

# How do social workers talk about poverty and how should they?

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# Research question: What aspects of poverty are negotiated through talk and how?

- 6 recordings of child protection home visits
- English social work practice
- Small sample size
- Poverty defined as indicators of relative deprivation

# Finding: Talk about poverty is functional and is resisted during home visits

T1  
1 F: I've basically got about a month? (.) before they tell me and then I'll have about  
2 6 weeks to get out (1.5) you know  
3 SW: [yep yep]  
4 so what I agreed to do is to write a supporting letter in relation to housing (.) yeah  
5 F: they don't<sup>↑</sup> they ignore it (1.5) I've had it off heart surgeon's everybody  
6 no no they will not take that correspondence into consideration for housing?  
7 SW: no  
8 F: that's the way the (name) govern er (.) council are  
9 SW: °okay°  
10 F: so you go there and you've got all this proof that >you're ill and they go well that's  
11 got nothing to do with the points< (1) so therefore you're not getting that property  
12 SW: [hmm] [°hmm°]  
13 F: and that's? the way they work?  
14 SW: But yeah so that's what I'm saying in terms of the purpose of wh:y (.) I'm here today  
15 and why I'm asking you uh other questions because (.) what I'm saying is we spoke  
16 about the the alcohol the concerns about your drinking but also I am then (.) have  
17 F: [yep]  
18 SW: to look at how they are doing in school how they are doing at ↓home

Finding: Talk about poverty is sequential – risk first, poverty later  
Risk and poverty approached as separate issues

T4

- 1 M: I'm fed up of running and I'm fed up of being frightened (.) I just want to live my life
- 2 SW: of course which I think you are doing well (1.5) you're actually managing it a lot
- 3 better than most people would
- 4 M: ["this time I feel different"]
- 5 SW: What's happening about housing↑

# Workshop questions:

- I. Why were practitioners working in this way?  
Group discussion.

2. Would there be better ways of working with these families? See case study.