

These are field notes from the interviews. The interviews themselves are not made publicly available as they contain information that makes it possible to identify participants.

1. Digital-by-default is damaging

- Cuts off claimants and puts up invisibilized barriers for people.
- Expects people to have access to computers and to be able to understand digital services
- Shifts responsibility from the state onto the individual by expecting them to make sense of digital language
- Created a hostile ground for people who don't understand technology, a "digital workhouse" for people who get trapped in the online application system
- "British welfare state is gradually disappearing behind a webpage and an algorithm, with significant implications for those living in poverty."
- Nationwide digital experiment that has used people living in poverty as guinea pigs
- Particularly disadvantages women, older people, people who do not speak English and persons with disabilities
- Erases the many households which are effectively offline
- This demonstrates the disconnect between government and claimants, it is both presumed that people will have online access and that, if not, they will be able to access it through local services...despite the cuts that have been made to libraries etc.

2. Compassion VS callousness

- Carving out the heart of the public sector, to emphasize individuality and autonomy
- Strength in community towards resilient individualism
- This was "damaging the fabric" of British society and eroding its sense of community.
- Low-income families have been left significantly worse off by universal credit, meaning that they feel 'left behind' by the state
- 'Every person for themselves' → stripped back the safety net of welfare and left claimants vulnerable and 'exposed' to harsh/'real' of life
- As such, shifted altruistic foundations of the welfare state towards atomistic understandings of individuality
- Positions the claimant is entitled for seeking help from the welfare state
- Responsibility from welfare as a collective support network to individual 'strength' and 'work ethic'
- The government blames the media for 'scaremongering,' but UC has left thousands of vulnerable claimants penniless, while others starve and even lose their homes

3. Efficiency and simplicity are political

- The notion of 'simplifying' the welfare state is political because it treats the digital design as 'clean' and 'free' from the messy/complicated systems that came before it. And by messy, it means systems overlooking feminized labour as a form of work. 'Simplifying' welfare to include a very narrow understanding of how we conceptualise work.
- "It is hard to believe now, but universal credit was designed to lift people out of poverty and smooth the transition into work to ensure that it always pays."
- Smoothness is understood as eradicating these 'messy' forms of labour that aren't paid work, yet, lead to 'messier' outcomes such as homelessness and in-work poverty

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