

Hidden hardship: Everyday experiences, coping strategies, and barriers to wellbeing in rural Britain
Dr Stephanie Denning

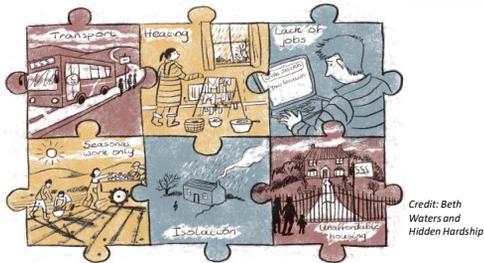
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A picture of hardship in 2023

Foodbanks	Homelessness	Rough Sleeping	Not enough money to live on
Long-term deprivation	Unemployment	Low Pay	Suffering from poor health
People living in poor quality housing	Insecure jobs	Rural and urban	Struggle

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A picture of rural hardship in 2023



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Hidden hardship project overview

- Aim:** To understand the experiences of people in hardship in the rural North Cotswolds
- Why?** Research into poverty has focused on urban areas more than rural areas. However, we can't assume that what happens in urban areas also happens in rural areas.
- So what?** The research will inform individual, voluntary sector and government responses to hardship with resources including a travelling public exhibition, a report for policymakers, and academic research papers.



Credit: Beth Waters and Hidden Hardship

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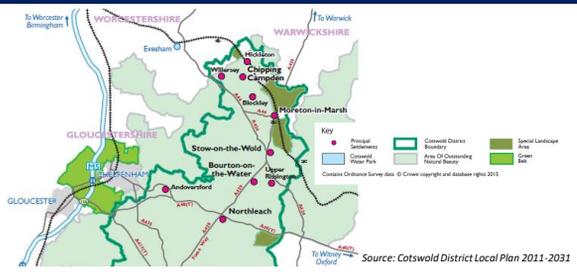
The Cotswolds



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The North Cotswolds



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Affluence and inequality

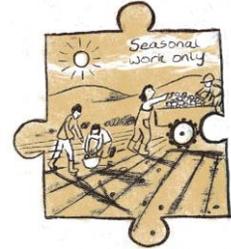


Credit: Beth Waters and Hidden Hardship

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Hidden hardship research methodology

- Participatory research with local people in the North Cotswolds:
 - Rural town, and nearby village
 - Stage 1: Time at community groups, plus 22 interviews
 - Stage 2 in progress: Go-along interviews and diaries



Credit: Beth Waters and Hidden Hardship

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Initial findings: hardship as struggle

- What is hardship? – struggle and tough times

“Gosh, just a struggle with life. Hardship is life is tough... Hardship is you've got very few resources, very little infrastructure around you, and practically no safety net that you get in an urban inner-city environment.”

“Not just money. The hardship of living in isolation, not knowing where to go to turn to. That's a hardship.”



Credit: Beth Waters and Hidden Hardship

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Initial findings: hardship as struggle



Credit: Beth Waters and Hidden Hardship

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Initial findings: navigating hardship

- Local groups for support including:
 - Advice services
 - Foodbank
 - Social prescribers
 - Community spaces
 - Employment support
 - Parish churches
 - Question of access and transport
- Family and friends
 - Informal support networks
 - For support, and for inspiration/perseverance
 - Stigma



Credit: Beth Waters and Hidden Hardship

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Initial findings: navigating hardship

“I have friends who are in a similar boat and we just help each other... In my house, I was given off one of my mates, a stand up freezer. So, I actually have that in a room in my house which is, **we call it our help yourself freezer**. So, one drawer has all my gluten free stuff, one drawer, my friend has, and then the rest of the drawers are help yourself. So, any of my neighbours or my friends who need stuff will... my friend knocked on the door the other Sunday, she needed a chicken for roast, and we've got them. One of my friends works at Aldi, so when she does a late shift, any of the meat that is going out, she grabs at 75% off and then she just fills the freezer. So, it's just creating... **we're all in the same boat. We all need to help each other.**”

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Find out more

- Visit the Hidden Hardship website - <https://hiddenhardship.coventry.ac.uk/>
- Sign up to the Hidden Hardship blog
- Resources on the website later this year
- Visit the Hidden Hardship Exhibition at Coventry Cathedral, January to February 2024



Credit: Beth Waters and Hidden Hardship