This presentation will explore strategies that NHS (England) develop, in their own words, to “increase life, career, employment, and social prospects and help reduce poverty”¹. If we leave aside the contradiction that such strategy documents seek to actively promote the benefits of stable employment whilst ignoring how some of their own working practices create precarious work, we can at least isolate elements of an organisational approach that could widen participation and facilitate social inclusion. Indeed, with its large internal market and relatively consistent level of vacancies, NHS employers in England have considerable potential for widening participation within their local communities.

It is important, however, to compare the strategy (and associated activities) of 2014 with the study of New Labour strategies of a decade earlier², to see whether any changes have been made that would turn this well-intended strategy into something that has more traction with NHS employers (than before). More specifically – does it acknowledge the financial dynamics that shape employer behaviour? Does it encourage organisational-wide thinking? Does it provide more materials on how pre-employment training might be financed, or how organisations might integrate internal and intermediate labour markets?³ Some of the terminology may be the same (compare Get in, Get on, Go Further – with Getting in, Getting started, Getting on), but unless some fundamentals are tackled, the impact of such strategies will continue to be marginal.

Unacceptable forms of work: precariousness in the global policy agenda

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The elimination of Unacceptable Forms of Work (UFW) has been identified as critically important for the future work of the UN International Labour Organization (ILO 2013). Yet there has been no comprehensive elaboration of the dimensions, manifestations or apt regulatory responses to UFW. This project has proposed such a framework (Fudge and McCann 2015; McCann and Fudge 2016). The project has investigated a set of key discourses on contemporary work to identify their contribution to an analytically rigorous conception of UFW. A novel Multidimensional Model has been designed for use by local policy actors in identifying and addressing UFW in countries across a range of income levels.


### Precarious work and precarious workers

Iain Campbell (RMIT University, Australia)
Robin Price (Queensland University of Technology, Australia)

Precarious work is a prominent theme in recent employment relations research, but discussion of its implications for individual workers remains hesitant and often confused. This article seeks to improve conceptualization in this important area. It critically reviews existing literature on precarious work and precarious workers. It then explores one ‘theory-relevant’ example – full-time secondary school students in Australia who hold part-time jobs in the retail sector. It argues that these part-time jobs are indeed precarious but that the negative effects on the student-workers are modest, both because participation in precarious work is limited (moderate weekly hours and intermittent work within the framework of a brief stage of the life course) and because many, though not all, risks are cushioned by structural forces such as access to alternative sources of income and access to alternative career paths. At the same time, the article introduces a longitudinal perspective, which reveals that the same group of student-workers face major risks in the near future as a result of increasingly insecure labour markets. Reflections on this example help to identify conceptual tools that can be applied to a wide range of other examples of precarious work.

Income security in the on-demand economy: 
Findings and policy lessons from a survey of crowdworkers

Janine Berg

Abstract: This article assesses the validity of many of the assumptions made about work in the on-demand economy and analyses whether proposals advanced for improving workers’ income security are sufficient for remedying current shortcomings. It draws on findings from a survey of crowdworkers conducted in late 2015 on the Amazon Mechanical Turk and Crowdflower platforms on workers’ employment patterns, work histories, and financial security. Based on this information, it provides an analysis of crowdworkers’ economic dependence on the platform, including the share of workers who depend on crowdwork as their main source of income, as well as their working conditions, the problems they encounter while crowdworking and their overall income security. Based on these findings, the article recommends an alternative way of organizing work that can improve the income security of crowdworkers as well as the overall efficiency and productivity of crowdwork.

Jenny Rodriguez

University of Manchester

The paper analyses the intersection of gender, age and class and its productive tension with dynamics of precariousness. It reports on data drawn from a study exploring the work and career experiences of young workers in customer-facing occupations in the service sector in the North East of England. The paper develops the notion of intersectional precariousness, discussing how young workers mobilise their gendered, classed identities as strategies to help them to navigate dynamics of precariousness, while simultaneously using them as justifications to explain it. The paper contributes to ongoing discussions that highlight the importance of intersectionality theory to understand the diverse, complex and simultaneous experiences of workers in contemporary labour markets.
Welfare reform, labour market activation and vulnerable workers

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Key policy reforms since 2010 are underpinned by an increasingly narrow ‘welfare’ debate in which conceptualisations of ‘fairness’ and ‘entitlement’ are distorted and ‘social security’ is being dismantled. These reforms have increased both the precarity of workers and the precarity of the social safety net and amount to ‘illfare’ rather than welfare as ‘well-being’ (Titmuss, 1974). Within this discourse, the policy solution to unemployment appears to rest on an expansion of low-wage precarious jobs (Standing, 2011) and the promotion of enterprise in the form of self-employment (Dannreuther and Perren, 2013). The paper draws on monthly Labour Force Survey, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data on the Work Programme and data from an ESRC-funded project on employer engagement in activation programmes. Our findings show that employment growth has been accompanied by growing insecurity in the labour market and a significant expansion of self-employment. Activation programmes such as the Work Programme account for only a tiny share of employers’ recruitment, and have a questionable record in terms of the creation of ‘sustainable work’. Against the backdrop of new policy initiatives in this area, we question the ability of such activation programmes to deliver on finding both jobs for those furthest from the labour market and sustainable work more generally.

Precarity, health and well-being: insights from foodbank service users

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An estimated 50 per cent of all people living in poverty in the UK live in a family with someone in paid work (MacInnes et al, 2014). This is symptomatic of polarised UK labour market experiencing rising levels of in-work poverty and a high incidence of precarious work (TUC, 2014). Many workers find themselves trapped in a low pay-no pay cycle, with recurring movement between in-work poverty and out-of-work poverty (Shildrick et al, 2012). A growth in foodbank use suggests that, in this context, many individuals and families are not meeting the most basic of needs and struggling to
maintain a decent livelihood (Forsey and Mason, 2014). Adverse effects of these developments on health and well-being are under-explored.

Engaging with this landscape, this presentation explores the relationship between precarity, health and well-being through the voices of foodbank service users. It does so by drawing on research undertaken for the TUC Employment Rights Department in 2013-14 in partnership with the Trussell Trust, a charity which works with local communities to combat hunger and tackle poverty and social exclusion. Depth interviews were undertaken with 10 foodbank service users, currently or recently in work and enduring lives of insecurity (Standing, 2011). The interviewees included men and women with a variety of health conditions and/or family members experiencing ill-health. The presentation explores foodbank service users’ work histories and employment conditions, interactions with health and well-being and pathways to foodbank service use. It also considers links to employment and social policy contexts.

**Young workers in the market for precarious work**

Ruth Lupton

This presentation reports on a study conducted in three contrasting labour market areas in the UK in 2010/11. The study sought to establish (by means of an experiment) whether young people living in low-income neighbourhoods and applying for work faced ‘postcode discrimination’ on the basis of the stigma attached to their neighbourhoods. In addition to the experiment we also interviewed young disadvantaged job seekers from these neighbourhoods, employers and labour market intermediaries. The study found no evidence of postcode discrimination. In this paper we report mainly on what was learned about the experience of seeking and applying for work of the kind that is increasingly characterised by aspects of precarity – work in the retail and hospitality sectors, for example. We particularly consider the relationships between precarity and equity. We suggest that increasing precarity in some respects opens up opportunities to people who may have found it more difficult to enter more traditional forms of employment. However there are also substantial disadvantages, not least worker discouragement and the increasing importance of locality and transport.

**Gaps in social protection for precarious workers: a comparative analysis**

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There is widespread concern in Europe about the rise of precarious forms of employment and what can be done to foster inclusiveness. Precarious work may involve variable or less than full-time
hours, temporary or fixed term employment, bogus self-employment and low cost full-time employment - such as outsourcing, posted workers etc... The extent of precariousness depends on both the levels of employment and social protection for ‘standard’ employment and on the gaps in this protection for nonstandard forms of employment.

Precarious work not only impacts on individual workers by denying access to employment rights and social protection established on assumptions of continuous employment under standard employment relationships. Protection gaps can take many forms and the consequences vary by personal circumstances (for example whether they have access to derived rights via the family) and by type of employment form or degree of precarity. Precarious work can also be considered as part of a process of decommodifying employment and undermining the standard employment relationship and in the process passing on more of the costs of social reproduction to individuals, families but also onto the social welfare system. Thus policies aimed at flexibility may conflict with other objectives of reducing overall public expenditure costs. Drawing on a six country study of precarious work, this paper maps these gaps in social protection and considers the tensions and contradictions in the evolving systems of employment and social protection.

**UK 'welfare reform': gender implications**

Fran Bennett, University of Oxford

Based on qualitative research with low-/moderate-income couples, and analysis for the Women's Budget Group, this presentation raises key issues about the gender implications of 'welfare reform' in the UK. It focuses on Universal Credit, a ‘super means-tested benefit’ paid in and out of employment. This presentation concentrates on couples, as another looks at lone parents.

Gender analysis of such reforms assesses the likely impact not just on households at one point in time but also on (gendered) individuals over the life-course; and not just on transfers of resources between men and women, but also on their effects on gender roles and relationships, autonomy and inequalities within the household.

Some features of Universal Credit design make government goals harder to achieve. There has been understandable focus on the imposition of in work conditionality. But from a gender perspective, a key issue is the extension of conditionality to partners, including those with children, whilst disincentives for many 'second earners' are worsened, and little if any attention is paid to the dynamics of gender negotiation within couples. In addition, the government's wish to equate being on Universal Credit with being in work, and its assumptions about the nature of work, seems to be countered by current developments in the nature of employment.