

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution: Liverpool Hope University</b>		
<b>Unit of Assessment: 28 History</b>		
<b>Title of case study: Using public feeding in wartime to influence approaches to food poverty today</b>		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014-2017</b>		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Bryce Evans	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Associate Professor in History	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 2011-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2011-present</b>		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N</b>		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Bryce Evans' large-scale public recreations of the 'National Kitchens' of World War One (WW1) attracted significant media attention and generated the following key impacts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provision of modern food bank users with a nutritious meal and immersive historic experience through recreating WW1 public dining spaces named 'National Kitchens'.</li> <li>2. Enhanced public understanding of food and the home front in WW1 through creative commemorative practice.</li> <li>3. Contribution to critical debate and contemporary national policy in relation to food poverty.</li> <li>4. The improved provision of local measures alleviating food poverty in marginalised groups.</li> </ol>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In November 2014 Bryce Evans was awarded £3,104 by the Wellcome Trust to investigate social eating in Britain, 1917-1919. This research informed Evans' voluntary work around food poverty and in 2016 he received £2,500 through 'food poverty tsar' Frank Field MP to convey his research by recreating national kitchens in 'breakfast clubs' in Birkenhead, an area of food poverty earmarked by parliamentary inquiry (outlined below). In 2017 Evans received £15,000 in funding from the AHRC's 'Gateways to the First World War' project to recreate the 'national kitchens' of the First World War (WW1): a nationwide network of social eating spaces largely staffed by working class women. These recreations took place at public venues across the country, from the English midlands to the Scottish borders. In order to enhance public understanding of this marginalised home front history, Evans pursued creative commemorative initiatives, recreating the lay-out, music, menus and decoration of national kitchens in large communal venues, accompanying these events with a mini-lecture and a mini-exhibition showcasing research.</li> </ol>		

2. The context to Evans' research is the emergence of the food bank.. A Church Action on Poverty report (May 2013) estimated that over 500,000 people in the UK were reliant on food banks administered by private charity. This prompted the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) to commission a Parliamentary Inquiry into food poverty in Britain, published in December 2014 as 'Feeding Britain'. Two of its key recommendations were: a) to guarantee that the 'new phenomenon' of the food bank does not evolve into a 'new poor law' by pursuing pilot projects in twelve UK regions as a pathway to a new national zero-hunger strategy and b) that a 'food bank plus' model of cafes inside food banks emerge, providing a communal experience which would mitigate the stigma of the 'hand out' . Caveating his research findings by noting the different contexts, Evans wrote long opinion pieces in The Guardian, BBC News magazine and The Conversation, using his research to respond to a) by criticising the basic food bank model as inferior to local and national approaches to food poverty 100 years ago; and b) echoing the inquiry's call for the 'food bank plus' model, advancing the WW1 model as a template. On the back of this, Evans was invited by Maria Eagle MP (shadow minister for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) to convene a parliamentary meeting featuring 'alternative voices' on food poverty and in April 2016 briefed the APPG on Hunger, the APPG on Brazil, and the APPG on Agriculture and Food for Development on his research.
3. A key research finding was that the national kitchens of WW1 functioned with a high degree of local autonomy, targeting local at-risk individuals and groups. Therefore, in the recreations, specific local groups at risk of food poverty – namely **children during school holidays, the homeless, and the elderly** – were targeted in order to improve provision while using research to educate, inform and entertain. In late May 2015 Evans undertook his first recreation in Birkenhead, targeted at local **children experiencing school holiday hunger**. Evans then undertook similar research-informed targeted schemes aimed at **homeless individuals**, for instance in St Ann's ward, Nottingham. In 2019, availing of university funding, two national kitchens were recreated at Age Concern Liverpool, this time targeting local **elderly people** at risk of malnutrition / underweight using the armband tool of analysis.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- Peer-reviewed journal article Bryce Evans The National Kitchen in Britain, 1917–1919 *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 10, 2, (2016), 115–129, DOI 10.1080/17526272.2016.1215052

#### Evidence of peer-reviewed funding:

- Bryce Evans 'Egalitarian Eating in Britain, 1917-1919', Wellcome Trust, February 2015 – June 2015 (£3,104.00)
- Bryce Evans, 'Public Feeding: Rediscovering the National Kitchen (1917-1919)' AHRC 'Gateways to the First World War' research fund January 2017 – November 2017 (£15,000.00)

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The impact comprised 1) enhanced public understanding of how approaches to public feeding were of relevance today 2) the provision of historical context to policy around contemporary food poverty and 3) nutritional and social benefits to key user groups.

1. In order to **enhance public understanding** of how wartime approaches to food poverty resonate today, these creative commemorations were publicised nationally, for example one of the recreation events [held in Liverpool on 29 March 2017] featured several times on BBC1's 'Breakfast' show (7 million viewers); BBC News 24 (505,000 viewers) and BBC North West Tonight (329,000 viewers). This publicity inspired innovative commemoration from third parties. Enhanced public understanding of national kitchens is evidenced through emails and letters to Evans from individuals looking to set up their own public feeding schemes based upon the national kitchens model. One wrote 'I'm not officially under the poverty line. I'm 23 years old and I earn £22,000pa. Sounds good for someone my age, right? But I live in London which means I actually earn around £8,000-£9,000 pa after taxes and rent. I mention this because I would happily eat every supper at a national kitchen if I knew I was getting meat, veg and, I don't know, rice and cost only a couple of quid. That's coming from someone who sees himself as middle-class.' Many people asked for pointers on how to recreate national kitchens in their communities, with one woman saying the research had inspired her to 'lobby politicians and newspapers' championing this 'brilliant idea' for 'cheap nourishing meals which save on food, fuel, money and time'. Local groups held events exploring social eating as an aspect of WW1 commemoration. For example, in 2018 Evans' mini-exhibition was loaned to the Imperial War Museum's *Women's Work 100* project and to a community history project in Devon; in 2019 a National Lottery Heritage Fund project in Harwich, Essex used Evans' research as the basis for a touring theatrical performance about life during the war. In achieving enhanced public awareness, the research was used by producers from Wall to Wall Television, makers of BAFTA-nominated *Back in Time for Dinner*, for the follow-up series *Further Back in Time for Dinner*, which aired on BBC2 in 2017.
2. The research added **historical perspective to debate around contemporary UK food policy**. Evans was consulted by several lobby groups including the UK Government Parliamentary Working groups listed above; *Food for Soul* (an Italian food waste charity); *Food Train* (a Scottish non-profit supporting elderly people in food poverty); and the Independent Food Aid Network. He was invited to speak at discussions which informed the APPG on Hunger's subsequent national report 'Feeding Britain: The first 100 days' (APPGH, 2015) and the APPG on Hunger's inquiry into school holiday hunger (APPGH, 2017) and spoke at workshops as part of the Fabian Society's report *Hungry for Change* (2015) which called for a new Ministry of Food and for local authorities to establish food access plans addressing food insecurity. The Labour Party invited Evans to convene a meeting featuring 'alternative voices' on food poverty which included the Association of Public Sector Excellence, Public Health England and Tesco Corporate Social Responsibility. Evans also addressed MPs interested in this issue from the four nations at Portcullis House, Westminster, advising that the UK could borrow from global best practice as well as its history of wartime dining in efforts to diversify food poverty provision, with an emphasis on social eating rather than the basic 'take away' food bank. The research helped inform critical debate around food policy, contributing towards reports and political thought leading, in February 2019, to the announcement of a government 'national index of food insecurity'.
3. In **targeting specific groups** at-risk of food poverty, the events stimulated ideas for action. On the back of national publicity Evans was invited to provide a public lecture and kitchen at Preston's 2017 *Feast for Peace* - a special event organised by city councillors as a riposte to rallies by the *Britain First* group - at which he claimed national kitchens promoted intercommunality around food, especially for the homeless, children

and the elderly. In targeting the **homeless**, anonymous feedback from a participant in one of the recreations read 'I live on the streets. This was a great opportunity for me to feel human again' and another 'this really helps those who are homeless'. A letter from a voluntary worker in Birmingham outlined how the research prompted her to consult local homeless on their daily food budget, calculating that the roll-out of a new 'national kitchens' model would provide them with a £2.50 saving per day. Others spoke of how using food banks left them feeling 'ashamed and depressed' but that the national kitchens project 'socially, has an air of magic to it' / was an 'adaptable and transferable model' / 'built community' / 'inspired us to set up a community kitchen'. The pilot school holiday hunger schemes for **children** in Birkenhead were praised by the Archbishop of Canterbury and led to the roll-out of food poverty initiatives that moved away from the basic 'hand out' food bank model and towards the WW1 model including (by 2018) the establishment of 'food bank plus' as best practice alongside 'hot food for the homeless' schemes. The implementation of national kitchens for local **elderly** at risk of malnutrition was praised by the manager of Age Concern Liverpool, who wrote to Evans thanking him for the idea of using the armband tool, which was 'made easier thanks to the party atmosphere' leading to the identification of 'two users with low scores on the armband'; she added that 'we were able to ensure that on their next visits they were eating properly and their armband scores have since improved.'

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- Press coverage including 'Why Can't we just end the food poverty marketplace?', 4 January 2015 – *Big Issue*; 5 December 2016 – 'food poverty' – *Guardian*; 'The Time When the Government tried to feed everybody' *BBC News website* 6 July 2015; 'Community kitchens for all! Plan to combat food poverty in the city', *Liverpool Echo* 13 July 2015.
- Correspondence with Maria Eagle MP and her successor as shadow secretary for environment food and rural affairs Kerry McCarthy MP, 2015.
- Feeding Britain: A strategy for zero hunger in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland The report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the United Kingdom ([https://feedingbritain.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/feeding\\_britain\\_report\\_2014-2.pdf](https://feedingbritain.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/feeding_britain_report_2014-2.pdf))
- Television coverage including BBC Breakfast and BBC News 24, 30 March 2017.
- 'Feeding Britain: what we do', local pilots (Birkenhead): <https://feedingbritain.org/what-we-do/where-we-work/birkenhead/>
- Letter to Bryce Evans from manager of Age Concern Liverpool and Sefton, 1 May 2019