



**CASH      RIGHTS      FOOD**

---

**Using research for policy and practice change**

Dr Mary Anne MacLeod, Research and Policy Officer

*"I wish I was even strong enough to deal wi' the government myself. Well, that would be quite a task. Yeah, I wish, but it would be handy if I was in a high position, that my word went. But I can't do it on my own. Everybody else goes on aboot it, and I have wrote to Fife council aboot my complaints. I've even wrote to one o' our councillors, but then the councillors cannae do it on their own either.*

***They need the rest o' the country wi' them"***

A Menu for Change participant

We want to prevent food aid becoming a permanent part of Scotland's social security system.



# A project in four parts



1. What can be done now and locally in Dundee, Fife and East Ayrshire?
2. What are the short and longer-term outcomes for people experiencing acute food insecurity?
3. What best practice can be shared across Scotland and the UK?
4. How can we use all the learning, analysis and evidence to change government policy and practice?

# Research aims

This study seeks to understand:



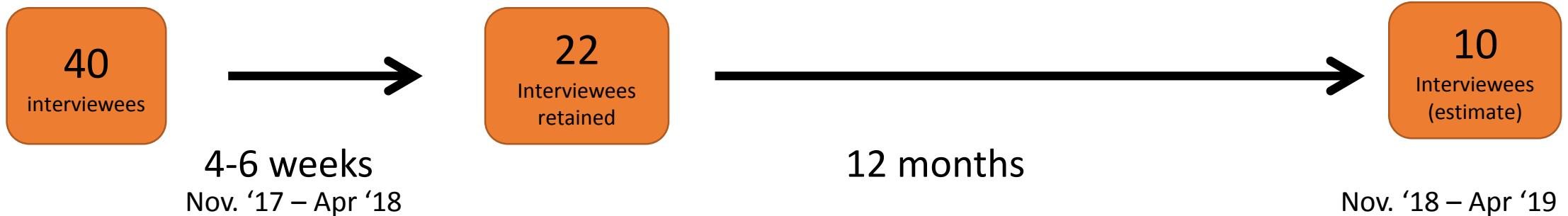
- the journeys which lead people to experience acute food insecurity
- their short and longer term outcomes following crisis
- factors which may have prevented or exacerbated (repeat) crisis

# Research Methods

- Qualitative longitudinal research methodology (3 stages of interviews)
- Semi-structured interviews focused on experiences of services
- Sample: recent experience of food crisis
- Use of structured food insecurity module to monitor changes in food insecurity over time



## Timeline for fieldwork:





# Initial Findings

## Short-term drivers of food crises

- *Universal Credit related problems*
  - Initial wait time, admin errors & delays → rent arrears, other debt
  - Having to reapply for UC when temporary job contracts end
- *Changes to disability benefits*
  - Failed medical assessments for anxiety and depression
- *Insecure work*
  - Lack of rights: sickness, maternity
  - Short-term, zero hours – pressures of in-work conditionality under UC

## (Duncan, Fife)

My story

*"they phoned my MP and then my MP done nothing, just said "Well, that's the Tories for you." Just wanted my vote"*

Several food bank visits



*"Sometimes you've got tae swallow your pride. You've got tae eat, at the end of the day"*

New UC claim early 2016

£0.01 UC payment

1 year ago

+  
End of job contract

2 week contract

End of 3 month  
contract

Last month

SWF award

Rent arrears



Charity support

# (Duncan, Fife)

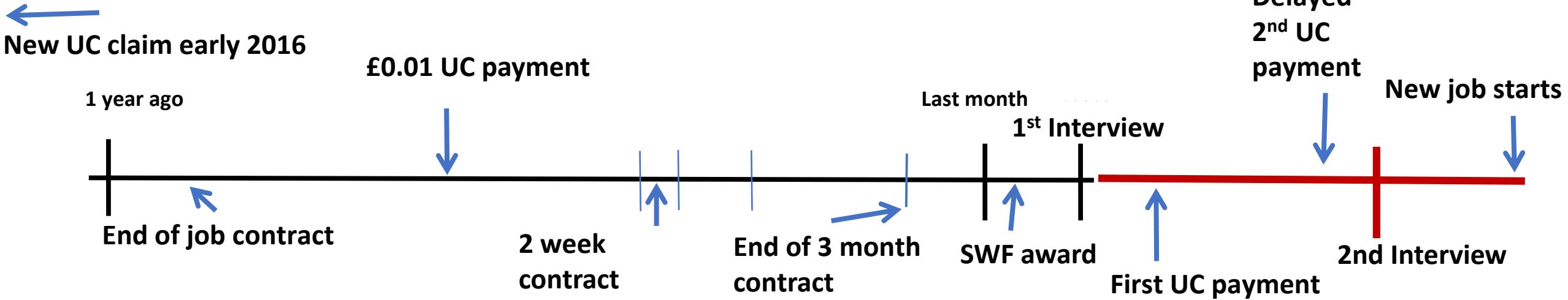
My story



Several food bank visits



*"I've still to look  
for work before I  
start a job"*



Health

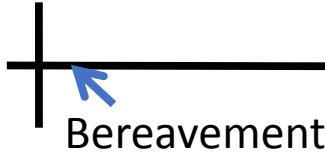


## My story

### (Brian, East Ayrshire)



1 year ago



*"I was my dad's carer. Constantly, twenty-four seven. And then when I lost my dad, and I just went in tae depression, and everything just kinda fell in"*



New UC claim

Food bank visit

Last month

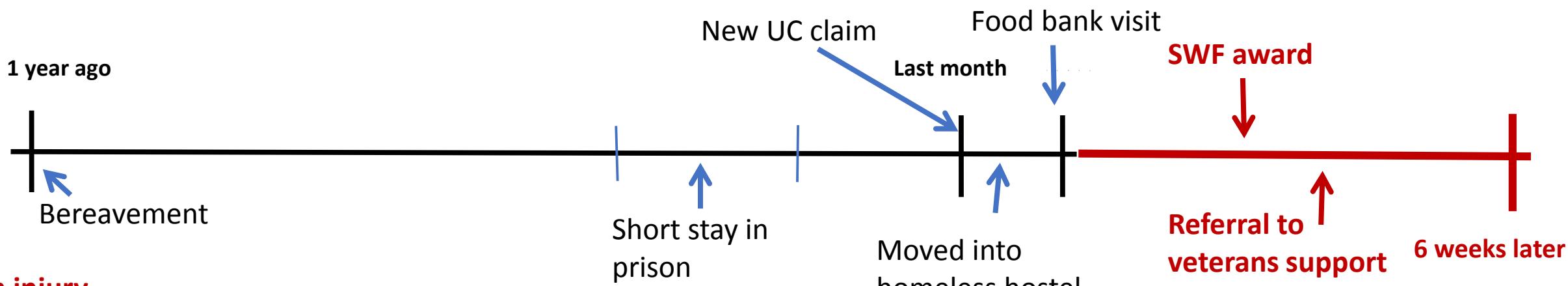
Short stay in prison

Moved into homeless hostel



*"I don't know when the next time I'd be eligible to get another, ken, food bank thing. So it'd be a case 'o, starving, until the next sheet o' paper, to get tae the food bank"*

## My story (Brian, East Ayrshire)





# Coping strategies

- *Budgeting*
  - Complex money management strategies (esp. women)
  - Impact of benefit changes, delays & errors on ability to budget
- *Friends and family support*
  - Statutory or charity help a last resort
  - Social and emotional impacts of having to ask for help

*“the weans’ gran and papa, they didnae get me a present as such – they actually got me a big bag o’ food.. every week when they were dae’in their shopping they were just picking up wee bits an’ bobs, putting them in a big box, an’ then on Christmas there they brought that doon for me”*

Stuart, East Ayrshire

# **Longer-term circumstances**

- *Significant life events* (& consequences of lack of timely intervention)
  - Bereavement
  - Abuse and neglect
  - Imprisonment
- *Mental ill-health*
  - Impact of historic trauma
  - Exacerbated by financial worries
- *Physical ill-health and disability*
  - Management of chronic conditions
- *Caring for and financially supporting others*

## **Q2: I couldn't afford to eat balanced meals**

*"Cause that's the reason why my cholesterol has increased because some of the tinned foods contain sugar and doesn't contain the right stuff sometimes" (Amanda, Dundee)*

## **Q4: In the last 12 months did you or any other adult in the household ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?**

*"obviously my main priority's making sure my kids are fed. And if it's the difference between me getting fed or them getting fed, then it's them obviously" (Kerry, East Ayrshire)*

## **Q6: In the last 12 months were you ever hungry, but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food?**

*"I mean you maybe have porridge in the morning. 85p for a bag of porridge. And then you have porridge at dinnertime, and you start feeling light-headed if you don't eat" (Alistair, East Ayrshire)*

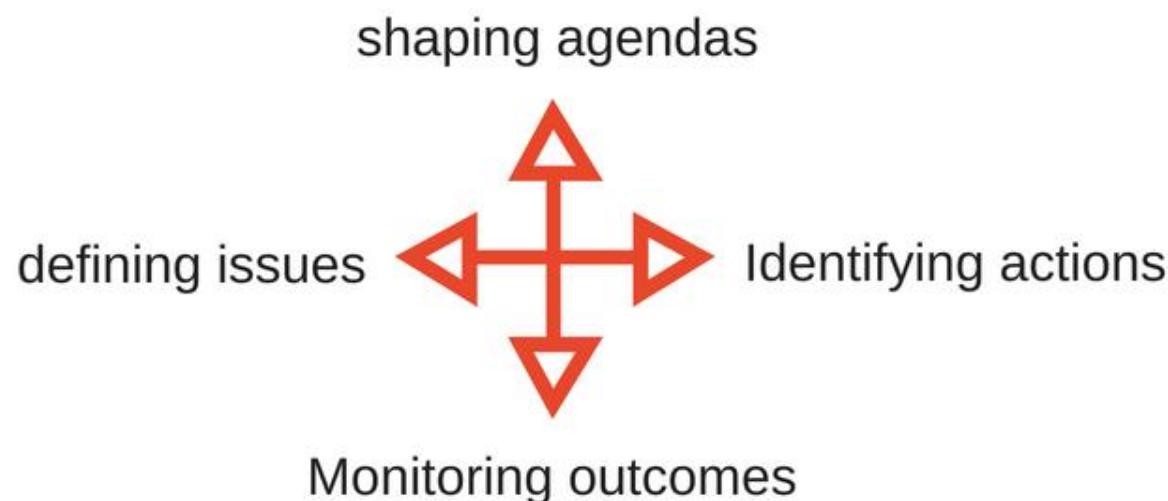
## **Q7: In the last 12 months, did you lose weight because there wasn't enough money for food?**

*"I'm actually about two stone overweight, but it is 'cause I'm not eating properly and healthy. With having fibromyalgia... causes stomach problems as well. When I'm able to eat properly, healthy, and regular, the bloatedness kinda disappears and bladder and bowels are slightly better. But when you're having to...If it's noodles for lunch and tea, it's noodles for lunch and tea" (Amanda, Dundee)*

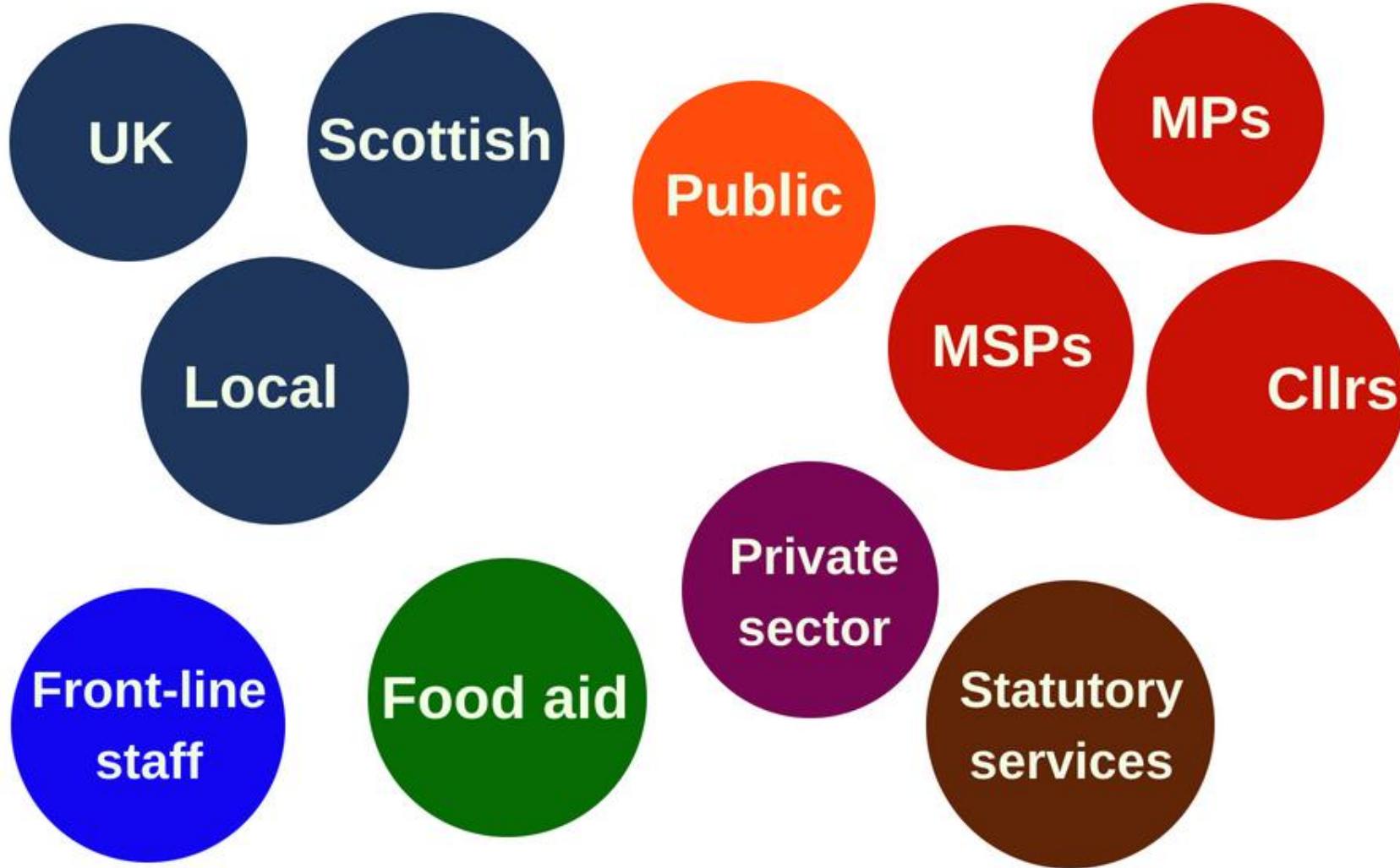
# Research for policy and practice change

## Opportunities

- Action on food insecurity a clear priority in Scotland
- A desire to act in evidence-informed way



# Who has the power to change things?



# What are our tools for influencing?

- Producing briefings: SWF, Universal Credit, In-work Poverty
- Giving evidence
- Lobbying councillors, MSPs and MPs
- Conferences and events
- Blogs
- Media engagement
- *Food Bank As It Is* play 21 November in Scottish Parliament

# Do you have a message for people in power?

*"If they could live a week or a month just with the bare benefits that they get given, and to actually show them how difficult it is or what they have to go through to actually try and survive or try and like keep themselves motivated and fed and to make sure that they don't break down. If they could do that themselves, then I think they'd understand".*

**Alison, Dundee**

## Group discussion:

*How do you use food insecurity research  
to improve policy and practice?*

Reflections on today:

*What do we need to do now  
to tackle food insecurity?*