

Institution: Sheffield Hallam University		
Unit of Assessment: UOA13 - Architecture, Planning and Built Environment		
Title of case study: The Uneven Spatial Impact of Welfare Reform		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010-2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Christina Beatty Steve Fothergill	Professor Professor	1992-present 1992-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013 to June 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		

1. Summary of the impact

Since 2010 Professors Beatty and Fothergill at Sheffield Hallam University have undertaken a substantial programme of research into welfare reform and austerity in Britain. This research has identified two major omissions in the Government's evidence base: the **cumulative impact of welfare reform** and **impacts on place**. They have **developed methodologies** to estimate systematically the cumulative impact of welfare reform for every local authority in Britain. Extensive engagement activities with politicians, policy makers, practitioners and the media maximised the application of research findings and data. **The impact was two-fold: 1. Shaping public policy debate and development:** the data (including interactive mapping tools which were accessed over 16,830 times), research findings and advice were deployed in Parliament (40 mentions in Hansard), in national policy documents, by national agencies and local organisations; **2. Raising awareness in the media** of this evidence on the uneven impact of welfare reform including front page coverage in the *Financial Times* (16,000,000 readers per month).

2. Underpinning research

From 2010 national governments instigated a major programme of welfare reform resulting in unprecedented cuts to entitlement and eligibility across all working age benefits. Professors Beatty and Fothergill identified two key gaps in the evidence base used to justify this policy agenda. **First**, official policy documents and impact assessments only considered individual policy measures in isolation, ignoring the cumulative impact on low-income households of the reforms as a whole. **Second**, the Government's policies and impact assessments proved aspatial: the impact on places and sub-regional effects were not considered.

Beatty and Fothergill therefore made **methodological advances** in order to create small area data. These go beyond national estimates of savings to the Exchequer from the individual 19 welfare reforms (R1,R4,R5,R7). They were the first to develop sub-regional estimation techniques designed to (i) **generate systematic data for all local authorities** which detailed the scale of financial losses to low-income households and (ii) **quantify the cumulative impact of these reforms** (R7). They integrated secondary, administrative, and claimant data on local area characteristics (economic, demographic and tenure) with national policy assumptions, Budget forecasts, and impact assessments from Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), and the Office for Budget Responsibility. They created a series of open access databases documenting **the financial losses arising from each welfare reform within all local authorities**. Between 2013-2019 these techniques were refined in order to reflect real-time changes in Government policy assumptions and Budget forecasts (R1).

Between 2010 and 2019, Beatty and Fothergill were directly commissioned to undertake a programme of public, private and charitable funded research (**GBP178,594, 16 national and local research projects**) to address gaps in the evidence base. Commissions included:

- **The *Financial Times* (FT) and Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting USA** (2013) funded the development of local authority estimates of the cumulative impact of reforms introduced by the Coalition Government 2010-2015. This research underpins the **FT Austerity Audit** and its publicly available digital data mapping tool (R5;E1,E3).

- **Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action** (2013) funded an extension of the research to provide data for all NI local authorities.
- **Oxfam, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and the National Housing Federation (NHF)** (2016) funded a study to estimate the overall impact of the Conservative Government's 2015 package of welfare reforms and the outturn of the 2010-2015 reforms. This research also allowed for the creation of estimates as to cumulative impact of reforms by household type and tenure (R1,R2,R7;E2,E6-E10).
- **Scottish Parliament's Welfare Reform Committee and the Social Security Committee** (2013-2016) commissioned five studies from Beatty and Fothergill as an evidence base to inform legislation and policy development. These studies laid out the impact of welfare reform in Scotland for: the pre-2015 reforms; local areas; household types and tenures; the labour market; and the post-2015 reforms (R6;E4,E5).

Four key research insights emerged from this programme of research. **First**, the integration of government data allowed the **cumulative impact of the reforms** to be assessed. This process found that if all reforms had been fully implemented then low-income households would be **GBP31,740,000,000 per year** worse off by 2020/2021 than if the reforms had not been introduced (R2,R7;E1,E2,E8,E9).

Second, the research demonstrated that **certain types of households and tenures** experienced far greater financial losses than others. Lone parent families, families with two or more dependent children, and tenants in the social rented sector were hit the hardest (R3,R6,R7;E4,E7).

Third, local authority data demonstrated the **very uneven spatial impact of individual policy measures**. Overall, the average financial loss per working age resident per annum was over four times greater in some local authorities than in others (R1-R7;E5,E6,E8,E9).

Fourth, financial losses were **concentrated in certain types of areas: poorest places were hit the hardest**. Particular problems were identified for older industrial Britain (R2), Britain's seaside towns (R3), and certain London Boroughs (R4). Local areas, as well as individuals, were directly affected by welfare reforms thus widening gaps in prosperity between the strongest and weakest local economies across Britain (R1,R4,R5,R7;E2,E8,E10).

3. References to the research

Peer Reviewed Journal Articles:

- R1:** Beatty, C and Fothergill, S. (2018). Welfare reform in the United Kingdom 2010-16: Expectations, outcomes, and local impact. *Social Policy and Administration*, 52(5), pp. 950-968. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12353>
- R2:** Beatty, C. and Fothergill, S. (2017). [The impact on welfare and public finances of job loss in industrial Britain](https://doi.org/10.1080/21681376.2017.1346481). *Regional Studies, Regional Science*, 4(1), pp. 161-180. (Best Paper 2018 Regional Studies, Regional Science) <https://doi.org/10.1080/21681376.2017.1346481>
- R3:** Beatty, C. and Fothergill, S. (2015). Disability benefits in an age of austerity. *Social Policy and Administration*, 49(2), pp. 161-181. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/spol.12117>
- R4:** Beatty, C. and Fothergill, S. (2014). The local and regional impact of the UK's welfare reforms. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 7(1), pp.63-79. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjres/rst035>

Key reports underpinning media coverage and used in Parliament:

- R5:** Beatty, C. and Fothergill, S. (2013). *Hitting the Poorest Places Hardest: The local and regional impact of welfare reform*. Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University. (Google Scholar 162 citations; underpins the FT Austerity Audit) <https://doi.org/10.7190/cresr.2017.6378897426>
- R6:** Beatty, C. and Fothergill, S. (2015). *The Cumulative Impact of Welfare Reform on Households in Scotland*. Welfare Reform Committee, 1st Report, 2015 (Session 4) SP

Paper 657. Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament. (Google Scholar 10 citations)
<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/87283.aspx>

R7: Beatty, C and Fothergill, S. (2016). *The Uneven Impact of Welfare Reform: The financial losses to people and places*. Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University. (Google Scholar 118 citations) <https://doi.org/10.7190/cresr.2017.55632393>

4. Details of the impact

Processes through which the research led to impact

Extensive engagement activities maximised the reach and influence of the research on public, policy and media debates. Key beneficiaries include **politicians, policy makers, practitioners, and the media**. Between September 2013 and October 2019, Beatty and Fothergill delivered 75 presentations and workshops involving 5,965 participants. Events included:

- **Parliament:** a half-day event (10/05/2016) hosted by Owen Smith MP (then Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary). He stated: “*The legacy this Government will leave behind is being drawn in the maps and statistics in this report ... Ex-industrial parts of the UK have been hit the hardest.*” (R7) (90 attendees: MPs, senior civil servants, and national charities).
- **Senior civil servants:** Between 2015 and 2018, DWP invited Beatty to give 5 presentations and 3 briefings to senior policy makers and analysts to inform policy development and shape their understanding of local policy implications (R1-R7;E7).
- **Keynotes:** at national policy and practitioner conferences (2014 to 2019): National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers (NAWRA) (3 times) (R2,R5,R7;E9,E10); National Housing Federation (NHF) for social housing providers (3 times plus 5 regional events) (R7); and Institute of Revenue, Ratings and Valuation for professionals designing local benefits policies (3 times) (R5,R7).

Beatty and Fothergill acted as **expert advisors or witnesses** including:

- **UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (16/10/2015): Beatty and Fothergill presented evidence on the cumulative impact of welfare reform on disabled people (R3,R4). The Committee subsequently recommended that the Government should undertake a cumulative impact assessment of all welfare policy changes affecting disabled people.
- **National Audit Office** (2016): Beatty acted as an expert advisor on the NAO Local Welfare Provision study which included an analysis of local data in the final report (R7).
- **Northern Ireland Audit Office** (2018): NIAO commissioned Beatty to act as a reference partner to inform the audit of welfare reforms in Northern Ireland (R1,R2,R7).
- **Social Security Advisory Committee** (SSAC) (R4,R5;E3) and **Scottish Parliament** (R1,R4,R6,R7;E4,E5) (see below).

From 2013 Beatty and Fothergill produced **open access databases with local authority data** hosted on various websites allowing any organisation to utilise the data (R5,R7). They co-created an interactive data mapping tool with the NHF for 800 housing association members (housing 6,000,000 people) (R7). The *Financial Times* hosted two publicly accessible interactive mapping tools utilising the data (from August 2013 (R5, E1) and March 2016 (R7).

Impact

The research led to two key areas of impact. **First, shaping public policy debate and development.** This is demonstrated through deployment of advice, findings and data in parliamentary policy debates, committees, and official documents:

- **Parliamentary and legislation debate:** (December 2013-June 2020) (R2,R3,R5,R7) Hansard indicates evidence from reports was deployed in: 2013, once; 2014, 19 times, by 10 different MPs/Lords; 2015, 6 times by 6 MPs/Lords; 2016, 12 times by 3 MPs/Lords; 2018, 2 times by 2 MPs/Lords; 2020, once. For example:

- *"Will the Secretary of State look at the interesting report by Sheffield Hallam University ... the welfare reforms might be working in some parts of the country, they are certainly not working in Wales ... It is important to look at the variations within the UK."* **Ann Clwyd MP, Westminster debate on Universal Credit**, (09/07/2014), Hansard Vol 584 (R5).
- **SSAC** (2014): acknowledged the contribution of Fothergill in shaping the remit of its report on the cumulative impact of welfare reform and quoted research findings (R5;E3).
- **Secretary for State for Work and Pensions:** (28/02/2019) invited Beatty to discuss the impact of welfare reform on low-income families: *"These discussions are immensely useful in helping build the evidence on the current affordability position and to inform the development of policy options."* **Letter from Amber Rudd to Prof Beatty**, (11/03/2019) (R1-R7;E7).
- **House of Commons Library Debate Pack:** (16/01/2017) *"The impact of DWP Policies on Low Income Households"* deployed findings from Beatty and Fothergill's studies as key evidence for MPs to inform the parliamentary debate (R6,R7;E6).
- **Scottish Parliament Welfare Reform Committee** (2014-2016) **and Social Security Committee** (2016): published 4 of their studies as official Committee reports and used the findings in their legislative response to welfare reform. Fothergill presented each before the Committees (broadcast on Scottish Parliament TV) (R6;E4,E5):

"The results of research commissioned by the Committee have been very valuable in both practical terms (providing concrete figures for what is actually happening on the ground) and presentational ones (...helped develop a strong media profile for the Committee)." **Welfare Reform Committee Legacy Paper: Session 4, 3rd Report**, (18/03/2016; p.4) (E4).

"...this research shows that the biggest losers from the latest round of UK Government welfare reforms are once again the poorest in our society. I hope this research acts as a wake-up call to the UK Government that their approach to welfare reform just isn't working." **Convener of the Social Security Committee, Sandra White MSP** (02/11/2016). <https://www.parliament.scot/newsandmediacentre/101896.aspx>)
- **National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers** (2014 to 2017): with 1,000 members in 266 organisations including advice agencies, local authorities, national charities and housing associations deployed data to inform policy development and targeting of resources:

"This was invaluable as it enabled organisations to see which reforms were most damaging in their particular area. This enabled them to plan what areas they needed to focus their advice on, and which clients they needed to reach out to, thus allowing limited resources to be targeted as effectively as possible." **NAWRA Chair, testimonial** (20/10/2020) (E9).

"with the help of the work done by Sheffield Hallam we were able to access further funding from Scottish Legal Aid Board ... to create 2 new posts ... generated in excess of £1m ... without the use of the data generated in "hitting the poorest areas hardest" this would have been much more difficult ... Using this key evidence is vital for funding." **NAWRA Scotland Representative, testimonial** (09/10/20) (E10).

Second, the importance of the cumulative effects of welfare reform and its impact on places has **been raised in the media**. National media coverage based on this research programme informed public and policy debates including: BBC News at 10 (21/11/16, average 4,800,000 viewers – also News at 6, BBC Radio 4 World at One and Moneybox Programme); Channel 4 News (17/03/16, average 7,400,000 monthly viewers); New York Times (28/05/2018, 2,330,000 subscribers, circulation 443,000). Extensive coverage of the findings has also been presented in print, radio and digital outlets in Scotland, Wales and the English regions.

The FT gave front page coverage to the research on the cumulative impact on places of the combined post-2010 and post-2015 reforms (R7) (09/03/2016) (16,000,000 readers per month; 4,000,000 UK and 12,000,000 international). The FT also co-developed a data mapping tool

Impact case study (REF3)

with Beatty and Fothergill utilising the local authority database emerging from this research (accessed 7,287 times between 2016 and 2019).

In November 2013, the FT Austerity Audit (based on the research findings and data from R5) won an *Editor and Publisher (EPPY)* Digital Publishing Award, for **Best Investigative/Enterprise Feature on a website with 1 million unique monthly visitors** (R5,E1). Since August 2013, this has been accessed 24,230 times, with 9,543 using the interactive data mapping tool.

The Guardian also covered our research findings on several occasions (35,600,000 readership per month digital and print). This included two articles by the Economics Editor (06/11/2016) reporting research on Jobs, Welfare and Austerity (R2). He said:

'Policymakers should read Beatty and Fothergill's report. So should anybody who wants to understand where Britain is, economically, financially and politically. It explains a lot.' **Larry Elliot, Guardian** (06/11/2016) (E2).

Political, policy, public, and media debates have been informed by a growing evidence base on the impacts of welfare reform (including our own as demonstrated above). This evidence has influenced the government to revisit and partially amend some aspects of welfare reform (see HMRC Budgets 2013-2019). Beatty and Fothergill estimate the cumulative impact of welfare reform by 2020/2021 will now be GBP21,000,000,000 per year (before any recent changes arising from the Coronavirus Crisis). This is GBP10,740,000,000 per year less than would have been the case had the reforms been fully implemented as originally intended and had all else remained constant.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Impact in the media

E1: *Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting USA (November 2013)*: Announcement that FT Austerity Audit (based on Sheffield Hallam research) won Editor & Publisher award for Best Investigative/Enterprise Feature on a website with 1 million unique monthly visitors and over.

E2: *The Guardian (6/11/16)*, 2 articles by Economics Editor Larry Elliot: Economics Viewpoint "The legacy of leaving old industrial Britain to rot is becoming clear"; "Half UK budget deficit 'is down to job destruction in older industrial areas'". Both articles are based on findings in report "Jobs, Welfare and Austerity" which became article R2.

Expert advice and research findings used in Parliamentary reports or proceedings

E3: *Social Security Advisory Committee (2014)*: The cumulative impact of welfare reform: A study by the Social Security Advisory Committee Occasional Paper No. 12.

E4: *The Scottish Parliament Welfare Reform Committee (2016)*: Welfare Reform Committee Legacy Paper: Session 4, SP Paper 946 3rd Report, 2016 (session 4).

E5: *The Scottish Parliament Social Security Committee (2016)*: Commentary in Committee report on the importance of Beatty and Fothergill research on The Impact of the New Welfare Reforms on Scotland.

E6: *House of Commons Library (2017)*: Impact of DWP policies on low income households, Debate Pack CDP-2017/0013.

E7: *Secretary for State for Work and Pensions, Amber Rudd (11/03/19)*: Letter acknowledging input to policy development by Professor Beatty.

Testimonies

E8: *Key Cities Group (October 2020)*. Letter from Corporate Policy Manager, Wakefield Council on behalf of Key Cities Group in recognition of their use of data to inform policy development and lobby government ministers.

E9: *Chair of the National Association of Welfare Rights Advisors (NAWRA) (20/10/20)*: testimony on the impact of the research on welfare rights services across Britain to defend services and target resources.

E10: *Scotland Representative for NAWRA and Welfare Rights Officer at City of Edinburgh Council (09/10/20)*: testimony on use of research to gain funding for additional posts and benefit income for clients.