

**Abandonment, abjectification, activation and
responsibilisation: experiences of the shift
towards universal conditionality within the
Welsh homelessness system following the
Housing (Wales) Act 2014.**

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Summary

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014, introduced amid rising homelessness internationally, required Welsh local authorities to provide (nearly) all homeless and soon-to-be homeless applicants with timely, meaningful help. Prior to the Act, a minority considered particularly at risk from homelessness were afforded a globally near-unique right to state-provided housing. However, most received minimal help, generating increasing concern for their welfare. The Act also introduced a fundamental legislative shift in the state-citizen relationship, with provision of assistance becoming conditional upon the applicant's ongoing co-operation. Further, the Act functions as part of the wider neoliberal paternalistic welfare state, embedding reliance upon Britain's competitive, deregulated, private housing market. This thesis explores this shift to universal conditionality in a homelessness context, reporting upon interviews with 98 actors within the Welsh homelessness system, analysed using a Foucauldian lens. The central argument advanced is that, while homelessness relief in Wales now incorporates many hallmarks of a classic workfare approach, conditionality itself is reluctantly and imperfectly enacted. This rests upon three central claims. First, the new Act relies upon the twin discourses of moralism and pragmatism, yet is complicated by care. Second, deployment of spatialised bureaucracy created spaces in which power is not only visibilised but, consequently, contested and negotiated. Third, the new Act must be understood within a broader context of citizen activation, in which homeless citizens are governed through a proposed failure to adopt a *homo economicus* subjectivity. This thesis demonstrates, therefore, the utility of a discourse-based approach to exploring modern systems of poverty governance, and particularly the importance of including frontline workers and applicants themselves in production and evaluation of legislation. It further provides evidence of complex actor subjectivities: workers were found to be liminal, ambivalent and pragmatic, and often motivated by care, while applicants adeptly navigated repurposed narratives of deservedness and abjectivity to advantage themselves in the system.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

To be without a home is as an extreme privation, and a fundamental inequity. It is a situation which affects a rising number of individuals internationally (Serme-Morin, 2017), and is associated with both lack of affordable housing and rising poverty (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017). An increasingly inhospitable housing market, in which rents have become destabilised and affordable housing (such as that directly provided by the state) increasingly scarce (Watt, 2018). Meanwhile, poverty rates across Europe, including the UK, remain high and are implicated in low-income households' difficulties in securing and retaining accommodation (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019).

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 ('the new Act'), introduced amid rising global homelessness, had the explicit aim of introducing a universal right to housing assistance for all households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. These changes to existing homelessness legislation had a resultant impact on policy and practice. First, it considerably increased the scope of those to be offered help under the Act. The UK has an unusually comprehensive definition of homelessness. Internationally, homelessness is predominantly understood in terms of physical rooflessness: the literal lack of a shelter (Busch-Geertsema, 2010). Statutory homelessness in the UK is conceptualised in terms of lack of an ontological home. An individual or household can be homeless not only where they lack *physical* shelter, but also where they have no accommodation they are legally entitled to remain in, or where they have accommodation but it is not safe, adequate and secure. This approach recognises the importance of housing adequacy to wellbeing (Dupuis and Thorns, 1998).

The UK is also highly unusual in offering statutory, enforceable rights to those who are, under this definition, homeless. The 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act introduced a link between statutory homelessness

and entitlement to a social housing tenancy,¹ thus guaranteeing lifetime secure, affordable accommodation. However, to be eligible for social housing, a homeless individual or family had to pass a series of further tests, most notably being in 'priority need'. In practice, this meant either part of a family with children, or at unusual risk (for instance due to physical ill-health) as a result of remaining roofless². Consequently, the fate of those who are not considered in 'priority need' has long been a source of considerable concern in the UK (Bowpitt et al., 2011; de Friend, 1978). Therefore, in practice, the British 'right to housing' has historically been highly selective and available only to a minority of applicants. The new Act retains the principle of the duty to provide accommodation for those considered at very high risk if they were to become unsheltered. However, it further introduces an additional obligation to provide extended assistance to all applicants (with recourse to British public funds) who were either homeless (in the broad sense of lacking safe and secure accommodation) or threatened with homelessness within the next two months. The mode of operation of this right is noteworthy for its focus upon individualising solutions to homelessness, with the help offered incorporating pedagogical interventions (such as money management, mediation and training in finding private rented properties).

Second, however, the Act, for the first time, applied conditionality to the homelessness system, with the introduction of a requirement upon applicants to co-operate with the local housing authority and the potential to have help removed from applicants who do not fulfil this behavioural requirement. This shift reflects the broader political and social context in which the Act was reduced. Particularly following the Global Financial Crash of 2008, British welfare policy has become increasingly punitive and restrictive, drawing on the abjectifying spectre of the undeserving welfare imaginary to justify state withdrawal (K. Allen et al., 2014; Jensen, 2010; Tyler, 2013). As will be shown, however, the roots of this can be traced back further, particularly to (in the UK), the Third Way approach of New Labour, and earlier. The Act, in Wales, was introduced at a time of deep 'austerity'- a euphemistic rhetoric which describes extensive and sweep-

¹The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 was brought into force on 1st December 1977 in England and Wales, and 1st April 1978 in Scotland, follow c21 s(2) of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977

²As will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 4, homeless applicants further had to show themselves, in addition to being without secure and stable housing and to be in especial need, to be non-culpable in their own homelessness, to have a 'local connection' to the authority to which they are applying, and to be eligible to have recourse to public funds in the UK

ing cuts to welfare benefits and public spending (J. Clarke and Newman, 2012). Workfare approaches to welfare benefits provision have become increasingly prevalent across welfare systems worldwide (Garthwaite, 2011; Schram et al., 2010; Soss et al., 2011; Tyler, 2013; Whitworth and Carter, 2014). These approaches make receipt of benefits conditional upon the performance of certain behaviours, notably adopting the subjectivity of a work-seeking individual. Such actions typically extend beyond simply seeking employment, requiring applicants also to perform enthusiasm, to engage with 'job-ready' training, and to submit to intense surveillance of their activities, through recording details of their daily work-related activities (Schram et al., 2010; Whitworth and Carter, 2014). Schram et al. (2010) argue that the landscape of welfare citizenship has shifted because of a broader shift toward neoliberal paternalism, evident in society as a whole but especially reflected in poverty governance. 'Neoliberal paternalism' (Schram et al., 2010:739) incorporates both the directive approach of paternalism and the market-centric philosophy of neoliberalism. Working (understood narrowly in terms of economic activity) is understood as a citizen mandate, and a civic responsibility (Jensen, 2010; Lemke, 2001a; McKee, 2009; Schram et al., 2010). Yet under neoliberal paternalism, citizens are understood as in need of close supervision, surveillance, and pedagogical intervention to transform them into self-governing, market-focused 'ethical selves' (Lemke, 2001b). This approach is particularly applied to welfare programs, resulting in attempts to create, shape, and commodify poor citizens' labour through a re-structuring of administrative-bureaucratic state apparatus.

Unlike other parts of the welfare state, before the Act, the homelessness system was exempted from conditionality. Following the Act, Welsh applicants, if they are considered to be 'unreasonably failing to co-operate' (Housing (Wales) Act 2014 s79 (5)), potentially lose the right to help from the local authority, with this constituting grounds for the cessation of the duty even with the most vulnerable applicants. In contrast, under the prior Acts (e.g. the Homelessness Act 2002), the duty could only be ended in specific circumstances, such as the unreasonable refusal of accommodation. This is significant: it destabilises the longstanding British tradition of regarding housing for vulnerable, non-culpable individuals as a right, rather than a conditional entitlement. Finally, the new Act included a considerably expanded casework function, with applicants required to engage (as part of the conditionality introduced above) with local authorities over a prolonged period. While casework existed under the

prior legislation, it did not have a significant pedagogical or compliance element. In effect, under the new Act, all applicants, including those who previously were owed an unconditional housing duty under the old Act, are now subject to conditionality. These changes, and consequent policy and practice implications, underpin this thesis.

1.1 From selective rights to universal conditionality

In this thesis, I argue that the shift from a limited, needs-based, and unconditional approach to extensive homelessness provision, to one where a much larger group have a conditional right to more limited help, represents a fundamental change to the understanding of the citizenship of homeless subjects. 'Conditionality' is here used to refer to the idea that entitlement to state welfare provision should be conditional upon the satisfactory performance of certain behaviours, notably work-seeking and re-orientation of the self as a individual intent on engaging in economic activity (Dwyer, 2016). The earlier system was widely regarded as internationally unique and characterised as offering a right to housing (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014; Fitzpatrick and Watts, 2010). And yet in practice, only a minority of applicants were eligible for this duty, since it hinged upon being assessed as being at particular risk because of homelessness (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014). In practice, this translated into decision making which amplified both normative ideas of vulnerability, and heteronormative constructions of family (M. Davis, 1994), and substantiates the observation that welfare legislation is an essential tool for producing and disciplining welfare subjects (Auyero, 2011, 2012; Cruikshank, 1999; Jensen and Tyler, 2015). This also meant that homelessness provision and provision to prevent people from becoming homeless was almost entirely lacking for most applicants not considered vulnerable. This inequity was widely recognised (Fitzpatrick, Bramley, and Johnsen, 2013), and a significant justification for the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, where the focus was largely upon applicants who could resolve their own homelessness with a pedagogical or practical intervention (Mackie and Thomas, 2014; Mackie et al., 2017). And yet, as earlier scholars have observed, the value of pedagogical intervention is often limited and ceremonial and does not necessarily offer applicants information which helps them resolve their situation (Schram et al., 2010).

Further, it is not clear how effective conditionality is within the Act. Conditionality within the legislation occurs primarily in specifying that the Local Authority can withdraw help where they are 'satisfied that the applicant is unreasonably failing to co-operate with the authority in connection with the exercise of its functions.' (Housing (Wales) Act 2014 s79 (5)). This appears, *prima facie*, to parallel the forms of workfare conditionality ubiquitous across unemployment benefit provision internationally (see Hickman et al., 2017; McDonald and Marston, 2005; Schram et al., 2010; Soss et al., 2011; Whitworth, 2016; Whitworth and Carter, 2014). However, the significance of this withdrawal to applicants may be less significant than in a workfare context. Applicants whose duty has ended lose access to advice and assistance. Except for the minority of applicants owed the 'full housing duty' (where the local authority must ensure access to housing), this translates to loss of ongoing tutelary input and some access to services and financial resources. This brings into question the purpose of the new conditionality clause (s79 (5), with one possibility being that it functions to signal a change in how homelessness is now understood and, therefore, administered in Wales.

This invites the question of how, in practice, the Act is both conceptualised and enacted. In this thesis, I explore the functional consequences of this shift from a selective, rights-based approach to one of universal conditionality. Of interest is not simply the consequences of this shift, but how different actors understand this more fundamental change to homelessness provision. I explore this using a Foucauldian approach, which centres the production of competing discourses- the production and construction of knowledge and the relationship between them-as integral to power, and so as a critical facet of shaping and deriving the right to shape social experience. Through this lens, discourse can be understood as a site of struggle, a source of tension, yet also productive, in that, it gives rise to plural alternative understandings of the world. A Foucauldian understanding of discourse is constructivist and post-structuralist: discourse is not neutral, but necessarily and inevitably connected to the distribution of material resources within society. Yet, power should not be understood in merely a hostile or repressive sense: indeed Foucault understands power, and hence discourse, as spreading through society precisely because it offers individuals and communities a route to freedom (Foucault, 1979; Hall, 1997).

Those who are housed precariously and unsheltered are often the subject of two societal discourses. First, they are seen as suspect individu-

als who are homeless as a result of their failure to work hard and make good choices (Horsell, 2006; Willse, 2015). This discourse justifies intense scrutiny upon their activities and leads to their becoming scrutinised, blamed and othered, with usually private aspects of their lives inspected (Cloke et al., 2011). Yet a parallel, often co-existing, discourse also regards homelessness as a state of victim-hood, meaning that to be lacking a material home becomes synonymous with personal incapacity (Jolley, 2020; Sweet, 2019). This approach justifies depriving unsheltered people of autonomy and voice, allowing them to speak, if at all, only through nominated others, or where they meet certain thresholds of legible competence (M. Dean, 2002; Horsell, 2006; Willse, 2010). Cruikshank, in her work on the late 1990s American welfare state, proposes that these two discourses are not in opposition, but rather operate together within upon a fictive, and ultimately profitable, discourse which justifies political decision making on both the left and the right (Cruikshank, 1999, see also INCITE!, 2007, Soss et al., 2011; Tronto, 2017). In this thesis, I address these questions of location, exploring the impacts of othering/stigmatising and paternalistic/silencing discourses within homelessness provision. I consider both the experiences of applicants themselves, and front-line workers, a group often overlooked within homelessness research, yet who, I argue (following Lipsky, 2010), are critical to an understanding of how law becomes practice.

1.2 Research focus and questions

In this thesis, I argue that while homelessness relief in Wales now incorporates many hallmarks of a classic workfare approach; conditionality itself is reluctantly and imperfectly enacted. McKee (2011) observes that a Foucauldian lens offers considerable scope for attending to how housing problems are constructed, through enabling consideration of the 'messy realities of governing' (ibid:3). She suggests we must move beyond a simplistic top-down understanding of power as merely coercive or totalising and instead consider how power operates as a transformative, resistive and potentially productive modality. She proposes that a Foucauldian analysis can be used within housing studies to explore how governed individuals make sense of their experiences, and so to explore how power operates in practice- in the interactions between 'street-level bureaucrats' (Lipsky, 2010) and applicants to produce contested and changeable subjectivities. This approach is used to structure the thesis and focus the

research questions at its core.

This thesis aims to explore, using a Foucauldian lens, the shift toward universal conditionality within the Welsh statutory homelessness system in the three years following the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. As will be discussed in greater depth (Chapter 4) this included a movement away from an apparently rights-based, yet highly selective, approach to addressing homelessness. Dean's typology of governance, which supplies a useful, largely descriptive, overview of the mechanics of modern neoliberal statecraft, is also helpful in identifying areas to attend to. Dean names four discrete, yet overlapping and dialectical elements (M. Dean, 1999). These are as follows. First, through discourse, certain forms of knowledge and consequent actions and individuals are identified as problematic and in need of improvement or restoration. Second, technologies: the method, mechanisms, and procedures by which governance occurs, for instance, empowerment or surveillance. Third, subjectivities: how individuals become created, shaped, and maintained through this governance. These elements are, themselves, situated within the broader fourth field, that concerned with the practicalities of applied governing itself, which focuses upon: 'the ends or goal sought, what we hope to become or the world we hope to create, that which might be called the telos of governmental or ethical practices.' (M. Dean, 1999: 45). As McKee (2009) argues, governance is 'fundamentally a political project' (ibid: 468) in which individuals within society become imagined in terms of possibility. 'Possibility' necessarily locates the individual as currently incapable or deficient, thus reinforcing the need for an intervention. In this way, governance relies upon, but also creates, a 'field of truth' in which certain assumptions are maintained about human existence and optimal societal organisation (M. Dean, 2002). In this thesis, the field of governance is the Welsh homelessness system following the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. The research questions consider how Dean's different governmentality elements operate dialectically in the context of a shift to a neoliberal paternalistic, workfare-style approach to homelessness provision, and in the context of a precarious, inaccessible housing market and broader discourses which problematise poverty. Therefore, the overarching aim of the thesis is to explore the enactment of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 within a governmentality framework.

This thesis also draws upon a number of key concepts: abandonment, abjectification and activation. Abandonment refers to state provision withdrawal, particularly for welfare subjects (J. Clarke, 2005). Abjectification is understood as a process by which those in society with spe-

cific characteristics become othered and stigmatised (Tyler, 2013, 2020). Finally, activation (closely related to empowerment) is understood as the idea that individuals should become individually motivated and responsible, understanding their circumstances as both created through, and resolvable by, their own individual actions (Cruikshank, 1999): thus the technology of activation provides a mandate to require citizens to operate as entrepreneurial and self-governing (J. Clarke, 2005). These concepts are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Research Question 1: How does discourse operate to construct and justify the change from a highly selective, paternalistic and needs-based system to one of universal, yet conditional help?

This question relates to Dean's first aspect of governance: the Foucauldian argument that governance occurs through discourse, in which a situation or individual is identified as problematic and in need of improvement or restoration. Yet discourses are not monolithic: they are fed by, and feed, other discourses.³

Homelessness in Wales operates at the site of multiple discourses, as will be explored. These include a significant moral panic over abjectivity and benefits 'scroungers' and a proposed 'inter-generational worklessness', closely connected to ongoing anxiety over council housing allocations and deservedness. Yet there is also an underlying narrative of helplessness and vulnerability associated with homeless applicants, which often relates to a sense that they cannot be trusted with agency. Discourse within society can be understood in terms of the underlying truth it asserts, reflecting the needs and interests of those producing the discourse. In the case of discourse relating to homeless people, this needs to be investigated in the broader context of state withdrawal, or abandonment (J. Clarke, 2005). Yet these discourses do not operate in a vacuum but rather must be explored in a social context in which, through technologies, they produce subjectivities. Therefore, the first research question focuses on the changing discourses used by law-enacting frontline workers, and how these discourses provide a justificatory framework for implementing the new Act within a broader state withdrawal and abandonment context.

Research question 2: How do technologies of biopower, bureaucracy and spatialisation operate to align homeless applicants with the

³Ultimately, this can give rise to a field of knowledge, or an episteme, in which certain truths are widely accepted within society as a whole- see Foucault, 1980b.

normative values of the new Act?

Dean proposes that attention should be paid to technologies: the mechanisms, processes and procedures by which governance occurs (M. Dean, 2009). Through technologies, individuals within society become governable: technologies, relying upon authority acquired from discourse, produce subjectivities. Of particular interest here is the tension between the bureaucratic practices and spaces inherited from the prior legislation, and the apparent expansiveness of the new Act in terms of offering assistance for more individuals, and based upon a construction of these individuals as fundamentally capable, and where a persuasive, empathetic approach is preferred (Mackie et al., 2017). I here understand technologies in an expansive way, including both the acts of control performed by the state to engender subjectification and the counter-acts of resistance produced throughout society which operate as an inevitable by-product of subjectification (Hall, 1997). A criticism could reasonably be made of Dean's 2002 approach in its narrow focus upon statecraft and top-down power, at the expense of the resistive potential of individual citizens. Further, while prior literature has attended to the potential of Foucault's work to explore resistivities (see, for instance, J. Butler, 2002), this has primarily focused upon the production of *discourse* as a site of resistance, rather than *technologies*, reinforcing the notion of the problematised actor as necessarily passive. Abjection as a concept is particularly helpful here since it provides a tool to understand how state technologies rely upon constructing welfare subjects as 'others', and so operate at a point of tension between state control and individual agency (Kristeva, 1982). Prior work has particularly focused upon the use of abjection as a reductive discourse in which welfare subjects are constructed as other and undeserving (Tyler, 2013). Yet, as Tyler (2013) observes, abjection is intricately related to legibility. Who is considered deserving of state resources, and under what circumstances? Thus, an abjection approach offers considerable potential to explore not only the disciplinary technologies imposed upon citizens cast as objects of disgust, but how these technologies themselves create a framework for counter-action, or resistance. This creates space for an examination of how actors might engage with technologies of abjection deliberately and willingly. Meanwhile, drawing upon a growing literature which considers the spatialisation of power within welfare locations, of interest here is the question of how space as a technology might be implicated in the production of abject

subjectivities.

Research question 3: How are homeless subjectivities constructed and maintained under the Housing (Wales) Act, with regard to the Welsh housing context?

Subjectivities are the ways in which individuals become created, shaped and maintained through governance. Thus subjectivities are the culmination of both discourse and technologies, and operate dialectically with both. Discourse and technologies are produced and maintained by particular subjectivities. A key part of neoliberal subject-creation is activation, in which technologies of power operate to summon and shape identities in terms of an idealised economic actor, operating within a particular field of rationalities. This has been explored in the context of workfare (McDonald and Marston, 2005; Schram et al., 2010) and social housing (McKee, 2011; 2015). Here, the specific field of rationalities available to applicants within the Welsh housing context is relevant. The new Act centred the use of private rented housing as a means by which local authorities could end their duties to homeless applicants. The British private rented market can be understood as comparable to the employment market in which workfare approaches are situated: it is similarly competitive, precarious and very poorly regulated (England and Taylor, 2021; Powell, 2015; Schram et al., 2010). This is complicated by high poverty rates following the Global Financial Crash, reducing the economic power of low-income tenants (Powell, 2015). This question offers the opportunity to explore the experiences of applicants and workers and consider how resistance, or deliberate production of particular identities, might occur.

1.3 Mapping the thesis

This thesis has a further seven chapters, as follows. Chapters 2 and 3 consider prior literature. In Chapter 2, I discuss the thesis' conceptual approach. I first consider the relevance and utility of a discursive Foucauldian understanding of power, exploring the consequent construction of knowledge and truth, within a neoliberal context. Second, I approach the concept of *homo economicus*: an idealised, autonomous, self-governing individual who perfectly meets the need of neoliberalism. I then discuss biopower, an approach which focuses upon categorisation and processing of individual citizens as a technology of governance. In Chap-

ter 3, I discuss the changing nature of the welfare state, understanding it as an arena in which the wider shift to conditional citizenship seen in Chapter 2 becomes evident. I first explore the relationship between the welfare state and technologies of self, with particular reference to the New Labour government. I then discuss how welfare outposts may become locations in which poverty is governed spatially, and particularly through the actions of frontline workers. In Chapter 4 I move to a consideration of the British homelessness system, tracing its historical role in defining and reinscribing notions of deservedness and vulnerability through an internationally unusual enforceable right to housing. I then consider the features of the Housing (Wales) Act, including the elevated importance of the private rented sector within the Act.

In Chapter 5, I present the study methodology. I describe how the approach taken for the empirical work was influenced by a Foucauldian approach to ontology and epistemology. The qualitative interview-based data collection method, including sampling and interview approach, is explored in detail for both sets of participants (workers and applicants). An overview of demographics is also presented, and potential ethical concerns addressed. The analysis method (Critical Discourse Analysis and thematic coding) is described, along with an overview of codes.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 collectively consider the three research questions, presenting findings from the data analysis. It should be noted that, although the research questions broadly correspond to the analysis chapters sequentially, this is not an exact correspondence. To address each (in Chapter 9) I draw upon evidence from all three chapters. Chapter 6 considers the discourse produced by workers and experienced by applicants, showing evidence of widespread moral panic, particularly around applicants whose identities were consistent with inter-generational worklessness narratives. And yet workers often struggled with the complexities of authority, preferring a persuasive, empathetic approach, although it was unclear whether this was enforceable in practice. I situate this chapter within the broader question of state abandonment and withdrawal and the consequent ambivalence of different actors. Chapter 7 considers the mechanics of technologies of spatiality and bureaucracy in housing options offices, including waiting, queuing, panoptic surveillance, distance and enforced legibility. These technologies were sometimes identified as problematic by workers since they visibilised power. At the same time, for applicants, these technologies were complex. While many felt that they communicated their abjectivity, interchangeability and irrelevance to the

system, these structures also offered a clear framework for applicants to render themselves legibly deserving. Chapter 8 explores how subjectivity is created, not only by the state itself, but through practices of reinforcement and subversion by workers, and applicants themselves. It shows that the private rented sector can be considered analogous to low paid, precarious work within welfare states, in that it creates a field of truth where applicants are responsabilised for learning to operate as entrepreneurial and competitive individuals. Failure is thus individualised, and pedagogical intervention justified. I examine this in particular depth with regard to the 'Personal Housing Plan', a technology of surveillance in which individuals are required to detail their accommodation search. Here, the performativity of searching for housing becomes evident, along with the unwillingness of workers to enforce compliance.

In the conclusion, Chapter 9, I draw upon the emergent themes, to detail the three primary contributions to literature which arise from addressing the research questions. Further, I propose that two additional contributions have been made which extend the understanding of the ambiguous and liminal role of front-line workers, and the centrality of legibility in understanding applicant agency. I finally suggest three further research directions.

Chapter 2

Toward conditional citizenship: theorising neoliberal governance

This section focuses on the theory underpinning the thesis. In this thesis, I approach the question of governance through a Foucauldian lens. A Foucauldian approach attends to how power in a modern state operates through normative assumptions and expectations, created and maintained, but also challenged and destabilised, through the creation of discourse. In a modern neoliberal state, Foucauldian power is closely associated with a valorisation of a *homo economicus* approach to citizenship: a reformulation of the state-individual relationship where citizenship itself becomes contingent upon successful enactment of a self-governing, autonomous *homo economicus* subjectivity.

A Foucauldian approach to ontology underpins this thesis. *Ontology* has as its literal meaning the study of being.¹ This necessarily implies the existence of both an object of study and a method by which this object can be appraised, an approach in line with the realist ontology² which predominates in policy research (Fitzpatrick, 2005). Foucault's approach destabilises both these precepts. First, he rejects the notion of static, external events, rather understanding phenomena as products of the specific context of their current, local environment. This does not mean that these events do not exist *per se*; rather, these events are epistemologically inaccessible to us. We rather interact only with the discourse and representations of these events: Foucault suggests that *meaning* does not exist outside discourse (Foucault, 1972). The categories which we use

¹Deriving from *onto* - being, in the sense of existence, and *logia* meaning exploration, investigation or study.

²A realist ontology takes as a starting point the idea that there exists an external reality which can be investigated empirically. See Popper, 2005

to understand, discuss and refer to the aspects of our lives are entirely, according to Foucault, constructed through language. These categories are historically specific: Foucault argues that madness and criminality, for instance, are both meaningful concepts within a specific set of societal norms and understandings (Foucault, 1979; Foucault, 1984, 1990). Further, the subject does not exist separately from discourse but is embroiled within it, both produced by, and producing it (Foucault, 1980b; Rosenthal, 2019). The contingency of the subject-position within discourse brings into question the (im)possibility of epistemological inquiry itself: to Foucault, neither the investigator nor the investigation process itself can be removed from the discourse surrounding the event. The question of how social science may meaningfully engage in investigation within a Foucauldian approach is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

It is important also to acknowledge that Foucault's work is frequently contradictory, and does not cohere into a single approach. This has led to very different understandings of both his work, and his political position (see, for instance, J. Butler, 2002; Ramazanoglu, 2002; Zamora and Behrent, 2016). Further, there is often little cross-fertilisation between these different approaches. For instance, scholars of governmentality do not often draw upon queer or crip theory to expand their approach (R. Butler, 1988; M. Dean, 2009; Halberstam, 2005; McRuer, 2006). This chapter attempts to provide an overview of the parts of Foucauldian theory relevant to this thesis, yet in so doing recognises that Foucault's work does not necessarily operate as a coherent whole (Hunt and Wickham, 1994).

Critical to Foucauldian ontology is an appreciation of the *specificity* of any given discourse. Our current understandings of different phenomena are produced by, and productive of, an unstable assemblage of external forces, and are subject to change and contestation (Foucault, 1972, 1980b). Identities, beliefs, morality and assumptions all emerge at the intersection of competing and contesting discourses. The only (arguable) constant in Foucault's ontological schema is power itself, which operates through, upon, and with individuals within society in myriad ways (Rosenthal, 2019).

This chapter considers Foucauldian theory in greater depth, exploring the key concepts which underpin the thesis as a whole. The chapter is arranged as follows. First, I discuss discourse in greater depth, as a critical facet of Foucault's theory of power. Discourse, is a means through which ideas and beliefs become not only asserted, but maintained; yet it

also provides an avenue through which power itself can be destabilised. This section explores the close relationship between discourse, knowledge and power, concluding with an examination of governmentality theory as a way to justify intervention into the lives of citizens. Second, I approach the specific social context in which the thesis is situated through an examination of neoliberalism and its effect upon citizenship. The figure of *homo economicus* is introduced, and I briefly discuss three important concepts for this thesis: abandonment, abjection and activation. The role of care within a neoliberal setting is then considered: I explore how, within a neoliberal setting, care can be alternatively co-opted, and yet resistive. In the final section, I explore the Foucauldian concept of biopower: the use of categories to enforce state norms upon individuals.

2.1 Discourse as power

Foucauldian power is circulatory and productive. A specific development of the modern, post-Enlightenment, industrialised, state, it is a more diffuse yet ultimately more effective form of citizen control than the feudal system, whereby citizens complied through the threat of losing their bodily autonomy through the state right to execute (McKee, 2009). In the modern state, power is diffused throughout society, without a single source (Hall, 1997). Further, it operates, not by coercion, but by desire, by making compliance with, and enactment and replication of, dominant ideologies, attractive:

[Power] doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network that runs through the whole social body.

Foucault, 1980a:119

Power operates by persuasion, and through the structuring of choices to promote ideas of autonomy and freedom. This particular form of governing operates through making individual decisions appear more rational and attractive than others. Hence, it avoids any direct action or compulsion. Instead, it functions as

A range of rationalities and techniques that seek to govern without governing society... through regulated choices... by discrete and autonomous actors.

N. Rose, 1996:119

Who can assert which realities, under what circumstances, are key questions for Foucault, and give rise to a conception of discourse as a technique by which reality is not reflected but created and maintained (M. Dean, 1999; Foucault, 1990, see also Hall, 1997). Foucault's concern with discourse lies with the relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic communication (extending beyond utterances or gestures and including practices and behaviours) and societal regulation, particularly through norms and assumptions. Discourse is cumulative and layered. Discourse emerges across society, at multiple different locations. Through constructing a set of understandings which assert the meaning and significance of an event or object, discourses assert a claim to knowledge. Discourse is also productive: through clear statements of assertion which categorise different phenomena arise imaginaries who embody these categories. Through discourse, ideas within dominant ideology become transformed into direct, tailored action, palatable and applicable to individuals (Cruikshank, 1999; Lemke, 2002), yet obscuring the fact that the field in which these choices are being made has been constructed in order to legitimise them (Lemke, 2002). An example of productive, discursive control is the introduction of new laws. Legislation is widely understood as a form of citizen control (Hall et al., 2013). However, new laws typically produce considerable debate, reaction and typologisation (Hunt and Wickham, 1994; Lemke, 2002; N. Rose, 1996).

2.1.1 Power and knowledge

Foucault understands knowledge as an assertion of truth, dialectically representing, and generatively underpinned by a claim to authority (Foucault, 1980a). Foucault thus sees truth as part of power. Power is both a product of, and operates to bolster and maintain, *itself*: it has a circulatory, self-replenishing, ability (Foucault, 1980b). Knowledge exists within a specific 'field of truth', or discursive formation (Foucault, 1990). A field of truth is specific to an individual social location and refers to the

normative values that surround not only what knowledge is assumed but also what may be said about the knowledge, how it may be discussed and by whom, and who has the power to take decisions using it. Foucault saw truth as intricately connected to subject formation, and the assertion of truth as an act of power. Power, to Foucault, both originates in, is maintained by, yet also itself maintains social norms, thus producing the ability to categorise and control citizens. By asserting truth, it becomes possible to label some individuals deviant and non-citizens and require others to undergo pedagogical intervention or removal from social space (for instance, to prisons or asylums-see Foucault, 1979; Foucault, 1984). Meanwhile, other individuals become elevated to the status of adjudicators of truth themselves- for instance, the diagnostic, examinatory figure of the doctor within psychiatry (Foucault, 1984).

There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations.

Foucault, 1979:27

Foucault understands knowledge as contingent upon the configuration of society. Foucault contrasts modern and pre-industrial (global north) constructions of knowledge in his work, understanding the two to operate in contrast in terms of how deviance is disciplined.³ The key distinction here is between *external* visible punishment, which is administered from the outside, and internalised punishment, which the individual applies to themselves. Tracing a proposed history of punishment in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1979) suggests that in the 17th century, criminality was punished visibly and through physical constraint, yet did not compromise autonomy. However, in the 20th he argues that criminality

³It is recognised that this conceptualisation of discipline and control within feudal society as operating solely through physical coercion rather than ideological persuasion is not necessarily historically accurate. It is clear that in feudal society persuasive ideologies worked to ensure compliance, for instance through religious doctrine (see, for instance, Hobsbawm, 2010). However, Foucault's approach remains a useful tool for exploring the mechanisms by which different forms of power operates, and particularly the idea that physical/ bodily constraint results in a different relationship between the state and subjects, to persuasive power.

became understood in terms of psychiatry, and hence the criminal became understood as incompetent, immature and thus and targeted for individualising psychological treatment (Foucault, 1979). Writing mainly of 'total institutions', which tend to be entrusted with processing and recuperation of individuals in terms of health, psychology, morality or education, Foucault argues that they derive their power precisely from a societal understanding of them as guardians of knowledge (Foucault, 1984). Thus, power reinforces itself. For instance, writing of the asylum, Foucault proposes that the figure of the psychiatrist derives their power to make diagnostic, categorical decisions about individuals, with significant implications for their civil liberties, precisely because psychiatry itself is trusted. He further observes that psychiatry derives this power from the fact that categorical decisions are being taken. When extrapolated to society as a whole, this process of destabilisation and intervention into human lives exists at the core of governmentality itself, through a process of understanding certain situations, communities and individuals as faulty or deficient, and consequently justifying state intervention (Foucault, 1984; McDonald and Marston, 2005; McKee, 2009; Sauer and Penz, 2017; Tyler, 2013; Whitworth and Carter, 2014).⁴

Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth; that is, the types of discourses which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned.

Foucault, 1980a: 131

2.1.2 Power and transformation

It is, however, important to note that Foucauldian power is not total. It does not operate from the top-down, nor from a specific source. Rather, it

⁴Foucault's approach to psychiatry is subject to challenge, not only upon material facts but also for its potentially reductive use of "madness" as a proxy for "irrationality" or failure to align with societal norms. However, Foucault's conception of psychiatry-derived, in part, from his own experience as a patient- has also contributed to patient-based anti-psychiatry approaches, such as *Mad Pride* and *Mad Studies* (LeFrançois et al., 2013).

operates *throughout* society, in a 'net-like organisation' (Foucault, 1980b:98), throughout society. Foucault understands power as uneven- certain institutions and organisations have more ability to insist upon, enact and normalise norms, assumptions and fields of truth, than others. Yet individuals themselves do not simply reproduce these norms but rather transform it. Thus, 'forms of behaviour, bodies and local relations of power...should not...be seen as a simple projection of the central power.' (Foucault, 1980b:201). Individuals bring their prior experiences, expectations and desires to interactions: while these modalities are guided and influenced by power in the form of dominant norms, they are not dictated by them. Rather, encounters within society operate dialectically to reinforce and undermine different structures of power. Further, to Foucault, modern power is not repressive: in this it is distinct from sovereign power, which operates through gaining control of individual bodies (McKee, 2009). Modern power, however, gains its potency through the fact that it is productive and enabling at a *physical* level, while simultaneously seeking to gain control at a psychological (Foucault, 1980a; N. Rose, 1996). For instance, Foucault contrasts the pre-modern approach of physical confinement of those considered 'insane', or irrational, to the modern approach, which seeks, first, to produce them as irrational *subjects* and second to re-create them as necessarily dependent upon the infrastructure of psychiatry to live correctly, as 'risky subjects' (Foucault, 1984; N. Rose, 1998). The question of resistance within Foucauldian power is, then, a complex one. Foucault's conception of power can be understood as fundamentally *descriptive*: it is an understanding of how the world is organised, and the inter-relations between individuals. Power can be resisted, and frequently is: yet this does not mean that power *itself* is eradicated: rather, it is transferred, recreated and dispersed.

2.1.3 Governmentality

Foucauldian governance has multiple strands and approaches. In particular, it can be used both to refer to a *descriptive* deconstruction of governance, where the focus is upon the mode, location and justification for power (M. Dean, 2009), and an *analytic* approach which focuses upon governmentality as a strategic approach to governing (McKee, 2009).

A *descriptive* approach to governmentality (M. Dean, 2009) conceptualises governmentality as concerned with the interaction between different levels of societal practice, process and change: how policy becomes prac-

tice and how practice produces resistance to policy (Lipsky, 2010; McDonald and Marston, 2005). This offers a toolkit to undermine, destabilise, expose and examine taken-for-granted, normative values associated with the 'complex and subtle' (J. Clarke, 2005:254) workings of power (M. Dean, 1999; McDonald and Marston, 2005; McKee and Cooper, 2008; N. Rose, 1996). As discussed previously (see 1.4 Research focus and questions), Dean conceptualises governmentality as having four elements:

1. *Discourse*: The creation and maintenance of competing narratives within society which assert truth and claims to knowledge.
2. *Technologies*: The modes and materialities through which governance occurs.
3. *Subjectivities*: The individual identities which are summoned through the dialectical operation of discourse and technologies.
4. *Governance*: The broader, political project which, through discourse and technologies, works upon individual subjectivities to bring them into line with the aims of government.

A descriptive approach is of considerable utility to an analysis of the pragmatic operation of governance and has been widely used to structure explorations of social phenomena (Foucault, 1991).

However, governmentality is *also* used to refer to a strategy of rule (analogous to Dean's fourth category, governance). Used in this way in Foucault's work, governmentality refers to an understanding of rule as 'a political project – a way of both problematising life and seeking to act upon it, which identifies both a territory (i.e. social space) and means of intervention.' (McKee, 2009:468). This approach is of considerable utility to understanding mentalities of rule, since it provides an analytic to understand governmentality not simply as a static assemblage but a dialectical process comprised of myriad competing and potentially contradictory processes (Muehlebach, 2012). Both approaches are evident in this thesis.

2.2 The neoliberal citizen

In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault (2008) argues that central to the neoliberal project is the reformulation of citizenship. Governmentality is intricately connected to neoliberalism: neoliberalism is the stage in which governmentality occurs, with Foucault regarding modern discourse as

performing the ideological function of supporting the neoliberal state. This section considers the question of neoliberalism itself, as a contested concept, with particular regard to its potential to destabilise historical notions of citizenship; yet care is also presented as a method through which citizenship may be recuperated.

2.2.1 Neoliberalism

The concept of neoliberalism is notoriously complex and contested (Harvey, 2007; Peck and Tickell, 2002; A. Sharma, 2008; Stonehouse et al., 2015). This thesis follows Peck's (2002) approach of defining neoliberalism as an 'ideological project' (ibid: 401) committed to 'pervasive naturalisation' (ibid: 394) of free-market discourse. Hence supply side measures and subsidisation of capital- 'lean government, privatisation and deregulation' (Peck and Tickell, 2002: 394), become prioritised over the rights of citizens, who become regarded as non-competitive and inefficient (see also Lemke, 2002). The state becomes shrunken and withdrawn, with its responsibilities to citizens becoming reduced and conditional (Brown, 2003; Peck, 2001; Trnka and Trundle, 2014). This apparent discourse of state withdrawal, however, has been regarded as a masking strategy to conceal the extent to which neoliberal regimes require a strong, present, state apparatus, not only for administration and legitimisation, but to open and maintain new markets and access to workers (J. Clarke, 2005; Sauer and Penz, 2017; Schram et al., 2010).

Lemke (2010) characterises neoliberalism as operating in a self-justificatory circle, as a 'political project that endeavours to create a social reality that it suggests already exists.' (ibid: 60). The resultant freedom for elites within this system operates in contrast to the discipline then enacted upon marginalised groups. For instance, Wacquant (2014) argues neoliberal rationalities to operate upon poorer people in society to require them to accept poor labour conditions, amid a lack of state safety net and economic precarity (see also Flint, 2017; Schram et al., 2010; Wacquant, 2009, 2014). Discourse under neoliberalism thus operates to both legitimise a system where some individuals are deprived of access to core resources, while embedding this within a rhetoric of deservedness in order that this differential access is understood as reasonable and rational.

2.2.2 Neoliberalism and citizenship

Neoliberal citizens are expected to thrive in a market-governed social sphere (Trnka and Trundle, 2014), where the market is seen as the best arbitrator of resource allocation (Brown, 2003; Klein, 2007; P. Miller and Rose, 1990) and hence become enterprising and to make responsible, prudent choices. This relies upon a hegemonic promotion of a discourse that that they are free to make these choices, without being constrained by adverse structural factors (Tronto, 2017). Individual misfortune is then seen as arising from personal failings or shortcomings rather than being the result of an inequitable or flawed system (P. Miller and Rose, 2008). The individual becomes required to underwrite risk-taking where previously the state provided a safety net (Brown, 2003; Hickman et al., 2017; Stonehouse et al., 2015), and to accept moral and psychological blame for failure (Trnka and Trundle, 2014). This obscures the context in which these decisions are made, and particularly the ongoing withdrawal of the state from provision of core welfare need (Lemke, 2001b, 2002). Neoliberalism reconstitutes citizenship by aligning (economic) productivity to morality. 'Good' citizens are self-governing, able and willing to make choices which move them away from welfare dependency and from certain forms of reliance upon the state (J. Newman, 2010). As characterised by Clarke (2005), neoliberalism thus provides not a prescriptive or clear framework, but a flexible and encompassing moral code which operates across society, shaping what is and what is not acceptable. To fail to govern the self and operate as a bounded, independent and responsible individual is framed in terms of immorality, irresponsibility and selfishness (J. Clarke, 2005).

2.2.3 *Homo economicus*

Underpinning this reformulation of the environment in which citizens operate is a restructuring of the relationship between citizens and the state. Foucault described the subjectivity invoked by this new form of citizenship as *homo economicus*. *Homo economicus* is a rational, prudent and self-governing actor for whom the state is a utilitarian, commodified good, rather than a source of support (Brown, 2003). Indeed *Homo economicus* is reliant on competition and markets for personal growth, understood as self-mastery and autonomy (Ong, 2006, see also Keane, 2009a; Ouellette and Hay, 2008; Sweet, 2019). *Homo economicus* is not owed care or support by the state simply by virtue of existing within a particular society. Rather, support is understood as a scarce, competitive commodity.

Homo economicus themselves are further imbued with similar knowledge of the social sphere as rational agents are understood to have of the market in classical economics: they are perfectly rational and able to anticipate the implications of their own decisions. As with economic decisions in a free market model, these decisions are understood to operate within a frame of considerable independence, where the impact of structural forces is negligible and where all agents are understood to be equal or at least to be able to make themselves equal with the correct decision making and willpower. Taking the starting point that *homo economicus* is a rational, self-interested, actor legitimises a state mandate to intervene, guide and incentivise *homo economicus* so that they act in line with the interests of the state. For instance, Lemke (2001b) observes that how individuals engaged in criminal behaviour are approached in neoliberal regimes as rational actors whose criminal behaviour arises from unfettered, considered decision-making, as

a rational- economic individual who invests, expects a certain profit and risks making a loss.

(Lemke, 2001b:199)

By implication then, *homo economicus* will act with disregard for society's needs, if to do so furthers their interests. The behaviour of rational individuals, however, creates 'negative externalities' (ibid: 199) to the extent that they operate in tension with political aims such as fairness, equity and mutual care. The primary conceptual approach of neoliberal regimes is to use disincentives and financial interventions to modify citizen behaviour.

This approach also brings into question more fundamental ideas of citizenship. It imagines citizenship in terms of *contribution*, with this contribution primarily understood in economic terms (Bauman, 2013; Brown, 2003; Tyler, 2013). The state's resources become understood in terms of scarcity, and hence to be allocated competitively (Doel, 2009; Tronto, 2017). Thus, within the modern state, citizenship becomes conditional upon performance of particular modalities of self, as economically productive, or striving to become so (Foucault, 1979; Tyler, 2013). This is understood as an *ethical* mandate (N. Rose, 1992). Following the logic that individuals are rational, self-interested and capable, to develop an 'autonomous subjectivity' (N. Rose, 1992:4) becomes understood as 'true, permitted and desirable' (ibid).

This logic is critical to justifying state intervention, through presenting citizens, particularly those receiving certain state benefits, as lacking in pedagogical knowledge and motivation (Cruikshank, 1999; R. Jones, 2010; McDonald and Marston, 2005; Pykett, 2010). Institutions, including the state and the third sector, operate as outposts of self-formation, communicating normative assumptions and objectives (N. Rose, 1992).

Further, *homo economicus* is conceptualised in intensely individualistic terms. Working upon oneself is therefore seen as the responsibility of *homo economicus* (Lemke, 2001b see also Crouch, 2011; Tronto, 2017; Venugopal, 2015). Care becomes 'care of the self' (Ball and Olmedo, 2013; Foucault, 2012), in which individuals are mandated to take care of their own needs and those of their families, including through engaging in acts of pedagogical self-improvement to increase their capacity for self-reliance (R. Jones, 2010; J. Newman, 2010; Ouellette, 2008). *Homo economicus* represents a centrality of the '*relationship of self to self*' (Dardot and Laval, 2014:122), a relationship in which the needs of others, particularly those without the nuclear family sphere, become secondary or erased (Tronto, 2017). Human nature under neoliberalism is understood as fundamentally selfish and self-interested, intent on maximising one's own gain at the expense of others and motivated to do as little as possible for the greater good of society as possible. Economic choice and economic freedom are highly valued, constructed as individual rights and individual agency; it is both the right of the individual to operate this way, and a necessity as an economic agent in society. Neoliberal approaches consider that to operate as a rational, economic agent is the responsibility of the citizen towards society (Friedman, 2009; von Hayek, 2014). As shown above, this is underpinned by a recourse to an essentialist construction of human nature as fundamentally selfish and self-interested. Thus neoliberalism positions itself as a needed counter-balance to a state that seeks to control and fundamentally alter human behaviour, through constraining their freedom (Brown, 2003; Harvey, 2007; von Hayek, 2014).

2.2.4 Historical development of neoliberalism: von Hayek to New Labour

While neoliberalism can be traced to the early writings of von Hayek (2014), and were especially developed politically as a result of the writings of Friedman in the 1970s and 1980s (Harvey, 2007), with the New Right, Thatcherite government of 1979-1997 this became embedded in UK poli-

tics. An increasing discursive anxiety about the potential for anxiety over the potential for rights *without* responsibilities (particularly associated with access to social benefits, such as the welfare state) to render citizens passive and disengaged (Sevenhuijsen, 2000): see Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion. This approach is marked by moralism and authoritarian normativity: societal values are structured by an alignment with heteronormativity, nationalism and state loyalty (Sevenhuijsen, 2000).

The New Labour government (1997-2010) was of particular importance in terms of the reconstitution of citizenship in line with a *homo economicus* subjectivity. While previous governments relied upon a top-down, moralistic approach, New Labour's approach focused upon the promotion of psychological forms of self-governance (J. Clarke, 2005; Vidler and Clarke, 2005; F. Williams, 2001). This approach is suggested by Foucault to be a hallmark of modern governance (Foucault, 1979) and contributed to the rise to a considerable body of 'neo-Foucauldian' literature which centred this shift to an individualistic, autonomous and internalised form of governance (see, for instance, J. Clarke, 2005; J. May et al., 2005; Sevenhuijsen, 2000; Vidler and Clarke, 2005; F. Williams, 2001; also conceptually important, through slightly preceding New Labour, is the work of Nicolas Rose, for instance P. Miller and Rose, 1990). The New Labour approach was an important, distinctive intervention to the increasing anxiety over the potential for rights *without* responsibilities to render citizens passive and disengaged, through implementing Giddens' (2001) Third Way approach to social justice (Giddens, 1998; Giddens et al., 2001; Sevenhuijsen, 2000). The 'Third Way' approach draws upon a broad consent for the idea that decades of obligation-free access to state benefits had created a cohort of individuals and households who lacked both skills and motivation to engage in economic activity (Cruikshank, 1999; Jensen, 2014; Sevenhuijsen, 2000). It promotes a 'new relationship between the individual and the community' (Giddens, 1998:65) which, based upon the principles social justice, emancipation, equality and social cohesion, promoted (and to an extent, required), intends to increase civic engagement (J. Clarke, 2005; Vidler and Clarke, 2005). In Giddens' approach, applying rights without responsibilities creates *inequities* by preventing the individual from contributing to wider society. Thus citizenship as envisaged by Giddens is participatory and active: to fail to engage with society brings citizenship *itself* into question (J. Clarke, 2005).

The corollary of 'no rights without responsibility' is that, for those prepared to take on responsibility, it is possible to gain rights and freedoms.

The Third Way, and subsequently the Blairite government, are particularly notable for advances in liberal rights: rights which focus upon making it possible for individualised oppressed, marginalised and excluded by moralistic conservatism to gain previously-denied citizenship rights (particularly those associated with family and workforce participation) (Shilliam, 2018; Spade, 2006; Weeks, 2007; Wilson, 2009). Similarly, as will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter, this period saw a shift in how welfare subjects were understood, from problematised for an unwillingness to engage in paid work, to becoming seen as potential neoliberal subjects (M. Dean, 2002). The Third Way political approach then is an expansive one: its focus is upon making it possible for a wider group of citizens to become *homo economicus*, active participatory and self-reliant individuals governed through their participation in the market. Here, citizenship became understood in terms of work, with those unable or unwilling to enter and remain in paid employment regarded as abject pre-citizens (Tyler, 2013). Thus, as already discussed, citizenship became not a status accorded as a birth or habitation right, but something to be earned through performative understanding of the self in terms of the worker/workless dichotomy (Tyler, 2020). Further, within a neoliberal framework, not only is citizenship restructured, but the nature of citizenship itself becomes financialised. 'Good' citizens are actuarial and financially independent: efficient consumption is preferred to civic participation and mutual aid (Soss et al., 2011; Tronto, 2017). Meanwhile, worklessness becomes understood as a (tempting) identity from which people must be dissuaded (K. Allen et al., 2014). The acceptable self in a neoliberal context is one who strives, who is not static in outlook but prepares themselves for the future, and is motivated to operate as an economic actor within society (K. Allen et al., 2014; N. Rose, 1992; Tronto, 2017).

2.2.5 The place of care

The past decade has seen increasing attention to moving beyond a reductive *homo economicus* approach and toward a considering the affective and inter-relational aspects of governance. Two important interventions have been made by scholars of care. First, care itself has been explored as a method to engender neoliberal subjectivities. 'Affective governmentality' (Penz et al., 2017), has demonstrated the importance of rationalities of care to devolved systems of rule (see the next chapter for a more de-

tailed discussion). An important intervention in terms of the relationship between neoliberalism and care is also provided by Muehlebach's 'moral neoliberal' approach (Muehlebach, 2003, 2011, 2012), which illuminates how a moral imperative to not only care for the self, but for others in the community, can be integrated into a wider *homo economicus* mentality. Aligning care of both the self and the community with morality, as proposed by Muehlebach, creates space for a form of responsabilisation to occur, (see Chapter 3) in which *unpaid* care becomes privileged and valorised, while the paid care provided (disproportionately) by racialised and gendered bodies is invisibilised, dismissed or problematised (see also Hochschild, 2012; Tronto, 1993). Muehlebach's work is especially important in establishing care as a *justificatory* strategy within neoliberalism. To Muehlebach, care operates as a moralistic dialogue which permits the erosion of state provision, since care becomes understood as an act performed between individuals for their own communities (see also Hochschild, 2012; Tronto, 2017).

An second important intervention is provided by Tronto, who argues that care itself as a concept is always already, in its fundamental centring of inter-relationality, resistive to neoliberalism. Tronto (2017) understands care as fundamentally antithetical to neoliberalism. For Tronto, *production* of care is a universal, defining part of human experience, rooted in a recognition of mutual bodily precarity (Berlant et al., 2012; Fisher and Tronto, 1990; Tronto, 2017). Care, to Tronto, is a process, and an activity. It is an ongoing civil responsibility, borne of a desire to improve our world.

A species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair our world, so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life sustaining, web.

Fisher and Tronto, 1990:40

Tronto's approach situates care as *necessarily* relational, located within an appreciation of a fundamental *right* to the care, and hence a generalised moral imperative to both notice a need for care, and provide care, for fellow humans (Fisher and Tronto, 1990; Tronto, 2013). This 'caring with' (Tronto, 2013:xii) is incompatible with the use of this care to further the work of neoliberalism, for instance through persuasive, affective

governance (Penz et al., 2017). Care as conceptualised by Tronto is necessarily neither paternalistic nor parochial, but *must* arise from a genuine mutual regard and equality between two individuals. Whereas Muehlebach provides a detailed account of how, through volunteerism, a 'caring subjectivity' becomes implicated in the devolution of governance, particularly to third sector organisations, Tronto regards *care itself* as a bulwark against the potential totalitarianism of neoliberalism (Brown, 2003). As Lynch (2020) persuasively argues, egalitarian political theorists, in criticising neoliberalism, tend to overlook forms of care which operate alongside neoliberalism, dismissing them as a 'cultural residue' (ibid:10). This thesis approaches the question of care from multiple angles, but remains mindful of Tronto's understanding of care as essential, inevitable and undervalued.

2.3 Biopower

A key development of modern governance is a productive, classificatory approach to rule: termed by Foucault, "biopolitics": biopower then is the mechanism through which biopolitics materialises within society. Biopower and biopolitics are developed together by Foucault primarily in the *History of Sexuality Volume I* (Foucault, 1990) and subsequently in a number of lectures (particularly those at the Collège de France- see Foucault et al., 2010); however his approach in these works are reliant upon his earlier ideas around classification (for instance, evident within *Discipline and Punish*, 1979), as discussed below. Biopower is a fundamentally *productive* form of power, operating to *include* individuals, and make them visible within discursive frameworks. These frameworks determine what is acceptable through the technology of *recognisability*: that which is unrecognisable is invisible, problematic and potentially ceases to exist. Thus, biopower operates to

...designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life. It is not that life has been totally integrated into techniques that govern and administer it; it constantly escapes them

Biopolitics and biopower are used within this thesis primarily to understand how modern governance works through a consent to classification and organisation.⁵ Biopower results in the production of citizens in terms of their characteristics rather than their individuality: it is reductive in that it sees individuals in terms of categories or examples of assemblages of traits (Foucault, 1979; Willse and Spade, 2004). Biopower relies upon discourse to sustain and legitimise it, but is enacted predominantly through statistics, and particularly the collection of data, and is particularly associated with large, administrative, and population-level data collection, disciplining through both establishing statistical norms, and through asserting and maintaining the right to seek categorical information (Willse, 2010). Further, categorisation is a process of whereby categories themselves are asserted: the existence of numbers, measures and statistics represents an assertion of truth and so a field of knowledge and thus claim to power (Cruikshank, 1999; N. Rose, 1991; Willse, 2015). Cruikshank has particularly drawn attention to how categorisation operates to create identities in the field of welfare subjectivity. She proposes that categorisation is not a passive, descriptive or inevitable technology, but one which operates to assert the existence and nature of racialised and gendered welfare subjects. Simultaneously, it creates an inevitability of action, whereby, through constructing intervention as necessary and moral, the individual responsibility of any given policy maker or worker is removed (Cruikshank, 1999; Schram et al., 2010). Through the creation of categories, people's daily experience becomes structured. From discourse arises imaginaries who embody these categories. Writing of "welfare queens"- lone parents in receipt of state support- Cruikshank observes that they are created through multiple interacting discourses which include racialised and gendered stereotyping, as well as anti-welfare polemic.

The black welfare queen is never embodied; she is and remains a fiction, or rather she is embodied as a fiction. There is no "real" woman who matches the stereotype. Her race and gender embodiment is the product of fictional narratives and rhetorical ploys.

⁵Biopolitics and biopower have been substantially developed in the work of neo-Foucauldians, notably Nicolas Rose (for instance, Rabinow and Rose, 2006), who understand biopower as a central technology of governmentality. In this thesis the primary contribution of biopower is taken to be that most closely evident from Foucault's contribution: relating to the link between classification and governance.

Cruikshank, 1999:110

As discussed above, assigning people to categories based upon behaviour and personal characteristics allows a population to be sorted and governed as a group through producing norms and expectations for both the category and the behaviour of those in the category (Spade, 2015). Thus, classification allows people to become manageable and governed, by promoting subjectivities in accordance with correct self-governance. Classification is reductive: it allows individuals to be understood and treated taxonomically and encourages them to think of themselves in relation to broader societal norms.

The technology of biopower particularly extends the Foucauldian technology of examination, a key component of discipline. Foucault particularly considers this within his earlier work, notably *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1979), and *Birth of the asylum* (Foucault, 1984). Through this process, the individual is taught to understand certain parts of themselves as 'abnormal', and consequently, problematic and undesirable. Foucault particularly discusses this with reference to the naval hospital. The naval hospital is a 'functional site' (ibid:143), which operates to exert control upon an uncategorised, and hence unknown and potentially dangerous population:

A port...with its circulation of goods, men signed up willingly or by force, sailors embarking and disembarking, diseases and epidemics - a place of desertion, smuggling, contagion: it is a cross-roads for dangerous mixtures, a meeting-place for forbidden circulations. The naval hospital must therefore treat, but in order to do this it must be a filter, a mechanism that pins down and partitions; it must provide a hold over this whole mobile, swarming mass, by dissipating the confusion of illegality and evil.

Foucault, 1979:144

Foucault argues that the control of disease among sailors and the general population operates to justify the imposition of data collection, spatial and bureaucratic organisation and careful control over distribution of commodities such as medication, rations and cures. This occurred through careful record-keeping, allocating patients to particular wards, and reducing them to a list of symptoms. In this way, 'an administrative

and political space was articulated upon a therapeutic space.’ (ibid:144). Biopower is, then, closely connected to technologies which exist at a front-line, institutional level, and is, in practice, often enacted by workers in interpersonal interactions.

Foucauldian examination enacts discipline through accounting for, categorising, and so neutralising the disruptive potential of individuality. Individuals are seen in terms of their relationship to general norms. Creating case-studies using this method is an important technology: with the ‘turning of real lives into writing [operating as a] procedure of objectification and subjectification.’ (Foucault, 1979:144). Through this process, the individual is taught to understand certain parts of themselves as ‘abnormal’, and consequently, problematic and undesirable. As Tyler has shown, stigma provides an essential locus of categorisation. Tyler argues that stigma is not simply an emotion, but a ‘form of classificatory violence ‘from above’ which devalues people, places and communities.’ (Tyler, 2020:27).

The neoliberal state is associated with high levels of monitoring and evaluation of citizens (Henderson et al., 2010; Horsell, 2006). Foucault saw this as resulting in a situation where individuals, understanding themselves to be constantly watched, internalised the standards by which they would be judged, incorporating them into their own worldview and subsequently using them to shape their behaviours. Foucault famously drew parallels between a modern, decentred, approach to statecraft and the Panopticon, a system of carceral control proposed by Bentham (Foucault, 1979). The Panopticon consists of a central observation tower surrounded by a circle of single-prisoner cells. The tower offers a view into all cells, yet prisoners cannot see into the tower. Thus, all inmates in an institution can be observed from a single vantage point, yet cannot know whether they are being watched. ‘They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualised and constantly visible.’ (ibid:200.) Foucault argues that, through instilling an awareness of the constant possibility that behaviour is being observed, panoptic discipline requires prisoners to take individual responsibility for their conduct. As he observes, ‘visibility is a trap’ (ibid:200).

Drawing upon Foucault’s proposal that power works upon people spatially, Deleuze then argues that a key change under neoliberalism is the movement to decentralisation of state control. (Deleuze, 1992). Such ‘free-floating’ (Deleuze, 1992:4) control operates outwith systems themselves, like that proposed by Rose’s notion of overt choice and freedom as

a method of governance (N. Rose, 1999). Deleuze considers how *apparent* choice can be used to directly mask *actual* lack of freedom. He uses the highway as a metaphor to explain this idea of overt freedom through choices, where offering varied choices masks the fact that ultimately all choices are limited and predetermined.

..by making highways, you multiply the means of control. . . .people can travel infinitely and 'freely' without being confined while being perfectly controlled.

Deleuze, 2007:322

Scott (1998) similarly argues that the creation of the nation-state both enables and relies upon collection of population-level data. Securing detailed information about citizens allows norms, and consequently deviance, to be asserted. Similarly, Dean links this to governmentality, arguing that standardisation is an essential component of both problematising the populace and justifying intervention:

The internal pacification of a territory, the establishment of monopoly over the use of legitimate violence and taxation, the imposition of a common currency, a common set of laws and legal authorities, certain standards of literacy and language, and even stable and continuous time-space systems, are all integral to the process of state formation. The nation-state was historically constructed through the subordination of various arenas of rule to a more or less central authority and the investment of the duty of the exercise of that authority to long-standing, if not permanent, institutions and personnel.

M. Dean, 2009:54

Chapter summary

This chapter has considered the changing relationship between the state and individual actors. It began with the premise that any given cultural

event is historically specific and a product of discourse. Power itself, potentially the only constant remaining within Foucault's destabilised ontology, exists as a triangulation of knowledge, discourse and truth. Governmentality then becomes a way to deconstruct power by understanding it in terms of *output* (discourse, technology and subjectivity) and *function* (a strategy to problematise specific subjectivities and create an interventionist mandate). *Homo economicus*, an autonomous rational and competitive human, was introduced as a way to understand the relationship between an idealised neoliberal self and the state. Finally, biopower was considered as an approach to producing subjectivities at a population level, through the construction of categories and cases.

This chapter has considered a specific approach to understanding the changing relationship between the state and individual actors, understanding it as an enactment of discursive power. As discussed, this has critical implications for how citizenship is understood, and how individuals within society are governed. A hallmark of a Foucauldian ontology is its emphasis upon *specificity*. It is not possible to understand a phenomenon in isolation from an appreciation of the power struggles, discourses and assumed knowledges which exist within its social context. The next two chapters explore the specific environment in which the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 operates, starting with a discussion the rise of the neoliberal paternalistic welfare state as a political artefact of austerity.

Chapter 3

Neoliberal paternalism: welfare reform as poverty governance

Three decades ago, Esping-Anderson proposed a typology of welfare regimes which identified those of the UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States as 'liberal', where market mechanisms were used to allocate and determine receipt of benefits (Esping-Andersen, 1990). More recently, reflecting the development of neoliberalism, these regimes have centred the individual's role in accessing help, requiring them to increasingly take control and act as empowered and resilient ethical citizens who take responsibility for their own claims (see Chapter 2).

Yet under neoliberalism, the welfare state is not, in fact, 'rolled back'. Instead, it is opened up, becoming a new arena for profit (Brown, 2003; Peck and Tickell, 2002). The rhetoric of austerity particularly justifies state withdrawal. Austerity, a concept arising from the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, should be understood as an ideological event which produced discourse aimed at reframing the public sector as an unnecessary expense (J. Clarke and Newman, 2012). The cuts relating to austerity were not only deep and extensive but gendered and racialised.¹

As discussed in the last chapter, in the UK, this gave rise to a 'Big Society' rhetoric, leading to a decentred, diffused responsibility for care and welfare. Here, prior excess over-consumption of public services, particularly by poorer households, were constructed as to blame for the financial

¹The Child Poverty Action group has identified that the following groups are particularly affected by austerity: those already on low incomes, those with two or more children, those headed by a single adult, single earner families and young parents. They estimate that universal credit cuts alone will result in a million more children in poverty, with 900,000 in severe poverty (Tucker, 2017). Meanwhile, people of colour in general and women of colour, in particular, are disproportionately likely to be affected by austerity, with cuts to benefits compounded by cuts to public services and broader labour market insecurity and precarity.

crisis (J. Clarke and Newman, 2012; Ryan, 2019; Tyler, 2013). Notably, while a rhetoric of collectivity and shared austerity was produced, it was disproportionately lower-income households who faced the effects of cuts to benefits and public sector services. Having discussed the operation of Foucauldian power at a state level in the last chapter, this section explores the enactment of this power upon welfare subjects. It utilises the concept of 'neoliberal paternalism'. The term 'neoliberal paternalism' (Soss et al., 2011:2) encapsulates the twin dynamics of modern poverty governance: the directive approach of paternalism, and the market-centric philosophy of neoliberalism. Paternalism is associated with a 'direct and supervisory approach to managing the poor' (Soss et al., 2011:2). Under paternalism, welfare subjects are understood as irresponsible and incapable, and unable to make responsible choices without both direction and incentivisation (M. Dean, 2002; Schram et al., 2010). Meanwhile, as has been discussed, neoliberalism focuses upon a *laissez faire*, market-based approach to governance. Neoliberalism is particularly distinctive for its efforts to open up new markets, using the state as an 'instrument for creating market opportunities' (Soss et al., 2011:2), for instance through outsourcing provision of services to welfare subjects to third sector/not-for-profit agencies or businesses (Davies 2008), and through the use of welfare to re-orientate poor citizens toward acceptance of precarious, low paid, employment (McDonald and Marston, 2005; Schram et al., 2010). This is more broadly dependent upon a 'field of truth' in which economic activity (understood narrowly as paid employment) is understood as a moral obligation of citizenship (Jensen, 2010; Lemke, 2001b). Under neoliberal paternalism, citizens are understood as in need of close supervision, surveillance, and pedagogical intervention to transform them into self governing, market-focused 'ethical selves' (Lemke, 2001b). This approach is particularly applied to welfare programs, resulting in attempts to create, shape and commodify the labour of poor citizens, through a re-structuring of administrative-bureaucratic state apparatus (Whitworth and Carter, 2014).

In the last chapter, I discussed the state's role in problematising and re-making citizens in alignment with neoliberal values, observing that governmentality understands actors as created through and engaged in constant negotiation and recreation of neoliberal rationalities (Lawson and Elwood, 2014). A key role of the state is to establish normative behaviours, attitudes and frameworks—for instance, class, whiteness, educational attainment, desire to move 'upward' (Cruikshank, 1999). Governmentality

operates in a welfare context by constructing those in receipt of welfare as fundamentally lacking knowledge and/or motivation, thus justifying pedagogical and punitive interventions to secure their realignment with government aims (Auyero, 2012; Cruikshank, 1999; McDonald and Marston, 2005). In this way, as discussed above, citizenship becomes reconceptualised as conditional upon the interests of neoliberal capital (M. Dean, 2002; Peck, 2001; Rimke, 2000; N. Rose, 1996). Governance/governmentality provides an important 'conceptual toolkit' (Gilbert and Powell, 2010:4) to interrogate the relationship between power and knowledge, and so the methods through which modern citizens are made subjects (McKee, 2009). In governmentality theory, Foucault understands discourse, power and knowledge as constructed amid situated ideological pressures based upon societal norms (Cruikshank, 1999; Lemke, 2010; McKee, 2009).

This chapter first presents evidence from previous literature to show that welfare subjects and poor citizens in neoliberal regimes are proposed to be personally responsible for their own situation through, failing to uphold and enact neoliberal values. Consequently, they become 'sites of governmental reform' (Lawson and Elwood, 2014: 213). They are produced as failed jobseekers and so culpable in their own poverty (J. Clarke and Newman, 2012; Schram et al., 2010). They are disciplined and monitored at multiple social locations- through societal norms, third sector bodies, as well as the welfare apparatus itself- in a process Foucault terms the 'swarming of disciplinary mechanisms' (Foucault, 1979:211, see also J. Clarke and Newman, 2012; J. Newman, 2010). Here, differentiation in terms of how citizens experience society is critical, relating to the concept of stigma and abjection discussed in the last chapter. Although at societal-wide level, power operates through discursive outlets available to all citizens in a relatively undifferentiated manner, with everyone exposed to the same information. For instance, the same media, policy and law are dispensed to all citizens, yet social structures ensure that they are received differently (Henderson et al., 2016; Henderson et al., 2010; Hunt and Wickham, 1994; Ouellette and Hay, 2008; Wacquant, 2009). Second, this chapter considers ways in which power operates at a *spatialised* level, operating to differentially construct welfare subjects as normative and non-normative, as welcome and excluded, through a 'swarmed' array of surveillatory welfare mechanisms. This includes a theorisation of front-line workers' roles, or 'street-level bureaucrats', those involved in enacting the system. However, I also propose that this spatialisation, particularly coupled with bureaucratisation, also creates a possibility of resistance at

different levels, including making possible encounter-based care affectivities.

3.1 Reconstructing citizenship

Scholars argue that the welfare state has shifted from a location where vulnerable, poor, citizens are buffered from the excesses of capitalism to one where they are collected for re-education as autonomous, competitive, market-orientated individuals. (Schram et al., 2010). Workfare is a technology where this 'retooling' is evident. Workfare requires welfare subjects to engage in behavioural compliance, particularly the performance of work-seeking behaviour, as a condition of receipt of state subsidies. Considerable effort also goes into ensuring that the same citizens receive intensive attention from state agents, whose role it is to observe and coach them into becoming correctly work-orientated (Schram et al., 2010; Whitworth, 2016). Meanwhile, subsidies themselves are reconstructed, often proposed to mimic wages, with changes to payment schedules, sanctions for failure to comply with directives, and a general increase in conditionality and uncertainty (J. Clarke, 2005; Hickman et al., 2017)².

3.1.1 Paternalism and poverty governance

Tronto (2013) understands paternalism as both a failure and a distortion of the kinds of care for citizens proper to statecraft. She regards paternalism as an act of power, wherein decisions are imposed upon citizens deemed vulnerable or incapable, so that, 'by virtue of the fact that they often have power over care receivers, are able to substitute their judgements for those

²Using essential and fundamental needs to enact governance is not a new technology or one specific to neoliberalism. The welfare state has long been a location associated with poverty governance (J. Clarke and Newman, 2012). For instance, the 19c punitive workhouse system operationalised the approach that poverty had to be made unattractive as a deterrent, with hard work being understood as the solution to poverty. Social reformers such as Octavia Hill particularly argued that the solution to poverty lay in self-improvement and ability to compete in the emergent industrial state (Carr and Hunter, 2008; Cruikshank, 1999). This overturned the previous Elizabethan Poor Law system, in which parishes were required to take responsibility for the poorest individuals within their area, notably those who could not be considered culpable in their own misfortune (such as orphans, and older and disabled people). Indeed, the Marshallian post-war state itself might be understood as an aberration. In the UK it was introduced with the post-war National Assistance Act, 1948 which introduced the principle of universal welfare coverage to bring about 'national minimum standards for most welfare needs' (Fitzpatrick and Christian, 2006:316). This represented a paradigm shift toward the idea of a right to housing and basic living conditions as a citizen right (Carr and Hunter, 2008)

of care receivers about what the caring needs in any situation actually are.’ (Tronto, 2017:38). Paternalism, therefore, requires that the care-receiving individual or community is understood as less able to exercise agency or make competent decisions; it operates to justify intervention and loss of control (J. Butler, 2002; Hedva, 2016; Tronto, 1993). Further, inherent to paternalism is an understanding of vulnerability and need as synonymous with, or at least indicative of, incapacity (J. Butler et al., 2016; Hedva, 2016; Tronto, 2017).

Yet accusations of paternalism also operates in a broader political context, to amplify the charge that the welfare state is excessively large and generous and so fails not only wider society, but welfare subjects themselves (M. Dean, 2002; N. Rose, 1996). This approach is closely associated with a centring of paid employment as the only means through which citizens can fulfil their obligations to society: the state’s primary duty to welfare subjects is, thus not financial support but to require them to become part of the (paid) workforce (Mead, 1992). It is associated with rhetoric which problematises non-economic social contributions, such as child-rearing or volunteer work (K. Allen et al., 2014; Jensen, 2010). A problematisation of paternalism is particularly associated with discourses of empowerment (see 2.2.3 Activation). As Cruikshank(1999) shows, services may be problematised as paternalistic when in fact they operate to serve the needs, and reflect the choices, of a community, or individuals. Paternalism here operates within a broader discourse in which welfare dependency is seen as a necessarily constrained choice. She draws attention to how discourses produced by third sector/not-for-profit agencies often speak to a need to move away from paternalism through empowerment, through their (funded) services (see also Mananzala and Spade, 2008). A horror of paternalism similarly accords with a broader neoliberal mandate to continually progress, and a problematisation of those who do not. In their detailed consideration of the gender politics of austerity, Allen, Tyler and De Benedictus (2014) argue that a blanket expectation of activation itself operates to remove choice from welfare subjects, foreclosing the possibility of valid, non-economic, forms of social participation (see also Halberstam, 2011; Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2019).

Welfare systems can be understood, not as monoliths, but assemblages of complex, contradictory, and overlapping discourses. The question of whether welfare states should offer specific services, or cash and subsidies, is longstanding, and intersects with key questions of welfare subject agency and choice (Auyero, 2012; Cruikshank, 1999). Part of the diffi-

culty lies in an either/or approach that fails to recognise the importance of broad social provision and financial support to welfare citizens (Jensen, 2010). In the UK, for instance, low-income households may be offered financial support to compete in the precarious, insecure, often poor quality private rented sector: yet this is mainly necessitated by the significant reduction in social housing stock of the past few decades (Hoolachan, 2016; Kemp, 2011; Powell, 2015). Further, although welfare provides a non-market and ostensibly needs-based space, welfare states are also created and maintained according to certain normative values, providing a location in which the poor are regulated through constructions of eligibility and deservedness (Cruikshank, 1999). Inherent within welfare systems are ongoing, value-based decision making over who should receive resources, which deeply reflect, reinforce and thus produce wider societal norms (Auyero, 2012; Jensen, 2018; Mananzala and Spade, 2008; Schram et al., 2010; L. J. Silver, 2010).

3.1.2 New Labour: conditionality and empowerment

As discussed in the previous chapter, the 1997-2010 New Labour government was significant in terms of a shift in governance approach. While largely refuting the previous New Right Thatcherite government's explicit moralism, it nevertheless attempted to change how citizenship itself operated, with particular emphasis upon creating self-motivated welfare subjects (Dwyer, 2016). This approach relies upon different technologies: empowerment, activation and abandonment, abjection, and responsabilisation.

3.1.2.1 Empowerment

Sharma (2008) conceptualises empowerment a 'sleight of hand' (A. Sharma, 2008: xvi) in which state withdrawal becomes recuperated as an increase in the power of individual citizens. In this way, the responsibility for care of citizens not only becomes understood in terms of personal responsibility, but the process of becoming responsible and of state withdrawal itself is re-conceptualised as a benefit to citizens, allowing them greater freedom and autonomy (Brown, 2003; Cruikshank, 1999; A. Sharma, 2008; Tronto, 2017). Activation operates within a specific market context. It is particularly associated with neoliberal paternalistic workfare regimes, where it operates to acclimatise poor citizens to accepting low paid, precarious work through re-conceptualising labour market participation in

terms of choice (J. Clarke, 2005; Schram et al., 2010; Whitworth and Carter, 2014). Clarke (2005) mainly associates activation and empowerment with New Labour's Third Way (Giddens, 2013), in which empowerment operated as a choice-based consumer culture in provision of government services which simultaneously operated to shift the discourse around services in the social sphere from one of universal entitlement, at least for certain groups, to one where individuals had to continually strive in order to receive help. Underpinning this was a rhetoric of private choice and individual decision-making, hence a moral responsibility for misfortune. For instance, Juliet MacLeavy argues that the redirection of income supplementation for those on low incomes towards those who were in work reinforced the idea that working was a straightforward choice, ignoring the competing responsibilities and obstacles that some people, disproportionately women, face to obtaining and maintaining employment (MacLeavy, 2011).

As Cruikshank further observes, empowerment is a compelling approach precisely because it operates in the terrain occupied by those who seek to increase the power of poor, excluded and disenfranchised citizens. She argues that empowerment operates through linking 'the subjectivity of citizens to their subjection' (Cruikshank, 1999:67). Cruikshank observes that empowerment is fundamentally an individualising approach, in which the material conditions which contribute to poverty and exclusion are understood as surmountable through work upon the individual's inner terrain and particularly their own psychological outlook. Cruikshank identifies three dynamics of empowerment as discourse. First, the 'dichotomy of power and powerlessness' (Cruikshank, 1999:70). Here, welfare subjects are understood as *always already* powerless, since reliance upon state support is understood as necessarily indicating disempowerment and demotivation. Through discourses of *dis*-empowerment, poor citizens and welfare subjects are created as necessarily outside power; as incapable of power. This, therefore, justifies intervention by others- particularly third sector organisations- to re-align their self-understandings toward paid work (INCITE!, 2007, Mananzala and Spade, 2008; Willse, 2015).

Second, Cruikshank draws attention to the processes by which empowerment is legitimated, which forms of empowerment are considered acceptable, and consequently how, through dictating what is and what is not empowerment, broader power structures are reinforced (Cruikshank, 1999). In this way, empowerment becomes a mechanism through which

welfare subjects become guided, sculpted and ultimately directed in their actions. Empowerment is therefore, in itself, a 'relationship of power and mode of subjection' (McKee and Cooper, 2008:144). It creates poor citizens as necessarily deficient and so in need of restorative pedagogical intervention (Pykett, 2010).

Third, Cruikshank observes that empowerment discourses often assume that poor citizens need simply to increase their power to become powerful, in control, or 'empowered'. She argues that this fundamentally overlooks the reasons for their lack of power. She proposes there to be a qualitative difference between their lack of power and the power held over them. Replicating the forms of power held over them, and exercising them themselves, upon themselves, through technologies of self-esteem and self-mastery does not, therefore represent a meaningful transfer of power but rather a different way of enacting state power upon them. She observes that poor subjects are usually structurally barred from full civic participation and that this in and of itself makes empowerment functionally impossible (Cruikshank, 1999). Powerlessness, according to Cruikshank, is not a byproduct of poverty but a fundamental characteristic of being poor in neoliberal society: the 'object and the outcome of the will to empower' (Cruikshank, 1999:72).

Empowerment can further be understood as operating within a context in which poverty is understood in terms of failure to operate as autonomous, motivated 'ethical selves' and results in intense state scrutiny and intervention (Auyero, 2011; Jensen, 2018; McDonald and Marston, 2005; Whitworth, 2016). Clarke (2005, in his examination of New Labour's approach to citizenship, dissects the dynamics of New Labour's approach to governance as a state approach in which citizens are understood not in terms of need but as bearers of 'responsibilities as well as rights' (ibid: 447). He proposes that this shift occurs through several processes, including abandonment and activation.

3.1.2.2 Abandonment and activation

Proposing that modern states are in the process of withdrawal from provision of core functions (such as healthcare, education, housing and welfare), Clarke (2005) argues that characteristic of neoliberal approaches to citizenship is 'abandonment'. Abandonment is a removal of state help, particularly from individuals most likely to require it. Clarke (2005) stresses that this abandonment must be understood as a *deliberate* strategy, which

is intended to force individuals to (re)align themselves with dominant neoliberal values. He particularly argues that the 'welfare to work' policies which characterised the British New Labour government's approach to poverty governance constitute a deeper abandonment of the interests of poor citizens. (see also Cruikshank, 1999; Schram et al., 2010; Stonehouse et al., 2015). Further, as Jensen (2010) observes, state withdrawal operates at a discursive level, promoting an understanding of society in terms of scarcity and (un)deservedness (see also 2013 2012). Clark (2005) suggests there to be four elements/characteristics to abandonment:

1. Withdrawal of workplace protections, in order to make labour more 'flexible' (J. Clarke, 2005:453) and consequently, to place workers in a situation of income precarity and unreliability, itself directly linked to homelessness (Powell, 2015; Schram et al., 2010).
2. Use of state apparatus- legislation and policy- to make people 'market-ready' (J. Clarke, 2005:453, McDonald and Marston, 2005; Schram et al., 2010).
3. Changing benefits (particularly the payment schedule) to align them with work, on the grounds that welfare subjects are unable to seek employment because they are psychologically unaccustomed to managing their own finances (Cruikshank, 1999; Hickman et al., 2017; Schram et al., 2010; L. J. Silver, 2010).
4. (Re)commodification of publicly funded, publicly provided services, so that help becomes conceptualised in terms of value, and mediated through a supply and demand matrix, rather than being offered based on need and philosophical-political stance. This can be seen particularly in the increasing importance of the third sector within service provision (Mitchell, 2001). As is discussed in greater depth in the next chapter (see 4.1.2 Expanding eligibility, introducing conditionality) The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 exemplifies the approach of embedding an expectation that local authorities will work closely with, and devolve some responsibilities to, third sector organisations.

Clarke (2005) conceptualises activation as the cornerstone of modern governance, regarding it as a process of transforming citizens from 'passive recipients of state assistance into active self-sustaining individuals' (*ibid*:448). It is a state in which an individual is understood as capable of self-motivation, without intensive intervention from the state (J. Clarke,

2005). Activation is closely aligned with empowerment (J. Newman, 2010), a strategic approach in which receipt of welfare becomes understood in terms of a personal failure of motivation, or "self-esteem" (Cruikshank, 1999). Empowerment is a critical concept in approaching poverty and welfare governance and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

3.1.2.3 Abjection

Tyler (2013) regards abjection as critical to poverty governance, through creating an 'othered' class of citizens. Abjection is a powerful tool which politicises affective terrain, specifically through encouraging an association between specific subjectivities, and disgust. It co-opts the 'vague sense of horror that permeates the boundary between the self and other' (Phillips, 2014:19) into a deliberate, targeted fear and distrust of particular groups (Kristensen et al., 2005). It operates to reinforce normative boundaries, rejecting some individuals on the grounds of ambiguity, and of deliberate or non-deliberate transgression, of societal assumptions and categories.

Tyler has made a series of important interventions in Kristeva's theory of abjection, challenging the othering potential inherent within a focus upon 'encounters with the abject' (Tyler, 2009:77). Tyler observes that rendering some individuals 'abject' is a critical component of creating them as threatening and frightening, and justifying intense, potentially violent, corrective interventions (J. Butler, 2002; Hall et al., 2013; Stryker, 2006). Tyler has shown how an abjectivity approach has been used to legitimise both anti-welfare sentiment and anti-migrant sentiment, through the additional technology of stigma, a 'governmental technology of division and dehumanisation' (Tyler, 2020:7) which serves to create societal divisions, 'corroding compassion, crushing hope, weakening social solidarity' (*ibid*). As conceptualised by Tyler, then, abjection must consider the experiences of abjection as a specific and non-static product of social location and context (Tyler, 2009, 2013, 2020). Tyler conceptualises abjection as fundamental to the actions of the neoliberal state, arguing that neoliberalism *requires* a concept of some individuals as other to justify itself (Tyler, 2013). She draws attention to, for instance, the use of the rhetoric of class-based disgust to establish the fundamental other-ness of stigmatised groups, particularly welfare subjects (Tyler, 2008, 2020, see also K. Allen et al., 2014; Jensen and Tyler, 2015)

3.1.2.4 Responsibilisation

Responsibilisation can be characterised as the process through which individual citizens are expected to take an increasing level of responsibility for tasks and domains that previously were the state's remit (J. Clarke, 2005). Responsibilised citizens are expected to proactively seek out and manage opportunities within markets, but in such a way that risk to the state is minimal (Hickman et al., 2017; Joseph, 2013; Lemke, 2002, 2010; McKee, 2009; Peck and Tickell, 2002; Stonehouse et al., 2015; Trnka and Trundle, 2014). As previously discussed, the neoliberal self is understood as 'enterprising' (Pyykkönen and Stavrum, 2018:216) and hence not only capable of prudent risk-taking, but entitled to be allowed to do so. Further, becoming responsible is a citizenship obligation, as previously discussed, representing a 'congruency between [being] a responsible, moral individual and an economic-rational actor.' (Stonehouse et al., 2015: 395).

Responsibilisation has become particularly evident in the discourse surrounding austerity. Austerity is here understood, following MacLeavy (2011) as a post-Global Financial Crash 'shorthand for an increasing focus on frugality, self-sufficiency and fiscal prudence'. It is strongly associated with deep cuts and eligibility restrictions upon the welfare state and housing, which have particularly affected welfare subjects (Beatty and Fothergill, 2015; J. Clarke and Newman, 2012; Hickman et al., 2017; MacLeavy, 2011; Morris, 2016; Ridge, 2013; Ryan, 2019). A particular motif of austerity politics is the idea that demand is limited and that individuals should take primary responsibility for their own climb out of poverty (Hickman et al., 2017). Austerity discourse locates the state as culpable in the ongoing infantilisation of citizens, and hence their impoverishment, with a previously more generous benefits system 'undermining the personal and social responsabilisation of citizens' (MacLeavy, 2011: 359). State withdrawal is thus promoted as a *moral* mandate: retreat and consequent responsabilisation is necessary to force dependent citizens to 'empower' themselves (MacLeavy, 2011). This approach is particularly evident in a recent amplification of conditionality measures. A particular development of austerity politics is conditionality.

3.1.3 Conditionality

A recent development within the British welfare state has been the increasing expectation that individuals should perform or enact specific be-

haviours as a condition of receiving welfare. This represents a movement away from an understanding of citizens as the holders of freestanding rights irrespective of responsibilities and toward one where rights become distinctly dependent upon the performance of responsibilities (Brown, 2003; J. Clarke, 2005; J. Clarke and Newman, 2012).³

A 'conditionality' approach, in which citizens are offered assistance with meeting their basic needs only if they meet certain behavioural and psychological standards has long been a core part of both statutory and non-statutory welfare provision. It accords with the self-improvement, workfare approach of Victorian paternalism, for instance, the work of reformers such as Octavia Hill, in which basic sustenance such as food and shelter was tied to adequate performance not only of labour but a work-orientated disposition (Cruikshank, 1999). A particularly significant development in terms of conditionality within the British welfare state was seen with New Labour's Third Way approach (Giddens, 2013), in which citizens are understood in terms of both rights and responsibilities, with obligations to, and from, multiple social and political actors, including the government, state institutions, and industry (Sevenhuijsen, 2000). A specific outcome of the Labourite Third way was an increasing conditionality attached to claiming benefits, with work incentivised and encouraged (J. Clarke and Newman, 2012; Dwyer et al., 2015; MacLeavy, 2011; Vidler and Clarke, 2005), reflecting the similar development of workfare style conditionality approaches across the global north (Handler, 2003; Peck, 2001; Schram et al., 2010). Workfare operated on an ideological plane, transforming citizens from 'passive recipients of state assistance into active self-sustaining individuals.' (J. Clarke, 2005: 448).

Watts and Fitzpatrick (2018) observe that conditionality is a financially inefficient response to the need to provide for welfare subjects, since it requires ongoing investment in a surveillatory, appraising, infrastructure. Instead they argue that conditionality should be seen as an exercise of social power, where threats of deprivation are used to secure behavioural change. Tracing the history of conditionality within homelessness services, they argue that, while it has been a feature of homelessness services since the 1980s, it gained particular traction under the New Labour governments, with particular behaviours- begging, street drinking and rough

³The idea that, before a shift toward neoliberalism, welfare systems operated based on citizen rights is contestable. In particular, welfare has long been a site in which gender, race, class and disability are all governed, with an intense privileging of paid work reflected in legislative conceptualisation of welfare deservedness. See, for instance, Auyero (2012), Cruikshank (1999), Davis (1992).

sleeping- increasingly targeted (see also Bowpitt et al., 2011; Dobson and McNeill, 2011; Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2010; Reeve, 2017). Beginning under New Labour, Watts and Fitzpatrick (2018) identify two main forms of conditionality as experienced by homeless people. First, they are increasingly pressured to engage with services to get help, for instance, by linking services to specific accommodation or making only one offer of accommodation. Second, homeless individuals were significantly affected by the restructuring of the benefits system; for instance, the system of sanctions targeting those judged to have failed to comply with requirements for particular benefits. This conditionality was typically justified in overtly neoliberal terms: homeless individuals were seen as antisocial and/or threats to the public, and as requiring a hard-line, inflexible approach to ensure that they engaged. This evidences an assumption that homeless individuals had the choice to engage and move out of homelessness, and that they needed to be disincentivised from remaining homeless through being placed in a situation where remaining homeless was sufficiently unpleasant. This approach is also based in a 'one size fits all' mentality which ignores the specific obstacles that some individuals may face to compliance: complex needs and traumatic experiences resulting in compliance being far more difficult, even impossible (McNaughton Nicholls and Nicholls, 2010)

Hickman et al. (2017) have particularly associated Universal Credit with housing conditionality and responsabilisation, describing the changes to universal credit as a 'prime example of responsabilisation policy in practice.' (Hickman et al., 2017:1109). Examining the shift from the previous system where rent was paid directly to private landlords, combined with much intensified sanctioning and conditionality, they show that Universal Credit, along with other key changes to housing support,⁴ has led not to increased financial capability but greater hardship, and risk of rent arrears and consequently homelessness. They argue that the overt aim of direct payments to tenants was as a form of behavioural change, to improve their ability to manage money and move into paid work, hence becoming a reduced social risk to society as a whole. They note that the low-income families in their studies were often *already* capable money

⁴Other changes to entitlement of housing support in this period include: the size of accommodation that would be paid for those renting from social landlords reduced to the levels for those in the private sector, despite the fact that those renting from social landlords were typically more vulnerable. Additionally, the benefits cap reduced the total amount an individual or family could claim in benefits via deductions from housing benefits and the housing element of universal credit. This particularly affects families, especially lone parents

managers: Universal Credit and associated conditionality *reduced* their ability to operate as autonomous, self-governing *homo economicus*, by reducing the control they had of their finances.

...a common budgeting strategy employed by those tenants on multiple benefits was to assign benefit income to specific expenditure (the 'jam jar' approach), juggling payments and income through the month (for example, 'borrowing' from the HB for food but repaying the following week with the Child Benefit). However, this will not be possible under UC.

Hickman et al., 2017:1123

Conditionality, then, is a critical part of responsabilisation, providing a mechanism whereby the state can justify withdrawal as part of a broader pedagogical approach aimed at making poor citizens independent and self-governing (McDonald and Marston, 2005; Pykett, 2010).

3.1.4 Moral panic

One interpretation of the discourse surrounding the welfare state under austerity is that it constitutes a 'moral panic' (Cohen, 2011). A moral panic is a politically motivated construction of a group within society as a potential threat to an imagined core normative set of societal values. In *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, Cohen(2011) drew attention to the selective and often sensationalist way in which news was reported, arguing that, consequently, a group become constructed (both in their own and society's eyes) as a threat to public discipline. He proposes a five-stage model of moral panic. In the first, a group is defined as a threat. Second, this is represented as such by the media. Third, public concern builds. Fourth, a response is produced by public bodies, which may take the form of legislation. In the fifth stage, the panic is resolved- this may be due to social change. Cohen's theory of moral panic has been of particular utility in understanding the development of societal attitudes toward 'othered' members of society. For instance, Hall's (2013) study of mugging as constructed and racialised, uses Cohen's theory to locate the media as a biased actor, often working closely with political interests. He argues that media sensationalisation of mugging fueled a consequent

increase in policing of black communities, leading to more arrests and apparently higher crime rates in these areas. Hall argues that this created a sense of fear, and consequently manufactured a 'public consent' for legislation that specifically targeted black youth, highlighting the importance of discourse to significant legislative change. More recently, several scholars have drawn attention to the close relationship between 'poverty porn' (Jensen, 2014) and a post-austerity restructuring of the welfare state. As Clarke and Newman (2014) argue, following the Global Financial Crash of 2008, a discourse has been produced in which welfare subjects become the key culprits of austerity. It is proposed to be their failure to make good choices, derived from socialisation into a culture of intergenerational worklessness, and consequently a rising and uncontrolled bill for their support, which has produced the crisis. Jensen and Tyler (2015), following Bourdieu, characterises this belief as a 'doxosophy' - a 'closed circuit of political discourse engaged in the vague debates of philosophy but without any technical content, a social science reduced to journalistic commentary and opinion polls - whose primary function is to comment on representations as if they were real.' (Jensen, 2018:4). They propose that these ideas circulate uncritically and unexamined 'through the pages of consultation papers, policy briefings, pamphlets, reports and ministerial speeches, despite an absence of supportive social research' (*ibid*:2). They are significantly amplified by compelling 'reality tv' outputs which depict welfare subjects as cultural figures in accordance with these stereotypes (K. Allen et al., 2014; Jensen and Tyler, 2015). Thus, societal consent for benefits cuts becomes manufactured through the media, performing a clear ideological function in asserting that cuts to benefits are a defensive necessity to protect society from an expansive and uncontrolled group with little motivation to support themselves financially. Housing in particular has long been a site of concern over morality, especially over whether and how the state should accommodate the non-heteronormative family arrangements of lone mothers (C. Davis, 2001; Platt, 1999), debates which are overlaid with classed, racialised and gendered eugenicism (Tyler, 2013).

The moralism underpinning moral panic has been closely linked to a rhetoric of deservedness, and consequent use of discretion to penalise certain applicants unfairly. Discretion over who is supported and how, how particular cases are investigated compared to others, and the role of initial categorisation of clients by street-level bureaucrats, has been argued to not only have a significant impact on how cases are dealt with but

how they are investigated, hence the information forming part of the decision making. Discretion is a means of managing scarcity (Lidstone, 1994); however it is also fundamentally at odds with a consistent, evenly applied, service (Lidstone, 1994; Lipsky, 2010). Lidstone further argues that the widespread use of discretion is inherently incompatible with equal treatment since by definition some individuals are getting different treatment to others. However, an alternative perspective might be that discretion allows nuanced and targeted decision making, and while it is incompatible with equal, uniform decisions, it is consistent, at least in theory, with equitable, or fair, decision making, with the potential to consider individual inequalities and barriers. As Lidstone observes, 'If individual welfare providers, professional or not, are free to take personal decisions about whether particular clients should receive help, welfare consumers with similar need will inevitably receive different amounts and types of help.' (Lidstone, 1994:470). It should be noted that the criticisms of discretion often rely upon an assumption of experience-based decision making by front-line workers as fundamentally problematic. In particular, discretion by homelessness officers is considered particularly problematic because it results in uneven, and hence potentially inequitable, decision making (Cowan, 1997; Cramer, 2005; Lidstone, 1994), and particularly to introduce 'ideas of merit and expectations about behaviour' (Bretherton et al., 2013b:70); and evidence for the impact of discretion tends to rely upon a presumed connection between moralistic views and conservative decision making. However, as scholars of welfare systems have observed, front-line workers are themselves frequently highly constrained by bureaucratic systems which offer them very little control, and where their ability to exercise discretion irrespective of their individual viewpoints is, in practice, quite negligible (Schram et al., 2010). Writers have also observed that, where they have the freedom to do so, workers will often seek to take compassion-based decisions where their discretion is used to extend bureaucratic limits (Flint, 2017; N. Gill, 2016).

3.2 Space: fear, belonging, resistance

Welfare offices – the bureaucratic spaces in which welfare law and policy are translated into practical enactment upon welfare subjects- are often segregated from the rest of society and difficult to find (Auyero, 2012; Cloke et al., 2011; N. Gill, 2016; H. Silver, 1994). They are spaces in which specific material practices and spatial ordering produce understandings

of citizenship, for instance through determining where clients must locate themselves, what they may do (for instance, whether they are allowed to point, or sit, or talk) (J. May et al., 2019). The physical arrangement of space is important in communicating what behaviour is expected. For instance, it is common for bureaucratic spaces, particularly those processing 'abject' applicants, to be set up to allow considerable surveillance, to have non-removable furniture, and to create a physical separation between workers and service users (R. Gill and Orgad, 2018; L. J. Silver, 2010). As Silver (2010) observes, in this way the space creates applicants. Because they are clients, in a certain location, they then cannot be interpreted in any other way, and so spatiality structures both client and worker understanding of encounters. Homelessness too is routinely hidden from mainstream society, and dealt with out of sight (Cloke et al., 2011). A Foucauldian formulation of government understands it as decentralised, through an assemblage of myriad, devolved, state outposts which operate upon individual citizens to communicate, relay and shape them into alignment with dominant state norms (N. Rose, 1999). This 'swarming of disciplinary mechanisms' (Foucault, 1979:211), is associated with an intensification of control through devolving it to multiple points of surveillance and distribution, which are also, through their localised and specific nature, able to respond specifically, in a targeted manner, to work upon individuals. These forms of government aim not only to transmit these norms and so train citizens into docility, but also to instill these norms in citizens to enable self-governance (Henderson et al., 2010).

3.2.1 Managing space

Bureaucracies can be understood as administrative governance systems concerned with the enactment of routine, potentially mundane, decisions according to both externally decided rules and regulations (for instance, law) and, through their ongoing actions, custom and normative practice (Weber, 1994). Within welfare bureaucracies, where applicants are located is of critical importance in understanding themselves. Space is not neutral but rather exists through, reflects, and maintains normative structures, identities and values (Massey, 2013). From a Foucauldian perspective, the careful management of space, including excluding certain bodies, is essential to order. Insisting on a single concentrated location to process people, as with welfare outposts, has two advantages. First, it allows for

ease of discipline. Second, it contains a potentially dangerous group. Together, these functions legitimise the imposition of order, administration and classification. As a precondition of treatment, writes Foucault, the hospital is:

... a filter, a mechanism that pins down and partitions... [in order to]... provide a hold over this whole mobile, swarming mass, by dissipating the confusion of illegality and evil.

Foucault, 1979:144

Who may do what, when and how in space is a function of their perceived identity. The intensely gendered nature of non-specialist homelessness spaces, and the consequent self-exclusion by women and queer people, is well established (Johnsen et al., 2005; J. May et al., 2007; Pyne, 2011). Creating a space of 'license' or 'safety' for one highly marginalised group can thus compromise inclusion for others (Johnsen et al., 2005). Puwar's (2004a) concept of 'space invaders'- those in locations where they are not anticipated, or provided for- illuminates how a lack of expectation leads to a sense of unwelcomeness and un-belonging.⁵ For all users of homelessness services (and indeed welfare services), long, uncertain waits, particularly in uncomfortable surroundings, do not only inform applicants that their comfort is of little importance, but that their time is of minimal value (Auyero, 2011; Comfort, 2003; Lipsky, 2010; L. J. Silver, 2010). Bureaucracies function to sort people according to their identities, and hence operate categorically, with the arrangement of space itself forming an active part of identity construction. In *Discipline and Punish* (1979), Foucault attends to how spatial segregation and ordering normalises subjection. Spaces are coded, and people become both understood and come to understand themselves through where they are placed within space, and their experiences of occupying this space. Returning to Foucault's conceptualisation of the naval hospital discussed above, he suggests that this highly ordered processing space which *purportedly* exists to diagnose, separate and treat incoming sailors, and so protect civilians from the potential spread of disease is heavily reliant upon spatial control, combined with tight bureaucratic organisation, to produce docility and submission

⁵she shows how this non-representation then reinforces the idea that certain groups- women and people of colour- do not belong in decision-making spaces, such as the British civil service or parliament.

(Foucault, 1979). Those to be disciplined are understood as dangerous and chaotic, and so are placed distinct and discrete administrative spaces. The act of sorting them into particular spaces and imposing an order, creates discipline: physical containment and concentration are integral to processing (Auyero, 2011; Comfort, 2003; Foucault, 1979).

3.2.2 Theorising frontline work

Welfare bureaucracies interact with welfare subjects primarily through 'street-level bureaucrats', frontline workers who, in their interaction with service-users, must translate complex, often contradictory legislative and policy mandates to the specific problem presented to them, and allocate limited resources accordingly. Frontline workers have been characterised as the 'engineers of advanced liberalism' (McDonald and Marston, 2005:381). Their role is multiplicitous. On the one hand, they are critical to the implementation of central government policy objectives at local level (Alden, 2015; Carlen, 1994, 1996; B. Hunter and Smith, 2007; Lipsky, 2010; Mackie et al., 2017). Halliday (2004) has argued that frontline workers are key to understanding the gap between the law as specified – 'black letter rights' (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014:454) and the law as enacted (Halliday, 2004). While Hunter et al. (2016) see the interpretation of the law by street-level bureaucrats as involving a 'distortion', a change to its fundamental purpose and intention, others have argued their application of the law to be its true expression: that the law cannot be understood without considering how it is implemented in practice (Maynard-Moody, 2010). Street-level bureaucrats might further be considered both products of, and enactors of, discourse (Fournier, 1999). Gilbert (2010) argues that their role situates them at the intersection of dominant, overarching ideologies, buffering localised resistivities. As Schram et al. (2010) observe, caseworker-applicant interactions are situated within a wider context in which caseworkers become the 'face' of government policy. In a workfare context, frontline workers are charged with persuading welfare subjects to seek or accept unpopular or precarious work (M. Dean, 2002; Peck, 2001; Penz et al., 2017). In a shift to a governmentality approach, these frontline workers are typically charged with implementing changes resulting from the shift from top-down resource distribution and toward one in which resources are distributed and restricted according to moral behaviourism (Alden, 2015). The same period has seen a rise in a longer-term, more interventionist approach to welfare subjects, in

which they are worked with and on for a more extended period, particularly in the form of 'casework', in which applicants are worked-upon over a protracted period and using an assortment of interventions aimed at activation and empowerment, to turn them into active, self-governing, individuals (McDonald and Marston, 2005). In particular, frontline workers are frequently charged with responsibility for motivating applicants using various emotion work techniques (Penz et al., 2017). This process aims to create, in welfare subjects, a self-hood aligned to the dominant norms of society, one who is 'activated' (J. Clarke, 2005), resilient, and capable of risk-management (M. Dean, 2002; Joseph, 2013; McDonald and Marston, 2005). To do this, they must instigate and manage pedagogical state interventions that develop and enable individual applicants' self-esteem and motivation (Cruikshank, 1999). Workfare approaches are enacted by frontline workers, who through 'technologies of agency' (M. Dean, 1999) intervene in the lives of poor citizens in a pastoral, tutelary way (Cruikshank, 1999; R. Jones, 2010; Pykett, 2010). With poverty (re)imagined as a failure of individual will rather than a consequence of systematic structural inequality (Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Schram et al., 2010), individual welfare subjects are required to become responsabilised (N. Rose, 1996; Vidler and Clarke, 2005), and, to receive subsistence level help, actively present themselves as carefully responsible, and yet compliant (H. Dean, 2014; P. Miller and Rose, 1990). In a workfare system, resources are no longer distributed based on need, but on behavioural alignment with progression toward self-governance and actualisation (S. Berger, 2009; McDonald and Marston, 2005; Whitworth, 2016). Frontline workers must therefore not only transmit the new requirements of the state, and embed them within welfare subjects, but they must instil desire and motivation in welfare subjects to move them away from state dependency (M. Dean, 2002). They must also do this while maintaining compliance, carefully navigating the use of sanctions and coercion to maintain rapport (McDonald and Marston, 2005).

3.2.3 Space and resistance

McKee (2011) draws attention to a tendency within housing studies to adopt a totalising and simplistic understanding of Foucauldian discourse in which it is seen as simply a conduit of dominant narratives. As discussed in the last chapter, a Foucauldian approach understands discourse as contentious, contradictory and dialectical. Yet regarding ap-

plicants to the homelessness system, and housing systems, as passive victims of a powerful state evidences a widespread tendency to simplify the experiences of welfare subjects and homeless individuals. (Jolley, 2020; Willse, 2010). Of particular interest here is the construction of welfare subjects in their bureaucratic interactions. Welfare subjectivity itself can be argued to be an artificial category with a political function. As has previously been discussed, a Foucauldian framework understands welfare subjects as created by the welfare state itself, through a series of normalising, disciplining and categorical decisions (N. Rose, 1990).

Cruikshank draws attention to a tendency to regard welfare subjects in terms of victimhood, and particularly the idea that the state, and state assistance, necessarily disempowers them (Cruikshank, 1999). She argues that welfare subjects are summoned and constructed not only by anti-welfare rhetoric, but also by those on the left, for whom, she suggests, welfare subjects constitute an important client group (see, more recently Mananzala and Spade, 2008; Mehrotra et al., 2016; Raddon, 2008). Cruikshank suggests that welfare subjects are constructed as helpless and so in need of education and intervention by third sector organisations (see also Crook and Kemp, 1996; Meyers, 2011; Sweet, 2019). Cruikshank argues, however, that this formulation necessarily situates welfare subjects outside the system, always already co-opting them as potentially resistive beings. This in and of itself constitutes a denial of agency and overlooks how welfare subjects may choose to work within the system to achieve their aims, for instance through careful management of identity (Sweet, 2019). Similarly, Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar (2019) have argued for the recognition of non-resistance, of what might appear to be acquiescence to capitalism, among welfare subjects, proposing that care for the self and others should be both understood as a radical act, and not devalued simply due to its overt visibilisation of resistance. To overlook to do so fundamentally objectifies welfare subjects, implying that they have worth only when they are clearly resistive to unfair treatment (Hall, 1997).

McKee (2011) proposes that Foucauldian power is inherently resistive since it operates through and is transmitted by individual subjectivities. She argues for the importance of examining the experience of individual, governed, welfare subjects, suggesting that space should be created for their refusal, resistance and rejection to be made-visible. This includes attention to the materiality of this resistance. For instance, it may occur through mundane practice, and unexpected responses to being governed, rather than a dramatic, transformative, rejection of dominant values. In

her work on tenant empowerment (see McKee, 2011), she provides a nuanced discussion of this approach. She notes that while tenants are often sceptical of tenant empowerment programs, seeing them as simplistic and irrelevant in the face of structural barriers and obstacles, they nevertheless may engage in the programs because they offer route to gaining control and agency.

Similarly, historical understandings of frontline workers tend to understand them as operating from either a bureaucratic, potentially uncaring, position, or paternalistically (see above). However, a key bureaucratic development of the last few decades, associated with the shift to workfare regimes, has been the increasing de-skilling, routinisation and precarisation of frontline worker roles. The workplace structures of welfare systems, and the demands upon caseworkers, have also become more prescriptive and less flexible as systems have moved toward conditionality. Workers are increasingly limited in the time and resources that they can allocate to specific applications and placed under pressure to rapidly process applicants according to set criteria (N. Gill, 2016; Schram et al., 2010). As such, their own subject position is increasingly close to those of the welfare subjects they process, creating the potential for care based upon mutuality and recognition of shared interest. Indeed, frontline workers have arguably always enacted resistance, in that they have been unwilling to subject all applicants to potentially unfair, homogenising, bureaucratic decisions. Yet, as Lipsky (2010) has argued, discretion is inevitable within a bureaucratic system, arising from the fact that law is applied by subjective individuals based upon the specific facts of an individual case. The exact nature of the help any given individual will need varies, and part of the role of the frontline worker is to make prioritisation decisions over resources, according to their perception of the individual applicant (M. Dean, 2002; Lipsky, 2010). Yet for frontline workers, this creates a fundamental source of tension. There is considerable evidence that, except in situations of extreme mismatch between the resources available to them (including their own personal resources), and the demands of the job, frontline workers will tend to see themselves in terms of helping applicants, and have constructed their own self-belief around a professional identity as a helper rather than a gatekeeper of state resources (Lipsky, 2010; Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2000; Reed and Ellis, 2020). Yet an increasingly standardised and homogenised approach to applicants at a systemic level, as well as increasing resource shortage, creates a situation where workers are typically extremely limited in

the time and resources that can be allocated to individual applications. A defining characteristic of street-level bureaucracy is resource shortage, requiring prioritisation decisions (Lipsky, 2010).

A consequence of the processing of citizens into different categories in order to better know, understand and so govern them, is that those who are poorly understood, and who cannot be categorised, often struggle to access state resources (Cruikshank, 1999; Spade, 2015). Time-pressed, processing-focused bureaucracies and services increasingly operate a refusal to acknowledge, and hence interact with, aspects of individuals which do not easily fit into systems. As Tyler (2013) shows in *Revolting Subjects*, this has significant consequences for those who are 'illegible' (Scott, 1998) to the system, since this unrecognisably compromises citizenship. For instance, those who the system does not anticipate, and so who are unable to produce sufficient information to allow them to be categorised, are then unrecognised as entitled to help from the state (Tyler 2013, Spade 2015). Within the homeless system this has particularly led to self-exclusion and withdrawal by groups including women, people of colour, and LGBTQ people, whose needs are not 'anticipated' by the system (Casey et al., 2008; Mayock et al., 2015; Netto, 2006; Pyne, 2011; Willse, 2015).

State pedagogy creates another space which may open up for resistance. Neoliberalism is both external and internal since the project of neoliberalism is constituted through 'mundane and immediate practices of everyday life' (Ball and Olmedo, 2013:88)- it is created through 'our language, purposes, decisions and social relations' (ibid:88). As previously discussed it both opens up a field of possibility, and mandates certain recuperative actions (McKee, 2009; N. Rose, 1996). The function of neoliberalism is to create new individuals- it is productive, not restrictive- yet in producing us, other options, and ways to be, become closed off (Ball and Olmedo, 2013). In their work on teachers, an explicitly pedagogical group, Ball and Olmedo (2013) identify top-down pedagogical arenas as spaces co-opted and subverted by teachers to reinscribe the importance of interaction, care and connection. Pykett has identified a more overt form of resistance within a pedagogical system. Studying teachers of citizenship studies, she found that their lessons were frequently used to teach students about neoliberalism itself, and so became a vehicle through which students were encouraged by teachers to consider resistive approaches (Pykett, 2010). Yet there is also the question of whether this is resistance, or already designed into the system. Concerning the pedagogical

state, it is clear that a critical tool of neoliberalism is to teach citizens about the system, to improve their capacity for self-governance. When is sharing and teaching this knowledge resistive, and when is it co-opted? Indeed, are the two mutually exclusive? In their work on mutual aid and precarity, Butler argues for mutual vulnerability, specifically to neoliberal structures, as an organising principle for resistance. Dispelling with the notion of vulnerability as a static or necessary characteristic of an individual, they rather understand vulnerability relationally, as a description of the extent to which an individual is disempowered, threatened and dehumanised by social structures (J. Butler et al., 2016). In the context of evidence that frontline workers are themselves often precarious and vulnerable, this raises the possibility of a resistance-based upon recognising a mutual vulnerability in which frontline workers evidence an unease about applying harsh or punitive sanctions upon them, not only due to empathy but a recognition of the proximity of their subject-position.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I argued that welfare reform is the fulcrum of neoliberal paternalism. Austerity is especially implicated in the increasing turn toward a conditional, probationary approach to citizenship, which operates as a strategy to embed poverty governance within workfare practices. Thus, technologies such as empowerment and responsabilisation, although operating at an individualised and personal level, in fact, must be understood within a broader 'moral panic' over welfare distributions. Welfare spaces are implicated in governance by creating rationalities of rule, which, through practices of inclusion and exclusion, reinforce particular normativities. Implicated in these rationalities are frontline workers, who enact the system, although under increasing constraints and homogenisation. Yet I also propose that the spatial and bureaucratic visibilising of the power relationships within these spaces also make resistance a possibility.

Having considered the implications of neoliberal paternalistic welfare reform within the broad context of workfare, conditionality and austerity, I now turn to the specific context in which this thesis is situated. In the next chapter, I explore the landscape of British homelessness legislation, to set the scene for a discussion of the extent to which the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 operates in accordance with neoliberal paternalism.

Chapter 4

Four decades of British homelessness legislation

This section discusses the British homelessness system in more detail to give context to the research questions and findings. The British homelessness system is distinctive in that, for the last four decades, it has offered an enforceable legal right to help to some groups of citizens who become homeless. This is in stark contrast to the situation internationally where, with the arguable exception of France, no other country offers a *legal* right to assistance. The form which this right has historically taken is direct provision of affordable, secure housing, through access to a social housing tenancy. Yet a significant drawback of this system has been its selectivity, with entitlement to help limited to those who fell into certain demographic (or circumstantial) categories. In contrast to the unusually comprehensive level of provision available for those considered in 'priority need', and hence eligible for access to state housing (provided certain other conditions were met), for those not in 'priority need', notably those applying without children, state help was discretionary and minimal, leading to significant concern about the welfare of non 'priority need' groups. However, despite this highly selective approach to direct provision of accommodation for homeless individuals and households, this provision has until recently been absent of ongoing *behavioural* conditionality. The duty owed to a homeless individual by the local authority was, once established, absolute and could not be withdrawn as a result of their behaviour- although, as discussed below, it is clear that in practice the selective use of social, spatial and bureaucratic deterrence has had the effect of diluting entitlement (Cramer, 2005; Lidstone, 1994).

This section is in two parts. First, the concept of a 'right to housing' is explored, particularly within the British context. It is revealed to be a com-

plex and nuanced, value-laden assertion that relies heavily upon broader societal constructions of deservedness. This is demonstrated through a detailed discussion of British homelessness provision prior to the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, in which the extreme selectivity of the previous right is made apparent. Second, the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 is introduced as both a response to the increasing crisis in homelessness in the UK, yet also, in its mode of action, an example of neoliberal paternalism (see Chapter 3). Both the expansion of the right to *advice and assistance*, and the introduction of conditionality, are considered artefacts of the Act. Finally, the section considers the private rented sector in Wales, relating this back to the discursive importance of a competitive, yet ultimately, to *homo economicus*, accessible, jobs market under workfare regimes.

4.1 Eligibility and deservedness: the case of the British homelessness system

The British homelessness system has, for the last 40 years, primarily operated a highly selective approach to direct provision of accommodation for homeless individuals and households. This provision has, however, until recently been absent of ongoing behavioural conditionality in terms of legislative entitlement, in that the duty owed to a homeless individual was, once established, absolute and could not be withdrawn as a result of their behaviour- although, as discussed below, it is clear that in practice the selective use of social, spatial and bureaucratic deterrence has had the effect of diluting entitlement (Cramer, 2005; Lidstone, 1994). The British approach to homelessness is underpinned by the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. Introduced in the context of significant concern over system failures, particularly with regard to families and other groups understood as vulnerable, it offered a right to priority access to the UK's then-substantial social housing stock for certain homeless applicants (de Friend, 1978; Fitzpatrick and Pawson, 2016). This was a legally enforceable right placed upon local authorities (Cowan, 2019; Fitzpatrick et al., 2014). The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 has been subject to several modifications, but in England and Wales remained substantively unchanged in principle until the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 (followed by the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 in England) ¹. The ex-

¹In Scotland, the approach to homelessness changed substantially following devolution with the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003. This considerably widened the

istence of a legally enforceable right to housing, even one which is limited in scope, is internationally unique²

Under British homelessness law, until 2014, those who were deemed to be homeless (or threatened with homelessness), in priority need, and who were not intentionally homeless, and who additionally satisfied two further tests (having an adequate local connection, and having recourse to public funds³) were deemed to be owed a duty under homelessness law by the Local Authority and so were eligible for assistance.⁴ However, the majority of applicants in England and Wales did not pass the five tests of eligibility under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 (or later iterations). Consequently, they were eligible for only minimal help from the local authority: the provision of an unspecified 'advice and assistance' (Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 c4 (2) (b)), see de Friend, 1978). Single people were particularly unlikely to be found to be owed a duty, primarily because they were less likely to meet the threshold for priority need, leading to significant concerns for the welfare of this group (Bowpitt et al., 2011; Fitzpatrick et al., 2011; Fitzpatrick and Pawson, 2016). A further consequence of lacking legislative protection has been that relief from homelessness for those not owed a local authority duty has tended to be delivered on the basis of charity and beneficence. This has historically had two implications. First, access to support has been closely linked to perceptions of deservedness, and so often selective (Johnsen et

scope of those owed a duty under the legislation. In particular, over a period of years, all applicants became potentially eligible for accommodation through the expansion and then abolition of the concept of priority need. Northern Ireland's approach mostly follows that of England and Wales, with a greater focus on non-legislative approaches (Watts and Fitzpatrick, 2017).

²In France, there exists a much-reduced right to social housing in certain, highly limited, circumstances, but this is not structured in such a way as to prevent a period of homelessness. The French right, however, has an arguably greater claim to universality since it does not depend upon a construct of 'vulnerability' but extends to all French citizens and lawful residents (Loison-Leruste and Quilgars, 2009)

³Two criteria exist which are not extensively discussed here. The first is that applicants must have recourse to British public funds. Second, the applicant must have a significant 'local connection' to the authority to which they are applying. The first rule remains under the Housing (Wales) Act, while the second applies only at the state of assessment as to whether there is a duty to directly provide housing (Housing (Wales) Act s62).

⁴Until the Localism Act 2011, this took the form of a duty to provide housing within Britain's social housing sector (consisting of state owned stock and that provided by housing associations). Following the Localism Act 2011, local authorities were able to offer assured shorthold tenancies in the private rented sector with terms of at least 12 months (The statutory minimum term for a private rented sector tenancy in the UK is 6 months) by way of discharging their duties to eligible applicants (previously local authorities could use the private rented sector to discharge a housing duty only in highly specific cases: where the household qualified for assistance only because a member of the household was subject to immigration control)

al., 2005). Second, this renders provision of essential services contingent upon funding, with non-statutory homelessness services significantly affected by austerity-based funding cuts (Daly, 2018)

4.1.1 The nature of the 'Right to housing'

The UK, uniquely, offers a justiciable right to housing. This raises the question of the importance of legally enforceable rights within a housing context. In ethical-legal literature a distinction is drawn between two types of rights: 'programmatic (moral/ humanistic) rights' and legally enforceable rights (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014; Fitzpatrick and Watts, 2010) Programmatic rights are rights expressed as intentions or desires, usually owned unconditionally by an individual, and derive from natural or doctrinal rights, 'a set of universal, inalienable rights held by all human beings.' (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014:107). They are justified by the Enlightenment idea of rights as owned by an individual, rather than given to certain individuals and not others. A programmatic approach to housing rights is taken in all European countries (with the arguable exception of France⁵), Australia and the US, with the right to housing incorporated into state activity via constitutional rights (Culhane et al., 2011; Fitzpatrick et al., 2014; Fitzpatrick et al., 2009). Fitzpatrick, Bengtsson and Watts (2014) propose that legally enforceable rights to housing, particularly for homeless individuals and households offer three advantages over programmatic rights, as follows:

1. The potential to create a 'counter-hierarchy of power' (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014:455) which addresses the relative power imbalance between claimants and state agents. This recognises that state agents have an effective power to withdraw services when they are based upon charity or beneficence, providing some protection against discretion-based decision-making.
2. Equal status as citizens: gaining housing represents the fulfilment of a citizenship-based entitlement, rather than an act of kindness which requires gratitude or reciprocity. Legal rights then *reinforce* citizenship.

⁵In France, there exists a much-reduced right to social housing in certain, highly limited, circumstances, but this is not structured in such a way as to prevent a period of homelessness. The French right, however, has an arguably greater claim to universality since it does not depend upon a construct of 'vulnerability' but extends to all French citizens and lawful residents (Loison-Leruste and Quilgars, 2009)

3. Defining rights protects them in a context of scarcity, providing a minimum standard of service which must be provided (see also C. Hunter et al., 2016).

Legally enforceable rights are not without limitations. Crucially, they rely upon enforceability. As Fitzpatrick et al. observe, inherent in the provision of enforceable legal rights is a risk of overlooking questions of access to justice (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014). For a law to be *meaningfully* enforceable, redress must be accessible. Where the routes to legal redress are overly complex or unclear, where legal help is financially, geographically or bureaucratically difficult to obtain, or where citizens are subject to potential penalty if they make complaints or take action, the value of legally enforceable rights becomes questionable (Goodin, 1985; Mananzala and Spade, 2008; Rhode, 2004; Spade, 2015). Within a Foucauldian framework, the law itself can also be understood as having discursive power. Through a selective focus on which categories of people to accord which rights to, it contributes to establishing and maintaining a 'regime of truth', with particular applicability to theories of biopower (Chapter 3, see also Foucault, 1979; Horsell, 2006; Hunt and Wickham, 1994).

4.1.2 Defining homelessness under British housing law

Eligibility for help under UK homelessness law is, as has been mentioned, highly restricted. Under the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act, to be offered meaningful help in practice an individual or household had to meet several criteria. First, under the Act and all subsequent iterations of UK homelessness law, they must be *statutorily homeless*. In contrast to the situation in other countries, the UK largely understands homelessness in terms of lack of an *ontological home*: a space which is safe, secure and permanent (Dupuis and Thorns, 1998; Fitzpatrick and Stephens, 2007). The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 recognises an individual as homeless or threatened with homelessness in terms of a lack of security of tenure, conceptualising it as housing precarity. As seen in Section 1 of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, an individual or household is *statutorily homeless* where they do not have anywhere which they have a legal right to occupy. Crucially, this is independent of whether or not they are *physically* roofless or unsheltered. Under the legal definition used in all iterations of UK homelessness law, those who are sofa surfing, staying in short term accommodation such as privately-financed bed and breakfast hotels, living in non-residential vehicles, or staying with friends

without having a legal interest or right to occupy the property⁶, are all eligible for assistance under homelessness law.

1. A person is homeless for the purposes of this Act if he has no accommodation, and a person is to be treated as having no accommodation for those purposes if there is no accommodation—
 - (a) which he, together with any other person who normally resides with him as a member of his family or in circumstances in which the housing authority consider it reasonable for that person to reside with him—
 - i. is entitled to occupy by virtue of an interest in it or of an order of a court, or
 - ii. has, in England or Wales, an express or implied licence to occupy, or
 - iii. has, in Scotland, a right or permission, or an implied right or permission to occupy, or
 - (b) which he (together with any such person) is occupying as a residence by virtue of any enactment or rule of law giving him the right to remain in occupation or restricting the right of any other person to recover possession of it.

Second, the Act recognises a broad definition of housing precarity. A person can be homeless where they have a home but have been locked out of it, or where continuing to occupy it places them at risk of violence⁷. The Act also recognises homelessness among those without static accommodation.

2. A person is also homeless for the purposes of this Act if he has accommodation but-
 - (a) he cannot secure entry to it, or
 - (b) it is probable that occupation of it will lead to violence from some other person residing in it or to threats of violence from some other person residing in it and likely to carry out the threats, or

⁶For instance, staying with friends in rented accommodation without notifying the landlord.

⁷Interestingly, direct references to violence were removed from the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and replaced with a broader stipulation that the property be 'reasonable for the person to continue to occupy' Housing (Wales) Act s55(3), with a broader discussion of 'reasonableness' offered at s57. The implications of this change have, so far, not been theorised.

- (c) it consists of a movable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation and there is no place where he is entitled or permitted both to place it and to reside in it.

Further, the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 recognises an individual as threatened with homelessness, which entitled them to, functionally, similar levels of help as those homeless, if their homelessness is imminent. Under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 this was 28 days (*Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977* (1)(3)). The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 (s55 (4)), and subsequently the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (s1(3)), increased the period of time during which an individual could be considered to be statutorily threatened with homelessness to 56 days.

4.1.3 Priority need: constructing vulnerability

Finally, to be offered direct provision of accommodation under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, and in all subsequent iterations including the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, the applicant needed to be in a 'priority need' category. The concept of 'priority need' meant that only applicants either in certain groups, or at particular, specific risk due to homelessness, were owed a duty under homelessness law. The priority need group as specified in the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 s2 fall into two categories:

1. *Categorical-automatic* This group are automatically in priority need for the purpose of the Act. They include households with dependent children (s2(1)(b)), and pregnant people (s2(2)).⁸ The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 expands this category to include 16 and 17 year olds and care leavers.
2. *Categorical-contingent* This group are placed in a priority need category provided that a link can be demonstrated between their circumstances and their homelessness. The link is thus *causal* and conceptually related to intentionality (see below). Under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 it included those homeless as a result of an emergency 'such as a flood, fire or any other disaster'(s2(1)(c)). This category has been expanded in subsequent iterations of UK homelessness legislation, with the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 also recognising those who have experienced domestic abuse.

⁸Equivalent sections in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 are s70(1)(a) and (b)

3. *Situational-contingent* This group is defined in the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 as 'vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap or physical disability or other special reason.' with subsequent legislation and caselaw offering ongoing clarification of who is to be considered vulnerable.

Of the three categories, it is the third, which I have termed 'situational-contingent', which has attracted the most scholarly and legislative attention. This approach has been understood as exclusionary, making it very difficult for certain groups to access help. Situational-contingent priority need rests upon the concept of 'vulnerability'. Under all iterations of the Act, 'vulnerability' is understood in line with incapacity and powerlessness, as 'susceptibility to harm, to being more likely to experience "injury, weakness, dependency, powerlessness, incapacity, deficiency and passivity" (Gilson, 2011:5). And yet the test is *also* an absolute one: it does not recognise relative or graduated vulnerability, nor have much power to consider context-specific vulnerability, or how a failure to categorise someone as vulnerable, and hence offer them help, may place them in a situation where they *become* vulnerable. It understands vulnerability as a static, bodily event, which exists independently of societal infrastructures (J. Butler, 2002; Tronto, 2017). The implications of this approach to vulnerability have been particularly documented with regard to those who are statistically less likely to fall into priority need groups: single unsheltered people. Despite being especially likely to experience a myriad of mental and physical disabilities and chronic conditions, and to come to homelessness following adverse experiences and institutionalisation, and despite a clear link between homelessness and amplification of drug use, repeated incarceration, and mental and physical ill health, UK homelessness law does not recognise 'rough sleepers' as *defacto* vulnerable (Dwyer et al., 2015; Fitzpatrick et al., 2011; Fountain et al., 2003; Freund and Hawkins, 2004; Metraux and Culhane, 2004; Susser et al., 1997; Vitopoulos et al., 2017; B. A. Williams et al., 2010).

Further, in practice, the lack of clarity over vulnerability is understood to have resulted in considerable discretion in England (Bretherton et al., 2013b). As Loveland (Loveland, 1995) observes, 'Quite how old, ill, or disabled one must be to come within [the relevant section]... is a question affording authorities considerable discretion" (*ibid*:160). Local authorities operating under minimal guidance as to the exact parameters of vulnerability have further been argued to deliberately employ a narrow definition of vulnerability to manage resources (Bretherton et al., 2013b;

Lidstone, 1994; Pawson, 2007), resulting in a means by which 'clients can be assessed and objectified to series of measurements and problems... [serving] to objectify and... increase the gaze of the expert on the lives of individuals' (Horsell, 2006:221, see also Carr and Hunter, 2008)

4.1.4 Intentionality

Historically the Act has also offered help only to those not considered to have contributed to their homelessness. The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 gives a local authority power to inquire as to whether a person 'became homeless or threatened with homelessness intentionally' (s3)(2)(b)(i). s77 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 offers substantial clarification regarding intentionality. In particular, a person may be considered intentionally homeless under the Act if 'the person deliberately does or fails to do anything in consequence of which the person ceases to occupy accommodation which is available for the person's occupation and which it would have been reasonable for the person to continue to occupy.' (s77)(2).

The inclusion of intentionality as a specific test to determine whether a person should be eligible for help reveals a broader construction of homelessness which aligns it with culpability. It can be seen as an extension of a popular discourse where homelessness is seen as an individual, potentially immoral, choice, and welfare as a scarce commodity to be allocated based upon deservedness (Bretherton and Pleace, 2015; Carlen, 1994; Cramer, 2005; Neale, 1997). It visibilises the alignment created between incapacity/blamelessness and deservedness, in which non-culpability and passivity are used to signal that an individual is worthy of help in modern welfare bureaucracies (Creek and Dunn, 2011; Meyers, 2011; Sweet, 2019). McNaughton Nicholls, based on her explorations of experiences of homeless individuals, argues that 'intentionality' is heavily intertwined with a politicised notion of 'correct' choice which is based on a construction of good/ bad choices which ignore the specific needs of many homeless people; for instance a valorisation of short term sacrifices for long term goals, which elide the truncated life expectancy and poor life quality of street homeless people (McNaughton Nicholls and Nicholls, 2010). This approach understands homelessness in individuated terms, as arising from a failure of choice, through inability, negligence or deliberate cost-benefit based decision making, resulting in homeless individuals being seen as culpable for constrained choices (Dobson and McNeill,

2011; Horsell, 2006; Savelsberg, 2010; Somerville, 1992; Stonehouse et al., 2015).

4.1.5 Selectivity: the ideological basis of British homelessness law

Under British homelessness law, until 2014, those who were deemed to be homeless (or threatened with homelessness), in priority need, and who were not intentionally homeless, and who additionally satisfied two further tests (having an adequate local connection, and having recourse to public funds) were deemed to be owed a duty under homelessness law by the Local Authority and so were eligible for assistance. However, the majority of applicants in England and Wales did not pass the five tests of eligibility under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 (or later iterations). Consequently, they were eligible for only minimal help from the local authority: the provision of an unspecified 'advice and assistance' (Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 c4 (2) (b)), see de Friend, 1978). Single people were particularly unlikely to be found to be owed a duty, primarily because they were less likely to meet the threshold for priority need, leading to significant concerns for the welfare of this group (Bowpitt et al., 2011; Fitzpatrick et al., 2011; Fitzpatrick and Pawson, 2016). A further consequence of lacking legislative protection has been that relief from homelessness for those not owed a local authority duty has tended to be delivered on the basis of charity and beneficence. This has historically had two implications. First, access to support has been closely linked to perceptions of deservedness and is often selective (Johnsen et al., 2005). Second, this renders the provision of essential services contingent upon funding, with non-statutory homelessness services significantly affected by austerity-based funding cuts (Daly, 2018).

A second significant impact of the construction of homelessness under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 was that it relies heavily upon normative constructions of need. Scholarly attention has especially focused upon how this reinforced a gendered and heteronormative understanding of deservedness,⁹ in which women's homelessness becomes understood in terms of loss of a home-sphere, and thus underline an essen-

⁹This is not to imply that examinations of other normative approaches within homelessness law are not overdue. In particular, there has been very little consideration of the intersection between ethnicity and homelessness in the British system, in stark contrast to a developed international literature (Beider and Netto, 2012; Soss et al., 2011; Wacquant, 2016)

tialist relationship between women and home (Cramer, 2005). Here, only families who live together are recognised and protected, with significant implications for non-resident parents and their children's ability to maintain contact (Bimpson et al., 2020). Thus, the process of recognising and categorising certain households and individuals as families and another as not is one of active production. Further, the history of eligibility for social housing and the surrounding discourses has been one highly productive of a gendered and classed account of deservedness. Social housing has historically existed at a particular nexus of dispute over deservedness. Lone mothers, often those escaping domestic violence, were particularly likely to be offered council housing in the years following the 1977 Act. To some extent, this reflected a historical over-representation of this group in the overcrowded private rented sector of the 1950s/60s (Lewis, 1997). The 1977 Housing Act specifically gave priority in social housing to those at substantial risk as a result of homelessness (particularly families), leading to intense debate over deservedness. During this period, Conservative rhetoric in which the two (different gender) parent heteronormative family was seen as under financial and moral threat of destabilisation, the need for housing by families headed by lone parents was intensely contested, with particular anxiety over the (unsubstantiated) possibility that young women were having children in order to obtain a tenancy, juxtaposing her against 'deserving' and 'hard-working' two-parent families (Davis). Like her American 'welfare queen' counterpart, lone mothers seeking council housing were understood as fraudulent:

*The ultimate con, she outsmarted the system; she was a grifter,
a fraud, who 'abused' the desire of taxpayers to help the down
and out.*

Cruikshank, 1999:104

This discussion was particularly associated with the creation of a lone mother imaginary, deliberately raising large numbers of children outwith a heteronormative relationship and subsidised to do so by the state (K. Allen et al., 2014; Platt, 1999). Crucially, homeless, female lone parents who secured housing under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 were subject to an intense discourse of mendacity, resulting in detailed scrutiny over their performance of feminised and maternal adequacy (M. Davis, 1992; Platt, 1999). This often focused upon domestic violence, which

was seen as an 'easy' route to obtaining council housing, and women in refuges and temporary accommodation were consequently subject to ongoing moralistic surveillance in which their financial competency and housekeeping standards were scrutinised (C. Davis, 2001). In more recent years, a narrative has emerged surrounding intergenerational workless in which welfare subjects are proposed to be static and unambitious inhabitants of long term social housing, and where, consequently, their mothering becomes a source of anxiety as a possible site of ongoing reproduction of deviant values (K. Allen et al., 2014; Jensen and Tyler, 2015).

4.2 Expanding eligibility, introducing conditionality: The Housing (Wales) Act 2014

In 2014, in the context of rapidly rising homelessness, and amid ongoing austerity-derived deep reductions to welfare entitlements, the Welsh Government passed a new Housing Act. The Act retains the prior approach of a justiciable, rights-based 'safety-net' approach in that it offered secure and affordable state housing to the most vulnerable citizens. However, it introduced two significant practical and conceptual changes to Welsh homelessness practice: the principle of universal help, yet in the context of universal conditionality.

An integrated approach to homelessness means that almost all Welsh residents who are homeless or threatened with homeless become entitled to a significantly expanded program of advice and assistance with the aim of either retaining their current accommodation if applicable or alleviating their homelessness. A key aim of the Housing (Wales) Act was to expand upon the groups owed a duty. This was in recognition of the extensive scholarship, noted above, which identified a 'cliff-edge' in resource provision whereby a majority of applicants were not offered significant help to resolve their homelessness (Mackie et al., 2017). In consequence, the 2014 Housing (Wales) Act effectively added a new requirement for Local Authorities to offer substantial help and assistance to almost all applicants, irrespective of local connection, intentionality or priority need status¹⁰. This help falls short of a duty to directly provide accommodation, which remains only for those who meet the five tests established under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 (see above). Yet all applicants are

¹⁰The only exceptions to the requirement to offer advice and assistance at the prevention and relief stages is with regard to those who do not have recourse to public funds.

eligible for ongoing assistance to avert homelessness under s66 of the Act ('Prevention Duty') and to receive assistance to resolve homelessness under s73 ('Relief Duty') for up to 56 days. This duty exists for all applicants, without a need to meet eligibility criteria for statutory homelessness (aside from a right to public funds). Therefore, almost all applicants are entitled to help with the prevention of homelessness, and with assistance to secure a home, with this intervention both expected to be meaningful and well-integrated into other services. Examples of prevention and assistance would be family mediation help with rent arrears, assistance for those experiencing domestic violence and tenancy support. This is a justiciable right, with a failure to perform reasonable steps to relieve homelessness challengeable through judicial processes, and has resulted in measurable success (Mackie, 2015; Mackie et al., 2017). The Act also maintains a link between statutory homelessness and an enforceable right to housing for those meeting the five tests (statutory homelessness, priority need, non-intentionality, local connection and recourse to public funds) (A. Ahmed and Madoc-Jones, 2020).

4.2.1 Behavioural conditionality: s79(5) 'Unreasonably failing to co-operate'

Second, however, the system also introduced behavioural conditionality. For the first time in British housing law, access to ongoing help for all applicants becomes dependent upon fulfilling certain behavioural requirements, notably co-operation with the local authority. Thus the duty to an applicant may be ended where:

The circumstances are that the local housing authority is satisfied that the applicant is unreasonably failing to co-operate with the authority in connection with the exercise of its functions under this Chapter as they apply to the applicant.

Housing (Wales) Act 2014 s79(5)

In the documents contributing to the development of the Act, applicants are presented as capable of managing their homelessness with the correct state interventions, particularly advice, information and short term help such as deposits (Mackie and Thomas, 2014; Mackie et al., 2017). This suggest an understanding of citizens as choice-makers, who primarily require information and some short term assistance to be transformed

from 'passive recipients of state assistance into active self-sustaining individuals' (Clarke, 2005: 448).

The Act reiterates this approach by offering help to people on the assumption that they can manage their own homelessness, with appropriate input. It places a duty upon all local authorities to work with applicants to resolve their homelessness. Although the Act itself does not specify action that must be taken to 'secure or help secure' accommodation, it offers a list of suggested services and interventions. These include mediation, loan and grant payments and guarantees of payment, money management support, advocacy and representation, and information and advice, as well as security measures and accommodation (s64 (1) and (2)). The Guidance to the Act particularly establishes the importance of a 'prevention' focus, by which is meant early intervention, offering effective support to those threatened with homelessness (Guidance, 9.1). Those who are incapable of this due to documented additional support needs are exempt. However, those who struggle for other reasons – for instance those with mental ill-health not recognised by the Act, or who are circumstantially unable to find housing, for instance due to a shortage of affordable, accessible accommodation, are, within the legislation itself, assumed to be able to resolve their homelessness through individual-level actions, such as increasing their knowledge, improving their skills, or specific, short term financial and practical interventions such as deposit schemes. These are conceptualised as 'interventions' (Guidance: 12.9), to be offered to applicants by Local Authorities in a top-down, discretionary manner:

Local Authorities are expected to consider the most appropriate intervention or range of interventions on a case-by-case basis, which are most likely to result in a positive outcome.

Guidance 12.9

At the same time, however, Local Authorities are required to listen to applicants' views, with the aim of together deciding upon the most appropriate interventions. In particular, the Duty to Assess (s62 (6) (a)) specifies that the applicant's desires are material to deciding upon the course of action. However, it should be noted that these wishes are not binding upon the Local Authority: the Local Authority is simply required to consider whether they can be met. The Guidance clarifies that Local Authorities

should see their role as contextualising and shaping applicant desires within the constraints of the field of action, specifically the local housing market. This can be understood in terms of Foucauldian power, in which power is explicitly productive and operates through shaping desires and wishes in accordance with normative societal values (McKee and Cooper, 2008).

It should however be recognised that the Welsh homelessness duty includes some safeguards for those considered vulnerable. The Guidance to the Act circumscribes the termination of this duty. 'Failing to co-operate' must not have occurred as a result of a vulnerability, such as an unmet support need or communication difficulties (15.86). Further, local authorities are required to 'make every effort' to obtain co-operation and give applicants chances to re-engage (15.88) and indeed continue to offer some discretionary help if possible even where the legal duty has been discharged (15.89). It should also be noted that failing to co-operate is qualified with 'unreasonably'. This indicates that if there is a justifiable reason for the individual's non-co-operation, termination of the duty would be considered invalid.

4.2.2 The private rented sector as a 'field of truth'

Analogous to the importance of a competitive jobs market within the welfare state (McDonald and Marston, 2005; Schram et al., 2010), the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 is notable for the centring of the private rented sector within the scope of activities available to Local Authorities (Mackie et al., 2017). As previously discussed, the Act builds on the Localism Act 2011, which established that a Local Authority homelessness duty could be discharged into the private rented sector, providing that the tenancy's minimum term was at least 12 months duration. In contrast, the Housing (Wales) Act allows the duty to be discharged to applicants with a standard shorthold assured tenancy of 6 months. Consequently, it becomes possible for local authority homelessness duties to be discharged, in theory, through the mainstream private rented market where a 6-month fixed term tenancy is the standard default offered. The centring of the private rented sector within the Act has been understood in pragmatic terms, as a necessary response to a severe shortage of social housing (A. Ahmed et al., 2020).

The British private rented sector is, in common with the private rented housing markets of other 'liberal' economies (such as New Zealand or

Canada) an exemplar of a free market housing system in which accommodation is secured competitively, according to perceived and actual ability to pay (Hulse et al., 2012). Since the 1988 Housing Act, rent control and tenure length have both been largely deregulated, resulting in a relationship between landlords and tenants which is largely unregulated (Kemp, 2011). Since the late 1990s, the sector has also become increasingly deprofessionalised, with favourable terms for Buy To Let mortgages resulting in an influx to the sector of non-specialist, inexperienced, single property landlords (Kemp, 2015). Consequently, housing is increasingly understood as an investment commodity, meaning that privately rented accommodation is understood not in terms of a right to a certain standard of housing for renters, but a right to make decisions about who may or may not rent a property, the terms of the rental agreement, and the length of the tenancy, to maximise profit by landlords (Pattillo, 2013). Although the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 does include some attempts at regulating the sector, primarily through requiring compulsory education and licensing of landlords¹¹ there remain no functional controls over affordability, tenure security is minimal (in Wales, after the fixed term, evictions may occur with 2 months notice) and quality standards are a widespread concern (England and Taylor, 2021).

Additionally, low-income households, particularly those in receipt of benefits, are understood to specifically struggle to obtain private rented accommodation in Wales due to the recent, largely austerity related, cuts to rental subsidies. A common strategy adopted in liberal market economics (Esping-Andersen, 2013), to disrupt the link between income and low quality accommodation, is the use of rental subsidies. This approach understands the problems faced by low income private renters in securing accommodation to lie with an inability to compete within the market, rather than with the structure of the market itself or the lack of specific protection for low income renters (Hulse, 2003). The UK, in common with some other liberal market economies (such as New Zealand and Australia), provide low income households with a separate allowance to other income supplements, giving them some distance from the increasing requirement for performance of work-seeking behaviours attached to the latter (Hulse

¹¹Reflecting the broader general unenforceability characteristic of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, RentSmartWales adds little in the way of access to administrative or practical justice for tenants. For instance, it does not offer tenants a route to challenge landlords without risking losing their homes, nor an alternative to the potentially costly and adversarial civil court system which is currently the only route by which tenants can assert their rights.

et al., 2014; Reeve, 2017).

In the UK, Housing Benefit, introduced in the mid 1980s, is paid to low income households to assist them with rental payments (Fenton, 2013; Kemp, 2000). Housing Benefit was particularly notable for extending state help with housing to tenants in the private rental sector (Kemp, 2000). Since 2008, a specific form of Housing Benefit, Local Housing Allowance, has been in payment for private tenants. It has been scrutinised to a greater extent than other forms of Housing Benefit, and particularly targeted for post-austerity cuts (Kemp, 2011). Most recently, some low income tenants have been required to claim an alternative, aggregate benefit, Universal Credit, which incorporates a payment toward rental costs. Since their inception, rental subsidies have been the site of considerable ideological struggle over whether, to what extent and for whom the state should pay for housing. British rental subsidies are explicitly need rather than deservedness based: low income households are entitled to receive Housing Benefit, including Local Housing Allowance, irrespective of the success of their performance of work-seeking behaviour. Yet through restricting both the amounts that can be claimed and who can claim, over the past decade there has been an increasing tendency toward incorporation of rental subsidy payments into a broader program of 'workfare' aimed at re-orientating low-income households toward an understanding of state support as conditional upon their improving employability and a reduction in their dependence upon the state (J. Clarke, 2005; Cole et al., 2016; Powell, 2015; Vidler and Clarke, 2005). This is underpinned by justificatory rhetoric which equates work-seeking, even where it is unsuccessful, with deservedness (Garthwaite, 2011; Grover, 2015). A need to reduce state dependence (and hence increase motivation to seek work) has been associated with reductions in housing subsidy payments, particularly for private renters.¹² Three key changes have occurred. First, the maximum amount of subsidy that a household can claim is limited to the lowest third of private rents (for the size of property deemed appropriate for them) in their local area, typically a local government region. Second, in 2016 this maximum was frozen, resulting in a further reduction in affordable properties for those receiving rental subsidies¹³. Third, certain groups had

¹²This is not to say that social renters have not been targeted by cuts to housing subsidies, for instance through the 'bedroom tax' or 'spare room subsidy' which reduced Housing Benefit to social tenants whose accommodation was deemed too large for their needs (Gibb, 2015).

¹³The freeze on Local Housing Allowance rates was lifted on 13th January 2020, however, was in place for the duration of the research.

their eligibility for rental subsidies considerably reduced: those under 35 were by default eligible to claim only for a room in a shared house (Powell, 2015)¹⁴. Additionally, a cap was introduced overall on the amount that individuals and households could receive from benefits, applied through a reduction of rental subsidy.

Ideologically, these changes have been justified as necessary behavioural disincentives. Cuts to rental subsidies have been proposed to be a necessary and responsible act of 'tough love' by a state whose previous overgenerosity has not only impoverished the nation, but irresponsibly failed to allow its citizens to develop strategies of resilience and self-reliance (Garthwaite, 2011; Jensen, 2010). State withdrawal, or abandonment, is therefore discursively positioned as an act of care, both for society as a whole, and for the individuals who have been unable to grow into mature, activated, 'actuarial citizens' as a result. Couched in individualising rhetoric of personal failure to make responsible, long term, choices, as discussed above, the changes to the benefits system have been justified ideologically on the grounds that low-income renters have the option of mitigating them through careful decision making, and an acceptance of the need to make personal sacrifices: relocating to cheaper areas, increasing or entering employment, or making small-scale economies (Cole et al., 2016). This rhetoric of personal responsibility and individual agency dovetails with the discourse of disability as a failure of will: the specific obstacles faced by disabled people in entering the workforce are overlooked or dismissed. As such, low income and consequential difficulties in securing rental accommodation is situated as an individual failure of personal competitiveness, rather than the product of structural economic disadvantage (Flint, 2017; Hickman et al., 2017; Powell, 2015).

The private rental sector has become a central part of the approach taken following the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 to address homelessness (A. Ahmed et al., 2020). Indeed, for applicants not (yet) owed the full housing duty, it constitutes the primary route out of homelessness. Thus, in creating a near-universal duty to assist without also extending the full housing duty, the Act necessarily implicates Local Authorities in engaging with private rented sector options. An examination of the form this takes is useful in comparing the promotion of the private rented sector to workfare. It should be noted that the Act itself does not specifically pro-

¹⁴Exceptions were made for certain groups, notably those in receipt of certain disability benefits. However, as has been noted elsewhere, the eligibility criteria for these qualifying benefits has also been substantially increased (Garthwaite, 2011; Ryan, 2019)

pose how applicants at s66 and s73 should be encouraged to look within the private rented sector as a solution to homelessness. However, the Guidance to the Act includes considerable direction to local authorities in how to assist homeless households into the private rented sector. Access to the private rented sector for homeless applicants in terms of citizen choice, using a logic whereby the 'blunt' approach of material help ended up overlooking or infantilising those who needed only quite minimal interventions (Mackie and Thomas, 2014). The Guidance starts from the premise that the private rented sector is, pragmatically, all that is available to many applicants, and so it will be necessary to work to improve access.

For many, the private sector will offer the only realistic opportunity of finding the type of property they need in their preferred location and Local Authorities should ensure that they fully engage with landlords in order to exploit this significant source of housing.

Guidance, 12.31

It particularly recognises that financial barriers exist for low-income people in attempting to access the sector (12.32). It specifies steps they should take to facilitate a relationship between the applicants and landlords. One of the minimum requirements (12.13) is that the local authority 'facilitate access to the Private Rented Sector' to ensure that 'suitable PRS¹⁵ options are available locally to applicants.' Two approaches are suggested. The first is direct liaison with landlords, through 'a locally managed private rented sector access service that should be available in every Local Authority area, a well-maintained list of PRS opportunities or referral to a house-sharing website'. The second is through 'payments for rent in advance or deposit and/or bond scheme'. Finally, the private rented sector is presented in the Guidance as an option: applicants should be 'fully aware of [it's] availability' so that they can make an 'informed choice'. Applicants are therefore constructed as rational and choice-making, with the role of the frontline worker and the council as a whole to ensure that applicants are cognisant of their options. They could be interpreted as being a group who are capable of self-autonomy but need varying amounts

¹⁵Private Rented Sector

of help to develop the practices and habits to successfully operate autonomously and independently (M. Dean, 2002). There is also in these preliminary documents, considerable attention to the need to reform the private rented sector to improve its quality (8.31) although the success of this outcome is questionable (England and Taylor, 2021). For instance, at the time of writing, the 'effective social lettings agency covering all areas' (8.31) promised in the White Paper associated with the Act did not exist, meaning that, in practice, homeless households in many areas of Wales compete for private rented accommodation on the open market. Further, the private rented sector in Wales, as across the UK, has a particular shortage of the forms of accommodation often required by those not in a "priority need" category, notably for single people (A. Ahmed et al., 2020).

Chapter summary

This chapter has considered the landscape of British homelessness legislation both before and after the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. It has argued that the 'right to housing' has been a complex proposition in the UK. While it arguably clarifies and strengthens citizen rights, it does so for a limited group of applicants. This led historically to a failure of meaningful provision for a majority of homeless applicants in the decades prior to the Act and contributed to a reductive problematisation of the groups who were eligible for help under the Act. Thus, the selective, normative constructions of homelessness and housing need under UK law result in both ideological and material inequalities. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014, responding to an increasingly apparent mismatch between service need and supply generated largely by austerity, sought to address these inequalities by increasing applicants' scope for at least some help. However, to address these inequalities, it relied upon construction of applicants as capable, or potentially capable, of operating as *homo economicus*. This is particularly evident both in terms of the introduction of conditionality in the form of a right to withdraw services due to non-co-operation, and the field in which this Act operated- notably the competitive, insecure and deregulated private rented sector, which is compared to a similar jobs market within workfare based welfare systems.

The last three chapters have established that the British welfare state in general, and the homelessness system, particularly in Wales, is a site at which poverty has long been governed, and which different ideas around deservedness and entitlement play out. The next chapter discusses the

Foucauldian methodological approach taken to investigating the discourses, technologies and subjectivities which surround the operation of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 in practice.

Chapter 5

Methodology

This section outlines the methodological approach adopted to explore the research questions. Continuing the Foucauldian approach to knowledge construction utilised by the thesis as a whole, data collection and analysis attended to the close relationship between power, knowledge and truth. This extends a social constructivist approach (in which reality is understood to be constructed through ongoing interaction) by attending to the underlying discourses deployed by different actors, and their recourse to normative assumptions. The primary data collection approach was extended qualitative interviews with both applicants and workers, with the sampling, participant demographics, and interview strategy for both groups discussed separately. This was supplemented by observations and field notes. Key ethical considerations are also noted. A Critical Discourse Analysis approach was taken to analysis, with the coding technique following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic coding guidelines.

5.1 Developing a Foucauldian methodological approach

Foucault regards truth and knowledge as operating in a dialectical, co-generative relationship with power (Hall, 2002). This approach particularly aligns with the constructivist perspective on knowledge as co-created through interaction in the research environment, through dynamic, active negotiation between participant and interviewer (Alldred and Gillies, 2002; Gubrium and Holstein, 2003; Holstein and Gubrium, 1995; Stacey, 1988). Resultant data is therefore an artefact of the researcher-participant relationship (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998; P. L. Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Manohar, 2013). A Foucauldian approach understands all dis-

course as suspect, in that it is inevitably the product of societal processes. This is a predominantly epistemological approach. It encourages a critical appraisal of phenomena and requires us to consider our own situatedness in relation to them. A Foucauldian approach to research is primarily interested in discourse to understand truth as a social construction, and so attends closely to how actors construct the world and how they experience structures and practices. It regards actors as operating within (and producers and legitimisers of) a 'discursive field'-a space of competing, contradictory discourses which structure and organise social processes, institutions and norms, where different subjectivities adopt and perform a range of personas. How certain discourses are understood, gain power and become amplified, while others diminish or are silenced, is a key focus of a Foucauldian approach. A Foucauldian approach interrogates the contrasting and contradictory discourses which arise from actors on opposing sides, or with different experiences, or with different motivations or subject position. Additionally, following the argument that discourses are created in a specific place and time and between particular actors, the structure and arrangement of space and bureaucratic-processing structures become important, communicating not only intention, expectation and normative behaviour but who is and who is not present or expected. (S. Ahmed, 2013; Massey, 2013; Puwar, 2001, 2004a, 2004b). This has specific relevance for homeless applicants, a group who, as previously discussed, have been argued to be disadvantaged at a systemic level, including through the designing-in of normative assumptions of deservedness and entitlement (see Lidstone, 1994).

5.1.1 Appraising reflexivity

The Foucauldian approach proposed by Hunt and Wickham (1994) considers that research exists within the context of a specific social encounter where the research itself is an artefact of power. For Hunt and Wickham, a recognition that the encounter is rooted in artifice is important in challenging the special status of the encounter and the knowledge that the researcher can extract. Recognising the encounter as a fundamentally social one, in which the researcher exists as a social being, one approach has been to try to identify how the researcher has affected the research, either through invoking power, or in their approach to interpreting results (Manohar, 2013; R. A. B. May, 2014; Oakley, 2018). Reflexivity – a process of self-reflection in which the researchers attempt to 'account for us'

(Denzin and Lincoln, 2002:591) is sometimes proposed as a strategy to overcome and eliminate the researcher's influence upon the data. However, simply comprehending our own biases and power, through 'thoughtful self-awareness' (Finlay, 2002:532) does not remove them, and risks, in fact, reinscribing the exact contrast between the researcher and the participants that it seeks to reduce. Rose (1997) particularly argues that presenting the researcher as active, productive and rational, through use of centring self-reflection, necessarily simultaneously creates a disempowered, passive, homogenised participant for whom the researcher derives the authority to speak (see also Alldred and Gillies, 2002).

As Rose (1993) argues, there is a danger within qualitative research of reflexivity becoming used to *amplify* researcher power, by justifying the invasion of the researcher into the perspective of participants, and the taking on of the authority deriving from lived experience (see also Stacey, 1988). Yet the process of reflection also has utility in recognising the limitations and shortcomings of both research in general and the specific research being undertaken (Moss et al., 2002; G. Rose, 1997). Within this research, I have particularly developed reflexive practice by using a research journal, creating a record of critical reflections centred upon the research process. My approach here is analogous to memo-writing within grounded theory. By forcing the researcher to document and hence reflect upon the process, and so providing a space in which to confront the researcher's own values and assumptions, memos create a space of challenge (Charmaz, 2014).

5.2 Conducting the study

The study used a qualitative interview methodology to conduct interviews with a total of 98 actors within the Welsh homelessness system. 54 of these were front-line workers in the homelessness system (working within Local Authorities or allied services). 44 were individuals who had made applications under the Housing (Wales) Act. This section describes the methodology used, contextualising this with reference to the practicalities of the study. In the first section, the characteristics of the participants are described, along with the sampling strategy. Second, the data collection methodology is discussed. Thirdly, I attend to the ethical considerations arising specifically from the research design.

5.2.1 Collecting data

The primary method of data collection in this study was extended interviews. These were conducted with 98 individuals (54 frontline workers and 44 applicants), over the course of nearly two years. In the following sections, I attend firstly to some general methodological questions arising from the use of interviews as a technique. I then discuss the practicalities of conducting interviews within this study, including two philosophical-practical issues that arose (truth and space). Finally, I give a brief overview of a supplementary data collection technique used: field notes and photographs.

5.2.1.1 Theoretical considerations relating to interviews

Qualitative interviews are an intense method of data collection in which information is elicited from participants through a series of questions, in order to better understand participants' complex experiences. Open ended, extended interviews can illuminate how decisions are made in a social context (Denzin and Lincoln, 2002; Elwood and Martin, 2000). Taking a social constructivist stance, interviews are here understood as encounters in which identities and reality are produced, challenged and undone (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998; Elwood and Martin, 2000; Oakley, 2018; Silverman, 2006). With the recognition that interviews operate as a site of social construction is an awareness that this brings issues of replication and amplification of the power of academia (Oakley, 1981, 2018; Stacey, 1988). Kvale and Brinkman (2009) observe that research is predicated upon an assumed right to knowledge of, and from, participants. Aldred and Gillies (2002) have also suggested that interviews may be deliberately structured in such a way as to encourage participants to share more than they wish to, due to subtle emotional pressures such as rapport and 'faked friendship' (Duncombe and Jessop, 2002; Hochschild, 2012).

A Foucauldian approach to interviewing must further consider how truth, itself a discourse, exists within the encounter. Silverman (2017) suggests that we currently live in an 'interview society' (*ibid*:144) where, through various mechanisms but particularly the media, we learn to participate in information exchange through interviews. For homeless participants this may have particular importance, since stories are a mechanism through which this group is frequently sorted and disciplined (Platt, 1999). In her work with queer teachers, Connell (2014) explores the complexity of anticipated narratives (in her work, the expectation of a tri-

umphant, overcoming 'coming out' story) in both structuring the expectations (and hence information shared) within an encounter, but also providing tools to resist, challenge and subvert these narratives. I conceptualised all participants as active products of, and producers of, societal discourse, who used expectations, tropes and shortcuts to communicate and position themselves. This accords with a broader Foucauldian understanding of the operation of discourse and power within society (Czar-niawska, 2004).

5.2.1.2 Conducting interviews

Interviews were conducted with both groups of participants (applicant-participants and worker-participants). In total, 98 interviews were included in the research.¹

Interviews varied in length, from 24 minutes to over 3 hours, with most taking around 60 minutes. A small number of interviews took the form of 'walking interviews' in which the participant was interviewed while they moved through their environment, thus providing an additional dimension of spatial interaction (P. Jones et al., 2008). This offered the opportunity to allow the research to become 'framed by a place' (Warren, 2017:787). Walking interviews were not planned into research design but instead arose spontaneously, reflecting the needs of participants. Sometimes they took the form of an invited 'tagging along' in which participants integrated the interview with their routine activities (see Roets and Goedgeluck, 2007 for an exploration of this term). These interviews occurred with both worker-participants and applicant-participants: in the case of this latter, particularly parents. In others, walking interviews occurred because the participant wanted to refer explicitly to their environment during the interview. This approach was primarily taken by worker-participants, especially those in support roles. Although applicant-participants invoked and referred to their environment during interviews, they seldom chose to interact with it through the act of walking through it. As

¹A small number of interviews were started but terminated, either because, after the interview began, the participant was felt to be unable to meaningfully give informed consent, or because the participant left abruptly with or without explanation. All these cases were with applicant-participants and occurred within a setting where the interviewee had access to support, where staff knew that they were taking part in an interview, and so it was appropriate to (in a non-disclosive manner) check on their wellbeing with staff. These interviews have not been included in the total. Some additional interviews were also conducted, which were later deemed to fall out with the study's scope, notably with managers not engaged in frontline work, and with third sector workers in roles without any capacity to influence decisions (for instance, third sector advice organisation caseworkers.)

discussed below, the space in which the interviews occurred were locations where often barely discernable dynamics of power and control played out. The difference in the relative enthusiasm of worker-participants and applicant-participants to conduct walking interviews is significant in the light of Warren's (2017) observation that spatial mobility is itself an expression of power and assumed belonging.

In some interviews with applicants, with the interviewee's permission, I used a time-line approach in which, I, the interviewee, or we together drew a time-line of the household's homelessness experiences. Time-line approaches are used variously in an interview setting, including as part of the data corpus itself (Charmaz, 2014). Here, however, a time-line was specifically used as an artefact within the interview, to give a broad overview of the situation as understood by the applicant and help me identify areas for further questions. Where time-lines were used, they were normally specifically to help sequence events. Creating a time-line was done collaboratively: I suggested this approach to participants to help me understand their accounts. I brought several pieces of taped together A4 paper to all interviews, as well as marker pens. Participants were typically enthusiastic about either themselves writing on the sheet, or directing me to do so. However, reflecting the fact that this work focuses on discourse, and is non-evaluative, time-lines were not systematic or homogeneous and no attempt was made to compare them. Evidence of this is further seen in the lack of value placed upon the time-line. After (or sometimes while) it had served its function as a prompt and *aide memoire* within the interview, it became another piece of paper, and was accorded no special status as evidence.²

The example below is taken from an interview with a mother in a family hostel.³ She was interviewed with her young child present. I brought various activities for young children with me to family hostels. During this interview, her daughter had been drawing using marker pens, and, when we started writing on the time-line paper, also wanted to contribute.

In addition to, or sometimes instead of, the time-line approach, I used a second approach to increase collaboration and reduce my own control

²Its status as an item including potentially confidential and identifying information is, however, recognised, and time-lines were removed, stored securely and then destroyed in accordance with data protection requirements.

³The participant is not identified by her pseudonym to reduce the risk of identification, and potentially identifying information, including examples of her handwriting, have been obscured.

over the encounter. I was particularly aware that I had come to the encounter prepared and primed to focus upon some areas of a participant's experience (Charmaz, 2014). One strategy I adopted to counteract this was the use of Post-it notes as collaborative *aide memoires*. In some interviews, when applicants mentioned a part of their story that I wanted to come back to, or made a point that I felt I would like to explore further, I made a note on a Post-it note placed in the centre of the table. I did this only after explaining to participants what I was doing, and inviting them to also make notes (or instruct me to make notes) of anything they wanted to remember to discuss. In practice, I found that applicants sometimes used the post-it notes to structure their answers. The notes sometimes became an apparent part of the encounter- I would be urged to make a note to remind the participant to share a particular story later:

Tell you what, put down '1997'. Just that, yeah [laughs]. Got to tell you about 1997. Can't turn that thing off [dictaphone] til I've told you about 1997!

Mo, interviewed in nightshelter

Both the time-line approach and the post-it note approach, however, were used selectively. The primary obstacle to the use of both was space: not all interviews took place in a location where it was feasible to lay out paper, for instance. As previously discussed, some interviews, particularly with parents, were walking interviews. Interviews were recorded (for which permission was sought) and transcribed, with transcriptions checked against the recorded interviews for accuracy. All interviews took place between September 2018 and January 2020.

Interview questions

A critical issue for qualitative interviews is achieving a balance between enabling interviewees to raise topics and discuss phenomena of interest to them, and ensuring that the interview encounter generates pertinent information (Silverman, 2017). The interview encounter, on the one hand, has potential to be, and is perhaps inevitably, one where the researcher exerts a *pre-classificatory* power, in determining how the experiences of the participant are expressed (Oakley, 1981; Silverman, 2006, 2017). A Foucauldian ontology recognises researchers, and the research encounter,

as situated within societal discourse. Indeed, as discussed above, to believe that it is possible to remove ourselves as researchers from the matrix of discursive power within society potentially amplifies this still more (G. Rose, 1993). At the same time, interviews take time and emotional energy for participants, making it important that interviews are not needlessly protracted (Silverman, 2017).

As previously discussed, interviews were conducted with two distinct groups: applicants to the system and workers within the system. The latter group consisted of those who could be said to be engaged in direct decision making over cases, and those whose relationship to decision making was less straightforward (but nevertheless, had the ability to significantly influence the direction of cases). Prior to commencing interviews, two interview guides were produced for applicants and workers. These guides focused upon the *practicalities* of the application process and the encounter, with the reasoning that through understanding how different actors described and represented these events, their relationship to different discourses, technologies and subjectivities would become evident. To achieve this understanding, both open-ended and closed questions were asked. In practice, however, the interview schedule was seldom followed closely, and the participant's lead was followed. The aim was for the interview to cover a number of domains, arising from the literature, and detailed below. These broadly, but not prescriptively, accorded with Dean's (2002) first three elements of governmentality (see Chapters 1 and 2).

Applicants

1. **Procedural approach** Applicants were asked to give a narrative history of their experiences of homelessness. I conceptualised this as beginning with their current period of homelessness with prior experiences giving context to this, or alternately chronologically and sequentially: this approach broadly accords with a narrative interview technique. (Birch, 1998; Czarniawska, 2004; Labov and Waletzky, 1997; Tamboukou, 2008)⁴. In practice, applicants described their

⁴The methodology used in this thesis does not explicitly align with a narrative approach: references to narrative methodologies are occasionally brought in because they offer insights into the interview technique used which did have some parallels in its focus on encouraging the participant to tell their story as it occurred to them. However some (arguably) key broader assumptions underlying narrative methodologies, notably the importance of the bounded self, are not accepted (Barthes and Duisit, 1975; Freeman, 2015)

experiences of homelessness differently and seldom followed a clear temporal pattern, rather focusing upon points of interest and importance to them (Czarniawska, 2004). For all applicants, I tried to ascertain: the events leading up to their current period of homelessness, the point at which they first interacted with the local authority, the outcome of this (both in terms of their progression through the system, and their own experience), their ongoing experience of casework, and their current situation. I also tried to explore previous applications as homeless, both before and after the new Act become used. I attempted to obtain a sense of *when* these events happened. The time-line approach discussed above was particularly helpful to gaining an overview of applicants experiences, which were then centred for the remainder of the interview. It should be noted that, although the interview typically began with procedural questions, these were returned to throughout the interview.

2. **Discourse** Drawing upon information shared about the procedure and practice I was attentive to the possibilities of exploring the two key discourses which I expected to be operating upon applicants: responsabilisation/moral panic and abjectionification (see Chapters 2 and 3). I explored these through open-ended questions about the applicant's impressions of others' perceptions or the system as a whole. For instance, when applicants expressed frustration at a particular feature of the homelessness system, I might ask *why* they thought it operated in that way. Where applicants discussed societal discourses, I also explored the impact and accuracy of these in terms of both the applicant's own experience and their broader understanding and opinions of the political-social sphere.
3. **Technologies** Here I was interested in how the procedures and practices that applicants had mentioned were experienced by them, particularly in terms of technologies of self-esteem, activation, empowerment and resilience. I was particularly concerned to unpick the interactions between power and control. Therefore, I especially focused on how much autonomy and choice applicants believed themselves to have and under what circumstances they could exercise choice and autonomy.
4. **Subjectivities** Here I was keen to understand how applicants saw themselves as being processed or categorised (see Chapter 2), and to explore the idea that they were felt to have a 'deficit' subjectivity

which necessitated transformation. I was also keen to understand and visibilise their *existing* subjectivities.

Workers

1. **Procedural approach** For worker applicants, procedural questions focused on trying to understand how cases were processed. I was interested in what *usually* happened in cases and when and how they made exceptions, including the criteria for deciding when an exception would be made. I asked these questions in slightly different ways, tailoring them to the participants' role. However, in essence, I sought to understand how they perceived the applicant's journey through the system from an organisational point, including the initial point of contact, information which was initially sought, how cases were subsequently handled, and ongoing follow up work. At this stage, a considerable amount of information was also often revealed about working processes, stresses and resource shortages. I did not tend to use a time-line or post-it note approach with workers. This was for several reasons. First, these interviews were sometimes partly or entirely conducted in spaces which made this hard, or else they were walking interviews. Second, these interviews were more likely to be condensed or to feel under pressure of time. On reflection, however, I question whether this reveals a deeper set of assumptions about the greater importance of seeking collaboration from applicants because I *perceived* them to be more likely to be marginalised and disempowered compared to me as an interviewer.
2. **Discourse** I was keen to explore how workers perceived applicants, particularly drawing upon literature discussed in Chapter 3 around austerity, irresponsibility and moral panic. I did not directly ask questions about these discourses, but rather used a reflective approach to explore these ideas when they appeared to be raised, to clarify and to explore (see Charmaz, 2014). However, I was also alert and attentive to nuance around these discourses and indeed refutation of them.
3. **Technologies** Here I typically picked up on procedures which the participant had mentioned at the procedural stage. I was interested in understanding *why* they did what they did, and how they understood this as part of their role. In practice, this overlapped with both

discourses (in terms of beliefs about applicants) and subjectivities (in terms of the applicant they saw themselves as producing).

4. **Subjectivities** I was interested in two subjectivities. First, I wanted to explore how applicants were produced and why. The literature had primed me to explore evidence that frontline workers were motivated to help applicants become *homo economicus*: when this seemed to be the case, I explored it further. The second subjectivity was that of workers themselves, and how they understood themselves in their role. As discussed in Chapter 3, there is evidence that workers in neoliberal paternalistic systems may be called upon to operate in the workplace in new ways, particularly through emotional labour, while also having their own autonomy restricted. Again, I explored these themes when they arose.

5.2.1.3 Truth and the interview encounter

An explicitly exploratory, constructivist, Foucauldian approach, which centred the perceptions of social processes by different actors, was employed (see Chapter 4). This meant that the narrow, objective, 'truth' of interview statements was not of central importance. Instead I approached participant accounts as reflections of the reality they wished to communicate within our encounter. The guide was not followed chronologically, and questions were not asked where applicants had already spontaneously given extensive relevant information. However, I did seek clarification and requested more detail from applicants, asking them to explain, in greater depth, what a particular phrase meant to them or to describe specific experiences. I mainly explored why they had taken certain decisions and actions- how they had understood their options and the potential consequences of different choices. I also used clarificatory questioning to check my own understanding of events, and to explore how applicants understood their stories to fit together.

At the same time, as explained above, the purpose of the interviews was not to access an underlying truth, and nor was it to demand coherence or consistency. I was often aware of a logical disjuncture between the facts as stated by applicants, and the circumstances of their case. In some interviews, the facts as given by applicants were directly contradicted by staff. I here deferred to Charmez' advice to attend to the content and themes of the encounter, the constructions of self that participants

were engaged in, over 'veracity' (Charmaz, 2014). I also considered these narratives as examples of resistive discourse, with participants subverting dominant discourses and resisting categorisation, such as managing a stigmatised identity as a woman whose children had been taken into care by retelling the story one of agency and sacrifice. Here, applicants were clearly aware of societal expectations but, through selective inclusion of information, were able to communicate how they wanted to be understood (Czarniawska, 2004; Tamboukou, 2003, 2008)

Indeed, asserting control of information was sometimes important to applicant-participants (see Manohar, 2013). In one interview, this was made particularly clear to me, when a participant pointed out that he could say what he wanted and that I would have no ability to fact check what he was saying. He saw himself as someone extremely skilled at deception. As he put it, 'lying is my superpower'. This was, for me, a powerful reminder that the corpus of data I was amassing was a social construction, and one which, potentially, had meaning only within the specific temporal and spatial context in which it was created (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998).

5.2.1.4 Space and the interview encounter

Space is recognised as a factor in interview dynamics. Finding a quiet space to conduct interviews was often a significant problem. While my questions were designed to be open and non-prescriptive, and elicit participant 'voice', they still took place in a specific social environment. Participants were given as much choice as possible over where interviews occurred, yet for all groups of participants, the role of space as a constraint upon the interview was a concern.

For applicant-participants, this issue was most evident. While applicants were offered different options over where the interview occurred, including where possible the option of leaving the outpost space to go to a local coffee shop,⁵ in practice, for practical reasons, the interviews usually occurred in a space within the hostel. Although the applicants relationship to this space is not discussed within this thesis, this was often

⁵It was not always practically possible to offer an alternative location. For instance, some interviews took place late at night or early in the morning, or on a Sunday, when no venues existed aside from the outpost space. Further, particularly in rural/semi-rural local authorities, no nearby alternative venues existed. No participants were interviewed where their participation required the presence of a support worker: although ongoing support would not preclude ability to give informed consent, in practice this issue did not arise. However, for several applicants with children or other caring responsibilities, leaving the hostel space would have been difficult or impossible

a complex, ambiguous environment for applicant-participants, in which themes of trauma, control and safety all played out (Bimpson et al., 2020; Gengler, 2012). Such spaces are negotiated and contested and their relationship to power and control for different actors is complex, negotiated and contested (Johnsen et al., 2005; Lawson and Elwood, 2014; J. May et al., 2007; Speer, 2017). Applicant-participants with young children were sometimes necessarily interviewed with their children close by, in spaces where children could play, although interviewees also often shared care of each other's children so they could be interviewed. Where young children were present, this clearly determined the content of the interview in that participants who were parents were careful about both the content and communication of sensitive or distressing events. Thus, caring responsibilities, and particularly concern for the safety and wellbeing of the cared for other, became an active factor in structuring how different identities and narratives were constructed within the interview-encounter (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998; Oakley, 1981; Tronto, 2017).

The spaces in which I interviewed sometimes had additional resonance for applicant-participants, due to their other functions. For instance, in one night shelter, I would later learn that the interview room I was allocated was also used as a space during the night where those staying temporarily would be sent if they needed space to 'calm down'. This meant, in practice, that it was used to give residents 'time out' from fights or aggressive behaviour toward staff, suggesting it was likely to be associated with punishment and banishment for applicant-participants. Further, the room had a one-way mirror to the main office, of which the participants were well aware, and so had strong associations for them with surveillance. In a small number of cases I also interviewed applicant-participants in their own rooms within hostels: these interviews were notable for being extended, with participants appearing to be relaxed.⁶

Several interviews did, however, occur in neutral spaces. For applicant-participants recruited through social media, the meeting took place at a location of their choice. A small number of applicant-participants recruited through outposts also chose to meet (sometimes on a different day) in a local coffee shop. In all cases, in practice, these were local coffee

⁶Applicant-participants were only interviewed in their own rooms if two criteria were met. First, the applicant-participant had to specifically and spontaneously request this as a preferred location, and second hostel staff had to confirm that the applicant-participant was not considered to be a risk. A buddying-in system was also employed with hostel staff where interviews occurred in private rooms.

shops selected by the applicant.⁷ Participants who were interviewed in coffee shops were bought at least one hot drink (in addition to payment for participation for applicant-participants, see below). However, refreshments were also supplied during most interviews undertaken in outposts.

The impact of space upon worker-participants at first sight appeared less compelling. Most workers were interviewed in their place of work. However, it was also evident that privacy was a concern in this group. For instance, in several interviews workers displayed behaviour which indicated concern about being overheard- lowering their voice, checking that interviews would be anonymised (anxiety here related primarily to ensuring that their local authority would not be disclosed), or getting up to check that the door was shut. All workers who were interviewed outwith their place of work specifically noted that, had they been interviewed in the workplace, they would not have been willing to share the information they had with me. These interviews with workers outside their workplace represented a small percentage of the total, but were especially long, detailed and revealing.

5.2.2 Field notes and photographs

The primary means of data collection in this study was qualitative interviews, as explained above. However, these were supplemented by the use of field notes, diary entries and photographs which were taken while I was present in the field⁸. Field notes, photographs and sketches in this study were intended to supplement and contextualise interview data, particularly to understand how bureaucratic space was used. They often provided material for specific questions and were often relevant in coding (see below). For instance, the copious drawing and notes taken when visiting different local authority offices structured my understanding of the role of securitisation and spatiality as explored in Chapter 7. Photographs, drawings and field notes in this context became primarily an *aide memoire*, which also doubled as a useful way to illustrate specific themes (see Chapter 7 in particular). The purpose of photographs, drawings and field notes was not, however, to capture a static reality, but rather to understand how different individuals interacted with spaces in different ways,

⁷Although an effort was always made to find an alternative neutral and private space, such as a private room at Cardiff University, no participant chose to do this.

⁸It should be noted that I had initially intended to use field observations and particularly photographs and drawings, to a much greater extent than might be evident from Chapters 6,7 and 8. This additional fieldwork was to be conducted in the summer of 2020, but became impossible due to COVID-19, which rendered fieldwork impossible.

at different times (Foucault, 1979; Pink, 2001).

5.2.3 Participants

This section presents some broad and general findings about participants, to contextualise the later findings. This information is primarily derived from interviews given: no systematic attempt was made to collect demographic data (such as age, gender or ethnicity) or information about housing or employment histories, or specific prior experiences. These observations are, then, based on a non-systematic appraisal of participants' own perceptions of their situations, and the information they shared *spontaneously* during the interview-encounter. Thus, the information presented here should be regarded itself as a constructed artefact of the encounter, rather than derived from an ontological certainty (Charmaz, 2014; T. Miller et al., 2012). The intention of avoiding collection of categorical data was to avoid the imposition of categories upon participants. However, erasure, arising from not asking these questions is recognised. In particular, this approach results in a significant reduction in the generalisability of the study, since the extent to which different ethnic groups, age groups and genders other than female and male have been sampled was not ascertained (see S. Ahmed, 2012; Currah and Mulqueen, 2011; T. Miller et al., 2012; Puwar, 2004a; Spade, 2006 for a fuller discussion of these issues). This is considered to be both a limitation and point of learning for future studies.

5.2.3.1 General methodological considerations

Sampling Lee (1993) regards the purpose of sampling to be 'to select elements for study in a way which adequately represents a population of interest, both in relation to the purpose of research and at reasonable cost.' (ibid:60). Here, a theoretical sampling approach (Bryman, 2016) was adopted, in that participant groups were selected based upon their potential to provide information which can resolve the research question. The purpose of theoretical sampling is to construct a meaningful and generalisable data set, which can be used to test the proposed theory (Bryman, 2016; Charmaz, 2014). Thus, while sufficient participants should be included for robust results, the primary concern should be to include participants whose experiences allow the research questions to be addressed (see Bryman, 2016; Silverman, 2016).

Anonymity Extending beyond the broader entitlement to anonymity for research participants within social science research (Bryman, 2016), all participants were recognised at potentially higher risk if they became identifiable since either their jobs or their homelessness applications could be jeopardised. Several decisions have been taken regarding reporting within this thesis to reflect this elevated risk. First, minimal information has been given about the participating local authorities, with a comparative approach to different organisational characteristics or needs avoided. Second, where quantitative data has been used to describe participant characteristics, small numbers (under 5) are recorded as $n < 5$. Further, in some cases exact participant breakdowns (for instance by gender) are suppressed to avoid identification. The ethical considerations relating to anonymity are discussed in greater detail in 4.2.4.3 *Confidentiality and anonymity*, below. Finally, use of percentages is preferred to raw quantities as a method of deliberately reducing precision and so increasing anonymity.

5.2.3.2 Applicant participants

Applicant-participants were understood as those who participated in the study based on having made at least one homelessness application since the enactment of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 (in April 2015). A total of 44 applicant participants were recruited.

Recruitment Applicant-participants were recruited in two ways: from outpost sites, and via advertisement. Outpost sampling is defined as recruitment from sites where the participant group of interest is especially likely to congregate (Lee, 1993). Within this study, outpost sites included temporary accommodation, various types of hostels/shelters (including specialist hostels, young peoples hostels, and family hostels) and day centres. The aim was to capture a broad range of experiences, and particularly to gain a sample that included women, and parents and families.⁹ This was facilitated by building relationships with key gatekeepers, such as hostel managers. Outpost sampling is a well-established approach in homelessness research (see, for instance, Fitzpatrick, Bramley, and Johnsen, 2013; Johnsen et al., 2005; Mackie and Thomas, 2014). However, a key limitation of an outpost site sampling strategy is that it recruits only from those who use the particular congregation point (Lee,

⁹To reduce risk to participant anonymity, a detailed discussion of recruitment location is not given

1993). There is considerable stratification in the homeless population regarding the demographic and social profiles of different services. For instance, as previously discussed, hostels and shelters may be offputting and dangerous for some sub-populations of homeless people, and 'hidden homeless' individuals may not use the outposts normally associated with homelessness. (Casey et al., 2008; Coolhart and Brown, 2017; Mayock et al., 2015; Reppond and Bullock, 2020; Willse, 2015) I was aware of a risk of over-use of an outpost strategy leading to an overly homogeneous sample (Lee, 1993). To address this, an advertising approach was used to recruit applicants via social media. This was primarily through advertisements shared by local homelessness and advice organisations, and word of mouth. Where applicant-participants were recruited from outpost sites, in all cases interviews were conducted on or very close to the site. The latter situation applied in the case of some generalist hostels with an attached or associated coffee shop: here applicant-participants sometimes elected to be interviewed in this, potentially more neutral, space. Four-fifths of applicants (79%) were recruited directly from outpost sites, with 21% recruited via social media.

Primary accommodation at the time of interview While participation in the study was open to all those who had made at least one homelessness application since April 2015, in practice all participants in the study believed themselves to have an open homelessness application.¹⁰

The biggest single group of applicants were those whose primary accommodation was generalist services (40%). This accommodation included night shelters (where applicants usually had to leave the accommodation during the day) and general temporary accommodation. This included generalist accommodation for specific age ranges (notably for under 25s¹¹). Local authorities appeared to vary considerably in terms of whether temporary accommodation was restricted to those accepted to be in, or believed to be likely to be in, priority need. In several local authorities, it appeared that applicants were housed in generalist hostels without a pri-

¹⁰It should be noted that a small number of applicants believed themselves to have an open homelessness application, but also had not had contact with the Local Authority for several months, meaning that there is a possibility that their cases had been closed

¹¹A decision was taken to include these hostels along with generalist hostels because they appeared to have much in common, and in practice to offer little evidence of automatic age-specific support to all applicants. The primary utility of this approach is that it improves anonymity. There is a high possibility that young people's experiences were distinct (following prior literature, for instance, Mackie et al., 2017). An investigation of this would ideally include young people's experiences in family hostels and those not housed through services.

ority need decision.¹² The second largest group were those living in 'family hostels' (30%). While in theory, most such hostels were also open to single applicants, in practice every applicant-participant interviewed who was living in a family hostel had resident children under 18.¹³ The third group were those who were not housed by services at the time of the interview (21%). In most cases, these participants were sofa surfing or staying with friends. Some had made contact via social media while others were recruited via daycentres. Finally, a small number were in specialist hostels where they received ongoing and intensive support¹⁴ (9%). This group was entirely comprised of single applicants, who had typically passed through generalist services.

Circumstances at time of application Applicants were not asked to provide detailed information about their circumstances, reflecting the non-positivist nature of the study. With this restriction in mind, some broad, tentative observations about the sample are provided below.

- *Homelessness* Most applicants were recruited from some form of temporary accommodation. All applicants who made independent contact had experienced a period according with the criteria for statutory homelessness. Further, applicants were asked to discuss their experiences of interacting with homelessness services as part of the interviews. Based upon information about circumstances, all applicants appeared to have been statutorily homeless at least once since the introduction of the new Act (Chapter 4). It was also common for applicants to discuss experiences of approaching the local authority at the prevention stage (when they were threatened with homelessness within the next 56 days). However, it was not always clear

¹²Local authorities can technically house applicants even if they are not in or considered likely to be in priority need. However, it is also possible that, in some cases applicants simply did not know that they were considered to be likely to be in priority need.

¹³This group was very likely to be considered in priority need, although in some cases this was in question due to uncertainty over whether they had a 'local connection' or were culpable in their own homelessness ('intentionality')- see above.

¹⁴Specialist hostels included in this study as sites of direct recruitment were not population-specific: in all cases they were mixed gender spaces, where applicants were living in order to access additional intensive support. I did not recruit from any hostels offering particular forms of support, or targeted at specific groups- for instance, hostels for women who had experienced domestic abuse, or for those dealing with substance use issues. No participants recruited other than at outpost sites reported that they were currently living in specialist hostels. Some participants had, however, previously been resident in specialist hostels aimed at particular populations

whether a duty had been accepted in the case of these applicants. Applicant-participants often believed that they had been turned away at this point without a case being opened. It should also be noted that very few applicants reported receiving information about their case's legal status: whether a duty had been accepted and what stage their case was at.¹⁵

- *Priority need* I initially intended to compare applicants according to whether or not they were considered to be in priority need; however it was often difficult to identify whether a priority need decision had been taken or not. Most locations from which applicants were recruited accepted both those likely to be in priority need and not, and many applicants simply did not know what the status of their application was.
- *Prevention stage* As previously discussed, and discussed elsewhere, the new Act is notable for its focus on prevention (Mackie et al., 2017). Although I had initially intended to recruit applicants who had entered the system at the prevention stage (while threatened with imminent homelessness, rather than actually homeless), this group proved extremely difficult to recruit from directly, since they did not routinely use services. Some participants had entered the system at the prevention stage, but often understood themselves to have been turned away without a case being opened.¹⁶ In practice, all participants in this study had been through a (sometimes very brief) period of statutory homelessness, meaning that they were highly likely to fall under s73.

Gender: Over two-thirds of applicant-participants were female. This is a much higher percentage of female applicants than routinely found in homelessness studies which do not explicitly recruit women¹⁷. It may

¹⁵Originally, I had intended to compare applicants according to the stage of the case that they were at. It quickly became evident that this was simply not possible without a change in the approach to include significant collaboration with third sector or statutory bodies, because applicants themselves very seldom had this information.

¹⁶It is difficult to say whether a case was in fact opened or not in these cases, however applicants in certain local authorities consistently reported being asked to return repeatedly with different pieces of information, and of local authority staff refusing to accept applications. This was also complicated in cases where applications were made based on housing inadequacy: these cases sometimes appeared to be treated as prevention, rather than relief, cases.

¹⁷Because administrative data produced on homelessness applications collects data at a household level, rates of female homelessness are not known, but there is evidence that they are likely to be equal to male homelessness (Mackie et al., 2017)

reflect the sampling approach which deliberately recruited from family hostels as well as generalist hostels. However, most women in the sample were not, in fact, resident parents to at least one child under 18, and were not recruited from, or living in, family hostels. Rather, like men, they were primarily recruited from generalist services. Just over two-thirds of parents overall, and just over four-fifths of resident parents, were women.

5.2.3.3 Worker participants

Worker-participants were understood as those employed either directly or indirectly to work with homeless people by Welsh local authorities. A total of 54 individuals were recruited.

Recruitment Worker-participants were recruited primarily from their place of work (either local authority homelessness offices, or local authority funded third sector organisations) usually in the course of several visits. In a small number of cases ($n < 5$), worker-participants contacted me directly and asked to participate in the study. In most cases, this was after seeing social media advertisements aimed at applicant-participants. To maximise the anonymity of participants, no specific details are given about the local authorities from which recruitment occurred. All worker-participants were employed at the time of interview by a Welsh local authority or third sector organisation funded directly or indirectly by, or working closely with the Local Authority.¹⁸ A mixture of urban, semi-urban and rural local authorities were included.

Role at time of interview Worker-participants were further divided into workers with direct decision making power, directly employed by the local authority ($n=30$) and workers in support roles ($n=24$). In the 'workers with direct decision-making power' only those who made homelessness decisions directly were included: this specifically excluded senior managers.¹⁹

The 'workers in support roles' group included workers employed either by the local authority or a funded, usually co-located, organisation. Here, only workers in roles where they could feasibly influence homelessness de-

¹⁸The Welsh third sector is complex in terms of funding, and organisations often have multiple funding streams which may vary in transparency. Funding by the local authority was seen as a strong indication of a close working relationship, as was the use of embedded caseworkers, and direct referral routes into and out of homelessness services.

¹⁹A small number of contextual interviews were conducted with key informants in the early stages of the research, including senior managers. This both provided helpful context and assisted with gaining access. However, these interviews do not form part of the analysed dataset.

cisions were included²⁰ The importance of this group was an unexpected finding. A decision was taken to incorporate them after it became clear that, in practice, they were critical to the forms of governance being undertaken, not only in the provision of extensive affective labour (Penz et al., 2017), but because, in practice, they frequently had significant influence over decisions.

In the analysis chapters (6,7 and 8) worker roles are clearly indicated after quotes. Unless otherwise indicated, emergent themes were derived from both decision-making and support workers.

Duration of experience: Around two-thirds of workers interviewed had been in post before the enactment of the new legislation. However, this varied considerably between local authorities: one in particular appeared to have very high staff turnover. Most local authorities and third sector organisations had undergone some restructuring following the Act and had recruited new specialist staff to reflect this, although in most cases, these roles fell out with the scope of this thesis.

Gender: 65% of the total group were female. Of those working directly for the local authority, 67% were female. Among those working in roles aligned with, but not directly participating in, decision making, 63% were female.

5.2.4 Ethical considerations

This thesis understands marginality and vulnerability in an expansive sense, considering these to be non-reductive nor static subject positions (Hedva, 2016; Hurley, 2007; Tronto, 2017). Ethical approval for the Study was obtained from the School of Geography and Planning before commencement of fieldwork (September 2018). However, the utility of ethi-

²⁰In practice senior managers in support services often had ongoing interaction with clients and more involvement in cases and so were included on a case-by-case basis, if their level of involvement seemed to justify it. However, some workers in support roles were not included, where their role had little impact on homelessness decisions. For instance, playworkers and specialist skills coaches were not included. In practice, support workers included in the study needed to have either a significant support role in assisting applicants in making an application or their reports upon a service user to be important to homelessness decisions. This group typically not only assisted with, but also sometimes processed, but did not determine, claims, but often had considerable input into decisions over compliance with behaviour conditions, reflecting the elevated importance of the 'shadow state' within Welsh homelessness law. The subject position of support workers can be understood in terms of 'new localism' (McKee, 2016), an increasingly prevalent approach in which local and national governments devolve core activities to third sector, funded, organisations.

cal accountability, through a reflective approach to practical, applied and contextualised ethics is also critical to a good practice within the research encounter, extending beyond submission of an ethics application (Bryman, 2016; Charmaz, 2014). Punch (2013) identifies key potential ethical issues in social research, which should be considered throughout the research cycle: harm, consent, privacy and data confidentiality. With the addition of specific consideration of the use of incentives within research, these are used to structure a consideration of the ethical approaches within this research.

5.2.4.1 Harm

Attempting to avoid harm to research participants is a key aim of social science research and is historically associated with the development of detailed ethical frameworks which specify how research should be conducted (Punch, 2013). At the same time, harm tends to be understood contextually, as balanced by both the broader social utility of the research, and the fairness of causing harm to the specific group being studied (Edwards, 2002). To some extent, the risk assessment associated with the ethics submission for this project addresses the possibility of causing harm. However, harm is a complex notion, encompassing both short-term, immediate ill-effects and longer term, often less predictable, experiences. Further, harm may be not only felt at an individual level, but to families, associates and communities. For instance, as discussed above and below, the potential for harm in the form of stigma or humiliation to occur to families of applicant-participants was a primary motivation for both avoiding a comparative approach and for preferring codes to pseudonyms.

Qualitative interview questions Qualitative interviews have particular potential to cause harm in the form of upsetting psychological consequences (Bryman, 2016). Since interview methodology is discussed above, I here focus upon the ways in which the study methodology attempted to avoid harm within interview encounters. First, the interview schedule was designed to avoid or minimise questions with particular potential to be upsetting, including omission of sensitive topics where possible. For instance, although I was initially interested in adverse experiences as part of the homelessness journey, I avoided directly asking about this, rather allowing participants to direct the conversation into this area if they felt comfortable. I also avoided potentially humiliating questions or dwelling

on stigmatising experiences, such as having children taken into care or being incarcerated. This did risk compromising the richness of the data and posed a potential methodological issue: participant-applicants who discussed these experiences in most detail were those who felt comfortable to do so and who raised them spontaneously. I propose that this is acceptable within the broader relativist/constructivist framing of the work, in which attention is given to how participants produce discourse, rather than assuming a realist-evaluative ontology (Braun and Clarke, 2006). However, this also stands alone as a decision (and potential limitation) taken from an ethical standpoint. This approach also meant inscribing my own preconceptions about what might be sensitive or humiliating, and I was conscious that avoiding direct discussion of these topics might also reinforce their stigmatisation: again, this represents a limitation. Interviews were led by the participant, as detailed above. No questions were compulsory, and this was made clear to participants at the outset of, and throughout, interviews.

Interview setting A detailed discussion of the settings of interviews is given above. Crucially, applicants were offered a choice as to where they were interviewed and, in all cases, could decide who else was present for the interview. Applicant-participants in institutional settings where support was available were always asked if they wanted a support worker or friend present, while those who contacted me via social media were also told that they could be accompanied if they wished. Very few applicant-participants chose to be interviewed with another person present: a small number initially requested their support worker stayed, but then asked them to leave. The inclusion/exclusion criteria included an assessment of whether the applicant was able to consent to participation (see above and below) meaningfully. The systematic exclusion from social research of those unable to satisfy researchers that they can meaningfully consent is recognised as a significant driver of inequalities within research (Duncombe and Jessop, 2002; Punch, 2013). Here, however, the small scale of the project, and particularly the fact that inclusion/exclusion decisions usually had to be taken quickly, meant that I erred on the side of caution. This is, again, recognised as a methodological weakness.

Participant fatigue Semi-structured, open ended interviews also raise concern over applicant fatigue. Allowing applicants to set the pace and duration of the interview produced some extended interviews, in some

cases nearly 3 hours long. In most cases, however, extended interviews did not produce a significantly greater quantity of included material than shorter interviews, and often simply contained a greater conversational element.²¹ I started to draw the interview to a close after 2 hours. However, I also recognised that people participate in interviews for a variety of reasons, and that interviews may include a social function (Oakley, 2018). Longer interviews also frequently included broader discussion of homelessness as a social phenomenon, or a problematisation of concepts such as vulnerability or disempowerment. In other cases, applicant-participants in particular were keen to share humanising information about their lives, to show photographs, or to discuss political events. Applicants were also often keen to know more about me, and drew parallels with our life. Paradoxically, these elements of the interview have in most cases needed to be omitted or occasionally deliberately changed to ensure anonymity (see below), highlighting the potential for research to reinforce dehumanisation. Particularly in the context of a thesis which argues against the processing of applicants according to time limits (see Chapter 7), I felt it to be important to give applicants this space, even where there was no discernible research outcome.

Sampling Two specific ethical issues arise over sampling methodology and harm. First, the sampling strategy, and particularly the heavy reliance upon gatekeepers and outpost sites, meant that involvement in the study was often known to either those with some ability to influence homelessness outcomes (in the case of applicant-participants) or employers (for worker-participants). I was particularly concerned about participation in order to please or maintain a connection with staff or managers. Participants recruited from outpost sites were ostensibly willing to refuse to take part quite openly, and did not express concern over repercussions. However, as discussed above, these concerns may have affected either willingness to participate (limiting the sample) or response to questions.

A second sampling issue related to harm is that of safeguarding for applicants recruited via advertising. However, these applicants met the inclusion criteria of competency to consent to participation, and an approach whereby vulnerability was assumed on the basis of homelessness was considered inappropriate (Duncombe and Jessop, 2002).

²¹This is not to dismiss the value of this material, which provides the potential for future exploration of several key themes. Neither is it intended to minimise the importance of an extended period of time spent on encouraging applicants to feel comfortable in the interview setting.

5.2.4.2 Consent

Informed consent is understood as occurring where the participant is fully aware of, and in agreement with, the implications of their participation (Bryman, 2016). Research ethics, including those obtained for this project, require consent to be obtained not only for the applicant's current involvement, but their future ongoing involvement (in terms of the ongoing use of their data). Considerable attention has, however, been paid to the complexities of obtaining informed consent among groups for whom understanding the implications of research participation may be particularly difficult, and indeed the politics of excluding those who are deemed unable to consent, particularly where this is a blanket exclusion derived from an understanding of certain groups as especially 'vulnerable'²² (T. Miller and Bell, 2002; T. Miller et al., 2012; Stacey, 1988). Simply excluding certain groups due to a fear that they cannot give meaningful informed consent also raises ethical issues, since it results in a situation where societal knowledge is primarily about those who are considered capable of consent. Birch and Mauthner (2012) observe that informed consent practices often implicitly demand that the participant perform a subjectivity which aligns with that of *homo economicus*, or ethical selfhood: being independent, rational, autonomous and capable of taking calculated risks. Reflecting upon this, I consider that 'taking consent' as a routine practice carries with it a danger of hubris, through creating a false sense of adequacy. I submit that informed consent should be not only an action taken during research but an ongoing practice which informs the entire research cycle.

Formal consent Participants were asked to formally consent to participation before being interviewed. This included consent to audio recording and re-use of data. In most cases, this was done using a formal consent form (see Appendix A). However, in some cases this was clearly or potentially inappropriate. I was particularly aware to the known high rates of low literacy among homeless adults (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). My primary aim was to ensure that applicants had the best idea I was able to give of the nature of the project, and had given informed consent on this basis. Both to maximise understanding and to reduce any sense of humiliation over literacy difficulties, I preferred to discuss the form with participants, and explain what each of the statements meant, rather than encourage them

²²in this study, this might include those experiencing complex mental ill-health, substance abuse, or trauma, and younger participants, including care-leavers).

to simply sign. In some cases, I therefore defaulted to verbal (recorded) consent.

Rapport and consent While the use of rapport within qualitative interviews is routine, it has the capacity to affect consent. As Dunscombe and Jessop (2002) argue, consent is given because it is socially expected, or because it arises from an affective 'fake friendship', then it is in fact deceptive, placing the extent to which it can be considered 'informed' in question. They observe that social researchers are systematically trained to engender this form of rapport, *specifically* (in part) to facilitate access to participants, and consent. This is heightened where gatekeepers are used to obtain access (as for most applicant-participants in this study), since participants may not easily be able to refuse to participate in research without unseen consequences. I propose that these issues are, in fact, impossible to address within the current dominant social science research paradigm. However, I took some steps to mitigate them. I tried to ensure that consent was ongoing and active (Punch, 2013). A small number of potential interviewees did elect not to continue, leaving before a discussion over consent. I also terminated a small number of interviews after I became concerned that participants could not give meaningful consent: recordings from these interviews were destroyed and were not included in the data corpus. This highlights the complexities involved in obtaining informed, meaningful consent: demonstrating that this requires not only that the participant is given sufficiently extensive information to make a considered decision, but that they are in fact capable of doing so (see (Hurley, 2007). Where interviews were terminated, participants were informed that I was ending the interview and would no longer be recording.²³

Particularly when applicants had shared especially disclosive, sensitive or compromising information, I reminded them that they could withdraw or selectively withdraw data from the study. While no participant completely withdrew after consent was given, on several occasions, participants did ask that I not include information they had given (here this information was simply not transcribed). I also reminded participants that recording could be turned off at any time, and a few participants did

²³These participants had initially appeared able to consent. In these cases, participants were still given incentives, to reflect their participation in the study (see below), and I remained talking to them for an extended period, reflecting Miller and Bell's observation that a method of reducing the power differential within interviews is to honour the therapeutic-social benefit to participants. However, I turned off the recording device and have excluded these interviews from the analysis. In all cases, these individuals were interviewed in a hostel environment where they had access to ongoing support.

ask I did this for brief periods (usually due to distress). I also tried to ensure that applicants did not feel a time pressure to participate and were able to take time to decide whether to take part. This was a key reason for adopting a strategy whereby I visited sites over several different days, often talking to potential participants about the project, before attempting to recruit participants for interviews. This highlighted the complexity of rapport: participants in this situation potentially participated due to a bond that had developed between us. However, this was usually built on mutual respect, in which I had been open about the project and my own positionality. While they may have participated partly to enjoy a quasi-social encounter, I argue that this is distinct from a deliberate creation of rapport (this theme is developed with regard to frontline workers in Chapters 6, 7 and 8).

5.2.4.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

To be identifiable as a research participant is often associated with a risk of harm, if not to an individual's current self then their future self. In practical terms, participant data was treated as confidential. It was transcribed as soon as possible (either by myself or a paid professional transcriber). Transcripts were then anonymised, with particularly identifying details removed or changed.²⁴ Information considered identifying is recognised to be subjective and contextual and require a value judgement, but particular care was taken to remove geographical details, children's names and ages, and extraneous biographical information²⁵. All non-anonymised data was stored on a password-protected laptop, and audio files were uploaded as soon as possible to the Cardiff University OneDrive system after interviews occurred and deleted once the interview had been transcribed and checked for accuracy. Participants were assigned a code at this point, comprising their status (applicant or worker), local authority, and number. Certain key information (for instance gender, location of the interview and, in the case of applicant-participants, some aspects of their homelessness experience), linked to their participant code was also entered into an SPSS database, which was similarly password protected

²⁴Details were changed only where they were regarded as non-substantive. Examples of acceptable change would be minor alterations to family or personal details - for instance, children's gender, or, within reason, their ages and number

²⁵The decision over the relevancy of biographical information is particularly difficult; however, as a rule, I removed extensive information which did not clearly relate to their experiences of homelessness, unless there was little chance that this could identify a participant.

and stored on a secure server (Cardiff University OneDrive). This occurred prior to the coding stage.

5.2.4.4 Pseudonyms

Participants were advised that their identity would not be revealed in research outputs and took part on this basis. Participants were assigned pseudonyms using a random name generator to assist with reader clarity²⁶ For some participants this anonymity was a strong concern. However, even for those who did not express a concern over their identity becoming known, there were two reasons why I decided to use blanket pseudonyms assigned by me. The first was the potential longevity of research, and hence the possibility that participants might reveal information which could, if linked to their identity, compromise them in future. Efforts were made not to include potentially compromising information; however, the future impact of particular information is also difficult to predict. Second, even where participants themselves were not concerned about being identified, in many cases identifying them risked also identifying family members (including children) and co-workers (Lahman et al., 2015). This sat in tension, for me, with the problematic nature of insisting that participant identities remained confidential. Requiring an individual's identity to be masked necessarily obscures their ownership of their work, and cannot be removed from the wider imbalance of power between researcher and participant (Lahman et al., 2015). I recognise, however, that choosing pseudonyms itself however reveals my own value judgements and assumptions regarding participants, and that this operates as a location where implicit bias can become apparent (Lahman et al., 2015). Participants were asked to indicate if there were any names they did not want to be assigned, however, and a few participants did request that they not be given certain names.

5.2.4.5 Incentives

Incentives have also been associated with compromising informed consent, particularly with groups deemed vulnerable, following the logic that

²⁶I had initially planned to ask participants for a chosen pseudonym. On reflection, I decided against this for two reasons. First, because I intended the research to have multiple outputs. Thus, retaining the same pseudonym magnified the risk of identification (which contravened my ethical approval). Second, in a prior, much smaller, study, I had found that participants often chose the same names. With a large number of participants, there became a significant risk that participants would either choose the same name, or a name which was the real name of an existing participant.

incentives will cause participants to over-ride their own self-preservation mechanisms and take part in potentially harmful research (Punch). Incentives for participants are recognised as a particularly contentious issue within research. While, on the one hand, the possibility of financial gain is sometimes considered to distort participant choice, placing them at risk of harm (Grant and Sugarman, 2004; Head, 2009), the alternative in this study was to ask participation from an already-marginalised group to give up their time unpaid, which was felt to be unethical and potentially exploitative (Thompson, 1996). Since, like all other participants, applicant-participants were interviewed specifically because their expertise was sought, to avoid compensating them in any way for their time for this was felt to be potentially exploitative (Thompson, 1996).

5.3 Analysis methodology

This section considers the approach taken to analysis of the data corpus, which comprised over 100 hours of interview data, together with field notes, drawings and photographs. In keeping with the Foucauldian approach within the thesis, Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2005) was used to inform the analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis informed how I understood the data. From a technical perspective, I used thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to analyse the data in a rigorous and systematic manner.

5.3.1 Theoretical approach: Critical Discourse Analysis

Transcripts were analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Critical discourse analysis uses an explicitly Foucauldian approach to data, providing tools to assess it within a broader context of shifting, competing social power. CDA considers spoken language and discourse, hence encompassing not only the words spoken but also the social context in which they are produced, what goes unsaid and why, the social conventions and assumptions summoned within the interview setting, and additionally how discourse itself is implicated in meaning-making. Thus, a CDA approach is of utility in understanding how meaning is understood, created and asserted, with specific regard to a power-based social context.

CDA is of particular utility in exploring how different ideas operate within an organisational context to create and uphold structures that justify exclusion and tracing how these change over time and in differ-

ent settings (Wodak and Meyer, 2015). Discourse is understood not only as reflective of, but as a strategy for resisting and reformulating, an individual's social reality. In performing analysis I particularly attended to the tensions between the discourse produced by organisations, and the experiences of those working and receiving services from them, regarding these as indicative of emergent, potentially new, discourses and modes of operation (Fairclough, 2005).

CDA is recognised to be of particular utility in understanding societal discourse, offering an approach through which to unpack the complexity and contradictions of particular discourses- how a discourse might be applied to one group, but another group exempted, or apply in one setting but not another. It also offers a framework to explore how discourses interact and multiply to reinforce and justify, or alternatively undermine each other. CDA attends to how different actors create and perform meaning, how this results in their actions becoming legitimated, and what social conventions it then normalises. This thesis particularly follows Fairclough's approach (2005). Fairclough identifies four key elements to which researchers should attend when performing CDA.

1. *Emergence* Fairclough suggests that discourses can appear within organisations without necessarily having a clear precedent. However, while such discourses appear to be new, in practice the generative inter-relationship between these new discourses and previously existing discourses must be considered.
2. *Hegemony* Fairclough understands discourses as operating politically to further certain political interests, and to construct these interests as normal, natural and mutual and hence foreclosing dissent. The *function* of discourse in terms of achieving hegemony should therefore be considered.
3. *Recontextualisation* Fairclough sees discourses as operating within an external field of understandings and meanings, necessitating attention to how external discourses become integrated, naturalised and internalised within organisational structures.
4. *Operationalisation*: Fairclough regards discourses as productive, creating new practices and procedures within organisations, and playing an ongoing role in shaping normative understandings.

The principles of CDA guided the coding decisions taken (see below), in that attention was paid to how discourses operated at different levels,

and with regard to different phenomena. It focused not only on what happened, but how this was understood- 'who uses language, how and where' (Van Dijk, 1997:2), and how it related to the social context.

5.3.1.1 Thematic approaches

Underpinning a theoretical critical discourse analysis approach, I used a thematic analysis strategy to assess and understand the data. Thematic analysis is an 'agnostic' methodology which can be applied across different theoretical approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is a method 'for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns' (Braun and Clarke, 2006:79) which offers a rigorous and systematic approach to understanding datasets and is particularly suited to qualitative interviews (BC). The coding process attended to the discourses being created, the feelings and experiences being evoked, and the assumptions upon which they relied. Reflecting the CDA approach used, coding was not evaluative of the Act as a whole, but instead sought to explore emerging discourses. My coding procedure closely followed that proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2014). They suggest that thematic analysis should incorporate the following components:

1. *Familiarisation*: Through repeated exposure and interaction with to the dataset, the researcher orientates themselves within it.
2. *Generating codes*: Systematic codes are then assigned to the data in a process of tentative organisation.
3. *Constructing themes*: An iterative process through which codes and familiarisation are used to identify patterns across the data.

I now consider each of these stages of thematic analysis in order.

5.3.1.2 Familiarisation

I closely followed the familiarisation procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Braun and Clarke regard familiarisation as the 'bedrock' of high-quality thematic analysis (ibid:23). Familiarisation provides an 'entry point' (ibid) to a text, allowing the researcher to orient themselves to the data corpus as a whole. This was particularly important in this study since it included a large, disparate data set. Familiarisation is an intense, active rather than passive process, which ideally includes re-experiencing the interview process by listening to interviews and re-reading transcripts.

While this stage aims not to produce codes, it has a tentative analytic function, generating early, provisional ideas.

During the process of familiarisation, I engaged with the data in several key ways. First, I re-read the transcripts several times, including along with the audio recordings at least once²⁷. Second, I kept detailed notes, including memo-style syntheses of emergent early ideas, consolidating these as the research process continued. This memo-keeping process was distinct from early coding in that I was interested in tentative hypotheses and possibilities emerging from the data, rather than attempting to organise or categorise data (Charmaz, 2014).

This detailed process of note-keeping and reflection was particularly useful in developing a reflexive approach to my data and helping me become aware of my own personal interest and potential interpretative biases (see above). For instance, early in the data collection cycle I became aware of a tendency to look for resistance and resistive practice within the accounts of applicant-participants. Here, my subject position closely mirrored that described by Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar (2019), in their work on the political validity of weariness. In common with them, I expected to find 'angry, politicised citizens ready to fight back against the injustice and mercilessness of the state.' (ibid:163), and hence risked projecting this expectation onto my data. The drawn out, iterative process of familiarisation allowed me to recognise, and give space to, counter-narratives, and so develop a more subtle and nuanced understanding of both applicant-participant and worker-participant subject positions. Extended reflective writing was also helpful to me in identifying personal biases toward interpreting particular stories. In another instance, I realised that, in certain interviews, I was overlaying both my cultural expectations of motherhood and my own personal emotional reaction to the possibility of being separated from my children onto interviews. Several interviews were with mothers who were no longer living with their children. Ongoing memo writing enabled me to realise that I had assumed that these women would feel distress as a consequence of this (to some extent following Bimpson et al., 2020). As a result of asking specific questions of the text, particularly around the discourse of maternal abjectivity (Jensen and Tyler, 2015), I realised that some of my female participants who were separated from their children did not understand this as a dis-

²⁷However, as explained above, for ethical/data protection reasons, audio files were destroyed after the accuracy of the transcript had been checked; hence this stage was not prolonged

troubling event, nor sought to immediately, or desperately, address this separation. Rather, reflecting some prior scholarship on the stigmatisation of absent parents, their feelings were ambivalent, but included relief and a sense of freedom, as well as a sense that their children's interests might be better served in care (Bimpson et al., 2020). Another point at which familiarisation memos were especially helpful was in interviews with decision-making front-line workers. Here, I was already aware of my own subject position and its potential to compromise my interpretation of these interviews, particularly coming from a career where I had frequently, necessarily, engaged adversarially with this group under both the prior and current Acts. I was aware that I came to these interviews, particularly with more senior workers, with an expectation that applicants were likely to be poorly treated and stereotyped. I was especially careful here to maintain reflective notes and try to represent the complexity of their position fairly.

5.3.1.3 Generating codes

Coding is the systematic approach of assigning categories to different parts of data. It helps the researcher understand the data, and the connections between different parts of the data and the research question. Here, the starting point was the tentative themes and emergent questions generated in the familiarisation stage. This process was iterative and occurred in several stages. Initially, I made notes on printed copies of my transcripts. I then assembled common codes from these notes and recoded using these codes. During this stage, I worked iteratively between NVivo and paper-and-pen methods. A long list of codes was then generated (see Figure 5.3): this allowed me to ensure that I was equally weighting each data item, and particularly avoiding over-focus on compelling or interesting examples. At this point, following the approach suggested by Charmaz (2014), I also worked iteratively with scholarly literature, allowing these to influence coding.

5.3.1.4 Constructing themes

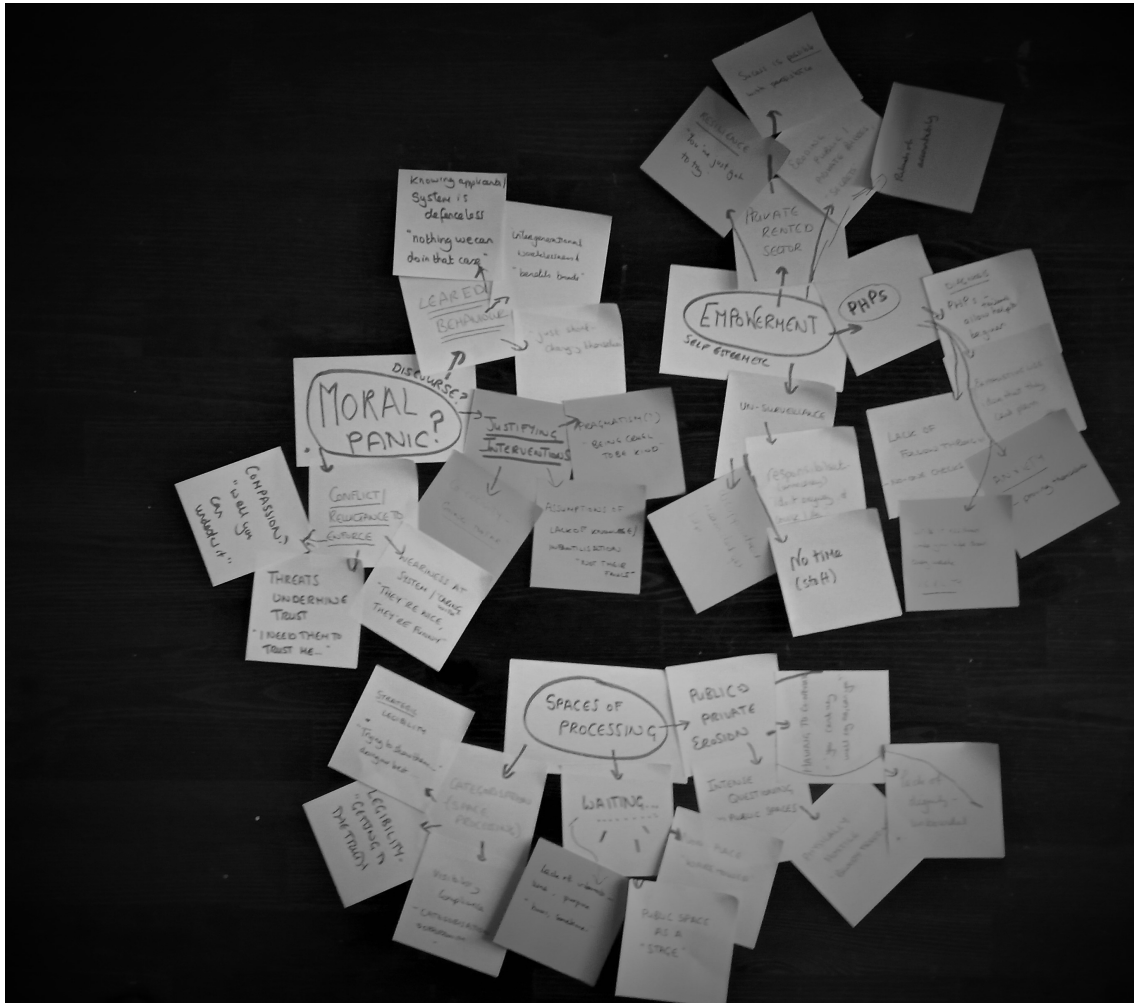
Braun and Clarke (2006) regard theme construction as a critical step in bringing together familiarisation and coding together with the research questions, to organise relevant data into overarching principles. This was an extended and highly iterative process in which I also adopted the constructivist grounded theory approach of referring back to prior scholar-

ship in order to create themes consistent with prior research. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), themes should be distinct from each other, yet complementary, and represent a single conceptual focus. Themes should also have internal coherence and consistency. The final set of themes included all relevant extracts, following the coding framework. However, in a departure from Braun and Clarke's approach, I did not adopt clear or pithy titles for themes, rather preferring a messy, fuzzy theme name or quote. I found that a less concrete approach was better suited to often liminal and ambiguous discursive themes. Themes often incorporated contradiction and challenge, reflecting participant narratives in which multiple seemingly diverse or opposing ideas were presented in close succession. Thematic categories organised by idea, which remained open and imprecise, allowed me to retain this complexity until the point of analysis and made it easier to recognise and give space to resistance and contradiction. To help me construct themes, I again used a modified form of the grounded theory memo approach. This allowed me to reflect upon the emergent themes, their fit with the data-set as a whole, and also their relationship to existing literature. Memos were especially helpful to me in identifying both key patterns and duplication. They also assisted with focus: deciding which themes might be discarded for the purpose of this project, or where I might combine themes. Memos further assisted in integrating and conceptualizing discordance and 'deviant cases': understanding how these fit is critical to developing a robust theme (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2013, 2014; Charmaz, 2014; Punch, 2013; Silverman, 2006, 2016)

I utilised a three-tier hierarchical system to organise themes (adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2013). Overarching, or Level 1 themes were used to reflect broad ideas (moral panic, empowerment and spaces of processing). This corresponded broadly, but not perfectly, to the three analysis chapters which follow (Chapter 6,7,and 8). Each Level 1 theme was supported by several Level 2 themes, which provided nuance, context and often contradiction within the Level 1 theme. For instance, in the case of the Level 1 theme Moral Panic, the Level 2 themes included both the ideas that participants were engaging in learned behaviour which consequently required active intervention, and also evidence that frontline workers were in fact ambivalent about enforcing this. Finally, the Level 2 themes were supported themselves by several Level 3 sub-themes, which expanded the themes further. Level 3 themes often had a sub-name, in the form of a quote from a participant, which functioned to remind me of the discourse produced by participants in relation to this theme. Figure 5.2 shows the

iterative process that gave rise to the codes, while Figure 5.3 summarises the working codes I used at the point at which I began writing the analysis chapters.

Figure 5.2: An iterative data collection process



Over the data collection period, I used a variety of methods to keep track of codes, including NVivo and mind-mapping software. Post-it notes, in different colours, proved to be one of the most flexible and useful method of developing a coding framework. They could be easily moved around and added to, which allowed me to avoid early imposition of categories upon the data. Figure 5.3 (overleaf) provides a text version of these post-it note codes. The process of developing themes and codes did not end once data had been categorised but rather, following Charmaz (2014), developed into the writing-up process, a point at which new connections often became evident.

Figure 5.3: Codes and themes

LEVEL 1 THEME	LEVEL 2 THEME	LEVEL 3 THEME	
Codes	Moral panic	<p>Applicants as real victims <i>"Short-changing themselves"</i></p> <p>System vulnerable to "knowing" applicants <i>"There's nothing we can do"</i></p> <p>Intergenerational worklessness/benefits broods</p> <p>Infantilisation/paternalism <i>"Not their fault"</i></p> <p>Pragmatism <i>"Being cruel to be kind"</i></p> <p>Fear of being co-erced <i>"Going too far."</i></p> <p>Compassion <i>"Well you can understand it."</i></p> <p>Threats risk undermining trust <i>"I need them to trust me."</i></p> <p><i>"Caring with", weariness "They're nice, they're funny."</i></p>	
	Empowerment	<p>Lack of time (staff)</p> <p>Responsibilises applicants <i>"I do it anyway"</i></p> <p>Disappointment from applicants at lack of help.</p> <p>Resilience- <i>"You've just got to try"</i></p> <p>Erosion of public/private divide needed for "success"</p> <p>Success=persistence</p> <p><i>"Rituals of accountability"</i> (doing things for the sake of it"</p> <p>Anxiety- proving themselves <i>"bucking bronco."</i></p> <p>As opportunity for *personal* (non-generic) help/intervention/diagnosis (Un)future. Idea that they can't plan, as characteristic of welfare subjectivity.</p> <p>Enforced visibility/surveillance <i>"write it down."</i></p>	
	Spaces of processing	<p>Strategic legibility <i>"Doing my best."</i></p> <p>Legibility <i>"Getting to the truth"</i></p> <p>Visibilising compliance / being "tested"</p> <p>Intense (inappropriate?) questioning in public space</p> <p>Having to co-operate <i>"You can't very well say no."</i></p> <p>Physically hostile space <i>"Bloody freezing"</i></p> <p>Lack of information: time, purpose <i>"Hours, sometimes"</i></p> <p>Non-place <i>"Warehoused"</i></p> <p>Public space as "stage", behaviour on display</p>	
		Learned behaviour	
		Justifying intervention	
		Ambivalence over enforcement	
		Un-surveillance	
		Private rented sector	
		Personal Housing Plans	
		Categorisation	
		Public/private erosion	
		Waiting	

A tentative, working, version of the codes and themes developed by the end of the analysis process. These themes continued to be refined during the writing up process, at which point additional connections often became apparent.

Chapter 6

Abandonment: moral panic, infantilisation and ambivalent authority

This chapter explores the changing discourses within homelessness service provision following the commencement of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, specifically the shift to conditionality-based homelessness relief. As previously discussed, the new Act represented a broad conceptual shift in terms of help offered to homeless households, from a right to extensive housing support and provision for a very limited number of households, to a near-universal right to more limited provision. For those owed no duty under prior legislation (beyond a minimal right to 'advice and assistance'), the Act potentially *increases* their state entitlement, giving them a right to ongoing, if unspecified and unregulated, help to prevent and/or relieve their homelessness. However, for those previously owed a duty under homelessness legislation, this can be understood in terms of abandonment: the introduction of legislative and policy tools to compel applicants to reconceptualise their relationship to the state as precarious and conditional (Jacobs and Manzi, 2020). The introduction of conditionality is in line with the expectations placed upon users of other welfare services, by making retention of access to state help conditional upon performance of ongoing behavioural compliance (Hickman et al., 2017; Watts et al., 2014).

Conditionality itself is not new to the British state housing system, having long been present within provision of temporary accommodation and social housing (Jacobs and Manzi, 2020; Watts et al., 2018). Additionally, as previously discussed, homelessness legislation has long excluded

those considered culpable in creating their own homelessness (see Chapter 4). However, in making ongoing access to help conditional upon ongoing *co-operation*, the legislation shifts homelessness provision away from the principle of unconditional help, albeit available only to a minority of applicants (Mackie et al., 2017). The first research question considered how discourse operates to construct and justify the change from a highly selective, paternalistic, needs based system to one of universal yet conditional help. This requires the Act to be considered in terms not only of the technologies it produces (the explicit citizen activation discussed in greater depth in the subsequent chapters) but the surrounding justificatory discourse. Following Fairclough (2005), in this chapter I attend to how understandings are created, constructed, interact with and constrain existing narratives, particularly those surrounding abjectivity and welfare entitlement. Extending Lipsky's (2010) argument that 'street-level bureaucrats'- non (senior) managerial frontline workers are in a unique position to understand (and so explain) the dilemmas of policy and legislative enactment, since it is through their mundane and routine daily negotiations between legislation, layers of policy, local practice, and the immediate needs of their clients that the law is enacted, in this chapter I attend especially to their accounts, augmented with the experiences of applicants themselves.

In this chapter I present the argument that dialectical and competing discourses of deservedness, static welfare subjectivism but also kindness and pragmatism are critical to structuring constructions of the change from a highly selective rights based system, to one of universal yet conditional help. These discourses of deservedness are produced by and through frontline workers, informing their practice and justifying change; yet to fully understand frontline interactions it is essential to also consider frontline work as emotional and pragmatic. In support of this argument I make two key claims. First, I show that moral panic over intergenerational worklessness is a key structuring mechanism for worker discourse over deservedness of welfare subjects. However, this is a pragmatic and often compassionate, rather than revanchist or punitive construction. Second, I demonstrate that the shifting nature of authority is difficult for workers to manage, and that they must particularly navigate the implications of a new coercive power, while simultaneously developing ongoing rapport based relationships with applicants.

6.1 Folk devils and moral panics: shifting discourse

An extensive 'moral panic' emerged in the years following the Global Financial Crash, intertwined with significant cuts to welfare services, particularly housing subsidies (Garthwaite, 2011; Jensen, 2014; Powell, 2015). Moral panics can be understood as a form of political discourse which aims to justify legislative and social change. They are typically based in 'othering' discourses in which one group becomes highly problematised and understood as a threat to society (Cohen, 2011; Hall et al., 2013). Reflecting both the widespread problematisation of welfare subjects in general, a key, initial question was the extent to which there was evidence for such a 'moral panic' among frontline workers.

Some housing options workers clearly did see some applicants as operating in a deliberately manipulative and cynical way in order to avoid council housing. This had some overtones of moral panic, in its invocation of the frightening 'other', and particularly a 'folk devil' (Cohen, 2011), a scapegoated, deviant outsider to blame for society's problems. Further evidence of this came in the way in which certain applicants were constructed: in broad, general terms, implying the form of assumed, organising, homogeneity which produces 'deviance amplification', whereby the seen anti-social acts (such as welfare dependency) are proposed to be indicative of a much greater, largely hidden, threat. Thus, in discussing the demands placed upon the system by homeless applicants, workers tended to give broad and general examples which were usually hypothetical, and sometimes included a vignette of a fictive applicant.

So they rock up and then they say 'Look, my ex is on the out' or they'll tell you... 'I can't pay my mortgage' or 'This relationship has broken down' or 'He's hit me' or whatever the reason is.

Andrew, decision-maker

In these discourses, the state was portrayed as highly vulnerable to deliberately mendacious, deceptive and hence amoral applicants, who were felt to be operating from a position of knowledge- as one worker put it, 'We get some people who are absolute geniuses at playing the system.' [Michael, decision-maker]. This reflects a wider construction of those targeted by moral panic discourse as disengaged from society, operating from

selfish and individualistic interests and so constituting a threat. Workers sometimes articulated a sense that they had little defence against knowledgeable clients who knew what to say to access resources: careful identity management undermined the worker's ability to make expertise based decisions. Frustration was felt at applicants who attempted to 'work' the system, with workers seeing this as a waste of another shortage resource: time. Thus, the fact that homelessness services were universally under-resourced became part of the justification for understanding some clients as mendacious or undeserving.

Some people are au fait with the system. They take up an awful lot of time when in some ways that would be better spent...it can just be harder to sort out, when you've got someone...

Andrew, decision-maker

As discussed previously (see Chapter 4), certain groups, such as households with dependent children, pregnant people, and those who have experienced, or are at risk of, domestic abuse, are, under most circumstances, treated as in 'priority need' for state-provided housing and offered temporary, interim accommodation, until such housing becomes available. For these groups, there is typically a minimal evidential requirement. Yet all three groups have also been subject to extensive broader, gendered debate about deservedness (K. Allen et al., 2014; Tyler, 2020). As previously discussed, since the inception of the Act a moral panic has raged over 'benefits broods' and single mothers 'queue jumping' social housing waiting lists, while those who have experienced domestic abuse have long been subject to intense scrutiny over moral entitlement to public funds (K. Allen et al., 2014; S. Berger, 2009; C. Davis, 2001).

Workers expressed unease over the way in which these (predominantly female) groups were able to secure reliable access to state housing support, revealing a significant moral anxiety and unease. This group were used to illustrate why the system had needed to change. As previously discussed, a key function of construction of 'folk devils' is the legitimisation of potentially unpopular legislative change (Cohen, 2011). Here, groups who, under the prior system, were usually eligible for full help with accommodation, became seen as a particular threat. This is illustrated with a typical extract from an interview with one decision-making frontline worker. He explained his concerns that automatic entitlement

to housing for those whose claims were based upon having experienced domestic abuse rendered the system vulnerable. He saw this as a fundamentally unchallengeable claim. He saw abuse of the system as an inevitable consequence of a commitment to believing applicants at face value, proposing that applicants were motivated by self-interest. He presented a vignette of an imaginary, entitled and manipulative applicant to illustrate the vulnerability of the system.

She knows that we have a duty to prevent her becoming homeless... She has claimed domestic abuse. You are always going to get it. She always has a priority lurking in the background. She knows what the triggers are.

Ian, decision-maker

These narratives indicated an important disjuncture with the 'folk devil' motif. Cohen (1985) suggests that antipathy toward 'folk devils' rests upon the idea of them as individuals with agency, making deliberately antisocial choices. For instance, Hall (1997) has shown that an essential component of the justification for the racialised creation of the crime of 'mugging' was an understanding of young men of colour as deliberately *choosing* to operate outwith societal rules, meaning that a harsh and urgent legislative response was necessitated. In contrast, in this study applicants were seldom understood in terms of agency. Rather, reflecting a broader discourse of austerity which understands those dependent on welfare as *victims* of an infantilising system, this moral panic discourse was substantially complicated by a more fundamental understanding of applicants, particularly those seen as manipulative or mendacious, as objects of pity. Workers saw applicant entitlement as a natural product of the system. As such, from the perspective of workers, these applicants were not suspicious nor subversive. Rather, their attempts to deceive or manipulate the system was always already anticipated. Even where these attempts were successful, the subjectivity they revealed was one of an immature and incompetent pre-citizen, who required the pedagogical input of state agents to become activated, ethical, autonomous citizens (J. Clarke, 2005; N. Rose, 1996). Thus, the dominant attitude toward applicants by workers was not antagonistic or suspicious. Yet neither did it regard them as full, competent citizens. Rather, applicants were often seen as in need of help: as childish, naive, and misguided, in stark contrast to the rational, self-sufficient

applicants anticipated by the provision of enhanced advice and assistance under the Act (Mackie, 2014).

People still believe that homeless is an instant footfall into social rented. So they come in and say, I'm homeless and I want a social rented property.

Andrew, decision-maker

6.1.1 Cultural learned helplessness

A belief that they were likely to obtain social housing through a homelessness application was more often characterised as naive. While, as shown above, applicant actions were sometimes seen as manipulative and deceptive, this was more likely to be regarded as an easily seen-through childish ploy, and evidence of their need for re-education and re-orientation. This belief was particularly linked, by workers, to inter-generational worklessness and welfare dependency, with applicants regarded as uncritically following a socially-learned strategy for obtaining housing (Jensen and Tyler, 2015). Workers often stressed the logic of this belief for applicants, reflecting wider discourse of state over-generosity (Jensen, 2014). This was particularly evident in the case of applicants who themselves had experienced homelessness as children. Childhood homelessness has been linked to adult homelessness due to the trauma associated not only with the circumstances which tend to be associated with family homelessness, but because housing precarity, extended time in temporary accommodation, and social and educational disruption are themselves traumatic for children, potentially causing difficulties in later life (Radcliff et al., 2019). Yet frontline workers tended to regard childhood homelessness as a social learning experience, in which young people learnt useful strategies to obtain social housing. This frontline worker captures the concept of a homeless application as performative. He proposes that, for some applicants, homelessness is strategic and deliberate, a routine part of the move to independent housing among certain groups.

There's no question that for some of them, it's like they see this homelessness application as time served. Pop down the social, get a house. Worked for my mam and dad, worked for nan and bampy [laughs].

Tim, decision-maker

As McDonald and Marston (2005) observe, infantilisation is a crucial part of governing welfare: through recategorising applicants as children, who are not (yet) capable of independence, they become legitimate targets of pedagogical governance (see also Cruikshank, 1999; Pykett, 2010; Soss et al., 2011). The association of expectation of state provision with immaturity is, of course, well-rehearsed rhetoric. As Allen et al. (2014) explain, describing the 'Benefits Street' reality TV participant 'White Dee', the state of benefits dependency is understood as one of temporal immobility, of suspension in time: they have a 'deficit relationship to time and space; stagnant, immobile' (ibid:3). As such, workers often described applicants in childlike terms, as being unable to control their emotion and operating in the immediate here-and-now rather than performing the middle class action of delaying gratification.

You know you can scream and shout and stamp your feet all you like [laughs]. No I'm laughing but some of them, they do think they're owed something. That's what I have a problem with.

Valerie, decision-maker

6.1.2 Benefits broods

Of particular interest here is the concept of 'benefits broods' (Jensen and Tyler, 2015). As discussed in the Literature Review, welfare reform, including housing reform, has consistently been justified through summoning a caricature of 'abject maternity': typically a female lone parent who not only produces large numbers of children who she cannot support without state help, but socialises them into an expectation of state help (Jensen and Tyler, 2015). As discussed, this myth persists despite little evidence for 'inter-generational worklessness', giving rise to a discourse of urgency of pedagogical intervention aimed specifically at preventing poor households becoming a site where welfare subjectivity can be replicated (Jensen, 2018). This was reflected in the close relationship between the widely held belief in an expectation of an entitlement to social housing, and a broader sense of socialised welfare dependency. It was the children, or more specifically, the daughters, of the lone mothers who provoked outrage in the 1980s for social housing queue jumping, who were now summoned in a recurrent motif: the young, (female) lone-parent applicant.

Invoked by workers across different local authorities, this young woman had typically been living with her mother (who was also, by implication, a lone parent, who had thus benefited from the proposed generosity of the previous system) in council housing, and had been asked to leave. She was the logical progression of the welfare-dependent 'queue-jumping' lone parent prevalent in 1980s homelessness discourse, confirming 'benefits broods' discourse by showing that young people from families given social housing grew up unable to become independent of the state (Platt, 1999). Several hostel staff, for instance, suggested that young women who had themselves been homeless as children were particularly likely to enter hostels as adults with their own children. Yet, despite most local authorities and hostels surveyed having some form of training for staff on the likely effects of childhood trauma, including early homelessness, on later housing precarity (Narayan et al., 2017; Radcliff et al., 2019; Roos et al., 2013), workers tended to see the subsequent move to social housing following childhood homelessness, rather than the events surrounding the homelessness, as the reason for this inter-generational circularity. Again, childhood homelessness became a vector for dependency socialisation, rather than evidence of ongoing extreme poverty and consequent trauma. It justified moral distancing, rather than ethically mandating it. Workers described the transition to social housing for young women who had grown up in social housing as 'too easy' (Sonia, hostel worker), arguing that continuing to meet the needs of homeless families in a relatively unconditional way placed their children at risk of homelessness through making them accustomed to state help.

These principles are illustrated with an account of a hostel worker, Michele had worked in family hostels for several decades. She displayed a weary yet pragmatic (Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2019) approach to family homelessness, regarding it as inevitable due to the ways in which homeless families were offered relatively unconditional help under repeated iterations of homelessness legislation. She saw the problem as a lack of accountability, blaming overgenerous structures, rather than directly criticising hostel residents themselves.

It's one thing you do get a lot of here. The mothers, they've been through [social housing] themselves, and they'll say to their daughters, oh all you got to do is go down the office and say, oh I'm homeless, oh I'm pregnant, and then they'll sort you out. And then what have you got, you've got another generation coming

through then.

Michele, family hostel worker

Michele's account typifies the frustration felt by some longstanding workers at a sense that this group were being overlooked and ultimately let down. It is underpinned by a sense of despair and futility: to her, even under the new system, it seems inevitable that individual families will continue to cycle through the system. There is, in fact, relatively little evidence for inter-generational worklessness, while enabling families to quickly enter stable and secure housing (historically social housing) is associated with decreased risk of trauma in children and consequently a lowered risk of adult homelessness (Harker, 2006; Jensen and Tyler, 2015). Yet Michele demonstrates the pervasive structuring effects of dominant narratives of welfare dependency.

I'm old enough now, I've been here long enough now I've seen these girls come through from toddlers, they've been in and out of here and now they're back in with their own [children] and I'll tell you what if the system isn't changed you can bet those kids out there [points out of the window] give it twenty years, less, we'll see them back here. But there's no telling them.

Michele, family hostel worker

The mother, in these accounts, occupied a specific position as a transmitter of socially unacceptable values. Her 'abject maternity' (K. Allen et al., 2014:3) is evident: constructed as a dependent: 'bone idle', unwilling and unable to move socially or spatially, yet in this dependency, 'out of step' (ibid) with the new approaches of state help.' (ibid). Her attempts to rely upon her own experiences to help her children navigate adult life are not only redundant but potentially damaging, trapping her daughters into the limited life she has experienced as a welfare subject, and hence justifying intervention. Workers particularly proposed that mothers who themselves had previously been homeless encouraged, or even instructed, their daughters to make redundant homelessness claims. Typically, such young women were portrayed as living with their welfare-subject, mothers, presumably in council accommodation, and, in an echo of 1980s discourse over lone mothers and welfare deservedness, used pregnancy as a method to secure council housing (Platt, 1999).

Under all iterations of UK homelessness legislation, parents with resident children, living with their own parents, and without a legal right to occupy their parents' property, would normally be considered both homeless and in priority need for social accommodation. Specifically, they would be considered to fall under the definition of 'hidden homeless' particularly given likely overcrowding. However, workers often saw young women in this situation as deceptive, proposing that they were not, in fact, homeless, but were operating according to a cultural script instilled in them (sometimes through ongoing coaching) by their mothers. This is shown in the account given by one housing options worker of how she approached young mothers who claimed to have been evicted by their mothers. Here, the mother is represented as coaching her daughter in how to manipulate the system. Thus the real source of welfare entitlement is not (yet) the applicant, but her mother: a welfare subject from the previous, over-generous, regime (K. Allen et al., 2014; Cruikshank, 1999; Jensen and Tyler, 2015).

Quite often, they'll know where the hostel is... I've got a friend in there and it's lovely.' And you're thinking, well is mum really making you homeless, or does she just think you need your own accommodation now because you've got a young child now and so maybe go down the homelessness route?

Audrey, decision-maker

There was, in fact, some evidence that young, lone parents did use the knowledge gained from family and friends to inform their decision making. Mothers were sometimes strong advocates for their daughters. Yet the role which they performed was predominantly one of accessible information sharing and advice, which the Act and Guidance both state are interventions which homeless citizens often need. Thus, the specific role of mothers, particularly those who, themselves had been homeless, in fact aligned with a pedagogical, empowerment function, in that they offered their children needed advice and information. The inhospitability of the system for those without this (often familial) support is considered in more detail in the next chapter.

Sarah's account illustrates both the importance of her (welfare-experienced) mother's intervention, and the way in which, as a result of this visible intervention, Sarah was misunderstood and deprioritised when she made a

homeless application. Sarah, her then-partner, and her two-year-old son were issued with an eviction notice by their landlord. Her partner was already physically violent and financially controlling; the eviction notice exacerbated this, with Sarah also becoming afraid that he would attack the landlord. Sarah moved out of the property to live with her mother, who had herself been homeless when Sarah was a child. However, the flat was overcrowded, and Sarah and her son were sharing a bedroom with her teenage sister. Based on both her prior experience of homelessness and of domestic abuse, Sarah's mother offered her daughter specific, targeted advice aimed at removing Sarah and her son from the situation, through the specific use of the homelessness services she had previously benefited from.

She was, listen... he's bad news. This is your chance, you can get out of there. Housing are really good, they'll help you if you explain.

Sarah, applicant, family hostel

However, at the Housing Options office, Sarah did not feel she was able to explain the situation in a way that the staff dealing with her case could recognise as one where she was both homeless and at serious risk of harm. She did not immediately identify herself as having experienced domestic abuse: her experience did not, to her, resemble the dominant societal narrative of domestic violence and so she did not understand her experience in those terms (Sweet, 2019). In particular, she did not see herself as a victim, but rather as having considerable personal agency.

They did say oh have you been the victim of domestic abuse. I went away, and I did think, oh yeah...but at the time I didn't really see it like that.

Sarah, applicant, family hostel

Those experiencing domestic abuse are considered statutorily homeless under the Act, so the fact that this was not identified had a significant bearing upon her case. She was miscategorised as 'threatened with

homelessness', and owed only a duty of assistance to prevent homelessness, rather than owed a duty to provide housing itself.¹ She was advised to look for accommodation herself.²

So then they said, oh you got to wait it out. I was like, what, I've got to stay there til he [landlord] literally physically kicks me and my son out?.. Yeah they were, you've got a place to live so we can't do much but come back when you're actually without anywhere.

Sarah, applicant, family hostel

The worker dealing with Sarah's case was also aware that she was, in fact, living with her mother, but failed to investigate this in detail- 'he was like oh ok but just make sure you check your mail'. Sarah's experience could be understood as an individual failure by a housing options worker inadequately trained to spot warning signs and indicators of domestic abuse. However, her account also illustrates the limitations of accounts of council workers in which applicants like Sarah are seen as potentially either manipulating the system or trained by their mothers into state dependence. In the absence of significant state help, the intervention of Sarah's mother was critical to Sarah receiving the help to which she was legally entitled. Aware that Sarah was entitled to housing, she encouraged Sarah to continue interacting with the local authority, until eventually a locum worker recognised that Sarah's relationship was abusive, and she was moved into temporary accommodation.³ Sarah's mother is, in fact, largely operating in the pedagogical role of providing advice and assistance stipulated in the Act, substituting for more formal

¹Interim accommodation based on reason to believe she would be owed a duty to provide accommodation, and based on a recognition of actual, rather than threatened, homelessness at s73

²As other applicants and workers confirmed, in this participant's local authority it was common not to offer temporary accommodation, even to those who would clearly be owed a s73 duty, until an applicant had actually been physically evicted: a number of applicants pointed out that this was a potentially highly traumatic experience both for them and for their children.

³It should also be noted here that Sarah obtained help only because her homelessness was framed in terms of domestic violence from her partner. Thus, the intimidating behaviour she experienced from her landlord was not visibilised within her claim. A detailed discussion of the private rented sector falls outwith the scope of this thesis (although see Chapter 8). However, reports of threatening and intimidating behaviour from private landlords, and consequent abandonment of tenancies, was widespread, including from families, and there was no evidence that local authorities recognised these incidents as material to an applicant's homelessness status.

advice services such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau- who, to Sarah, were inaccessible predominantly because of long waiting times and childcare difficulties (Auyero, 2011; Kirwan et al., 2016; Seefeldt, 2017; L. J. Silver, 2010).

6.1.3 Inter-generational welfare entitlement as a failure of personal responsibility

The rhetoric of intergenerational entitlement to welfare relies upon a complex, confessional, emotionality on the part of the state itself. As discussed in the Literature Review, the state itself is seen as having failed, through historical over-indulgence, particularly in the provision of 'generous' benefits (Jensen, 2010; Jensen and Tyler, 2015). This approach sees applicants as socialised into a dependency associated with an over-indulgent, foolish (previous) government. Further echoing the rhetoric of the infantilised applicant (Stuckler et al., 2017), to allow applicants to see themselves as entitled to demand help was understood as unfair, not only to the State, but to them. Frontline workers presented themselves as occupying the position of reluctant disciplinarians: although it was tempting on an emotional level to give in and help applicants, this, in fact, trapped them into state dependence keeping them in an unreal, suspended, and protected environment in which they were denied the opportunity for personal growth and progress. Indeed, as council workers characterised applicants, they had already been socialised into a state of helplessness and dependency, with ongoing State help leaving them deprived of both knowledge and motivation.

This approach was particularly clear in frontline workers' discussions of applicant financial irresponsibility. This was particularly connected to non-payment of rent. In practice, this tended to be associated with the change from Housing Benefit (a discrete sum which was often paid directly to the landlord) to Universal Credit (paid as part of a larger subsistence payment, normally directly to the applicant). This reflects the wider discourse surrounding the introduction of Universal Credit, a benefit specifically associated with austerity and post-Global Financial Crisis welfare cuts. The change in the way that housing subsidies were paid was part of a deliberate strategy under Universal Credit to require welfare subjects to take more responsibility for money management. Those who have transitioned to Universal Credit often accrue rent arrears: however, there is little evidence that this arises from poor budgeting skills or an inability

to delay gratification. Rather, these have been associated with administrative changes to payment schedules, and significant delays in payments (Hickman et al., 2017).

Frontline workers, however, often connected Housing Benefit to a failure of self-management. They characterised applicants as homeless due to irresponsibility and inability to plan for the future. This approach relied upon the logic that homelessness was a result of poor self-management and a failure to self-govern. As this worker explains it, this level of financial non-autonomy was seen as producing habituated dependence, and so poorly preparing the applicant for the future. It kept them in an unreal state, insulated from the consequences of their (non) actions. State protection of financially vulnerable households thus became re-interpreted as an act of indulgent irresponsibility, which, as this worker put it, was unfair, not only to society as a whole, but to the individual applicant. This closely echoes the rhetoric of paternalism as a disempowering, deceptive kindness (Cruikshank, 1999), justifying a shift toward self-governance.

Look I get it it looks great, seems great but it's not how the world is really. Rent paid for you, like magic, on the dot and then they're in here, haven't got a clue. You got I mean you've got to think, what's it doing to people to live like that? Is it fair?

Angela, decision-maker

Their job then became to challenge this assumption of a right to dependency, echoing the broader argument to justify the introduction of greater conditionality, and restructuring the benefits system to mimic wages (Hickman et al., 2017; Schram et al., 2010). This was explored by one frontline worker, who expressed her frustration at clients who, she felt, simply did not understand that they could no longer rely upon the state. As she describes the problem, it is one of activation (J. Clarke, 2005). Applicants simply did not see themselves as agents who needed to manage their cases actively.

Lot of clients will come in and go, well, my housing benefit's stopped so my rent wasn't paid. And at that point you have to go, okay, but your... it's your rent. You know, you've said to me

my rent wasn't paid, it's your responsibility regardless...Of housing benefit stopping for whatever unfair reason, and you know, it can be or whatever, wrong that's happened, it's still your responsibility to pay rent.

Valerie, decision-maker

Clarke (2005) has argued that welfare systems use discourses of empowerment and responsabilisation to mask state abandonment and withdrawal. Some evidence of this was seen in terms of a proposed need to take responsibility. This was related to the concept of fairness, and consequently deservedness: council workers questioned why they should continue to help those who did not appear to be trying to change their own situation.

I think it makes people more responsible for their situation because on the old system there was too much dependency, waiting for you, waiting for their Section 184 letter, waiting for you to give them a determination, waiting for you to place them, waiting for you... Now you're saying 'It's not all down to me, mate.' And I'll say to them 'If you're not helping yourself, I can close you on non-cooperation... This is what I expect from you.' And people are like 'What do you mean?' And I'm like 'Well it's not all down to me, this is a two way thing.' And I have closed people on non-cooperation because my argument is at the end of the day 'If I'm chasing you morning, noon and night and you can't come back to me...'. you've got those people who will just sit there. And then you know they're going to come back and review it. They will come back and they'll say 'I don't think you've done enough, I want to have a review.' And I'm like knock yourself out mate, because of what?

Andrew, decision-maker

In practice, confirming prior studies, applicants were often, in fact, skilled in money management, and resented the implication that their homelessness arose from their own ineptitude. They drew attention to structural issues: a lack of available resources, such as accessible and sustainable employment, or housing, and re-centred scarcity of resources,

rather than ineptitude or self-indulgence, as the cause of their homelessness (Hickman et al., 2017; Tyler, 2013). Several applicants asserted that they possessed both complex budgeting skills and a willingness to prioritise rent payments to a point of extreme self-denial, noting that they had considerable experience of budgeting either through prior employment, or managing multiple, complex and unpredictable streams of benefits income (Hickman et al., 2017; Ryan, 2019).

I'm used to managing a tenancy, paying rent. I'm fine with it... You try and prioritise what money you got coming in. But then if you've got no money coming in, what are you supposed to do?... We have to eat [but]... many a time me and [husband] wouldn't, because we'd put gas and electric in, or we'd prioritise a different way.

Anna, applicant, family hostel

However, the logic presented by council workers here appeared to reverse this, assuming the legitimacy of a state withdrawal discourse. For council workers, system change created an urgency which justified individual change. Applicants needed to become empowered because the system was unlikely to help them if they did not. Frontline work, therefore, had changed. It was no longer primarily about allocating resources, but involved re-orientation and motivation of applicants, including those unlikely to be offered social housing. An essential part of self-esteem and movement toward ethical selfhood is an honest acknowledgement of failure, and commitment to improvement in line with normative values (Martin and Waring, 2018; Yeung, 2007). The 'reality check', as a number of frontline workers referred to interactions where they bluntly informed applicants that they had little chance of significant state help and so needed to take responsibility for their situation, was seen as an important stage in the process of moving an applicant to a point of self-responsibility. It is important to consider the phrasing used here: a 'reality check' necessarily asserts the correctness of a particular world view (Hall, 2002). The phrasing is reminiscent of the way in which 'austerity politics' often uses the language of frankness, of 'setting things right' after a protracted period in which state-dependent citizens have been allowed to deceive themselves, enabled by an over-generous state (K. Allen et al., 2014; Jensen and Tyler, 2015).

The phrase we use with them is called [the] 'reality check'. It's giving them a reality check to say, this is the situation, this is the reality.

Lucy, decision-maker

These principles are further illustrated in the quote below. Simon, a decision-maker explained how his work now had an integral discursive function, moving applicants from a state of belief in their rights to help with housing, to an understanding that the state would no longer automatically provide. Reflecting a broader theme, he discussed homeless applicants as a homogeneous group being moved away from a needs-based system.

It's increasingly a part of the job. Giving it to them straight. Not that way any more. That's often my job then, to break that news to them. Times have changed. That's something we have to manage.

Simon, decision-maker

Workers reiterated that the reality check and the associated boundaries were not intended as deliberately obstructive. Rather, this was constructed as for the good of the applicant. Workers often saw themselves as kind, a 'soft touch' [Charlotte, decision-maker], and indeed valued the parts of the job which involved emotion-work. Yet these emotions were not themselves understood as helpful to applicants. Yet emotional attachment was also, to some extent, regarded as a liability, tempting workers into performing acts which appeared to be kind, and yet in fact simply perpetuated a cycle which had already damaged applicants through accustoming them to state support (Jensen, 2014). Thus, workers had to disconnect their instinctive personal, emotional, desire to help and to be kind, with what they saw as in the best interests of the applicant (Hochschild, 2012; Sauer and Penz, 2017). Honesty might be uncomfortable or unpleasant but was also understood by workers as an act of kindness which became necessary because applicants operated from a naïve and dependent socialisation.

I think some of them think we just say no for the sake of it, but that's not the case at all. And you can understand it when that's been their experience all of their lives.

Valerie, decision-maker

Those in decision-making roles particularly saw themselves as performing necessarily firmness in establishing and maintaining boundaries. Simply helping people was seen, ultimately, as short-changing them through denying them the opportunity for (usually unspecified) progression, preventing them from becoming invested in their future. Again, the concern here focused upon the applicant themselves. This frontline worker exemplifies this discourse with her implication that allowing applicants to remain habituated to state dependency short-changed them, by holding them back. She presents herself as a reluctant, firm but fair, parental figure, forced to put down boundaries for an applicants' own good. Frontline workers often explained that it was not that they did not want to help; rather saying no and establishing clear boundaries was the only way to prevent a repeated cycle of welfare dependency.

I think we have maybe gone a little too far. People expect, 'Oh I'm homeless, the council will sort me out. Find me a house, pay my rent'. Ok and supposing we did that? Where will you be in five years, ten years? Me, personally, I hate saying no to anyone. I'd love to [give them a house] in many ways...

Lucy, decision-maker

Resistance strengthened workers' resolve, reinforcing the idea that intervention was needed. Even three years after the commencement of the Act, the typical applicant was seen as likely to resist and object to taking responsibility. This resistance, therefore, strengthened the worker's sense of the importance of their work. It suggested to workers that without their intervention, applicants would remain static welfare subjects. This need for intervention, particularly as related to a need to take personal responsibility, was a central part of how workers understood their new role.

It is difficult! What is difficult is putting it back onto their responsibility. Because they do not want to hear that. Who does? You've got to step up! No one wants to [hear that] but it's part of the job.

Tim, frontline worker

By providing this challenge the Act was seen as offering a specific solution to inter-generational worklessness, by allowing them to challenge transmission of values of entitlement. This was explained by Audrey, who described a hypothecated yet, to her, representative young mother who had been sent by her own mother to secure a council house. Having described how she understood young female lone parents as being coached by their mothers into manipulation of the system, she continued by explaining how she saw the Act as specifically helpful in allowing her to challenge the transmission of entitlement between generations. The daughter's presentation allows the worker to communicate directly with the mother in order to explain that the system has now changed, that not only can they no longer rely upon the state's beneficence, but both the daughter and her mother- the family unit- will be subject to scrutiny and surveillance. If the daughter wants help, the mother will have to cooperate.

In the past it would be literally as easy as, mum would write a letter saying, 'I'm throwing my daughter and her child out.' We [would] ring the mum and the mum says, 'Yes, I'm not having her back here.' Right- social rented. Now, it's 'Right, ok, if you're asking her to leave, we need to liaise here. We need to sort out mediation. . . it's not as easy as before when it was a simple letter and 'I'm going to get a council house in two months time.

Audrey, decision-maker

This meant, however, that they were understood not in terms of othering or moral panic. Rather they needed to be re-orientated. This was done through a careful, non-othering authority based upon rapport and empathy, in which coercion was limited.

Frontline workers were, therefore, suspicious of applicants. However, this was tempered by pity. Thus, applicants become constructed not as 'revolting subjects' (Tyler, 2013) to be punished, but as childish and inept. Their homelessness becomes understood as an issue of self-esteem: a failure to reach their 'potential' as independent, activated into autonomous, ethical selves due to a lack of both motivation and (intricately connected) knowledge (J. Clarke, 2005; N. Rose, 1992). As discussed previously, technologies of self-esteem are those which encourage the individual to take

responsibility for their current and future situation, and include empowerment and resilience-training (Cruikshank, 1999). These technologies are associated with state withdrawal and the consequent greater responsibility placed upon individuals to manage their own welfare and have been documented more widely in the context of workfare/ conditionality regimes (McDonald and Marston, 2005; Schram et al., 2010; Whitworth, 2016). In such regimes, conditionality underpins technologies of self-esteem, forcing compliance with individualising, psychological interventions (McDonald and Marston, 2005).

6.2 Introducing conditionality to the homeless system: The Welsh context

The Welsh homelessness system is notably different to such regimes in that, for the majority of applicants, the primary reason to engage with the system is to obtain help and advice with finding accommodation: except for those applicants likely to be owed the full housing duty, no equivalent exists to the weekly subsistence payment which those in receipt of workfare benefits risk losing if they disengage. Thus, although the Welsh system does include, for the first time, explicit conditionality in terms of the ongoing duty owed linked to ongoing behavioural compliance, it is not clear whether this, alone, is likely to be a sufficiently significant motivation for compliance.

I will now consider how frontline workers understood the shift in their role toward being one where they had to manage compliance. First, I explore the role of technologies of self-esteem, termed by (McDonald and Marston, 2005) 'empathetic authority' (ibid:384). Second, I consider the role of 'coercive authority' (ibid:384) - those forms of authority which operate to create a deterrent, and which clearly assert the boundaries of the state. I find that the integration of empathetic and coercive authority is strategic and ambivalent. Workers were uneasy about coercive approaches, feeling that they risked causing disengagement; yet both applicants and workers widely reported use of threat. Yet, advancing beyond this adversarial position, while a minority of applicants experienced anxiety as a result of a fear of service withdrawal (particularly those owed or likely to be owed the full housing duty), others simply failed to comply and regarded it as simply another bureaucratic hoop.

Although the Act is underpinned by the constant threat of withdrawal

of help, the mode of operation envisaged by official discourse is clearly persuasive and pedagogical. Applicants are conceptualised as potential ethical citizens, in that they are capable of choices which bring them closer to freedom (see above). The goal, therefore, is independence, to be achieved through autonomy and self-governance, understood by Rose (1996) as a technology of 'governing through the freedom and aspirations of subjects rather than despite them' (ibid:155). The importance of persuasive, enabling authority – Foucauldian productive power, which 'doesn't only weigh upon us as a force that says no' (Foucault, 1980a:119) and so is able to encourage individuals to invest in self-governance- is particularly developed in the Guidance to the Act, with local authorities encouraged to engage individual applicants strategically. For instance, in the initial assessment, local authorities are encouraged to ensure that the choices and wishes of individual applicants are reflected because this results in better engagement and movement toward an activated *homo economicus* self:

The assessment should be designed to engage the service user in the process. It should reflect their own views and understanding as participation tends to encourage individuals to take more ownership and responsibility for decisions that are made

Guidance, 10:33

In these relationships, it was the job of the staff member to act upon the applicant to encourage and persuade them to move toward making the correct choices, creating an alignment between social identities and normative values of the state (McDonald and Marston, 2005; Sweet, 2019). In this way, the casework role of housing options workers emulated the similar role occupied by jobcentre staff, and in similar roles in other conditionality-based systems (Soss et al., 2011). As McDonald and Marston (2005) argue, essential to an ongoing casework relationship in which the applicant is moved toward independence is the establishment of emotional connection. Trust and rapport, therefore, were pragmatic, strategic necessities, deliberately cultivated and exploited, rather than a by-product of human interaction (Soss et al., 2011). Both decision and non-decision-making staff, including hostel workers, saw rapport and trust in functional terms, as a necessity to engender compliance. One manager explained how she prized this emotional labour in her staff, since it increased the extent

to which the applicant could be engaged and influenced. She described the interaction in top-down terms: the applicant was a problem to be resolved according to the Local Authority's normative criteria for success (this theme is developed further in the next chapter). Absent from her account is a consideration of how frontline workers might engage a 'caring-with' (Tronto, 2017, 2018) approach: the applicant becomes a problem to be solved through correct application of technologies, rather than an equal in need of assistance.

Rapport is the magic ingredient. One hundred and ten percent, it's the magic where it all happens, in that interaction. When you've got it, you can do anything with a client. When you've got staff that can build those relationships...

Caitlin, decision-maker, some managerial responsibility

Caseworkers explained that their job was easier when clients were engaged, because when engaged, clients followed the suggestions of caseworkers, allowing themselves to be directed and shaped over the course of the case. Building trust made it possible for the caseworker to secure co-operation and engagement. Trust was a highly valued commodity for housing options workers and was understood in functional, one-sided, and utilitarian terms. It allowed objectives to be achieved, rather than a relationship to develop. It utilises affect and human connection as a strategy of biopower, extending 'the terrain of government... into the very depths of the soul' (McKee, 2009:469). As this housing options worker explains, the development of trust is a commodity, an opportunity to generate progress. It was a functional necessity which, through extending the caseworker's influence over the client to be extended, improved the chance of success.

Okay, great, we've got a little bit of trust going on here, let's use it!

Andrew, decision-maker

Persuading applicants to interact through technologies of rapport was thus an important part of frontline workers role. Further, it was conceptualised as a necessary part of their job, essential to successfully helping applicants, with frontline workers encouraged to deploy emotion-work

strategies such as rapport toward specific ends (Penz et al., 2017). However, in common with other authoritarian-paternalistic systems, the modern Welsh homelessness system also includes conditionality. In theory, a duty to an applicant can be terminated where the Local Authority are 'satisfied that the applicant is unreasonably failing to co-operate with the local authority in connection with the exercise of its functions.' (79 (5) Housing (Wales) Act 2014). McDonald and Marston (2005) characterise such authority as 'coercive' (384): it is punitive, primarily focused on punishing a breach in participation. It underpins conditionality: it is the threat of withdrawal of resources which forces individuals into compliance (Watts et al., 2018).

6.2.1 Navigating 'failure to co-operate'

Housing options workers were highly aware of their new power to discharge duties in this way if applicants did not co-operate and engage. For a minority of workers this was seen as simply a part of the new procedure and was not substantially engaged with on a conceptual level. Echoing McDonald and Marston's (2005) finding that workers themselves are also subject to technologies of government in the form of dictates from managers and performance indicators, some workers primarily saw this as an additional bureaucratic requirement, and closely followed the steps advised in the Guidance, seeming to be predominantly concerned with ensuring legal compliance. This quote from a housing options worker evidences this approach: the decision to end a duty based on failure to co-operate is described in procedural, rather than emotional, terms: he is primarily concerned to demonstrate that he has done his job correctly and followed the rules. Such an approach echoes the moral indifference sometimes observed in frontline workers, which has been associated with moral distancing from applicants through excessive proceduralisation (N. Gill, 2016; Schram et al., 2010).

We will explain to them that we are minded to make a decision that they have unreasonably failed to co-operate, give them a final appointment, possibly a home visit and then we'll end duty on that basis.

Juliet, decision-maker

However, most workers expressed considerable reluctance to issue unreasonable failure to co-operate (UFTC) decisions and stressed that this was not a routine part of their role. This may reflect the absence of a history of conditionality within British housing and homelessness law (in contrast to its longer history within workfare) meaning that use of coercive threats such as sanctions and withdrawal of service are not part of housing and homelessness culture (Stuckler et al., 2017; Whitworth, 2016). Workers were often reluctant to take the step of withdrawing help, feeling it to be a disproportionate and unhelpful response.

Well one option, if they're really not engaging at all, we can terminate the duty. But we really don't like to do that. We really try not to. It'd be quite extreme.

Niamh, decision-maker

It is also clear that, in practice, very few applications are being withdrawn due to a decision that applicants were not co-operating. This can be seen from an examination of the figures. In the last quarter (Oct-Dec 19/20), only 3% of applications were terminated on the grounds of unreasonable failure to co-operate. This represented 3% of applications at s66 and 4% at s73. For those owed a full housing duty, withdrawals on the grounds of failure to co-operate were 2%⁴.

Workers often noted a disincentive to record unreasonable failure to co-operate because these cases took proportionately more bureaucratic time and effort. Closing a case due to failure to co-operate was a particularly time intensive way to withdraw a duty. It required them to be prepared to justify their decision, both bureaucratically and to themselves. Paradoxically, this meant that they had to invest scarce time in attempting to engender engagement.

If it's a deliberate act and it's a pattern of behaviour where they've disengaged with everything that we've done, we can then discharge duty under the 'Failure to co-operate', but we've got to show that we've made steps to try and contact them, encourage

⁴Administrative statistics in Wales should be treated with caution. In particular, it must be stressed that the relationship between number of applications and number of separate households is unknown, with some evidence that drop out for those unsuccessful at each stage may be significant.

them to engage. Failing that then, failing all of that we've got to list it all in a letter; when we contact in, the results of that, and then we can discharge duty.

James, decision-maker

Thus, failure to co-operate required a clearly identifiable action or set of actions, which was normally conceptualised as going beyond withdrawal or failure to look for housing adequately. It did not, therefore, parallel sanctioning within British workfare: if applicants did not help themselves, caseworkers had the option of simply providing minimal help. Where applicants were seen as 'difficult' it seemed that they were often simply not helped, or helped less: this was perhaps made particularly possible by the fact that the exact steps a local authority must take to help an applicant is nowhere defined or established in law (Taylor and England, 2020; Evans, 2016a). To close a case often took time, which was a resource in short supply, and workers across all local authorities reported that cases stayed open because they simply could not find time to perform the administrative functions associated with closing them. While workers did not explicitly state that they would then record such cases as ones in which the duty was not successful, rather than terminated, it is also well-established that in situations of time pressure shortage, workers will take the least time-consuming approach (Soss et al., 2011).

I've been trying to shut a few of them down, and we don't have time to close them down sometimes, you know, they're sort of lurking, you know.

Gemma, decision-maker

A consequence of drawn out procedures for case closure was that front-line workers often avoided closing cases except in clear cut, unchallengeable, instances. Lucy, a decision-maker, explained how the process she engages in before closing for non-co-operation was protracted, and yet highly process driven: it requires the applicant to engage, and so fit themselves into the service. If the applicant cannot engage with the service, they are understood to be non-co-operating. This quote illustrates how *difficult* it was for workers to close cases. The presence of conditionalising

legislation operates within, and in tension with, strong, procedural, disincentives to withdraw help. Contrasting to the moralism found in front-line workers in earlier studies (for instance, Bretherton et al., 2013a; C. Hunter et al., 2016; Lidstone, 1994), frontline workers in this study often *welcomed* the fact that they could not close cases quickly and easily, because it meant that they were justified in spending longer trying to help clients

It's a long process before we close for non-cooperation. . . . We do two week reviews, so a letter will go out to either their care of address, or to that person. If they're engaging with any service, probation, mental health, we'll arrange appointments through them. We're trying to get engagement in any way we can really. We'll keep trying until they come in but obviously we can't keep them open forever. So after a couple of phone calls or letters we have to close them.

Lucy, decision-maker

Workers understood the requirement to avoid termination of duty based on non-co-operation decisions as extending into a cultural change in terms of how applicants were seen, shifting from an approach which felt punishment-orientated, to one which was focused upon help, as explained by a day centre/hostel worker with experience of helping individuals make applications.

Initially, I think there was a mentality with some people to take that approach. You don't turn up for your appointment, then we're going to discharge duty towards you, and it was that very vicious approach to that, authoritarian. That has changed in the last 18 months, definitely, and we're seeing less of that. We're seeing less punitive action being taken for somebody who didn't turn up for an appointment today, for example, or haven't done enough to find accommodation for themselves and filled their diary where they keep a record. There's less of an emphasis on that now and more of an emphasis on how can we actually help people? There's much more of that proactive approach rather than the sort of [mimes 'kaboom']...

Anthony, day-centre/support worker

However, there was also evidence that workers avoided closing cases based on UFTC because of a deeper sense that such a solution undermined their wider duty to applicants. Decision-making workers often felt that if they discharged duty to an applicant, the applicant would remain homeless. They did not tend to feel that simply withdrawing the duty to applicants was motivational: in fact, they often saw their services as necessary to applicants to secure help. Thus, to withdraw the duty was seen as overly harsh, and something which most preferred to avoid.

What I will say is...you could say I'm going to hold everyone to the legislation, you could...But it doesn't stop them being homeless, because we've discharged their duty.

Andrew, decision-maker

Particularly in smaller local authorities, workers observed that if they terminated a duty to someone due to non-engagement, the individual remained homeless and would be likely to return to services in the near future. This approach is reflected in the Guidance, where Local Authorities are encouraged to 'continue to offer limited assistance' to applicants whose duty has been terminated (15.89). Local authorities differed in their approaches in this situation. Some closed a case, but if the applicant returned, re-opened it with the same caseworker. Others tended to leave the case open as long as possible. However, most workers indicated that they would find a way to re-open the case or continue to help the applicant; most managers also suggested that they were sympathetic to, or even encouraged, this practice.

If you end it, unreasonable failure, and then they come back in...well we usually just withdraw the decision, or get it overturned and start again.

Jasmine, decision-maker, some managerial responsibility

It is also worth noting that, of the applicants interviewed, none had had their cases permanently closed, and it seemed likely that a number

had had a case re-opened after a probable non-co-operation decision, indicating that the accounts of the workers did reflect actual, rather than aspirational, practice.

The end of 56 days is not an outcome, it just means we've ended 56 days. And so they're still homeless, but their situation hasn't changed. They can't make a new presentation. So we're back to square one really aren't we? So you're better off using those resources, we think. We could be wrong in saying to somebody our 56 days have ended but we'll still help you rent in advance and a bond if you need it because we recognise you are still homeless but...

Andrew, decision-maker

However, while in practice, decisions were clearly seldom taken to withdraw help altogether, the threat of withdrawal of help remained extremely important to the relationship between applicants and staff. Almost all applicants were highly aware that a decision could be taken to terminate their case. Perhaps because of the widespread use of conditionality within the benefits system, no applicant expressed surprise or indignation at being told that the duty toward them could be withdrawn if they did not engage. For some, this was a redundant statement.

They did say, oh if you don't do your bit, we can stop helping you, yeah. But that stands to reason, doesn't it? Don't take the p, basically. Well yeah, obviously.

Lara, applicant, nightshelter

The threat of withdrawal, rooted in conditionality, ultimately created a sense of insecurity for applicants. This was especially the case where communication with caseworkers was felt to be poor, inconsistent, and ambiguous, and where applicants were not given space and time to explain themselves. It especially arose where applicants felt uncertain about what was expected of them, or where the options available to them were not well explained. One applicant, Beth, articulated this sense of confusion, and her consequent fear. She had been told by her local authority that she

was ineligible for social housing because she had prior debts to a social landlord. She had been told that she had to reduce her debts before the local authority would help her. She also found that her prior debts made it extremely difficult for her to find private accommodation; yet felt that when she had explained this to her caseworker, she had been threatened with a non-cooperation decision. She was extremely worried that the duty to her would be terminated completely, leaving her without any assistance at all.

Truth be told I think they're going to end duty of care because of all my debts. They have said that. If I don't start paying my debts they can't help. But how can I? I'm paying as much as I can. But it was like, well, if you're going to argue, you can go and get a tent... you're making yourself homeless and duty of care ends.

Beth, applicant, day-centre

Making people uncertain as to which parts of their behaviour are being watched is essential to internalisation and self-production of norms, with the resultant anxiety important in the production of compliant citizens (Henderson et al., 2010). This principle is illustrated by Maryam's account. Maryam, who became homeless after leaving National Asylum Support Service accommodation after successfully being granted leave to remain, was advised that she needed to look for housing as part of the agreement with the local authority. This failure caused her considerable anxiety, since she had been told that the duty to her could be withdrawn, but it also caused her to try harder, by reinforcing to her that the support available to her was minimal. Thus, the lack of clarity in the open-ended requirement from the local authority, in fact, meant that she became more compliant: an active and entrepreneurial self-focused entirely upon finding accommodation (J. Clarke, 2005; Foucault, 1979). Refugees are often presented as intent on manipulating the British state, particularly to obtain social housing. They are understood, similarly to lone parents and 'benefits-broods' as 'knowing' (N. Gill, 2016; Tyler, 2013). And yet for Maryam it was lack of knowledge which caused her anxiety. In this excerpt, she recounts her worries, providing the additional angle of feedback from friends. Her friends, seeing her clear efforts, are able to reassure her that it is apparent effort, rather than outcomes, which are important.

Maryam successfully performs the subjectivity of the hard working, determined welfare subject seeking to extract herself from dependency (S. Berger, 2009; Sweet, 2019). For this reason, her perception is that she is regarded as deserving by the Local Authority, and help continues.

They said, you've got to do this and this or we won't help you. Ok that's fine. So what's next? I looked for houses everywhere, I couldn't find anything. So then I'm phoning them and phoning them. They never call back. So I am worried then, they're [council] not going to help me. What am I meant to do? Then my friends say, listen, it's ok, don't worry, they will understand, they can see you've tried, explain to them you've tried, that's all you can do. [Edith: And was it ok?] Yes yes, it was ok, when I said what I had done they said that's very good. But for me, so much stress.

Maryam, applicant, contacted independently

6.2.2 The production of competing authorities

Workers thus heavily relied upon an empathetic, persuasive, rapport-based authority. Yet, reflecting work on therapeutic governance (for instance, McKim, 2008), applicants often saw empathetic authority as manipulating them into engagement. Yet coercive, conditionality-based approaches, in which punishment is used to 'weigh upon us as a force that says no' (Foucault, 1980b:119), carries with it the risk of removing the desire to self-govern (Foucault, 1979; McKee, 2009). Empathetic power, important for providing a persuasive bridge to self-governance, risked being undermined by an excessive show of conditionality. The significance of this may have been especially great for those with little chance of the full housing duty, and so had less to lose through disengagement. The tension between a recognition that forms of productive power, such as empowerment and resilience were more likely to produce desired results, and the utility of a conditionality-driven 'bottom line', were in evidence in discussion with both applicants and workers.

You do have to be... aware, I suppose is the word. Yeah we can discharge their duty. We have to make that clear. But as I see it there's no point in going overboard with that because if all you're

saying is you've got to do this, you've got to do this, you see it in their eyes, you've lost them.

Angela, decision-maker

McDonald and Marston (2005), in their study of frontline workers in Australian unemployment offices, found that caseworkers commonly used threats or actual sanctions as a strategy to elicit engagement. There was some evidence of similar tactics in this study. Workers did often ensure that applicants were aware of the potential for the duty to be terminated, and sometimes made specific threats to end a duty, to provoke applicants into working with them. Unlike McDonald and Marston's participants, however, workers in this study usually contextualised this threat within a broader empathetic, rapport-based understanding. They communicated that they wanted to listen and that they wanted to help, but simultaneously that they had the power to end the duty. The message was that they could be kind and that they wanted to be kind, but that the applicant needed to engage: the applicant was therefore responsabilised for the worker's approach. This was seen in the account of a housing options worker, who used the tactic of transparency: explaining to her clients how the law worked while offering them rapport-based possibilities for engagement. She offered empathy and understanding, yet this was heavily contextualised by the threat of withdrawal.

If you don't engage with us, I always say to my clients, you know, I can end the duty. You know, if you don't contact me for six weeks and I can't contact you I can end the duty. And I get it. I get it housing is scary. I get it but even if you're just a bit anxious or you're a bit worried or you... you find you're not coping tell me because I... I... I... I can't... I can't keep a duty open forever but if you tell them you're struggling we can... we can reassess it. So I think it's... it's sort of going, you know, this is the law, I'm bound by the law but if we can work together we can use it to our advantage rather than... than using it as a... as a sort of punishment in any way. I don't even want to see it as a punishment.

Jasmine, frontline worker, some managerial responsibility

Housing options workers further extended the approach of rapport, which includes performative regard (see above), by giving applicants information about the law in order that they could modify their behaviour and so avoid a penalty. In this way, they seemed to occupy the 'citizen-agent' position of frontline workers described by Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000). Here, the 'citizen-agent' apparently positions themselves as on the same side as the client or service user and *against* the state, using techniques such as explaining and laying bare the mechanisms of the state (for instance through offering information and access to privileged routes through the system) to engender connection, respect and so co-operation with their clients, by positioning themselves as on the client's side, rather than being agents of the state. And yet, citizen-agents do not challenge the state: rather they work within the normative framework in a highly discretion-based way. Selectively informing certain applicants as to how the law works by offering 'backstage secrets' (Goffman, 1978) can be understood as a strategy to improve compliance through encouraging certain service-users to feel that the advice they have been given is non-generic and so more likely to be successful. Here this approach appeared to be extended still further to become a tactic used by housing options workers without regard to personal sympathy for the applicant. It was used to reinforce to applicants both the importance of avoiding the punitive power of the state and the sympathetic, helper role of the caseworker. By describing the punishment as originating from the state, and as inevitable and regretful, workers were able to put themselves on the same side as the applicant. Sharing information then became a way to retain connection and rapport with the applicant, and rather locate both the client and the worker as having to operate within wider constraints.

To my mind its about creating that level playing field. It's a hard system and it's getting worse. To my mind that's where making them informed comes in, that's about giving them an empowerment then. That's not fair to my mind, what's not fair to my mind is when you've got to come down hard on them and they haven't been given fair warning. I do spend a lot of time explaining it [the system] to them.

Cath, decision-maker

Providing applicants with transparency and information reinforced the

idea within the Act and official discourse of the applicant as capable of becoming an independent 'ethical self'. It implied that giving applicants this information was in and of itself sufficient to give them a choice to comply, allowing applicants to be responsabilised for non-compliance (R. Jones, 2010). Jasmine, a decision-maker with some managerial responsibility, explained how apparent openness over the quasi-legal processes surrounding the Act created choice. She proposed that, since a decision would only be taken if steps had been followed to ensure that the client was aware, the applicant who does not engage has then done so knowingly, and hence can be considered responsible. As presented by Jasmine, this was a reasonable approach on the grounds that applicants were given information and so could make an informed choice to comply. It reflects a 'pedagogical state' approach, where applicants are given broad and general information, where state withdrawal of help can then be justified on the grounds of active, informed, decision making by the service-user (Pykett, 2010; Schram et al., 2010). The importance of the pedagogical state to construction of post-Act relationships will be discussed in more depth in chapter 9.

I think it allows for more transparency. So the client understands exactly what we're doing and we can explain. I mean it's for example, unreasonable failure to co-operate... we should never be making that decision unless we're saying to the client every time we speak to them, if you don't agree to this, if you don't do the actions we've agreed, if you don't co-operate with us then this is going to happen. So they should... they should always be aware of that being a possibility... we're not trying to threaten them with it, it's... it's if this happens, we may have to go down this route.

Jasmine, frontline worker, some managerial responsibility

Most housing options workers, therefore, integrated the coercive and empathetic elements of the Act by using a conditionality-based requirement to underpin engagement. It was clear that the tension between the two, and the potential for coercive authority to overshadow and undermine persuasive, empathetic work, caused tension, and yet for most workers, these were complimentary, reflecting McDonald and Marston's (McDonald and Marston, 2005) observation that coercivity can be used to force engagement with empathetic authority.

However, some workers express ambivalence over use of threats, feeling conflict between a sense that coercive control operated in the applicant's own interests by forcing reluctant, though necessary compliance, and a sense of unease at the evident distress caused by rigid, uncompassionate, systems. They invoked deservedness and non-culpability, suggesting that it was unfair to penalise applicants who faced specific obstacles, such as mental ill-health. This returned to the concept of pity discussed above: the principle that applicants who tried, and yet were unsuccessful due to their own limitations deserved compassion. To withdraw help from an applicant who had tried to engage felt unreasonable, and to undermine key principles of deservedness, such as rewarding effort (Meyers, 2011). This was shown in the account given by one junior housing options worker, who was particularly conflicted about the requirement to make applicants engage when, to her, this was sometimes unreasonable given their health and circumstances. She was also a relatively new recruit, who had not worked under the old system and so, from a street-level bureaucracy theory perspective, might be understood as still undergoing the process of subjectification and integration to the dominant norms of her office (Maynard-Moody and Portillo, 2010).

I see a lot of clients who don't engage in the service [and then]... we can discharge a duty to help them. Which I agree with but then at the same time, I have people calling up saying, 'My anxiety's so bad, I can't leave the house.' So how can you expect them to look for themselves? It's really difficult, it is hard.

Olivia, decision-maker

The Act and Guidance do specify that help should not be withdrawn where non-compliance is due to unmet support needs. However, the act of identifying these support needs itself requires an investment of (scarce) time, which had to be justified. Although a detailed discussion of the needs of those specifically understood as 'vulnerable' falls outwith the scope of this study, there was evidence, reflecting prior scholarship, that those with compelling needs were not always identified as such in their often brief encounters with the local authority (Bretherton et al., 2013b). It falls outwith the scope of this thesis to comment extensively upon working conditions of frontline workers. However, it did appear that workers found the sense that some applicants' needs were being missed or inadequately considered intensely frustrating: to be denied the opportunity

to care caused them dissatisfaction and anxiety (Penz et al., 2017; Soss et al., 2011; Tronto, 2017)

Encounters with applicants for whom a threat of service withdrawal seemed inappropriate, and yet who did not evidently have support needs, were often instrumental in workers questioning the system. There was occasional evidence of a 'meantime': liminal spaces of encounter between service-provider and service-users in which the service provider's preconceived and categorical expectations of the service user are unconfirmed or challenged, and consequently, their broader worldview is placed into flux (S. Sharma, 2014, see Cloke et al., 2017 for a welfare-specific analysis of the term). It was here seen in the occasional importance of specific interactions in the narratives of housing options workers. These were seldom connected to a broader reappraisal of the system, but rather often remained disjointed and somewhat contradictory from the rest of the narrative, offering as yet unrealised potential for further-reaching dissonance to develop. One such example was seen in Audrey's account. A very longstanding housing options worker who had, by her own account, avoided management responsibilities because she preferred the human encounters of frontline work. Audrey had a pragmatic approach to non-cooperation overall and saw it as part of the role, expecting some deliberate non-engagement. She was critical of other workers (from different local authorities) who she saw as overtly moralistic. To Audrey, reductive and judgemental approaches to applicants was incompatible with the role, and she distanced herself from this attitude.

I was on a training course a couple of months back. And this woman, she's another housing officer in another authority. She went, 'When are they going to learn?' she goes. She said, 'Some of them have come in like 20, 25 times.' And I thought to myself, 'Love, if you've got that attitude you need to get another job, you need to get another job.'

Audrey, decision-maker

Audrey, a frontline worker, enjoyed her work in part for the possibility of emotional connection with applicants. And yet this created in her a sense of guilt and unease. This human connection was not efficient, and she worried that it was selfish. And yet she asserted enjoyment. She valued her encounters with applicants, not because it reinforced her own

subject position as a helper, but because she valued their personal qualities, a position which fundamentally requires an appreciation of another person's worth, equality and humanity.

Sometimes it is nice to see them coming back in. [laughs] Look I know I shouldn't... [but] Because they're nice, they're funny. And you build up a little bit of a relationship with some of them.

Audrey, decision-maker

Audrey's approach is subversive in that she does not use tools available to her to terminate the duty on the grounds of failure to co-operate. Rather, she uses empathy and rapport to encourage applicants to remain engaged.

Because I've had a few of them coming in and they've messed up their hostel accommodation. They're not in priority need but we've got them somewhere, and they've come and they've said, 'Oh, I've got evicted again.' 'Oh, what have you got evicted for?' 'Drugs or something.' And I say to them, 'Listen, if you mess it up, just come back. Don't just not do anything, just come back, and we'll always place you somewhere,' I said 'but if you've messed it up really bad, it just means that it's extra harder for us to find you somewhere so don't try messing it up. But if you do, you do; come back, don't be beating yourself up over it.'

Audrey, decision-maker

For Audrey, as a frontline worker, it is critical to assert her shared humanity with applicants. Foreshadowing a theme that will be developed in the subsequent two chapters, she stresses the lack of distance between herself and applicants, refusing to engage in othering. She does not attempt to justify this within a wider moral framework, nor adopt a position of sympathy or pity, but rather meets them in a relationship approaching one of equality- a 'caring with' stance (Tronto, 2013, 2017).

So, I don't know, I think as an officer you've just got to be a human being, really, and not someone who's paid all this money by the council to sit there and assess people.

Audrey, decision-maker

Chapter summary

This chapter found that frontline workers have a complex subject position. I firstly argued in this chapter that the subject position of frontline workers is complex. While they largely reject top-down discourses in which welfare subjects are rendered 'folk devils' who are excluded from help, they nevertheless construct their clients in terms of infantilisation and in need of pedagogical intervention. These discourses are of particular interest since they scaffold and justify a broader abandonment. They do not only arise from the dominant narratives of deservedness and cyclical, intergenerational welfare subjectivism, but are also informed by kindness and a desire to help. Yet it is also clear, from the close examination of the ambivalent exercise of coercive authority by frontline workers, that affective, emotional labour is a critical tool in ensuring compliance and hence successful enactment of abandonment. Workers are aware of, and to some extent contextualise their actions within, a 'moral panic' framing of homelessness. This is also re-interpreted within a pragmatic desire to help. Second, I show that this was especially evident in the complexity of authority, and especially the rarity of 'failure to co-operate' decisions, which, based upon a literal reading of the legislation, and prior literature upon conditionality, might be expected to be far more prevalent. And yet the *possibility* of failure to co-operate decisions remains highly visible as a structuring mechanism in the interactions between applicants and workers. Discussion of this use of discretion evidenced the ambivalence experienced by workers in using service withdrawal as a threat, since it was felt to potentially undermine the connection which they needed to enact pedagogical interventions successfully.

The next chapter expands upon the complexity of boundaries and distancing in a system heavily reliant upon pedagogical persuasion. I explore the spatial and procedural materialities of the bureaucracy-applicant relationship, with particular regard to the initial encounter between the homeless applicant and the state, arguing that this provides a location through which abjectivity is contested.

Chapter 7

Abjection: Spatialising bureaucracy, becoming subject

In the last chapter I argued that homeless applicants are subject to a discourse which justifies an abandonment of the principle of a non-conditional right to homelessness relief based upon need. I argued that, from the perspective of frontline workers, while applicants were often understood compassionately, they were also often infantilised, as requiring intervention in order to manage one's life (Cruikshank, 1999; Dean, 2002). In this chapter I explore the technologies through which this occurs, understanding this process in terms of abjection. As discussed in Chapter 3, abjection can be understood as a process by which individuals become targets of disgust, in a process which creates consent for poor treatment, systemic exclusion, and deprioritisation (Tyler, 2013, 2020). This chapter explores the processes by which unhoused and precariously housed individuals become created as abject homeless applicants, particularly through examining docility as a location where needs become legible. This chapter explores both the ways in which applicants become understood as homeless subjects, through technologies of processing and categorisation, but also how these categories may be subverted through performance and (il)legibility. This chapter seeks to show the conditions under which homeless applicants are made docile, with the expectations of the state transmitted to them. Particular attention is paid to the spatial and bureaucratic aspects of this- the secluded location of the office which necessitates that the applicant face their status as a homeless person in need of state help, the objectifying technologies such as waiting, queuing, and public humiliation, which serve to communicate the loss of a right to dignity and privacy, and the processing of applicants into de-individualised cases who can be seen and understood. Yet throughout I

also attend to the ways in which applicants display agency, particularly by attempting to make themselves legible to systems.

7.1 Space and time in the Housing Options office

For applicants, as for welfare subjects more broadly¹, their experience of the Housing Options office, the first stage for almost all applicants in beginning their application, waiting was a defining experience. As Auyero (2011) observes, waiting is a (non) action routinely expected of poor citizens within the welfare state. It forces welfare subjects into a situation of resigned compliance and lowered expectations, in which their time becomes conceptualised as of value only contingent upon their re-orientation as ethical subjects. Seeking both control of, and knowledge of, how time is used is a crucial technology of discipline. Foucault conceptualises time as a metric which creates a normalising anxiety over extraction of maximised (economic) productivity. This is both a macro and a micro attention to how subjects use their time, with the activities closely monitored to maximise efficiency of the system as a whole (Foucault, 1979). Waiting also takes on different resonances for different actors, with poor citizens particularly required to engage in holistic waiting, where they lack knowledge of how long they must wait for, what the outcome is likely to be, and sometimes even why they are waiting. Bourdieu (2000) conceptualises waiting as a technology of power. 'Making people wait. . . delaying without destroying hope...adjourning without totally disappointing' (2000,228) is a common, near-universal, experience of modern bureaucracies. As Lipsky (2010) observes, waiting (and by association, queuing) is an inevitable result of resource shortage: requiring (unpaid) applicants, not (paid) workers, to wait allows the organisation to shift a significant cost of service provision to applicants. This is made possible due to their 'dependence and relative powerlessness': waiting is typically necessary for welfare subjects to get any help at all.

As Seerfeldt (2017) observes, waiting is integrated into welfare systems:

¹All applicants in this study made their initial application through 'presenting' at a local government 'Housing Options' office. At the time of the study, some local authorities did have capacity to take applications in other ways, notably by phone. However, the focus emerging from interviews with both workers and applicants was on applications made in person. This may reflect the sampling strategy- several local authorities particularly targeted their remote services at the prevention stage, which was a group under-sampled from.

applicants must, typically, not only wait to be initially seen, but face ongoing uncertainty and delay throughout their interactions with the system. During this time, they typically have very little information to enable them to plan their own time but rather, echoing the construction of the deserving applicant as passive and docile, must remain for a period of time in a space in which they can be observed to be submissive, undemanding and patient (Meyers 2011). Indeed, waiting can become a technology to identify deserving applicants- Keane (2009a) and others have argued, correct, performative, waiting is a technology through which applicants are differentiated.

In this way, waiting itself can be understood as a processing technology. Welfare bureaucracies operate on the assumption that 'recipients have nothing else to do with their time' (Lipsky, 2010:95). Thus, they communicate the relative lack of value placed upon the unproductive applicant, in comparison to the time-poor bureaucrat. The individual must wait because their time matters less than that of the worker, and by extension, the state (Seefeldt, 2017). Indeed, teaching people to wait is an ongoing technology of governmentality and inherent to systems which deal with poor welfare subjects².

7.1.1 Time

Lack of control was particularly evident in the length of time which applicants were expected to spend waiting. A relationship between visiting the Housing Options office, and an unspecified period waiting, was a near universal experience for most applicants, but particularly those who did not have support workers, and particularly in larger local authorities³. These waiting times, which sometimes translated into a very quick appointment, often represented a significant portion of an applicant's day.

I don't think I've ever seen anyone inside of 3 hours. The only ex-

²An extended discussion of the working conditions of frontline workers falls outwith the scope of this thesis. However, it is important to note that frontline workers themselves reported working conditions characterised by time shortage, and closely echoing the work-intensification pressures reported by prior studies of welfare systems (see Penz et al., 2017). Thus, this technology of waiting was not one capriciously introduced by frontline workers to discipline welfare subjects: as Lipsky and subsequent scholars of street-level bureaucracy have argued, time pressures are integral and designed into the system.

³The reader is reminded that, to preserve anonymity as far as possible, neither the total number of local authorities nor the characteristics of them are made explicit, although they included local authorities with a range of sizes

ception would be when I've made an appointment but even then, you're waiting.

Anna, applicant, family hostel

However, it was also noticeable that applicants did not tend to regard waiting in and of itself as frustrating. Auyero, in his detailed account of the waiting of welfare subjects in Argentina (Auyero, 2011, 2012), observes that waiting to be seen by bureaucracies is often not, in fact, a source of irritation, because welfare subjects are always already anticipating waiting. Waiting is integral to welfare subject lives. For applicant-participants in this study, it was anticipated, and an arena in which the expectations upon them were well understood. Alex- a support worker who routinely accompanied homeless clients to the housing office, explained that, although their clients often expressed disappointment or irritation at discovering that they had to wait, they were also practiced at it and accepted it. As Alex describes the situation, it parallels the 'weariness' conceptualised by Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, (2019). It is a small, ongoing, irritating facet of the system, which would take a disproportionate amount of energy to fight: as an act of self-care, therefore, they accept the situation. Alex, and their clients, conceptualise the situation within wider societal structures and other welfare situations. As with Auyero's (2011) participants, Alex's clients, are, in fact, skilled and resourceful in waiting, reflecting the centrality of waiting to their interactions as a welfare subject.

For them it's like ... well there's a lot of waiting they do a lot of them. Like the benefits office or whatever. Waiting to see the GP. They know how it is. I do say, oh it could be a while, you know. I tell them it'll take a while and they're fine with that. Oh do I have to wait? Yeah. Ok then. It's fine then, they usually have their phone. We might chat. It's one of those things, isn't it?

Alex, intensive support worker, mental health charity

Although applicant-participants did express irritation at long waiting periods, this was primarily directed at the lack of information given around waiting: applicants were often unclear as to why they were waiting, whether it was needed, and how long they would need to wait for. Liz

explained how her difficulties with waiting were tied to a sense of being given little information or certainty, of being required to repeatedly present herself for processing, yet of lacking sufficient information to manage her presentation efficiently. For Liz, in common with other applicants, the fact that the system itself was also exerting discipline on frontline workers was evident. She was ambivalent about offering a critique of the system because she felt that her caseworker was himself trying to overcome the system's gaps. However, she drew attention to a mechanistic, all-encompassing bureaucracy which meant that without key information, her case could not proceed, and she was required to spend extended periods of time engaged in waiting.

They're doing their best and it's no reflection on them actually because you can see how harried they are, but it feels nasty in that they tell you nothing. Which I don't believe is purposeful... I'm a very organised person and I did bring everything on the list... I wanted it over... we had to come back twice because of something that wasn't even on the list. And he [caseworker] was trying to help but - 'computer says no'.

Liz, applicant, contacted independently

A key issue arising from long, unpredictable waits was that it prevented applicants from managing their time. This clearly communicated to applicants that their time was not seen as important, nor that their autonomy in managing their lives was seen as legitimate or important. As welfare subjects, in need of tutelary intervention to remake them as forward-facing citizens (see next chapter), their current use of time was of little interest, and (as seen with Liz, above) they often felt that little effort had been made to create predictable and transparent structures which allowed them to interact as choice-making individuals seeking a service. It was clear that frontline workers and managers often did not recognise that applicants might have other commitments- as one worker put it, 'You're homeless. You're telling me you haven't got time to sit and wait?' [Ian, frontline worker]. Other workers suggested that if applicants were not prepared to wait, this indicated that their cases were less serious than they were claiming. Thus, despite the pragmatic, often caring, discourse which complicated the moral panic discourse around applicants, in practice it was also clear that frontline workers expected, and so potentially rewarded, applicants whose performance of waiting indicated sub-

mission and willingness to adopt the subjectivity of the passive, receptive welfare subject (Sweet, 2019). Invoking a desperate, submissive 'homeless imaginary' as the benchmark of authenticity is particularly significant in the context of an Act which aimed to assist people before they reached a point of abjectivity and desperation, in order to minimise consequent trauma (Mackie et al., 2017). Applicants seldom objected to waiting- in fact, several made clear that extended waiting periods were expected and felt to be reasonable- '*I don't mind waiting my turn*', as Bridget [applicant, young people's hostel] put it. However, the lack of clarity surrounding the process of waiting, meant that they were denied the opportunity to take control of their own time, and consequently their search for housing. Dan, who was doing casual work at the time he made his homelessness application, articulated the frustration at the passivity involved in waiting by pointing out that it prevented him from acting himself to resolve his homelessness. It communicated to him that his efforts to resolve his own housing were of less importance than making him wait to see his case-worker, and ultimately meant he had to engage in a cost-benefit analysis over the value to him of engaging with the homelessness department, over looking for his own accommodation.

It was...four hours. Four hours til I seen anybody. It's a long wait. It's a long wait and for some people it's longer, mind. Some people in here waiting longer just to be told, we can't do anything for you. So those four hours could have been spent on finding somewhere to live but they make you wait for that time.

Dan, applicant, generalist hostel

7.1.2 Space

All local authorities involved in the study had a space set aside for homeless applicants to wait (in some cases, this was shared with other council services). Entering a waiting room did signal a success of sorts, since once an applicant had entered the building they could usually expect to be seen. Yet they were also spaces where applicants occupied a specific role as powerless and dependent, in which they understood themselves as entitled to little control over their time or actions. Housing Options waiting rooms, like other waiting spaces, produced people as welfare subjects through communicating expectations and parameters of behaviour

for different actors within the space; their role was to be compliant, and to wait uncomplainingly (Auyero, 2011; N. Gill, 2016).

Waiting rooms themselves are liminal spaces, locations in which applicants must submit to 'being stuck in a space and for a time not of our choosing' (Armstrong, 2018:133). Material practices such as spatial ordering (determining where, and which applicants may sit or stand) what they may do (which forms they must complete, how they must make staff aware of their presence), and what they must divulge of themselves are all critical to this process (J. May et al., 2019). Waiting areas themselves were seldom comfortable or welcoming spaces. They typically contained a reception desk which was situated in order to afford a panoptic view of the waiting area: in most local authorities this desk had a high Perspex screen. In most, but not all, local authorities, I was invited behind the reception desk and viewed the waiting area from this angle. Here, the ability of the receptionist to have command of the room, at all times, was evident. In my field notes, I record the sense I had when I moved from in front to behind the reception desk (once my status as a researcher rather than an applicant was identified) that the desk afforded considerable surveillant potential.

The room layout is like a goldfish bowl. The way the seats have been arranged- you don't notice it until you are behind the desk, but they are arranged not for the comfort of the applicants but so the receptionist has a clear view at all times. It looks a bit odd [the room layout] but when you get behind [the desk] it makes sense- otherwise the receptionist can't see the whole room.

field notes, March 2019

Figure 1⁴ shows a typical waiting room layout. It indicates the visibility afforded the receptionists in this room: there is nowhere to conceal oneself, and everyone may be seen at any time. The room had also been stripped of any distinguishing features: not only anything that might allow individuals to interact with the space, such as toys or books but any item that personalised the room and distinguished it from other waiting areas.

The waiting areas in this study were relatively comfortable. They were not the spaces of endurance found in processing spaces for asylum seek-

⁴Note that all photographs will be redacted from published thesis

Figure 7.1: The waiting room (PHOTOGRAPH REDACTED)

PHOTOGRAPH REDACTED

Photo of reception area: taken ten minutes before the first clients arrive. The manager showing me around saw this as a perfect time to see the room: 'it's ready and waiting for them.'. It had been recently cleaned. But there was, in fact, little in the room to become disarrayed. The chairs were attached to each other. A TV, high up on the wall, was securely attached. She mentioned that they have lots of families in here, but there were no toys or books, nor magazines. It feels like it's been childproofed to the extreme. Even the windows were high up, and, although the office itself had a good view of trees, the blinds were often drawn. Permission was obtained to take all photographs included in this thesis from appropriate office managers - field notes, June 2019

ers (Gentleman, 2019; N. Gill, 2016), or the actively adverse, unsanitary, noisy and sometimes dangerous welfare offices described by Auyero (Auyero, 2011, 2012). There were chairs to sit on, although sometimes not enough, there was working sanitation, and the rooms were reasonably well ventilated. They did not clearly communicate physical abjectivity to applicants, in that basic needs were usually taken care of (although several applicants did note that heating often failed, and that the noise levels sometimes felt overwhelming). Yet more fundamental to most applicants was a deeper sense that the space was not one of care, in which they were valued as individuals, but an impersonal space in which they were contained, waiting to be processed. Such spaces might on one level be understood as 'non-places'. As conceptualised by Augé (1995) a 'non-place' is a space often created by industrial needs, intentionally depersonalised, operating to process, organise and direct people. Typified by transit spaces such as bus depots or airports, they are generic and unresponsive to individual needs, thus subverting the relational, identity-based function of most space. This does not, however, mean that they do not fulfil the broader spatial function of creating subjects. Rather, through their depersonalisation and anonymity, they communicate to the subject within the

space that their humanity is not relevant or valuable. They do not convey a 'sense' of individual belonging within the space, and consequently function to reduce individuals to their role stripped of individuality or difference in a manner congruent with Foucauldian categorisation:

A person entering the space of non-place is relieved of his usual determinants. He becomes no more than what he does or experiences in the role...

Augé, 1995:103

A particular feature of 'non-places' is their lack of interactivity. They are holding areas, typically featureless and generic, where any interaction is primarily transactional and fleeting (Eggleton et al., 2017). The arrangement of such spaces tends to be regimented, and yet insufficient to meet the needs of the volume of applicants who need to use the service (Auyero, 2011; Lipsky, 2010). This is another form of 'non-anticipation': a mechanism to communicate to applicants that the system is overwhelmed, and that their needs must be contextualised among the needs of myriad others (Lipsky, 2010). As described by Alex, a support worker with a homelessness organisation funded by the local authority, this scarcity translated to self-restriction. Applicants chose to stand in order to retain spatial control; yet this itself was caused by a shortage of chairs (or adequate distance between them). The materiality of their waiting is not provided for: applicants are expected to be bored, to endure long waiting times without distraction, with the only respite in the form of materials left by prior service users. It was a featureless space, which applicants, even children, endured and managed their occupancy of, 'passing the time' for an unspecified period to get to the next stage (Auyero, 2011).

There's never enough chairs. People are always standing. If someone gets up it's like musical chairs. People just stand anyway, you don't really want to be crowded and it's a small space. Never seen anything for kids. Always loads of kids, never seen a box of toys. Maybe one of the free papers, people leave those. I tell them [their service users], bring what you need, you never know how long it'll be, you've just got to do it.

Alex, intensive support worker, mental health charity

Melissa explained how this impersonality created a sense of alienation within the office. She had made a number of applications to her local housing office since the Act came into force, including while pregnant or with small children. Although Melissa mentions physical discomfort, she dwells upon the impersonality of the space, and her consequent sense of disconnect and discomfort. For Melissa, the sparseness and non-interactivity of the space intensifies her sense of psychological discomfort; evoking an intangible sense of unwelcomeness.

It was bare. Absolutely freezing too. Yeah, not much fun. I was there when I was pregnant, I would go in there sit in that place. And it was just so unfriendly, just the worst place to be. Stressful.

Melissa, applicant, family hostel

This was reflected in the expressed opinions of workers themselves. Workers widely regarded the waiting areas as dehumanising, indifferent and impersonal. They were uncomfortable with the implications of requiring applicants to remain in these spaces. Here, it was noticeable that managers were especially critical of the waiting areas, seeing them as spaces which communicated an outdated way of interacting with people. Managers were particularly keen to stress that waiting times, and evidently depersonalised spaces were a focal point for improvement, highlighting their incompatibility with the post-Act regime.

And this is the seating arrangement. Again, it's not great. And this is part and parcel of where it's not just the service that we're... we're changing and our ethos and language we're changing, it's also the building. They do have a wait sometimes, I'm not denying that, but we try to make it as short as possible.

Patricia, decision-maker and manager

In most local authorities, although there were few or no items with which applicants could interact, an exception to this was tutelary, informative material, primarily posters and leaflets (see Figure 7.2). All local authorities had a well-ordered rack with leaflets on potential solutions, aligned (often council-funded) organisations, and details of the local authority's duties. These racks of leaflets contributed to staging the space. Through presenting cues, they signalled the purpose of the building as a

location in which information was distributed, so that applicants could, potentially, self-solve (R. Jones, 2010; Seefeldt, 2017). They allowed the possibility of enterprising, choice-making, citizenry in which the state had a purely signposting role (Pykett, 2010). This could, again, be understood in a similar way to the use of advice lines for selected applicants: it created a pathway for applicants who were constructed as needing minimal help from the state. This proposition is strengthened by the homogeneous nature of the leaflets. As described in my field notes (below) the leaflets and informational posters presented were not usually random or assorted, but carefully curated, reflecting those organisations with whom the local Council had a 'trusted partner', clientelist, relationship. This was despite the presence of multiple agencies and organisations which might help homeless households in the local authority.

Lots of leaflets and posters on ways to get help, different kinds of help. At first glance it looks like lots of different charities, lots of different organisations offering help. But then it's clear, there's one place you go for debt, another for domestic violence, another if you need mediation.

field notes, Dec 2018

Despite the relative prominence given to the leaflets, neither workers nor applicants mentioned them. Although workers remarked on the fact that there was little to do in the waiting area (see above), they did not propose that applicants read leaflets. During the time I spent in waiting rooms, I saw very little interaction with leaflets, supporting the idea that these were primarily a part of staging, rather than empowerment through information. They signalled the purpose of the building.

I was in the waiting room for about twenty minutes- it was busy. No one took any leaflets, no one looked at the leaflets.

field notes, Dec 2018

7.1.3 Queuing

Queuing is a particularly ritualised form of waiting, which creates an illusion of fairness by using temporality as a proxy distribution mechanism

Figure 7.2: View of the rack of leaflets from the reception area (PHOTOGRAPH REDACTED)

PHOTOGRAPH REDACTED

The photograph looks from the waiting room (see below) to the interview rooms, with the screened reception desk to the left. On the right are a series of leaflets, primarily A4, in racks. Most of these leaflets (in white) are a description of the Council's duties: this was information that largely replicated that available on their website. In the smaller rack on the far right are leaflets from partner organisations relating to homelessness services. The racks are carefully organised, and all leaflets are targeted and 'relevant' to homelessness duties under the Act. Field notes, June 2019.

for scarce resources. Lipsky (2010) observes that queue-based processing systems gain legitimacy from the illusion of equality since everyone must queue equally. It renders waiting time 'fair', and hence conceals the more fundamental imbalance between service user and provider, forcing them to accept the implicit assumptions of a rationed service: 'that the costs they are bearing are necessary because the resources of the agency are fixed.' (p95) Assistance becomes a fair reward for the time spent waiting, which masks its differential inequality since not everyone is equally able to wait. As Keane (2009b) argues, however, in her study of drug services, waiting has a second function: to actively produce citizens, and so aid in their categorisation. For instance, as shown here, queuing operated as a specific deterrent for some applicants, yet they tended to accept and internalise their deprioritisation as due to their own failure to persevere. This requirement to 'wait' has potential to undermine the 'universal' rights approach aim of the legislation. This was illustrated by Josh. After becoming homeless, and lacking knowledge of the homelessness system, he tried to make an application at a local night shelter, but discovered he needed to go to the Housing Options office. In common with a high percentage

of those who use homelessness services, he had complex mental health needs (Fitzpatrick, Pawson, Bramley, Wilcox, et al., 2013; Johnsen and Teixeira, 2012). For him, although he was street homeless and sofa surfing at that point, queuing was sufficiently off putting that he was unable to wait: waiting alone was, therefore, a deterrence which risked causing him to leave the system (Lidstone, 1994; Seefeldt, 2017).

First off I went to the [nightshelter]... they said, no, you got to go there... it was late by then. I went to the housing but there was a queue, long queue. I don't get on with... yeah so I wasn't having that. I'm not one for people.

Josh, applicant, day-centre

Queuing was necessitated, in part, by the unpredictability of demand for services, which made it hard for applicants to plan their time efficiently. This situation was compounded, in some local authorities, by difficulty in contacting caseworkers directly, meaning that applicants had to make repeated physical visits to the Local Authority (this was confirmed by caseworkers as an issue and a source of frustration). Although queuing appeared to be fair, in practice, it caused significant delay to applicant's cases. This applied not only to those who were unknown to the local authority, but in at least some local authorities extended to applicants whose cases were unsuccessful at prevention.

Zoe described a common situation in her local authority. Although she was facing harassment from her landlord, her local authority refused to consider her to be homeless until she was physically evicted from the property. Zoe (who identified herself as having a number of mental health conditions, including Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) became afraid of returning to her property; this then developed into a more generalised anxiety about returning to the local area- *'it was a phobia, silly, I just couldn't.'* She was able to stay with a friend temporarily, and on the scheduled day of the eviction visited the local Housing Options office. However, because she had to travel some distance, she did not arrive at the local authority until mid-morning, by which time there was a long queue. As Josh, she found queues intimidating and confusing and left.

Zoe was able to sofa surf for a short period. She was also able to draw upon support from a friend, who accompanied her to the office a few days later and advocated for her, meaning that she was offered interim accommodation. However, her experience highlights the expectations placed

upon homeless subjects in the system: that, although they themselves were typically in a crisis situation, a significant mismatch between need and available resources meant that they still had to be flexible and operate according to the temporal needs of the service (L. J. Silver, 2010).

They said, when it happens, come straight down to the office. They said they couldn't help me til he'd [landlord] actually come in the house. . . I didn't stay there overnight, stayed with my friend in [neighbouring local authority], so when it happened I got down to the housing as soon as I could, but it was too late, they were packed out, and then it was the weekend.

Zoe, applicant, family hostel

7.2 Watched from a distance

The waiting area was widely understood as a panoptic space, both by staff and those waiting. It was a space in which behaviour was being monitored and deservedness was assessed. As Gwen put it, '*You know you're being watched then from the minute you walk in the room, sit down, they might not be in your face ok but you know they're clocking you and you got to be on your best behaviour then.*'

This frustrated some applicants. Hallie observed that this sense of being watched made the waiting rooms a difficult space for applicants, like her, who had had prior poor experiences of institutionalised, bureaucratic environments. A care leaver with significant past trauma, Hallie had previously been repeatedly excluded from homelessness service spaces. For Hallie, it was the sense of being observed, which she experienced as confrontational, which produced this behaviour.

You walk in there and they're there right in your face waiting for you to put a step wrong and...okay here we go.

Hallie, applicant, generalist hostel

Hallie's difficulties were not only related to the nature of the space, but the short term nature of the interaction. She stresses the need to 'be seen' beyond her immediate behaviour, in a wider temporal context.

They need to see the people... to see us. Not how we are at the minute, because a lot of us, we get angry, but that's not us.

Hallie, applicant, generalist hostel

Because Hallie very quickly became frustrated, she acquired a 'problem client' label which then determined how her application was treated (Cramer, 2005). Hallie pointed out that if she was given more time to explain herself and thus present herself as a complex individual, then her actions had the potential to become understandable, contextualised within a rich life story. The waiting area, for Hallie, became a stage where she became a 'problem client' because a time-poor, bureaucracy focused system produced her as such, by denying her the opportunity to return to and contextualise her actions. Her account, then, highlights how a resource-shortage driven necessity to simplify applicants and see them in terms of stereotypes- a key facet of panoptic power- particularly affects those who struggle to perform socially advantageous identities.

They need to see us, see beyond us just kicking off, you know, see us. We are people, you know what I'm saying? I know I get angry but leave me be, I'll come around and before you know it I'll be saying sorry. I'm apologising- I don't want to hurt no one.

Hallie, applicant, generalist hostel

For other applicants, however, the waiting area provided opportunities to gain an advantage through performing a 'good applicant' subjectivity, helping them to craft and perform deserving welfare subjectivity. This reflects prior work which centres the strategies by which welfare subjects may take control of a disempowering narrative which requires them to operate as passive victims, deliberately deploying identity management which allows them access to resources (L. J. Silver, 2010; Sweet, 2019). As in Sweet's (2019) study of women in domestic violence refuges, this identity management was seldom cynical. Rather, applicants saw it as a language which they could use to communicate their existing commitment, and distance themselves from other, less deserving, applicants. Maeve, who had waited for a number of successive days, some of them with her young child, explains how she carefully managed her temper because she knew that if she became visibly angry she would be likely to be deprioritised. Her best chance of timely intervention was to perform rationality and compliance, even as she grew more afraid and worried at the

uncertainty facing her family. To manage her emotions, she sought help from her support network. In this way, Maeve's waiting could be conceptualised as 'active'. Just as Auyero's (2012) participants often took small, minimally subversive steps to re-claim waiting spaces by reducing their dehumanisation, Maeve turned the space itself into one where she could perform a subjectivity which made it easier for her to access help from the Local Authority.

I was waiting all day, from lunchtime onwards, and then it turned out I didn't have the right paperwork so I had to come back. Yeah it was frustrating. I was this close to losing it, I won't lie... I wanted their help. I was on the phone to my mum too, and my friend, [they're] going, just keep a lid on it [laughs].

Maeve, applicant, family hostel

A particular issue raised by workers in the waiting area was that of physical distancing. All local authorities had a clear demarcation between worker-space and applicant-space. In most cases, this took the form of a wide desk with a thick, Perspex, screen. From the perspective of both applicants and workers, this spatial separation represented an enactment of a deeper othering, communicating the relative abjectivity of applicants. Applicants drew attention to the sense that workers behind the screens were insulated and did not have to engage with interactions emotionally. Neil described his frustration at a sense that the screens at his local Housing Office enabled an intangible, unchallengeable disrespect. He describes a sense of being categorised, and consequently disbelieved. In his account, the protection of a screen exists amid a wider set of rules and standards which exist to enable workers to maintain a moral and cognitive distance. Neil draws attention to the difference he experiences between a performance of respect, and genuine regard. The difference for him is that he is not listened to: rather, because he has been categorised already as a difficult client, his words have little effect, and his explanations are always already anticipated and, hence, disregarded. Here, he describes his frustration at a bureaucratic encounter with workers who appear devoid of emotion: who he perceives as simply not caring.

They're careful like. They know what to say, what not to say. There behind their screens. They're respectful, it's just the way

they do things. They don't say you're lying. They're more like, oh yeah but what about... and I'm saying, mate. I'm not being funny with you. I'm giving it to you straight up. [shrugs] They've got their rules.

Neil, applicant, nightshelter

Such workers might be understood as extreme Weberian bureaucrats, led by rationality rather than emotion. While, as discussed in the previous and subsequent chapters, in practice workers did, broadly, appear to care, and were often working to manage their own emotional labour amid extreme resource scarcity, there was wide agreement that the presence of screens was a hindrance to performing their job. From the perspective of workers, overt separation created a barrier which prevented applicants from engaging. Workers saw screens as sending an incorrect message that applicants were abject, which then, they felt, caused them to both fail to take responsibility, and to disengage. Most workers felt that they were capable of creating rapport even with the screen in place, but that the screen increased the chance of applicant hostility.

This was explored in some depth by a housing options worker whose role included triage. She routinely conducted these discussions in the main area, separated by a desk-to-ceiling screen. As with most workers, she saw rapport as central to her work: it was an assumed part of her interactions with applicants (see last chapter). However, she saw the screen as creating distance, not in her, but in applicants.

I feel like I create quite a good bond with most of the people I see but I think the screen makes it really difficult for me. Yeah, I think it creates barriers and I think they do think 'Oh why am I separated?'

Olivia, decision-maker

For Olivia, the screen has the power to produce a distorted representation of her as a worker. It creates her as separate and different to applicants, which makes her uncomfortable. And yet it is evident that she does have a different subject position to applicants. Her role performing triage included taking a decision over whether to advance an applicant's

case, and if so, which pathway to assign them to.⁵ She expresses a desire to subvert this barrier through the expressive technologies of empathy and rapport discussed in the last chapter. This develops the argument proposed in the last chapter, rapport was proposed as a central, and yet ambivalent, form of empathetic authority. Discussing the effect of the screen between herself and clients, she explained:

You know I think [because of the screens] they see me as someone else, and I think that straight away, like, that tarnishes building a relationship with them. I think it makes it harder for them to engage, which I understand, I would be the same if I was on the other side of it.

Olivia, decision-maker

Olivia ends her account by invoking commonality and understanding (Tronto, 2017), proposing that the screen's presence as a physical division between clients and staff inevitably produces of hostility and suspicion, by reminding actors within the space of their roles, and constraining them within different spaces (Foucault, 1979). Yet this relies upon the assumption that the screen itself, rather than the conditions of the interaction, are responsible for the applicant's hostility. Further, it suggests that the applicant's reluctance to engage is circumstantial, and so can be changed simply as a result of architecture.

I would be the same if I was on the other side of it. When I'm around there and I'm looking in, and it's like, so weird seeing it from the other side, it looks very... it's just not a nice feeling seeing the screens there.

Olivia, decision-maker

The screen was a potential obstacle for a second reason. A number of workers pointed out that it was likely to remind applicants of other institutions in which they had had unpleasant experiences, notably prison and psychiatric services. As seen in Hallie's account (above) bureaucratic

⁵For instance, as has been seen, this might result in an applicant being advised to apply to a different local authority, or postpone their application. It also determined whether the case was allocated to a specialist or generalist advisor.

spaces had significant potential to operate as retraumatising spaces. Yet, reflecting the findings in the last chapter on the extent to which rapport became commodified, workers saw regimented, retraumatising, spaces as a problem because it made it harder to create rapport. While rapport was, more broadly, conceptualised as of importance for the successful resolution of the applicant's own case, it was, again, notable that the individual comfort and well-being of the applicant was seldom mentioned. Rather the focus was, again, upon rapport as instrumental to case progression. One local authority had moved, within the past few years, from a relatively informal setting, where, as Isabel put it, 'people felt more comfy waiting', to one shared with another, very different, council department, in a more formal, clearly official, building. To her, this was an issue, not because of the emotional or psychological impact upon clients in crisis, but because it reduced engagement.

Our environment downstairs is not the most welcoming. It is quite an intimidating building. So when you are trying to get down and approach it in that more informed way, and try to get more out of that individual, and you have... a corporate building. Some of that is lost immediately.

Isabel, decision-maker, some managerial responsibility.

It is important to stress that this did not mean that frontline workers did not care. As discussed in the previous chapter, the use of rapport was underpinned by rationalism: a belief that this was the most effective way to help applicants. However, although attempting to create rapport was a mechanism of showing care, it does represent objectification and categorisation. This illustrates the complexities of care: for frontline workers, the process of objectification could actually become part of the practice of care. It relied upon seeing the cared-for individual as 'other', veering into the paternalism which Tronto (2017) cautions is, along with favouritism and selectivity, one of the 'greatest dangers of reallocating caring responsibilities.' (ibid:38).

7.2.1 Becoming seen

Welfare subjects are seen, within a neoliberal framing, as a risk to the economic well-being of society (M. Dean, 2002; Lemke, 2001b). Their intangibly risky nature, which leads to their becoming distrusted, becomes

their defining, determining and integral characteristic (Jensen and Tyler, 2015; N. Rose, 1998; Tyler, 2020). Docility- a willingness to submit to authority, including allowing oneself to be shaped according to dominant norms (Foucault, 1980a) is a metric through which welfare subjects can be categorised as deserving of state help. As Sweet (Sweet, 2019) has shown, for welfare subjects a willingness to perform compliance with neoliberal norms, and re-frame and reproduce their past, present and future in a manner which accords with a narrative of progress and overcoming, producing a successful, empowered, self which aligns with activated citizenship (N. Rose, 1990; Sweet, 2019) closely accords with their access to resources. As will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, the self that is summoned must be mobile, not static: it must strive, contextualise setbacks within improvement and development, and understanding their subject position as inferior (in terms of knowledge) to 'experts', accept pedagogical intervention (Keane, 2009b; Ouellette and Hay, 2008). Thus, applicants have a complex relationship to docility, the first stage in the process of making people subject. Docility can be understood as a receptiveness to receiving, absorbing and replicating societal norms. Docility offers scope for manipulation: 'A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved.' (Foucault, 1979:136). The docile body, further, can be assessed, analysed and measured: the elements of it that are 'individual' and hence problematic can, therefore, be addressed.

The waiting space did not function only as a passive location. It also created a staging area in which applicants' cases were frequently publicly heard. Homeless people are a group who are frequently afforded little privacy (Casey et al., 2008; Cloke et al., 2011). They are subject to enhanced levels of surveillance, and denied privacy. As suspect welfare subjects, their eligibility for access to state funds is intensely scrutinised. (Auyero, 2012; Cloke et al., 2011; L. J. Silver, 2010). In this study, applicants routinely had to initially justify their need for state assistance in the public space of the waiting room. In most local authorities, to a greater or lesser extent, access to casework and material assistance was conditional upon first sharing key information with triage or reception staff (in some cases, non-specialists), and convincing them that they were eligible for homeless services. This often involved revealing key, confidential information publicly.

Isaac, who took on emergency full residency of his two young sons, made a homelessness application in the local authority in which they were resident, primarily to provide them with security. On his social worker's

advice, he visited the Housing Options office, but was nearly turned away after being asked a series of routine questions which included his local authority.⁶ Only because Isaac persisted was he able to see a caseworker and given emergency interim accommodation. However, in order to do this, he felt he had to disclose sensitive and potentially confidential information in a public space; he was especially concerned that this transgressed his sons' right to, and need for, privacy. The local authority to which Isaac applied did have private rooms available for sensitive conversations (where Isaac was eventually taken); however in order to gain access to them, it was necessary to convince triage staff, requiring at least some disclosure.

They wouldn't let me even sit and wait til I'd explained what was going on, which wasn't what I wanted to do, not in public like that. I'm thinking, who's listening? What if they know my boys, you know, they might be from the school, might know their mum. But I had to cos until I explained that they said they couldn't help so I had no choice.

Isaac, applicant, family hostel

Restricting access to significant help, for instance, casework and material assistance⁷ conditionally upon first sharing key information to allow workers to assess eligibility is consistent with their status as welfare subjects (Lipsky, 2010). As previously discussed, street level bureaucracy theory understands a key role of frontline workers to be to ration state resources, employing such technologies as deterrence (off-putting staff and hard-to-find locations) as well as humiliation (Lidstone, 1994; L. J. Silver, 2010). Workers themselves sometimes argued that, since there were routes into the system which bypassed the waiting room altogether, applicants considered especially 'vulnerable' should not be affected by a lack of privacy.⁸

⁶It is important to note that Isaac, in fact, was eligible for help and assistance under the new Act even had he not met criteria for local connection. However, frontline and triage staff in this local authority also confirmed that they would advise applicants out of area that their cases were unlikely to be successful, and encourage them to make an application to their own authority.

⁷Material assistance means here not only housing itself but also resources such as bond schemes, first month's rent, and preferential access to private rented property lists.

⁸It falls outwith the scope of this thesis to significantly explore the construction of the category of vulnerability under the Act. However, reflecting prior research, it was evident that likely 'vulnerability' (even according to the strict definition employed by the Act- see

George's account illustrates this. He had complex, vulnerabilising circumstances which he did not want to become public knowledge. However, he was also concerned for a more specific reason: he was worried that the information he disclosed would lead to him being targeted in shared hostel accommodation. In his local authority, applicants unlikely to be owed an interim housing duty (such as, despite his circumstances, George), were usually sent directly to a hostel. In his account, he juxtaposes his fear of particular groups of applicants (Johnsen et al., 2005), with the expectation by the local authority that he share personal, vulnerabilising information. He felt that, if he did not share key, potentially humiliating and stigmatising information in public, the success of his case would be compromised.

I was in and out [of the housing options office]. They wanted a lot of information I wasn't prepared to give. I wrote it down. It wasn't right, it felt like everyone was in your business, and then I knew they'd send me over to the [nightshelter] and I'd be [sleeping] down beside... [shrugged] , I didn't want to give them anything. I'd be lying on the floor next to other people... people who'd had drink or substance abuse problems... shooting up, the after effects of them consuming drink and drugs.

George, applicant, contacted independently

Even for applicants who were not worried about safety implications of disclosing information, having to justify their access to services publicly reinforced their sense that they were being processed through an industrialised system in which their individuality was largely irrelevant. This was often psychologically distressing and humiliating. Henry explained this in terms of dehumanisation. As he describes the experience, welfare subjects are required to present themselves to a group of homogeneous workers: the interaction is generic, repetitious, and yet intensely personal in that applicant information becomes publicly audible. He evokes a sense of an enforced, passive, and collective humiliation arising from the shared experience of welfare subjectivity.

Chapter 4) did not correspond reliably to engagement with specialist services and that there were specific groups- for instance, those who had experienced domestic abuse, with specific, stigmatised, health conditions, and those with recent criminal convictions- who needed access to confidential space yet could not obtain it without some degree of public disclosure.

It's kind of like the only people we really spoke to there were kind of like a bank of people sat behind desks. And you could hear everybody's business while you were waiting.

Henry, applicant, contacted independently

On several occasions, across different authorities, I witnessed this close, public questioning of applicants in offices. In the following extract from my field notes I describe this experience of observing an applicant sharing this information with a receptionist. His embarrassment was evident, and the receptionist herself responded as sensitively as possible, given the small size of the office. However, this was also information she needed to move his case to the homelessness team. The room was small, and the conversation was audible. The encounter transgressed normative social conventions: the man shared detailed personal information which, were it not a bureaucratic encounter, might have elicited more overt sympathy. Yet the nature of the office structured the reactions of bystanders: although embarrassment, but also compassion, were evident, we remained physically, practically and morally distant (Lipsky, 2010; Pilavin et al., 1969).

Ahead of me, a man explained, in detail, why he was homeless. The receptionist was sympathetic, asked more questions- 'Do you have any medical conditions?'. He did- he gave details. They kept their voices down- he was clearly embarrassed. Those of us in the queue were careful not to look at each other too much although when we did our looks were sympathetic, to treat this as routine, although the details of his life spilling from him were detailed and upsetting. Conversations [among those in the queue] continued. She was sympathetic, apologetic. There was now a long queue behind him going out of the door. Eventually, they said they could see him, gave him forms to fill in. He sat down, the next person moved forward. No one offered him help.

field notes, March 2019

The way that applicants related to triage workers, and answered these questions, was critical. As has been seen, it determined the next stage of the case: in Isaac's case above, his social worker's coaching was critical in

ensuring that he persisted and so was not turned away. It was also clear that these detailed questions were part of the role of triage workers, and that they were required and expected to ask them. Based on the answers to this, she had the power to advise an applicant not to continue with their case. Although they did have the right to ask to see a caseworker, as Lidstone (1994) has explained reception workers have a significant role in deterrence, through giving informal advice and signals about the likely success of the case. In other instances, receptionists were responsible for recording information which affected the pathway an applicant then took. Again, this was typically done publicly. In this account, an officer explains that the information an admin worker took publicly then determined the next stages of the case, and particularly the priority placed upon it (whether it was assigned to a quiet or busy team).

Admin will fill out what we call a contact sheet with the person's details, name, tenure or what is it they actually want, or if they're threatened with homelessness. That sheet is then given to the duty officer. So that duty officer will look at that case and pick out what's needed and decide whether or not it's kept for obviously the duty officer, or is passed to the prevention team.

Carol, decision-maker

While most authorities operated a triage system, meaning that intense information sharing primarily occurred in secluded rooms, in some local authorities the whole interview occurred in the waiting area. In these instances, access to private space was possible, but at the discretion of the caseworker. For instance, one local authority, whose reception area was part of the local council offices, by default conducted interviews in the walk-in reception area. This meant that, unless the officer deemed that a room was needed, the conversations were public not only to other homelessness service users but in fact, any member of the public. As Gemma explains, privacy in this local authority became, not an automatic right for any applicant whose case was to be explored in depth, but to be awarded on a discretionary basis where frontline workers identified a need. Yet there were no formal criteria for identification of an applicant as particularly in need of privacy for the interview; it seems likely, therefore, that this would be heavily reliant upon a matrix of personal perception, deservedness and recognition of vulnerability (Sweet, 2019).

You tend to know the type of people that are quite nervous in speaking to you because they're aware that, you know, other members of staff or members of the public can hear and you just use your initiative really to think, you know, would you like to go into a room a bit more private? You can... you can see the relief sometimes of, yeah that would be great.

Gemma, decision-maker

A manager in a local authority which triaged applicants in the public waiting area described this interaction and the questions asked. This occurred at reception, through a Perspex screen, with the applicant usually standing, and no more than two metres from the nearest chairs. The triage was an essential part of the application: the manager did not suggest that the applicant might be able to ask for privacy, and so it is reasonable to conclude that there was an expectation that this information-sharing would, *de facto* occur publicly.

You know, know it could be anything coming through... it could be, you've had a notice from your landlord, mum and dad are asking you to leave. It may be, I'm going to be released... I'm on day release today or I may be released from prison or hospital or whatever it is, you know, in such and such a time and I'm going to be homeless at that point. It may be that I've got disrepair issues in my property, anti social behaviour with my neighbours. It may be I've been sent here. That's... that's a good one. Who sent you? I've been sent here, it could be by police, by social services, the counsellor, whoever...

Patricia, decision-maker and manager

Understanding people in terms of categories, rather than as individuals, is a critical part of disciplinary power. As Scott (Scott, 1998) argues, bureaucracies create normative values through simply ignoring or dismissing those who do not or cannot comply with them. As Tyler (2013) shows, illegibility has significant consequences: this unrecognisably compromises citizenship. For instance, those whom the system does not anticipate, and so who are unable to produce sufficient information to allow them to be categorised, then struggle to be recognised as entitled to

help from the state (Spade, 2015; Tyler, 2013). The Act necessitates significant categorisation. Starting with the first interactions in the waiting area, workers must make immediate decisions over whether an applicant is entitled to help at all, and if so, which type. The earlier parts of this chapter have shown how certain configurations of applicants were anticipated in different ways.

As such, workers engaged in diagnosis. Individuals considered a potential risk to the state (such as patients in a Foucauldian naval hospital, as discussed in Chapter 3) must be classified and understood, and contained through following a prescribed course of action, before being permitted freedom and autonomy (N. Rose, 1992; Whitworth, 2016). To understand an individual in terms of their parts, to make them predictable and known, is, Foucault argued, achieved through close scrutiny and examination. Categorisation is a key technology of modernity, made possible by industrial systems with the capacity to closely investigate the lives of individual humans. In consequence, the examiner (physician, psychiatrist, teacher or caseworker) is able to prescribe a course of action tailored to the individual's needs. Knowing an individual's parts gives the examiner a superior knowledge of the individual than they themselves have. Diagnosis is a critical part of this process, and often sought by individuals themselves in order to enable them to gain more freedom (Rose, 1992). This technology is intricately connected to case-work. In case-work, a service-user (such as a welfare subject) is 'diagnosed', and a course of self-esteem 'treatment' determined (Cruikshank, 1999). A critical part of this diagnosis and casework is that it is often welcomed and sought out: biopower requires co-operation. The applicant is actively worked upon to align and reconfigure them, using their existing desires to bring their goals in line with societal norms (N. Rose, 1990). The Act did not introduce casework to the homelessness system, but it substantially increased its importance, since almost every homeless household was now eligible for ongoing casework (Mackie et al., 2017). It was clear from this study that targeted, tailored, casework was a central part of homelessness practice, following the Act. Workers now work with applicants for a protracted period (up to 56 days at each stage of the Act). They also have greater range of options to offer applicants. Yet these options were limited in the extent to which they could be tailored to individual applicants. As frontline workers conceptualised them, they were seen in terms of a set of pathways, with their task as to determine which was the best fit for their client. This discom-bobulated, problem-solving approach was illustrated by Olivia. She saw

her role as working out how to locate applicants within the system: the focus was not on the holistic individual, nor their emotional experience, but on how to insert them correctly into a predetermined framework.

I think of it a bit like a jigsaw puzzle. I ask them lot of questions and then I'll be thinking right well how can we move forward here? Where do I fit [this person] in?

Olivia, decision-maker

To make these decisions, workers needed to ask detailed and extensive questions. As previously seen, applicants were often understood as having a limited right to privacy: indeed a desire for privacy could be seen as furtive and suspicious (Sweet, 2019). Intrusive questioning was understood to be performed not out of prurience but to help the applicant. The frontline worker thus takes on the role of the naval doctor in *Discipline and Punish*, attempting to categorise, and so know, the applicant through a detailed inventory of their circumstances. In this way, an 'administrative and political space [becomes] articulated upon a therapeutic space' (Foucault, 1979:144). As naval hospital patients, applicants approach the local authority for help, but in order to receive it must be willing to have their experiences and circumstances located within the local authority's frame of reference. This manager gave an indication of the kinds of information that might be asked of applicants at an initial interview. It includes potentially traumatic events and humiliating and stigmatising information. Notably absent from this account is a sense of emotional connection to these events: despite separately expanding upon the local authority's integration of different trauma-informed approaches, there is no recognition that these re-tellings have the potential to re-traumatise applicants, or that applicants might struggle to talk about such incidents (disadvantaging them in terms of legibility-see above). This account illustrates how the applicant becomes objectified: understood as a conduit through which a case may be efficiently understood, rather than a traumatised and often distressed human.

We meet somebody and within five minutes we're asking their medical history, criminal convictions to see if, you know, some people may have been in and out of prison for years and institutionalised. What sort of medical conditions, whether it's mobility,

mental health. Whether they've had any previous trauma that could contribute, even things like rape could lead to mental health and lead to homelessness depending on areas, the perpetrators and just... so we've got medical, history...

Chloe, decision-maker

Frontline workers (in contrast to managers), did sometimes acknowledge the intrusiveness of the encounter and take steps to mitigate this. It was understood as a necessary evil, regrettable, but needed in order to provide help. In practice, therefore, it was clear that there was, at least among some workers, an understanding that certain enquiries needed to be approached sensitively. Workers sometimes justified these inquiries through direct reference to the Act, locating themselves as sympathetic and non-antagonistic to gain compliance (Lipsky, 2010). Emotion-work-anticipating an applicant's distress, and managing the way in which information was sought, in order to blunt the resultant distress- was widely used, with workers themselves taking responsibility for managing these encounters in such a way to retain engagement (Bolton and Boyd, 2003; Crain et al., 2016). At the same time, the fact that applicants often resisted intrusive question served, for workers, to reinforce the importance of intervention. Continuing the findings of the prior chapter, reflecting a 'pastoral care' approach widely adopted in therapeutic care environments, applicants were characterised as avoidant, reluctant to face up to the consequences of their actions or to work toward progress out of homelessness (Keane, 2009a; Sweet, 2019). The applicant's reluctance to divulge information justified a sense of pride in their skill and competence in excavating, and then interpreting, information (Gibson-Graham, 1994). This frontline worker saw her role as necessitating an investigative skill-set in order to diagnose, measure and assess applicants, making available to them information which they themselves potentially could not access. Applicants were not, therefore, untruthful, but self-deceptive. However, probing and detailed questions made it possible to retrieve information inaccessible to applicants themselves. Clients emotions formed part of the excavation process, with this worker describing how she used techniques which mimic friendliness, such as conversations, to create an environment conducive to a productive encounter.

It can be [difficult]. Some aren't very forthcoming with informa-

tion, some leave... I understand that some don't feel comfortable, which is completely understandable, but I don't know. I think... yeah it's difficult. I think sometimes it can involve... like detective work, you've got to dig a bit, which can be quite difficult because you've got to instigate these conversations and try to get this information out of them...

Rachel, decision-maker

Returning to the theme of legibility, it was clear that an authentic performance was critical to getting help. Several workers mentioned that they questioned applicants in detail partly to assess whether their performance seemed authentic, while applicants sometimes reported direct confrontations, where their version of events was challenged, and they were encouraged to alter their perceptions of the event. These confrontations, however, were difficult to read as such. They were performed persuasively and often involved friendly suggestions to an applicant to encourage them to reappraise their interpretation of events. This sense that the interaction was 'commodified emotion' (Duncombe and Jessop, 2002) particularly jeopardised attempts to build rapport. As shown above, and in the previous chapter, rapport was seen as an essential part of the caseworker's job under the new Act, reflecting the shift in their role from allocator of resources to scaffolder and empowerer. It is clear from discussions above that workers, and the bureaucratic system as a whole deliberately produced rapport to secure engagement from applicants, reflecting wider practice in neoliberal bureaucracies (N. Gill, 2016; Soss et al., 2011). However, this approach relies upon the applicant not realising that rapport is being deliberately produced as a tool of manipulation (Lipsky, 2010). The empathetic authority upon which this relies discourages direct confrontation and instead works to govern through internalisation of norms (Henderson et al., 2010). This deliberate production of rapport was often noted by applicants and sometimes lead to considerable frustration. Kay recounted an interaction between herself and a caseworker. Having missed several appointments with different agencies, when Kay attempted to explain why, she felt that her caseworker was minimising the difficulties she faced and implying that she was exaggerating. What appeared to anger her particularly was not only her caseworker's attempt to impose a regime of truth - a denial of Kay's reality in which it was dismissed as wrong- but the persuasive, cajoling, way in which this was done.

She was like 'come on now...'. And it was true, every word! Ok love maybe we have a bit of a disagreement here, yes it was fucking true. What you meant was, I don't think you acted right. Come out and say that love, alright?

Kay, applicant, generalist hostel

This sense of objectification and distrust created, in applicants a sense that they were regarded, not as active, motivated, partners in the task of looking for housing, but as recalcitrant and state dependent. For some applicants, the fact that caseworkers felt it necessary to make clear to them that they had to look for houses was insulting, re-enforcing the idea that they were only interested in a social housing tenancy. Challenging the narrative seen above of the dependent applicant interested in social housing, applicants objected to the patronising assumption behind the standardised belief that applicants necessarily needed to be told that, if they wanted to find private housing, they would need to themselves be active in searching (Mackie and Thomas, 2014).

They do talk down to you. I know how to find a house. I had my own tenancy for [over 20] years. I can do it all, cooking, cleaning. I had bad luck. I know I'm not going to get social [housing]. I know I got to look for myself. I know houses don't just appear out of thin air. No need to talk to me like I'm a child whose never had a house of my own. I raised four kids.

Alison, applicant, day-centre

This contributed to a sense that they were seen by the local authority as failures because they were homeless. In dismissing their specific life experience, it reduced them and homogenised them simply as 'homeless applicants' rather than individuals with complex life experiences (McNaughton Nicholls and Nicholls, 2010). This was unpleasant. As one young applicant, with extensive experience of the care system, explained, *'I hate being a case. I've been a case all my life. I hate it'* [Mia]. It also meant that opportunities to intervene in nuanced and responsive ways which met the actual and specific needs of applicants were missed (Mackie and Thomas, 2014). It seems likely that what perhaps seemed to staff to be non-cooperation was, to applicants, a rejection of inappropriate solutions

which did not reflect their lives, and which did not offer them the opportunity to resolve their homelessness. As discussed above, this would seldom lead to an actual termination of duty, but potentially influenced how the applicant was perceived, with ramifications for discretion-based resource decisions. This is illustrated with an account from Bill, an older man who had become homeless, along with his wife, after being evicted from a private tenancy following rent arrears due to ill-health. Bill explained how the insistence by caseworkers involved in his application on offering solutions which did not meet his needs was frustrating and compromised his ability to co-operate. Bill was extremely focused upon finding housing, and spent a considerable amount of time contacting landlords and agents, yet found that, because he was in receipt of benefits, he had no success: his problems were structural, rather than individual (Powell, 2015). The specific difficulties faced by applicants in finding private rented accommodation is explored in more depth in the next chapter.

They mean well I don't dispute that but they're half our age. When you're our age and you've lived a life... They've got all these ideas, the trouble is, none of them [the ideas] work. It's easy to sit behind a desk and say ... they mean well but I don't know what they think it's for... What would help me is... here's a list of landlords that'll take you on. That's where the problem lies. You don't need to tell me to look for a house, love. I'm [in his 50s], I've never claimed a penny in my life. That's what we're learning, the system isn't set up for people like us.

Bill, applicant, generalist hostel

Although some applicants objected to a sense of public humiliation, dehumanisation and surveillance it was also notable that, reflecting prior scholarship, they were *in practice* willing to comply. indeed, they were often prepared to work to ensure that they were able to enter the system, and to become categorised and processed (Auyero, 2011a; Cruikshank, 1999). Processing is a disciplinary tool; and yet, as a form of 'seductive', productive biopower, it operates not upon people against their will, but rather is presented as a strategy to accomplish needs, desires or aims (Cruikshank, 1999). Applicants presented at the Housing Options office because they wanted help: consequently, they were usually willing to work to meet the legibility requirements of the Act.

Sweet (Sweet, 2019) discusses the importance of applicants making themselves 'legible'. This is a multi-faceted process, and includes working on their presentation of self to provide a performance of correct welfare-subject-victim (in line with a developing ethical self) and a re-framing of their personal narrative to fit it within the personal progress narrative demanded by self-governance (P. Miller and Rose, 1990). Within the homelessness system, legibility operated on different levels. There was some evidence of active management of identity to engender deservedness.⁹ This was intricately intertwined with the production of concrete information about their circumstances, with willingness to comply offering a performative opportunity to present potential self-hood in alignment with a *homo economicus* subjectivity. I now consider evidence that applicants had to operate carefully at the point of initial presentation in order to produce themselves in such a way as to be allowed to enter the system.

Legibility was evident in terms of fitting applicants to bureaucratic systems, even where these frameworks were inflexible and led to some applicants becoming overlooked. All local authorities normally expected applicants to provide some basic information, such as proof of identity, financial information and evidence related to their homelessness. From the perspective of workers, this was typically presented as reasonable and necessary; yet it was also notable that quite extensive information was sometimes requested, which applicants facing homelessness would be particularly likely to struggle to provide. One particular issue was that systems tended to anticipate a tenancy which was fully compliant with RentSmartWales, with landlords themselves registered, and notice periods correctly issued. Tenancies which did not comply with the regulations were, technically, illegal and so applicants facing eviction struggled to be considered homeless.

We do need to be able to see that notice has been given in order to validate [the application]. We need to see a tenancy agreement. We need to see deposit protection information. We need to have that information.

Lois, decision-maker

Indeed, applicants often worked to produce curated narratives in order to communicate and perform openness. This can be understood as

⁹However, this was primarily associated with case progression and the longer term client-caseworker relationship, and is discussed in more detail in the next chapter

a restive act which relied upon their own critical analysis of the relationship between themselves and the state (Meyers, 2011; Sweet, 2019). As explored above, council workers were highly concerned about social learning among certain groups structuring how they interacted with the council: that they might be deliberately presenting themselves in such a way as to advantage themselves within the system. Yet applicants were also aware that the way in which they interacted with staff affected their likelihood of getting help, and specifically that they would be more likely to get help if they performed a particular 'victim narrative' (Creek and Dunn, 2011) of openness and authenticity. Interviewed in a young people's hostel, Bridget had grown up in a series of care placements, moving out at the age of 17 to live with an older abusive, partner. She left this relationship and was placed in a refuge; but was asked to leave after failing to comply with the refuge rules.

Yeah, I did have to leave the hostel [refuge], yeah cos I was a bit disruptive. Well I was fighting. I've grown up a lot since then, but you only get one shot. Fair enough.

Bridget, applicant, young people's hostel

Bridget explained that as a result of the program within the refuge itself in the form of 'empowerment' programs aimed at increasing reflexivity and self-awareness, she had learnt to present her story in a more reflective way which conveyed authenticity, and which allowed her to identify which parts of her life story would assist her in this (S. Berger, 2009; Rimke, 2000; Sweet, 2019). This helped her to understand how the system needed her to present for her needs to be 'legible' (Cramer, 2005; Scott, 1998; Sweet, 2019). Just as with Sweet's participants, her willingness to selectively dissect and re-present her life in a specific form was necessary in order for her to be regarded as sympathetic. Had she not done so, she would have been at even greater risk of long term homelessness, as a young care-leaver who had already experienced domestic abuse, and who was already receiving treatment for complex mental ill-health (Fitzpatrick, Pawson, Bramley, Wilcox, et al., 2013; Shelton et al., 2012). However, her own perception of performing this act of identity management also did not appear to be deliberate, intentional, or conniving. Rather, they shaped her world-view at a deeper, structural level. She had been successfully convinced of her need to adopt them, and consequently, as a reflexive and so

'forward-facing' applicant, she was rewarded with relatively smooth passage into long term support.

I've learnt to speak up a bit more, just do that by myself. I think I've learnt a lot [through the program]. I do know [now] its important when you go in [to the council]- be honest, be open, be yourself, so they can see you're a nice decent person like.

Bridget, applicant, young people's hostel

Thus, the interview encounter became a site of active production of acceptable identity. This was seen particularly in the strategies adopted by applicants who did not easily fit into the system. For instance, a common problem faced by applicants in some local authorities was having their homelessness recognised as valid where they were unable to provide evidence that they were facing eviction from a private tenancy. As previously discussed, although the Welsh system has adopted a system of landlord registration, compliance with this is under-enforced. Some Local Authorities adopted the approach that where an eviction notice was invalid, the applicant could not be treated as homeless or threatened with homelessness, and so there was no duty under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014¹⁰. One strategy here was to invoke competing notions of fairness and equity: some applicants did have success by appealing to morality, or sometimes a higher authority. Anna, who, with her two young children, was facing eviction by an unregistered landlord whose abusive behaviour had led to police involvement, threatened to involve her MP. However, this required considerable confidence (Anna also noted that she was afraid that her threat would backfire and her case would be treated unfavourably) and was possible only because she had some knowledge of political and bureaucratic processes.

We'd been up and down for two days at that point and I wasn't having it. I'd just had enough. I said to them, these kids need somewhere they can get their head down at night, somewhere safe. I said, I'd go to my MP.

¹⁰Whether this is a tenable position is questionable. Arguably, where a household faced significant harassment from a landlord (several participants had involved the police), a household could be considered homeless on the grounds of having nowhere reasonable to reside, even if their eviction was technically unlawful.

Anna, applicant, family hostel

Requiring applicants to take responsibility for their legibility particularly affected groups who were likely to qualify for interim accommodation, especially families and disabled people and those with serious health conditions. These groups were often required to provide proof of their circumstances to justify interim accommodation; yet this, in turn, often meant repeated, exhausting, visits, as well as obtaining sufficient proof. Although those considered in priority need under the Act have been presumed to be offered more help (Mackie et al., 2017), there was little evidence that systems were deployed to make the application process easier for them, to reflect their circumstances. Lone parents and disabled people with fatigue and pain related conditions particularly reported that long and repeated visits to the local authority were onerous, and often exacerbated by a lack of clear initial instructions about what to bring. The implications of the refusal to admit people to the system until they could prove their eligibility is described by Melissa. During her most recent application, and despite having a young child with her, she was required to spend two separate days waiting to be seen in the Housing Options office before her homelessness application was accepted because there was debate over whether the eviction notice she had been issued was valid.¹¹

It was pretty busy yeah, we had to take our time to be seen. Yeah and then... so I didn't have all the paperwork they wanted. It looked like he wasn't on the register, but then it turned out he was. So at first I thought they wouldn't be able to help at all and I'm going into full on [mimes panic] ... Anyway, they were, oh you have to come back tomorrow. Come back tomorrow with this this and this and then we can get it sorted out.

Melissa, applicant, family hostel

Yet, although applicants often struggled with the performative aspects of compliance, it was also clear that bureaucratic rules and requirements

¹¹As previously discussed, applicants in some local authorities reported that housing options workers would not accept homelessness applications where the landlord was not registered with RentSmartWales, because they did not accept that this constituted a valid eviction notice. In one case this position was maintained even after the applicant had had to ask the police to intervene when the landlord tried to gain control of the property.

enabled some applicants to make themselves legible to, and so benefit from, categorisation as 'good applicants' by the system. Some applicants deliberately elected to demonstrate acquiescence, a seemingly passive, and yet often highly successful, strategy. Reflecting Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar's (2019) argument that 'weariness' is not only a valid response to experiencing life as a welfare subject, but, in fact, a useful strategy for survival, applicants often simply did what they were told, with the result that they were understood to be willing to work within the system. This reflects Cruikshank's observation that welfare subjects are often not, in fact, resistant to welfare systems, but rather recognise them as locations where their needs stand the best chance of being met. A number of applicants used waiting itself as a mechanism to perform, and so become legible as, deserving subjects. As Cara explained, she engaged, over a period of several days, with an extended process to establish her eligibility and open her case because to resist offered her no benefit. She was frustrated, but she also accepted that this was the only realistic way she would get help, so, in the absence of other options, she complied, signalling that she was prepared to put in effort- becoming activated, empowered and responsabilised (J. Clarke, 2005) to move her case forward.

I just kept coming back, giving them what they wanted, until they sorted me out. Cos what else was I to do? ... they saw I was serious.

Cara, applicant, generalist hostel

A particularly interesting finding around legibility was that both front-line workers and applicants saw the proposed clarity of the Act in terms of opportunity. Workers observed that if applicants kept to the rules, they were often able to help them. Visibilising compliance, and sharing information, and so making themselves legible as deserving applicants, helped workers in an increasingly industrialised system to justify helping applicants. This approach could be read in emotionally manipulative terms, as trying to engender compliance through trying to gain applicant sympathy or taking them into a confidence (Lipsky, 2010; Maynard-Moody and Portillo, 2010). Yet workers stressed that they genuinely did want to help applicants yet were constrained by the rules.

I say to them, look I want to help you. That's the truth, I do. So

make it easy for me, yeah? I'm not here to trip you up, why would I? Make it easy for me.

Ian, decision-maker

There were mixed feelings on the clarity of the Act. Workers felt that, in practice, some areas were unclear. Although it falls outwith the scope of the thesis to consider the pressures faced by frontline workers in detail, difficulties in obtaining clarification from internal and external providers was particularly raised as an issue. Yet at the same time, the prescriptivity of the Act was largely seen in a favourable way, since it allowed frontline workers to communicate to applicants what needed doing, but also what they were able to offer.

One of the big advantages of the new act, I feel anyway, is that it's all there in black and white. We all know where we stand to some extent. There's a lot more rules, I can't deny that, but we can say to them [clients] this is the pathway you need to take, right then.

Michael, decision-maker

This sense that the Act allowed greater clarity, and that this clarity was helpful to both applicants and workers, in clearly defining the expectations around their relationship, was echoed by workers in non-decision making roles. A hostel worker with some managerial responsibilities, felt this clarity in her dealings, on behalf of clients, with the local authority. This allowed her to clearly instruct her clients in their interactions with the local authority, improving her ability to instruct them on how to present themselves and so make themselves legible. In common with other workers, Maria welcomed legibility for caring reasons- because it gave her a way to help applicants.

This is something I do appreciate. If I'm unclear I can give them a call and say ok how about this and they can give me an answer there and then. So we know what we're doing and I can say to them [clients], right then.

Maria, support worker with some managerial responsibility

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I argued that homeless individuals become constructed, and construct themselves, through spatial and procedural interactions with homelessness bureaucracies. This process involves the interaction with the concept of abjectivity. Abject individuals are regarded as beyond understanding, and so are illegible. Where applicants asserted legibility and demanded understanding, they challenged their status as abject. In this chapter I made, and evidenced, two claims. First, I demonstrated that applicants are actively and deliberately produced as abject within homelessness offices through attention to spatial and chronological arrangements. They must wait, often for protracted and uncertain periods, thus communicating the relative lack of value of their time. Further, the space is one in which they must accept ongoing scrutiny, and surveillance as part of their identity as homeless applicants. Waiting was shown to be an ubiquitous requirement, which functioned to rationalise the treatment of applicants in terms of fairness and equal access to resources, yet which disproportionately disadvantaged some groups. I suggest that, in common with other welfare subjects, homeless applicants are routinely required not only to wait for long periods of time but to perform actions which reveal them to be understood as stigmatised, abject individuals. For instance, they are given little information about the length of time they are expected to wait and are routinely asked to disclose sensitive information in public spaces. These spaces also reinforced the abjectivity and suspicious subjectivity of the homeless applicant, through use of panoptic architectural design and a requirement to publicly evidence need. Second, however, I show that the relative predictability of these same structures also enabled applicants to communicate that they were deserving, through performance of a blameless yet activated subjectivity. I show that applicants do not, in fact, passively occupy the location of 'homeless subject', but rather engage in active identity management, using understood constructions of deservedness to improve their chances of success, and that this is made possible due to the presence of clear and mutually understood normative, moralistic, standards. The shaping and creating of homeless subjects who accept the need for state intervention is a key function of the Act, reflecting in the ways in which both space and bureaucratic systems are constituted. However, it is also important to recognise that subjectivity is not imposed upon homeless applicants but rather is often welcomed and often fought for, reflecting their status

as active citizens. I thus found that that abjectivity is a contested state, which is often destabilised not only by 'abject citizens' themselves, but through creating lines of understanding between abject and non-abject citizens (see Tyler, 2013, 2020).

This chapter has shown that applicants cannot be understood in dichotomous terms, as simply oppressed or resistive. Rather, they operate within a field of possibilities, in which their options are structured by normative values as to how an acceptable homeless applicant subjectivity might perform. The next chapter considers this theme further by considering how a neoliberal paternalistic welfare system appears to demand the activation of homeless applicants as neoliberal ethical citizens, but in practice this proves unsustainable, since neither workers nor applicants are willing or able to maintain performative responsabilisation.

Chapter 8

Activation: Empowerment, futurity and the pedagogical state

Having considered first the discourse applied to homeless applicants (Chapter 6) and then the spatialisation of bureaucracy and categorisation to enact and amplify the processing of applicants (Chapter 7), I now turn to the question of activation. As discussed in Chapter 3, activation is the process whereby modern citizens are created and governed through choice and consequence. Through activation, they are encouraged to maximise their ability to make productive, responsible and useful decisions (J. Clarke, 2005; Cruikshank, 1999; N. Rose, 1992). The successful 'self-governing' individual is one who, with minimal ongoing input or guidance, (re)produces societal norms. As has been shown, the homeless applicant summoned under the new Housing (Wales) Act 2014 is both pitiable, and reformable. They are capable of becoming self-governing home-seekers, yet also occupy a liminal location as potential citizens. To make them 'productive', they require pedagogical intervention. As shown in the prior chapter, homelessness itself, under the new Act, has been understood as a state of failure arising from a lack of knowledge, not only of how to obtain housing, but of why state independence in housing should be desired. Having been summoned and (co-)created as docile homeless subjects, they are then invited to submit to pedagogical intervention, in the form of protracted casework aimed at accustoming them to understanding themselves as potential tenants within a precarious, competitive, housing market.

In this chapter I argue that homeless applicants are subject to activa-

tion, yet that this process itself illustrates that the limits of state control arise because individual frontline workers avoid excessive responsabilisation. In the first part of the chapter I show that homelessness can be understood as a form of 'failed citizenship' analogous to welfare subjectivism, in which they are constructed not as the choice-making, independent, entrepreneurial citizens expected by the Act, but rather as thus-far failed potential citizens to be recuperated through intervention, particularly through encouraging or requiring them to search for properties in the private rented sector (Mackie and Thomas, 2014). In the second part, I consider the technology of the Personal Housing Plan, a quasi-contractual agreement between applicant and council involving detailed attention to the spatio-temporal organisation of applicants. In the third part, however, I demonstrate that this panoptic control is limited not only by resource shortage, but also a reluctance on the part of workers to enforce harsh, punitive and ultimately uncaring approaches.

8.1 Homelessness as failed citizenship

I begin by revisiting the idea that homelessness under neoliberal paternalism becomes understood as the result of a lack of skills or motivation (Chapter 6). This mirrors a similar approach within workfare where worklessness is understood in terms of lack of knowledge and motivation (Schram et al., 2010). The importance of a workfare approach lies in its potential to justify interventions into the lives of poor, and precariously/unhoused, individuals (McDonald and Marston, 2005; Schram et al., 2010; Whitworth and Carter, 2014). In this chapter I move to a focus upon the ways in which citizens became 'activated' through technologies of empowerment and responsabilisation.

An extract from an account given by Jasmine, a decision-maker with some managerial responsibilities, illustrates how interventions could become justified. Jasmine's discussion of a recent case is of interest because it concerns a client who appeared to be *competent*, in contrast to the far more prevalent discourses of socialised incapacity discussed in Chapter 6. This client, however, is *potentially* capable but lacks certain skills. Jasmine therefore presents this lack of understanding to be a significant, but rectifiable, stumbling block. Once this lack of knowledge has been addressed, the applicant is transformed to a welfare subject capable of autonomous self-regulation (M. Dean, 2002). The function of this discourse is twofold. Not only does it establish that homelessness arises

from lack of knowledge (locating it as an individual issue) but it inserts the worker as an actor able to remedy the situation, through providing instruction (Cruikshank, 1999). She is deserving- she is not culpable in her homelessness and is innocent and relatable.

Straight off, there's nothing extra with her, she's with it, she's just had a bit of bad luck. She's been handed her section 21, it all checks out fine, right she's homeless. She's with it, she's like us...

Jasmine, decision-maker

However, her homelessness is prolonged because she does not know how to start the process of looking for private rented accommodation. Jasmine, a decision-making worker, and manager understands this as a reasonable situation to be in and addresses this knowledge gap through a pedagogical intervention. Although this applicant is, functionally, a 'static' welfare subject (Jensen, 2014), she is not blamed for her situation, because it is understood to be the result of an easily rectifiable knowledge gap: it offers an opportunity to *demonstrate* alignment with neoliberal values through learning and hence, moving toward her own accommodation (S. Berger, 2009; Sweet, 2019).

She had no idea really where to find [private rented] properties. Where've you been looking? She'd barely been looking, that was her trouble. She couldn't tell me. So that was a case of showing her all the places she could look. I don't think it was deliberate, she just really didn't know.

Jasmine, decision-maker

In asserting that it is possible (simply, difficult) for applicants to secure private rented accommodation, frontline workers can be understood as acting to create a field of knowledge in their assertion that it is possible to obtain a private rented property. Thus, homelessness becomes individualised as a failure of self-empowerment, rather than a result of structural inequalities (Cruikshank, 1999). Nadia recounted a conversation with her caseworker in which they tried, with some success, to convey to her this sense of possibility. The Housing Options worker assigned to

her had used the comparative approach detailed above to help her believe that it was possible for her to obtain private accommodation, seemingly overlooking the fact that for Nadia this would have required her to share a room with her toddler daughter. It is in fact doubtful that the council would have helped her move into a house which was legally too small for her. However her account illustrates, from the perspective of the applicant, the approach explained above of encouraging people to think that it was possible for them to obtain private housing if they were prepared to work upon themselves, and make sacrifices. Nadia recounts how this conversation was important to her in making her reappraise her priorities, and particularly in making her scrutinise her needs in order to make her a more competitive tenant.

Cos you never know, that's what [HO worker] said. She said she did find that sometimes people found somewhere so... yeah I am still trying cos to be honest I do just want anywhere, so long as it's safe for [daughter]. I think [HO] is, yeah, she's very, like she'll tell it how it is. Like oh yeah it's really tough trying to get a house yeah, like no bullshit but then she goes, ok but I had a family last week, they did find somewhere. It isn't going to happen if I don't look, is it? Cos I think, ok maybe I could afford that... if me and [daughter] share a room...

Nadia, applicant, family hostel

8.1.1 'Success' and the private rented sector

Although frontline workers sometimes saw the private rented sector as a pragmatic necessity (see below), they also often struggled to give specific examples of successful resolutions to homelessness which involved the private rented sector. This contrasted with a general willingness to tell specific stories about applicants to illustrate narratives. This account from a frontline decision-making worker (some management responsibility) typifies the non-specificity of answers regarding the private rented sector as a destination.

I don't know personally as an officer [how many applicants are finding private rented accommodation]. I know that we do a lot

of bonds applications, we do. Because I remember one day, I did one, [manager] did five. So that was just one. That was just us two officers, so I don't know what the other officers had done that day, but we do do bond applications for people all the time.

Audrey, decision-maker

This invites the question of whether they could reasonably be expected to know these outcomes. It should be noted that neither the Act nor the Guidance supply a clear definition of when a homelessness duty should be considered as ended 'successfully': by this I mean that at no point is this term, which is used to separate cases for reporting purposes, actually defined. However, a close reading of sections 67 and 74 specify that for a duty to be *ended* (under sections 66 and sections 73 respectively) the applicant would have available to them 'accommodation likely to be available for occupation for a period of at least 6 months' (s74 (4) (b) and s67 (3) (b)). It is to be expected, therefore, that workers recording a 'successful' outcome at either s66 or s73 would have some knowledge of the likely housing destinations of this group. One possible explanation is simply that cases involving bond applications were less noteworthy and more routine.¹

One nightshelter worker described the global difficulties faced by the group of predominantly single men among his service users. He explained that, for this group, the private rented sector was not accessible, and articulated his frustration with a system which, he felt, simply refused to acknowledge this, rather relying on a hegemonic insistence that it was 'possible'. In this account, reflecting scholarly observations that low income tenants lack power in the competitive housing market, he observes that, for homeless applicants, it is often nearly impossible to persuade landlords to accept them as tenants (Cole et al., 2016; Powell, 2015). He explains that, in his experience, for applicants using his service to be accepted by private sector landlords was an unusual situation which relied upon personal connections: the market as a whole was inaccessible. He explains that even the small apparent success rates achieved by his service were dependent upon a *personal* connection between a staff member

¹It may be helpful to reiterate at this point that this study is not evaluative and these findings cannot be taken to reflect the *actual* prevalence of outcomes. The purpose of exploring this question is to understand the discourse produced by workers-both decision-makers and support workers in relation to the outcomes

and a local landlord.²

Yeah no one does [accept homeless applicants]. No one. It's not a thing. Oh yeah [worker] managed to get a couple of boys into a flat because it so happened, he knew a landlord. That's how we're moving them on, in practice, that's the only way it's going to happen for them. I'm not being funny-they turn up to see a flat. Doesn't matter if they've got a bond, doesn't matter if they've got a guarantor. The ones here are at the back of the queue.

Rob, support worker

Workers in council offices and hostels, and involved in bond schemes, identified several specific, overwhelming barriers- particularly the frozen LHA and the requirement to have a guarantor, as well as a generalised preference not to take tenants receiving Housing Benefit, which meant that the private rented sector was relatively inaccessible to applicants (Powell, 2015). As David, a non-managerial housing options worker, with around two decades of homelessness experience, explained, access to the private rented sector was increasingly difficult for many applicants. He listed issues including a lack of economic power resulting from benefits cuts, and the requirement that applicants provide a guarantor.

It's got a lot more difficult now. Because a lot of landlords will want guarantors, and they will want... and it used to be pretty good but gradually, I mean, it's sort of changed a lot. Their guarantor has got to be somebody who owns their own home and works and earns at least £25,000 a year. And a lot of households have got nobody who they can ask who can do that. Or part of the landlords now are saying, we won't take anybody who's claiming benefits, we'll only take somebody who's a professional, somebody working, which happens lots. So there are a lot of barriers now for people trying to get into private rented.

David, decision-maker

²This staff member was not, in fact, directly responsible for liaising with landlords or working with service users to move them into accommodation. Rather, this appeared to be a chance personal connection, with workers seeing both the staff member and, to an extent, the landlord himself as doing the service a favour by facilitating this connection.

Affordability was another issue raised in every local authority. This was particularly related to the broader benefits context, notably the freezing of the Local Housing Allowance (see Chapter 4). Reflecting previous scholarship, workers in both decision-making and non-decision making roles, and to some extent managers, identified unaffordability caused by benefits restrictions as a serious obstacle to obtaining private sector housing (Beatty, 2014; Powell, 2015). One decision-making worker illustrated this with an example from a recent case: a family who he was unable to house because, although they had looked for and found a property, the rent exceeded their Local Housing Allowance (LHA) by more than the council were prepared to accept they could afford, and so he could not guarantee the property or release the bond.

Talking about LHA, a family that I had yesterday found a property in [inexpensive area of the Local Authority] and their [the family's] LHA is extremely low.³ And therefore I was unable to help them. It's just unrealistic. The LHA needs to increase. I just don't know, without building more properties, what [else] the solution is. . . .

Zach, decision-maker

It was clear, from interviews in all Local Authorities, that workers were not only aware of the difficulties faced by most client groups in obtaining private rented accommodation, but often felt strongly that they constituted an inequity. Workers, both those in decision making roles and support roles, noted that there was a broad and general sympathy for the difficulties faced by applicants in the new system. As Mike, a decision-maker, put it, *'there's none of us who'll disagree that the system's much harder, and that the odds are stacked against them.'* This substantiates prior scholarship which understands frontline workers as often sympathetic to applicants, understanding them as constrained within a disciplinary system which severely limits their ability to operate compassionately. For instance, Schram et al. (2010), observe that workers allied to the system may often, in fact, attempt to avoid placing punitive sanctions on families they are sympathetic too (see also Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2000).

³The amount of Local Housing Allowance a household is entitled to varies according to a number of factors including family size. LHA amount *payable* might also be affected by other factors such as the benefits cap, or the presence of non-dependants.

Workers were often deeply ambivalent about requiring applicants to look for private rented properties, seeing this as a potentially impossible task.

We can't get [applicants] past the credit checks or the tenancy references, no matter how much money we throw at it, landlords don't want to know. So that becomes really challenging and I think my biggest frustration is that they [management] all tell us use the private rental sector. Well I'd like them to come and give it a go. You go away, sit down and find me... it's not as easy as they make it sound.

Andrew, decision-maker

Workers also argued that the private rented sector was not a satisfactory solution to long term homelessness since it provided little legal or practical security of tenure. Insecurity of tenure was particularly an issue given the difficulties which homeless households already faced. Here, one non-managerial housing options worker articulated a fear that the use of short term private rented sector tenancies was an unsustainable solution which did not address the wider issues implicated in homelessness.⁴

In terms of use discharging duty into the private rented sector, they come back through for years and years and years and a positive outcome is seen as preventing them from becoming homeless for six months. Whereas if you look at the bigger picture, it's not great, is it?

Jasmine, decision-maker

Housing options workers were also often aware that, other than encouraging applicants to look for private rented accommodation, they had few other options to suggest to applicants. Proposed obstacles accessing social housing- both in terms of actual stock shortage, and the increasing conditions attached to who was eligible for a social tenancy, frustrated

⁴The actual figures for cyclical homelessness involving the private rented sector in Wales are unknown. This quote reflects a (widespread) sense among workers that the private rented sector was a factor in unresolved homelessness; however it should be understood in the broader context of the status of this dataset as non-evaluative.

frontline workers. Even where they had expressed a general concern over social housing as contributing to a 'dependency culture', as seen in chapter 6, the same workers also frequently expressed a desire to be able to offer more clients social housing, and were frustrated that they couldn't help more. This is particularly interesting given that, as discussed previously, while social housing figures have declined overall in the last 30 years, they have been relatively stable in Wales, and possibly slightly increased, since the introduction of the Act (England and Taylor, 2021). Thus, the disjuncture between worker perception and the likely reality is interesting, and potentially the result of the significant increase in applications and workload (due to the addition of stages 66 and 73). Most workers felt that social housing needed to be more widely available, with those who had been in post under the prior Act often unfavourably contrasting the current situation. Here, workers sometimes used extreme and non-specific comparisons, painting a picture of freely available social housing, compared to a current situation of scarcity. The function of this seemed to be, in practice, to reinforce the idea of pragmatism. Prior availability of social housing was aligned with the previous system which, as discussed in Chapter 6, many workers felt had poorly prepared applicants to survive in the 'real' housing market. Asserting their desire to offer universal housing thus functioned to locate them as sympathetic, and yet orientated toward working successfully within the current situation (Soss et al., 2011). Returning to a key theme of Chapter 6, the *necessity* of searching for accommodation in the private rented sector was a 'reality check', yet one required because the context of housing in Wales meant that continued indulgence was neither compassionate nor kind. This quote from Audrey, a very longstanding decision-making worker, exemplifies this approach.

Because I'd love it if people could just come in, like it was years ago, and there'd be all the keys on the wall, and we would just allocate them a property and then they could go away.⁵ I would love to go back to that again. But that's not going to happen any time soon, so private rented is the way to go really, until the situation has been resolved.

Audrey, decision-maker

⁵Although Audrey had been in post for several decades, it is very unlikely that, in this particular local authority, she had ever worked in a situation where social rented housing was available to this extent. Her statement here is understood as rhetorical.

Workers expressed frustration at a sense that the system itself, and the surrounding policies, were overly prescriptive, and offered little room for exception making or individual acts of compassion (Soss et al., 2011). Andrew, a decision-maker, explained how, even where properties had been found, the amount of necessary paperwork and administrative action this generated often caused a time delay which resulted in a property being lost. His account could be interpreted in terms of Lipsky's (2010) observation that bureaucratic delay is not accidental but represents a broader resource-prioritisation decision within the system itself, a mechanism for disciplining not only applicants, but constraining workers and preventing them from performing desired, satisfying, emotion work (Crain et al., 2016). He expresses here the sense that the system, and particularly bureaucracy, drive scarcity and shortage.

I really want to help people, but due to the red tape...it's difficult to do so. So for example if someone finds a property, in order for us to pay for them to go into that property, we need to go and inspect the property and then we need to process the money. But just arranging for someone to go out to inspect it, you're constantly getting, 'No I haven't got the time, sorry.' And it's like, come on, you know this customer is trying their hardest to do what we told them to do and this is a really frustrating point, every single day, chasing other people. But again it's because they're so stretched, so...

Andrew, decision-maker

For some workers, this seeming contradiction between an awareness of the limitations of the private rented sector for meeting the needs of homeless applicants, and the paucity of alternative options, justified a resilience approach. A resilience approach can be understood as a form of empowerment which trains the individual not only to expect adversity, but to see it as part of a learning process (Joseph, 2013). Not only does resilience therefore normalise and render legitimate structural inequalities, through directing the individual's attention inward to what they can control, it also locates the responsibility for avoiding adversity with the individual. Harm is reinterpreted as personal failure to prepare adequately, and an important part of the work of workfare and conditionality based welfare is to

communicate this to the individual (Carton, 2014; M. Dean, 2002; R. Gill and Orgad, 2018; Joseph, 2013; Lamont et al., 2016; Zebrowski, 2013).

8.1.2 Personal agency and empowerment

The response of most decision-making workers, and some non-decision making workers, was to stress that it was possible for applicants to find private rented housing, but it required them to gain additional skills to overcome these obstacles, to re-create themselves as stronger, competitive home-seekers, particularly through specific pedagogical interventions (Keane, 2009b). Acknowledging difficulties was important but became incorporated into a narrative of personal empowerment and achievement. This allowed workers to reframe the evident difficulties in finding private accommodation described above as a need for self-esteem. Thus, workers did not represent the process of finding private rented accommodation as easy; rather they advised clients that it was possible, provided that they were willing to change and learn. The acknowledgement of obstacles in fact makes this more powerful since it asserts the power of the individual to succeed despite the obstacles placed in their way (J. Clarke, 2005; Hochschild, 2012; Penz et al., 2017).

What I tell clients, the ones who've been looking, is it's hard in [local authority]. Everyone knows that the rents have gone up. But we do [bond] applications every day for people. And that's what I try and tell the clients who are saying that they've struggled. But I mean, they have got to be looking every day, and they have got to be pretty flexible on where they want to go because a lot of the rents are expensive.

Audrey, decision-maker

Stories were one technology through which this normalisation was accomplished. Applicants were presented with the selective experiences of others to demonstrate that it was possible to overcome these obstacles and obtain accommodation. Their experience became, in this way, part of a category, which included people who had succeeded, a key technology of self-improvement and motivational approaches (Foucault, 1979; Keane, 2009b). Coral, a decision-making worker, explained her tactic for motivating applicants who felt that they were unlikely to get housing: first by

listening to their difficulties and acknowledging them, and then telling them that other people had succeeded in this situation. This approach of recognising and normalising obstacles, and yet asserting that it remains possible to overcome them, is recognised as a key technology for managing 'progress' (Keane, 2009b).

I know it's hard out there. But what I say to them. People are getting flats, houses, all the time. I think they get demoralised to be honest with you, give up. Oh I won't find anywhere! Well I'll tell you, [name] is writing bonds out every day of the week. So people are getting houses. Sometimes it's just about keeping motivated.

Coral, decision-maker

In Foucauldian power, that the personal-private distinction becomes eroded. The state seeks to act through the individual, by incorporation into their psyche. An individual's private life also becomes governable, as has been seen in the case of low income families (see Chapters 6 and 7). Foucault refers to this as 'exhaustive use' (Foucault, 1979:154). Here, all aspects of the individual's time, both public and private, must be turned over to improvement: there is no separate, private, self. Applicants reported a sense that they were expected to adopt an intense and complete orientation toward obtaining accommodation. As Beth explained, particularly living in council temporary accommodation, she felt her entire life to be under scrutiny, with an expectation that all her day to day activities became orientated toward house finding.

And here, it's like being in a fishbowl. They're always watching you, are you doing this, are you doing this? Have you gone to this appointment, have you done this? I can't be doing with it, I can't stand it.

Beth, applicant, day-centre

Applicants were similarly expected to integrate their search for accommodation into their private life, to use these resources to increase their chances of success. They were particularly expected to use their families and friends as strategies for finding accommodation, thus eroding the

distinction between the two. Indeed, for frontline workers, breaking down this distinction and seeing the individual's personal network as a resource was a key pedagogical learning point, a strategy for reinforcing to the applicant that every part of their life was to be turned over to the pursuit of the goal, with not a moment or opportunity for productivity wasted; a system of total control in which every part of the individual becomes co-opted into the individual's transformation (Foucault, 1979). This is illustrated by an account from one manager, who explained how she advised applicants to make visible their homelessness within their personal networks.

The best advice that I...I always give, one of the best advices, you know, more often than not it's not agencies that you can go to, it's talking to people. Talking to people in the playground, talking to people in work...if you're at the bingo. You know, speaking to people and they know someone who knows someone who knows somebody and it's...it's that old adage it's not what you know it's who you know...

Patricia, decision-maker and manager

Frontline workers tended to see such advice as non-intuitive knowledge, justifying a pedagogical intervention. It implied that applicants had not already considered using family and friend networks to resolve their homelessness. It reinforces the idea of applicants as naïve and unskilled in finding and retaining housing. This housing options worker explained that she saw this strategy as privileged, secret, knowledge.

They don't realise some of them, but nowadays you're spoilt for choice, really. You've got Rightmove, Zoopla...but I always say, listen, I'll let you into a secret. Because the ones I can think of who've really had the success, 9 times out of 10 it's word of mouth. Oh my mate's got a room in his house. My friend's moving out and her landlady wants someone in quick...

Coral, decision-maker

In fact, this was to some extent an admission that it was only possible to find a private rented property where an individual was relying upon

friends. Turning this into a strategy, a 'trick', and thus making applicants privileged in their knowledge of this strategy allowed them to maintain the 'truth' of a system where, ultimately, there was a disconnect between the professed truth (that it was possible to get a house through the private rented sector) and the reality (that for homeless applicants specifically it was nearly impossible) through suggesting that applicants simply had to be willing to utilise another part of themselves, to increase their efficiency through drawing on other resources. This is illustrated in the account below from Harriet. She recounts her reaction to being told, by applicants, that they cannot find accommodation. In keeping with a resilience approach, she acknowledges their difficulties. However, she implies that it is a result of their own lack of resourcefulness, suggesting that they employ an alternate strategy.

[I say] You're not telling me anything I don't know. So you've got to cast your net a bit wider. Try asking around. Most of the ones I can think of who've found somewhere, it's been through a friend. That's how it tends to work. Ask your friends, just get the word out.

Harriet, decision-maker

These suggestions were often seen by applicants themselves as, at best, unnecessary and at worst, patronising. To Josh, who was interviewed in the day-centre he attended, asking his friends was a logical extension of looking on property search sites. He observed that he did not need to be told to look for accommodation. These suggestions communicated to him denial of his material reality. He saw his homelessness as caused by a lack of (affordable, accessible) properties. To imply that his own lack of skill and knowledge contributed to his homelessness was patronising and alienating: it ignored not only his own motivation and resilience, but his prior experience of seeking accommodation.

Yeah I look on those places like spare room and zoopla. That's what I did last time. And they say ask around, well of course I'm doing that like! Yeah there just isn't anywhere. That's the problem.

Josh, applicant, day-centre

To follow these suggestions was seen, by applicants, as compromising their privacy and making visible their homelessness in all parts of their lives. Isaac, a lone parent, explained that he did not want to ask the parents at his sons' school if they knew of any available houses because this would have meant his family's homelessness becoming widely known, with a potentially stigmatising impact on his sons. As in Casey et al's (2008) study, he was motivated to operate careful identity management to avoid negative social consequences.

They said, talk to friends, at the children's school, is there anyone you can ask. It's not nice for the boys that I'm asking.

Isaac, applicant, family hostel

Workers also reported that they instructed applicants on how to present themselves, to fit the preconceptions of landlords better searching for tenants. They advised applicants to construct themselves carefully, and manage their stories, in order to create a good impression. The pedagogical state demands that individuals take control of how others perceive them, and maximise the advantage gained from this (N. Gill, 2016). As Ouellette and Hay (2008) argue, learning to construct and re-construct the self to fit into dominant norms is a key, critical, facet of neoliberal progress, marking the shift toward the empowered, and hence in-control, citizen. One strategy was to encourage applicants to manage their presentation in such a way that it was not evident that they were homeless. As Jasmine, a decision-maker with some management responsibilities, explained, she encouraged applicants to downplay the fact that they were on Housing Benefit or omit key parts of their circumstances, because she saw this as necessary to success.

I say, listen, you've got to be clever about it. Because let's face it, we all know that landlords don't necessarily want those on housing benefit. Yeah I know that as well as anyone. . . .Some of them really get it, some of them really go for it, and they're the ones who succeed.

Jasmine, decision-maker

Applicants were often advised that they did not have to tell landlords or letting agents certain compromising information. While this is technically correct and could be perceived as ensuring that applicants were aware of their rights, applicants also saw it as unrealistic, putting them at risk of future difficulties, including homelessness. They felt themselves to be placed under pressure to hide their identity, thus reinforcing the impossibility of success unless they pretended not to be themselves. Rhys described his discomfort at pressure to withhold the fact he was in receipt of benefits from potential landlords.

When we spoke to the council they said that you don't have to disclose that you are on [benefits]...they encourage you to do that because they thought it would be easier for us to find somewhere privately if we did that.

Rhys, applicant, day centre

Emma gave a more specific example of this. One particular obstacle she faced to securing housing was her dogs. She explains that she was encouraged to omit information about her dogs when making initial application.

They said- and they're not wrong- don't tell them about the dogs! They're not wrong. They were like, get in there, make a good impression and then tell them about the dogs!

Emma, applicant, family hostel

8.1.3 The pedagogical state

As discussed in Chapter 3, the pedagogical state is a mechanism to produce certain kinds of citizen subjectivity. In the case of workfare, it is not focused upon resolving unemployment, but upon changing individuals so that they understand themselves as failures *due* to their unemployment and so become willing to accept pedagogical interventions (Whitworth, 2016). In so doing, 'myths' - assertions of truth- become critical. As Schram et al. observe (2010).

The guiding myth of welfare reform is that, by meeting paternalist requirements to attend classes and engage in other reformative endeavours, recipients will learn the habits of mind associated with the world of work. At the frontlines of welfare provision, however, the pedagogical myth results mostly in administrative ceremony.

Schram et al., 2010:751

Welfare mythologies centre around performances, in which welfare subjects are required to engage in and with increasing numbers of 'countable things' (Schram et al., 2010:752) – measurable and discernible activities, such as applying for jobs, creating CVs, attending computer skills classes or taking part in job clubs. This makes their activity clear and recordable but, in the study by Schram et al. (2010), not only does it not make them more likely to get jobs, but caseworkers themselves did not associate these activities with success at finding work. In fact, they did not even see them as helpful for making them into ethical, self-disciplined, citizens. Rather, it was a way to get people into the system and keep them in the system- it allowed frontline workers to perform their jobs, to avoid penalising clients as far as possible while complying with the actions necessary for them to retain their own jobs.

All local authorities involved in this study had made, or at least purposed to have made, intense pedagogical resources available to applicants, primarily in the form of workshops aimed at helping applicants to find accommodation.⁶ The exact form which the workshops took varied between different local authorities but overall, they resembled the courses and 'job-shops' offered to applicants in workfare systems, such as the British Universal Credit system (Hickman et al., 2017; Whitworth and Carter, 2014). They had two major features. First, workshops constituted specific geographical locations where applicants went to learn about searching for accommodation. Depending on the local authority, there would typically be a staff member present, and usually access to computers and telephones. The staff member had varying degrees of specialist expertise, but in some cases was understood to have no specific training in housing: their role appeared primarily to be supervisory. Second, in most local authorities

⁶It is stressed again that the aim of this study is to understand the perspectives of different actors within the homelessness system, and so the following account should be taken as reflecting the understanding of the system of the participants in this study, in their local authorities

which offered them, applicants were required to attend these workshops as a condition of receiving help. Although frontline workers indicated that non-attendance at these workshops was not something they would terminate a duty for, the threat of withdrawal of help was a significant reason for applicants attending the workshops (see below).

Different local authorities had different names for the workshops. For most, they were at particular times and in particular locations, although in some cases, applicants could book individual sessions with staff in lieu of workshops attendance. Some hostels also ran sessions which were accepted as workshop attendance. However, in all cases the aim was explicitly pedagogical: to improve applicants' own knowledge, and consequently their chances of finding accommodation. Staff did not, for instance, make phone calls for applicants (although in some local authorities they did give applicants scripts).

There was a clear difference in how Housing Options workers understood the workshops (and explained them to applicants) and how applicants themselves reported the workshops. Housing Option workers presented workshops as locations in which applicants were taught to apply for housing. They were locations of opportunity, where knowledge gaps could be rectified through intensive one-to-one tuition. They therefore constituted an opportunity. As one decision-making worker explained.

An officer will sit with them, go through the internet, will look for private rented, will help them to set up viewings and also, they'll teach them what to do and how to look, how to present themselves when they're going on viewings. And basically that, really. You know if you were looking for private rented, that's what that officer would do; and they'll try to teach them and coach them.

Chloe, decision-maker

Tutelage was justified because applicants were often understood as lacking in knowledge of how to avoid, or escape, homelessness, particularly evidenced by the use of educational words such as 'teach' and 'coach', which clearly positions the applicant as a learner with less knowledge than the experienced officer. Applicants were seen as in need of this intensive work due to a lack of information specific to the current system; this was understood as having made them homeless due to a lack of knowledge,

and hence their homelessness became remediable by giving them this knowledge.

It teaches them how to find a property. A lot of them will have no idea and that can be a stumbling block.

Coral, decision-maker

Equivalent classes within workfare programs are often associated with a deliberate, discursive, attempt to shape low income citizens, particularly into individuals who accept low paid and precarious employment (Schram et al., 2010). They therefore tend to fulfil an explicitly pedagogical role, which would be consistent with the discourse produced by frontline workers.

Applicants, however, reported very different experiences of workshops to either workers, or workfare style workshops. Workshops which homeless applicants were required to participate in were typically non-directional, and often involved very little instruction. For most applicants who reported attending the workshops, they were essentially drop-in sessions in a location with computers. Susie recounted her experience. She explained that she had been told she had to attend a specific, tutelary session at her local library as part of her agreement with the local authority. Susie understood the sessions as potentially helpful to her precisely because she expected to be taught how to look for properties. *'Initially I was all for it, the [workshop name], cos I thought, I'm having no luck, let's hear if they've got any tricks.'* However, she subsequently felt that the help she received was minimal, and poorly targeted to her actual needs and experience *'Common sense! At my age I can pick up a phone!'* She also felt that it offered her very little help in moving toward finding her own property. Discussing one workshop which she had been sent to in the local library, she notes that, in practice, there were often no workers available to help.

But I go there... every time I've been there there's no one to help. I don't really understand, to be honest with you, how it's actually supposed to work.⁷

⁷It was sometimes unclear whether interventions to which applicants were directed took the form of scheduled workshops or unscheduled use of computers, for instance at the local library. In this instance, Susie did appear to be discussing a *scheduled*

Susie, applicant, day-centre

She recounts sporadic, inconsistent and ultimately inaccessible help; yet it is clear that she understands this as necessary to evidence to case-workers that she has been compliant, rather than because looking for housing at the workshops is in itself helpful. To Susie, the workshops had no meaningful pedagogical role. Attendance has a utility only in performative terms. It enables her to positively engage with surveillance and use it to become legible (see Chapter 7) as a compliant and willing applicant.

You look for your own place and got to prove you're looking for your own place. You have to look on the computer at... rental properties, and then get it printed off and say, look, all these I've contacted, and most of them are gone and I can't afford these, and some of these are just like, no absolutely, cos they won't take me on. I got to keep it all written down, show it to them, prove I'm not taking the piss. And I take that back there and they check it and they sometimes might make suggestions you know but they're never... usually they've already gone.

Susie, applicant, day-centre

Indeed, the purpose of the workshops sometimes seemed to be to try to make applicants consider otherwise unsuitable properties. Applicants often described frustration at being told that they should apply for financially or otherwise inaccessible properties. This approach creates a sense that there are many properties available: the individual applicant's inability to attain them thus becomes a personal failing. It is personal characteristics specific to the applicant (such as poverty, unemployment or family status), not the system as a whole, which is the problem (McDonald and Marston, 2005).

They said, ok here are some houses you can apply for. Ok. I sent some emails. No. All need guarantors. I said, ok, I have the bond.

workshop. Further, her experience is representative of other applicants. However it is also possible that in some cases applicants were directed to attend workshops or supervised computer sessions which were not, technically, required- particularly given the findings related to monitoring, below.

No, not ok. You need a guarantor. You are on housing benefit, so no.

Samir, applicant, nightshelter

Thus, workshops did not fulfil their discursive function as teaching spaces, where either skills or knowledge were transferred. Rather, they were performance spaces, in which applicants enacted the process of looking for accommodation in very specific ways. Workers in these spaces often seemed untrained and to lack the information applicants themselves had about what the council would be willing to pay for. Anna explained that the workshops were redundant for her: they were not a space in which she obtained any additional information about how to perform a search for housing, yet she was told she had to attend by her Housing Options caseworker. For Anna, who was looking for housing independently, they seemed to have very little value. She went, as did Susie, because she had to.

I went to the two and she pulled up the same ones I'd already seen and I was like, no, that's too much, my maximum amount is this much, they won't pay the bond if it's any more. And this one is no DSS. And she's like- 'Oh. Oh, right, ok.' It was basically doing what I was doing at home. Go on the internet, go on rightmove, go on DSS move, Zoopla. They sign you in. Just doing exactly what I was doing at home, on my laptop. I went there, said hi, got introduced and then just looked online for houses. I think that's basically all it is. There's no help with getting a bond together or anything.

Anna, applicant, family hostel

As demonstrated by Anna, there was a substantial temporal-spatial control element to the workshops. Workshops take place in a certain location, at a certain time, and she was required to be there *at this time*. It was not adequate for Anna simply to look for properties at home, even if she could evidence this. Rather, she had to be observed to look for properties, and to be documented as doing so. This requirement to enact a particular sequence of events in a specific location is a form of discipline Foucault identifies as the 'temporal elaboration of the act' (Foucault, 1979:151).

Through controlling not only how a person performs and acts, but where and when, they are not only subject to surveillance, but authority and control. It reinforces the idea that the individual is not competent to perform this act alone, at least until it has been 'learnt'- fully internalised, meaning that the individual is self-governing.

Applicants who already had the skills which workshops purported to teach were (as in Anna's case) still usually told they should attend. Requiring applicants who had clearly successfully obtained and managed a private rented property for a protracted time to attend workshops to 'teach' them to obtain a property made little sense and alienated applicants, who felt patronised- particularly since these workshops seldom did much beyond providing computer access and staff to assist with basic skills. This sometimes led to a sense of infantilisation: applicants felt that their competence overall was being challenged and that they were being understood as homeless because they did not know how to find a property and were lacking in certain basic skills. As McDonald and Marston (2005) observe, global incompetence is often attributed to welfare subjects, communicating a devaluing of their skills and wider experience. Susie recounted an interaction where she had been told how to make contact with landlords. Having had numerous private rented properties in the past, she objected to this question, feeling that it implied that she lacked competence. She spoke of her frustration at a sense that, because she was homeless, she was also assumed to lack the necessary skills to search for a house. In contrast to the Act's intended function of differentiation and nuanced support (Mackie and Thomas, 2014), she felt that simply being perceived as homeless in itself defined her interactions with the local authority.

I had my own house for twenty years. I can pick up the phone. I don't think they get that at all. We're not all the same.

Susie, applicant, day-centre

Assumed incompetence further caused frustration because it meant that the real causes of their homelessness were not considered or addressed. These workshops were identified by applicants as of little use specifically because they ignored applicants' material reality and imposed an understanding of their homelessness as located in their own lack of knowledge. Broad and general interventions which ignored the structural

factors were seen as unhelpful and obstacles to individual applicants getting help. Applicants objected to being located as incompetent or lacking knowledge when, to them, the issues were structural. As Luke explained, he did not lack knowledge of how to find a house. Rather, he was facing specific difficulties which required particular interventions to overcome, and which, in his experience, the workshops did not address.

I know how to find a house! I just can't afford it. It's all changed now. Last time it was easy. I found somewhere. Now I can't afford anywhere. That's what I need help with. I need a job; benefits don't cover you.

Luke, applicant, night-shelter

Thus workshops asserted a 'field of truth': that a range of properties did, in fact exist, that the individual applicant had options and could make choices, but that their failure was a result of their own lack of knowledge. They reinforced the idea that the state needed to educate them. They required applicants to defend themselves: to justify why properties were unsuitable, and to evidence that their failure to find anywhere suitable was not a result of inactivity.

However, although applicants were routinely advised that they had to attend workshops, non-attendance was seldom penalised. Workers were often sympathetic to the psychological difficulties faced by applicants arising from structural constraints such as shortage of affordable accommodation. Although they were charged with motivating them, and characterised themselves as providing encouragement and scaffolding, in practice it also seemed that when an individual had become overwhelmed by the system, workers were inclined to respond sympathetically and compassionately. Juliet, a decision-maker, explained her reaction to people who appeared not to comply with the system, who failed to look for private rented accommodation. A view of workers as simply enacting empowerment would anticipate a response which promoted progress, which located 'failure' as something to be overcome. Instead, she recognises the validity of their feelings, their 'right to be weary' and not to have their exhaustion co-opted into a narrative of improvement and empowerment (Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2019). Yet her response was more complex: she recognised the need for applicants to look for housing to progress, while also acknowledging their difficulties.

I see a lot of clients who don't engage in the service. They don't try to find privately rented; they don't go to [workshops]. And it's like, you need to be actively looking. You need to be actively trying to help yourself. We can discharge a duty to help them. Which I agree with but then at the same time [they are saying] 'My anxiety is so bad; I can't leave the house.' So how can you expect them to leave the house? It's really difficult. It is hard.

Juliet, decision-maker

8.2 Futurity and planning: The Personal Housing Plan

A key technology of neoliberalism is requiring the individual to see themselves in future terms. As Rose (1996) observes, it is an obligation of the 'active citizen' to manage their current behaviour with reference to risks (to society) for the future, to 'adopt a calculative prudent personal relation to fate now conceived in terms of calculable dangers and avertable risks.' (N. Rose, 1996:158-9), in line with becoming *homo economicus* (see Chapter 3). At the same time, the homeless individual is understood in terms of failure: it is their inability to correctly conceptualise the future and their role within it which limits them and makes them continue to be homeless (Cruikshank, 1999; Spade, 2006).

Through the examination, the individual is not only constructed as in need of pedagogical intervention to make them become able to move toward self-sufficiency, but tutelage to progressively move them toward becoming individuals capable of planning their futures. Their homelessness is constructed as a more fundamental lack of self-esteem, of both an understanding and a willingness to move forward with their lives. Structural problems thus become personalised, reduced to a lack of confidence, and hence an individual, though resolvable, failure to develop the correct attitude (N. Gill, 2016; P. Miller and Rose, 1990). The individual must therefore first enact, and, on seeing their success, believe in and so internalise, the steps to their goal which accord with the normative narrative of progress (McNaughton Nicholls and Nicholls, 2010; Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2019).

A distinctive feature of the Act is the development of a casework relationship with applicants. Whereas previously, homeless applicants potentially interacted with the local authority over a short space of time, with the local authority in the adversarial position of gatekeeper of resources, now the Act conceptualises the local authority as an empowerer, assisting the applicant to progress away from homelessness. This significantly increases the temporal aspect of the relationship between applicant and caseworker.⁸ As one decision-making worker explained:

Nobody has enough time. And it's not because the job is particularly busy. It's because there's a lot more with it. It carries a lot more weight. Before the policy change, it was an automatic out.. But now you have to work on issues around money management...

Andrew, decision-maker

In this way, the decision-making worker's job became to manage the individual applicant's transition from the present to the future. Making a homelessness application became an opportunity for re-orientation to a worldview which incorporated a particular kind of future in which the now-housed applicant had become so not through simply being '*being wrapped up in cotton wool*' [James, decision-maker] but as a result of the progression through a series of steps designed not only to allow them to obtain a house, but develop a responsible, entrepreneurial attitude which, it was proposed, meant that they would not end up homeless again. Critical to this was teaching them deferred gratification, which, as has been seen, applicants were constructed as lacking. As homeless individuals, applicants were often believed not only to lack the ability to plan, but that this stemmed from an inability to imagine the future (Jensen, 2014; McNaughton Nicholls and Nicholls, 2010). The role of the decision-making worker then became to provide specific scaffolding to allow applicants to experience the rewards of planning and working toward a particular outcome.

⁸In practice, particularly in the years leading up to the new Act, the chronic shortage of resources meant that clients in priority need potentially interacted with the local authority over a longer time frame. However this was based upon the protracted time spent by the council in resolving their difficulties due to resource shortage, rather than an ongoing pedagogical relationship. Pedagogical relationships, if they existed, were likely to occur through third sector provision (Johnsen et al., 2005)

A planned, closely monitored, progression is a key technology of Foucauldian discipline. Through careful attention to the subject's temporal-spatial location, discipline is imposed upon the process of becoming and consequently the subject themselves are shaped. In the *Organisation of Geneses* (Foucault, 1979), Foucault identifies three principles for disciplinary progression. First, there must be a homogeneous program to which all individuals are subject. While individuals may interact with the program at different levels- and indeed such differentiation, and selected exemptions, is often built into the system, allowing it to claim to meet everyone's needs- the overall approach of the system is universal and incorporates all humanity. Second, individuals are assessed and classified as part of the program according to transparent metrics: thus progression is clear and measurable, and it is straightforward for the individual to understand what they must do to progress to the next level. Finally, although the program is conceptualised in terms of a particular goal, and that particularly through a 'seriation' of successive activities' (ibid:160), it becomes possible to work upon individuals within a broader construction of progress within 'end-product drive time' (Davies, 2008:47). It is also clear that there is in fact no true ending of geneses. Rather the real point of geneses is one of discipline, that the individual internalises the methods of progress, but also the sense that they are incompletely progressed and must constantly work harder toward their goal (Foucault et al., 2008; Penz et al., 2017). Foucault discusses organisation of geneses within wider theorisation about docility, a strategy to encourage people to internalise discipline and consequently self-govern. Crucially this is a program for self-improvement: a strategy by which the state can insist that individuals internalise a desire to work upon themselves. Compliance with the program is essential: people must willingly accept, and even seek out, discipline, through desire for the product, goal or outcome (Keane, 2009a).

All applicants under the new Act are, in theory, subject to a similar pathway. Following the examination, and work upon them to modify their desires and ambitions, they are required to engage with future-planning in the form of a Personal Housing Plan. The Personal Housing Plan is specified in the Guidance, rather than the Act: it is a proposed mechanism of working with applicants, rather than legally mandated. It is conceptualised as 'a system of ... supporting an applicant to deliver reasonable steps.' (Guidance: 12.17). A proposed template for a PHP given in the Annex to the Guidance demonstrates that this is a document where both the

applicant and the local authority are required to specify the action they will take. It is a quasi-legal document, signed by both to confirm both the interaction which has occurred and the intention regarding action, as well as a date for review. This construction immediately extends the Act itself in terms of an understanding of reasonable steps. In the Act, it is only the local authority who is required to engage in reasonable steps. Section 65 states:

Section 65 – Meaning of help to secure Where a local housing authority is required by this Chapter to help to secure (rather than 'to secure') that suitable accommodation is available, or does not cease to be available, for occupation by an applicant, the authority – (a) is required to take reasonable steps to help, having regard (among other things) to the need to make the best use of the authority's resources.

Housing (Wales) Act 2014 section 65

Yet the Personal Housing Plan places an onus on applicants also to perform specific, measurable, steps to resolve their own homelessness. While, as seen previously, a local authority may cease to help an applicant who is deemed to be unreasonably failing to co-operate under 79 (5), no positive compliance duty is extended to the applicant by the Act. The use of a Personal Housing Plan, introduced by the Guidance, creates a second layer of visibilisation and specificity, in which the actions of the applicant become not only evident, but subject to scrutiny, reflecting similar developments with the Claimant Commitment in Jobseekers Allowance and Universal Credit.

Housing Options workers tended to see the plan as functioning to delineate the responsibilities of applicants and caseworkers clearly. It was a way of making the applicant legible and clear, and of creating a plan which not only the applicant and caseworker, but other organisations involved in the case, could follow. As Lipsky (2010) observes, for workers, who are typically highly time-constrained, to be able to process applicants, using strategies such as stereotyping, is necessary to managing the mismatch between resources and clients which typifies street-level bureaucracy (see also Lidstone, 1994). Some support for Lipsky's approach was found in accounts from workers which valorised the use of stereotypes in order to

quickly process applicants. As Coral explained, it was helpful to her to have a clear plan to follow when working with applicants since then *'Everything is nice and clear then, we all know where we stand, and we've got somewhere to start from.'*

The plan also provided a tailored metric by which the individual could come to measure, judge and discipline themselves and so know, independently of the state, what they needed to do (Foucault, 1979; N. Rose, 1992). In this way, the PHP allowed the individual to perceive themselves in terms of progress. This decision-making worker explains how she conceptualised the plan as a way for applicants to make their progress manageable and keep motivated. It allowed them to see themselves in relation to time, as individuals moving through time and hence with control of their progress through time (Foucault, 1979).

I do think it's important we make the plan, yes I do, cos they can see it laid out there, this is what we'll do and this is what you have to do. We all know where we stand and for them I do think it's just really sort of really important actually because it means they can see themselves as moving forward because we all know how easily it is get sort of disheartened and set back.

Audrey, decision-maker

In order to become forward facing, the applicant had to gain a realistic expectation of the future. The first chapter demonstrated how applicants were perceived as lacking an ability to plan for the future, or indeed to understand themselves in relation to it; rather they were static and trapped, through their welfare dependency, in the present (Jensen, 2014). Housing Options workers saw a primary, essential, task as being to help applicants reimagine the future, to modify and downgrade their aspirations to those which were reasonable and achievable. The PHP was then a discursive document, with the deliberate intention of communicating to applicants what they could expect from the state. As this housing options worker explains, she used the PHP as a tool to set out, for the applicant, what they might reasonably expect from their experience of homelessness.

And so, when they have this conversation a lot of people will say 'Oh but I want this and I want that.' So, you'll be saying 'Well

we're not going to give you this or give you that.' So, this personal housing plan is about having that conversation about what your homelessness is going to look like.

Lois, decision-maker

Foucauldian power operates by co-opting and shaping wishes and desires (Chapter 2). Both the Act and the Guidance make clear that the individual applicant's own wishes should be considered in the development of the Plan. For instance, s 62 Duty to Assess of the Act states, at (6) (a), that the local authority must 'seek to identify the outcome the applicant wishes to achieve from the authority's help.', while the Guidance itself states that the wishes of the applicant should 'inform how the identified duty may be met' (10.31). However, it is also notable that the sample PHP included in the Guidance does not include space to consider the applicant's own preferences. The Guidance also encourages local authorities to distinguish between needs and 'wishes', with the implication that wishes are less pressing and more discretionary.⁹ Applicants who expected too much were criticised, as seen in the first chapter; the 'deserving' applicant had low ambitions and was simply grateful for help. Frontline workers sometimes intervened to help applicants lower their ambitions and construct more realistic expectations. Audrey explained how she used the approach of asking her clients to think about what they wanted. This was partly about orientating applicants to an acceptance of to the private rented sector, since the private rented sector was presented as offering more variation and to be more accessible (see above). Yet asking them to recalibrate their expectations was also about establishing the idea that they could have a better house, if they were prepared to work, specifically through 'compromise.' She explains how, through a series of choices, she moves the client through the process of deciding what they really want, based on which they will construct a plan to help the client achieve this. In her account she presents herself as developing, in applicants, neoliberal ideas of self-sacrifice and delayed gratification, both traits which benefits claimants are represented in discourse as lacking.

⁹This is a complex and nuanced difference within the Guidance, considered primarily at s10.31-10.38. It is made harder to unpick the intended meaning by the multiple context in which 'wish' is used. However it appears that 'wish' broadly refers to a non-essential preference, while 'need' refers more specifically to a condition necessary for the applicant's fundamental wellbeing, such as housing. Both are under-defined, leaving considerable room for inconsistency and discretion; however the implication of 10.32 is that a need should be met while a wish must only be considered.

I truly believe, you have to make sacrifices. Sacrifices is a strong word... you have to be willing to compromise. You want a three bedroom house in [high-income part of local authority] with a garden for your kids and a swing [laughs]. It's unlikely. So, then we get into, what's the most important to you? Is it the garden with the swing? Or is it having three bedrooms? Is it [area]? Right, let's work with that. It's about compromise. It's about finding that goal.

Audrey, decision-maker

In this way, the applicant learns what they can expect. They cannot expect both outdoor space and enough bedrooms for their family within the local authority- although both can be argued to be important to housing adequacy. Neoliberal citizenship, or a *homo economicus* subjectivity, requires compromise in the form of bringing desire into line with the dominant norms of society (Foucault, 1990). As abject, revolting citizens (see chapters 2 and 3), applicants to the homeless system must adapt their ambitions in order to resolve their homelessness, and accept that, in the current context, they may not be able to get anything more (Jensen, 2014; Tyler, 2013).

Another way in which workers saw the PHP as allowing them to work upon applicants was to require applicants to expand the tasks that they were willing to do. It allowed frontline workers to communicate to applicants the need to take certain actions in order to move toward their desired outcomes. It became a tool of 'self-esteem' (Cruikshank, 1999) which mandated applicants to expand the actions they were prepared to undertake, in order to resolve their situation. This approach instead moved applicants away from state reliance. Jim, a decision-making worker, felt that Personal Housing Plans allowed him to challenge applicants who he felt '*rely on us too much for everything.*' To him, the plan was '*all about empowerment*', which he understood in terms of a willingness to perform specific, directed acts of home-seeking. He saw homelessness as often arising from a lack of confidence, an unwillingness to do certain difficult tasks, such as making phone calls or contacting landlords. For him, the Personal Housing Plan was a structure which allowed him to demonstrate to applicants, through completion of small successes, that they were able to succeed:

[The Personal Housing Plan] does put the emphasis back on the individual, it gives them empowerment, it gives them the responsibility for their future housing within reason. I do like it. It is all about empowerment. The trouble is we are wrapping people up in cotton wool, which in some cases is needed. A lot it is not, but then people rely on us too much for everything whereas if we guide them through the personal housing plan and say, 'You can achieve this. You can do this.' You will get some who say, 'I can't do that.' 'Yes, you can. You have got support. You can do it.'

Jim, decision-maker

It was used to encourage individuals to take personal risks. 'Risk-taking' is an important concept in self-esteem literature. As part of state withdrawal and individual responsabilisation, citizens are expected to take carefully calculated risks. Morally justifiable citizens are those who 'rationally assess the costs and benefits of a certain act as opposed to other acts' (Lemke, 2002:56). However, risk must be considered not in terms of the individual, but the burden placed upon the state (Lemke, 2001a, 2002). Inaction and dependency, therefore, are morally problematic actions where they cause an individual to fail to become independent of the state. Additionally, inaction is often conflated with a lack of self-esteem or self-belief (Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2019) (Wilkinson, 2019), with the solution being 'confidence', a particular technology of governmentality which sees an unwillingness to act through uncertainty as to whether it is the correct or a useful strategy understood as a failure of self-belief and self-worth which needs remedying (Auyero, 2012; N. Gill, 2016)

Workers often saw this unwillingness to take risks with housing as a key reason for applicants remaining homeless. This returns to a theme of chapter 6, wherein welfare dependency was shown to be often understood as a fear of the unknown. This is described in the account below from a Housing Options worker/manager. He characterises applicants as unwilling to take risks; yet without risks, as he conceptualises it, their situation cannot change.

[I say] 'Look, this is what we need to be doing, if you are not going to do these things then obviously we are not going to get where we need to be in terms of an outcome at the end of it.' If you sit

there and do nothing and just wait it out, nothing will change. I think it's a bit of an incentive for them to work with the plan and get out of their comfort zone. I would say that there's an incentive that they are going to get the option what they need at the end of it to resolve their homelessness situation.

Simon, decision-maker

Scholarship on risk-taking and poverty has established the different experiences of risk for low income and homeless households compared to the dominant norm. In particular, as McNaughton Nicholls (2010) observes, for low income and homeless households, strategies which work for the mainstream may present risks to core facets of wellbeing. The accounts from applicants confirmed this: they were seldom unwilling to take risks. Rather the issue was that the risk to them of failure was considerable. To give a single example, Leila who had recently been granted leave to remain in the UK with her two children, was, at the time of interview, being strongly encourage to consider private housing in a part of her local authority which would mean her children had to move school. The family had already moved a large number of times. For Leila, as this account shows, the issue was not that she was unwilling to take risks in terms of living in private property. The issue was, in fact, that she knew private property was insecure and short term and posed a risk to her health and her children's health. For this reason, she resisted her caseworker adding a stipulation that she should look for private rented property onto her PHP. Leila's fear of the impermanence of the private rented sector was a widely held one; however, the extreme instability of housing she and her children faced was likely to have been a function of the family's immigration status. Yet her account illustrates a general experience: to a greater or lesser extent, most applicants did perceive themselves as experienced, risk taking individuals: poverty and insecure housing meant that they daily had to grapple with risk. Applicants routinely saw themselves as making active choices not only in terms of mitigating risk but in choosing *not* to take risks. In this account, Leila takes a considerable risk by stating that she is *not* willing to look for private property, and yet she is prepared to do so because it is, to her, counterbalanced by the greater risk to her children's wellbeing.

Everyone has to look for private housing. That's ok. I can look

for private housing but in six months I'll be back. It's happened to us so many times, six, seven times now we have been in a flat and we've had to move. Each time we have to buy more furniture, new curtains, everything. Each time, the children have to change schools. I can look for private, but I've said, if you make me, I'll just be back.

Leila, applicant, family hostel

8.3 The limits of panoptic control

In most local authorities involved in the study, applicants were required not only to perform certain actions in accordance with the Personal Housing Plan, but to record them in the form of a diary.¹⁰ The exact form of this varied between local authorities. However, it typically required that applicants recorded, in detail, the actions which they had taken to follow the 'reasonable steps' agreed in the PHP. This particularly centred on looking for private rented accommodation, although it was also the case that other activities (particularly attending workshops) were sometimes included.

I do ask them to [keep a diary]. I do ask them to do that. I say, every time you make a call, every time you speak to the estate agent, just jot it down. Doesn't take long.

Coral, decision-maker

This was typically seen by workers as a minimal, reasonable, exchange primarily for long term help and access to resources. Audrey illustrated this in her account: she financialised the exchange, with applicants expected to produce and evidence themselves, as part of a calculated economic transaction. She recounts a conversation with another colleague which she implicates in her formation of this belief.

¹⁰Again it is stressed that the study was not evaluative. Participants in all local authorities in the study reported that they were required to evidence their temporal and spatial movements in some form, usually in writing. However, it falls outwith the scope of this study to assess whether this was the case in *all*, or even *most* Welsh local authorities, or to compare different modes of operation of this requirement. The focus in this section is upon considering the understandings of different groups of actors around this temporal-spatial accountancy requirement

I remember [when the diaries came in] one of the benefits officers saying, 'Listen, if someone was going to pay your mortgage, wouldn't you fill out a form?' And I thought, 'Oh my God yes, I'd fill out a form every week if they were going to pay my mortgage!'. That's what I would do.

Audrey, decision-maker

From the perspective of frontline workers this was especially justified as a mechanism to diagnose problems, to identify where applicants were going wrong. The power to diagnose is part of the examination: it allows the examiner to identify what is 'wrong' (for instance, faulty thinking or non-compliance with normative values) and prescribe a course of action to re-align the individual. In so doing it reinscribes the normative power of the state agent. It reinforces the idea that the issue lies with the individual applicant's faulty implementation of instructions, and so denies the possibility that what they have been asked to do is structurally impossible. Diagnostic power as part of the examination allows power to be both generalised and specific (applied to the individual). As this worker explained it, it allowed her an insight into the process by which the applicant was approaching the task of finding houses. It allowed her to see both whether they had been complying, but also to identify where the plan was not specific and prescriptive enough, and consequently where more direction was required.

It's important. It means I can see they're doing it, that's the first thing. So, if they come back in to see me, oh [name] I've been looking all week. Let's take a look at your diary then. Then I see, right, they've not looked in their price range. They're only looking in [area]. You're going to have to look outside [area]! Not many one beds in [area]. We give them a list of estate agent who will take on people on housing benefit. Have you phoned? Right ok. So, I see what's really happening.

Valerie, decision-maker

From the perspective of applicants, diaries were sometimes seen as onerous. This was not usually because of the physical act of recording.

Indeed, several applicants kept records of their housing search in order to ensure that they were conducting the search efficiently. A number of applicants also pointed out that they were used to completing a similar diary as part of their Universal Credit claims. The objection centred more around a sense of intrusiveness. However, applicants did feel the requirement to note down what they had done and at what times was intrusive. Josh articulates this sense that his time was taken over and occupied by the project of making his life evident, that the council wanted him to account for his physical and temporal timekeeping. Pointing out that he is similarly asked to record his time for Universal Credit, he describes a broader sense that as a suspect, 'revolting citizen' both his time and activity is subject to constant scrutiny.

Yeah, keep like a ... like write it all down like. Write your life down every week [laughs] He gave me a load of sheets, yeah. I mean I did try, yeah. Yeah you've got to look for housing, yeah, you got to show them you've looked for housing. Yeah it's like with Universal Credit, isn't it, you've got to show them, they want to see you've tried I guess. Yeah I guess it makes sense, they want to know you've put the work in. Yeah between housing and universal credit, if they had their way I'd spend every second of my day writing down my life, yeah [laughs]. Every second of your day you've got to write down oh I did that, I did that, yeah.

Josh, applicant, day-centre

As Schram et al. (2010) observe, caseworkers, while operating within tight constraints, often do feel sympathy for applicants. Documentation and other mechanisms of making compliance visible do not simply allow punitive measures to be enforced but allows them to justify avoiding sanctions or penalising applicants. As Jasmine, a decision-maker, explained, the diary sheets meant that she was able to see that applicants had simply been unsuccessful- yet they had tried, therefore they were not understood to be at fault. The requirement to evidence themselves therefore became protective, visibilising their compliance.

We give them a diary sheet for... so they have to keep a record of what they're doing. And when you go into the review, they give

that sheet into the review, so the... that officer knows that they have been following the steps we've asked them to do. And you see a lot of people coming back in, you see all the cases where people have come back in and they've gone through, gone to every interview, they've done loads of diary entries, so they've looked at loads of properties and they still haven't found anywhere but that's ok cos you know they're not... you know they have tried, they've done lots of things.

Jasmine, decision-maker

Very few applicants saw a utility to completing the diaries, and understood them to be about communicating compliance, rather than useful information. This meant that the decision to keep a diary carefully was usually related to a desire to signal to caseworkers that they were resource worthy applicants. In some cases, this appeared to overlap with the diagnostic function. One applicant, Helen, explained that she kept the diary because she wanted additional help: she did not specify whether she expects the help to come directly from an analysis of her diary and tailored recommendations, or through communicating to staff that she was a worthy applicant, but in context of her wider interview it would seem to be both. Phyllis, who wanted private accommodation, also felt that she was struggling to be treated as an applicant interested in the private rented sector and instead as a mendacious, manipulative, 'welfare queen' intent on obtaining social housing (Cruikshank, 1999).

Yeah I'm doing one of those... diaries but because I've only been seen 3 times mine are only on normal bits of paper. I mean, I'm not doing anything differently really- just writing it down so they can see it. I don't want to be in this situation and writing it down means they can see what I've done and hopefully they will give me that much extra help.

Phyllis, applicant, family hostel

Being able to offer this tailored help which considered the resources already available to applicants, which did not offer unnecessary help but

rather maximised the applicant's existing skills and resources, was integral to the conceptualisation of the Act (Mackie, 2014). Yet, as this played out in the encounters between applicants and workers, this echoed wider state withdrawal in the guise of empowerment: applicants often described being left without any real help or support, with the diary taking on a monitoring, rather than tutelary, function (Cruikshank, 1999). Maryam described how she had completed her diary explicitly because she wanted help. As explained above, Maryam strongly preferred a private rented property because she wanted to be in a community-specific location where social housing waiting lists were very long. As such, she was committed to searching for private housing and wanted help from the council in this. She was struggling to find a house and needed to know if she might be able to adopt a different strategy. Yet she found that, at her appointments, workers were uninterested in her diary- they just wanted to know that it had been completed. Workers were thus using her diary as evidence of compliance rather than as a diagnostic tool. This frustrated Maryam, who wanted the more detailed and nuanced help envisaged by Mackie (2014).

They say, you must look for a house and we will also look, we will help you too. You must look and if you look, we will look. . . . writing down, every day, write down what I have done. . . .they don't ask. So, I don't know what's wrong really!

Maryam, applicant, contacted independently

Similarly, Hazel articulated the worry that her diary would be suddenly looked at and deemed inadequate, and this would cause the council to stop helping her. For Hazel this was part of a broader sense that she was not getting the help she needed: she related this a sense that she was being asked continuously to evidence compliance. A lack of feedback on her diary reinforced the worry that she was doing the wrong thing and that, at some point, this would become a reason to stop helping her.

I'm doing one of those [name] diaries so they can see what's going on, but they give me the impression lately that they're just sitting waiting for me to fail so they can say no. I'm not doing anything differently and they never look at it anyway. . . We're doing every

part of the process but it's falling on deaf ears. The phone calls, there's no return on phone calls. It's like we're just a number. And we have to do our thing to stay in the system, but it's not going to get us a house. It's like a bucking bronco. As soon as you make a mistake, one wrong move, you're out.

Hazel, applicant, family hostel

Diaries were therefore understood to function as a form of panoptic surveillance. Panoptic surveillance relies upon diffuse and unspecified observation for its power. The individual never knows whether they are being watched in any specific situation and hence must continuously conduct themselves as though they are being watched (Foucault, 1979; Henderson et al., 2010). Thus, panoptic surveillance is, in fact, more efficient than surveillance where the observer can be seen since the subject must constantly monitor themselves and their own actions. The aim of panoptic control is to cause the subject to internalise the dominant norms and so render direct control of their behaviour redundant; to 'induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power' (Foucault, 1979:201). Panoptic surveillance renders a show of actual power unnecessary through causing individuals to self-regulate their own behaviour. The observed should be aware that this power exists, but it should simultaneously be 'unverifiable' (ibid).

Reflecting the mechanisms through which panoptic power works, it was the lack of clarity over how the diaries would be used which enabled them to become a form of control which extended into self-policing. Although applicants often felt they had to keep their diaries, and housing options officers saw the diaries as necessary to enable them to monitor applicants, in practice it seemed that the diaries were seldom checked. Frontline workers admitted that they often simply did not have the time to do this.

I don't ask for evidence. I have to just assume they're doing it. I haven't got time; we've got so many cases.

Ian, decision-maker

It is well established that frontline workers 'cream' off certain cases, and preferentially help more sympathetic applicants (Lipsky, 2010; Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2000). A logical corollary is that applicants who are

perceived as more compliant require less surveillance. Applicants who were clearly compliant were often exempted from the requirement to evidence house-seeking. Emma found that, because she was evidently working hard to find not only housing but work, she was exempted from the accounting requirements applied to most applicants.

No, I didn't [have to fill in sheets]. They could see I think... I just missioned it, really, basically. I was on a mission to sort my life out at that point. once [worker] was onside, he was brilliant. He really fought my corner then. He really just did what he could to come through with [help], in the end he did, bless him.

Emma, applicant, family hostel

Similarly, Melissa was proactive in talking to both Housing Options workers and the staff in the council run hostel in which she was staying. This willingness to be open, to ask for help, and present clearly as an individual who was motivated and so did not need to be closely monitored, meant that she was not required to evidence compliance.

Yeah well I did the first day but... I've got a separate notebook. Yeah but I don't really... yeah I just talk to them now and they're ok with it. Yeah they knows I'm doing it, they know I want to get out of here, for [son], I'm not going to be stuck here, so they're pretty relaxed about it.

Melissa, applicant, family hostel

Both applicants were quickly exempted from evidencing their compliance because they proactively performed this at an early stage. They were, therefore, legible as applicants who did not need extensive supervision. Thus, the diaries had a performative function- they could be used deliberately to signal the kind of applicant an individual was, and hence the level of scrutiny they required. Anna, for instance, was allowed to stop submitting her diaries after demonstrating extreme compliance.

So, for a month I had to look for private rented and I was doing that daily. I'm really computer savvy, so I had the apps on

my phone. I had rightmove, prime location, zoopla, you name it, Gumtree. It was on my phone; it was on my laptop. And I was looking daily. They used to give me A4 sheets like this. Reasonable Steps diary. So, I was filling four double sizes, four sheets, both sides, weekly. And it got to the point where they housing officer from Housing Options, she left us when we got here, she said, right you've done everything you need to.

Anna, applicant, family hostel

However, it was also clear that applicants themselves became aware that the diaries were often ignored, and many simply did not keep them at all. Although some applicants reported being closely disciplined by the requirement to keep a diary, others did not appear to find even threats to withdraw the duty toward them to be especially significant. Applicants especially drew a connection between not being asked for their diaries, and ceasing to produce them.

Yeah, the diary. Yeah. I don't know yeah they mentioned it, but they haven't asked for it.

Lily, applicant, general hostel

For some applicants, non-monitoring of diaries produced anxiety and responsabilisation. It communicated that they could not rely upon the help of frontline workers to find accommodation. Thus, responsabilisation arose from the absence of direct surveillance, producing a panoptic effect of internalisation of power (Henderson et al., 2010). This principle of internalised panoptic surveillance is illustrated through Ellie's experiences. Ellie, like other applicant-participants, was instructed to keep a diary. She was already highly motivated, because she did not want to remain homeless, so keeping a diary felt redundant to her. However, she was also willing to perform the 'myth and ceremony' (Schram et al., 2010:751) associated with obtaining council help, and so, at first, strove to keep the diary, responding to the vague threat of service withdrawal.

No. I did. Right at the start, when I was seeing the man, he was, oh you've got to write it down, everything you do. So... yeah cos I

didn't want to get into trouble. He was like, if you don't, we might stop helping you.

Ellie, applicant, family hostel

Yet Ellie quickly found that there was a disjuncture between what she was being asked to do and what she needed to do. She realised that she did not, in fact, need to write down what she was doing, since she was unlikely to be asked to provide proof. It was important that frontline workers told applicants that they needed to provide proof, but in practice, this was not followed through. Ellie stopped keeping the diary. However, this was *not* because she was not motivated to search for housing. Rather, it was because, as an already motivated applicant, the council's surveillance offered nothing additional to her. Thus, because she was already an activated home-seeker, the council's surveillance was redundant. Implicit in Ellie's account is a sense that she identified that she was unlikely to be monitored or chastised, and so the diaries serviced no function. As with the workshops, Ellie recognised them as were ceremonial and performative. Thus Ellie was *already* the subject which the diaries aimed to create. Her decision not to complete them because they are redundant for her demonstrates that she is the self-governing, choice-making, actuarial, risk taking *homo economicus* subject of neoliberal paternalism.

So there was a point when literally everything I did I wrote it down, and then I took it back and he was like yeah yeah ok you're doing it, I can see that ok. Then he didn't ask again so I stopped writing it down, cos it was taking ages to be honest. Like I'll go on Rightmove and just look and see if there's anything. 9 times out of ten, there won't be anything I can afford. If there's anything, ok I'll send an email, but I don't usually hear nothing back. I mean, of course I'm doing that, I don't want to be stuck here forever.

Ellie, applicant, family hostel

A complimentary account was given by Christopher. Christopher simply ignored the diary sheet he was given after the initial meeting with the decision-maker. For Christopher, who described himself as '*quite an anxious person- well I have diagnosed OCD and CPTSD so of course I'm an*

anxious person!' the worry caused by homelessness was intolerable for both him and his partner. Providing him with a diary sheet in fact communicated to him that the council was minimally able to help him- as he put it, *'I get it, you're not going to help me.'* He understood the diary, therefore, as a method of communicating to him that the local authority had divested itself of a responsibility to help them. This led him to take the decision to self-solve, by intensively looking for properties to the point where it became the only thing he was doing: he thus achieved perfect docility in that he had reached, albeit temporarily, the 'maximum speed and maximum efficiency' (Foucault, 1979:154) sought by Foucauldian discipline.

What I did [after the appointment] was to go home then and just sit on the computer and I just applied for everything, literally everything. I joined about ten different Facebook groups where landlords were offering houses...I didn't sleep for three nights and eventually I did find us somewhere but of course then the council wouldn't pay for it so it was back to square one.

Christopher, applicant, nightshelter

Chapter summary

In this chapter I argue that homeless applicants are subject to activation, yet that this process itself illustrates that the limits of state control arise because individual frontline workers avoid excessive responsabilisation. In the first part of the chapter I show that homelessness can be understood as a form of 'failed citizenship' analogous to welfare subjectivism, in which they are constructed not as the choice-making, independent, entrepreneurial citizens expected by the Act, but rather as thus-far failed potential citizens to be recuperated through intervention, particularly through encouraging or requiring them to search for properties in the private rented sector (Mackie and Thomas, 2014). In the second part, I consider the technology of the Personal Housing Plan, a quasi-contractual agreement between applicant and council involving detailed attention to the spatio-temporal organisation of applicants. In the third part, however, I demonstrate that this panoptic control is limited not only by resource shortage, but also a reluctance on the part of workers to enforce harsh, punitive and ultimately uncaring approaches. However, as I also show,

in practice a failure of intervention was not always beneficial for applicants, but rather created the experience of abandonment, and ultimately responsabilisation.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

McKee (2011) proposes that, to understand how governance occurs, we must attend to 'messy empirical realities' (ibid, p3), and in particular what happens 'beyond the plan' (ibid, p15), through exploring what happens to legislation when it is enacted in encounters between frontline workers and clients, becoming 'living law' (Ehrlich and Isaacs, 1922:xvii). Attending to these interactions between those charged with enacting governance, and those being governed, reveals them as sites of 'contradiction and struggle' (McKee, 2011 p3), unexpected transformation, and change. In this thesis, I sought to address the charge made by McKee (2011), that, within housing studies, it is often the case that:

Little is said... about the struggles around subjectivity, and the way in which 'governable subjects' may speak back and refuse to enact their subject position in the intended ways.

McKee, 2011:9

Drawing upon the experiences of 54 workers in, and 44 applicants to, homelessness authorities across Wales three years after the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, this thesis has explored the introduction of conditionality to a system which previously allocated resources according to an arguably partial, yet needs-based, model. Under the previous system, most homeless applicants received no significant help. As discussed previously, the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 sought to address this inequity with the introduction of a universal right to assistance for all households experiencing threatened or actual homelessness. However, this brings with it two key changes to the relationship between homeless

applicants and the state. First, it introduces behavioural conditionality, in that the duty to the applicant can be withdrawn where they do not adequately perform co-operation. Second, it relies upon the construction of homeless applicants as a group as defacto capable of a resolution of their own homelessness, under the guidance of the state. As shown, this change occurred in the context of a broader competitive, deregulated, housing market, which provides a similar field of action to the deskilled, precarious and low-paid jobs market within workfare.

This thesis's central argument is that, through the legal shift from a rights-based to conditionality model, albeit one that considerably broadened the scope of those entitled to assistance, homelessness in Wales now incorporates many hallmarks of a classic workfare approach; and yet this conditionality is, in practice, often imperfectly implemented (M. Dean, 2002; N. Rose, 1999). However, it also finds that, in contrast to workfare in which the ability to coerce welfare subjects is made possible because the state is a broker of financial support, frontline homelessness workers lack this power to the same extent.¹ In contrast, the functional absence of meaningful state help responsabilises applicants, but also workers, thus operating to make them 'ethical' *homo economicus* homeless citizens (N. Rose, 1996), by which is meant, unsheltered individuals who respond to their situation by performing responsabilisation through according with norms of activation and empowerment, risk taking and resilience. To explore this further, I conclude this thesis by drawing together the central arguments presented so far. To do this, I return to the initial three research questions presented in Chapter 1. After discussing these in turn, I consider two cross-cutting themes: the liminal and ambivalent status of frontline workers, and the role of clearly defined frameworks in both reducing and enabling agency. Following a discussion of these research findings, I situate the research within some broader limitations. Finally, I consider the implications of this research for potential future directions within homelessness services.

¹As discussed in previous chapters, particularly Chapters 4, 6 and 8, frontline workers do have power to offer interventions, including deposits, rent in advance, signposting to services which can offer help with benefits and debts, etc. Thus, to an extent, homelessness departments do have some financial power and ability to enforce conditionality, as discussed in Chapters 6 and 8.

9.1 The research questions

9.1.1 How does discourse operate to construct and justify the change from a highly selective, paternalistic and needs-based system to one of universal, yet conditional help?

As discussed in Chapters 2,3, and 4, the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 was introduced in the context of several national and international discourses which operated upon welfare subjects as a group. These were shown to include:

1. *An ongoing moral panic over welfare deservedness.* This proposes there to be strata of society who are unreasonably and irresponsibly disproportionately drawing upon scarce state resources, without adequately considering the impact of their actions upon society. This moral panic discourse is associated with the justification of austerity-based welfare change (K. Allen et al., 2014; Garthwaite, 2011; Jensen, 2010).
2. *A moral imperative exists to abandon.* This understands welfare subjects as locked into an ongoing state dependency as a result of a historically over-generous state. State withdrawal thus becomes re-framed as a moral good, allowing previously dependent citizens to move toward becoming non-dependent, choice-making *homo economicus* subjectivities (K. Allen et al., 2014; Reeve, 2017).
3. *Poverty results from lack of knowledge or motivation.* Welfare subjects lack knowledge and motivation, and the state is entitled to intervene to redress this (R. Jones, 2010; McDonald and Marston, 2005; Pykett, 2010).

Discourse around the Act was multi-layered and contradictory. Moral panic theory (Cohen, 1985; Hall, 1997) offered some explanatory power for the discourses produced by frontline workers, particularly in the invocation of intergenerational worklessness as an alibi for punitive approaches. Here, frontline workers often suggested that the Act's conditionality element was necessary because of learnt socialisation into welfare subjectivism (Chapter 6). Yet a moral panic approach was not adequate to fully

capture the responses of frontline workers: this approach was not sufficiently nuanced to fully explain the subject positions of frontline workers themselves. Frontline workers were shown to be very reluctant to deploy revanchist or punitive measures to discipline clients in practice (Chapters 6 and 8). This was likely to be partly the result of extreme resource shortages, which prevented workers from, in practice, engaging in surveillance of applicants (Chapters 6 and 8). Yet it also evidences the importance of affective technologies such as persuasion and rapport to the operation of neoliberal paternalism (Penz et al., 2017; Sauer and Penz, 2017) (see Chapter 6 and 7). A theme which emerged in all three analysis chapters was that frontline workers saw their role as to help applicants become activated and so move away from welfare dependency. While this included some instances of intervention, overall, they sought to help and persuade, to secure co-operation and avoid threats. This translated into an anxious approach to authority among frontline workers. On the one hand, they wished to deploy collaborative approaches to resolving homelessness. On the other, they felt it necessary to employ specific strategies, notably rapport, to engender engagement *for the applicant's own good*. The powers which workers had to employ conditionality (for instance through service withdrawal) and distance (for example through building architecture) caused widespread anxiety since, through visibilising power, they were seen as likely to produce disengagement (see Chapter 7). Yet it would also be simplistic to understand the actions of frontline workers simply in terms of a desire to enact power upon applicants more efficiently. Discourses of welfare subjectivism provoked anxiety in workers for an additional reason: they sometimes expressed discomfort with the objectification of applicants which they necessitated. While this may have undermined their ability to work with applicants efficiently, the focus for at least some frontline workers was upon the broader wellbeing of applicants, in ways which extended beyond their status as a welfare subject (see Chapters 6 and 9). This paves the way for an appreciation of workers themselves as *hominus curans* (Tronto, 2017), *citizens* who understand their role in terms of inter-relationality and civic obligation to the 'other' to provide for their needs: this is discussed further below.

An examination of the motivations of frontline workers for engaging in this behaviour further complicated an approach which understands frontline work in terms of paternalism (for instance, Bretherton et al., 2013a). While workers did take a paternalistic approach of intervention for an applicant's 'own good', this did not always arise from an 'othering' subject

position. In practice, it could arise from proximity of their own experience, or a belief in the fundamental equality between themselves and the individual they were assisting (see Schram et al., 2010, for a discussion of a similar phenomenon in the American welfare system). This is further evidenced by the complexity of subject position occupied by applicants in relation to workers. Workers understood applicants as both welfare subjects who required discipline, and as partners working to resolve homelessness. Workers managed these apparently contradictory identities by using an approach of treating applicants as if their opinions and preferences carried an equal weight, and as if the worker did not have power to withdraw help. And yet the reason for this approach was, in itself, understood in terms of pragmatism and care: it arose from a regard for participants, a desire to see them succeed, and a sense that, as a result of state over-generosity, they were poorly equipped to survive in a hostile housing market. Thus they were constructed as fundamentally incompetent and in need of help- including to the extent that they were usually unable to recognise their need for help. As seen in all three analysis chapters, this resulted in the creation of a disempowered, needy subject position for applicants which then justified a need for intervention by the state.

This exploration of the complexity and contradiction inherent in the justificatory discourse surrounding the Act is the thesis' first contribution to knowledge. Through close attention to the understandings produced by those most closely affected by the operation of the system, I propose that a change from a highly selective rights-based system, to one of universal yet conditional help is structured not only by dialectical and competing discourses of deservedness and static welfare subjectivism but also kindness and pragmatism. Abandonment is thus important as a framework to understand not only the discourse applied to applicants, but the reaction to this discourse by both workers and applicant. Paternalism is not a binary state, but a process which is deployed as part of subjectification. As I discuss further below, the discourses produced by frontline workers are therefore important in making-visible a potential moral proximity which recognises both the resistive agency of both applicants and workers, but the importance of the relationship between these actors.

9.1.2 How do technologies of biopower, bureaucracy and spatialisation operate to align homeless applicants with the normative values of the new Act??

This question particularly related to the findings described in Chapter 7, although they draw on other chapters. Here, the deployment of spatialised, bureaucratic, technologies revealed a tension between a rhetoric of change (to some extent discussed in Chapter 6, and relating to the first research question) and the ongoing work of creating docile and receptive welfare subjects. The mode of operation of the 'law in books' (Ehrlich and Isaacs, 1922) - itself, as previously discussed, a culturally specific enactment and assertion of power-was shown to be a significant structuring factor upon the actions and interactions of both workers and applicants. This question particularly relates to Foucault's work within *Discipline and Punish*². This view of space understands it as a method of asserting power and producing subjectivities, relating it to 'casework' as a reductive, alienating technology which allows relatively rapid process of individuals (see Chapter 2). This incorporates Foucault's proposal that making an individual subject requires them to both be understood in terms of, and come to understand themselves, as an example of a category.

First, spatio-bureaucratic environments, notably the homelessness of offices discussed in Chapter 7, were shown to be arenas in which power became not only visibilised but contested and negotiated. This thesis applied Foucault's early work on the production of subjects to understand of space within welfare bureaucracies, thus demonstrating the utility of a re-centring the spatial dimension of Foucauldian insights on examination, discipline and docility (see Chapter 7). This confirms previous work, which has shown that welfare subjects are produced through the physicalities of bureaucratic sites (for instance, the work of Auyero (2011, 2012, Silver (2010 and Gill (2016). However, using a Foucauldian lens had additional utility, in linking the spatial arrangements and particular technologies associated with the office not only to individual experiences but to the broader production of specific subjectivity using space itself. In this way, it brings together the insights developed within Foucauldian and governmentality approaches to welfare and homelessness (Horsell, 2006)

²An intriguing extension to this work could be made by considering Foucault's later work. In particular, his subsequent theory of heterotopia offers potential to explore bureaucratic spaces in terms of secluded and hidden, enforced transformation, yet as explicitly part of wider society. For instance, see Cenzatti, 2008; Foucault and Miskowiec, 1986; McGrath and Reavey, 2013; Pugliese, 2009; White et al., 2012

with an appreciation of the importance of the embodied experiences of those occupying homelessness spaces (Auyero, 2011; L. J. Silver, 2010).

Second, technologies of bureaucracy and spatialisation were found to create an ambivalence among workers. The mechanisms of casework, including the potential unfairness of a selective system, were approached critically by workers, who were often reluctant to engage in overt displays of co-ercive power. This appeared to be for two key reasons. First, workers had a complex subject position which often incorporated, at least, an understanding of themselves as morally proximate individuals. The mechanisms of casework, including the potential unfairness of a selective system, were approached critically by workers, a finding which complicates prior literature which suggests that bureaucratic workers, particularly in homeless systems, may be minimally engaged with the morality of their job (Bretherton et al., 2013a; Weber, 1994). The importance of recognising the caring of workers as a key contribution to this thesis is discussed in greater depth below. Second workers often perceived visibilisation of power as counter productive. Modern power, for Foucault, is necessarily hidden, disparate and decentred: to create a specific locus of power increases the possibility of targeted resistance (see Chapter 3). Encouraging applicants to focus upon the state as a restrictor and discipliner, overt spatialisation or physical reminders of power (such as securitisation technologies- the use of screens or uncomfortable waiting areas described in Chapter 7) was seen as promoting a hostile and adversarial relationship between applicants and the local authority. Workers struggled with displays of co-ercive power through overt securitisation and territorialisation measures (such as the presence of screens and overt security presence). This was because clear displays of power operated co-ercively, and thus interfered with their ability to deploy empathetic power (McDonald and Marston, 2005), so undermining the collaborative ethos of the Act (see Chapters 6, 7 and 8). A particular contribution here lies in recognising the awareness of frontline workers regarding the importance of persuasive, empathetic knowledge over coercivity: the importance of concealing power was tacitly understood by those deploying it, and they accepted responsibility for managing the affective states of applicants in order to maintain compliance (Chapter 6). This extends literature on neoliberal paternalism not only by demonstrating the importance of spatiality, but by demonstrating that the responsabilisation of *frontline workers* was essential to managing the tension between making applicants aware of the consequence of not complying, and encouraging them to engage, particu-

larly with pedagogical interventions and surveillatory technologies.

9.1.3 How are homeless subjectivities constructed and maintained under the Housing (Wales) Act, with regard to the Welsh housing context?

The third research question considers how citizen activation, particularly through technologies of self-esteem, empowerment and resilience, can be used to understand the enactment of homelessness legislation in Wales. A Foucauldian ontology understands phenomenon as existing within a specific social, cultural and political nexus. Further, homelessness in general and specifically in the Welsh context, is highly politically charged, and subject to multiple discourses, as discussed in Chapter 4. Thus, it is vital to consider the specificities of the Welsh housing context. The research considered the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, which includes the specific introduction of *legislative conditionality*³ along with the right to (near) universal assistance. The Act is understood in terms of a Foucauldian approach to law: phenomenologically, as an act of power, and an assertion to knowledge, and hence the site of intense struggle over dominance (Hunt and Wickham, 1994). In addition to the introduction of conditionality within the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, there are three further aspects of the British and Welsh socio-economic context which I argue are especially material to an understanding of the Act. The reader is reminded of these.

1. *Reduced state support for low income households.* As discussed in Chapter 3, the extent of state support for low-income households to secure and retain housing has been substantially reduced in the past few decades. Not only has social housing stock been considerably reduced, but the past decade has seen the introduction of welfare changes which specifically target housing subsidies (for instance, the frozen Local Housing Allowance and the benefits cap) (Cole et al., 2016; Powell, 2015).

³This was discussed in Chapter 4. The reader is reminded, however, of the wording of the Act at 79(5), which specifies that, where 'the local housing authority is satisfied that the applicant is unreasonably failing to co-operate with the authority in connection with the exercise of its functions...as they apply to the applicant' it may terminate a duty. As this thesis has shown, while the extent to which this legislative change resulted in a practical change is complex and nuanced, the legislative change did operate to structure the interaction between actors within the homeless system.

2. *An inhospitable housing market* As discussed in Chapter 4, the housing market as a whole for individuals and households at risk of homelessness or facing housing precarity due to restricted income is unaffordable and difficult to access. In particular, there is increasing evidence that welfare subjects face direct and indirect discrimination in attempting to access the private rented sector. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 is heavily focused upon strategies to assist homeless applicants, who are extremely likely to be on below-average incomes and to be in receipt of benefits, into private rented accommodation.
3. *Increasing use of conditionality within the welfare state as a whole.* Welfare systems both in the UK and internationally have engaged in an ongoing shift toward, and intensification of, neoliberal paternalistic measures, notably conditionality. For instance, in the UK, Universal Credit has significantly increased the extent to which welfare subjects are required to undergo surveillatory scrutiny as a condition of receiving benefits. Similar turns mirror this within both the Australian (McDonald and Marston, 2005) and South and North American (Auyero, 2011; Soss et al., 2011) welfare states.

First, the emphasis on finding accommodation within a deregulated, competitive, and privatised housing market (in the form of the private rented sector) has a similar role to the precarious and casualised labour market in studies of workfare under neoliberal paternalism (Schram et al., 2010; Whitworth and Carter, 2014). As discussed in Chapter 4, the housing market as a whole for individuals and households at risk of homelessness or facing housing precarity due to restricted income is unaffordable and difficult to access. In particular, there is increasing evidence that welfare subjects face direct and indirect discrimination in attempting to access the private rented sector, reflecting restricted incomes and the impact of ongoing austerity-based cuts to welfare. Just as the purpose of welfare has been argued to be to prepare and habituate welfare subjects to compete for low-paid, precarious work (Flint, 2017; McDonald and Marston, 2005), so the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, in practice, operates to equip and normalise the insecure housing available to low-income households in Wales. It does so using a governmentality approach, in which the individual themselves becomes understood as a problem to be solved through state interventions (Harvey, 2012; Pykett, 2010). This is significant for two reasons.

First, the practice of requiring the individual to engage in the perfor-

mance of compliant acts to evidence their commitment to transformation into activated citizens is a well-established technology of neoliberal paternalism (S. Berger, 2009; McDonald and Marston, 2005; Sweet, 2019). The evidence presented by this thesis to establish this to be a key approach in use within homelessness systems provides further evidence that it is appropriate to consider homelessness systems as examples of neoliberal paternalistic workfare approaches. This demonstrates the complexity of activation within the newly conditionalised Welsh homelessness system. I propose that normalisation of a precarious, deregulated and competitive housing market communicates to applicants the necessity of adopting a self-governing *homo economicus* subjectivity, extending the theme of legibility (Chapter 7, see also below). Yet a recurrent theme throughout all chapters is also the ambivalence felt by workers at applying this system (see also below). Consequently, applicants are often activated through the system to become self-governing *homo economicus* subjectivities- if they are not already-as a result of a need to manage their own identities in a situation of abandonment. And yet they are activated, not as economically active *homo economicus* but as the knowing, potentially abject, homeless subjects of Chapter 5.

Second, the findings relating to the implementation of this governmentality approach extend existing neoliberal paternalistic theories by showing that the performativity of the system was not only well understood by all actors, but *embraced* by them (Chapter 8). Both applicants and workers regarded many of the actions involved in this performative compliance as irrelevant to obtaining secure housing. Instead, they were ritualistic markers to indicate that the client was compliant, and hence operated as a form of Foucauldian discipline and surveillance, confirming the findings of several previous scholars, notably Schram et al. (2010). Yet in contrast to prior studies, here I found that workers often worked hard to ensure compliance, not merely motivated by a need to manage their own workloads, and escape detailed scrutiny, but explicitly due to a desire to avoid evicting applicants from the system. This resulted in them both engaging in intense surveillance of applicants and justified the use of pedagogical measures (such as workshops to 'teach' applicants how to obtain housing), even where these were redundant, because to do otherwise meant potentially punishing clients. This considerably complicates prior work which has found frontline workers to be either morally distanced (N. Gill, 2016) or disinterested and rule-bound (Bretherton et al., 2013b; Cramer, 2005; Lidstone, 1994). This approach extends Soss et

al.'s (2011) proposal, that authoritarian-libertarian modes of governance require government staff to do little beyond administering the law. They do not need to substantially agree with or be convinced by broader discourses of austerity. Instead the system functions through the series of multiple small actions by frontline workers motivated by a professional construction of themselves as helpful (Lipsky, 2010). It is through repeatedly doing 'only what strikes them as permissible, reasonable and right', within 'organising fields of practice' which limit, specify and so normalise options according to a broader set of neoliberal rationalities, that these 'ambivalent subjects' discipline their clients (Soss et al., 2011:751).

Thus frontline workers were complex and liminal actors, who saw themselves as enacting neoliberal discipline upon welfare subjects amid a strategy of care. Recognising that, in practice, they could best help applicants by teaching them to survive independently within the system, they incorporated the valorisation of such technologies as empowerment, resilience and responsabilisation into their workplace practices. They employed an ambivalent and hesitant approach to neoliberal governance, mostly arising not from a revanchist satisfaction in disciplining abject welfare subjects, but because it was felt to be the only way they could help. In this way, they approached the 'caring with' subjectivity proposed by Tronto (2017) to be a fundamental aspect of humanity. As discussed in Chapter 3, Tronto's (2017) *hominus curans*, in contrast to the isolated, competitive and defensive *homo economicus* cares for those around them both as a citizenship obligation and because to *fail* to care would result in alienation from a core aspect of their humanity. This thesis contributes to knowledge in centring care as a critical, though overlooked, aspect of frontline homelessness work.

9.1.4 Summary: abandonment, abjectification and activation as ambivalent responsabilisation

Bringing together the three research questions allows the relationship between three technologies of governmentality- abandonment, abjectification and activation- and responsabilisation to be considered. As the extended discussion of the three research questions shows, it is evident that both workers and applicants have a more complex relationship to these technologies than anticipated by the literature. In Chapter 6 I demonstrated that, while the new legislation's 'abandonment' generated a 'moral panic' discourse, in practice workers were hesitant about formal aban-

donment. In particular, ending a duty to an applicant was avoided, with workers preferring to use persuasive, empathetic approaches which focused upon connection. This could be understood merely as a strategy to make the abandonment mechanisms more palatable and hence useful, particularly since non-co-operation decisions were not encouraged by managers and carried a bureaucratic penalty. However, this reluctance also evidences the importance of emotional labour's recurring themes and an ethic of care in worker-applicant interactions over abandonment, preferring to retain an emotional connection. As I then show in Chapter 7, abjection proved crucial in structuring how applicants were received in the Housing Options centres, communicating to applicants that their time was of little value, and that their role in the system was to be submissive. And yet the knowledge of the discourses surrounding abjection also enabled applicants to (re)present themselves in accordance with a homeless subjectivity which accorded with deservedness. Finally, in Chapter 8, I demonstrate that frontline workers are widely understood as the engineers of activation, particularly through pedagogical interventions associated with self-esteem. While there was evidence that workers did take on this subjectivity, it was also clear that this was done with considerable ambivalence, and that they were unwilling to perform detailed surveillance or enforce the levels of compliance associated with other workfare approaches. While this may be, in part, associated with only not having the functional ability to coerce compliance, since they could not financially or materially penalise applicants as in the benefits system, it also evidently arose from an unwillingness to responsabilise applicants to a point of detriment.

Responsibilisation thus operates within the Welsh homelessness system both as a target and a limit. Responsibility as a concept is valorised, with the legislative change understood in terms of the introduction of responsibilities along with rights (Chapter 6). And yet there also existed an evident underlying unease about over-responsibilisation: of expecting too much of applicants to their detriment. The origins of this discourse were themselves often contradictory and unclear. One interpretation might be that the resistance to over-responsibilisation is a fundamentally paternalistic one, rooted in a sense that applicants were unable to make competent choices. While some evidence of this belief was seen consistently throughout the analysis sections, there was also evidence that workers were operating from the standpoint of moral proximity and mutuality, and helping applicants because they empathised with their situation. It is worth not-

ing that frontline work is often poorly paid and precarious, potentially increasing the possibility of a shared perspective (N. Gill, 2016; Schram et al., 2010).

9.1.5 Further cross-cutting findings: Ambivalence, legibility and the shadow state

This thesis proposes two additional cross-cutting findings, which draw on themes developed through the three analysis chapters. First, the importance of ambivalence among frontline workers. Second, the role of legibility in resistance.

9.1.5.1 The prevalence of ambivalence within frontline work

A strong emergent theme concerned the complexity of the subject position of frontline workers. Frontline workers have been understood throughout this thesis as the enactors of law, and creators of policy, in practice (Lipsky, 2010), and so to understand how the law works it is essential to understand how they interpret it and contextualise it within a broader operational morality. Workers occupy a critical position with regard to legislation and policy which governs poor citizens. Their role is to apply an assemblage of (often contradictory) legislation, policy, and local and national practice to the specific situations they are confronted with in their daily work. As explored in Chapter 3, those who enact the legislation at the frontlines have, particularly within homelessness literature, been understood as a group who potentially undermine the principles of both fairness and consistency within the system, through introducing personal judgement tainted by moralistic discourse. Their work is frequently understood as low-skilled, and their decisions problematised. However, this thesis provided a rare opportunity to engage in protracted discussions with frontline workers around their construction of their work and their clients. From attending to the discourses produced it became evident that frontline homelessness workers occupy a complex and liminal subject position. They consistently regarded themselves as caring professionals, in some cases with significant prior experience either in their current or an allied field, who were trying to operate within both resource and bureaucratic constraints to secure the optimum outcome for their clients. A significant contribution made by this thesis is to unsettle a reductive approach to frontline workers, by demonstrating that they conceptualise

their role in terms of care, and that widespread system constraints which translate to an inability to provide meaningful help to applicants are frustrating and often personally upsetting.

And yet the discourse of frontline workers also consistently aligned with a rhetoric of self-governance. Frontline workers saw themselves as enacting neoliberal discipline upon welfare subjects amid a strategy of care. Most workers did, in fact, often understand the system as imperfect, and rooted their actions in pragmatism, using pedagogical techniques to help applicants survive adversity. There is some similarity here with Maynard-Moody's (2000) concept of the 'citizen-agent'- the state actor who is motivated to help some clients through the system selectively. However, the workers in this study differed, in that they tended to construct their interactions with applicants as a group in terms of a need for pedagogical re-orientation to help them to understand better, and so succeed within and against, the state, as competitive citizens (R. Jones, 2010). Recognising that, in practice, they could best help applicants by teaching them to survive independently within the system, they incorporated the valorisation of such technologies of biopower as empowerment, resilience and responsabilisation into their workplace practices. They employed an ambivalent and hesitant approach to neoliberal governance, mostly arising not from a revanchist satisfaction in disciplining 'scroungers', but because it was felt to be the only way that they could help. This extends Soss' (2011) suggestion that authoritarian-libertarian modes of governance require government staff to do little beyond administering the law. They do not need to substantially agree with or be convinced by broader discourses of austerity. Rather the system functions through a series of multiple small actions by frontline workers motivated by a professional construction of themselves as helpful (Lipsky, 2010). It is through repeatedly doing 'only what strikes them as permissible, reasonable and right', within 'organising fields of practice' which limit, specify and so normalise options according to a broader set of neoliberal rationalities, that these 'ambivalent subjects' (Soss et al., 2011:751) discipline their clients.

9.1.5.2 The importance of being legible

The second cross-cutting theme is legibility. The introduction of rigid, prescribed frameworks for processing applicants has been criticised and associated with disempowerment of workers, creating a culture where they lack an incentive to offer help beyond the minimum required by law (Fitz-

patrick and Pawson, 2016; Schram et al., 2010). Such frameworks are also associated with categorisation of applicants, and hence making them subject and passive. This theme overlaps substantially with abjectification: applicants distanced themselves from an abject subjectivity through legibility.

However, the findings on legibility extended beyond the research question's scope and had particular relevance for understanding applicant and worker agency. A key finding was that legibility frameworks did not simplistically operate to disempower either workers or applicants. Instead, they were interacted with dynamically and dialectically. They offered a language through which applicants could demonstrate they had the subjectivity of the deserving homeless individual (see chapters 6 and 7). However, this was a carefully managed performance, in which applicants had to demonstrate both passive acceptance of lack of control, waiting and queuing, yet also their motivation to operate as self-governing *homo economicus*.

Through examining the different experiences and understandings of legibility, the performative nature of the system became apparent. First, while applicants had to work to make themselves legible, this could only be done in specific ways. As explored extensively in Chapter 5, workers were highly suspicious of 'knowing' applicants whose knowledge of the system appeared extensive. And yet it was also critical that applicants were transparent and prepared to, often openly, share detailed information about themselves in order to allow themselves to be categorised (Chapter 7). Therefore, legibility was not a static state but required an ongoing submissive performance in which the applicant accepted themselves to require pedagogical intervention and guidance to navigate the system (Chapter 8). Further, as shown in Chapter 5, it was essential that the genealogy of applicant understanding of the system was clear and originated within the Housing Options office itself. Applicants whose knowledge of how to become legible came from their welfare-subject families or their own history were distrusted even where this knowledge was accurate.

I propose that this close examination of applicants' strategies to retool both discourses of abjectification and discourses of pity to render themselves legible and hence eligible for help is particularly helpful in understanding how applicants themselves related to being 'made subject'. As shown in Chapters 7 and 8, this was an active and deliberate process, in which applicants utilised the field of action available to them to structure their performance of self to become intelligibly deserved. They en-

dured long and uncomfortable waiting periods, queued repeatedly, and gave sensitive and humiliating information in public spaces because they identified that this maximised their chances of successful transit through the system (Chapter 7). Returning to the concept of the idealised neoliberal activated, empowered and responsabilised citizen, an exploration of how applicants, particularly those less clearly 'deserving', must often act to become seen as worthy of help under the system indicates that this group are, in fact always already ethical subjects, 'fully capable of action' (Cruikshank, 1999:41). Engagement with services required them to manage their own emotional state and take strategic decisions over their presentation and their willingness to engage with services.

This suggests that homeless subjects are neither passive nor manipulative, but rather operate within the discourses, practices, options and opportunities available to them. I suggest that this formulation can be used to reconceptualise applicants engaging with homeless services as activated citizens. They are 'constituted and put into action' (Cruikshank, 1999:41) by the terrain made available to them within the welfare office. This terrain does not only operate upon them but through them, a form of power which 'doesn't only weigh on them as a force that says no but... traverses and produces things... induces pleasure, forms of knowledge.' (Foucault, 1980b:119).

9.2 Policy recommendations

It is important to reiterate that this thesis is underpinned by a Foucauldian, constructivist, ontology, rather than the realist or critical realist ontology which predominates in policy orientated research (Fitzpatrick, 2005). Because this work does not use a realist ontology, it does not claim to be an evaluation of the Welsh homelessness system, but rather an investigation into the co-constructed experiences of actors involved in bureaucratic encounters as part of this. At the same time, although the Housing Act (Wales) 2014 has received both scholarly and policy-based intervention, both for its focus on prevention, and its movement toward universal entitlements to a right to help (A. Ahmed and Madoc-Jones, 2020; A. Ahmed et al., 2018; Mackie et al., 2017). However, very little attention to date has been paid to frontline workers' subject position. Neither have applicants themselves tended to be considered as potentially potentially resistive and complex subjectivities. This reflects a broader inattention to the complexities of these experiences. With some notable

exceptions, housing studies as a discipline tends to explore the impacts of policy and system change through interviews with stakeholders (particularly those involved in strategic decision making- (for instance, in the Welsh context, A. Ahmed and Madoc-Jones, 2020; Mackie and Thomas, 2014) rather than frontline workers, despite the importance of this group to the application of lived policy. Similarly, while prior research has considered the experiences of applicants to some extent, this has not sought information about their understandings, perceptions or opinions to a significant extent, but instead focused on the materialities and practicalities of their experience, such as pathways through the system (A. Ahmed et al., 2018).

9.2.1 Policy recommendation 1: Involvement of frontline workers in the evaluation of legislation and policy

Attention to the experiences of frontline workers has been instructive in revealing the nuances and contradictions of the Act itself. This is not surprising: as Lipsky (2010) argued, and as developed by considerable subsequent scholarly work, it is frontline workers who, through applying the complex assemblage of law-in-books, local and national policy, societal expectations and their own experience to repeated specific cases, create living policy. Yet their voices are notably absent in policy studies. This omission cannot be separated from the social and economic position of frontline workers. 'Street-level bureaucracy' is poorly paid (Lipsky, 2010; Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2000). It is disproportionately likely to be performed by women (Sauer and Penz, 2017). in accordance with a wider tendency to devalue gendered labour (Crain et al., 2016; Hochschild, 2012; Tronto, 2013), this group has tended to be understood as non-professionals, or as antagonistic to their clients (Bretherton et al., 2013a; Lidstone, 1994; McDonald and Marston, 2005; Soss et al., 2011). In this study, frontline workers were found to have the capacity to offer detailed, thoughtful and compassionate insights. Most saw themselves both as professionals, and caring individuals, with unique insights into the system (see Chapters 6 and 8). The majority of policy work's failure to explicitly and directly consider the experiences of *frontline workers* thus both limits the reliability of their findings and reinforces gendered power dynamics. The first policy recommendation then is that future investigations into homelessness provision specifically, and indeed all evaluations

of legislation with a substantial frontline implementation component, include the experiences of frontline workers directly.

9.2.2 Policy recommendation 2: Attention to the emotional wellbeing of frontline workers

This thesis found evidence that frontline workers were expected to engage in ongoing emotional labour which was frequently unrecognised. For instance, the extensive use of rapport to secure co-operation was documented in Chapters 6,7 and 8. At the same time, workers also expressed anxiety about this use of emotion-work, feeling that it was both inauthentic (particularly Chapters 7 and 8) and compromised engagement (particularly Chapters 6 and 7). Further, it was clear that this emotional labour was not adequately allowed for within system planning, placing workers in a situation where they had to manage scarce resources through eroding the boundaries between their work and private life (Chapter 8). Studies of other workers involved in intense provision of face-to-face help have indicated that burnout, depression, and stress may relate to a lack of recognition of the impact of emotional labour (Cull et al., 2020; B. Hunter et al., 2017). As discussed above and in Chapter 3, frontline workers within the homelessness system are often problematised and regarded as potential vectors of unfair, inconsistent and moralistic, decision-making. Perhaps for this reason, little attention has been paid to the emotional experiences of frontline work within policy decisions, nor of the impact of providing care. This reflects a broader context in which frontline workers' emotional labour is frequently overlooked (Sauer and Penz, 2017; Tronto, 2013). The second policy recommendation is then that greater attention is needed at the service design, delivery and evaluation stages to frontline workers' emotional wellbeing, specifically within the Welsh housing context, but more broadly within welfare bureaucracies overall.

9.2.3 Policy recommendation 3: Attention to the impact upon actors of a "neoliberal paternalistic" approach to homelessness

The shift to (near) universal help with homelessness introduced by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 is underpinned by heavy reliance upon the private rented sector as a potential form of accommodation for low-income

households. Evaluative studies have established that it is often difficult, or impossible, for low-income households to obtain and maintain private rented sector properties. While the new Act does include some compensatory measures (for instance, bond schemes/rent in advance, and in some local authorities, the development of relationships with private landlords), these do not address all the issues faced by low-income households (see Powell, 2015; a fuller discussion of barriers is provided in Chapter 3). Having taken a non-evaluative approach, and recognising the limitations of sampling⁴ this thesis does not attempt to make definitive statements about the broad material situation faced by homeless households attempting to enter the private rented sector. However, it is possible to say that there was a significant impact, at least in terms of the actors involved in the study, arising from an individualising, workfare-style approach which was felt to regard them as the cause of their homelessness, and which downplayed the importance of structural factors. Applicants and workers felt that this approach embroiled them in performative behaviour. This not only took up time, but undermined a potentially productive working relationship. It also communicated to applicants that their time and personal priorities were of little value, and that they were not recognised as capable adults with (often) relevant prior experience. Therefore, the third policy recommendation is that the broader, discursive, implications of the introduction of both conditionality and an individualistic approach to homelessness provision, must be considered. In practical terms, this might be addressed by exploring co-production options and directly involving applicants in service design provision at a local authority level.

9.3 Closing comments

When this research was conducted, the Welsh homelessness system was in a state of flux. This was engendered not only by the significant changes associated with the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 but with contextual changes (mostly in common with England) to both the housing and benefits system. Notably, housing benefits had been substantially reduced and reworked, with a reduction in social housing stock, and amid spiralling private sector rents (Powell, 2015).

⁴for instance, an approach which included relatively few applicants at the prevention stage, and which potentially over-sampled from those in priority need categories—although see comments in Chapter 4 regarding the broad issues faced by homelessness studies as a discipline in terms of obtaining representative samples

The study adopted a Foucauldian methodology, in that it focused upon production of discourse, remaining agnostic as to the nature of the underpinning reality (Foucault, 1980b). It investigated workers and applicants' perceptions within the system, and the normative values, decision-making strategies, and fields of action available to them. This particularly makes a contribution in terms of understanding how the operation of long-standing discourses around welfare/ housing deservedness coalesce and shape the actions of frontline workers, which again produce the decisions which shape the subjectivities of all actors. A critical discourse analysis approach enabled the agency of both sets of participants to become evident. Thus workers were revealed to be both ambivalent and pragmatic actors, often enacting a paternalistic form of care (in that they assumed the applicant's needs) which was nevertheless subversive in terms of the broader requirements of their job (for instance, failing to enforce compliance with the Personal Housing Plan). They often appeared to be operating from a position of anxiety over conditionalising citizenship, while simultaneously resisting attempts to 'mass produce' (as Audrey, a frontline worker, put it), and so morally distance, from applicants. Meanwhile, applicants were shown to be sceptical of the system but not resistive: they actively attempted to make themselves legible, in practice operating as ethical selves. Some applicants and workers welcomed the clarity of the new Act because it enabled differentiation between applicants. This interrogation of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 in terms of a broader shift to a workfare approach to governance additionally visibilises the complexity of subjectivities produced within a workfare context, and especially how these may interact with both care and agency.

Homelessness is widely recognised to be a symptom of far broader societal problems. The ambitious Welsh system attempts to address complex and embedded factors, primarily through working upon and with applicants. It sought to address the previous evident inequalities created by the prior approach to homelessness in UK law, which resulted in a majority of homeless people being eligible for extremely minimal help. This thesis has attended to how this approach necessarily individualises homelessness and creates a legitimising, yet ultimately unsuccessful, justificatory discourse. The thesis argued that the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 exemplifies a neoliberal workfare approach to homelessness, centring self-governance and development of a *hominus curans*. However, it found that the mode of operation of workfare centred not upon the punitive conditionality which characterises workfare approaches, but rather upon abandonment, with-

drawal, and consequent self-responsibilisation, not only of applicants, but of workers themselves. Despite an overarching approach of neoliberal paternalism, this thesis demonstrates that both frontline workers and applicants themselves are best understood not as passive enactors or recipients of legislation but as active agents, who understand homelessness in terms of inter-relationality, mutual need and citizen-based obligations.

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Chapter 10

Appendix A: Consent forms



Participant information sheet

The Welsh homelessness system after the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 (working title).

This research is part of a PhD project that explores the experiences of different groups within the homelessness systems in Wales. As part of my project, I am interviewing people who have made homelessness applications, staff who are working with homeless people, and people who deal with homelessness applications. I am trying to understand how the system works and what it feels like to be part of the system, from different perspectives.

If you agree to take part, here is some information you should know in advance:

1. **I will treat all information you share with me confidentially.** This means that I will not share information about you with anyone outside the Research Team (myself and my supervisors, Dr Peter Mackie and Dr Scott Orford). The only exception to this would be if I was extremely concerned about your welfare or that of another person.
2. **With your permission, I will record the interview.** The interview will be uploaded to a secure server as soon as possible. It will then be transcribed and anonymised (meaning that all information which might make it possible for someone else to identify you will be removed). Once the interview has been transcribed, the original audio file will be deleted.
3. **I will use a pseudonym for you** and change or remove any details which might identify you.
4. **I would like to use anonymised quotations from you in my thesis, and in other publications** (for instance, reports and academic papers).
5. **You do not have to answer any question I ask you- you do not have to give a reason.**
6. **You are free to end the interview at any time, for any reason.** If you do leave the interview I will assume that you no longer want your data included in the study, unless you tell me otherwise.
7. **If you decide you no longer want to be part of the study, please contact me.** You may do this at any time. I will remove some or all of your data (as you prefer) from all unpublished work.
8. **If you have any questions about the study, you can contact me or my first supervisor, as follows:**

Edith England EnglandEA@Cardiff.ac.uk

Dr Peter Mackie MackieP@Cardiff.ac.uk

If you would like to speak to someone about this research who is outside the research team, please contact Ethan Lumb at the Department of Geography and Planning at Cardiff University:

LumbE@Cardiff.ac.uk / 0292876412



Consent form

The Welsh homelessness system after the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 (working title).

1. I confirm that I have had a chance to read and discuss the study, to consider the information given, ask questions, and am happy to take part on this basis.
2. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason.
3. I understand that anonymised transcripts will be used as a basis for this and future research.
4. I consent to audio recording of this study.
5. I consent to participation in this study.

Participant name

Participant signature

Date

Consent taker name

Consent taker signature

Date
