

ECONOMIC (IN)JUSTICE

FACTSHEET - EXPLAINER

Name	Dr. Charlotte MacPherson
Details, area of experience	Working with Kings College London on a project that looks at barriers to young people's opportunities.
Interview date	November 2020
Issues addressed	Young people's opportunities and futures, the gig economy and insecure working, socio-economic inequalities, The Equalities Trust and its Young Equalities Campaigners: https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/young-equality-campaigners https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/news/hackney-hosts-hard-hitting-youth-art-seventeen-gallery
Injustice category (linked to economic injustice)	ability <input type="checkbox"/> age <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> class <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> faith <input type="checkbox"/> gender <input type="checkbox"/> neuro-diversity <input type="checkbox"/> race <input type="checkbox"/> sexuality <input type="checkbox"/>
Key words	Young people Just society Equality of opportunity Fairness Billionaires & destitution Gig economy Neoliberal economics Living wage

Brief summary (key points)	Dr. Charlotte MacPherson explains the power of rhetoric that blames people for their own poverty and structural injustices. She
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focuses on the links between low wages, insecure work and food poverty experienced by young people. In our podcast series, she explores what an economically just society looks like.

What would an economically just society look like?

An economically just society is about equality of opportunity and being able to access a decent life. The structure of society needs to support this and requires a good social security system, social policy and the redistribution of wealth. The UK is seen to have this, with the most salient example being a purportedly meritocratic education system. However this is not the case and the UK is “ravaged” with inequalities.

Gig economy and working practices

The gig economy means that workers are no longer employed on a contract, but on one-off ‘gigs’ such as an Uber driver being paid for a drive. People are paid on the amount of tasks that they do, akin to piece work. There is flexibility in this working practice but not much protections or guaranteed income that can leave people feeling stressed and insecure. Young people are particularly impacted by this type of working.

History of economic injustice

Economic justice in the UK has a history. Deindustrialisation has had an impact on people’s access to life-long jobs. People are less likely to have secure jobs for life, instead they have insecure employment on zero hours contracts. This is leading to in-work poverty being at a record high in the UK as people struggle to make ends meet. Neoliberal policy has also had an impact by creating a narrative that people are personally responsible for the situation in which they find themselves. This puts pressure on individuals while ignoring external events such as rising house prices and food costs and cuts to social security and tax breaks for the rich.

Food banks and the young

There is a rise in young people who are in work who are accessing food banks because their wages are insufficient to meet the costs of living. The wages don’t meet the need because there is not enough hours being given to the young people.

The living wage

The need for a living wage and young people accessing it. It is important to have a real living wage for young people, rather than the inadequate minimum wage that assumes the young can live in the parental home and have their income boosted by their parents. This is not always the case and some are facing the same living expenses as adults and those post-25 on the living wage.

Stand-out quotations	<p>“The sense I get from my research is that young people are not experiencing social justice in the UK and that is not acceptable.”</p> <p>“The gig economy is one of several ways in which young people are disadvantaged in the labour market.”</p> <p>“Poverty and economic injustice are structural problems, they are not personal problems.”</p> <p>“Young people don’t tend to experience economic justice ... they are culturally devalued as having a poor work ethic.”</p>
Main themes for learners	<p>What makes a society just and is the UK one?</p> <p>What effects will Covid-19 have on people already experiencing poverty?</p> <p>What is work like today for young people? (the gig economy and how it impacts workers and young people; and the living wage)</p> <p>Economic justice in the UK has a history and a language (deindustrialisation and the gig economy; neoliberal policy and personal responsibility).</p> <p>Why are young working people accessing food banks?</p> <p>Economic injustice, the young and cultural devaluation: thinking about economic injustice holistically (Nancy Fraser’s theory and social justice).</p>

<https://www.economicinjustice.org.uk>