A qualitative investigation into the experiences of workers in the hospitality sector in Scotland

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FAIR WORK CONVENTION

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Contents

Executive Summary

This research examines experiences of fair work in the hospitality industry in Scotland. The research was conducted by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) on behalf of the Fair Work Convention. The project involved semi-structured interviews with 30 hospitality workers and the analysis of video diaries completed by 14 hospitality workers.

The report focuses on the perspectives and lived experiences of hospitality workers. In particular, it explores the impacts of precarious work, low pay and poor working conditions on the physical, mental and social well-being of those working in the hospitality industry. It also looks at how these experiences have been adversely affected by recent social and political events, particularly COVID-19, Brexit, industry-wide staff shortages and the cost-of-living crisis. The research presents a diversity of voices and experiences, including those of women, workers with recent histories of migration to Scotland and workers in rural and island locations in Scotland; many of whom face a unique set of challenges in the hospitality industry. The report additionally explores positive experiences of work among hospitality workers, relating particularly to their everyday relationships with customers and with co-workers. Finally, the report looks at workers' views and experiences of progression and training as well as communication and voice in the workplace.

It is worth noting that while many of the workers in our sample have had difficult experiences in the hospitality sector, we also spoke to people who reported enjoying their work and experiencing good working conditions. This suggests that experiences of fair work may vary considerably across the sector. We recognise that this study is based on a relatively small sample of hospitality workers. In the conclusion to the report, therefore, we suggest where further research could usefully explore the nature and extent of certain experiences across the sector.

The findings of our study, across ten different themes, are summarised below.

1. Findings on working hours

Precarious working hours can have detrimental impacts on the financial, personal, and social well-being of hospitality workers.

Our research illustrates the significant impact that precarious working hours can have on the well-being of hospitality workers. Specifically, our research provides numerous examples of workers who were unable to plan when or how much they would be working from week to week. These problems were most acute for those on zero-hours contracts although they could also occur for some on part-time and full-time contracts, who reported that their working hours and shift patterns could vary significantly on a weekly or even daily basis. These uncertainties created financial insecurity and hardship for some workers, as well as experiences of social and personal hardship, given that they were unable to plan or invest time in social relationships and valued past-times outside work.

Zero-hours contracts work best for people who require flexibility, who see their jobs as temporary or secondary to other work, and who can rely on alternative sources of income.

Our research provides examples of hospitality workers who reported valuing the flexibility afforded to them by working in the hospitality industry, typically because they were students, carers, or working full-time in other sectors. Many of these workers told us that they valued the fact that zero-hours contracts allowed them to vary their hours on a weekly basis, depending on their availability. However, these workers also stressed that their working patterns were acceptable to them either only on a short-term basis or as long as they could depend on other sources of income, such as through student loans, other jobs, or family members.

Workers on zero-hours contracts can often feel pressured to accept unwanted hours, particularly within the context of staff shortages.

While many hospitality workers valued the flexibility afforded to them by zero-hours contracts, some of these workers simultaneously found that they were often unable to utilise this flexibility. Our research provides examples of hospitality workers on zero-hours contracts who felt under pressure to accept more hours than they wished to work, often due to concerns that refusing work would reduce their capacity to obtain work in the future. Some workers also reported feeling obligated to accept hours in order to reduce the stress of managers or co-workers, particularly in the context of staff shortages. We provide examples of how this pressure to accept work could negatively impact on the ability of some workers to fulfil their responsibilities outside of their work, such as family responsibilities.

Working long and anti-social hours can detrimentally impact the physical and mental health of hospitality workers.

Our research provides examples of hospitality workers who reported routinely working long hours – often as much as 80 or 90 hours per week. Some workers also reported working for weeks at a time, without any time off. These research participants were typically, but not exclusively, chefs or workers at management level. Some workers reported being paid for all these hours, while others were not. Those on annualised salaries were least likely to be paid for overtime. Many of these workers reported experiencing chronic tiredness, stress and reduced productivity as a result of long hours, as well as detrimental impacts on their relationships with family and friends.

Hospitality workers can appreciate working anti-social hours, such as evenings, nights and weekends, as it allows them the flexibility to fulfil other responsibilities, for example as students, carers, or workers in other sectors. However, hospitality workers also reported similar negative effects with anti-social hours as with long hours, such as stress, tiredness, reduced productivity, an inability to spend time with family and friends, and, in some cases, experiences of depression.

2. Findings on pay

Hospitality workers may be particularly likely to feel that their pay is unfair if they are routinely asked to carry out responsibilities beyond their pay grade. Similarly, workers may view their pay as unfair if they feel that they are using skills and experience for which they are not being adequately remunerated.

Our research provides examples of hospitality workers who were routinely performing managerial or other additional responsibilities for which they were not adequately remunerated. These workers typically reported feeling that their pay was unfair. Workers who felt that they had skills or experiences that contributed to their performance, but for which they were not remunerated, also expressed sentiments that their pay was unfair.

While the majority of our research participants reported being paid accurately and in accordance with the law, this report provides examples of hospitality workers who have experienced a variety of unfair and illegal practices around pay. Such practices can result in employees feeling anxiety and distrust in relation to their current employers, even when these negative experiences had occurred in previous jobs.

A number of the hospitality workers in our sample reported having had negative experiences around pay, most of which had occurred in previous hospitality jobs. These experiences included: not being paid accurately for hours worked; the withholding of holiday or sick pay; deductions to their pay that were deemed as unfair; failures to distribute service charges; and being paid ‘off the books’ in cash. Other workers told us that they had not experienced these practices directly but that they believed them to be fairly common in the hospitality industry in general.

Many hospitality workers who had had negative experiences reported sentiments of distrust or anxiety in relation to their employers, even when these negative experiences had occurred with previous employers. These concerns could manifest in certain behaviours, such as always recording their hours and checking their payslips, or asking to see a record of service charges. Such concerns could also contribute to more general sentiments of dissatisfaction in the workplace and to the desire to move jobs, including leaving the hospitality sector entirely.

Workers on zero-hours contracts may show a poor understanding of their rights around holiday and sick pay.

Many of the workers in our sample on zero-hours contracts reported not receiving holiday or sick pay and being confused about their rights in relation to these. Moreover, some of those who had received holiday pay reported that this occurred only when they had requested it from their employers.

3. Findings on working conditions

Hospitality workers can experience their work as physically demanding, particularly due to the requirement to stand for long periods of time. Some hospitality workers can also find their work mentally demanding, and at times stressful, due to the need to deliver high-quality service under pressure.

Many of the hospitality workers in our sample complained of experiencing pain in their back or in their feet, particularly due to the requirement to stand for long periods of time. We also spoke to hospitality workers who had experienced injuries and developed long-term health conditions which they attributed to prolonged periods of standing. Many hospitality workers additionally reported experiencing general physical fatigue or even exhaustion after their shifts. Some of the chefs that we interviewed reported additional physical challenges, such as working in hot kitchens and suffering from injuries due to repetitive actions or heavy lifting.

Hospitality workers who reported finding their work mentally or emotionally demanding typically attributed this to the demands of customer service, particularly the need to deliver high-quality and efficient service under pressure.

Regular breaks can help hospitality workers cope with the physical and mental demands of their work. However, hospitality workers may have limited flexibility as to when they take their breaks, or may not take any at all, despite working long shifts.

While many of the hospitality workers in our sample reported that regular breaks helped them to manage the physical and mental demands of their work, many simultaneously reported either not taking breaks, or having limited flexibility as to when they took them. They typically attributed this to venues being busy or to staff shortages. Most workers who did take breaks reported having to enforce these themselves, as opposed to breaks being enforced by supervisors or managers.

4. Findings on relationships with customers

Interactions with customers can be a significant source of job satisfaction – and of meaning and purpose – for hospitality workers.
Most of the hospitality workers in our sample reported that interactions with customers were the best part of their jobs. They described these interactions as enjoyable and energising and, in some cases, as providing a sense of greater meaning and purpose to their work.

Hospitality workers may also find interactions with customers demanding and stressful, particularly when customers complain, when they are drunk, or when they are abusive.

Most of the hospitality workers in our sample reported having had experienced distress caused by their customers. They highlighted three particular types of situations that could be particularly difficult: dealing with drunk customers, dealing

with customers' complaints, and dealing with customers that were physically or verbally abusive.

Women working in the hospitality industry may be particularly vulnerable to experiencing abuse and harassment from customers.

Our research highlights examples of women who have experienced sexual harassment from customers in the workplace. It also highlights examples of hospitality workers who have witnessed this behaviour from customers towards women colleagues. Further research is needed to ascertain the extent and nature of these experiences in the sector.

5. Findings on relationships with co-workers

Relationships with co-workers can be central to job fulfilment and satisfaction for hospitality workers.

Most of the hospitality workers in our study reported having close relationships with co-workers, often likening these relationships to friendships or even family relationships. These relationships were a central aspect of these workers' enjoyment and satisfaction in their work.

Hospitality workers who work in restaurants, kitchens or other high-pressure environments may feel particularly vulnerable to experiences of bullying from managers.

A number of the hospitality workers in our sample reported experiencing or witnessing bullying or difficult behaviour from managers, albeit to different degrees. Chefs and those who worked with chefs were particularly likely to report that verbal abuse was commonplace in restaurant kitchens, although some workers believed that this had improved in recent years. Some workers in other, non-kitchen contexts also expressed the view that the pressures of delivering good customer service on time contributed to bullying and abusive behaviours among senior staff across the hospitality sector. Given these provisional findings, further research is needed to ascertain the nature and extent of these experiences among hospitality workers in different environments.

Hospitality workers in our sample often changed jobs frequently. We identified a number of different factors leading to high turnover in the hospitality industry, such as relationships with supervisors, working conditions, hours and pay. One of the most common themes was that workers often used the ability to move jobs as a strategy to deal with bad treatment, such as bullying and harassment.

6. Findings on communication in the workplace

An absence of formal avenues for communication in the workplace, in combination with low expectations around progression, may contribute to a lack of effective voice among workers in the hospitality industry.

Many of the hospitality workers in our sample expressed a sense that they did not see a role for their views and opinions on how things were run in the workplace. This was particularly common among workers who saw their jobs as temporary or secondary to other jobs or commitments. It is also noteworthy that most of these workers reported having no or irregular formal avenues for communication with managers or supervisors, such as meetings or appraisals.

The ability to advocate for oneself is seen as vital by some hospitality workers for avoiding experiences of exploitation in the industry.

Self-advocacy emerged as a theme in relation to several different topics in our research. In particular, some hospitality workers emphasised that in order to ensure good working conditions, pay and hours in the industry, it was important to learn about one's rights and to defend one's rights during interactions with employers. These hospitality workers typically saw this sort of knowledge and confidence as something that they developed through experience in the industry over time, as well as something that came with greater personal financial security. It could also be affected by their migration status and confidence in the English language. The nature of their relationship with their employer may well also be a factor, although interestingly our research suggests that it cannot be assumed that employees with a close and trusting relationship with their employers are any more likely to advocate for themselves than those with a difficult or conflictual relationship. The research found examples of hospitality workers who acknowledged the stress or financial struggles of their employers, and did therefore not want to cause tension due to their good relationship.

Other workers felt that there should be more external, independent support and advice available to hospitality workers. Trade unions could be a potential support mechanism, but most of our research participants were not members of a union, often because they had not considered it or were aware of options for hospitality unions.

7. Findings on progression and training

Precarious working hours, low pay, and experiences of working long and anti-social hours can affect workers' wishes for progression within the hospitality industry.

When discussing progression opportunities, the hospitality workers in our study often cited low pay and precarious working hours as a reason for not pursuing progression opportunities within the sector or as a reason for seeing their hospitality work as temporary or secondary to jobs in other sectors.

Our research also provides examples of hospitality workers who had chosen to take jobs with less responsibility, lower pay, and less secure hours than in their previous jobs because they felt that they were less likely to be expected to work long, unpaid hours in these more insecure working arrangements.

The hospitality industry is seen by some workers as offering good and fair opportunities for progression, both in terms of income and skills.

While some of the hospitality workers in our sample expressed little desire to progress in the industry, others stated that they saw significant opportunities for progression in the industry. This was particularly the case among chefs, managers and those working with specialist produce, such as wine or coffee. Some of these workers also expressed a sense that the industry worked on 'meritocratic principles' insofar as experience, hard work, and skills were more important for progression than social background or qualifications.

Opportunities to improve skills and qualifications can positively impact on sentiments of job satisfaction and the desire to stay in the industry among hospitality workers.

While the majority of workers in our sample had received little formal training, our research also provides examples of workers who have pursued more formal qualifications and training experiences, either independently or facilitated by their employers. These were typically chefs, those working at managerial level, or those working with specialist produce, such as wine or coffee. These workers cited this training as improving their sense of satisfaction in their current workplace and as a motivating factor for staying in the industry.

By contrast, other hospitality workers in our sample cited a lack of interest in pursuing training: this was typically either because they saw their work as temporary or secondary to their work in other industries, or because it was because they felt that their existing experience in the industry was adequate to perform their current job.

8. Findings on social and political contexts

The COVID-19 pandemic placed additional pressures on some hospitality workers and has led some to question their future in the industry.

Our research suggests that the pandemic has placed additional pressures on some hospitality workers. For most of the workers in our sample, the pandemic had some or all of the following impacts: it created or worsened financial hardship; added to anxiety and uncertainty about future work prospects; created extra demands in the workplace, particularly in terms of managing customers; and contributed to staff shortages, which again created additional stressors and pressures. Some of our participants reported feeling less certain about their own future in the hospitality industry as a result of the pandemic, as they felt the pandemic had highlighted the uncertainties involved in being dependent on hospitality work for a regular income.

Hospitality workers typically see staff shortages as having contributed to a worsening in their working conditions, although some also believe that they have forced employers to raise standards.

Almost all of the participants that we interviewed had observed that their workplaces and/or the industry as a whole were experiencing significant staff shortages. Many of these participants linked staff shortages to the COVID-19 pandemic and its after-effects, although many also saw them as a product of Brexit as well as longer-term

issues with recruitment and retention in the hospitality industry due to poor working conditions and low pay.

Most participants reported that staff shortages had made their working conditions worse, particularly in terms of having to work longer or unwanted hours, feeling under increased pressure in the workplace, and being unable to take adequate breaks. Some participants, however, reported anecdotal observations that standards in the industry were improving as employers seek to recruit and retain more staff.

9. Findings on migrant workers

People with recent histories of migration may feel particularly vulnerable to exploitation around pay and/or hours.

Our research provides examples of hospitality workers who have migrated within the last ten years from countries in eastern Europe and who reported feeling particularly vulnerable to exploitation within the industry because of their position as migrants. These workers attributed this sense of vulnerability both to the exploitative or prejudiced attitudes of certain employers, as well as to a sense that they cannot – or could not in the past – advocate for themselves, due to poor English language skills or a poor understanding of the legal and ethical norms in the industry.

People with histories of migration can experience racist abuse in the hospitality industry, both from co-workers and from customers.

Our research shows that migrants working in the hospitality industry may experience abuse based on their skin colour and/or their accents, both from customers and from co-workers. Such experiences can contribute to feelings of anxiety and being unsafe in the workplace, and feelings of frustration and anger at being unfairly treated. However, not all of the migrant workers that we interviewed reported these experiences. Further research is needed to establish the extent of such experiences in the hospitality industry, and why some workers may be more vulnerable to abuse than others.

10. Findings on working in rural areas

Hospitality workers in rural areas can face a unique set of challenges.
Hospitality workers in rural or island locations in Scotland reported particular challenges relating to these locations. In particular, they talked about an inability to find affordable accommodation, which meant they often had to either commute long distances or live in staff accommodation, both of which could detrimentally impact on their family and social lives outside work. This could also mean that these workers were more likely to see their jobs as temporary, as they felt they would be unable to settle in the area in the long-term. Workers in rural areas also expressed concerns that they were more vulnerable to experiencing the negative consequences of staff shortages and price rises.

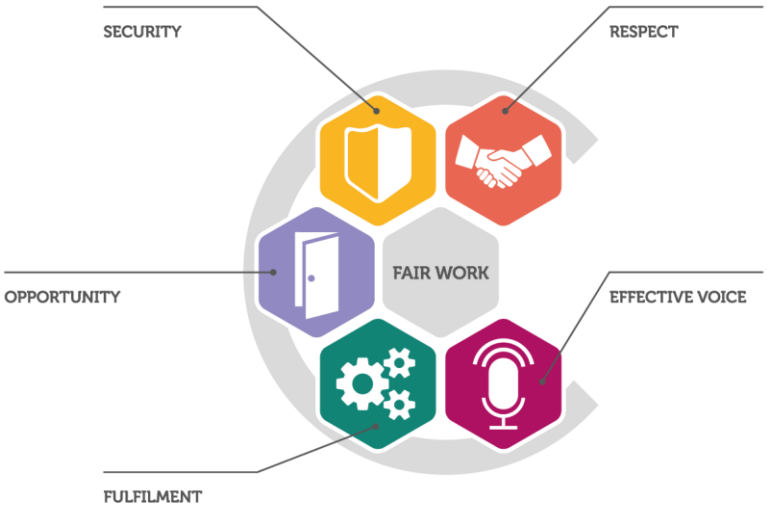
Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

This report examines experiences of fair work in the hospitality sector in Scotland. The hospitality industry has been one of the sectors most affected by lockdowns and government restrictions due to COVID-19, as well as by Brexit. ONS data shows large variations in monthly turnover in revenue across the hospitality industry throughout the pandemic (ONS, 2021) and data from HMRC shows that hospitality was one of the sectors with the highest number of workers on furlough, both in Scotland and across the UK. Moreover, hospitality employers now face significant labour shortages. Hospitality has one of the largest numbers of job vacancies in the UK and the largest increase in vacancies since the start of the pandemic compared to any other sector (ONS, 2022). There have been various attempts to address these labour shortages in the sector, for instance last summer when the Scottish Government (2021) launched an advertising campaign to encourage people to choose a career in the tourism and hospitality industry.

A Hospitality Inquiry has been established by the Fair Work Convention, an independent body that advises the Scottish Government on advancing fair work for all in Scotland. Broadly, the inquiry will assess the extent to which work in the industry can be described as fair work. Consideration will be given to each of the dimensions of fair work, as defined by the Fair Work Convention (see Figure 1 below): effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment, and respect. An Inquiry Group, comprising representatives from the Fair Work Convention, employers, workers, national bodies engaged in the industry, and trade unions, will: assess relevant evidence, consult stakeholders, identify key issues and actions, consider feasible interventions, and develop recommendations for Ministers and the industry. A review of the available literature covering topics of importance under each of the five dimensions (Fair Work Convention, 2022) provided an initial base of evidence for consideration by the Inquiry Group and guided the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry. The Fair Work Convention has also commissioned the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) to undertake this study, to add to this evidence base and extend the Inquiry Group's understanding of the varied lived experiences among workers in the hospitality industry.

Figure 1: Fair Work Convention Framework that defines fair work as work that offers individuals effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment, and respect.



This study contributes to the Inquiry Group's understanding of lived experiences among workers in the hospitality industry. It involved semi-structured interviews with 30 hospitality workers and the analysis of video diaries completed by 14 hospitality workers. The report focuses on the perspectives and lived experiences of hospitality workers. In particular, it explores the impacts of precarious work, low pay and poor working conditions on the physical, mental and social well-being of those working in the hospitality industry. It also looks at how these experiences have been adversely affected by recent social and political events, particularly COVID-19, Brexit, industry-wide staff shortages and the cost-of-living crisis. The research presents a diversity of voices and experiences, including those of women, workers with recent histories of migration to Scotland and workers in rural and island locations in Scotland; many of whom face a unique set of challenges in the hospitality industry. The report additionally explores positive experiences of work among hospitality workers, relating particularly to their everyday relationships with customers and with co-workers. Finally, the report looks at workers' views and experiences on progression and training.

1.2 Methodology

We carried out the fieldwork between May and July 2022. It involved semi-structured interviews with 30 hospitality workers and video diaries with 14 hospitality workers, four of whom were also interviewed. Therefore, there are a total of 40 unique participants in our sample.

The interviews were carried out by telephone or video and lasted around 45 minutes each. The video diaries varied in length and depth: ten of the diaries involved six days of entries, which was the target initially set for the length of the diaries. Four diaries involved less than five entries due to participants not completing the process. Participants were asked to upload a short video each day, talking about the best and worst aspects of their day at work, and various other key themes relating to their day. They were completed over a two-week period using an online video diary software called Vurvey. All participants were paid £40 for their participation. The interview topic guides and video diary design can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B.

All interviews were conducted in English with the exception of one interview, which was conducted in Spanish by one of the authors of this report who is fluent in Spanish. The interview was translated and transcribed by this researcher. Four of the video diary participants were selected for interview after the completion of their diary: this was because they had had experiences that we believed would be best explored in more depth in an interview.

We used a variety of different methods to recruit hospitality workers in order to achieve a diverse sample. First, we used a professional recruitment company (MRFGR). This was the primary recruitment method for the interview participants, 22 of whom were recruited using this method. Secondly, we contacted 2400 employers in the hospitality sector in Scotland via a database of employers called Market Location. We asked employers to circulate information about the research to their employees. Similarly, we asked two organisations working with migrants in Scotland to forward the information to their members. Finally, we recruited a small number of hospitality workers using a 'snowball technique': this involved asking workers that we interviewed to circulate details of our research project to their colleagues and friends. Interested participants were asked to contact us directly and to complete a brief 'screening' survey to collect demographic information. For the video diaries and remaining interviews, we selected participants who fulfilled our target criteria for sampling. These targets included a particular focus on migrant workers, workers in rural areas, and workers on zero-hours contracts, as determined by evidence gaps identified by the Fair Work Convention for their Hospitality Inquiry (see Table 1 below for the full sample composition).

All the names of hospitality workers used in this report are pseudonyms in order to protect the privacy of research participants. In some cases, we have also changed the job titles, ages, and other characteristics of employees, while ensuring that we retain the overall integrity of the data by choosing descriptions that reflect the overall social structures identified in the research.

Throughout the report, we include a number of case studies, referred to as 'worker stories': these are in-depth explorations of the experiences of a single hospitality worker. These workers were chosen and interviewed in the same manner as the other research participants, with the exception of one case study, who completed a video diary rather than an interview. Case studies were chosen not necessarily for their representativeness of all workers in our sample but, rather, for their capacity to shed light in a detailed and nuanced manner on certain experiences among workers in the sector.

Table 1 provides an overview of the sample in terms of different demographic characteristics.

Table 1. Number and proportion of research participants, by different groups

Gender		
Men	20	(50%)
Women	20	(50%)
Age		
18-24	7	(18%)
25-34	13	(33%)
35-49	12	(30%)
50+	8	(20%)
Job types		
Chef (head chef, sous chef or commis chef)	8	(20%)
Coffee shops/cafes (baristas or waiting staff)	7	(18%)
Bar tenders (pubs or bars)	8	(20%)
Hotel managers	3	(8%)
Hotels (housekeeping or reception staff)	3	(8%)
Restaurant (waiting staff)	5	(13%)
Restaurant manager	1	(3%)
Events catering (waiting staff)	3	(8%)
Security guard	1	(3%)
Take-away front of house	1	(3%)
Contract types		
Zero-hour contracts (directly with employer)[1]	12	(30%)
Agency workers (app-based only)[2]	3	(8%)
Other agency workers	2	(5%)
Full-time contracts	11	(28%)
Part-time contracts	11	(28%)
Self-employed/freelance	1	(3%)
Hospitality workers with jobs in other industries	**4**	**(10%)**
Full-time	3	(8%)
Part-time	1	(3%)
Students	**9**	**(23%)**
Undergraduate students	6	(15%)
Diplomas or vocational courses relevant to hospitality	3	(8%)
People working in rural location, currently or in last 5 years	**11**	**(28%)**
Hotels	6	(15%)
Coffee shops, bars or pubs	3	(8%)
Restaurants	2	(5%)
People with managerial responsibilities	**10**	**(25%)**
Housekeeping supervisor	1	(3%)
Hotel manager	3	(8%)
Bar manager	1	(3%)
Coffee shop supervisors/managers	3	(8%)
Restaurant manager	1	(3%)
Head chef	1	(3%)
Migrants to Scotland within last 10-15 years	**15**	**(38%)**
Hungary	3	(8%)

[1] We note that there is currently no legal definition of a zero-hours contract. We have adopted the following definition provided by the CIPD: “an agreement between two parties that one may be asked to perform work for the other but there is no set minimum number of hours. The contract will provide what pay the individual will get if he or she does work and will deal with the circumstances in which work may be offered (and, possibly, turned down). " For full publication, see: CIPD. 2021. *Zero-hours contracts: understanding the law*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
[2] These workers used apps to apply and receive shifts in hospitality work. The app ‘gig’ is one example of the type of app used by these workers.

Romania	2	(5%)
Nepal	1	(3%)
Poland	3	(8%)
Australia	1	(3%)
Hong Kong	1	(3%)
Estonia	1	(3%)
Finland	1	(3%)
Republic of Ireland	1	(3%)
Spain	1	(3%)

For context, Table 2 provides an overview of some characteristics of the hospitality workforce in Scotland as a whole based on publicly available data.

Table 2. Scottish Hospitality Industry Characteristics

Gender		
Men	73,700	46.3%
Women	85,400	53.7%
Age		
16-24	52,500	33.0%
25-34	38,100	23.9%
35- 49	36,100	22.7%
50 and over	32,500	20.4%
Other Equalities Characteristics		
Those who are from minority ethnic groups (as % of all employed in sector)	14,300	9.0%
Those who are Equality Act Disabled (as % of all employed in sector)	22,000	14.3%
Occupational Skill Level		
Level 1 (Equates to a competence associated with a general education and may require short periods of work-related training)	78,800	49.6%
Level 2 (Requires a good general level of education but with a longer period of work experience than required for Level 1 occupations)	29,600	18.6%
Level 3 (Associated with vocational training or a qualification below degree-level and/or a significant period of work experience)	45,400	28.6%
Level 4 (Typically requires a degree qualification or equivalent period of work experience)	5,300	3.3%
Employment Characteristics		
Those who are Self-employed (as % of all employed in sector)	14,300	9.0%
Those who are Part-time (as % of all employed in sector)	76,200	47.9%
Employment by Nationality Group		
UK	128,900	81.0%
EU	23,400	14.7%
Non-EU	6,800	4.3%
Urban Rural Classification (% of total Scottish employment)		
1 Large Urban Areas	84,300	43.7%
2 Other Urban Areas	53,120	27.5%
3 Accessible Small Towns	12,020	6.2%
4 Remote Small Towns	8,130	4.2%
5 Accessible Rural	17,990	9.3%
6 Remote Rural	17,380	9.0%

Sources: Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2020. Businesses in Scotland, 2021. Employment - Business Register and Employment Survey 2020; Businesses - Inter-Departmental Business Register 2021.

Strengths and limitations of the data

The evidence in this report is based on qualitative research that is not – and does not set out to be – representative of the wider population. Instead, the research has focused on generating in-depth insights on the lived experiences of 40 hospitality workers, through collecting data using semi-structured interviews and video diaries.

In creating this sample of hospitality workers, we selected workers with a range of different job types, levels of responsibility, and pay, working in a range of different subsectors within hospitality across Scotland. This sampling strategy allowed us to explore a breadth of experiences within these sectors and to look for both commonalities and differences between different types of workers. Moreover, by conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews, we were able to generate detailed and textured data on the experiences and perspectives of our interviewees. Semi-structured interviews also ensure that data collection is led by the participants' priorities and views, rather than by any prior assumptions of the interviewer. This has allowed us to generate recommendations that we believe will benefit many hospitality workers in similar situations, including for the UK as a whole.

Our research is not, however, intended to be representative of all hospitality workers. We note, for example, that we oversampled migrant and rural workers, as this was an evidence gap identified by the Fair Work Convention. However, we only interviewed one person of colour. Similarly, experiences of disability, and experiences around gender and sexual identity, were not explored in any depth in the research. We anticipate that hospitality workers' experiences will be significantly affected by these intersecting identities. Unfortunately, however, an in-depth exploration of these issues was beyond the scope of this research project. We also note that there is a vast variety of job roles and subsectors within the hospitality industry, not all of which were captured within our sample. For this reason, we would encourage that further research explores the applicability of our findings to workers in other subsectors in hospitality, such as those excluded from this research, including food delivery drivers.

Finally, it is important to note that the research is designed to understand the experiences of a sample of hospitality workers at one point in time – in 2022. This period saw high rises in the cost of living, with inflation at the time of fieldwork around 9%. The sector was also affected by the pandemic, new trading relations with the EU, and labour shortages. While the interviews sometimes covered people's experiences across their working lives, especially as past experiences are often important to understand people's current perspectives, the study does not intend to draw any significant conclusions about past or future cohorts of hospitality workers.

1.3 The report

The report consists of this Introduction plus eight additional chapters. Chapter Two looks at experiences of hours and pay. Chapters Three, Four and Five look respectively at experiences with customers, experiences with co-workers and managers, and experiences around communication and voice in the workplace. Chapter Six looks at experiences of training and progression, followed by Chapter Seven which looks at experiences relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, Brexit, ongoing staff shortages, and the cost-of-living crisis. Chapter Eight explores the perspectives and stories of people working in rural and island locations in Scotland and how these contexts have shaped their experiences of work in the hospitality industry. Finally, Chapter Nine, the conclusion to the report, summarises the findings and explores some of the implications of the research.

Chapter Two: Experiences of hours and pay

This chapter explores experiences of hours and pay among a sample of hospitality workers in Scotland. It begins with a worker story that introduces many of the key themes explored throughout the chapter. The following sections explore the views and perspectives of our sample of hospitality workers, first on their hours and working arrangements, and second on their pay. The chapter also includes three further worker stories.

The themes explored in this chapter address issues relating in particular to the security of workers – one of the five dimensions of fair work as outlined in the Fair Work Convention's Framework.

Workers' Experience of the Hospitality Sector

Worker Profile

Name: Timea

Nationality: Hungarian

Age: 48

Work History: Worked in a secondary school in Hungary. In Scotland, has worked for a decade in hospitality, mainly as a chef.

Residency: EU settled status, Currently lived in a hotel's staff accommodation in a rural location

Takeaway: Has experienced a range of difficult experiences in the industry, including: working long hours that were detrimental to her health and family life; illegal work practices; low pay; racism and sexism; workplace injuries due to poor working practices; and living in tied and unsuitable accommodation in rural areas.

Tímea moved from Hungary to Scotland in 2012. In Hungary she had been working as a receptionist in a secondary school although, following her divorce from her husband, she

decided that her job prospects would be significantly better in the UK than in Hungary. In her words: "I couldn't see any way to maintain myself and support my children on a Hungarian wage."

On arrival in Scotland, Tímea quickly found a job as a cleaner, working largely in restaurants during the night-time, often finishing at around 4am in the morning. At this point, she spoke little English and felt that cleaning work was the only option available to her due to her limited language. In her interview with us, she described the work as "really hard" and "really underpaid", which made her feel "under pressure". She also shared a room with a fellow cleaner, a Romanian woman, which she found difficult given the lack of space and privacy. This job was on a zero-hours

contract, although the majority of her jobs since have been on full-time contracts. After a short period, she moved to a small town in a rural area, taking up a job as a housekeeper in a small hotel, where she also started helping out in the kitchen. This was the start of Tímea's work in kitchens, which she has been doing ever since, albeit often alongside other duties.

After 18 months in this hotel, Tímea moved to England to work as a commis chef in a gastro pub in Reading, which she enjoyed. She described this experience as the first time that she began to experience a "passion" for cooking. However, still being paid minimum wage, she found herself unable to afford rent in Reading. She returned to Scotland, taking up a job in a hotel in a remote location in north-eastern Scotland. Here she worked as a commis chef, a housekeeper, a waitress, and a receptionist, depending on the day in question. She described working long hours in this hotel, without much time off. In the summer season in particular, she would work 13 days in a row, for 12 hours a day, before having one day off and starting another 13 days of work. She described some weeks where she was working over 100 hours a week. She said she was paid a fixed salary for this work, which meant that – if broken down by the hour – she was being paid well-under minimum wage.

Tímea then started a new relationship with a man who lived and worked on an island, resulting in her moving and finding a job there. She worked first for a small venue, where she experienced sexual harassment from the head chef.

She told us:

"I was working there for three weeks and the actual head chef there he was sexually trying to harass me and because he had my number, because he was the head chef, he started to send inappropriate messages as well and it was… I needed to block him and leave the place."

After quickly leaving this job, she obtained a job as a chef in a local venue. She worked here for almost two years, leaving only when she realised that her employer was not paying her adequate holiday pay. She told us that, in total, he held back almost £2000 in holiday pay over the course of her employment. With the help of her next employer, whom she reported as kind and a good friend, she went to ACAS with nine other employees from the golf club and she ended up receiving a settlement of over £1000.

Tímea described this as a "very bad experience" that damaged her confidence in employers in the industry. She told us that, at first, she thought that this employer had felt at liberty to exploit her in this manner because she was a "foreigner". She later changed her view on this when she learned that other employees – who were not migrants – had also not been paid. However, she noted that her employer had originally tried to distract from his actions by trying to convince her that she had misunderstood Scottish law and employment practice. She told us that "at the beginning he acted like, how can I put this, like I'm stupid because…I'm not from here and I know nothing about how holiday payments work." She continued that "thankfully I knew who was the accountant and…she was very nice and kind and she told me everything about how holiday pay works which I

already knew but I needed some encouragement."

It was also during this time that Tímea's relationship with her partner broke down and she had to move out of her partner's flat. While he had been born and raised on the island, she found herself unable to find affordable accommodation. In her words, the island "literally lives on tourism and so I wasn't able to find one single [place to live], not even like a room share, nothing". For this reason, she decided to return to the hotel where she had previously worked, given that she had a good relationship with the employer. She worked in the kitchen and doing housekeeping again, although this time she also took on a second job doing chef work at a small guesthouse, working three nights a week. She described sentiments of guilt about this job: she said it was "not the right thing to do" and "her only black job in the UK", as she was paid in cash that she did not declare.

After a period, she began a new relationship with a man and moved to Edinburgh, where she was still based when we interviewed her. Her first job in the city was in a restaurant that primarily served fried chicken dishes. She was paid a pound above minimum wage, which she described as "already better than any time before". However, she found the working conditions there physically stressful and ultimately untenable, leading her to hand in her notice after only a week. Despite leaving after a week, she told us that she still struggled with pain in her wrists due to the injuries she incurred during this week:

"They put me on the fryers for four days, for 12 hours, with no break. There were three double fryers and five or six kilo of chicken wings needed to be fried, they were very, very heavy and after four days my wrists were thick as my whole underarm because it was so swollen and I barely could move my fingers and I have struggled with my wrists since… it was without breaks and it was extremely hot but it was kind of in a corner with barely any ventilation and a wall from one corner, a shelf behind me and the fryer's in front of me, so there was only one way out….It was physically very hard, I couldn't breathe after a certain time because it was too warm, you didn't get any fresh air. I didn't have food."

Tímea told us that she had had fairly similar experiences with a lack of breaks in her other jobs in the hospitality industry: "I got, kind of, sometimes [got breaks], not every day. But no one ever said to me, okay, you need to go for your break now because you [have been too long] working already".

Following the chicken restaurant, Tímea took a job as a chef in another gastro pub, where she was paid only in cash. After three weeks, she asked for a proper contract and wage, to which the employer flatly refused. Tímea explained to us that she was unwilling to accept this, especially as she now had considerable experience of how demanding chef work could be. In her words "I want a pension for my old age. It's a demanding job, you're going to get sick after a while, you are not able to stand in the kitchen for 12 hours and [stay well]."
Again, Tímea found it very easy to find another chef job, this time in a hotel an hour's drive from Edinburgh. She considered herself lucky to have found this job so quickly, as only a few months later the pandemic hit and she was able to receive furlough. However, after around 12 months, the hotel started to downsize due to losses

incurred during the pandemic and Tímea was made redundant. Her employer notified her of her redundancy but kept her on furlough for another three months while Tímea looked for another job.

Her next job was also relatively short-lived: she described this job as "13 hours a day, five days a week and the break was, well, either you work it or not, depending on how much preparation you had done". She described the sous-chef as an alcoholic who regularly did not turn up to work, leaving the place understaffed. Interestingly, she added that, in her observation, drugs and alcohol misuse was a frequent problem among kitchen staff as it's "the way they cope" with the stress of cheffing. Things came to a head for Tímea when the head chef was on holiday, the sous-chef had failed to turn up to work, and the agency staff hired by the management were not working to a high standard, leading the kitchen to "fall apart", as Tímea described it. She said the management expected Tímea to manage the whole kitchen almost alone, which she felt unable to do, leading her to hand in her notice.

This last job was at the beginning of 2022. When we interviewed Tímea in May 2022, she had recently started a new job as a sous chef in a hotel, although she had been promised the opportunity for a promotion to head chef within the year when the existing chef was planning to retire. Her feelings about her current job were relatively mixed: her salary was much better than previous minimum wage jobs and, if she was promoted to head chef, she would receive a salary of £32,000 a year. However, she still worked 65-70 hours a week, which she found physically extremely tiring. While she said that she "still likes cooking", she wondered how long she would be able to maintain this level of physical exhaustion as she approached her 50th birthday. She told us:

"It's very demanding and stressful and I already feel…it's not good for me. It affects my sleep [because] I start as breakfast chef at 6 o'clock in the morning and I finish at 10 o'clock at night time. I've put weight on, even though I eat less, because I eat at night-time, and I'm starving and I have to eat. I can't really exercise because I have five hours to sleep or six hours to sleep at night."

Moreover, this job was a two-hour drive away from Edinburgh. The journey was too long to do every day so she was living in staff accommodation in the hotel. However, this was a single room, meaning that her son – who was now 18 and lived in Scotland – could not spend his university holidays with her. It also meant that she lived away from her partner. However, she reported that local accommodation was not an option, as it was a relatively remote, tourist location where accommodation was expensive and in short supply.

Finally, Tímea also told us that she had experienced "racism [and] sexism very often" in the hospitality industry. She gave the example of a former boss who was unable to remember her name properly and so chose instead to call her "Friday" after a famous slave character from the novel Robinson Crusoe. She also said that this same employer "made jokes at our expense" if she or her colleagues made errors in their spoken or written English. Indeed, she felt that she had often experienced discrimination based on her accent or language capacity: in her words, "people kind of think you are stupid".

She also felt that kitchens were often sexist places, as she described: "they're male operated, they really are: if you are a woman and work in a kitchen, they'd really make you feel like you are less than the men in many places. I needed to fight a lot of times because of that."
For all these reasons, Tímea felt concerned about carrying on working in the hospitality industry. However, she felt that with her experience and continued progression over the years, it was the best option for her financially. She had considered working in an office, or in retail, but believed that it was unlikely she could get a job at a similar wage.

2.1. Hours and working arrangements

The following sections explore experiences of hours and working arrangements among our sample of hospitality workers. It shows how many of the workers we interviewed, particularly students and those with jobs in other industries, value the flexibility afforded to them by working in the hospitality sector. At the same time, this flexibility has come with significant trade-offs for these workers, namely, an inability to predict or control when or how much they will be working. These uncertainties – which we also refer to as 'precarious working conditions' – have created various forms of financial, personal and social hardship in the lives of many of the hospitality workers in our study.

By comparison, later sections explore the experiences of those hospitality workers who work more predictable and secure hours but who report frequently working long and/or anti-social hours, often without adequate remuneration.

The following sections also include three further worker stories, which in various ways exemplify these problems of precarity on one hand, and of over-work on the other: these are the stories of Vicki, Jamie and Mike.

2.1.1 Precarious work in the hospitality industry

Vicki's and Jamie's stories, described in the two worker stories below, illustrate a number of issues that we found to be common experiences among many of the hospitality workers that we interviewed. In relation to zero-hours contracts, both stories show how such contracts can make it hard for workers to generate a predictable, dependable income and, moreover, they can make it hard for people to make social arrangements, thus having a detrimental impact on their personal and social well-being. They also show how working anti-social hours, even when these hours are predictable, can make it hard for hospitality workers to spend time with family and friends. They can also impact physical and mental health, particularly by causing chronic tiredness. These findings are all explored in more depth in subsequent sections.

Vicki's story additionally illustrates themes taken up in later sections and chapters, such as issues around pay, as well as the challenges faced by those working in rural locations.

Workers' Experience of the Hospitality Sector

Worker Profile

Name: Vicki

Age: 28

Nationality: Australia

Residency: Holds a work visa. Lives in a small town with partner and daughter in Perthshire.

Work History: Worked in Australia as a manager in hospitality. In Scotland, she has worked as waitress, receptionist, and bartender.

Takeaway: Vicki has enjoyed working in hospitality over the years but has found the hours, stress, and responsibility of her work difficult to manage alongside her family responsibilities, in particular as she has struggled to find affordable childcare in her rural area.

Vicki, a 28 year old woman, moved from Australia to Scotland in 2019 to a small town in a rural area to join her partner who worked in a five-star hotel there. In Australia, she had worked as a restaurant manager for several years. On arrival in Scotland, she found it fairly easy to get a job in the same hotel as her partner, working first as a waitress and then as a receptionist. When this hotel was sold, she was made redundant although both she and her partner found similar jobs in another hotel. Shortly afterwards, the pandemic hit and she was furloughed for almost a year. During this time, she also fell pregnant

and gave birth to her daughter. When her daughter was around six months old, she returned to work in the hotel although she was ultimately unable to come to a suitable arrangement on hours with her employer – an experience that she found difficult, as explored below. She left the hotel and found a job as a bartender in a local bar, where she was still working when we interviewed her in May 2022.

Vicki told us that she enjoyed working in the bar: she liked the social interaction with regular customers and also what she described as the "creative" side of her work, particularly writing the cocktail menus and mixing the drinks. At the same time, however, she told us that she was considering leaving the hospitality industry and instead finding an office job, perhaps in Human Resources. Her main concerns about working in hospitality were the hours and particularly the impact on her well-being and family life of working anti-social and often unpredictable hours. She also felt that she was being underpaid and that the work was physically very demanding.

While she had held a full-time contract in the first hotel she worked in, her second hotel job came with a zero-hours contract, meaning that there was a great variation in the number of hours she worked each week, depending on the needs of the hotel and on her availability. She told us that

some weeks she only worked one day a week, while other weeks she would work four or five days a week. She told us that this was manageable only because she could rely on her partner's income:

"It was just like a zero-hour contract and my hours went like, they were really up and down, they just slotted me in whenever I could work, because [my partner] and I worked at the same hotel again. It was very up and down, and they put me on, one week was like four or five days and then one week was one day…[but] we weren't relying on me doing a certain number of hours luckily, we could just rely on [my partner's] wages and then whatever I got was a bonus."

Vicki had hoped that this zero-hours contract would come with some advantages after her baby was born, not only because this contract seemed to offer flexibility but because the hotel initially agreed to schedule her only when her partner was not working. Vicki told us that this was essential for them, as there was no affordable childcare available in the town where they lived – a town of around 2500 people, centred around the tourist industry. However, working such unpredictable and variable hours made it difficult to plan a social life and to spend time with her partner, as she explained:

"It was hard, because yes, like I said, they sort of like balanced it for both of us, obviously, so that we weren't working at the same time, but then it was like we didn't see each other a lot, it was like passing ships, because if one was home, the other was working all the time. There wasn't a set routine, so, that was quite hard and it was hard to organise going to see [my partner's] family in Edinburgh, which is a couple of hours drive…So, it was quite difficult and my social life, basically didn't exist, because it was really hard to make plans."

Moreover, shortly after returning to work from maternity leave, her employer started to request that she work more hours than she was able to. Even though she was on a zero-hours contract, they said they needed someone who could commit to more hours, and who had the flexibility to work whenever they needed, even if these times changed each week. This was impossible for Vicki, given her partner's working hours and her childcare commitments, leaving her with little option but to leave her job. She told us that she found this upsetting, especially as her employer had initially promised her the flexibility she required.

It did not take long for Vicki to find her current job in the local bar. Here she was on a part-time contract, working approximately 20 hours a week on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights, typically from around 5pm until closing time. She told us that closing time varies, however, between 10pm and midnight, depending on how busy the bar is. She reported being paid fairly and accurately, by the hour. When asked about how she felt about her current hours, she told us that while she appreciated being able to work when her partner was at home with her daughter, she found working nights difficult, as it was tiring and left her little time for her family:

"I am happy with [my hours but]…it has taken a toll, the only day off my partner and I have together is a Sunday, that's our only full day off together and then he's got to work the next morning, so, it is a bit of a struggle with that and also I think

finishing so late, I didn't realise how much it would affect me, because by the time I get home and unwind, it's sort of like, I might not go to sleep until about two and then [my daughter] is up at six. So, normally [my partner] gets up with her, but I still obviously wake up and then it wastes a bit of the day, you can't really spend the whole day together, because I'm just a zombie. So, I don't think I really thought that through before I got back into bar work to be honest. [So yes] definitely, lack of sleep, tiredness and probably like, obviously, family time as well [is what is difficult]."

Vicki is paid £10 per hour in her current job while she had been paid £9.50 in her previous work at the hotels. She did not think these wages were particularly fair, given her experience and training as a manager in Australia. Moreover, in her current job in the bar, she was performing the role of a manager, despite not being paid accordingly:

"When I first got the job, there was someone else that was in charge, who has since left, and that's why I've taken over everything. [It's] not really what I signed up for at first…. just by default, I've ended up running it, I write the menus, I train new staff, I do the cash up, I open and close, and I lock up and everything but I'm not technically, I don't have the role of a manager."

She also explained how she found this added responsibility stressful at times, and that it had restricted her ability to take time off:

"When I was first going, I thought oh well it's just a job, I can just go, do my job, come home, that's it, whereas now it's like a lot of, I'm doing a lot of thinking about work, outside of work, which is not really what I wanted to do. So, I think it has put a bit of stress on me as well, like, I haven't been able to take certain days off, like on the weekends, because literally, like when we hired someone else, they had hardly any experience. So, I felt like, well I can't take a day off, I can't leave this other person, because they don't even know how to make a cocktail. So, I think that was a big thing.

I [take stuff home] like, the stock, thinking about making sure we've got enough stock in and thinking about what needs to be made for the cocktails, because we make syrups and things like that. There have been times where I make them at home, in my own kitchen. Like rosemary syrup for example or sugar syrup or whatever… just making sure that…the right fruit is getting ordered for us, yes, and thinking about if we've opened a bottle of wine on the weekend, it's only going to be good for four days. So, I have to tell the people in the café, if you don't sell it by Wednesday, or Thursday, take it off the shelf and all things like that. Which, for the first couple of months, I never had to worry about, because there was someone else that was in charge."

We asked Vicki if she had asked for a pay rise: she replied that she had not because she felt uncomfortable asking the bar owner, with whom she reported having a good relationship – like "good friends", in Vicki's words. This woman was currently experiencing personal difficulties and Vicki did not feel able to ask for a raise.

Workers' Experience of the Hospitality Sector

Worker Profile

Name: Jamie

Age: 38

Nationality: UK

Residency: Lives in Glasgow

Work History: Worked as security guard/bouncer for over 15 years

Takeaway: Jamie likes security work but has recently taken a permanent job as an assistant porter in the NHS due to the financial and social difficulties of working anti-social hours and on zero-hours contract in the hospitality sector.

Jamie, a 38-year-old man living in Glasgow, had worked full-time as a security guard for over 15 years, largely in nightclubs, bars, pubs, and music festivals. He used to work for what he described as a "big company" although he now works for a small agency, run by a man with whom he reported having a very good relationship. He has almost always worked on a zero-hours contract but is much happier with this current employer, whom he felt did not exploit the terms of this type of arrangement. Indeed, he emphasised to us how previous companies had threatened to not give him work if he refused to take on hours when offered:

"I've worked for big companies years ago and when you tried to say no they weren't happy with it, even though you're on a zero hours contract… they

force your hand….and say well then I'll just not give you any more hours or I won't phone you if anything comes in, so I stopped working for big companies.. now I let my guy know whether I've got something on or I've got my [daughter] and he'll get it covered."

Moreover, around two years ago, Jamie secured a job on the NHS as an assistant porter. He now works around 25 hours a week on a permanent contract with the NHS, and then approximately two weekends a month doing security. In our interview, he spoke several times about his preference for this arrangement, primarily because of the security provided by the permanent job in the NHS. In particular, he appreciated receiving sick and holiday pay on the NHS, and the fact he was now saving for a pension. He also felt that he was less over-worked than he had been in the past now that he had the security of the monthly income from the NHS. He described to us how he used to work 50-60 hours a week without time off in order to make ends meet, and how he still observes similar forms of over-work and precarity among co-workers in the industry:

"I'd do retail security and then I'd do the doors at the weekends, so some days it was seven days a week…I did that for a long time. shopping centre

hours were like eight hour shifts so that would've been forty hours a week, and the doors minimal ten hours at the weekends. ..[I see now] people that don't have a permanent job they're having to work for two and three different companies just to make up their hours…"

Jamie was also grateful that now, due to the NHS job, he did not have to work every weekend, which he had found a challenge due to its impacts on his social life:

"You sometimes get sick of it, you get sick of it every weekend, doing the weekends. [It was good] when I got the job in the NHS and I got to choose I didn't have to do [the security work] every weekend, I could just do it as and when. I'm starting to enjoy my weekends more now.....You see, before I got the job with the NHS, I was working every weekend literally, a couple of days during the week and then working every weekend and that's why I got the NHS job [so] I didn't have to work [every] weekend.. [because] if you're doing the door, it's kind of like. [if you're] going to the football with your mates because you start your door at seven, they're all getting drunk and you have to be sober to go to work."

For all these reasons, Jamie told us that he hoped to pursue further progression in his NHS job and to stop the security work altogether within the next five to ten years. He also told us that while he had greatly enjoyed working in hospitality over the years, he felt that security work was better suited to a younger person, given the often physically- and mentally-demanding nature of the job.

2.1.2. Valuing flexibility

Many of our participants talked about valuing the flexibility afforded to them by working in the hospitality industry. This was particularly the case with students, who reported being able to fit shifts in around their study schedules. Those on zero-hours contracts also reported being able to vary the amount of work they took on depending on their university commitments.

To give one example, Alistair, a 20-year-old man studying for an undergraduate engineering degree in Edinburgh, had worked in events catering for four years, working shifts as a waiter at large events such as football games. He used an app-based agency to apply for shifts, allowing him to choose when he did and did not want to work. He also reported never feeling pressured to take on work that he did not want, in contrast to many of our participants (see below). Alistair tended to work relatively few shifts when big university assignments were due and then seek out longer-term contracts during the summer holidays – a common pattern among the students that we interviewed. Alistair also identified the flexibility of the work as the key reason for working in hospitality over other jobs:

> "That's the main good thing about it, you can just do it when you want… It allows me to plan my week around, or plan my shifts around my life, because yes, work is important, but I wanted to make sure I can fit everything in as well."
> **Alistair, 20, undergraduate student and waiter in events catering, Edinburgh**

Flexible working was also important to those undertaking further training or studies within the hospitality sector. For example, we interviewed two chefs – Alek and Benci – who were studying hospitality management and cooking respectively. In these instances, the capacity to work flexibly was important in facilitating their broader progression ambitions in the industry.

In addition to students, we spoke to several people who used hospitality work to supplement income from a full-time job in another sector. These people also valued flexibility – and zero-hours contracts in particular – as this allowed them to work selected evenings and weekends, depending on their availability. For example, one participant, Neil, used an app to apply for weekend shifts doing events catering work, which he did alongside a full-time administrative job in the weekdays. He described this sort of zero-hours hospitality work as the best option for him, given his full-time job and his caring responsibilities for his two young children:

> "You know it's either [this catering work or] go and get a job say at Audi or Morrison's where I have got fixed hours. At least with [app work] I have got flexibility, especially having children. I had to cancel a couple of shifts when [my son] came with chickenpox. But as long as you give them 24 hours' notice it was like yeah sure, no problem."
> **Neil, 38, full-time administrator and part-time waiter for events catering company, Glasgow**

Neil's emphasis here on the need for flexibility as a parent with young children was also raised by a few other research participants. As described in the worker story in section 2.1.1, for example, this was a concern for Vicki, who worked evenings as a bartender as she did not have childcare in the daytime. Similarly, Megan, a kitchen runner in a restaurant, had a similar arrangement:

> "It's actually really good because my husband works daytime. So, when he gets in, he then takes over the kids and I get to go to work. So, there is always somewhere here for children. [Otherwise] we would have to try and find childcare."
> **Megan, 32, kitchen runner, small town in the Highlands**

To give a final example, Caroline, a 64-year old woman who worked as a bartender in a local golf club in Perthshire, told us that she left her job in the oil and gas industry to take up part-time work in the hospitality industry precisely because she required greater flexibility in order to help her son – a single parent – care for his young children. She worked weekends and evenings and cared for the children in the daytime.

2.1.3. The limitations of flexibility

While many of our participants valued flexibility, these same participants also spoke to us at length about the limitations of this flexibility, as well as the trade-offs that could come with increased flexibility. Participants identified three major disadvantages of increased flexibility: first, the experience of feeling pressured to accept unwanted hours; second, financial insecurity; and third, personal and social insecurity. While the latter two issues applied to people both on zero-hours and other types of contracts, the first issue applied almost exclusively to people on zero-hours contracts, as the next section explores.

2.1.3.1. Feeling pressured to work

Zero-hours contracts were seen by many of our participants, although by no means all, as a sort of 'false promise'. This was because while these contracts offered flexibility in theory, hospitality workers often felt under intense pressure to accept unwanted hours and to be available at all hours of the week. Ironically, therefore, the demand for flexibility by employers often turned out to be prohibitive for those workers seeking flexibility. In the above case study, for example, we saw how Vicki was forced to leave her job entirely because she required flexibility as the mother of a young child, while her employer demanded her to be at least potentially available at all times.

Other participants expressed concerns that they had to accept unwanted work in order to ensure that they could obtain more work in the future. For example, Alek, a 35-year old man, had moved from Poland to Glasgow five years ago and had been working as a chef ever since. He had held full-time contracts in the past but currently worked for an agency on a zero-hours contract, being sent to different restaurants, often on a weekly basis (for Alek's full story, see section 2.2) He described how he found it hard to refuse shifts because he worried that he would then be unable to get work in the future:

> "It sounds like you have freedom but in the end of the day…you cannot just say 'okay this week I am not going to take [any shifts], but the next week I [will]' because then you're not going to have a job because you should have taken that job you had…and maybe in the next week everyone actually took everything and you don't have anything."
> **Alek, 35, chef, Glasgow**

The extent to which participants felt pressured to accept unwanted hours varied, however, depending on the nature of the employer and the venue in question. For example, those who used app-based agencies to do events catering work generally reported that it was easy to refuse to take on extra hours, given that the onus was on the worker to apply for shifts as desired. However, those who worked in a single venue, such as cafes, bars, and restaurants, were more likely to report being reluctant to refuse shifts in case it affected their relationship with their employer or their future hours. Crucially, most of these participants identified staff shortages as a key reason for employers asking them to do extra shifts.

It is important to note that the pressure to take on extra hours could present a real challenge to hospitality workers who were trying to manage other responsibilities. For example, consider the case of Lily who worked in a Thai restaurant as a waitress alongside her undergraduate degree, having moved from Hong Kong to the UK a few years ago to study. She described to us how she relied on her income from her waitressing job in order to complete her studies, which she described as her priority. However, during periods of COVID-19 restrictions in particular, she was frequently asked at the last minute to take on extra shifts due to staff shortages. She reported that she found this extra work stressful, particularly as it affected her capacity to complete her studies.

> "I think last year was especially difficult at times…we had a hard time hiring enough staff…that could be quite stressful and I had to kind of change one or two things with my studies because I couldn't get the time off…. I couldn't get enough energy, for example, if I needed to work…longer…I couldn't meet the deadlines or things like that. I feel very stressed…because when you sign up for the semester you kind of have to show up and do certain work and show that to your supervisor and other things. I really failed to do that on the days I worked full time or had to cover other people's shifts or when they were short staffed, I get quite stressed out."

Lily told us that, ultimately, she found it easier to ask her university for extensions to deadlines, than to tell her employer that she was unable to work, given her concerns about losing her job:

> "I [accepted the work] as I don't know if I will get fired or not in that moment…I thought that maybe a bit easier to talk about with my university… luckily, where I do my studies they're quite flexible so we can talk about the kind of delay, take a break from the studies during that time or get an extension for my assignment…. it's easier to tell them that I can't get time off, explaining to my university feels a little bit maybe less stressful than telling my employer that I want to do my study."
> **Lily, 26, undergraduate student and part-time waitress in a Thai restaurant, Edinburgh**

2.1.3.2. Financial insecurity

Many of the hospitality workers in our sample saw financial insecurity as one of the primary disadvantages of flexible work. Indeed, while many of our participants found that they were offered more work than they could manage, others frequently struggled to get the number of hours they required. For example, Alistair, an undergraduate student who worked in events catering, applied for shifts using an app-based agency. He reported never feeling pressured to take on extra work but, at the same time, he was increasingly finding that he was not getting enough work. Recently he found that, unable to pay his rent as a result of this lack of shifts, he had to move back to his family home earlier than anticipated:

> "Because everyone has finished exams, the company has, we apply for shifts on an app, but they're quite full at the moment, so we get put on the waiting list for everything. That's the bad part of it for the moment, like, throughout uni when I wanted to do the shift in the week, it was fine, but now that everyone

has finished their exams, and they're free for the summer, it's clogged up, which is a shame… I probably would have stayed on an extra month at my flat at the moment, but because the shifts are lacking…I just decided I'd probably have to move home a month earlier than I thought."

Interestingly, Alistair further reported feeling unable to join additional agencies, as he worried this would jeopardise his relationship with his current employer:

> "I think the head of this agency would be annoyed, because they do cover the same events, so, if you were to say work for the other company, for that event, they maybe would get a bit annoyed. I have heard that he does get a bit annoyed that you're switching between the two or whatever."
> **Alistair, 20, undergraduate student and part-time waiter in events catering, Edinburgh**

It is noteworthy that many of those workers who reported being content with the financial uncertainty of zero-hours contracts emphasised that they saw this contentment as either temporary or conditional on other circumstances. For example, those people who had a full-time job in another sector all stated that they would not wish to rely on zero-hours work in the hospitality sector as their primary income. This was both because they found that having a variable income made it hard to make longer-term financial plans but also because of the lack of additional benefits they perceived with these contracts, such as the lack of holiday pay, sick pay, and pensions. Some participants also highlighted how the loss of work during the COVID-19 pandemic had made them more aware of the uncertainties of working in the hospitality sector (see Chapter Seven).

Similarly, other participants reported that zero-hours work was acceptable for them as long as they, firstly, required flexibility above financial security and, secondly, as long as they could depend on income from other sources. Some participants relied on their partner's income, as stated for example by Vicki (see the worker story above). Others relied on income from student loans or other family members. As the following further examples suggest, however, participants expressed hesitation about relying on zero-hours contract if these circumstances were to change:

> "While I was at uni [and had my loans], it was great to have a zero-hour contract, it just allowed me to have that flexibility, kind of on the whole, just like when I wanted more hours, I could have more hours, when I couldn't do more hours, it would be fine. Whereas now, I think I do kind of want that security and that regular income. So, I would prefer to do that now.'
> **Kate, 21, undergraduate student and barista in a coffee shop, Edinburgh**

> 'I quite like that it's quite flexible and I have quite a lot of freedom to choose what hours I want, so [with my studies] I wouldn't want to be tied to kind of like, a very strict schedule, but at the same time…, I get quite a lot of financial support from my family, so, I am not really worried about the financial side of the things…. If it was to be my permanent job, I don't think that can happen that way, obviously, it doesn't give me enough income to be able to live, especially given the increase in the living costs now. So, it's just temporary."
> **Maria, 38, barista in coffee shop, St Andrews**

As a final point, we found that while workers on zero-hours contracts were particularly vulnerable to financial insecurity, some participants on part-time contracts also struggled to get the hours that they wished, therefore experiencing financial hardship. For example, Hannah, a 23-year old woman, had recently started a new job as a bar tender in a pub in Glasgow (for more on Hannah's experiences at work, see section 3.5). She had previously worked in a late-night bar, the sister venue of this pub, although she found working late nights detrimental to her mental health. When she was transferred over to work in the pub, she was given a part-time contract for 12 hours but was assured by the owner that she would have a minimum of 30 hours a week. However, she now frequently found that she was getting under 20 hours of work a week due to a lack of custom in the pub. She reported struggling financially as a result:

> "The pub has been really quiet recently, pretty dead and the owner actively cuts hours if it's really quiet. You know, so… I am supposed to be a full time member of staff but I am pretty much a part time member of staff….Moving from the last place to this place within like the company…one of the main things of me moving is like one of the key factors would be a guaranteed 30 hours at least. But that's not happening, and it is just like well what do I do... Recently it's a bit better but just for some weeks it was just like barely 12 or 20 hours and it is just like, I can't afford this."
> **Hannah, 23, bartender, Glasgow**

2.1.3.3 Social and personal insecurity

Many of our participants reported that working flexible and unpredictable hours resulted in experiences of social and personal insecurity, that is, an inability to plan or invest time for meaningful social relationships and activities outside work. These issues affected workers both on part-time contracts and on zero-hours contracts, although they were more likely to affect those on zero-hours contracts. Our research participants identified two primary reasons for these forms of insecurity, first, the unpredictability of their working hours; and second, the need to work anti-social hours, namely weekends and evenings.

Unpredictable hours and locations

Many of the participants that we interviewed reported having hours that varied significantly from week to week. They received a rota on a weekly or fortnightly basis and found that the days and times that they worked could vary significantly depending on a number of factors, such as staff shortages or absences, and events. Many also reported experiencing sudden last-minute changes to their hours, such as being asked to work with less than 24-hour notice or being sent home early from a shift due to a lack of custom. Several of our participants also reported variable closing times in their venues, depending on levels of customers, meaning that they often did not know exactly when they would finish work. The following quotes illustrate some participants' experiences of uncertain hours, as well as the frustrations associated with them:

> "This is not good, you can't plan anything, you don't know what your hours are, this is quite complicated. If you have fixed hours, you can plan tomorrow,

I have to do this, I can do it, but if you don't have fixed hours, this is more complicated."
Birodh, 30, chef, Stirling

"I think, especially during uni time, it's okay, because a lot of people like friends and family they have time around that, that you can kind of find a time to meet up and do things, but I think it is difficult, because you can't really plan anything really, unless it's like a holiday and you have to plan that in, you have to make sure that they're okay with it, which does make it difficult just to keep on a normal life routine, which is the thing."
Kate, 21, undergraduate student and barista in café, Edinburgh

"Other stuff that I don't like, it's the fact that they can change, you could just cover shifts at the last minute. Well, you kind of have a choice, but you don't at the same time, you know that if you're not going to do it, who is going to do it? They call you, well, you can cancel, but you can get called in at the last minute and I don't really like that, maybe sometimes I have plans that I have already made and stuff like that. So, that's a bit, I don't think that's quite professional, isn't it, but I guess it is happening in most places [during COVID] it was happening every two weeks or so…I think it's the night before in most cases."
Maria, 38, barista in coffee shop, St Andrews

"I think it's nice to have flexibility, that will be a massive advantage. I think, you know, it's not a nine to five job, and when it comes to the kids they do give me time off to go to sports day or go to certain things and I can bring the kids to work sometimes as a last resort if one of them is ill I can just put them on the sofa and they can watch a movie while I can do some work, so flexibility, that aspect is brilliant. But the disadvantages I suppose, being on this strange contract is that I need to … like I don't get paid, and I can't plan, sometimes you can't plan in advance in having those weekends off, just I guess impacting family life, I guess that's the disadvantage of it."
Jessica, 38, wine-bar manager, Glasgow

The following quotes relate specifically to variable closing times, and the frustrations that these can create for workers, who cannot predict exactly when they will finish work:

"I am contracted 16 hours. But I fluctuate depending on obviously what length of time we are opened until… My shift is supposed to be from 5pm until 9pm but it all comes down to when the customers leave. We don't generally chase them. We let them leave at their own leisure. So, recently it has been from 5pm until say 10pm."
Megan, 32, kitchen runner, small town in the Highlands

"The worst thing [about today] was…how we couldn't get people to leave, we had events on today and …the event ran over... Even after the events were done, people wouldn't get out and they…had a bit of a chip on their shoulder. They were just relatively rude to us when we were like, hey, like your meetings already ran over and we need you guys to leave because the staff

> need to get into cleaning and such and there is a lot of back and forth with people saying stuff, like all. 'There's nothing on in this room after their meeting, so why should we leave?' And it's a lack of consideration for hospitality staff and the fact that we have home lives and social circles and things we want to do after work, like we don't just live to work. And I think that's often forgotten about by a lot of members of public when they go out somewhere. Like my life is not my job and I need you to just leave. "
> **Amy, 24, event worker through app, Aberdeen**

As a final point, it is worth noting that we also spoke to two participants who reported unexpected changes in their working locations. In the case of one woman, Lutsi, this had occurred when she had been transferred to another coffee shop in the same company without any discussion or a notice period, something that she had found very difficult. In another example, Daniel, a hotel receptionist, reported that he was frequently requested at the last minute to work in another hotel owned by the same company, on the other side of the city. He was often only given a few days' notice that he would be working elsewhere. This was typically due to staff shortages in the other hotel. Daniel reported finding this unpredictability unsettling, as he never felt entirely sure where he would be working each day.

Anti-social hours

Many of the hospitality workers that we interviewed described the detrimental personal and social impacts of working anti-social hours as a major drawback of working in the hospitality sector, even if it afforded them the flexibility to study or work other jobs. This was the case for Vicki, for example, who reported feeling exhausted and having little time to spend with her family as a result of working in the evenings while also caring for her daughter in the daytime (see case-study in section 2.1.1).

In another example, Daniel, a 55-year old hotel receptionist living in Glasgow, worked nightshifts, which he found lonely and often boring, a problem that was exacerbated by the fact he always worked alone. This differed to his previous hotel where two people always worked the nightshift together – an arrangement he greatly preferred, also for reasons for safety. Daniel told us that working nightshifts left him feeling chronically tired and more prone to making mistakes at work:

> "I think you can put a person on night shifts too many because it will affect your work because you are not effective. If you are so many nights you won't be effective and you will do a lot of mistakes. … Especially if you are too tired and you can't get real sleep it affects your work because you're not as correct, you have to check everything several times that you do it correctly and that is affecting quite a lot, especially if you do a lot of night shifts then you feel like I want to sleep now."

It also meant he struggled to plan a social life:

> "I don't feel I have outside life because when I come home in the morning I sleep.... And then I have to go back. Because when you finish at seven in the morning, it takes me about 50 minutes to go home but then you don't go to

> sleep directly because you can't get to sleep directly because you've been outside and you have to wait and then when you suddenly fall asleep okay now it is almost five or six o'clock in the evening, you have to eat and then you have to go back to work…: I feel like I am more in work than I am seeing my friends. I don't really see my friends. Of course it affects you a lot, it affects you and especially when you get older it affects you even more. When you are younger you can do whatever you [want] because when I was young I could work several hours and still see my friends and do that but when you get older you need your sleep… The problem is when you have day off, one day goes to sleeping."
> **Daniel, 55, hotel receptionist, Glasgow**

Daniel typically works seven nightshifts in a row, and then has two days off, although he reported that during times of staff shortages he has worked as many as 13 night shifts in a row. When he asked to do four shifts on, two off, like he had done in his previous job, his employer refused: he told us that, "they said if you don't like your hours you know where the door is".

Ana, a waitress and housekeeping supervisor, also described her experience of working nightshifts to us in a previous job:

> "I'm not working with them anymore because the nightshifts are really hard to work, you don't sleep, you feel awful during the day, so I changed to a [new job]."
> **Ana, 36, housekeeper and waitress in hotel, Edinburgh (interview translated from Spanish to English)**

In another example, Hannah, a bartender, had recently moved jobs so as to reduce the number of nightshifts she worked. She described the impacts of working nightshifts to us, particularly on her mental health:

> "It was good for a while but like three and a half years of doing total night shifts it does things to you, like not seeing daylight and yes just like not, it's like the day light is a big thing. Especially in winter it really affects your mental health. Waking up in darkness and going to sleep in darkness and just not seeing any daylight, it is just like ahh.., like be really unmotivated and lacking energy and just like seasonal affective depressive disorder. And yes just like not nice."
> **Hannah, 23, bartender, Glasgow**

Benci, who worked late evenings in addition to completing a full-time vocational course (SQV) in cooking, told us how his work patterns led him to feeling tired and that he did not have enough time to spend with his children:

> "My mental health it's a little bit less, because I couldn't sleep well… I arrive home late at night, and I need to wake up early [for the kids]…Also I try to, spend my time with my kids, if I can and make them precious times. But it's not enough, not enough, so, and I can see them, it's affecting them, about their emotional feelings. But luckily, Sophia, is so lucky, my wife she is

working at home, she's an Engineer, IT Developer, and can care about our kids."
Benci, 52, chef, small town in south-west Scotland

Finally, many hospitality workers also complained about working weekends because of the impact that it had on their social and family lives:

"We don't have time off at the weekends, because hospitality restaurants, it's more busy at the weekends, so, we don't have time for friends and family… I tried one time [to talk] with [my manager] but he told me, week days we're not busy, so he tells me it's not too busy and we are busy at the weekends, so we can't have time off at the weekend."
Birodh, 30, chef, Stirling

"Obviously, the negatives [of the job] is just having to work weekends… I don't like having to work every weekend, obviously that's the needs of the business…You know you just feel because you are starting at five o'clock, so if you were to be out and about during the day you have to cut off whatever you are doing by about mid-afternoon, you need to go home and get ready to get to work….So it is just the fact that say if I wanted to go away over night or whatever, because it is always principally a Friday/Saturday you know basically you know you can't get away. It is just purely impacting your social life."
Julie, 57, full-time administrator and front-of house at take-away restaurant, Glasgow

2.1.4 Experiences of over-work

Some of the hospitality workers in our study complained less of unpredictability and uncertainty in their work, and more of working excessively long, often unpaid, hours, without suitable breaks during or between shifts. The following section provides a general overview of the problem of over-work and is then followed by two worker stories – Alek and Mike – that provide in-depth examples of some of these issues.

2.1.4.1 Over-work in the hospitality sector

Many of the hospitality workers that we interviewed complained of working long hours that had detrimental impacts on their physical, social and emotional lives. In some cases, long hours were the result of people working multiple jobs at once, typically on zero-hours contracts, as was the case with Jamie for example (see worker story in section 2.1.1).

In other cases, long hours were the product of staff shortages or managerial responsibilities, as illustrated respectively in the below quotes:

"At first…when we opened the venue, it was pretty labour intensive, I think I was doing like 70 hours a week, because we were trying to get the ground up and running… So, I'd work 9 until 7 every day…for 14 days in a row…so, it was crazy…. Then they were, oh, you'll get those hours back, obviously that's

not transpired [yet], which isn't a very good…thing. But they said I will get them back, or I'll get holidays back in lieu…I think [it will happen]. I've had a couple of days…when it's been quiet, they've been like take a day off."
Tom, 35, assistant manager in a café in a tourist venue, Edinburgh

"The working hours [are] very hard because this company I work for they have you work many night shifts in a row and not very many off and it is very hard. One time I worked like 13 nights in a row and had two nights off and that is too much… it was just after the pandemic finished. And lots of people after being furloughed didn't come back you know so, because uncertainty of [the virus] coming back again."
Daniel, 55, hotel receptionist, Glasgow

'Usually I do more than 40 hours…all the time something unexpected happens, and I have to stay more in the hotel here, when I think I have to work, until one o'clock, something has happened, the General Manager comes to say to do something more, more hours, things like that, and it's just I have to go and do it, because anyway, they pay for every single hour. Even for every single minute, if I stay like that, yes, they pay for every single minute actually…all the time I work more than 40 hours, it's happened [that I] have, between 50 and 60 hours for every single week."
Andrei, 30, housekeeping supervisor in a hotel, Stirling

In the case of Andrei, working long hours had contributed to problems with his studies, which he told us were a greater priority for him than his work as a housekeeping supervisor. He had failed to complete a year of study due to his long hours:

"It's the last year, yes, but I didn't, actually, I didn't finish already this year, I've been busy with the work at the same time, and I had many exams to pass…this is just about the timing, I didn't have enough time to study, this is why it's hard."
Andrei, 30, housekeeping supervisor in a hotel, Stirling

Crucially, we found that the problem of over-work could be particularly acute for those on full-time contracts, who also often reported working unpaid overtime. Indeed, among those who had worked for many decades in the hospitality industry, there was often a view that long hours were simply an expected and inevitable part of the job. To give an example: Tony had worked in the hospitality industry for several decades, primarily as a restaurant manager. He recently took a job outside of hospitality following a knee injury and what he described as a loss of confidence following his injury and operation. He told us that he sometimes felt that he had worked "half his life for nothing" as he had always worked over 80 hours a week, while being paid on a 40-hours contract, although he considered this to be normal for the industry. He felt that ultimately his lack of work/life balance had contributed to the breakdown of his marriage:

"[My ex-wife] worked in hospitality, and the two of us separated ... In 2006 she went to work, but she was working in [retail]. So, sometimes I was coming in from work and I was making her breakfast, and she was going to work. So, we

> used to joke about it: 'We should probably just get a single bed, because we're never in it together.' So ... I'd say, over the years I've missed out on a lot of things."
> **Tony, 54, restaurant manager, Glasgow**

In another example, Malcolm, a 72-year old man who had ran a pub for several decades with his wife before moving into freelance work as a temporary hotel manager, currently worked 80-hour weeks, albeit only for certain months of the year:

> "We don't actually count hours half the time, to be honest with you. If you counted hours you'd put your stuff in the car and drive home. You just do whatever's required…I mean, you could be up there over seven days and maybe doing 90 hours.... that's just the way the industry is. The problem is, we've been in this trade quite a long time now, and we accept that that's part and parcel of this business. They're trying to get youngsters in nowadays, trying to do these jobs on a 40–hour or 48–hour contract, and it doesn't work…What we tend to do is work in blocks, kind of thing, and then take a block off."
> **Malcolm, 72, freelance hotel manager, the Borders**

István, a head barista in a coffee shop, told us that his long shifts led him to feeling tired although he was happier in his current job than in his previous job because overtime was at least optional:

> "It's a 40 hours contract, and there is opportunity to do some more overtime [but] it's not mandatory, and that's the best part of it. Because my previous employer, I have to get overtime and obviously it was paid, but they never asked me do you want to do this or not? Anyway, so yeah, I'm happy with this, and now I just work four days a week, and it's possible that that means ten hours a day, which I find quite tiring at times."
> **István, 34, head barista in a specialist coffee shop, Edinburgh**

By comparison, Lizzie described to us how she and her partner had left their previous jobs in a holiday camp because they felt over-worked. Central among her complaints was that she and partner worked too long hours and, moreover, could not get the same day off, so they rarely spent time together or had time to go and visit family. When they applied for their new jobs in a hotel resort on an island – Lizzie as a waitress and her partner as a chef – they accepted the job only on the guarantee that they could get the same day off:

> "[In my last job] for about seven months, I didn't have a weekend off from September to probably about March, we were just overworked, wages weren't that great, because of the cost of living has gone up, we've got a dog and we're just too tired. I never went round to see my mum, on my days off because [they were never the same as my partner's] it was just horrible. Because [my partner] doesn't drive, I'd be going up there to drop him off and pick him up…so, I never got a rest because I'd still be there on my days off. We never had the same days off, just never got a rest ever, did we? [When we got the new job] we did say when we had our interview like, we told them

about [our last job] and I was like, it's a deal breaker for us, [having the same day off]."
Lizzie, 23, waitress, hotel resort on island

It is noteworthy that Lizzie's current work in the hotel had entailed a cut in pay and responsibility in comparison to her past job, where she had been a supervisor. However, she stated that this was preferable for her if she could spend time with her partner and, moreover, she was paid by the hour, meaning that she would not have to work unpaid overtime anymore (see Chapter Eight for Lizzie's worker story).

This sentiment that more insecurity and less responsibility could, in fact, be preferable to the over-work entailed in management positions and full-time contracts was echoed by two other participants: Alek, whose story is explored in the second half of this chapter, and Mike, whose experiences are described in the section below. Taken together, these experiences raise questions about how experiences of over-work may present a barrier to possibilities for progression in the industry.

Workers' Experience of the Hospitality Sector

Worker Profile

Name: Mike

Age: 44

Nationality: Scottish

Work History: Hotel manager

Takeaway: After several decades as a manager in hotels, Mike experienced depression and burnout due to working long hours and the pressure of managerial responsibilities. He currently works on a zero-hours contract as a bartender while considering whether to return to managerial work.

Mike, a 44-year-old man, has worked in hospitality for two decades, primarily as a manager in restaurants and hotels. He recently gave up this managerial work, however, following an episode of burn-out and depression – something that he linked, among other things, to the stress he had

experienced in the hospitality industry. He was currently working on zero-hours contracts as a bartender in a pub and in a local golf club near Dundee while he decided whether to return to managerial roles.

Mike's longest stretch of employment had been as a manager in a luxury hotel in the Highlands, where he had worked for over ten years, primarily running events within the hotel. He described to us how this involved long hours, which did not involve being paid overtime. He saw these hours partly as a product of being in a managerial role, and partly as the result of doing a job that revolved around the needs of the customer:

"I very rarely worked almost anywhere less than 55 hours a week in a management or a supervisory role…. working in [management] you're heavily reliant on your teams, and if your teams aren't performing or don't turn up or sickness, ultimately the buck stops with you, and it's your responsibility, and there's an expectation on you to be able to do that.
There were weeks where I was doing over 70, over 80 hours and consecutively in those, I think there was one week I did over 80 hours, two weeks in a row, at [the hotel].

The other thing about doing the events side of the business, is that because they're all hotel residents generally, it is their house, so, technically is there an end time? So, I would keep my event going, so that the guests were looked after and had the best time. Then of course, the longer the night goes on, the less staff I have to do the close down and the tidy up. So, it elongates everything more, because some of my staff are maybe working breakfast in the morning or have been working since 12 o'clock in the afternoon. So, that in itself, becomes a challenge, because you try to look after people to the best of your ability, [but] it has a double knock-on effect on you."

Mike also described how he had always worked different hours each week, making it very hard for him to make social plans:

"[The rota] changed every week, because the business changed every week… because as soon as you've got a request in the diary for someone or somebody off on holiday, then the rota changes..[and] if you're in the hotel environment and you have events on and corporate dos and things, because bearing in mind, corporate dos would be mid-week [but then] weddings and private events more at the weekend, but then you don't have corporate dos over the summer holidays. Corporate stuff finishes over the summer and it's more leisure things. So, you're adapting to what the requirements and the expectations of the business are, all the time, your rota was never ever the same, one week to the next, never .[It affects your social life] hugely, because you can never, you can't plan, I wouldn't know if I was working on a Sunday until Thursday afternoon."

Mike described to us how he left this hotel eventually after a disagreement with his employer about his long hours – a dispute that he described as a precipitating factor in the deterioration of his mental health. The dispute had centred around the hotel's promise to provide people with 'time off in lieu' when they worked extra days beyond their contract. Given that he frequently worked a six-day week but was contracted for five days, Mike calculated that he was due 15 days back from his employer. He described to us what happened when he raised this with his employer:

"So then I raised it to the line manager, I was then told really there wasn't much we could do, I said, 'Look, I just want my time back'. 'Well we don't have the staff to give you the time back.' I said, 'Well try and pay me for it then.' Then…there was a big discussion, I ended up going up to director level, director of food and beverage, the director of HR and I ended up in a meeting with them about it. I said, 'Look, I understand we don't have enough staff, I understand how busy we are,' because you see the weekly and monthly figures coming through, so, you know where you are

in terms of your budget, you know where you are in terms of your headcount. I said, 'I give everything I can' I said, 'But I do want to be treated fairly.'.. But it was made clear that there was no way the business could sustain me getting 15 days back."

Mike described how eventually the hotel agreed to pay him for the extra 15 days, although Mike felt that the dispute resulted in him being "blacklisted" within the hotel, hampering any further progression. He also noted that the hotel promised to give him days back in the future, if he claimed them within the month, although this never happened:

"They were quite aggressive and I would say a wee bit bullying towards it. They agreed to pay me my 15 days, I was then told that the discussion and the outcome of the discussion does not leave the room, because they know they were doing the wrong thing."

"I'm the only person that is putting my head above the parapet, and ultimately, I got paid my 15 days, [and] I was told that if I worked an extra day I had to get that extra day back, within the month. That never happened either, because they didn't have the availability of staff to be able to do that. It certainly hampered any further progression for me at the hotel, because that was me sort of blacklisted, in terms of any forward movement, there was no way I was moving forward after that, because I wasn't a yes man. So, ultimately, after a wee while, I then decided to seek other opportunities. [I said] I wanted a bit of time off, and to look at other things, but I was actually suffering from depression."

It is worth noting that Mike saw some of the problems that he had experienced as specific to the prestigious and therefore high-pressure nature of this hotel, as opposed to a problem that applied to the entire hospitality industry in general. For example, he told us:

"I must point out that I ran a local hotel, ten bedrooms, busy restaurant, whiskey bar for six years, and I had consistency in my life, I was off every Sunday, every Wednesday and I was able to…recruit and build the right team, but again, I was looking to challenge myself, and so we took the business to a good level, but I then wanted a fresh challenge, as people do. On hindsight, would I rather I was still there? Perhaps, but you move on."

Mike now worked on a zero-hours contracts in a local pub and in a local golf club, which he stated had the advantage of allowing him to control his time, have a better social life, and not to work unpaid overtime:

"I think my work life balance is better now, for example, if I'm in the pub, and my shift is meant to finish at nine o'clock or ten o'clock and then my shift finishes at that time, I go home. I can arrange to meet people after work, I can arrange to you know, do something before, without the feeling that I might get called in because they're short staffed or too busy. If I do like, let's say for example, I'm meant to finish at ten, and they say, Mike, it's really busy, is there any chance you could stay on for half an hour or an hour? I have the ability now to say yes or no, that I never had before. So, yes, I'm getting paid less money, but I'm in more control of my own life. I'm in a position where I'm not married, no kids or anything, so, the financial expectation or burden on me, is not as

great as it is for other people. So, I don't necessarily need as much money as I needed before, that people at my age, might need. So, I have that ability but I suppose, part of the reason that I've not found that family life, is largely work related as well."

Mike noted how he was frequently offered managerial jobs by former colleagues and contacts, although he was hesitant to take anything on, because of his negative experiences in the past:

"I'm very careful and protective of what I do. I get phone calls probably once every couple of weeks, wanting, asking me to come and speak about certain roles and positions, and I'm like, no. Recently, I got approached from a local hotel and asked me if I would go in, on about fifty percent more money than generally I'm on between the two places [currently], I'm like, no, because I know what comes with it. Despite even, despite what they say on the cover, I know the reality will be very different. So, I'm not prepared at the moment, to put myself back in that position."

2.2. Experiences of pay

The following sections explore experiences of pay among our sample of hospitality workers. First, it tells the story of Alek. We have chosen to tell Alek's story in depth because his experiences speak to some of the more troubling issues around pay in the hospitality sector. While many of our research participants reported basically good experiences with their employers when it came to pay, others had had similar experiences to those of Alek, albeit often to a lesser degree.

The following sections look at how hospitality workers evaluated the fairness of their pay. It suggests that those who were felt unhappy with their pay typically did so because they felt that their skill-set, experience, or level of responsibility were not reflected in their level of pay. Subsequent sections explore experiences of tips and other benefits, uncertainties around holiday pay, and experiences of inaccuracies in pay.

Workers' Experience of the Hospitality Sector

Worker Profile

Name: Alek

Age: 35

Nationality: Polish

Residency: EU Settled Status

Work History: Chef

Takeaway: Alek has experienced illegal and unfair practices multiple times in the hospitality industry over the last decade, which he links to being a migrant. He feels strongly that his experiences have improved as he has learnt to advocate for himself and to be vigilant for unscrupulous employers.

Alek came to Scotland in 2018 from Poland. When he arrived in Scotland, he already had considerable experience as a chef which he had obtained both in Poland and in other European countries, allowing him to find a job quickly in a restaurant in

Glasgow. He had worked in a number of different hotels and restaurants since then, although when we interviewed him, he had recently quit his last sous-chef job and was working for an agency on a zero-hours contract while looking for another permanent position. He was also studying full-time for a diploma in hospitality management at a higher education college, which he explained to us was an important step for his longer-term ambitions of opening his own restaurant.

In our interview, Alek spoke in depth about the poor and often exploitative workplace practices that he had experienced in the hospitality industry in Scotland. He described overwork, and low and unfair pay, as endemic to the industry and he cited this as the

primary reason for why he left his most recent permanent position:

"I was doing the head chef position actually so I was doing the orders, I was doing the trainings, all the management things you know you need to do at the kitchen, it was actually on my head so I was doing all that stuff but they were paying me for [a lower position] So yes it was very unfair because I was doing the majority of the jobs there and I should get paid like at least £16, £15 an hour and they were paying me just £10 an hour which was very weak. Just I am not a quitter and I promised to help them so I was keeping and keeping and keeping and then they asked me if I want to be a manager of the restaurant and I said but the way you were treating me before, now asking me to be a manager so you want me to do more things and pay probably what more. Oh we gonna pay you more. How much? Oh £2 more. I was like what? On top of the cheffing. So after that conversation I said guys really I quit because that is too much, you know like how you treat the people and how you expect from people to work is unbelievable you know."

Alek told us that he did want to find a permanent position again in the future, given that such jobs came with benefits that agency work did not, such as holiday pay and pensions. Moreover, he noted that it could be stressful moving so regularly between kitchens, as you had to constantly adapt to new menus and working practices in very short spaces of time. However, he noted that there were advantages to zero-hours work, namely that he is never expected to work without being paid:

"[With agency work] you start from ten and you finish at ten, you don't stay longer. Usually [with a] kitchen, if you are on the contract, you should finish at ten, [but] you still need to clean the kitchen, still need to finish things you didn't finish because of the service and you need to finish them because tomorrow you have [a] function…Usually if you are on the contract then they don't pay for it...So I do all that [extra work] and they don't pay for it. [But with] the agency, I just finish at ten and that's it, because my contract is from ten to ten, I finish."

In addition to experiences of working unpaid overtime, Alek described to us past experiences in various jobs of not being paid accurately, not being paid a fair share of tips, not receiving sick pay, and experiencing unexpected deductions to his pay:

"At the beginning they were deducting things like [saying] some customers were unhappy, like a huge charge. It's not a fault of the kitchen or the restaurant, it's the fault of the management because they did something wrong, they explained things wrong and then the customers were unhappy from the beginning so they were trying to put the fault on everyone, just not the management and then like get the pay slip and you see like minus £40 and you're like what the … why?... So [usually] they take like from the service charge. Because they cannot take from the salary.

[Also] once I was sick for two days and they should pay the sick days yes, but they never did… And they actually minus £80. And it was like whoa, so what I didn't get my monthly pay and you just took minus £90 because I didn't appear at work because I was at sick and I actually got the papers from the doctor."

The most substantial deduction he had ever experienced was over £1000 when he crashed the company car while running a kitchen errand – something that he attributed to tiredness given he had worked 340 hours that month:

"Yes, even if you are overtired because you are working 240 hours last month and then you get tired you know and then you just feel sick because of too many hours you do….. I remember the time I was doing 340 hours a month…. Then I need to drive somewhere [to pick up supplies for the restaurant] and I was so tired that I didn't notice that something is behind me and it was the company car so they charged me for the repairs…. And that was the time I was doing this 340 hours a month so I was doing 16 hours a day with no day off for a month….then they still took from my salary £1,000**."**

Crucially, a central narrative running throughout Alek's account of his experiences was that he had been more vulnerable to exploitation because he was a migrant and because, initially, he did not speak good English. He believed that employers purposefully selected migrants for kitchen work, as they were less likely to know their rights and more likely to accept poor conditions:

"They use the people from other countries to say 'you need to do [this]' and they [just accept it] and then they say 'we are going to pay you' but they never pay you for that…Especially when I was working for the [luxury hotel] and even now when I speak with friends and they say yes it was a bit abuse of Polish people because they mostly hire people from Poland because they realise they work hard and we don't ask, you know, we are going to work for free just because we work there and we want that job you know."

When reflecting on his own attitude in his early days in Scotland, he emphasised how not speaking the language affected his confidence and his ability to reject poor conditions:

"It's hard to explain, you are not fine and feel… like you're not from here and even if you want to answer you [are] scared to answer because of how you speak. You know like it sounds very silly or you don't know the words, you know when you're going to say something it sounds silly… Language is a huge barrier you know… I was like forced to [do] everything they were asking me for."

Alek also recounted experiences of witnessing similar dynamics of exploitation among other hospitality workers:

"I worked for [this restaurant] and…they were hiring, they didn't like the people who knew how the hospitality worked so they never hire anyone from Scotland. Always were hiring people from outside. And they always were looking for someone who don't have a huge experience….then they started to hire people from India and then it was very like very, very bad, like they didn't pay them for like three months…and they were still working there because their culture, you know, they're going to stay until they get paid, [then eventually] they get paid and they still stay there because they were happy they get paid you know. And it is like oh my god, so hard to even explain to those people that it is not how [it should be] just find another job."

However, Alek also repeatedly emphasised that his attitude had changed over the years and that now he felt confident to seek out and accept only fair pay and conditions. He stated that was a product of his increased experience in the industry, his good language skills, and his studies in hospitality management. Indeed, he told us that his experiences of poor conditions had been a key motivating factor in undertaking the studies, as he wanted to understand how to improve his own situation and also how to do things differently when he opened his own restaurant one day:

"I decide to study because I learned that you need to know the law, you need to know how things are working from inside. So I just quit and decided to educate myself and be more confident not to just listen to people and believe everything they say you know."

He described to us how, in various ways, he now ensured his working conditions were fair:

"I am quite aggressive with the pay and I don't accept the low pay. But they always try to pay you as low as you can. Then you say no, no, no... Right now they don't even try…because of [my] education and because of 15 years in hospitality and because of how I speak with them. I think I am more confident….So when they say they going to pay you, I will say 'okay so let's sign the contract that you're going to pay me, right now, you know?' I don't believe you know, I am not going to work for free, you can fire me, it's fine but you cannot fire me actually because I actually do everything and you need to have reason to fire me… I know how to protect myself now.
I always now ask for signed things. I always ask for it and say okay [if] it's a service charge please make a contract up I am going to get paid for every single service charge. And… I want to see how much the customers paid so I know how much we should get paid and I can actually you know get the money to people if they try to be cheeky you know…. Next week Monday I go for trial shift for two hours. It's more I want to check the company…not the company want to check you…. [I want to check] how they treat the people, how they speak to the people, if they paid the extras they promised they're going to pay."

Despite Alek's increased confidence and experience in the industry, it is noteworthy that he was hesitant to take on a job as head chef – he noted that this was primarily because he felt the extra responsibility, work and pressure was not worth the likely remuneration.

"Yes, I am mostly sous chef, I don't want to take a head chef position because that's almost same money and heck much more work to do…It's like £3,000 more a year but then you do twice as much…the £3,000 I can earn in my free time, [but] the head chef going to do the paperwork".

Instead, therefore, Alek was continuing with his intention to complete his studies while working as a sous-chef in the hope of opening his own restaurant in the near future.

2.2.1 Perspectives on pay

The majority of our participants were paid the minimum wage or a little above the minimum wage. The exceptions here were some of the more experienced chefs, and

restaurant and hotel managers, who were more likely to receive both a higher rate of pay, and to receive this in the form of an annual salary rather than an hourly rate. However, this latter group of hospitality workers were just as likely – if not more likely – to see their wage as inadequate, primarily because of the numbers of hours they worked on such salaries. Several of these workers commented, for example, that – in real terms – they were paid below the minimum wage, given the extent of their hours.

Among those paid at minimum wage or a little above, participants expressed different views on the fairness of their pay. Many expressed a basic acceptance of their pay, stating that it was the norm in the hospitality industry and that it was adequate for their needs. Students and those who saw their jobs either as temporary or as secondary to their primary incomes were particularly likely to express these sentiments of acceptance.

Several of our participants, however, saw their wages as unfair. This was typically because they felt they were using skills or exercising responsibilities that should be acknowledged through higher pay. One good example of this is the experiences of Vicki, whose story is explored as a worker story in Section 2.1.1. Vicki felt that she was underpaid given that she was performing managerial responsibilities. To give another example: Lutsi was a 41-year-old woman who worked as a barista in a large coffee shop chain in Aberdeen. She had worked in the hospitality industry for almost two decades, both in Scotland and her country of birth, Estonia. She was a supervisor in her coffee shop but often found herself carrying out the tasks of a more senior manager:

> "[My pay is] not really [fair], taking the amount of work I do…it's quite a bit more work, but not nearly enough more pay… Rotas, organising stuff, ordering, all the paperwork, more paperwork."
> **Lutsi, 41, barista in coffee shop, Aberdeen**

In a similar example, Andrei, a 30-year-old housekeeping supervisor for a hotel in Stirling, cited his additional responsibilities as a reason for complaint about his level of pay:

> "My salary it's 11 pounds per hour, which actually, in my opinion, for the responsibility which I have, I think it's not enough… I don't do just the job of being supervisor: when it's needed, and when it's required, I do the laundry porter, I do the housekeeping, I clean the rooms, I do the manager tasks, when he is on holiday and things like that."
> **Andrei, 30, housekeeping supervisor in a hotel, Stirling**

For other participants, skillset and experience were important factors when assessing the fairness of their pay. For example, Daniel, a night-time hotel receptionist, felt that he should be receiving higher pay, both because of the burden of working nightshifts and because he spoke six languages fluently – a skillset that he felt was valuable in the hotel industry and should be recognised in his pay:

> "No, I don't think it is fair to be honest. You get an extra, I don't remember how much it is but it's not very much is it, something like 50p extra if you work

> nightshifts… [And] I don't get extra for my language skills… And I think it's unfair if you are using languages you should get something for it."
> **Daniel, 55, hotel receptionist, Glasgow**

By comparison, Maria, a barista who worked in a coffee shop in a book shop in St Andrews, felt that pay should reflect education levels and job experience, even if these had occurred in other sectors. Maria had been a secondary school teacher in Romania before moving to Scotland to join her husband and she was currently studying in her free time to apply for a PGCE course so that she could continue to teach in the UK. She felt that her wage did not reflect her education levels or previous work experience. She also commented that the job was not as easy as the pay levels might suggest:

> "I think probably it should be paid a bit more to be honest…they probably think it's an easy job, but actually it's not, so, my feeling is that they should be, I think the one thing that people don't realise is that people who are working in a coffee shop, some of them are quite educated as well…So, it's not like people, they've just finished their high school, and they just got their first job, there will be people, I have colleague, one of them is a retired pharmacist, so, they are people who have lots of knowledge and experience, and so on. So, I think it should really be more valued in terms of pay."
> **Maria, 38, coffee shop barista, St Andrews**

As a final example, Kate, who had worked as a barista for an independent coffee shop in Edinburgh throughout her undergraduate degree, felt that pay should increase in line with experience in the job – something that had not happened yet for her. She told us that she hoped to ask for higher pay, especially as she was graduating in the next month and was able to make a more solid commitment in terms of hours for the next year. This also mattered to her as she would also be more reliant on this income, given that she was no longer receiving student loans:

> "Yes, at the beginning, because I, when you go somewhere new, I always expect to be paid less, but seeing I do have more experience now, I think I would kind of want to discuss a higher pay…. I think now, especially, since I [am graduating], I will and I've had also more around two years of experience with them."
> **Kate, 21, undergraduate student and coffee shop barista, Edinburgh**

2.2.2 Experiences with tips

Most of our participants received tips although relatively few of them described these as a substantial source of income or a highly-valued part of their job. One exception here was Caroline, who had recently moved jobs from a bar to a local golf club. She was receiving a lower hourly wage in her new job than in her previous job although she had been promised by her new employer "several hundred pounds" of tips every few months, which she felt would compensate for her lower wage.

Participants reported quite different approaches to tips in different venues: some places split them daily and paid employees in cash, while others processed these through payslips and paid them via bank transfer monthly or quarterly. One participant, who worked in a take-away, reported that tips were donated to charity,

although she noted this was most likely because they tended to be insignificant amounts.

As with Alek, whose story is told above, a small number of participants expressed concerns that other employees or employers were dishonest in their handling of tips. One participant, István, told us that his previous manager was eventually fired for stealing from the tip jar. However, the majority of participants did not express concern about this with their current employers. Many did, however, report being aware of stories of this happening elsewhere in the hospitality industry.
Finally, it is worth noting that several people reported a reduction in tips in recent months and years, which they linked to the cost-of-living crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, which had resulted in a reduction in table service in many venues, and a reduction in the use of cash (also see Chapter Seven).

2.2.3 Experiences of other benefits

Many of our participants reported receiving complementary food and drink at work, while a few participants working for large organisations reported receiving discounts in other venues across a range of locations in Scotland. One participant working at a hotel also told us that they were allowed to use the hotel facilities, such as gym and swimming pool, for free, while another reported being invited to wine-tastings and Michelin star restaurants as part of her job. While few of these participants reported factoring in these benefits to considerations around the fairness of their pay, they did typically see these benefits as increasing their overall job satisfaction. As the quotes below suggest, many participants also valued this time as an opportunity to take a break and to enjoy well-cooked food:

> "Here at the club, you're told to go and make yourself a cup of tea, go and sit down for five minutes. You get your [dinner], before the kitchen closes at 8:30, they usually take last orders for the food about 8.30, 9 o'clock. And the waitress will come and say, 'Chef's asking what you want off the menu for your dinner?' … It's really [nice], I had chicken teriyaki noodles last night, it was beautiful and the last night I was in I had a cheeseburger. You know, it's really nice, the food is lovely."
> **Caroline, 64, bartender in a local golf club in Perthshire**

> "One of the nicest things after your shift [in my last job] you would have a drink, alcoholic, non-alcoholic, whatever you wanted. Just those little things, you know, it don't seem much in your pocket, but [it's a good] feeling."
> **Lutsi, 41 coffee shop barista, Aberdeen**

> "It's nice that I get fed on the job for free because…I never have to spend money on my lunches, which in other jobs would be an expense, I'd have to waste it. Instead, I'm getting that free. Whenever I'm tired at work I can make myself a coffee, add an extra shot or another one until I'm less tired."
> **Andrew, 21, undergraduate student and coffee shop waiter, Edinburgh**

2.2.4 Inaccuracies and uncertainties around pay

Most of our participants reported being paid accurately, honestly, and in accordance with the law. However, there were some notable exceptions here. For example, the worker stories of Tímea and Alek (see above) provide some stark examples of employers illegally holding back holiday pay, paying 'off the books' in cash, making errors in pay calculations, unilaterally making deductions from pay, and withholding tips.

Other participants had similar stories to tell. In many cases, these were not personal experiences but stories that they heard from friends or colleagues. Indeed, there seemed to be a general consensus among most participants that unscrupulous employers and exploitative practices were common in the hospitality industry, particularly when it came to pay.

In other cases, however, employees did have direct experiences of poor practice by employers. For example, some reported not being paid holiday pay or experiencing employers who paid in cash and kept employees 'off the books'. One participant reported having had to threaten to report his last boss to the authorities for tax avoidance if he did not adequately compensate him for firing him without cause. He told us that he was "a dodgy guy that didn't pay his taxes properly…There's quite a lot of managers that worked for him, they got put on gardening leave for years after they left because they knew all that he was up to."

Other participants reported not being paid for overtime or experiencing errors in their pay. For example, Andrei, a housekeeping supervisor, left a job as he was frequently not paid for the hours that he worked. He commented that he only became aware of this because he kept a note of his own hours:

> "But the reason why I left was because they didn't pay for whole hours… For example, they gave me 21 rooms to clean, and it started, for 21 rooms, let's say I have eight and a half hours, but they didn't pay eight hours and a half, they pay like seven, or six hours and a half, which it's not fair. Because I found these things, all the time when I am going to work, when I am coming home, I write on the paper the number of hours what I worked."
> **Andrei, 30, housekeeping supervisor in a hotel, Stirling**

In another example, Daniel, a hotel receptionist, complained that his employers failed to accurately record his hours, meaning that his pay was frequently incorrect. As a result, he always checked his payslip:

> "Every time I get paid I have to look at my hours because it is always wrong… I think it is if you do like an hour extra now and then and you put it up they don't look at it, they look at the rota only and pay you after that. And it happens quite often until all of us, I talked with my supervisor about it but … he tells them but it takes time before you get it fixed and if you get it fixed you get it in the next salary…. I always write up my hours because I [have] seen so many mistakes so I always write my hours what I do…. If you don't check it, they don't." **Daniel, 55, hotel receptionist, Glasgow**

It is interesting to note here that both Andrei and Daniel emphasise the importance of having to check their own pay slips and record their own hours, suggesting a lack of trust in their employer to pay them correctly. Indeed, even for those hospitality workers who reported few negative experiences, it was often seen as necessary to check their hours were correct. In some cases, this was because their hours changed regularly, which was seen as potentially creating confusion:

> "They are recorded on a paper sheet, which is on the wall at work, so, it's typed, but it is just there and then if there are any changes, so, if you switch a shift with someone, or if you end up staying an hour later, because [someone is] in late, then you change it just by hand, but usually I haven't had any problems with that. Sometimes, if there has been a bigger shift change, I do just make sure to message my boss directly, just to ensure that that is recorded right."
> **Kate, 21, undergraduate student and coffee shop barista, Edinburgh**

> "Sometimes I think that's happened maybe a little bit less or a little bit more but usually it's quite consistent with what I think I earn. According to my boss I think it's something to do with maybe the accountant maybe miscalculating something but usually it's not too far off what I should take home. I think at the beginning of employment I [used to check my payslip] a lot and then I haven't done it so much lately… sometimes, if I have time then I'll do a check."
> **Lily, 26, undergraduate student and part-time waitress in Thai restaurant, Edinburgh**

By contrast, others reported checking their payslip assiduously because of negative experiences at previous employers, which continued to affect their attitudes now:

> "Yes, I always [check when I get paid], I have a payslip, I look at the hours, I guess I've always been like that….When I was working in the pub, I was on and off, I was on and off for about four years, I never got an ounce of holiday pay, and yes, I just, so, I think that's maybe where that's come from."
> **Lizzie, 23, waitress in a hotel in an island resort.**

In a final example, Caroline, a 64-year-old woman, reported a mixture of reasons for her concerns around her pay in the job that she just left in a local pub. Chief among these concerns was a lack of clarity and communication from her employers about how she was being paid and what she was entitled to, meaning that she felt unable to check the accuracy of her pay:

> "Well, I just don't know how it worked, to be honest. I could never really work out what my wages were going to be because the boss is not [local] – it was the last Friday of the month that you were paid but if I was working that day, I never knew if I was getting paid for that day, or if it was going on to the next month, do you know what I mean? Because the boss had to know our hours before pay-day. So, I just never knew how much I was actually going to be getting paid…. The manager just took a note of [my hours]. The manager, and she passed it on to the boss, to do the wages…I don't know [if she got it right], to be perfectly honest. And I just, I couldn't be bothered asking the question… And I didn't like that, whereas you know, I write my hours into a diary for [my new job] at the Club and I knew exactly what I'm getting. So,

you know, I feel better about that, that I'll be able to work out what I'm getting paid."
"And also, on the pay-slips from the pub, it said something about holiday, but then the manager that left; we were speaking about holidays one day and I think I had said 'Oh, do you get holiday pay?' And she says, 'Well that's why you haven't got a contract'. So, I never knew if I was actually getting any holiday pay."
Caroline, 64, bartender at golf club, Perthshire

As suggested by Caroline's last comments, uncertainties around holiday pay were common among the workers that we interviewed – a point taken up in the section below.

2.2.5. Uncertainties around holiday pay

Many of our research participants on zero-hours contracts reported being unclear or unaware of whether they were due holiday pay. Some felt certain that they were not due holiday pay, while others had a sense they might be but they were unsure of the details. Some stated that they had recently discovered through talking to other colleagues that they were due holiday pay but had previously not been paid. In all these cases, employees reported that their employers had never explained to them what they were entitled to. The selection of quotes below capture a sense of some of these uncertainties around holiday pay:

"No, well, I think the holiday pay you can ask for, it's a bit weird, I don't really get holiday pay but yes, you can ask for it at a certain quarter of the year or something like that, which I only found out recently, so, I think I've been missing out on that money. If you don't ask for it, you don't get it sort of thing… No, I think it's sort of like a, you have to figure it out yourself, I don't know, it's, they're happy to keep the money, because it's not like their obligation, I don't know. I wish I had known that over the past 12 months."
Alistair, 20, undergraduate student and waiter for events catering agency, Edinburgh

"[Holiday pay] is actually something I looked at recently, I don't think I am [due it] for this job but I could just be reading my payslip wrong…. I did look it up recently, I think it's around, oh God, what was it? I do know, but I can't remember at the moment, definitely more than I do get though…. I think so, but I need to double check that, because in terms of hours, I'm not sure."
Kate, 21, undergraduate student and barista in a coffee shop, Edinburgh

"I think you do [get holiday pay]; you get some days off according to how many days you work. So, I think I don't get that many, I think for the last year, I probably got like five, which I took off.. I don't know if you can just [choose to take them off], I don't think so. I think you, yes, if I had to take them, but if they said it is not allowed, maybe I should have mentioned something about that, as well, when you said about the negatives, the fact that there is not a lot of time that you can take off."
Maria, 38, barista in a coffee shop chain, St Andrews

2.3 Migration and vulnerability

As has been suggested throughout this chapter – and particularly through the worker stories of Tímea and Alek – hospitality workers who have migrated to Scotland in recent years may feel especially vulnerable to exploitation over pay and hours. As explored in their stories, they explained this sense of vulnerability as due, in part, to the exploitative behaviour of employers and, in part, to their limited capacities in English and limited understanding of the industry.

Several other participants reflected on the difficulties created by having limited English. Ana, a waitress and hotel housekeeper whom we interviewed in Spanish, told us that her limited English held her back at work in a number of ways. First, it had limited her capacity to take on customer-facing roles, which was something that she found difficult as talking to customers had always been her favourite part of working in hospitality when she was living in Spain. She told us that, particularly when she first arrived in Scotland, this became a somewhat vicious circle, as she could get only jobs involving nightshifts and cleaning work, which then limited the amount of time she spent talking in English to both customers and colleagues. Although her English was improving now, she only worked as a waitress during the breakfast shift, so her contact with customers was still limited as her tasks revolved largely around re-filling a buffet service. Secondly, she told us that limited English had affected her progression opportunities: she was keen to take on more senior roles but had been told directly by her employer that she had to improve her English first. Thirdly, Ana felt that her limited English left her vulnerable to poor treatment by colleagues. She told us that that this was a problem primarily with other migrants who used her lack of English to exert power over her:

> "That's my main problem working abroad, other foreigners who speak more English think they have more power over those who speak English less well, I've seen it happen with myself and colleagues. I don't speak English but I'm not dumb, I'm not stupid, I can understand what you're saying."
> **Ana, 36, housekeeper and waitress in hotel, Edinburgh (interview translated from Spanish to English)**

In another example, Andrei, a student and housekeeping supervisor, described to us how, when he first arrived in Scotland from Romania, his limited English made it hard for him to apply to jobs through formal means, leaving him instead to rely on Romanian networks. He told us that when applying for his first job in Scotland he did not write a CV or any other formal application: instead he had a conversation with the Romanian manager of the hotel who offered him a job on the spot. As his English has improved, he has applied for jobs more formally through websites such as Indeed, which he described as widening his opportunities, reducing the potential for bad experiences, and leading to his current supervisory position. His improved English also allowed him to switch jobs frequently – he reported having had fourteen jobs in one year – which he told us allowed him to leave jobs when he experienced poor conditions or problematic relationships with colleagues. He now observes other people without good English struggling with application requirements:

> "If you ask people who don't speak English very well, it will be a very complicated process, because for them, it's quite different.. it's quite hard,

> because they don't know even how to complete their CV..[or] it's some people who don't know how to use the online forms, how to apply online and things like that, it's still many people who come with the CV paper, physically to the hotel, and they leave it at Reception, because it's, they don't know how to use the online forms."

Andrei also spoke to us about the potential for exploitation at the hands of online companies who recruit workers from abroad. He described to us his experiences of arranging a job before leaving Romania:

> "It was with [an] agency, not online, because it was very hard to do that online, because it's online, it's many people who promise you a job and they ask you to pay some money, and then you pay but they didn't give you a job, they try to do some tricky things. It was very hard to believe someone. [Then] I found an agency and I think I asked a lawyer to check if they are legal, and things like that, and yes, I've been asking a lawyer to check, if it is legal what they're doing, and he checked, and it was fine and I said, "Okay, I will apply to this."
> **Andrei, 30, housekeeping supervisor in a hotel, Stirling**

Therefore, as with Alek (see worker story above), Andrei emphasises the importance of being vigilant to potential exploitation and of conducting appropriate checks oneself.

It is important to say that not all the migrants we spoke to expressed these sentiments of vulnerability, suggesting that further research could usefully explore the extent of such experiences, and whether certain groups are more likely than others to feel vulnerable in the sector.

Chapter Three: Working conditions

This chapter explores some of the physical and mental challenges that hospitality workers experienced in the workplace, including tiredness, injuries, and stress. It then addresses the question of breaks, and the extent to which our sample of hospitality workers took regular breaks during working hours. Finally, it looks at experiences with customers, which could be a source of both great fulfilment at work, as well as stress, dissatisfaction, and anxiety.

The themes explored in this chapter address issues relating in particular to experiences of 'respect' and 'fulfilment' at work – two of the five dimensions of fair work as outlined in the Fair Work Convention's Framework.

3.1 Physical challenges at work

Our participants described a range of physical challenges associated with their work. These ranged from minor complaints to experiences of more serious injuries and accidents.

Among chefs, a common complaint was the heat of the kitchens, which they often found made their working conditions uncomfortable:

> "The reality is that the job is hard on the body. And it's hard in a kitchen. It's a very hot environment to be in. You've got all the cookers, the ovens."
> **John, 53, head chef and restaurant manager, small town in the Highlands**

> "In the Indian kitchen you have to work in the heat, and the smoke, and it is more dangerous than [other kitchens]…You have to have everything in front of you, boiling something, more risk in the kitchen."
> **Birodh, 30, chef, Stirling**

> "The heat [is the worst thing working in a kitchen]."
> **Megan, 32, kitchen runner, small town in the Highlands**

Another particularly common complaint among all the hospitality workers we interviewed was tiredness, in addition to aches and pains related to prolonged periods of standing. Many participants also linked these experiences to a lack of regular breaks:

> "It's quite exhausting but I feel especially with, in hospitality when you're on your feet all the time, it doesn't, you just get into the habit and you don't really notice, until the end of the day. You do eat, just here and there, just to fuel yourself a little bit, but by the end of the day, I'm exhausted…. I [also] have had periods of time where I felt quite light headed, just because, as I said, we don't always get breaks and so you can't always have food."
> **Kate, 21, undergraduate student and barista in coffee shop, Edinburgh**
> "It's just exhausting, very exhausting…. Like running back and forth all day and in the kitchen at night [without breaks]."
> **Megan, 32, kitchen runner, small town in the Highlands**

> "You know, standing for six, seven hours at a time is really, really, at the time you're busy and you just don't feel it or think about it. But you know, once you come home and you sit down; you try and stand up again, your feet are just throbbing, you know."
> **Caroline, 64, bartender in golf club, Perthshire**

In addition to taking breaks, appropriate footwear was important for many workers in order to minimise pain when working. Vicki, however, described how she was reluctant to wear trainers to work, as she felt they were not appropriate in a cocktail bar. While this was her choice rather than a request from her employer, she noted that a former manager in a hotel had banned her from wearing trainers to work:

> "It's really like affected, it's really sore, my feet the next day, I will try and get up out of bed, and honestly, sometimes I feel like I can't walk, because my feet are so sore, killing. So, that's the only thing really, just from standing around or walking around all night sort of thing … I guess I could probably wear better shoes to work, but it's hard when you work in a nice cocktail bar, you don't really want to be trainers. I normally wear boots, not heeled boots or anything but try and wear nicer shoes which obviously, aren't very good on your feet. … [At my last job] I bought some new trainers to wear to work, but they were nice ones, they were proper, just nice little flat trainers and the owner told me I couldn't wear them and the owner told me I had to wear nice dress shoes, because I was in reception. But I'm like, I'm running around for breakfast as well. So, that really pissed me off actually."
> **Vicki, 28, bartender, small town in Perthshire**

3.1.1. Injuries and accidents

Several of the participants that we interviewed reported suffering minor injuries at work, such as burns or cuts to hands and fingers. We additionally interviewed people who reported more serious injuries linked to their work. One example here is Tímea, who described the long-term problems with her wrists that she developed as a result of lifting large chicken fryers in a kitchen for hours on end without a break (see worker story in Chapter Two).

Another notable example here is that of John – a head chef in a restaurant that he also manages. He told us how he has a long-term vascular condition in his legs, due to the effects of constant standing in the kitchen for long periods:

> "[Cooking] is not great for your health. I blew the valves in my legs.... So, you end up with sores on your legs. I had open sores on my legs and things like this. So, I've got to wear compression stockings… The consultant said that there's no cure for it. There's no operation that they can do that'll fix it. [It's] because you're standing for maybe 14 hours a day every day. There's no seats, no sit down, you're standing. You're doing prep in the kitchen all the time. So, it's not a great thing for your health, mobility. [The doctors said] it's standing all the time. That's what caused it."

He described this as a painful condition:

> "It's horrific because what happens is…unless I wear those compression bandages…then your legs start to twinge and then you go into full cramps. Particularly through the night is the worst part when it just, it just, your muscles just lock right up and you've just got to try and rub and rub and rub your leg... So, that's what happens, it traps the lactic acid in there and you end up with severe leg cramp."

In addition to this vascular condition, John had also developed carpal tunnel syndrome in his arms, which required an operation:

> "So, what happens is you're using your hands all the time for either cheffing or mixing, all those kind of things. So, you get ailments, repetitive strain injuries. So, I had to get [an operation] for carpal tunnel."
> **John, 53, head chef and restaurant manager, small town in the Highlands**

In another example, Tony, who had worked for decades as a restaurant manager, described to us an accident that he had in the kitchen, resulting in long-term arthritis in his hand:

> "I had a bad accident with my hand, years ago... We were downstairs, doing a dinner, and the chef had come down and said: 'We're expecting an environmental health visit tomorrow. Can you just double-check everything's okay with the kitchen?' So, we pulled everything out, checked everything. It was one of the big mixers, the really big mixing bowls…. And as I put it back, I then realised it was plugged in. So, aye ... Thankfully, it was on the lowest speed. So, I put my own finger back on – it was hanging off. So, I've got really bad arthritis in my left hand…. So, when I'm opening wine and champagne ... I've got to do it a different way… It's just because I don't really have the strength in my hand."

Tony had also developed a chronic knee problem, which he linked in part to his work and the effects of standing for long periods of time. He had stopped working in the hospitality industry as a result of the injury and was currently claiming universal credit at the time of his interview with us. He described to us his anxiety when applying for new jobs with his knee injury:

> "I was applying for jobs but I was getting quite anxious about things. I was getting interviews set up, but I was cancelling them and saying: 'I've been offered another job.' I hadn't been offered another job, I just didn't feel mentally strong enough to do the job…I think a lot of that was today with my knee, I would say to people: 'I wouldn't employ a limping waiter.' I don't limp, I waddle – but I think that's to do with the extra weight I've got. A lot of people were saying: 'Listen, Tony, we don't mind.' I'd say: 'No, but it bothers me."

Tony has subsequently had an operation on his knee and was contemplating returning to hospitality work when we interviewed him. He described his anxiety when undertaking a shift in a restaurant a few weeks prior to the interview, although he found ultimately that he was able to cope with the pressure:

"I did a couple of services in people's restaurants for them ... I worked in a restaurant about a fortnight ago, and for that first hour I was an absolute mess [with nerves]. But you see, once we were actually – pardon me for swearing – in the shite and we were really up against it, that was me, I was fine. I think it's a confidence thing more than anything. I've done wine tasting for people, and I've done private events for people, and I've been fine – but it was actually a proper dinner service, and it was ... We were really up to there in it. I thought: 'God, it's good to be back.' And I thought, yes, I would know when it was time to take my medication for my knee."
Tony, 54, restaurant manager, Glasgow

3.2 Mental challenges at work

Several of our participants described their work as mentally challenging and often stressful. As the sections below explore, one particular source of stress for hospitality workers was difficult customers. In addition, participants also emphasised that, in general, the pace of their workplaces was often fast, and they frequently felt under pressure to deliver efficient, quick and cheerful service without errors – a sense of pressure that could result in feeling stressed and overwhelmed:

"It gets quite stressful and that can cause quite a lot of conflict in the team. Just when you have too many clients waiting and normally we are just two in the whole place, so, one doing the coffees and the other one serving, it can get quite stressful.. and you feel like you're going to have a go at your colleagues, just because you can't keep up with the pace."
Maria, 38, barista in coffee shop in St Andrews

"It's a stressful [job]…just the pressure, it is a consistent pressure in this industry but the thing is, you either thrive off that pressure or you fold."
Lizzie, 23, waitress in island resort

"Sometimes it's just overwhelming. There's a lot of work in the job, and even though, it's a bar, it's not a hospital or something, but you've just got so much to do, and you sometimes feel like, I just can't finish it, so it's stressful, that's probably the worst."
Jessica, 38, wine-bar manager, Glasgow

"Hospitality is not for everybody. It's a very demanding job and sometimes it's not very thankful, unfortunately…. Hospitality is just a different field, you have to be a people person, you have to work in teams, you know, it's not for everyone…. On a stressful evening when it's busy and everything, you might lose [your] rag a little bit. But as years have gone on I've kind of just gone with the flow of, you can't please everybody, you can only do what you can, and everybody makes mistakes. So I've definitely calmed down from what I was and, like I said, in the bar now I have the authority when I speak, to say, "Right, enough's enough, out you get," sort of thing. So I've toughened up, I would say, over the years. But some days you would come home after a night and…you would just want to cry, because it's just like everything's gone wrong now."
Ellen, 40, office supervisor and manager in a hotel on an island

> "I think to work in a bar you've got to be thick skinned and be able to just brush it off and these people are intoxicated most of the time and [..] you've got to take [it with] a pinch of salt, brush it off your shoulder and get on with your day because if you don't it'll later affect you and I have seen people that have worked in pubs and stuff that had to take time off for their mental health and it's because they take work home. [If you do that] you're going to suffer at home […] The minute you walk out that door you've got it let it go and as I say when you walk in the pub you put your bar face on and you're good to go and your bar face stays at work and you bring your face home. That's just me and my silly methods, but I swear by that."
> **Kirsty, 31, bartender, South Lanarkshire**

Conversely, Amy, a recent university graduate who works on multiple zero-hour contracts doing events work, reported her job to be mentally draining when there was a lack of clientele. She described to us how "mind-numbing" her job can be when she is working in a role that requires her to wait for hours without colleagues to keep her company or without tasks to complete:

> "I didn't have a lot of tasks to do [today]. It was more just like directing people and helping out the event organizers and helping out the catering staff and stuff like that. And so in that respect it was fairly quiet which I suppose is quite good. But at the same time, because it was quiet and I didn't have a lot to do, I was left standing for long periods of time while meetings and stuff was going on. Some meetings, lasted like three hours and things like that. So I was just kind of stood on my own with no one to speak to, nothing to do, can't go on your phone, can't do anything. And so, I just gonna stare at a wall for about three hours at a time…So it was kind of mind-numbing my job."
> **Amy, 24, event worker through app, Aberdeen**

To conclude the last two sections, our sample of hospitality workers reported experiencing a range of physical and mental stressors in their work. It is worth noting that while none of the participants reported receiving any formal support from their employers in relation to these stressors, our research did not focus in depth on questions of occupational health, nor did it include the perspectives of employers on these issues. That said, one issue that frequently arose in the narratives of workers in relation to these challenges was that of breaks, as these were typically seen by workers as an important way to help mitigate some of the challenges described above. However, as the next section explores, hospitality workers reported that they were often unable to take breaks when needed, or were forced to skip them altogether.

3.3 Experiences of breaks

Many of the hospitality workers that we interviewed reported not taking regular breaks during their working shifts, despite being aware that they were legally entitled to a break after a certain number of hours at work. There were a number of different reasons for this: most typically, our participants reported that they were only able to take breaks when the venue was quiet, something that was rarely guaranteed, as suggested in the below quotes:

> "Sometimes it is so busy you work like 14 hours, 12 hours with no break."
> **Alek, 35, chef, Glasgow**

> "We work through, yeah. Well, when I start work, service starts within half an hour. So, you have got the first half an hour for prep and getting everything [ready]. And then it's a case of service itself starts. So, you don't really get a break during service."
> **Megan, 32, kitchen runner, small town in the Highlands**

> "I only [take a break] if it is quiet. If it goes quiet then yes, you can sit down and have a wee drink but if it's busy right through then you're busy right through…I've just accepted that's just how it is you know."
> **Julie, 57, full-time administrator and front-of-house in take-away, Glasgow**

For two hospitality workers that we interviewed, Daniel and Caroline, a lack of breaks was a product of working alone. Daniel, a night-time hotel receptionist, told us how difficult he found it to work alone at night, something that he never had to do at his previous hotel. Part of his concerns around working alone were to do with security and feeling tired, although he also told us that working alone made it very hard to take a proper break:

> "You don't really, you take your break when you can take a break because you don't have anybody who can let you go for a break…. You shouldn't go out [the hotel], you shouldn't leave the hotel empty. [So on a break] I usually sit in the office. And watching the cameras at the same time so it is not really a break, it is just sitting."
> **Daniel, 55, hotel receptionist, Glasgow**

By comparison, Caroline, a 64-year-old woman living in a village in Perthshire, described to us how she regularly worked alone in her previous job in the local pub. She went into detail about one particular occasion where she had found it extremely tiring and stressful to work alone, without a break:

> "In the bar I didn't [get a break], because you were on by yourself…even on a really busy night. ..[Once] they were doing a pool competition thing and it was quite busy and there was two girls on during the day. And I knew it was going to be really busy at night. And I just presumed that two people would be on… But I was told 'No' I was going to be on myself so by the time I got in at 6 o'clock the [customers] were half-cut [drunk]. And it got busier and busier and I was on my own…and it was just manic…from 6 until 1, no break….So I just didn't think it was fair and I said [afterwards], 'I would never do it again'. And actually I just said, 'I would rather just put in my notice'. And they said 'Well, we don't want to lose you'. So 'that's okay, you won't have to work on your own again'. But I did."
> **Caroline, 64, bartender in a golf club Perthshire**

Other hospitality workers reported that they did usually take breaks, although that there was often little flexibility as to when they took their break, again due to the venue being busy and/or due to staff shortages:

> "I mean I'm on my feet all day. I'll get half an hour break and that will come really and truly whenever the café is more quiet and we can afford to have less staff on hand. So, it might be that I have to take my break two, three hours into my shift. It might be that I take it five, six hours into my shift. It's very dependent on when is the best time for your time and I don't leave my co-workers with a massive amount of work to do whilst I'm sitting around taking it easy."
> **Andrew, 21, undergraduate student and waiter in coffee shop, Edinburgh**

> "We do get [a break], which is a lunch break and we get food as well, which is nice. But as I said, if it's really busy, you have to work around that and you might have to take your break a lot later or a lot earlier than planned, but we do try and make sure that everyone does [take one]. But it is also from our point of view, it's more controlled by us, as employees…But sometimes we wouldn't get one at all, because we were short-staffed."
> **Kate, 21, undergraduate student and barista in coffee shop, Edinburgh**

As implied in Kate's final comments here, some of our research participants also told us that they had to take responsibility for organising their own breaks, or for making sure that their colleagues took their breaks: in other words, supervisors and managers rarely enforced breaks. Denise, for example, told us she took it upon herself to ensure that her colleagues took breaks:

> "I'm sort of, I'm like the mum, I just go like, come on, you go and half an hour and then I'll have half an hour. Because we help each other out, it's fairer. If you're all working together, it's like a spider's web, and it all joins up. So, one person is off, you're not missing them, because the other person is sitting down, because the other people are covering you, sort of thing."
> **Denise, 59, waitress in coffee shop, Dunfermline**

By comparison, Lutsi, who worked as a supervisor in a large coffee shop chain, commented that she tried to be very disciplined in taking her break, even though it was busy. She commented she found it best to leave the building, otherwise people would continue to ask her questions throughout her break:

> "I try not to [miss breaks]. [Also] if you let people, you know, most of them don't mean it badly, but they test you, they test [with one] more question, small question[s], you know…where [are] straws supposed to be?.. In real life it can be very busy, but if you postpone that lunch break, then [another staff member] comes in [and needs a break], and it's a rolling effect."
> **Lutsi, 41, barista in coffee shop, Aberdeen.**

Finally, a few participants told us that they preferred to skip their breaks and finish earlier in the day, as Tom explained to us for example:

> "[We are] supposed to get half hour breaks, sometimes it happens, sometimes it doesn't…[Also] if I take a half hour during the day, it just elongates the day…I'd rather give the staff breaks, rather than myself, and then I [can] just sit down at the end of the night."
> **Tom, 35, assistant manager in a café in a tourist venue, Edinburgh**

3.4 Relationships with customers

Many of the hospitality workers in our sample described customers as simultaneously the 'best' and 'worst' things about their job. As the first section below describes, most of the workers we talked to cited interactions with customers as something that boosted their mood and made their work enjoyable and, in some cases, meaningful and purposeful. However, it was also fairly common for hospitality workers to report negative experiences with customers – experiences that ranged from the frustration of dealing with customer complaints to incidences of sexual harassment and racism. The final section on customers takes the story of Hannah as a case-study. Hannah was fairly unusual in our sample in that she cited little pleasure in her interaction with customers at all. However, we have told her story here as she is a good example of the general point highlighted by our research, namely, that relationships with customers, when difficult, can be a source of significant distress for hospitality workers.

3.4.1 Positive interactions with customers

The majority of our research participants reported that interactions with customers were one of the favourite things about their work and an important source of contentment and job satisfaction. Many participants emphasised how much they enjoyed talking to customers, particularly regulars, and that this sort of regular social interaction had a positive effect on their mood.

Furthermore, some participants emphasised how such interactions with customers gave them a sense of purpose and meaning in their jobs because they felt that they were able to make a difference in the lives of others:

> "I would say my mental health when I work with people is very good because you see different nationalities, different people… Of course you have difficult people, you have good people, you have all kinds of people but that is the job you have in hospitality; you don't know what you are getting. And I love it because…there is not a bad person, a person can have bad days but you can make it different because you can make the person smile in the end. That's my goal."
> **Daniel, 55, hotel receptionist, Glasgow**

> "You're also doing it for the passion and creating that experience,. My main thing is I want people to enjoy themselves and I don't care if they're in a five star environment or where I am now, in the pub environment, if they're there for one week, or one day, if they're buying the cheapest of things or the best of things, I want to give them that best experience. I've looked after people from royalty and celebrities all the way to my next door neighbour's granny and granddad and I don't care who it is, I just want them to have the best time." **Mike, 44 bartender and former hotel manager, Dundee**

Two hospitality workers, both of whom worked in their local villages or towns, told us how they felt that through their work they were able to make a difference by supporting regulars who might be vulnerable or in need of support:

"I chat to people if I see they're looking a little bit flat or something…they trust you and they see your face every week… I know what they tell me is confidential. So, you're like doing counselling as well… There's a lot of people as well, they can't get out, or they can only maybe go out once or twice a week, and maybe they don't feel like, oh I can't tell my family or they can't tell the doctor, so, you're helping them as well. ...They might chat to you about little things… or they're worried [about something]. Because I know loads of people… I'm like a middle man, if they're saying about energy bills, or something, I might just go, have you been to [this company], they've got a man that comes out and looks at your house and tells you how to save money. Or if they're saying they're struggling, I say, if they want clothes or something like that, I say well there's a clothing bank, do you want the address? I'm like a middle man."
Denise, 59, waitress in coffee shop, Dunfermline

"I would say [my job affects me] positively because you know, I'm meeting people; I'm speaking to people. And half a dozen times I've said that I am a 'people person' and I like communicating with people, so I really enjoy it, so I would say positively [and] it's a real local pub and [there are] some characters, you know. For instance, there's an old man, he's 84 years old and he's just a sweetheart. He's like Santa Claus…I'm actually going round to see him today, he's just round the corner from us so I'm going to go round and see him. And my husband's had a clear-out of clothes and I'm just going to try and help him a bit, you know, but it's, it's that kind of, everybody knows everybody in the village, you know."
Caroline, 64, bartender in golf club in Perthshire

As a final point, some hospitality workers also saw interactions with customers as a way in which they used or developed their own skill-set, which added to their sense of value and purpose in their jobs, even for those who were not planning to work in hospitality in the long-term

"I'm practising my [English] language as well, you speak with more native people….I'm speaking [with people with] like local accents and things like that, I quite like that."
Maria, 38, barista in local coffee shop, St Andrews

"I love working with people because I speak six languages and I can use them when I need to use them and that's very, very good in hospitality because you get lots of different nationalities."
Daniel, 55, hotel receptionist, Glasgow

"I've picked up skills like customer service and I guess just working as part of the team. And, I have learnt how to interact with my co-workers and to be organised, which has been useful."
Andrew, 21, undergraduate student and waiter in coffee shop, Edinburgh

3.4.2. Negative experiences with customers

While most of our participants told us that interacting with customers was one of the best things about their jobs, these same workers also told us that customers could simultaneously be one of the worst things about their jobs. The following sections explore a range of problems faced by hospitality workers, namely: drunk customers; customers who were overly demanding or quick to complain; and customers who were verbally or physically abusive. The final section looks at the experiences of Hannah, who identified difficult customers as the reason for her desire to leave the hospitality industry.

3.4.2.1 Dealing with drunk customers

Daniel, who worked as a night-time hotel receptionist, expressed concerns about drunk customers, particularly because he worked alone and was responsible for the well-being and security of his guests. It is worth noting that Daniel was currently looking for another job, which he attributed, at least in part, to his concerns about having to work nightshifts alone. He described one incident where he had to try to handle a drunk customer who was sleeping in a corridor, an experience that he had found difficult to manage alone:

> "The only problem I am not happy with is because [I] work alone in the night. And I know it is quiet in the night but I see it a different way because if there is a security risk you can't really do much alone, you need to be two people probably. Because you're not allowed to lock in anybody if something happened because that's a breach of human rights as well because – [if] people [come] home drunk and then, or coming to the rooms drunk and then starting to fight… You have to be concerned about that because of course you can call the police but how long will it take for the police to come?.... I had once that they came home so drunk so they fell asleep on the hallway and I tried to get them into the rooms… but by law you're not allowed to touch people because that is, I don't know if it's called assault or something because you can be charged for something, if you touch somebody and the guests say okay you have touched me. So you just try to wake them up and try and get them back in the room."
> **Daniel, 55, hotel receptionist, Glasgow**

Other concerns among our participants about drunk customers revolved around their increased likeliness to engage in discriminatory or abusive behaviour (see sections below), and around the challenge of when to stop serving customers who had drunk too much. For example, Alistair, who worked in events catering, described how he found it difficult to handle the reaction of customers when it was time to stop serving them alcohol:

> "A lot of the shifts are at football games, so, it depends if they're winning or not… especially at football games, Scottish football, the clientele can be a bit rowdy…It's a bit hard to deal with sometimes, because they are either drunk or angry and they expect a lot more from you than what you should be doing. So, like the other day, they're obviously quite happy that they won, the Rangers won, but they were getting very drunk and just sort of pushing us to give them more drinks than they should have been getting. We closed the bar

> and they were like, come on, just another one! They were very pushy, which is a hard one for us, because we obviously have to say no, and then we feel like we're disappointing [them]. We made like a nice relationship throughout the whole day and then we don't want to ruin it by saying, oh the bar is closed now, especially when they're all very drunk at that time."
> **Alistair, 20, undergraduate student and waiter in events catering, Edinburgh**

3.4.2.2 Dealing with unhappy customers

Many of our participants reported finding it hard when customers were unhappy, both because it could feel unjustified and hard to handle, as well as because their complaints could reflect badly on the workers themselves. This was something that Lily spoke about at length in her interview: she talked about a range of problems that she faced with customers, including complaints that she spoke too quickly, as well as complaints from customers when she asked them for ID to buy alcohol. She also spoke to us about how COVID restrictions had created more of these types of difficult interactions, due to the requirements on staff to enforce restrictions (see Chapter Seven). For Lily, one of the most difficult things about unhappy customers was that they could leave complaints online, which could then made her employers unhappy, as she told us:

> "According to one of the reviews, [I spoke too fast]. I'm like I'm sorry but I wish I knew that I'd spoken too fast and you didn't like it… I feel very frustrated and I don't know what else to do because most of the time I try to do my job and I don't mean to give them a bad experience at all..[Also] some of the [customers] just for all kinds of reasons get upset that we ID them and [think] it's our fault that we ID them or we didn't ID them the last time. That frustrates me a lot…they will say all these kinds of things…they even threaten to leave bad reviews online if we don't sell them alcohol."
> **Lily, 26, undergraduate student and part-time waitress in Thai restaurant, Edinburgh**

Other participants expressed similar sentiments of frustration at difficult customers, particularly when they were quick to complain:

> "[You get] the occasional customer who is just inappropriate or clearly has had a bad day…just rude, inappropriately rude, it's just unnecessary, the way they treat you, and they just expect certain things from you and they don't realise that it is just a normal job, that is just a person, doing their job and trying to do their best and sometimes it just doesn't work out. There are problems, things happen, and some people just don't really realise that, so, I think it more comes from that. So, if it takes a bit longer for their coffee, then some people, you just kind of have a different reaction, so, they kind of complain a lot more than others."
> **Kate, 21, undergraduate student and barista in coffee shop, Edinburgh**

> "The bad things [about the job] is, I guess, the front facing role, customer service and dealing with the general public. So, again, there's plenty of lovely people who come in with a smile on their face, it's a lovely attraction, but equally you can deal with some really nasty people who are miserable and

come in and just almost want to ruin your day, which is like that everything that you do there's always an issue with it. There's never, nothing's ever perfect and you just have to again grin and bear it."
Andrew, 21, undergraduate student and waiter in coffee shop, Edinburgh

"This industry is definitely not for the light-hearted…I think just because it is a tough job, you're on your feet, all day, you're running around all the time, you need a thick skin, because you do get arsey people, you do get some, like you have they nicest customers in the world and then you could have a table that just complains all night. So, I just think yes, you've got to be tough."
Lizzie, 23, waitress in an island resort

Finally, some of our participants also told us that they often felt that customers lacked respect for hospitality workers, treating them as somehow 'inferior' or 'subservient'. This was Hannah's view, for example (see worker story below). Amy, who worked in events work, made similar comments about feeling unappreciated and even dehumanised by her customers:

"I think all together working in hospitality is generally soul-crushing and because you do have that thought of like these people don't see me as a person. I'm just a number. The public that I'm serving don't see me as a person and I am wasting my life. I do not have a passion for customer service."

3.4.2.3 Experiences of physical and verbal abuse from customers

The majority of our participants reported feeling safe at work and being treated with respect by customers. There were exceptions here, however. Lutsi, for example, told us about an experience in a previous job when a customer had physically accosted her:

"The worst case [I had], it wasn't even because I was foreign it was just because I was, you know, [I am] service sector. [It] was two American ladies. My worst customer experience ever. [It was] a tourist hostel… They had a policy, you are checked out, you want to leave your luggage, it's okay, we lock it up for you. But there's a big, long lunch break in the middle. At that time you can't access it, okay, it's locked up, so nobody was allowed to unlock it.. Somebody was working after lunch, in the street I met those two in their 50s, Americans, who had left her bag there, and she like 'oh, we are going to leave now, we want our bags.' And I said 'I'm sorry, I can't do it'. One grabbed my hand and tried to drag me."
Lutsi, 41, barista in coffee shop, Aberdeen

In another example, Marek, a chef, explained how verbal abuse towards his colleagues had also had a negative impact on him at work:

"I don't work in the open kitchen so I don't really interact with our customers…One of my colleagues, she had a very hoarse voice today and…with their shift progressing, slowly getting worse and worse…until the point where she almost lost her voice by end of shift, she was wearing masks

all the time…[A customer] told her she shouldn't work in this state and he was very rude while saying it. And she told him that she needs to pay her bills and this guy called her names, he knocked the cup full of coffee that he ordered on the floor, he make a mess and left and yeah, she was very foul mode after this interaction, and she told me about it, it also affected my day."
Marek, 30, chef at an international airport

3.4.2.4. Experiences of sexual harassment from customers

A number of participants also reported either experiencing or witnessing sexual harassment from customers. For example, Lizzie, a 23-year old woman who had worked in the hospitality sector since leaving school, recounted to us a recent experience of sexual harassment in her new job as a waitress in an island resort:

"I've had a bit of a horrible, shitty experience with a young, well they weren't really young, I think they were in their 30s, with some lads. They all wanted to pay separately, they'd been hammering the cocktails…and there were six of them. I dropped one of the receipts and as I bent down, he just, I don't even want to say it, but he just said something as I bent down…I was a bit shocked, that hasn't happened, I used to work in [an army camp], which is the biggest army camp in Europe, even some of the lads weren't that bad, I was taken aback by it, I don't know, it just hasn't happened to me in a while. Someone making a sexual comment, do you know what I mean? I was just a bit, but I told the manager and they were straight on it…they weren't allowed back in the restaurant after that and they were here for a few days, do you know what I mean? I was [pleased] like, oh the managers] do care."

Lizzie told us that she had experienced harassment in the past from customers in different jobs, although she said she had found this particular experience more upsetting than these previous experiences:

"Like [I've had] the cat calling, I've worked in old man pubs really, where I'm from….Yes, just be chatting and I'd be like okay it's fine, it's just one of those things, I think, I don't know, especially for women, it sounds horrible, but you kind of get used to it….Just like it is what it is, but yes, no, I haven't had someone kind of, especially that explicit, I don't think anyone has said something that bad [as those lads did]."
Lizzie, 23, waitress in an island resort

In addition, several other workers reported having witnessed co-workers experience sexual harassment from customers:

"As long as they are not overly drunk they tend to be absolutely fine....[when they are drunk] they can be sometimes a bit more sleazy. It tends not be to the lads, it tends to be more to the ladies if that makes sense….Usually the supervisors deal with it or whatever… but it is rare it's the exception not the norm."
Neil, 38, full-time administrator and part-time waiter in events catering, Glasgow

> “There’s a couple of customers that can be, you do get the occasional leery customer… especially to girls. So there was one guy who was a local, a regular guy, and he used to come in with his sister all the time, and used to drink loads together, and he started, not stalking her, but he used to start making some inappropriate comments to her. And she just didn’t want to go and serve him anymore. And eventually another manager had to step in and say, I think you need to like stop saying that to her, and so this guy stopped coming for a while. But now that girl’s left, so he’s started coming back, but he doesn’t do it to anybody else. But I think yeah, we had to step in and say something.” **Jessica, 38, wine-bar manager, Glasgow**

> “As I say, the fish restaurant I was working in a couple of months ago, helping my friend with all the young, the young staff. I had to say to a couple of girls: ‘Listen, I know you would rather wear a skirt than trousers, but’ – and I thought, I’ve got to be very careful about how I word this now, because it’s now 2022 – ‘you’re not on the menu.’ And ‘you will get that’ and ... without scarring them, I’d say to them: ‘If there is an occasion when you’re serving a table and you feel uncomfortable, let me know and I’ll start serving them. You don’t have to tell me anything. You just say, ‘Listen, I don’t want to serve them because of such-and-such’ I’ll say: ‘Not a problem, I’ll serve them.”
> **Lizzie, 23, waitress in an island resort**

3.4.2.5. Experiences of racism from customers

Among those workers with histories of migration, two reported having experienced discrimination or racism from customers. Birodh, a 30-year old chef who was born in Nepal and was the only non-white person that we interviewed in our research, described experiencing racism from customers in the take-away restaurant where he worked after first arriving in Scotland in 2020. He told us how he felt anxious for his safety at these times, as well as disempowered and mentally distressed by these experiences:

> “Yes, not friendly, sometimes, you work in the takeaway at the weekend night, people coming in drunk, I don’t like this… Because, if you are working, they are, like starting laughing with you.. They are coming in drunk, they come in drunk… but one or two times, I think people, they look at the colour of my hair, the colour of my face…people directly said, ‘Oh are you from India, Pakistan?’ And they are trying to laugh with you and normally my English is also not, so, I can’t talk with them, and I ignore them. So, they are talking in a different way [with you]…. Like some people, make comments like this… you feel unsafe, if you have to… say something, you’re going to be attacked… so, the only option, you have to be quiet. … they are drunk and they could do anything, so, I have to be quiet and control myself… It mentally affects you; you feel like why is this happening?”
> **Birodh, 30, chef, Stirling**

By comparison, Lutsi, who had worked in various hospitality jobs since moving from Estonia over 10 years ago, told us that she had experienced prejudice from customers:

“It’s you know, sometimes [people are] really funny about foreigners. [They say] ‘that’s normal there, that’s how they do it where you come from’…I can be sensitive [to it], but normally I have enough to do with my work, you know. And I say it probably helps I’m normally quite strong personality.”
Lutsi, 41, barista in coffee shop, Aberdeen

Chapter Four: Workplace relationships

This chapter looks at how hospitality workers experienced their relationships with co-workers and managers. We found that most hospitality workers reported good relationships with their co-workers and many cited these as a source of job satisfaction and enjoyment. Hospitality workers were more likely, however, to have experienced problems with managers and other senior staff: in the sections below, we show that some workers reported harsh and even bullying treatment from managers, which they cited as a source of stress in the workplace. Many of the chefs and restaurant managers that we interviewed expressed the view that such behaviour was particularly common in restaurant kitchens.

The chapter also shows how some of the hospitality workers in our sample have experienced or witnessed discrimination and harassment from co-workers based on their gender, race and ethnicity, and age. The chapter concludes with a worker story on Amy, who cited negative experiences with managers as a key reason for wanting to leave the hospitality industry.

The themes explored In this chapter address issues relating in particular to experiences of 'respect' and 'fulfilment' at work – two of the five dimensions of fair work as outlined in the Fair Work Convention's Framework.

4.1 Positive relationships with co-workers

Many of our participants reported close relationships with their colleagues, often using the language of friendship or even family to describe the nature of these relationships. The below quotes have been chosen to illustrate how hospitality workers saw these close relationships between colleagues as a source of social support and a significant aspect of their overall job satisfaction and well-being in the workplace:

> "Here I found out the kind of colleagues who you can work with them, with, actually we make a good team, we can be a team together and we can understand each other, and we help each other when we need. It's just, this is the reason actually why, which motivates me to stay in this hotel."
> **Andrei, 30, housekeeping supervisor in a hotel, Stirling**

> "The main thing that I love about hospitality in general but also this job was my co-workers, they were just lovely, just to work with and just the team dynamic that we have going on…., I mainly worked with women, which is usually my experience in hospitality, and they were all kind of the same age as me. So, we had that connection on, you know, we were still doing university or a lot of us just had graduated. So, we had the same life experiences, which was probably what was important with that, and so sometimes we'd have socials and things, where we would meet up and that also allowed us to bond a bit more… you become very close to your co-workers very quickly, because I think you're just with each other for such a long amount of time, that you do break those barriers very quickly. So, you get to talk about those things and it was always very easy. So, if someone was

having a bad day, you would try and be there for them and make sure they feel okay at work."
Kate, 21, undergraduate student and barista in coffee shop, Edinburgh

"I mean I have got to know some of the guys there as well, and they treat me like I am part of the team now. So, I like that it's almost like a social life. My co-workers we get on very well together… Just seeing people and talking to people. I think during covid I really missed people, you can probably tell I am quite … my wife says I am a sociable bugger. So, covid didn't really suit me because I like speaking to people."
Neil, 38, full-time administrator and part-time waiter for events catering company, Glasgow

4.2 Experiences of bullying from managers and senior staff

Many of our participants reported having good relationships with senior staff members, in some cases referring to their managers as 'friends' or even 'like family'. However, other participants cited bad management practices as a major source of stress and dissatisfaction in their workplace, and even as a reason for moving jobs. István described a former boss to us, for example:

"[I had] a terrible manager, the worst I could imagine. And basically he was bullying staff members, and he was micromanaging and all, yeah, so there was one point when I was thinking about okay, I'm going to leave this job too, because people left the job, one after another, and every week somebody left."
István, 34, head barista in a specialist coffee shop, Edinburgh

Another participant, Caroline, left a job in local pub primarily because of a new manager, whom she felt had a bullying personality, as she told us:

"I know of things that she's done and said to other people. And I've been there when I've actually heard her, that tone that she speaks to people. And I just didn't like it. … You know, you can't speak to people like that."
Caroline, 64, bartender in golf club, Perthshire

By comparison, Jessica explained how a previous manager had created a "toxic environment" at work, ultimately leading to people leaving the bar:

"The old manager we had was very, very difficult, and she was fired for bullying people, so a couple left because she bullied them. Another person was about to leave, and then that's when we all told the boss, this can't keep going on, this is ridiculous, so we lost a few people because of that… it was beginning to get quite a toxic environment, and for such a close-knit team, when that happens, you know, people didn't want to come to work, it was lots of gossiping, yeah, it wasn't a fun period. That was a really stressful time, it was difficult."
Jessica, 38, wine bar manager, Glasgow

In another example, Andrei reported leaving a job in a hotel due to a critical manager and supervisor, who he felt had behaved in a bullying manner:

> "[In my old job] the supervisor and the manager, even if I do my job, 100 percent, they found all the time something to say, all the time, it was like creepy… They tried to make me feel like inferior, [like] they are someone and I am nothing." **Andrei, 30, housekeeping supervisor in a hotel, Stirling**

The quotes above reflects that workers in our sample often changed jobs within the hospitality industry. We identified a number of different factors leading to a high turnover, such as relationships with supervisors, working conditions, hours and pay. One of the most common themes was that workers often used it as a strategy to deal with bad treatment, such as the examples above where Caroline, Jessica and Andrei left due to bullying and toxic working environments. Similarly, Timea moved jobs when she experienced sexual harassment.

Other hospitality workers told us that their managers, while often good-tempered and friendly, could still on occasion react harshly and impatiently to situations in a way that often felt demoralising and unfair. For example, Andrew, a student who worked part-time in a coffee shop in Edinburgh, described two occasions to us when his manager – with whom he said he had basically a good relationship – had lost his temper with him, once for checking his phone and once for making a mistake with an order. Similarly, Benci, a chef, described having excellent relationships with his head chef and sous chef, despite an incident when he first started training with them when they shouted at him to the extent that he was considering leaving his job altogether – this story is also explored in the sections on training in Chapter Six.

In another example, Lutsi described how she was reprimanded and threatened by her manager for taking a sick day, despite rarely ever taking time off and despite their usually good relationship:

> "I was supervisor [in this coffee shop] I was doing loads of paperwork because [my] manager is actually dyslexic…And I'm doing loads of paperwork, don't mind it, but sometimes she had bit of temper....I almost never take a day off sick, [only] one time I had a bad allergic reaction, I went to hospital, I went from hospital to work, and was like I'm feeling quite okay, I can do it. But I was sick soon after that, called in sick and she told me, if I find out you're going to job interview instead of coming to work, you're going to get fired and never get work anywhere."
> **Lutsi, 41, barista in coffee shop, Aberdeen**

4.3. Agency workers

It is worth noting that agency workers could face a particular set of challenges with management, especially given that they were often expected to adjust quickly to new conditions and workplaces. Agency workers and permanent employees also told us that agency workers – as temporary staff – were often seen as less good at or invested in their jobs, making them more likely to be treated harshly by managers. For example, Alistair, a student who works in events catering, described how he had a different manager with every shift, given that managers were always employees of the venues where he was sent by the agency. He described how his enjoyment of his work depended to a great extent on how well he was treated by these managers, some of whom were patient and courteous, while others were "snappy" and irritable:

> "[My] mental health [is affected] during the shifts, it depends if the manager is nice and actually cares about their employees, the other day, the manager was really nice, so, it really did improve the whole shift and everyone actually praised her at the end, it was like, thank you so much, you made it just so much nicer. Then you get [managers] who don't really tell you what they want you to do and then expect me to be doing the stuff they haven't told you to do. Then they are quite snappy, saying, you should be doing something, and then we don't know what to do, because we don't often work in that venue or something like that. I think a lot of the people that work at these venues are full time, they do get a bit annoyed with agency staff, particularly if they haven't been trained for that place."
> **Alistair, 20, undergraduate student and part-time waiter in events catering, Edinburgh**

In another example, Jamie, a security guard who was sent to different venues regularly by an agency, identified venue managers as the worst aspect of his job. In this case, it seemed that a lack of clear hierarchy and division of labour between himself and managers often resulted in tensions between the two:

> "Some [bar managers] are worse than the punters, some of them really are worse than the customers....[they try] to tell me my job, they'll try and tell you well you shouldn't have done that, don't try to tell me how to put someone out, I've been doing it since I was fifteen…:I don't like someone getting involved because they add petrol to it, we were trying to talk it down and the bar manager's trying to get us just to drag him out and you're like no …we're our own boss, they try to be your boss but you're like you just get on with your work and we'll get on with ours, you know what I mean."
> **Jamie, 38, NHS assistant porter and part-time doorman/security guard, Glasgow**

4.4. Experiences of physical and verbal abuse in restaurants

Many of our participants who worked in restaurants, either as waiting staff or as junior chefs, told us that senior chefs were particularly likely to engage in verbally abusive behaviours in the workplace, such as shouting, swearing and insulting junior members of staff. For example, Alek, a chef, told us that he had frequently experienced this sort of verbal abuse in kitchens, which he attributed, in part, to the stress of the kitchen environment:

> "I think it's the environment… it's learned behaviour I would say you know. Yes so they just put that behaviour in the kitchen and they find the weak people and they just react because it is a hard job, hard work and people are tired, they need to react, like overreact somehow and usually they do on the people they have close. So the co-workers you know."

Alek felt, however, that things had improved in recent years, as restaurants were aware of the need to retain staff:

> "[Bad treatment] was so common you know. It was common but it is changing because people stop to work as chefs because they don't like to be treated that way and they start to realise that you can just go to grocery store and work there for similar money and much less stress. No one is going to scream at you, just going to need to do your things."
> **Alek, 35, chef, Glasgow**

By comparison, Alistair, who worked as a waiter for an agency doing events catering, told us how he had once burnt his fingers, because he was being shouted at by a chef:

> "The chefs sometimes [get] snappy with you. Once, the plates are very hot, so you have to deal with napkins and stuff, and then my napkins got covered in gravy once, and then they were just shouting at me to go, go, go, but obviously, I didn't want to burn my fingers, and ended up burning my fingers because of that."
> **Alistair, 20, undergraduate student and part-time waiter in events catering, Edinburgh**

The most stark examples that we heard of verbal and physical abuse in restaurants were described to us by Tony, who recounted numerous examples of such behaviour, particularly throughout the 1990s and 2000s. He noted that he himself had participated in what he saw as this 'culture' of bad treatment in the restaurant industry. Like Alek, however, he also felt that things had improved in recent years:

> "I got sat on top of one of a [hot] cooker, because I burnt something....The chef sat me on top of it, to teach me a lesson. I got locked in a fridge for an hour; I got sent for the glass hammers and the tartan paint and all that kind of nonsense…. This was, what, the early 2000s. So, it was still the screaming and shouting and the threats of violence….all the other nonsense that went with it…. Like if I was to meet somebody in the street that worked in hospitality, we'd speak to each other in a completely different way, where you can verbally abuse people… And it wasn't always clean. Any time a new

> member of staff started, who was younger, you'd say: 'Listen, you're going to have to behave yourselves until we see what they can tolerate.'.. A lot of the time… they thought this was fantastic, the way we just spoke to each other and swore at each other and shouted at each other and ... . I used to be a shouter, and stamping my feet and slamming doors, and all that kind of nonsense…"
> **Tony, 54, Glasgow, restaurant manager**

4.5. Experiences of sexual harassment from co-workers

Three of our participants reported incidences of sexual harassment or inappropriate behaviour at work: one participant, Tímea, had experienced this personally from the head chef in the restaurant where she worked. She described it to us as follows:

> "I was working there for three weeks and the actual head chef there he was sexually trying to harass me and because he had my number, because he was the head chef, he started to send inappropriate messages as well and it was… I needed to block him and leave the place."
> **Tímea, 45, chef, rural location**

Tímea told us that she did not feel confident in reporting the incident, choosing instead to leave her work and find another job instead (for Tímea's full story, see Chapter Two).

Ana, a native-Spanish speaker, described two co-workers who were routinely offensive towards women:

> "I have two colleagues, they're both Spanish, and they try to dominate in the kitchen, I understand because they speak Spanish, but they talk shit, they are vulgar against women, the things they do to women, because others don't understand, well I understand."
> **Ana, 36, housekeeper and waitress in hotel, Edinburgh (interview translated from Spanish to English)**

Another worker, Lutsi, had not experienced harassment herself but had witnessed a co-worker harassing the "younger" female employees. He was eventually fired for this reason, although Lutsi felt that the situation could have been dealt with better by the company by providing both training on sexual harassment, and by providing better channels for making confidential complaints:

> "It's a big company as well, so they should have like a helpline or something. Like in that case, because that guy wasn't supervisor, and he wasn't manager. It was the girls getting together and [telling on him eventually]. But it could have been better."
> **Lutsi, 41, barista in coffee shop in Aberdeen**

4.6. Experiences of racism and discrimination from co-workers

In our sample, we interviewed 15 hospitality workers who had migrated to Scotland as adults. The most common complaint among these workers, particularly among

eastern European workers, was that they were more vulnerable to being exploited by employers in terms of pay and conditions (see Chapter Two). Some also complained of experiencing racism and prejudice, both from customers (see section 3.4.2.5) and from co-workers or managers. For example, as explored in the worker story in Chapter Two, Tímea told us that she had experienced "racism [and] sexism very often" in the hospitality industry. She gave the example of a former boss who "made jokes at our expense" and referred to her as "Friday" after a slave character in Robinson Crusoe.

In another example, Birodh, who had been born and raised in Nepal, described to us both experiences of racism at the hands of customers , as well as his concerns that prejudice was contributing to staff shortages in his restaurant, as local people did not want to accept jobs in an Indian restaurant because of the smell:

> "Sometimes they have a problem in finding the staff, front of house staff. Basically, in the Indian kitchen, people don't like, they feel, the smell, so, people are not interested in working in the Indian restaurant, so, quite complicated sometimes. Front of house, yes, but because of the smell of food is more stronger in the Indian kitchen….Yes, it's stronger, the smell, so people are quite, don't like, there is no, people not interested, they have other options, if they are working in a café, but they have, sometimes they have problems with finding work outside….people are not happy like this, working in a strong smell, they feel like when they go out, they smell like curry, curry [chuckling]."
> **Birodh, 30, chef, Stirling**

In a final example, Alek, a chef who felt strongly that he had experienced exploitation over the years because he was from Poland (see section 2.2), told us that he had not experienced racism although he had witnessed this in kitchens he worked in. He described the following incident to us where a manager referred to a co-worker as a "lazy Indian":

> "There was a situation… there was an Indian guy who was like slow but he was very good worker and at the end of the day everything was done so I was very happy with him. I never complained… But then the lady heard a few words he is slow and [said] "ah you lazy Indian" which is very, very bad. He felt very attacked and after that he said like he almost started to cry because the way she said that and he actually tried very hard to help and everything and it's like you know the small things, the small words can really hurt you know. So they don't realise that actually they can by these silly jokes …Yes, but not for everyone is a joke and they need to understand like not every culture accepts that kind of jokes. You know like Scottish people are cool with that you know and they joke like that every single situation… But then you need to realise that you work with people from the other countries, and you need to be more aware."
> **Alek, 35, chef, Glasgow**

Workers' Experience of the Hospitality Sector

Worker Profile

Name: Amy

Age: 24

Nationality: Scottish

Work History: Experience as an events worker, stewardess, and as a bartender

Takeaway: Felt that managers and co-workers treated her unfairly because of her young age.

Amy, a 24-year-old woman, had worked in the hospitality sector since leaving school at 18. She had previous experience as an events worker, stewardess, and as a bartender. At the time of the video diary, she was using an app and an agency to find work. In her video diaries, which she completed over six working days, Amy described two negative interactions with her managers. Firstly, she experienced difficulties with the app which she uses to find shifts. On three separate occasions in one week, shift patterns were listed earlier on the employer's work portal and later on hers. This meant she showed up late to work and was sent home earlier than expected. On one occasion, her manager became aggravated and shouted at her:

"I walked in, and the supervisor just kinda shouted at me, and he was like, who are you? And I was like, I'm [Amy] and he started saying that they had me down as like a 6:30 start, instead of a 8:30 start and he's being really

aggressive and like wouldn't believe me until I actually opened up the work portal and it said 8:30 on it and he wound his neck back… but it kind of set a precedent for the day."

The uncertainty of her shift arrangements during this week had distressed her as she had planned her week and her finances around these working hours which then turned out to be incorrect. She contested this via the app and was told that she would be paid until her finishing time, as the mix-up had been their fault. She was not convinced, however, that they would do as promised.

Later that week, when working with the agency, she was scheduled to work early on a Sunday morning. However, a lack of public transport at that time made it impossible for her to make it on time for the morning shift. She approached her managers to see if she could be moved to a later shift that same Sunday and was met with a negative response. Interestingly, during this interaction, she felt that her managers were making unfair assumptions about her based on her relatively young age:

"They kind of belittled me about it and I was annoyed and the first thing they asked me they were like, who do you live with? And I said well I stay at home right now and they just had an attitude and they were calling me

mollycoddles and stuff like that….So that annoyed me about because… as much as I'd like to do the shift I can't but it was just the way they were speaking to me. It was as if like oh, I've led a sheltered life and I wouldn't, can't get up too early as if I haven't been getting up early at four in the morning for the past week to work there and […] I was made out to be a spoiled brat because I can't get there."

Furthermore, talking generally about her experiences at work, she commented that despite her years of experience in hospitality, she was treated differently at work due to her colleagues' assumptions relating to her age.

"I think the worst thing is because they are a bit older than me and I'm relatively new like to the [venue] that we were working. And even though I've worked with that company for six years, they sort of look down on me a bit, and over explain things to me that I'm very well aware of and I know so that kind of gets to me sometimes because it's like a weird hierarchy. I don't know, it's like, it doesn't matter how long you've worked in that profession. If you're younger than someone, they will automatically assume that you're incapable of doing your job that you've probably been doing just as long as them."

Amy told us that she was not interested in continuing to work in hospitality and gave a variety of reasons for disliking her work, particularly these negative relationships with colleagues and managers, as well as at times with customers. She also told us that she felt physically and mentally drained: physically due to having to stand on her feet throughout her shift and mentally as her role often left her feeling bored, which negatively impacted her mental health.

Chapter Five: Communication and voice in the workplace

This chapter explores experiences relating to communication in the workplace. It looks in particular at the extent to which hospitality workers have access to formal and informal channels to express their views and opinions on their work, and to negotiate the terms and conditions of their employment with their employers. The chapter also looks at their views on external sources of support and advice, such as trade unions.

The themes explored in this chapter address issues relating in particular to experiences of 'effective voice' – one of the five dimensions of fair work as outlined in the Fair Work Convention's Framework.

5.1 Formal channels for communication

None of our participants reported having formal one-to-one meetings with their managers or supervisors, either on an occasional or on a regular basis. Some participants did report participating in team meetings, typically on a weekly basis, which provided opportunities for senior staff to communicate operational or logistical information. However, many of our participants had no set meetings at all, communicating with managers only if and when they were on shift together. For agency workers or people who worked alone or in small venues, they often would only communicate with managers via phone or messaging services such as WhatsApp. Moreover, in some cases, hospitality workers reported being unclear about whether they had an individual line-manager: in these cases, workers reported being responsible to whoever the individual supervisor was for their particular shifts or, in the absence of any supervisors, to the owner of the venue who dealt with their pay and contracts.

5.2. Expressing opinions and views at work

Many of our participants reported feeling that their views and opinions mattered in the workplace. For example, many workers reported that employers or managers acted upon – or least appreciated – suggestions that they had made to improve efficiency or customer service. At the same time, we also spoke to hospitality workers who felt either that there was no need for them to offer views or contributions on how things were run in the workplace, or who felt that these would not be acknowledged by senior staff.

Students and those who saw their work as secondary to other jobs or career plans were most likely to express the view that it was not their 'place' to express views on how things were run. For example, two students, Andrew and Kate, told us that they thought that they lacked the skills or experience to make such contributions and moreover, in Andrew's case, that he had little interest in doing so as he saw his job as temporary:

> "It's a bit out of my skill set and it doesn't really make much of a difference to me again because if they have a way of doing it then I do it their way. And it's up to them to choose whether that's effective or not. I just follow the rules which they make…. Maybe when I'm looking at longer term plans for my bigger career, my future, I might have a bit of a different attitude but because of the nature of the job it really doesn't affect me…… I see my work as a job to put money in my bank account…Work is there for me to turn up, make my salary and go home and be able to do the things I want to outside of work. I don't see work as either a part of my life to make me happy and what not, it's there to earn."
> **Andrew, 21, undergraduate student and part-time waiter in a café, Edinburgh**

> "I have made a couple of suggestions, particularly with the way the drinks are run, just because that was what I was doing most of the time. So, if there was anything that I felt like would be a better way to do something like, say with cleaning the coffee machine, I had more experience with that, so, I tried to make sure it was done properly and it was all clean for the next person the next day. But any bigger things to do with the café, I kind of left to the people who had more experience….I think [that would come] with the number of hours you do put in, I think the more hours you do, the more experience you have and the more you can reflect on that and then give your input on things, but because I've never worked full time in this café, it's a bit more difficult I think, I don't feel as comfortable, saying, giving my opinions and things like that… it really depends what I'm suggesting, because they have run this café for a long time, so, they have a lot more experience in this area than me."
> **Kate, 21, undergraduate student and barista in coffee shop, Edinburgh**

By contrast, other participants did express wishes for a greater say in the workplace but faced barriers when doing so. For example, Hannah, a bartender, had a more direct line of contact with her employers who, she reported, did frequently ask for suggestions from staff on how to increase their customer basis, which was currently dwindling. However, Hannah complained that when she made suggestions, they were routinely ignored – something that she found demoralising:

> "The people who own [the bar] they ask for like our opinions and ideas and stuff but then when we give them like ideas and not like frivolous stuff but actual stuff that would work and things we know we could like do, they just like are like 'oh no, no, we can't do that'…… just like putting stuff on like nights and like karaoke, live music or like those kind of things, different promotions and or like doing different things with them like a food menu or stuff like that …And it is just like what is the point in even asking then, why are you asking us for our opinion on things when you're not going to do it. … Especially when they are asking for them, it's just like what is the point?"
> **Hannah, 23, bartender, Glasgow**

In another example, Lutsi, who works as a supervisor in a large chain of coffee shops, felt that the organisation was so large that things were set at a high-up level, leaving little space for her contributions to be heard:

> "The store managers don't have much leeway to do stuff…it seems like you know, how many cups we should order, yeah, that is easy, that we can decide, but yeah, bigger things…. Everything is written for somebody to decide it."
> **Lutsi, 41, barista in coffee shop in Aberdeen**

An interesting comparison here is Jessica, a wine bar manager, who emphasised that she felt listened to in the workplace, precisely because she worked for a small business rather than a "big corporate" organisation:

> "I like working in a small team. I'm glad we don't have a big corporate thing where you're just a cog in a wheel. Your opinion does matter in this place. If you don't like wine of if you want to change something, you can say that and it's not taken badly."
> **Jessica, 38, wine-bar manager, Glasgow**

5.3 Negotiations with employers over pay and conditions

As explored in previous chapters, many of the hospitality workers that we interviewed emphasised that 'self-advocacy' was important in the hospitality industry, particularly in order to ensure good working hours, pay, and conditions. However, the extent to which workers felt able to exercise their voice in this manner varied considerably.

For example, we interviewed some hospitality workers who had successfully negotiated their pay with their employers. For example, Jessica, a 38-year-old wine bar manager in Glasgow, had asked for a pay increase when she started to take on more responsibilities as a manager, which her employer agreed to:

> "Well, that's kind of how [I got promoted]… so I was just normal bar staff, until I started doing the events thing, and I started working doing the day shifts, and then when we fired our old manager, I started taking on those responsibilities without being asked, but there was no one else to do it. But I was still getting paid the same amount that I was earlier, so until we started hiring new people, and I was like hang on a second, I'm doing a manager's role without being told to, and I think I should get paid more… [that conversation] was okay, better than I expected, I didn't get quite what I wanted, but I think it would … obviously I started high and we negotiated and it was a fair arrangement in the end I think. Yeah, my boss is understanding."
> **Jessica, 38, wine-bar manager, Glasgow**

At the same time, we interviewed many workers who reported being unhappy about their wages or their hours but having not asked their employers for a wage increase. In some cases this was because, paradoxically, they reported having a good relationship with their employer and they did not want to cause tension, particularly if the employer was under stress. This was the case with Vicki, for example, whose story was explored as a worker story in Chapter Two. Indeed, some participants reported being acutely aware of the financial struggles of their employers, particularly since COVID and with the cost of living crisis. In these circumstances, they felt that it was inappropriate to ask for a pay rise. Ellen, who had worked in the same hotel for

19 years and reported having a close relationship to the hotel owner, described this as follows:

> "[My pay] is probably not what some people would class as fair. After being there for nearly twenty years, it probably should be a little bit higher than what it is. But I also know what the hotel has gone through in the last ten years and, you know, how close they came to losing everything. And I know the price of things, we weren't making money, you know what I mean, I've been there. And so, like I said, my loyalty to her [the hotel owner] is more than my pay is worth, d'you know what I mean? Like I said, she would do anything for me, I know she would, and I feel like, I understand where money worries come from in a small business like herself."
> **Ellen, 40, office supervisor and manager in a hotel on an island**

Another good example here are these comments by Julie, 57, who works evening and weekend shifts in a take-away in Glasgow:

> "No, I wouldn't ask them [for a pay rise] because I know sometimes you know they struggle as well because obviously they've got all these overheads that have to be [paid]. If they've got more orders they are cooking more so their energy requirements are more. But if it's a case of nobody comes in, because there has been some weeks that they themselves have said they've not been able to take a wage out the business because there's just not enough business coming in and they are saying like the cost of everything as well has gone up like four, five, six fold, and they are in a position where… if we put the prices up will that stop people coming in and also if we make new menus up with the increased prices that in itself is a big cost because it is apparently £300 for them to print new leaflets. And it may well get that if it keeps that way they will maybe seriously have to consider just stopping the business."
> **Julie, 57, full-time administrator and part-time front-of-house in take away, Glasgow**

In other cases, people attributed not asking for a pay rise to a lack of personal confidence or a lack of experience in those sorts of conversations, as well as to concerns about losing their job. Conversely, those who did regularly negotiate their pay linked this to greater experience and confidence in the industry. This was Alek's point, for example, whose various negotiations with employers are described in the worker story in Chapter Two. As a reminder, Alek also linked his increased confidence to the fact his English language had improved since he first arrived from Poland.

To give another example, Jamie, a security guard, notes that experience but also confidence in one's ability to get other work are essential to avoiding low pay in the hospitality industry (for Jamie's full story, see section 2.1.1). He also states that this confidence is linked to how financially dependent you are on the work in the first place – an important point given that Jamie now also has a full-time job on the NHS, in addition to this weekend work as a security guard:

> "If you've been in it long enough you just tell them what your starting rate is and this is what you've got to pay me or you're going somewhere else, and if

> you're experienced enough you can just walk somewhere else, it's easy enough…. Yes, it's experience in just speaking up for yourself, some people it's needs must, see if you're really needed, because I've done it myself where I've just let them pay me less than what they should've than what I would get paid or what I would ask for simply because needs must."
> **Jamie, 38, assistant porter in the NHS and part-time doorman/security guard, Glasgow**

In other cases, however, employees reported raising issues with their employers, only to be told that there was nothing to be done. This was Birodh's experience, for example, when he asked his employer if he could not work weekends in order to spend time with family: he was told that this was not an option. Daniel, a night-time hotel receptionist, requested to work four shifts on, and two off, as he had done in his previous job, but his employer refused: Daniel told us that, "they said if you don't like your hours you know where the door is". Finally, the story of Mike (see worker story in Chapter Two) provides an example of a worker who felt that his own progression opportunities in the business had been curtailed by challenging his employer over an issue to do with his hours.

To sum up this section, therefore, our research found examples both of people feeling unable to ask for better pay or conditions, as well as examples of people receiving better pay or conditions only when they initiated this process themselves. Our findings point towards a few possible factors that may affect the extent to which employees feel able to negotiate their pay, such as their relative financial security, their experience in the industry, their migration status and confidence in the English language, and their confidence in their ability to find other work at a better rate of pay. The nature of their relationship with their employer may well also be a factor, although interestingly our research suggests that it cannot be assumed that employees with a close and trusting relationship with their employers are any more likely to ask for pay rises than those with a difficult or conflictual relationship.

5.4 External support and advice

Some of the workers that we spoke to felt that there was a role for greater external support and advice for hospitality workers. Lutsi, for example, described the experience of an Estonian friend who had been fired when her manager broke company rules in her presence, even though she herself had not broken any rules. Lutsi, who had also migrated to Scotland from Estonia, used this story to illustrate her point that there should be more help available to people in the hospitality industry, or more should be done to make people aware of the support mechanisms that are available, particularly for migrants, so that they could learn more about their rights.

> "[My friend] is also from Estonia, and I'm quite sure by law she could you know, sue them, because it wasn't fair, it wasn't what was supposed to be happening at all. But she just thought she had to find a new job…. [She] hates people to know that she's from another country, especially country in eastern Europe…she doesn't want people to know."

She additionally gave some of her co-workers' experiences of sexual harassment from a colleague as a reason why there should be some sort of 'helpline', as well as her own experience of being transferred to another venue without any notice or warning:

> "It's unfair and you know, people don't want to complain, they don't know where to complain… There] should be [a] wider published way for people to complain. Helpline or something.. Maybe they don't want to do anything, but have option, even you know, it's a proper guide to find online, what's the rules? It would be nice to have a place to call."
> **Lutsi, 41, barista in coffee shop, Aberdeen**

Lily, who came to Scotland from Hong Kong for her studies, also felt that there should be increased support and guidance from a reliable external source for hospitality workers who experienced bad treatment from their employers:

> "I hear about a lot of…different people working in different hospitality or I've started to pay more attention to it, there's a lot of really bad stories that I hear about… a lot of places are still kind of more quiet or kind of cheeky about tipping or maybe not paying and kind of things like that, luckily that didn't happen in my place and I feel very grateful for that. I wish there was…more checking for that kind of thing because now that I'm getting that proper treatment I feel life is really unfair that people didn't get paid what they really deserved to get paid. So maybe minimum line, maybe upholding minimum wage and also tipping and things like that, I think they should be upheld by the government, so by checking… I wish that there would be maybe a department for doing that for certain people or they need to make new rules and new changes for pushing people to do the proper thing.. or maybe setting up like a certain department for when people are complaining for mistreatment from their employers."
> **Lily, 26, undergraduate student and part-time waitress in Thai restaurant, Edinburgh.**

5.5 Views on trade unions

Among our 40 unique participants, 5 were current members of a union, 35 were not. When we asked participants who were not members of trade unions if they would be interested in joining, many said they had not considered it and were not aware of options for hospitality unions. Lutsi, a 41-year-old Estonian woman working as a barista, reflected that if a union did exist, they were "not doing a good job, or [she] would have heard about them." This was despite the fact, as mentioned in the section above, she felt strongly that hospitality workers needed more external support and advice to protect them from bad treatment by employers.

Others had specific reasons for not joining a trade union. Neil, a 38 year-old man working part-time in events and full-time outside the hospitality sector, had previously been a member of a trade union when working in a bank outside of Scotland. However, he felt the trade union had been unable to save his job or those of many hundred colleagues. He told us that this left "a sour taste' and that he has not since joined any union.

By comparison, Daniel, a 55-year-old hotel receptionist, was not confident that his employer would listen to a trade union, as he stated that their main concern was to "make money". Finally, Denise, a 59-year-old waitress, expressed concerns about a scenario where the union would vote to strike to support other workers, causing tensions with her employer, with whom she currently had a good relationship:

> "Sometimes [trade unions are] more trouble than they're worth, because sometimes, you might be working in a place that you're quite happy with, and nobody is taking the mickey out of you, and you think you've got good communications and stuff like that, but then, there might be another café now having problems. Well if you're doing alright, I know it sounds selfish, but you just want it like yours, keep the status quo. Just because you're union, they might say, that café's having problems, you've got to come out on strike, but if you're happy, why would you want to?"
> **Denise, 59, waitress coffee shop, Dunfermline**

Participants from our sample who were members of unions did not mention any experiences of receiving support from hospitality trade unions. However, one participant – Tom – did express a belief that unions were important in the industry, based on his understanding of the news and the experiences of friends:

> "So, I've known people that have used them that have been wrongly accused of stuff, and then they've been fired without any warning. And then they went to the union, and the unions went back to [the employer], and they've been like, okay what's your evidence, blah, blah, blah….and then they've been offered their job back on a severance package. So, they've done quite well. So, it has been quite good, and I think hospitality, the unions are certainly coming up because they're more and more in the news these days, anyway. Especially Unite, it's been like big battles, where bars have been closing down, or they've had bars close down because they've done shady things."
> **Tom, 35, assistant manager in a café in a tourist venue, Edinburgh**

Chapter Six: Training and progression in the workplace

This chapter explores workers' view on progression, showing how some hospitality workers had fairly low expectations of progression opportunities in the industry while, by contrast, others – particularly chefs and managers – saw the industry as offering significant opportunities for progression. In both cases, however, low pay and poor working conditions were seen as barriers to progression opportunities. The final sections look at experiences around training, both in terms of the experiences of those who have received little to no training, as well as those who have pursued training opportunities and who see these as central to their sense of purpose and hopes for progression in the workplace.

The themes explored in this chapter address issues relating in particular to experiences of 'opportunity' and 'fulfilment' at work – two of the five dimensions of fair work as outlined in the Fair Work Convention's Framework.

6.1 Views on progression

Our participants expressed a range of views on opportunities for progression in the industry. On the one hand, we spoke to people who expressed little to no interest in progressing in the industry, typically because they saw their jobs as secondary to their studies or ambitions to enter other industries. By comparison, other participants simply expressed a wish to leave the industry altogether as they had become weary of poor working conditions and pay. A further subsection of participants expressed a reluctance to pursue progression because they saw their hospitality work as secondary to their full-time jobs in other industries and as, first and foremost, a supplementary source of income. However, in these cases it was clear that experiences of low pay and poor working conditions also contributed to this sense that they were better off pursuing progression opportunities and job security outside of the hospitality industry.

On the other hand, many of our research participants did see the hospitality industry as offering opportunities for valued forms of progression. For example, among chefs and others who worked with specialist produce, such as wine or coffee, progression typically meant being paid relatively well and achieving a greater sense of creative and professional fulfilment by improving their skill-set – possibilities that were, in theory, seen as achievable through continuing to gain experience and, in some cases, pursuing formal training opportunities. For other workers, this improved sense of security and fulfilment was seen as possible by opening their own businesses: for example, we spoke to several people who aspired to open their own restaurants, coffee shops, or bars. Finally, other participants, particularly those working in hotel and restaurants, saw opportunities for progression through management and, moreover, through management in high-end or luxury venues. For example, consider these comments by Tony, who had worked in the hospitality industries for several decades:

> "Something I always say.. is: 'It doesn't matter, your background. If you're willing to work hard and put in the hours, you will get far.' One of the things I always say.....I was born and brought up in a tenement [in Glasgow], and I went on to work in Five-Star hotels and a Three Michelin Star restaurant, a Two Michelin Star restaurant, and several One Michelin Star restaurants. And it was when I worked with this [famous] sommelier Johnnie Walker….and he said: 'We're ordinary people, doing extraordinary things.' I think that's the good thing about hospitality."
> **Tony, 54, restaurant manager, Glasgow**

Interestingly, Tony's words here also evoke a sense that the hospitality industry is a meritocratic one, based on hard work and talent, rather than qualifications or background – sentiments echoed by Lizzie, who aspired to work in management in hotels:

> "I'd like to stay in the sector, it's all I've ever really done, it's easy, I think it's easy, this industry is definitely not for the light-hearted, I said that the other night, but if you've got a grasp on it, and you're good at it, you'll go places."
> **Lizzie, 23, waitress in island resort**

However, participants who expressed wishes for progression simultaneously identified a number of barriers to such progression. In Lizzie's case, for example, she had recently taken a demotion from a supervisor position to a waitress position in a different venue because she had felt over-worked and underpaid in her previous job. Similarly, Tony was no longer working in management due to a knee injury and an associated loss of confidence in his capacity to cope with the hours and physical demands of being in restaurant management. Another participant, Mike, similarly told us that he saw the hospitality industry as offering great potential for progression, although he too had recently moved from a management position to a zero-hours contract as a bartender in a local pub, due to experiences of burn-out and depression, which he linked to years of over-work and under-pay in hotel management (see worker story in Chapter Two).

Other participants identified the increased responsibility but relatively small increases in pay at higher positions as a key barrier to progression, as was the case for example with Alek and Hannah (see worker stories in Chapters Two and Three respectively). Other participants identified 'paperwork', the stress of managerial responsibilities, and other administrative pressures as a reason for avoiding progression opportunities. For example, István described his concerns about progression:

> "I could go to the management part of the things, like I could become a general manager, or a supervisor or whatever, but obviously I just … I'm just not interested in this job, because I have to do management already, and it's just so painful sometimes."
> **István, 34, head barista in a specialist coffee shop, Edinburgh**

In another example, Lutsi explained to us why she was unsure whether she wanted to move from a supervisor position to a manager position in the large coffee shop chain where she worked. She highlighted concerns not only about the added

responsibility and lack of extra pay, but also pressure created by the lack of "leeway" afforded to individual managers by the larger company:

> "No, it's tricky, probably I would like to be store manager, but it's more paperwork and like it … you know, opening my own coffee shop, very complicated, but would I even like to do it, not sure. I'm probably not ambitious enough, yes probably. Even now it's like more money would be nice, but also it's a headache. It isn't really worth it…Even more responsibility. Because it seems like that kind of big chain, so little bit of what you can do, but you're responsible for everything at the same time. It's like you know, you have to think about it … how you're going to explain it when you're asked, if you want to, you know, computer says you're supposed to have four people at that time, maybe we could have five. Or I'm quite sure it's going to be very quiet day, we could have three… leeway is just not there. But saying you have to keep up sales, and close the sales, and how can you close the sales, when your computer says you can't have extra person to do sampling or actually a little bit of time to do some sampling and get staff in."
> **Lutsi, 41, barista in coffee shop, Aberdeen**

Finally, another participant, Tom, identified long hours and over-work as a barrier to progression in his current job, although he also commented that in previous jobs his progression had been hindered by a lack of formal recruitment procedures, which he equated to "nepotism":

> "I've told them that I'm not keen on progressing because…my boss now doesn't do anything apart from work….I would never want to put myself into that. She works on her way to work, she comes to work, and works until she goes home, and works. And, she doesn't even ... her days off, she says she spends just answering emails. So, it's not really ... it's not worth it."

> "I've worked places before and it's been quite, what's the word, it's obvious [that] nepotism is rife in some work places, because…say a manager leaves, the other manager will pick their favourite person. There's never any due diligence, there's never been a recruitment process, it's just been right, well, they're in line. So, it's like well, what about me? I'm not getting a chance to apply for it."
> **Tom, 35, assistant manager in a café in a tourist venue, Edinburgh**

6.2 Training

6.2.1 Overview of training experiences

The majority of the hospitality workers in our sample reported having received some 'on-the-job' training, typically involving shadowing an existing member of staff for anything between one shift to two weeks, depending on their existing experience. To give an example, Andrew described the training he received on starting work at a coffee shop, having never worked in hospitality before:

> "Obviously I got the training when I started and that was just initiating into the job and understand all the things that I had to do like how I would be doing them and how the café does it. But I haven't received any formal training. I haven't got any qualifications out of it, it's just the experience and the skills I need to do my job… It's a learn on the job experience really…But again that was…the name of the game really as I learnt things and got myself on the right page. If I had a question and I said hey, I've just been asked to make a flat, white and I have no idea what that is because I didn't, what do I do, you'll have to show me and you might have to show me again because, and another time because there's a lot of things to learn at the beginning."
> **Andrew, 21, undergraduate student and part-time waiter in a coffee shop, Edinburgh**

This is how Birodh, a chef in an Indian restaurant, described training in his workplace:

> "With training, normally, we help each other, we give advice, but we haven't had any training yet…We gain experience by working and preparing dishes, is this better, is this?"
> **Birodh, 30, chef, Stirling**

István, a head barista in a specialist coffee shop, described to us the relatively informal nature both of his progression to his current job, and of the training he received:

> "We have a head of operations… and she just asked me 'oh, do you want to be the next head barista of this kiosk and [I said] "yes of course, what do I have to do?" Yeah, because we had problems with our previous head barista, but that's another story. And yeah, basically the training was not so accurate, so I had to train myself, and then sometimes report to my manager. It wasn't a formal training, and yeah, after a couple of months, we just did a quick test, and yeah, the head of operations said okay, I sign you off, you'll be the new head barista."
> **István, 34, head barista in a specialist coffee shop, Edinburgh**

Some of the hospitality workers we interviewed, however, had been required to do more formal, typically online, training courses by their employers on subjects such as health and safety, first-aid, allergies, or serving alcohol. Those who worked for larger organisations were also more likely to have received formal training materials, although one worker that we interviewed – a barista in a chain of coffee shops – reported that this material was not very accessible:

> "You're given this book, you have to basically work with whoever is going to teach you. But quite often it's done too fast, you know, not [enough] for starting someone on work, also [it's] like school paperwork, it's a lot, it's like huge, thick A4. It's too much for people who don't pay attention."
> **Lutsi, 41, barista in coffee shop, Aberdeen**

Tom, a manager in a café in a tourist venue, also expressed concern that the training materials provided by the company that owned the coffee shop were not very effective:

> "We give them training modules…we've got four. So, when they start they've got a week. you'll get paid for a week, without actually doing any work, as long as you complete the flow training. And, that's like an online step-by-step about how things work, how to do things, sort of like the basic food safety food challenges, and the food safety certificates as well….But they just don't seem to absorb the information as well. So, then they just burn through it, and that's it…. It's just the corporate training, the company's made [that] up. So, it's just like a standardised thing across the board."
> **Tom, 35, assistant manager in a café in a tourist venue, Edinburgh**

Finally, we spoke to a number of hospitality workers who had been offered or who had pursued more formal qualifications and/or more lengthy training in certain areas. For example, we spoke to two co-workers who worked in a wine bar, both of whom had completed a qualification in wine (WSET level 2) sponsored through their employer. We also interviewed some chefs who had undertaken more extensive training courses, for example Alek, who was studying for a diploma in hospitality management in the hope of opening his own restaurant, and Benci, who was completing courses in cooking in order to pursue his ambitions of becoming a fine-dining chef. We also spoke to two other chefs who had completed 'stages' – a form of unpaid work experience – for several weeks in the kitchens of Michelin-starred restaurants, in order to improve their skills and experiences through observing more-skilled chefs. As with Benci and Alek, these were training opportunities that these chefs initiated themselves, funded themselves where necessary, and did alongside their existing responsibilities at work. We also spoke with Jack, a chef in a pub in Glasgow, who was pursuing a qualification in brewing and distilling, with the hopes of opening up a venue one day.

6.2.2 Navigating a lack of training

Despite a relative lack of formal training, many of our participants stated they had not faced any significant difficulties due to a lack of training and that they did not believe that they needed more training. Some participants did, however, report that either customers, or other staff members, had expressed frustration at them for being slow or making mistakes while they were still learning. Andrew, for example, whose description of the limited training he received in the coffee shop was described in the previous section, told us how his manager reprimanded him harshly for making a mistake on one of his first shifts in the job:

> "There was one time where…I'd literally just got on shift and this was one of my very first shifts and I took a plate out to the wrong table. It was like a brunch plate instead of a breakfast plate. And a customer started eating it and then I realised and my manager had realised as well. And then I froze and I was like, oh, they've started eating it, they seem pretty satisfied with the plate and maybe I'll just let, not tell them and not worry about it. I was just standing there, oh, shall I do anything, what do I do? And the manager went over to them and let them know. They were happy to eat it, but obviously he had to alert them for allergy reasons and just to let them know because some people might not have been happy and it's just the done thing. And, he had a little go at me. And, this was literally one of my first shifts.. He did have a bit of a talking to with me. And, obviously, it was quite harsh.. I wasn't too happy with that, but it's intense and there's a lot going on. So, it probably wasn't meant to be as harsh as it was. He just said you need to be on the ball; you need to come in here and make sure these things are done right….He said like we're better off not having you if you're going to make mistakes and not try and fix them and what not. And, I just thought that was quite harsh because this was like my third shift or something."
> **Andrew, 21, undergraduate student and part-time waiter in coffee shop, Edinburgh**

By comparison, Maria felt this frustration more from customers while she was still learning how to make coffees:

> "There are very few to be honest, I have worked there long enough, but I've never had a very, very difficult customer, like, I think the worst I got was like people, kind of like think, they're being impatient because at the beginning I was quite slow, and I had to rely on someone else coming to show me and so on, and also I had kind of my induction. I think I had about two weeks of training, obviously, I was quite slow, so, I could tell that people were a bit impatient, but I didn't get anyone being rude or anything like that, so, I think maybe I was lucky and I've not spilt anything on anyone yet."
> **Maria, 38, barista in coffee shop, St Andrews**

In a slightly different example, István, a head barista in a coffee shop, reported having been put under stress when he was expected to perform the roles of a manager, without adequate training:

> "The supervisor left without any handover and obviously [I] didn't know about some parts of his job, like dealing with all this paperwork or everyday issues in the shop. In the end we had an audit and everything just fell back on me. And I'm not trained, I don't know what to do, and it was a really, really stupid situation. And I have to deal with something that I'm not trained for, and yeah, it was unprofessional, so obviously it was a bit stressful but at the same time, I just tried to cover myself with different moves and okay, if somebody wants something from me, I do have the proof that it's not my responsibility."
> **István, 34, head barista in a specialist coffee shop, Edinburgh**

It is noteworthy that those participants who stated that they were content with their relative lack of training typically cited one of two reasons for this: either it was

because they saw their jobs as temporary or secondary to a longer-term ambition or job in another industry, or it was because they felt that their job was best learnt through experience. The following two quotes illustrate this latter point:

> "I would say [I don't need any more training] because I think because I've been doing it for so long you know and I've got enough life experience and because I've always worked in hospitality, always had it as a part time role that yes you know it is cash handling, speaking to people, giving out food, answering the phone to take orders, deal sometimes with some complaints if they're not happy with it. So all of the hospitality roles, you know it's all been very similar tasks, you know whether it's giving out food, whether it's giving out drinks, cash handling, I've basically been doing it for decades."
> **Julie, 57, full-time administrator and part-time front-of-house in take-away, Glasgow**

> "I do [feel I have had enough training for the new job] because it's like riding a bike, you never forget how to pour a pint."
> **Caroline, 64, bartender in golf club, Perthshire**

6.2.3 Views on training opportunities

While many of our participants felt that they did not need to receive more training, others expressed an interest in undertaking further training. For example, Lizzie, a waitress in a hotel, had asked several times in her previous job to complete a first aid course but had not been given this opportunity. Hannah, the bartender whose story is described in Chapter Three, shared this view and wished her employer would open up the first-aid courses to her, rather than only to those on supervisor-level. Lizzie also stated that she would be interested on going on a mixology course to learn how to mix cocktails, as did Vicki, who currently worked in a bar but who had trained herself in cocktail-making (see worker story in Chapter Two).

Moreover, many of those participants whom had undertaken more formal training reported that this training was a valued part of their job and that it contributed to their overall satisfaction with their work. Isla, for example, stated that the promise that her employer would sponsor her to complete her next level of wine qualifications (WSET 3) was a "real incentive" to stay in her job. Benci, whose story is explored in depth below, is also a good example of how training – and, specifically, the feeling of being able to improve one's skills and progression opportunities – can provide motivation and value to those who otherwise find their working conditions relatively challenging.

6.2.4. Views on training among managers

We interviewed several hospitality managers who expressed frustrations at lacking trained and motivated staff. They told us that, despite offering opportunities for training, new staff members were not always interested in learning. These managers reported that this influenced their pace of work and distracted them from their own responsibilities. This was expressed, for example, by Tom – an assistant manager in a café in a tourist venue in Edinburgh.

> "The worst thing [about today] was we're understaffed, really busy and the staff we do have, some are quite rubbish, so yeah, sometimes you move slow because the staff just haven't been trained properly. They've not had enough time, but, yeah, and I think it's also something to do with that we've hired quite a lot of young people, I think young people haven't really experienced what hospitality used to be like."

Interestingly, Tom perceived the younger generations to be less likely to work hard and participate in training compared to older workers due to their differing financial situations:

> "There's a big age gap between some of them but some of them work hard, some of them don't. You can tell that some people don't pull their weight. We've got a list of people that we like, and we don't like, myself and the manager. Then I'm trying to train them properly, it's not the easiest thing in the world but we do try. There's problems with them that come from a younger generations, they don't actually know how to work hard […] whereas when you get older people they actually need the money/job to pay bills."
> **Tom, 35, assistant manager in a café in a tourist venue, Edinburgh**

István, a head barista, expressed similar frustrations, although did not link these directly to age:

> "Some of them doesn't want to learn more and they are not proactive and I always have to tell them please go to the storeroom check what we need and they are just somehow not able to do that. Or they just don't want to do that or they just don't care."
> **István, 34, head barista in a specialist coffee shop, Edinburgh**

By comparison, Jessica, a manager in a wine bar, expressed how she and her bosses try to provide opportunities for new staff members to prove themselves, despite knowing not everyone they hire will be suitable for the post.

> "I think even the bosses, they know that not everyone that you employ is going to work out. They're quite realistic on the fact that we've employed about six new people and three of them might not work out. If that happens then fine, but we need to give them, make sure that we've done everything we can to train them and to make sure we are giving them the best opportunity and we're not dismissing them straight away and we're giving them an opportunity to prove themselves and that we are offering them that opportunity to do so." **Jessica, 38, wine-bar manager, Glasgow**

Workers' Experience of the Hospitality Sector

Worker Profile

Name: Benci

Age: 52

Nationality: Hungarian

Residency: Moved from Hungary 6 years ago, now lives in a small town in Scotland with his wife and two children.

Work History: Graphic designer in Hungary. After arriving in Scotland, he started working in a factory. Now he trains and works as a chef.

Takeaway: Happy with job and excited about prospects for progression, but long hours affect his mental health and the time he spends with his kids.

Benci moved to Scotland from Hungary with his wife and two children almost six years ago. He described the move as motivated by a search for "better opportunities" for himself and his family. He had worked as a graphic designer in Hungary although on arrival in Scotland he obtained work in a factory as a manual labourer – work that he did for around four years. He did not enjoy this work, however, in large part because he experienced discrimination from other colleagues for being a "foreigner", as he described to us:

"I wasn't fitting in well at the factory, because of my language and my identity…because I'm a foreigner, the people are, don't want to, didn't want

to accept this situation, and I was abused, bullied a little bit…I think because there was a lot of uneducated people, and they just talking what they're hearing….I was a little bit over educated, and they were, I don't know, maybe just jealous or maybe, I don't know, I don't care."

Over a year ago, knowing of his struggles in the factory, a Hungarian friend suggested he take a job as a commis-chef in a restaurant in a hotel in the Highlands – around 60 mins drive away from the small town where he lived in south-west Scotland. Since then, Benci has developed a passion for cooking and is currently pursuing his ambition to work as a head chef in a fine-dining restaurant – work that he described as creative, skilful and challenging. After a few months of working at this hotel, he enrolled and completed a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) course in cookery at a local higher education college. At the time of interviewing, he had completed Level 5 and was pursuing Level 6. He described the decision to study as his own choice, rather than a necessity in the business:

"It was my idea, because what I usually do, I'd like to do academically, so, I need to learn not just from the other people, so, I'd like to do this academically."

Benci also decided that he would benefit from working in a kitchen that was more focused on fine-dining, and so he applied for and obtained a job as a trainee chef in a fine-dining restaurant in a local market town, around a 45 minute drive away. He is paid £9.50 in this kitchen and works 30 hours a week, primarily in the evenings and weekends in order to fit around his ongoing studies. He described the kitchen as a "professional kitchen" which always paid fairly and accurately, and which did not experience staff shortages, meaning he was never asked to work beyond his contracted hours.

Reflecting on his pay, Benci commented that he was content with his level of pay because he saw the training that he was receiving at the restaurant as invaluable for his progression prospects.

Interestingly, Benci described his training both in his first job at the hotel, and in his current job at the restaurant, as an informal training programme that centred around a good working relationship with his more senior colleagues. He described working in the hotel as follows:

"I was anxious, excited, but full of joy and hope and I was lucky, because [the chef], she [gave] me everything, at the beginning, how could I do things better? Faster? Tastier?... everything what I learnt…was from her…she [mentored] me… and after I started my studies, at the college, I just improved my knowledge."

He described similar positive relationships with the head chef and sous chef at his current restaurant, whom he praised for the time they took to set him new challenges and to answer his questions. Again, he described training as a process of observing, being set new challenges, and asking questions:

"My sous chef, he is educated, he came from Italy and he has got skills, explaining the things, make the things in a good way and he is training me. The head chef, he wasn't educated, but he has got a lot of experience, he's so professional and he hasn't got too much skill to explain things, but he can show me…So, one of them speaking, another one moving, so… All the time, they told me there is no stupid questions, all the time you question, make the questions, ask everything. If I think it's a stupid question, it doesn't matter."

Benci also emphasised how success in training is a two-way relationship, as it's dependent not only on the approach of the senior chef but also on the will and ambition of the trainee chef:

"But it's up to the person, so, if someone doesn't want to learn, why should I waste my time, because my time is so precious, and for once for example, still doesn't want to improve, increase their knowledge, why should I help anymore. So, it's about a deal between two people I think."

When asked, Benci told us that he had heard plenty of stories of abusive relationships in kitchens, and chefs that bully their workers. He said that, by contrast, he had found both the kitchens that he worked in to be tight-knit "family" environments that were very supportive. He said he had never experienced in the kitchen the sort of discrimination that he had in his factory work. At the same time, elsewhere in our interview, he also recounted a few instances of being shouted at or treated badly by his head chef. For

example, when asked what he thought could improve in the hospitality industry, he replied that he thought people need to learn more patience:

"Yes, patience, I tell you this because in the hotel, it wasn't all the time, from my boss, she wasn't, how can I say? So, she shouted at me once, and I just discussed with her, I don't like this behaviour and because she hasn't patience, you know."

He also described his first few weeks in his new restaurant, where he felt that his two senior chefs were "testing him" by putting him under pressure:

"I think it was my first month, I was thinking, I'm going to leave this kitchen, because both of my chefs are shouting at me, for example…you need to learn more, faster, you need to do this, if I show you once, twice, you need to do it now! Or I was a little bit anxious and…I had to take five in the fresh air, because I had to make myself better… This happened at service, during the service, and my head chef just shouted at me…concentrate on the service, blah, blah, blah. I came home, and I told my wife, 'it's not working for me' and I just think about the things and processed everything, and I thought I'm going to give it one more shot, one new shot, and I go to the kitchen and do my job and things changed…It was kind of a test, how could I feel myself, under the pressure, what am I doing when I'm in the pressure, under the pressure? So, nothing, so, it never happened again…. I understand now it's because they don't want to teach to someone who [does not] want to learn. They don't shout at me anymore."

Benci told us that, following this incident, he realised that he cannot take breaks during the service, and that, therefore, he has to find a way to manage the anxiety he experiences when under pressure to deliver dishes on time and to high quality. He told us that he asked for advice from his sous-chef on this issue recently:

"That was my question yesterday, how could I manage my stress better at the workplace? So when I'm getting stressed and frustrated, what can I do? And he told me a couple of tricks [that] could make me calm. So, yes he's a very good guy…..So, concentrate just on one thing at a time, not so, everybody says working in the kitchen is multitasking, but if I have got five or six orders, so, just concentrate on one at a time, and the second and third, and keep on. So, and I will see the stress is getting less, the frustration is getting less and my brain just growing and growing, and just do things, like easily."

Benci told us that he has plans to continue his studies by completing Level 7 of the SVQ course, which will involve his head chef sponsoring him on a work placement – something that this chef has not done before but is happy to do for Benci. Benci also has hopes to study for an undergraduate degree in Culinary Arts in Edinburgh. He hopes that his chef will allow him to reduce his hours but stay on at the kitchen while he completes these studies, although he has not broached this subject with him yet.

While Benci reported being very happy with his job and excited by his prospects for progression and further training, he did note that his long hours had affected his mental health, as well as the amount of time he had to spend with his children.

"My mental health it's a little bit less, because I couldn't sleep well

[because] I arrive home late at night, and I need to wake up early… [I finish, the drive is 45 mins] then I go to bed sometimes, it's midnight or half twelve. [In the morning] I need to go to the school and I need to take my kids to school [and then be in college] from nine to half four….

I try to, spend my time with my kids, if I can and make them precious times. But it's not enough, not enough, so, and I can see it's affecting them…their emotional feelings."

Chapter Seven: Wider contexts

This chapter looks at how the experiences of hospitality workers have been shaped by wider social and political contexts, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, Brexit, ongoing staff shortages, and the cost-of-living crisis.

7.1. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

Approximately half of our research participants were furloughed at some point during the COVID pandemic while around a third carried on working in hospitality throughout the lockdowns in some capacity. A further third of our participants reported having had neither work nor pay from their hospitality jobs for relatively long periods during lockdowns. We also interviewed one person who was made redundant after a period of furlough due to the losses incurred by their employer during the pandemic. While research participants on zero-hours contracts were less likely to have received furlough than those on permanent contracts, it is worth noting that we did speak to several people on zero-hours contracts who had received furlough pay.

The following sections show how the COVID-19 pandemic has placed additional pressures on hospitality workers: in particular, for some workers, the pandemic created or worsened financial hardship; added to anxiety and uncertainty about future work prospects; created extra demands in the workplace, particularly in terms of managing customers; and contributed to staff shortages, which again created additional stressors and pressures. Some participants also reported feeling less certain about their own future in the hospitality industry as a result of the pandemic.

7.1.1 Experiences of furlough

Several of our research participants reported that furlough was a positive experience, as they had enjoyed their time not working and they had felt well-supported by their employers. For others, however, furlough had been a stressful period. For some, this was because they missed social interactions at work, as Daniel, a hotel receptionist, described to us:

> "It has been quite hard to be honest because I love being with people and when you're not with people it is very, when you are inside four walls it is quite hard. It is mentally hard."
> **Daniel, 55, hotel receptionist, Glasgow**

For others, furlough created financial stress, especially if their furlough pay was low compared to their normal salary, as described here by Jessica, a wine-bar manager in Glasgow:

> "So I was furloughed when the bar was closed… but that was annoying because I think it was based on my December 2019 payslip, which wasn't very high, because I'd been away for a lot, so my furlough was minimal, it was really, really hard, and I had to go onto universal credit, just to top up, just to

pay for rent and living costs. But there was nothing they could do about it because that was how it worked apparently, so it was, yeah, tricky."
Jessica, 38, wine-bar manager, Glasgow

The uncertainty about when they would be able to return to work – if at all – also created anxiety for some research participants, as described here by Lutsi:

"I [was] anxious…you know, what is going to happen, long term? When it was bad, I wasn't working, the shopping centre was closed. Going back, yes, it's like, do I even have a job to go back to? All that, it's very stressful. I was afraid."
Lutsi, 41, barista in large coffee shop chain, Aberdeen.

Another participant, Maria, explained to us how her anxiety about being furloughed was intensified by the fact that she had only recently arrived in Scotland from Romania and had already had to abandon her original plans to work in social care work due to the pandemic. She described being "deflated" at the prospect of also losing this job and concerned about whether her plans to apply for a teaching degree at university would still be possible:

"I think [I was furloughed for] about six weeks. I remember it was less than two months, because it started off that Omicron was a big thing and then it kind of died down…although I have to say that when we first got shut, I think they said they're not going to open for about six months. So, in a way, you kind of lost a bit of hope, but then they opened prior to that… Obviously, that was a bit stressful, I'm not going to lie, because I was getting used to it and it was something that I had started and I had training on as well. So, I felt a bit deflated, I'm not going to lie, I'd invested in that and then, I said okay, and what's next now…This kind of uncertainty as well, I don't know what to do in my studying as well."
Maria, 38, barista in coffee shop, St Andrews

7.1.2 Impacts on work availability

For many of our research participants who did not receive furlough pay, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant changes in the availability of hospitality work. Some participants continued to work albeit with reduced hours. For example, Kate, an undergraduate student in Edinburgh, carried on working as a barista during the first lockdown but received less shifts than usual, given that the café was no longer running a table service. This contributed to Kate's eventual decision to move home to London to live with family:

"It did affect the hours I received…So, it was very much a takeaway-based situation, and because of that, we didn't need so many staff. So I think on a day-to-day basis, it was two people in front, so, one on coffees, one serving customers, and then one person in the kitchen preparing food and that was about it.. it was just fewer staff were needed and that's why we got fewer shifts…. It wasn't great at the time, just because I think I would have preferred having more shifts… so as COVID continued, I moved back to London, because that's where my family were based."

Kate, 21, undergraduate student and barista in coffee shop, Edinburgh

Other participants reported receiving no work at all, forcing some to spend their savings, as Caroline described to us:

> "Just no work, no…[It was] difficult, financially. But you know, we just had to use our savings."
> **Caroline, 64, bartender in a golf club in Perthshire**

It is noteworthy that even for those participants who held full-time jobs in other industries, the loss of a secondary income in hospitality could still generate considerable concerns about finances, as comments by the following two participants suggest:

> "[There was] no work during COVID… nothing, literally nothing. ...Yeah. It just dried up. It was difficult."
> **Neil, 38, full-time administrator and part-time waiter for an events catering agency, Glasgow.**

> "I didn't like it because I wasn't getting out, you know because I wasn't at work during the day, I wasn't out at night, some weekends, so 1) you don't have any money coming in so you're just trying to make sure that you're doing the minimal in the house sort of thing, like you're not burning any energy. Because obviously if you are stuck at home all you are doing is sitting watching television. There's nothing else you can do but if you don't have money coming in then you know you just have to be careful that you're not kind of increasing your expenses sort of thing by having the heating on, having the lighting on, having the TV on sort of thing you know."
> **Julie, 57, full-time administrator and part-time front-of-house in a take-away restaurant, Glasgow.**

We also spoke to hospitality workers who had had to change the nature of their work as a result of the pandemic, either by taking a less desirable job or by temporarily leaving the hospitality industry altogether. For example, Birodh arrived in Scotland in early 2020 from Portugal, where he had been working for almost a decade as a chef since leaving his country of birth, Nepal. He had originally planned to obtain a job as a chef in an Indian restaurant on arrival in Scotland. However, he told us that this was impossible due to restaurant closures, so instead he found a job cooking in a take-away restaurant. He was unhappy with this situation, given his experiences of poor working conditions and racism in the take-away, and he quickly found a job in a restaurant once they re-opened following lockdown.
By comparison, Lizzie, who had previously been working as a supervisor in a holiday resort, told us that she could not find any work in hospitality, despite having worked in the industry for many years and in many different types of jobs. As a result, she took a job as a cleaner while her partner, a chef, took a job in a butcher's shop:

> "COVID just knocked a lot of this industry down, didn't it? It was sad to see. [My partner] went into butchery, which helped his career, but I ended up cleaning a squaddies gym, so, it wasn't very nice… Yes, I was like, I just

> missed being behind a bar… [I did that] until the beginning of the end of last year, September time, is when I came back into this industry."
> **Lizzie, 23, waitress in an island resort**

7.1.3 Impacts on workplace experiences

COVID restrictions and regulations also impacted hospitality workers' experiences in the workplace, often making working conditions more demanding. In restaurants, for example, some workers reported that they found it stressful trying to enforce hygiene and social distancing regulations among customers. Lily, an undergraduate student and waitress in a Thai restaurant, described how difficult this could be, especially when customers then complained or left bad reviews online as a result:

> "We asked the customer to do this and that for Covid, we'd ask them to wear face masks, we asked them to put hand sanitizer on. We need to space them out, they can't sit together if there's only six of them from three households at the same time, some of them don't understand it and then some of them we'd actually take them to the Scottish government website…because some of the customers were really impatient and then we just didn't have enough staff to get by….they just ended up [having] a bad experience in the restaurant which frustrates us a little bit…. It was more work maybe for us to do…[and it] can be a bit [stressful]…I think everyone wishes that there was a bit less of that… some of them will just maybe walk off if it doesn't go the way they want and then some of them will argue with you 'why this has happened' and things like that or 'this shouldn't be like that'. I think sometimes that's been a bit stressful, it happened as well…they've kind of left really bad reviews online and that kind of stresses my boss…"
> **Lily, 26, undergraduate student and part-time waitress in a Thai restaurant, Edinburgh**

Jessica, a wine-bar manager, also described similar frustrations with having to enforce regulations among customers:

> "I was happy to go along with it, do what I was told, it was more the customers being difficult, coming in and refusing to wear a mask, and like it was a bit silly, people you know, you could wear a mask walking to your table, but then you could take it off, and then you had to put it back on to go to the toilet. I think once you're in the room, and you're sat down, it's fine, but it was just yes, especially sort of tourists, like English tourists coming up to visit, just refusing to put on a mask, or getting angry that you were asking them to. So it's more, I think the staff, we were all happy to do it, but yeah, it was the customers that were a pain."
> **Jessica, 38, wine-bar manager in Glasgow**

To give another example, Tony, an experienced restaurant manager, described to us his frustrations at not being able to deliver a high-level of customer service due to COVID regulations and due to staff shortages. Interestingly, he said this experience contributed to his decision to take a step back from the hospitality industry – a decision that he had taken after suffering a knee injury and an associated loss of confidence in the workplace:

> "It was a new restaurant that opened up this time last year. I think initially, because of the working conditions, the lack of staff, customers were giving you the benefit of the doubt to a certain extent, but that was annoying me, because if you're going to do something, I say: 'Do it nice, or do it twice.' People are coming into the restaurant, they're paying £70/£80 a head. Why are they getting service that they just put up with? I think that's why I thought: 'I can't, I can't do this. I need to get out of this for a while."
> **Tony, 54, restaurant manager, Glasgow**

It is worth noting here that the majority of hospitality workers that we interviewed reported feeling comfortable and safe at work, despite the risks posed by catching the virus. Many of them noted that measures such as mask-wearing, putting up screens, and social distancing, contributed to this sense of security at work. However, as the following quotes suggest, some participants reported that such measures simultaneously resulted in a greater workload, greater physical discomfort at work, and a reduction in their overall job satisfaction, particularly given that such measures reduced the quality of interactions with customers:

> "We did just like the department service, like we cleaned the whole room all the time, which was good, because I keep on going, this is how it has been working during COVID-19. Of course, I have the special things for Health and Safety to do, separate like more than usual, you have to clean all the time, yourself, your hands and put the mask on and we have, I don't know how to call it? It's like white suits on you, just to protect yourself, and it was a little bit worse than usual."
> **Andrei, 30, housekeeping supervisor in a hotel, Stirling.**

> "Then when we did go back you had to go back wearing masks and obviously following the strict rules of social distancing and hand gels. It was a different environment. I mean we have only stopped wearing masks in the last 2 or 3 weeks now… It wasn't too bad. Our kitchen is not the biggest, so it did mean that the social distancing side of things maybe wasn't adhered to properly as it should have been. Because we just couldn't meet that requirement, but we did continue to wear masks in the kitchen. And that was fine, but obviously a kitchen is a hot environment anyway and that was a lot more hot and claustrophobic type of thing."
> **Megan, 32, kitchen runner, small town in Highlands**

> "I was working but…I was just prepping the food and just dishing it out to give to people, it was more like a Deliveroo sort of thing. [I found it] a bit boring, I didn't have the interaction… it was more like, robotic, just going, da, da, da, and I could understand why the people that do the takeaways, they don't like it. They don't get the interaction with people do they?"
> **Denise, 59, café waitress, Dunfermline**

Finally, many of our participants described how staff shortages resulting from COVID created a range of additional pressures in the workplace. This issue is explored in more depth in section 7.2.

7.1.4 Impacts on pay and tips

A common observation among some participants was that the pandemic had resulted in permanent reductions in how much customers tip. It was typically felt that this was a product both of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, and broader behavioural change that occurred during the pandemic as a result of a reduction in table service and in the use of cash.

Most participants did not report that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected their pay in any significant manner. However, a few participants did express anecdotal views that the pandemic, coupled with staff shortages, was leading to an increase in standards in the industry given that employers were being forced to improve pay and conditions to attract workers. For example, Alek, a chef whose story is told in more detail in Chapter Two, told us that employers were being forced to raise pay in order to attract staff:

> "Because a lot of people quit from hospitality, now they have a problem to find people so they realised they need to start to pay more if they want the professionals because they find that people just, not the people from the street, without background, without the experience you know and they need people with experience you know and the people with the experience changed their jobs, they start to work for retail….Even management team they start to work for retail, they start to be management in retail and they realise much less stressful and on the same money."
> **Alek, 35, chef, Glasgow**

Similarly, Jamie, who had worked in security in the hospitality industry for around 20 years, noted that he was observing an increase in wages due to COVID-related staff shortages:

> "I was always on a minimum of ten pound an hour… some places just went up because back in the day most of the door guys were on maybe twelve to fourteen quid an hour, I haven't seen that rate for any door guy for about ten years….coming out of Covid some places it's like you'll start at twelve quid an hour and I haven't seen that for a long, long time.... I think it was because of Covid, they needed people because people were struggling to come back to work and they needed them to get back but they should've been paying door guys."
> **Jamie, 38, NHS assistant porter and part-time doorman/security guard, Glasgow**

Tony, who has worked as a restaurant manager for several decades, also noted that during his recent job applications, he has been offered better pay and conditions than in the past – something that he also attributed to the impacts of the pandemic on the industry:

> "I was speaking to the food and beverage manager, he was saying: 'It's a 40-hour contract. You get paid for your overtime, and the service charge actually stays in the department.' Without even thinking, I just said: 'Well, thank God, you have grown up.' He was like: 'We've had to.' And I think, with ... because

> of Brexit, COVID, the lack of staff, I would say the hospitality industry has grown up quite a lot… You actually now see adverts for staff: they're mentioning things like meals, uniforms, taxis, equal share of the tips – which I've always thought, you should get that anyway. Why are employers now dangling that wee carrot? And now, a lot of them are actually saying on the applications: 'Are you okay working the weekend?' What?"
> **Tony, 54, restaurant manager, Glasgow**

To reiterate, however, the majority of our interview participants had not observed any tangible improvements to their working conditions or pay as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. – if anything, they had experienced the opposite, particularly in terms of working conditions. Indeed, as the next section suggests, for some participants, the pandemic had led them to feel increasingly uncertain about working in the hospitality industry.

7.1.5 Impacts on longer-term job plans

Several of the participants that we interviewed reported that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected their longer-term plans around work and, specifically, had forced them to re-consider whether they wished to remain working in the sector.
For example, Neil worked full-time as an administrator in addition to working evening and weekend shifts in events catering – work that he obtained through an app-based agency. He told us that he relied on both incomes to support his family and that they had found the complete absence of work during the pandemic extremely difficult. He also told us that he greatly enjoyed his hospitality work. However, he cited the pandemic as a reason why he would never rely on income from the hospitality industry:

> "The pandemic taught me that although I thought it was the safest industry in the world, but it's not…. just the fact that even if you thought it was a safe role and then obviously it's not all of a sudden…. Yeah. Yeah, you know just the fact it just disappeared like in a flash. Nobody would have ever seen that coming. If you would have to said to me in 2019 this will happen, I would have said you are insane."
> **Neil, 38, full-time administrator and part-time waiter in events, Glasgow**

Julie was in a somewhat similar position to Neil: she worked full-time in the week, using shifts at the weekend in a take-away as a supplementary source of income. She felt that this was an unreliable source of income which she would not wish to rely on, both because of COVID and its impacts, and because of broader insecurities in the industry due to changes in how people spend:

> "So that's the thing, I wouldn't be confident that potentially the work would be there, and I know just now … COVID has a big impact because a lot of them they've just not had the money to kind of keep going. And then for them to try and resurrect again it needs money but again it's a vicious circle that people have now got used to staying at home more, also they don't have the same amount of money… and the prices you're getting charged because a lot of these businesses are trying to recoup money that they've not made. But what they are doing is they've now become quite expensive, people are watching their money and saying well look it's too expensive to go out now so we'll just

> stop at home and get people round…. [Also] because you actually see it when you are working. The rise in like Deliveroo, Uber Eats, you see the cyclist going past with their bags on whatever so there's the rise of that… I think a lot, I've seen it myself like the supermarkets you can get two takeaway meals for £7 and a small business can't compete with that…You know that I am thinking well you know if it's quiet are they then just going to say right we don't need you to tonight or it's not been busy this week so don't bother. I think it is too volatile [to rely on for a job]."
> **Julie, 57, full-time administrator and front-of-house in a take-away restaurant, Glasgow**

Maria, a barista in a coffee shop in St Andrews, also expressed concern about relying on work in the hospitality industry, following the pandemic:

> "I just wonder if they are going to come up with something that will shut everything down….The hospitality sector in particular, because they have this kind of like face to face contact with clients, so, I think they are the first, you don't know how many things shut [here], it looks like a ghost town, literally. Even coffee shops actually, a lot of things just shut down, businesses as well, I'm worried about that…people are not travelling, and they are not spending money on coffees and stuff like that, they might end up getting shut. There would be no jobs for people like me."
> **Maria, 38, barista in coffee shop, St Andrews**

Finally, in a somewhat different example, one research participant, Mike, told us that the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted his decision to step back from management positions in the hospitality industry. While he linked this to longer term issues around over-work and pressure at work, he explained to us that the pandemic had acted as a trigger as the prolonged period of not working forced him to re-evaluate his life and what was meaningful for him:

> "COVID partly triggered it, but it also makes you think about things as well in terms of family and things like that, and we started doing different things in the lockdown and valuing our time, with ourselves and getting out in the fresh air, and going for walks and all these sorts of things and I think that's had a huge mindset shift, for a lot of people. I was speaking to quite a lot of people, that have said, "I've got a totally different outlook now, since COVID." Had COVID not happened…I [probably] would have taken on that [promotion I was offered] with that company and who knows what would have happened? So, we are where we are."
> **Mike, 44, bartender and former hotel manager, Dundee**

These sentiments were echoed by Tom, a manager in a café, who told us that the long period of not working during the pandemic allowed him time to reflect and to pursue different interests:

> "[COVID] has definitely affected my plans.. I will try to get out of hospitality… [I've been] trying to [learn more IT skills], so been doing like online courses for that. So, it's not like I'll be doing this forever… I think because I had that

opportunity and that long window of doing nothing [when furloughed], thinking I want to know how to do stuff properly. Like retrain."
Tom, 35, assistant manager in a café in a tourist venue, Edinburgh

7.2 Staff shortages

Almost all of the participants that we interviewed had observed that their workplaces and/or the industry as a whole were experiencing significant staff shortages. The following sections look, firstly, at how participants made sense of these shortages and, secondly, how it impacted their experiences in the workplace.

7.2.1. Understandings of staff shortages

Many of our participants linked staff shortages to the COVID-19 pandemic and its after effects. For example, Jessica, who runs a wine bar in Glasgow, reported that staff shortages had resulted from people not returning to work in hospitality after the pandemic:

"We found it really hard to employ people especially post like Covid when you lost a few people."
"And then employees, then we got a whole new team, and then 50% didn't work out and left, so I don't know, it's tricky at the moment, but I've seen so many vacancy signs in bars around the area, so you can see that everybody's got the same problem."
Jessica, 38, wine-bar manager, Glasgow

Other participants working in management positions, however, emphasised that there were also longer-term structural issues contributing to staff shortages. John, who runs a restaurant in a small town in the Highlands, emphasised that anti-social hours and low pay have always made it very hard to recruit staff:

"So, it's difficult to get staff to stay. They come in, unless they're used to the environment it's quite challenging for them and they don't want to stay… There's no financial motivator because you can't pay more than minimum wage basically. There is no special hours that you get because you're working anti-social hours, you're working evenings, you're working weekends… So, the attractions are not really there. You don't have the things to attract people in."
John, 53, head chef and restaurant manager, small town in Highlands

Mike, who had worked in the hospitality industry for several decades, also linked staff recruitment and retention problems to low pay and anti-social hours but he further noted that, in general, hospitality is not seen as a respectable profession in this country in the same way that it is in other countries:

"They've never been able to fix that, in a lot of places, because it's not, see the, I believe the problems they're experiencing now, they will blame COVID and they'll blame Brexit, but the fundamental issues have been underlying in the industry for decades, and then these two things are then just the catalyst that has manifested itself in a dreadful situation…But it's always been difficult to get the right staff, because in this country, hospitality hasn't really been

seen as a viable career. There is nowhere along the line, through schooling that anybody, at any point, suggests or pushes hospitality, as a career. If you go to the continent, and you go to Malta, or Italy, Spain, if you're the head waiter of a good local restaurant, you're a significant person, within that community. That doesn't happen here."

Mike also told us that COVID-19 had given workers an experience of other jobs which had better pay and better conditions, resulting in a reluctance to return to the industry:

> "So, as I say a lot of hospitality [workers] to survive during COVID, they had to find other methods of making money. They went into retail, the supermarkets were obviously busy, they went into packing, delivery, food delivery, etc.…But other people have found the methods of making money and they found out that they get more money, for less hours, less stress, not as much antisocial hours, why would you come back to hospitality?"
> **Mike, 44, bartender and former restaurant manager, Dundee**

This sentiment was echoed by two other hospitality workers, Neil and Tony who believed that staff shortages were caused by people 'waking up' to the poor pay and conditions that were part and parcel of the hospitality industry:

> "Again, with the Covid situation, so many people left the trade and ended up in jobs where they'd be working in a factory, or whatever the case may be. They're doing more an 8 to 5 type job, Monday to Friday, and they don't want to come back and do the weekend work, evening work, that kind of thing. And I think that's one of the reasons they're finding it so hard to get people; they don't want to work the unsociable hours."
> **Neil, 38, full-time administrator and part-time waiter for events catering agency, Glasgow**

> "During the pandemic so many people left the industry because they realised there is life other than kitchen or waitressing or whatever and now we are struggling and there is not enough colleagues so the colleagues who are there they need to cover other people who left the industry."
> **Tony, 54, restaurant manager, Glasgow**

It is noteworthy that several hospitality workers with histories of migration from eastern and southern Europe felt that Brexit had also contributed to staff shortages. While they themselves did not report a desire to leave Scotland, they spoke of family and friends who either chose to return home or who found the legal process needed for migration to be too prohibitive:

> "In all honesty I don't think it has anything to do with COVID, I think it's more Brexit, for instance, I don't think it is COVID and not where I am, because it's quite a small coffee shop, I would imagine in other coffee shops, they would struggle to get people, just because they're not very keen to come here anymore."
> **Maria, 38, barista in coffee shop in St Andrews, moved from Romania in 2019**

> "What happened [after Brexit], loads of people, friends of mine were leaving, because like maybe they're going to throw us out, we just going to leave now."
> **Lutsi, 41, barista, Aberdeen, migrated from Estonia over 10 years ago.**

> "The thing what Brexit affected is the things like many people left the country, and we have been struggling to find people, and we still have this problem, to find people….Now it's very, if before Brexit it was easier to take people from outside of the country, now it's very a difficult process. If they don't have Pre Settled or Settled Status. These things, it makes it a more difficult process."
> **Andrei, 30, housekeeping supervisor, Stirling, migrated from Romania around 7 years ago**

Some of the managers that we spoke to also identified Brexit as a reason for staff shortages, For example, Ellen, an office supervisor and manager in a hotel on an island told us:

> "We always used to have a lot of Polish girls coming to help, and they would do breakfast and housekeeping and the bar, things like that. And generally, they were just there from May till October, sort of time, so they always got lots of hours…And we used to have accommodation for them as well, that they could stay in and just pay a small fee for staying. So it worked in well. But we don't even, we've got nobody coming over now, nobody even applying."
> "And we used to get students from a French hospitality school, we used to get a student every year who came over as part of their coursework, and they had to write up. And that was always great as well, you know, hearing people's stories and they got to learn the language, and it was always fun. But nothing like that anymore, and I think it's a shame."
> **Ellen, 40, office supervisor and manager in a hotel on an island**

Tom, a manager in a café, also noted that Brexit had contributed to staff shortages in his café:

> "So, it's harder to get better staff…especially kitchen porters…normally would be from Eastern Europe, or somewhere else, and they were really good workers. But now, we don't really have that option anymore. There's not many people willing to do that job anymore, either, so it's difficult to find and keep someone because we've been through, on average, one a week, two a week. Like, when we first opened, it was one, was a new KP every week."

Tom also said, however, that he had noticed a worsening in customer behaviour during and after the pandemic – an issue raised by other participants. He felt that this was also contributing to staff shortages:

> "For the front of house, it's been really difficult to hire decent staff, and because everyone's ... I think everyone's fed up of working, because the general public now are idiots, and it can be quite difficult and quite taxing working with them. Because people have just become more idiots… people like to complain a lot more I think now. … It could be clientele, it could be anyone, they're just ... general public are morons sometimes when they go out."
> **Tom, 35, assistant manager in a café in a tourist venue, Edinburgh**

To summarise this section, therefore, our research participants generally saw staff shortages as more than a temporary side-effect of the COVID-19 pandemic: rather, they saw them as a product of longer-term structural issues affecting the hospitality industry and, specifically, of its reliance on low-wage and flexible labour and on migrant labour.

7.2.2. The impact of staff shortages on workers

Hospitality workers generally saw staff shortages as contributing in a significant way to a deterioration in their working conditions. Indeed, as explored in more depth in Chapter Two, staff shortages were typically described as underlying many of the issues that hospitality workers faced around working conditions, such as having to work alone, a lack of breaks, and feeling pressured to accept hours that they did not wish to work.

To give a few further examples here, Jessica, a wine-bar manager, described the added pressure to workers created by COVID-related absences:

> "Yeah, well we all, the team obviously all got it at some point, so working was quite tricky around that, especially when more than one of us had it, it was we were all pulling extra shifts, extra hours, being called up last minute, but then obviously I had it as well, and everyone else had to step in for me, so it just … it was tricky for about three months. And you always at work, you always wore masks the whole time, even when we opened, which I felt much safer doing, I was happy that we could keep the masks on."
> **Jessica, 38, wine-bar manager, Glasgow**

In another example, Andrew, a waiter in a coffee shop, told us how he felt "apprehensive" about his job in coming months, due to the ongoing issues with staff shortages, which he expected would increase pressure on himself and his colleagues:

> "I have noticed, it's like with the employment, the job sector right now is really, really struggling with how much availability there is to work and how desperate a lot of jobs and companies are to take on staff. We're using three or four people right now, which seems right down and we've had an ad open for a good while and haven't had a single application. … I suspect being understaffed will mean that either more people are going to have to take on more hours or there'll just be days where we only have a limited number of staff, but we can't take on more hours and we also have to work according to our situation. And, you maybe even run a reduced menu or just accept that we're going to have long wait times and it's going to be a bit more hectic than normal, but it's. Yeah, it's just like, we just have to deal with it. [I feel] A little bit apprehensive. It's not going to be probably a great deal of fun."
> **Andrew, 21, undergraduate student and waiter in a coffee shop, Edinburgh**

7.3 Supply issues and rising prices

Our participants identified a range of other issues that were currently affecting the hospitality industry, particularly issues with supply and issues relating to the cost of living and rising prices. Some participants, such as Vicki, felt that this was exerting additional pressure on businesses, driving standards down:

> "I think people sort of got really excited when everything first opened and then closed again. So, it was really busy and then the restrictions kind of, I don't know, and then I feel like people maybe didn't have the money to spend as much after it as well. So, it's just been a really weird time. I don't know, it's been so up and down I feel. But within the business, I feel, I don't know if this is so much about COVID actually, rather than, it's probably more to do with all the prices have gone up so much recently….But I know the price of stock and everything has gone up. But I think a lot of businesses did lose a lot of money during COVID as well. So, I feel like they're all a bit stressed about money and trying to cut corners and things like that."
> **Vicki, 28, bartender in small town in Perthshire**

Several participants noted that customers were spending less and that their venues were less busy as a result of rises in prices:

> "Yes, but you notice as the squeeze has come, they're ordering less or smaller things. Not really, no, I mean, I've just noticed since COVID people haven't got so much money, but maybe that's the economics."
> **Denise, 59, waitress in coffee shop, Dunfermline**

> "Yeah, yeah I think definitely you know, Friday and Saturday nights used to be heaving and it would be busy from like 6 o'clock until 11, you would be full, and have a waiting list, but now you kind of have that after work, pre-dinner drinks, and then some people, they'll be a handful of people who will have dinner and then it will just kind of drop off after 9 o'clock, and that seems to be sadly, happening more and more. And I think people are just going home, they're going home after dinner, you'll get the occasional person coming in now for a post-dinner drink, otherwise I think they're going home and buying wine from the supermarkets, and just drinking there, it's a shame. You know, especially a decent wine anyway, so I think yeah, prices, that's a big thing, and especially with then, obviously living prices going, cost of living going up, it's difficult. I think people's drinking habits have definitely changed."
> **Jessica, 38, wine-bar manager, Glasgow**

Hospitality workers in management positions also told us that problems in supply chains, in combination with rises in prices, were creating significant difficulties for them in the workplace, both in terms of providing good customer service and in terms of keeping the business afloat. For example, John told us:

> "Another thing that makes it very difficult at the moment is the cost of produce is increasing massively. I buy fresh produce, as I said. My local fishmonger, the price I was paying for a side of salmon at the beginning of the year. I can tell you what the price was, ten pounds per kilogram. It's now eighteen-fifty per kilogram. So, it's nearly double the price of what it was at the beginning of

the year for me. I can't pass that onto the customer. I can't double the price of my salmon dish. The customer wouldn't pay it, but I've got, still got to think well what do I do here? Do I still offer salmon? Do I still offer fresh local produce or do I try and put something else on? So, it puts you in a difficult position that the profitability, your GP is diminishing, but you're trying to secure, you're trying to hold onto the customers. If I put it up they'll go somewhere else."

John, 53, head chef and restaurant manager, small town in the Highlands

Chapter Eight: Working in rural locations

We interviewed eleven people who currently worked – or who had worked in the past – in hotels or restaurants in rural locations in Scotland. These participants highlighted a number of challenges that they linked specifically to working in rural areas. As the following sections explore, these included: struggles to find affordable or suitable accommodation, struggles to find adequate childcare, increased prices, and increased staff shortages. These are explored in the sections below and through Lizzie's worker story.

Workers' Experience of the Hospitality Sector

Worker Profile

Name: Lizzie

Age: 23

Nationality: British

Residency: Recently moved to an island for work. Previously lived and worked mainly in the north of England.

Work History: Worked in hospitality since leaving school, including in pubs, fast-food restaurants and as a restaurant supervisor in a holiday camp.

Takeaway: Happy with new job on an island resort but sees the job as temporary due to problems associated with its remote location.

When we interviewed Lizzie, she had recently started a new job as a waitress in a restaurant that was part of an island holiday resort. She had moved there with her partner, who had taken a job as a sous-chef in the restaurant kitchen. They had also

worked together in their previous job in a holiday camp, where Lizzie had worked in a supervisory position in a restaurant. Both Lizzie and her partner had been born and raised in the north of England, and this was their first job in Scotland.

They had decided to move to Scotland due to their dissatisfaction with their previous job, which had involved working long hours without being paid overtime. In this previous job, they had never managed to have the same day-off in the week, which meant they had little time to spend together. Moreover, as her partner did not drive and the holiday camp had been in a rural location, Lizzie had spent her days off driving her partner to and from work, rather than travelling to see her family and friends.

When they accepted the job on the island resort in Scotland, they stipulated that they wanted to have the same day off, to which management agreed. Lizzie was pleased to be paid

by the hour rather than on an annualised salary, as she felt that this would ensure that she was not expected to work unpaid overtime, as had happened in her previous job. Lizzie also told us that she had been pleased with how supportive the restaurant management had been when she experienced sexual harassment from a customer (see section 3.4.2.4). She was aware that the resort was experiencing staff shortages – with several of its restaurants currently closed as a result – and she had already experienced changes to her hours due to these shortages. However, as long as her day off with her partner was protected, she did not mind last-minute changes to her shifts.

Despite this positive beginning to her new job, Lizzie saw her job at the resort as temporary, lasting probably just for the summer season and perhaps into the Christmas period. She told us that its remote location was the main reason for this: not only was it far away from her family and friends but it was also hard for them to see a future for themselves there due to a lack of affordable accommodation. They were currently living in a shared room in staff accommodation. She told us that while she was essentially happy with the accommodation, she was still adjusting to the lack of privacy and space:

"I found it a bit weird to adjust, because we would like a bit more privacy, because we've lived in our flat for three years, just us two and the dog, so, I think it's a little bit weird sharing a kitchen and sharing a bathroom, but I'm sure I'll get used to it."

Lizzie expressed wishes to settle down and buy a family house within the near future, but she suspected this would be impossible on the island:

"We've had a look [at buying a place] and just on the island, it's just, it's abysmal, I thought where we lived was bad, but there's nothing. Some of the chefs that [my partner's] been speaking to, have been here for three years and they still can't get a house."

In the shorter term, Lizzie also expressed shock at the price of petrol on the island, which she told us was higher than on the mainland. She also described to us how there was less choice about where she shopped and the products that were available:

"Oh my God yes [I'm worried about the cost of living] I mean, because it's an island, it's the most expensive, it's more expensive, like fuel for a litre is two pound thirteen. Now I nearly threw up in my mouth when I saw it, I was like, oh my God. Like the Co-op, I think the Co-op is more expensive here, we had a Co-op where we lived, and I don't know, just everything is a bit pricier….: Yes, that's the only choice, I'd kill for a Lidl or a McDonalds, yes, there's no fast-food restaurants, there's literally one pizza and a Chinese."

8.1. Accommodation and childcare shortages

Like Lizzie, many of the participants who had worked in rural locations had at some point lived in staff accommodation due to either an absence of local accommodation or due to its unaffordability. Tímea, a chef whose experiences are described in depth in Chapter Two, had worked in a number of different rural hotels in Scotland since migrating from Hungary around ten years ago. She had experienced difficulties with accommodation on a number of occasions, such as when she broke up with her partner, a man who lived locally, which then forced her to find a new job as local accommodation on the island where they were living was too expensive for her to remain in the area. She described this experience as follows:

> "I tried to find a flat to rent but because [the island] is really literally lives on tourism, there is no flat to rent for a long term, just on a touristy price, and I cannot pay £50, £60, £70 a day. …So actually I wasn't able to find one single, not even like a room share or a flat share, nothing."

At the time of our interview, Tímea was living in staff accommodation in a rural town around two-hour drive north of Edinburgh. She told us that, as a small tourist town, any other form of local accommodation was unaffordable for her. This was problematic, however, as her partner lived in Edinburgh and her son, a university student, would usually spend his holidays at her with home. However, as staff accommodation entailed only a single room with shared living space, her son could not join her and so was staying with her partner in Edinburgh. She tried to see them both as often as she could although she found this difficult, given the length of the drive and her long working hours:

> "[I see them] for a couple of days [but] sometimes I only have one day off. When I have one day off I can't even come back. [the drive] is just too much, it's roughly two hours. If you have a day off, you drive two hours and drive back two hours that's just like what's the point."
> **Tímea, 45, chef in a hotel, rural location**

Like both Lizzie and Tímea, Vicki – whose story is also described in more depth in Chapter Two – similarly found that working in hospitality in a rural location presented problems for her family life. For example, when Vicki fell pregnant, they had to move out of staff accommodation, as they felt they needed their own space once the baby arrived. They did manage to find somewhere to live although they subsequently struggled to find affordable childcare once Vicki was ready to return to work after the birth of her baby. As there was no childcare in their town for children under three, Vicki could only work on evenings and weekend – something that she found very tiring and detrimental to her family life (see worker story in Chapter Two):

> "The only nursery in [our town], is three plus and [my daughter] is only one and a half, so, I can't really work during the day anyway….We don't have family here or anything and we can't afford to have someone come to watch her, because it would cost the same as what I would earn, it would just be silly."

Ellen, an officer supervisor and hotel manager on an island, described the difficulties of working in hospitality as a single mother. She told us that she would like to work more hours at the hotel but is restricted to working during the hours childcare is offered:

> "There's only so much I can do because I can't be there the whole time. I'm a single mum. So I don't have people to look after my child in the evening, so this is a bit tricky. I can only get childcare from 8 in the morning […] Unfortunately there is a big lack of childcare here as it is, lots of people have trouble trying to find childcare and child minders, nurseries, there's just not enough for everybody."
> **Ellen, 40, office supervisor and manager in a hotel on an island**

As a final example, another participant, Mike, described to us how he had lived in staff accommodation for a period while working for a rural hotel in the Highlands. He told us that staff were only allowed to live there for a six-month period and also that it was not available to more senior staff members, as it was deemed inappropriate for them to share living space with those whom they managed. Once he was promoted, therefore, he had to start commuting long distances to work every day, which added to the pressure of his work:

> "The first time I worked [in the hotel] yes I lived in, but you only got six months in staff accommodation, before you had to find a place in town, because the staff turnover was relatively high, that they always needed fresh rooms for people coming in. The second, so, six months and then I found a flat with a friend. The second time I worked there, I wasn't allowed staff accommodation, because my grade was too high… So, I was doing the commute, which wasn't that bad, it was forty five minutes, but when that's forty five minutes, each way on the back of a twelve, thirteen, fourteen hour shift, that knocks the hell out of you."

Mike eventually decided to buy a place locally due to the stress of the commute, which he was able to do given he was on a management salary. He noted, however, that this was not an option for more junior members of staff:

> "So then after about five months, I ended up buying a place closer to [the hotel] because I couldn't keep [the commute] going….[It] is quite expensive because it's besides [this famous resort] so it creates its own little sort of economic bubble. If you're speaking about the entry level, the coming in as a commis chef, a waiter, a housekeeper, a bartender, basically if you wanted to have a life outside of work, you'd have to share with somebody, you wouldn't be able to afford a one bedroom flat in that area, and live between the rent, council tax etc., and you're on minimum wage essentially, or not far above it. Not far above it, they're not a minimum wage employer, but they weren't far above it, at that time."
> **Mike, 44, bartender and former hotel manager, Dundee**

8.2 Staff shortages

Finally, some of our participants believed that staff shortages were more acute in rural areas than in other locations, because the pool of available workers was

smaller. For example, Vicki described how the combination of Brexit, Covid and her rural location affected staff shortages:

> "Yes and the café, everywhere in [our town], all the businesses at the moment are really struggling for staff, I think a lot of people that were here from overseas went back home during lockdown and maybe didn't come back, or whatever, and also just being quite a small town, it's really hard for people to, there's no accommodation really here. So, if a business doesn't have staff accommodation, then it is really hard to find staff."
> **Vicki, 28, bartender in a small town in Perthshire**

These sentiments were echoed by Ellen, who worked as a manager and officer supervisor in a hotel on an island. She believed that a range of factors, including the stressful nature of the hospitality industry and the impacts of COVID, were causing staff shortages, although she also believed that these problems were more acute for those in remote locations.

> "Very understaffed, yeah, staffing this year has been really, really poor. I know it's a nationwide thing, it's not just [us], but they really affect [us] because…[in] the rest of Scotland, there's a lot more people going around. And you can have your pick of a job at the moment, because it's not just hospitality that's understaffed, everywhere' s understaffed. So if you don't like a job you just move on to the next one, and it's really hard to retain people because hospitality is not for everybody. It's a very demanding job and sometimes it's not very thankful, unfortunately."
> "I mean we've noticed things since Covid really, that we used to have a lot of European people coming over to help work. And they would be our summer staff, sort of thing, so they would work for maybe five months through the year, and that always helped us get through. But since Covid as well, there's a lot less people and I think, this is just my own personal opinion, that they have been in furlough…and everything, they get too much for staying at home. So why would you want to get a job when you can stay at home and get the same money? That's how I kind of feel at the moment…..I know we've had people coming in and they've done two days and they've like, "No, not for me," and they just go back home again…. I don't know, like I said, hospitality is just a different field, you have to be a people person, you have to work in teams, you know, it's not for everyone."

Ellen also identified a lack of childcare in her local area as a barrier to recruiting staff:

> "But all we can get at the moment for people applying is 14, 15-year-olds looking for summer work. And they can't serve in the bar, so we've had days when we can't open the bar. And then we had a gift shop built just prior to Covid, we had one summer out of it… And we can't open it every day because, again, a lot of our staff for the shop are parents, mothers who work during school hours only. But then in the summer there's no childcare for us up here at term-time. So it's really poor because, then, they can't work for the summer. So I think childcare needs to be addressed as well, somewhere outside of the 8 till 5 sort of work times."
> **Ellen, 40, office supervisor and manager in a hotel in the Highlands.**

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

This conclusion summarises the findings of the research according to the Fair Work Convention's 2016 Framework, which defines fair work as work that offers individuals security, fulfilment, respect, voice and opportunity.

Security

Our research highlights a number of challenges relating to the security of workers in the hospitality industry in Scotland. These challenges centre around working hours and pay. The research found that, in many cases, these challenges have been worsened by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing staff shortages in the industry. Furthermore, the research has shown how certain workers – such as migrant workers and workers in rural locations – often face a unique set of challenges in relation to security at work.

Working hours

Our research has provided examples of hospitality workers facing the following challenges in relation to their working arrangements:

- an inability to plan or predict when or how much they will be working from week to week, due to the use of zero-hours contracts and/or due to work rotas that change on a regular basis;
- among those on zero-hours contracts, feelings of being pressured to accept more hours than they wish to work, typically due to concerns that they will lose future work opportunities if they refuse hours;
- working long and/or anti-social hours, such as nightshifts and weekends. For example, the research provides several examples of workers – particularly chefs and others at managerial level – working as much as 80 hours a week or more.

Some of those hospitality workers who could not rely on a set number of hours per week reported experiencing financial insecurity as a result. Others reported depending on alternative sources of income, such as from additional jobs or from family members.

Many of these hospitality workers also reported experiences of personal and social hardship, resulting from an inability to rest adequately and to invest time in social and family relationships and valued past-times outside work. This could be a product both of working long and anti-social hours or of working unpredictable hours.

Pay

The report has identified mixed experiences relating to pay among hospitality workers, ranging from fairly straightforward and positive experiences to

experiences of exploitation and illegal practice. In particular, the report provides examples of hospitality workers who reported the following experiences:

- not being paid for hours worked, either due to intentional withholding by the employer or due to administrative errors;
- withholding of holiday or sick pay;
- deductions to pay that were deemed unfair by the worker, for example due to customer complaints;
- failure to distribute service charges;
- being paid 'off the books' in cash.

Hospitality workers who had had these experiences – or who felt that they were commonplace in the industry – often took it upon themselves to monitor their own pay and any other benefits regularly in order to ensure their accuracy.

The research also explored perceptions of fairness around pay among workers. It provides examples of hospitality workers who deemed their pay to be unfair, typically because they were performing tasks and responsibilities above their pay grades, or because they had skills and experience which they felt were not being adequately acknowledged by their employers.

The impact on security of COVID-19, staff shortages, and the cost-of-living crisis

The hospitality workers in our sample reported the following impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, of ongoing staff shortages, and of the cost of living crisis:

- increased financial insecurity due to a loss of work during lockdowns;
- an increased sense of pressure to accept unwanted hours due to staff shortages;
- increased variability in working arrangements due to staff shortages;
- increased pressure and stress at work due to staff shortages;
- increased concerns about their financial security due to the increased cost of living;
- increased concerns about the viability of their employer due to rising prices and customers spending less;
- greater reluctance to ask for better pay or working conditions, or more likely to accept lower pay, due to concerns among workers about the financial impact of COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis on their employers.

It is worth noting, however, that some workers also reported observations that pay and working conditions were slowly improving in the sector as employers tried to recruit and retain staff.

Migrant workers

Some, but not all, of the migrant workers that we interviewed reported feeling that they were more vulnerable to experiences of insecurity and exploitation than Scottish workers. They attributed this, in part, to the attitude of some employers

whom they believed treated migrants as ‘easy targets’ for exploitation. At the same time, these workers also attributed the problem to their own inability to advocate for themselves, particularly if they did not speak good English or were unaware of industry norms and laws.

Rural workers

Workers in rural areas in our sample expressed a number of concerns relating to their ability to feel secure in their work and in their home lives, including:

- an inability to find affordable and/or suitable accommodation that allowed them both to work and to maintain their family and social lives outside work;
- among parents, struggles to find suitable childcare;
- concerns that they were more adversely affected by staff shortages and the cost-of-living crisis than other workers in Scotland.

Implications of findings

In conclusion, many of the hospitality workers in our sample faced a number of challenges relating to their security in work. However, this was not the case for everyone we interviewed and, moreover, the nature and extent of these challenges varied between different workers. Based on our initial findings, we recommend that further research based on larger, representative sample, for instance through an online survey, should be conducted in order to explore the following questions:

- what proportion of hospitality workers have experienced challenges relating to precarious working hours and/or over-work?
- are people on zero-hours contracts more likely to have experienced these issues around working hours compared to those on other types of contracts?
- are certain demographic groups more likely to have experienced these issues around working hours than other groups?
- what proportion of hospitality workers have experienced unfair practices around their pay, and are certain demographic groups more likely to have experienced these than others?
- what proportion of hospitality workers have felt increased insecurity at work due to staff shortages?

We also recommend that the Fair Work Convention’s hospitality inquiry and/or further research considers the following issues:

- how are employers in the sector managing staff shortages and how can they be better supported in order to mitigate the impact of staff shortages on existing workers?

Fulfilment

Our research identified three key areas where hospitality workers were most likely to experience fulfilment in their work. These were:

- workers' relationships with customers;
- workers' relationships with co-workers;
- the ability of workers to develop their skills and talents.

Relationships with customers and co-workers

Relationships with customers were a particular source of fulfilment for hospitality workers, typically providing workers with a sense of enjoyment and engagement, as well as meaning and purpose in their work. Workers also reported that relationships with co-workers were a source of fulfilment at work. As the section below on 'respect' explores, however, both relationships with customers and with co-workers could simultaneously be sources of tension and stress for workers, particularly when they were subject to abusive or difficult behaviour. The research did not include a thorough exploration of the nature and types of support by employers offered to hospitality workers in these areas.

Training and skills

Our research identified mixed experiences in relation to skill development. Many of our research participants, particularly those working in front-facing customer roles such as bartending or food service, described feeling little need or desire to develop their skills and talents in the industry. For this group, fulfilment at work came largely from daily interactions with customers and co-workers. By contrast, we also spoke to workers – particularly chefs, those working with specialist produce such as wine or coffee, and managers – for whom the ability to develop their skills and expertise was central to their fulfilment at work. In these cases, employers played a significant role in either providing directly or facilitating training and thus in ensuring their employees' fulfilment at work.

Implications of findings

Given the emphasis that our research participants placed on their relationships with customers and co-workers, it is worth exploring further what support workers receive from employers in these areas. The Hospitality Inquiry and/or further research could usefully consider the following:

- what types of support and training are available to hospitality workers in order to optimise their relationships with customers and with co-workers?
- what other measures do or should employers take to optimise relationships between employees and customers in the workplace, and between co-workers?
- how effective do hospitality workers find these sorts of interventions?

Further research could also usefully explore the ‘training gap’ we have provisionally identified between different types of workers in the hospitality industry. This could ascertain whether a similar ‘gap’ between different types of workers in expectations and wishes around training can be identified in a larger, more representative sample of hospitality workers. Similarly, the Hospitality Inquiry should consider the implications of this potential ‘training gap’ for fair work practices in the sector.

Respect

Our research identified a number of challenges faced by hospitality workers relating to experiences of respect at work. Many of these are explored in the section above on ‘security’, such as experiences of working long and/or anti-social hours, and experiences of precarious working conditions, which threaten workers’ ability to invest in their social and personal lives outside work. Other challenges relating to respect include:

- a range of physical and mental stressors in the workplace;
- a lack of suitable breaks;
- experiencing difficult, abusive or bullying behaviour from customers and co-workers.

Physical and mental challenges at work

The research identified a number of physical and mental challenges commonly experienced by hospitality workers, including:

- physical pain resulting from standing for long periods of time;
- injuries resulting from standing, repetitive movements, or accidents;
- tiredness and fatigue;
- stress relating to the pressure of delivering high-quality service on time.

Lack of breaks

Crucially, many of the hospitality workers in our sample reported frequently missing breaks or being unable to take breaks when they needed them, both of which could make them more likely to struggle with these physical and mental challenges.

Problematic relationships at work

Many of the hospitality workers in our sample reported experiencing distress due to the behaviour of customers and/or co-workers. These difficult experiences included:

- dealing with drunk customers;

- dealing with customer complaints;
- experiencing sexual harassment from both customers and co-workers;
- experiencing racism from both customers and co-workers;
- experiencing bullying or abusive behaviour from co-workers.

Many of the workers in our sample expressed the view that chefs were particularly likely to engage in bullying or abusive behaviours at work, although many also felt that the pressure and pace of many different contexts in the hospitality industry could lead to bullying behaviour by managers.

The impacts on respect of COVID-19 and staff shortages

Some of the hospitality workers in our sample reported that the need to enforce restrictions relating to COVID-19 had increased the incidence of negative experiences with customers. Similarly, many workers also felt that staff shortages had increased pressure and intensity in the workplace, increasing stress levels among staff and, at times, making it harder for workers to take breaks during working hours.

Implications of findings

Given these findings, we recommend that further research should seek to quantify the prevalence of experiences of harassment, bullying and abuse within the sector, and to explore whether certain groups are more likely than others to have these experiences, both in terms of workplace context and demographic characteristics.

Further research could additionally explore the views of employers on these issues and look to map the nature and extent of support offered by employers to their staff.

Similarly, further research could look to survey the types of support offered to workers in order to manage the above-mentioned physical and mental challenges at work and to ascertain how effective workers find this support.

Effective Voice

Our findings on effective voice in the workplace were mixed although, overall, indicate that many hospitality workers face a range of barriers to effective voice in the workplace. Our research particularly focused on workers' own perspectives on such barriers. These included:

- sentiments among workers that they had to cultivate the confidence and skills to voice their views and experiences independently of – or even in opposition to – their employers in order to ensure fair treatment;

- concerns among workers that they had inadequate access to, or knowledge of, external sources of advice and support;
- sentiments among certain groups of workers – particularly those in junior positions and those who saw their hospitality jobs as temporary or secondary to other responsibilities – that it was not their place or responsibility to voice their opinions at work;
- concerns among workers about the financial impact of COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis on their employers, which made workers reluctant to ask for better pay or conditions.

Our research also identified examples of structural barriers to effective voice, such as a lack of formal communication channels for dialogue between staff and especially between junior and senior staff members.

Implications of findings

Based on these findings, we recommend that further research among workers and employers seeks to quantify the extent of the following experiences among workers and employers across the industry:

- knowledge of and engagement with external sources of support among workers, such as trade unions or other bodies;
- a lack of formal channels for communication in the workplace, particularly between junior and senior staff.

Our findings show that hospitality workers often rely on their ability to advocate for oneself to avoid experiences of exploitation in the industry. We recommend that the inquiry explore, for instance through a nationally-representative survey, to what extent people feel able, knowledgeable and confident to do this, and what characteristics affect this ability. The inquiry could consider how this can be addressed through collective action, for instance through unions or other forms of staff representation, or by designing interventions to equip especially vulnerable individuals with the required knowledge to advocate for themselves.

Opportunity

The report highlights a number of issues relating to the dimension of opportunity, as outlined below.

Flexibility

Our research suggests that many workers value the flexibility afforded to them by working in the hospitality industry, particularly when it allows them to fulfil other responsibilities such as studying, caring for others, or working in other sectors. However, this flexibility can also impinge upon their financial, personal and social security, as suggested by our findings relating to ‘security’ (see above).

Progression

Our research found that low pay, over-work and precarious working hours were typically cited by hospitality workers as a reason for not pursuing progression opportunities within the sector or as a reason for seeing their hospitality work as temporary or secondary to jobs in other sectors. Some hospitality workers additionally reported that they did not wish to pursue progression opportunities as they saw management roles as involving increased physical and mental stress, particularly in terms of administrative duties and in terms of dealing with difficult customers or staff.

At the same time, some of the hospitality workers that we spoke to did see the hospitality industry as offering good opportunities for progression. This was particularly the case among chefs, managers and those working with specialist produce, such as wine or coffee.

Impact on opportunity of COVID-19

Our research suggests that COVID-19 has negatively affected how some workers perceive their future in the hospitality industry, specifically by increasing their concerns about their ability to obtain secure and reliable work within the industry.

Rural workers

Our research highlights that rural workers may face particular challenges that affect their opportunities at work, such as struggles to find adequate housing or childcare.

Implications of findings

Based on these findings, we recommend further research into how COVID-19 has affected how workers perceive their future in the hospitality industry. Furthermore, the inquiry could explore whether there are any learnings from specific areas of the hospitality industry, such as among chefs and managers, that could be applied more widely to improve opportunities for progression.

These conclusions will be considered by the Hospitality Inquiry, established by the Fair Work Convention, an independent body that advises the Scottish Government on advancing fair work for all in Scotland. The inquiry will assess relevant evidence, such as this report, consult stakeholders, identify key issues and actions, consider feasible interventions, and develop recommendations for Ministers and industry.

Two key challenges stand out, based on the findings of this report. First, the ability to advocate for oneself is often seen as vital to avoid experiences of exploitation in the hospitality industry, across all domains of fair work; however self-advocacy requires knowledge of one's rights and confidence to defend them during interactions with employers. An important implication for the Inquiry is to explore in a more systematic way, for instance through a representative survey, to what extent workers know their rights, whether they feel confident in defending them, where their gaps are. Based on this, the Inquiry should consider potential ways to improve the advocacy of workers; firstly by improving their knowledge of fair work and basic employment

rights, and secondly by considering and expanding the voice mechanisms that are available to workers in hospitality. This work should consider both individual self-advocacy routes, but also the creation of collective voice mechanisms. Expanding offers of independent support and advice available to hospitality workers is likely to be beneficial. When assessing the availability and effectiveness of voice mechanisms consideration should also be given to vulnerable workers who are less likely to have the knowledge and confidence to advocate for themselves, such as migrant workers.

Second, the research shows that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are central to understanding current experiences of working in the hospitality sector. In particular, staff shortages in the sector are seen mostly as having contributed to a worsening in working conditions, in particular in terms of having to work longer or unwanted hours, feeling under increased pressure in the workplace, and being unable to take adequate breaks. However, staff shortages represent an opportunity to raise standards, as employers seek to recruit and retain more staff. It will be important for the Inquiry to consider how employers in the sector are managing current staff shortages, and how to ensure employers are equipped to address the impacts of staff shortages and making the hospitality sector more attractive, for instance by improving fair work across the different fair work dimensions.

Appendix A: Interview guide

Introduction and consent (3 mins)

Thank you for participating in this interview. My name is _____ and I am a researcher at the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR). We are an independent research organisation and a registered charity. We are conducting a research project on the experiences of people working in the hospitality sector in Scotland. This is funded by the Fair Work Convention, an independent body that advises the Scottish Government. For this project, we are interviewing people like yourself to find out more about your experiences of work in the hospitality sector. We really want to hear about your personal experiences and learn more about how things are – and how things have been – for you at work. The interview will last between 45-60 minutes.

All the information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team at NIESR. All the findings will be analysed and reported anonymously. This means that your name and any other identifiable characteristics, such as your workplace and job title, will be either removed or changed in any reports or publications resulting from the research, so that you cannot be identified in any way. Crucially, we will not tell your employer that you have participated in this research, and we will not reveal to them anything that we discuss in the interview. Your participation is voluntary, so you are free to withdraw at any stage without giving a reason, and you are free to decline to answer any of the questions. With your permission, interviews will be recorded so that I can listen back and ensure that I have not missed anything you have said. These recordings will be stored on secure servers. *Please can you confirm that you are willing to take part in this research? [obtain consent]. Please can you confirm that you are happy for this interview to be recorded? [obtain consent].* [start recorder after consent obtained]. Do you have any questions before we start?

About you and your work (5 mins)

Could you tell me briefly about yourself: your age, your living situation, and anything else that you think is important to know?

Could you tell me about your current job?

- Who do you work for? [*probe for size, location, type of venue*]
- What does your job involve?

How long have you worked there?

Why did you apply for this job?

- Do you remember how you found out about the job?
- How did you find the recruitment process?

What did you do before this job? [*try to obtain brief job history, focusing particularly on: experiences in hospitality sector/reasons for leaving previous jobs*]

Have you ever been in full time or part time education? *[try to obtain information on education levels, and any other qualifications]*

Are there things you particularly like about your job? Are there things you do not like about your job?

Experiences of migration (5 mins)

Have you ever lived or worked outside Scotland?
[If born outside Scotland]

When did you come to Scotland? *[probe for brief history of migration pathway]*

Why did you leave [home country]? What were your hopes for moving to [destination]?

Did you have a job arranged in [destination] before you left [home country]? *[probe for details on recruitment process]*

- [if not] How did you find work when you arrived in [destination]?

What work did you do in [home country]?

Did you obtain any qualifications in [home country]?

What type of visa or legal status do you hold?

- Do you have any concerns about your status, now or in the future?
- Do you think your status affects your job?
- Does your employer sponsor your visa? Do they have any role in determining your legal status?
    - Does this ever affect your relationship with your employer?

Working conditions: contract and hours (5 mins)

Do you have a contract? What type of contract? *[check if self-employed]*

- Have you ever been offered a choice of contracts?

Are you happy with your contract? Why/why not?

- What sort of contract would you prefer?
- How does your contract now compare with contracts you have had in the past?

What hours do you work?

- Has this changed since you started your job?
- Has your employer asked you to opt-out of the ‘Working Time Directive's 48 h/week maximum’?

How often do your hours change?

- When do you find out about your hours? *[probe for max/min amount of notice given of hours]*

- Are you ever called in to work at the last minute?
- Are you ever sent home early?
    - Are you paid in full as planned in these cases?
- Who decides on your hours? How are these communicated to you?
- How many hours do you have between shifts? *[probe both for lack of breaks, as well as long unpaid breaks]*

Do you know how many hours you are entitled to by law between shifts? *[probe for specific answer]*

How does it affect you when your hours change at short notice? [*probe for childcare plans/financial security/effect on social or family life].*

Can you request particular hours?

- What happens if you do not want to work the hours offered?
- What happens if you need to change your hours?

Are you happy with the number of hours you work? Why/why not? *[probe for how this might vary in different time periods; also probe specifically for effects on social and family life].*

- Have you ever asked to increase / decrease your hours? Why/why not?
    - What response did you receive?
- How do your hours compare to your colleagues? To other similar jobs in different venues?

What are the advantages of these working hours/type of contract for you? What are the disadvantages?

How are your hours recorded? Is this always accurate?

Do you get paid breaks at work?

- Are these fixed times? *[probe for who supervises this]*
- Where do you go on your breaks? Is there anything you're not allowed to do?
- What do you do if you need a break outside of fixed times?
- Are you aware of how many paid breaks you are entitled to by law? *[probe for specific answer]*

How easy is it to get time off when you need it?

- Have you ever requested time off? For what reason? What was the response?
- Is there a formal notice period/process to ask for time off?

Are you aware of your workplace's HR policies? Do you know how to access them?

Pay and benefits (5 mins)

How much are you paid?

- How did you end up with this pay *(probe for: advertised at this level, negotiations when recruited, increases)?*

Has your pay changed in recent years?

- How did this increase come about? (*probe for: formal process, negotiations, new job)*

Are you always paid what you expect to be paid? *[probe for: process for recording hours, travel expenses, unclear unpaid breaks]*

- Are you always paid when you expect to be paid?

Do you have deductions from your pay? [*probe for: docking pay for breakages/deductions for transport/uniform/meals/housing]*

Do you think your pay is fair?

- How does your pay compare to your colleagues?
- How does your pay compare to other similar jobs?

Do you receive any other benefits from employer *[probe for: accommodation, food, travel, bonuses]*

Do you receive tips? How do tips work in your workplace? *[probe for how they are collected and distributed/management deductions]*

How much do you take home in tips? *[probe for how this changes over time]*

- Do you think this is fair?
- Has this changed at all with COVID?

Do you receive sick pay?

Do you receive holiday pay?

- How is this recorded? Do you believe it to be accurate?

Have you ever been asked to keep information to yourself? [*probe for: pay, working hours, anything else?]*

Impacts of broader social, economic, and political context (5 mins)

Has anything changed for you at work since Brexit?

Did the COVID pandemic affect your ability to work?
If lost job or furloughed

- How did it affect your pay?

- How did you feel about this?
- Did you receive any support from your employer?
- What did you do during these periods?
- Do you feel you had similar experiences to colleagues? What about to other venues with similar roles?

If continued to work: How did you feel about working during periods of restrictions? Has anything changed in your workplace due to COVID? *[probe for worker numbers and turnover/hygiene restrictions/extra work/enforcing COVID-19 rules/customer confidence/ 'Eat Out To Help Out' / catching COVID-19 and/or isolating]*

- Do you think these changes will stay in place?
- Did you receive any support with this?

Did you have times when you had to self-isolate? What were you paid during these times?

Are you being affected by the rising cost of living, such as the increased cost of food, gas, oil and/or electricity?

Has the COVID pandemic affected how you see your work, and your future plans?

- Do you think the situation is getting worse, better or is about the same?

Health and well-being (5 mins)

Do you find – or have you ever found – that your health is affected by work? *[probe for: accidents, illness]*

- Have you ever taken time off work due to accident or illness?

Do you find – or have you ever found – that your mental health is affected by work, either positively or negatively?

- For example, some people experience their work as a source of satisfaction and contentment. For others, it can contribute to feelings of worry, stress or anxiety, or to feeling down or sad. Do any of those experiences apply to you?

Training and progression (5 mins)

Do you feel that you have the necessary skills and experience to carry out your work?

Do you feel your current job makes good use of your skill set and your talents?

Why/why not?
Are there opportunities to learn new skills in this job?

- Would you be interested in these? Why/why not?
- What sort of skills would you like to gain? How would you like to do this?

Have you ever received any training at work? *[specify that this includes on-the-job training, as well as training outside work]*

Have you ever been offered any other training at work? Why did you complete this training or why did you not?

- Were you offered pay for this training?

Are there opportunities to progress up/move up in your job?

- Are you interested in these?
- Do you think you have the same opportunities as your colleagues or others in the sector?

Do you want to stay in this job? Why/why not? What sort of work would you like to do in the future?

- Do you think you would find it easy to find this work? Why/why not?
- How confident do you feel in applying for this work?
- Do you think your experience in this job will help you achieve these future plans?

Relationships at work (5 mins)

How do you find your customers at work?

How do you find your relationships with your colleagues at work?

How regularly do people leave? How regularly do new people join?

- What are the advantages/disadvantages of this?
  Has this changed in recent years?

Do you feel that people listen to each other opinions at work?

Do you feel comfortable sharing your views and opinions at work?

Do you feel you can be yourself at work?

- Do you feel comfortable with talking about your personal life at work?

Would you ask your colleagues for help you if you were feeling worried or upset about something at work? Or in your personal life?

Have you ever felt uncomfortable or distressed by the behaviour or comments of someone at work? *[probe for customer, colleague, manager]*

- Did you seek any help?
- Did you receive any support?

Have you ever witnessed other people feeling uncomfortable or distressed by the comments or someone at work?

- Did anyone seek any help?
- Did anyone receive any support?

Have you ever felt unsafe at work?

- Did you seek any help?
- Did you receive any support?
- Have you found any patterns to these experiences *[probe for: time of day, gender, sale of alcohol, working alone, enforcing COVID-19 rules*]

Have you ever experienced harassment or bullying at work? [*probe for customer, colleague, manager*]

- Did you seek any help?
- Did you receive any support?
- Have you found any patterns to these experiences *[probe for: time of day, gender, sale of alcohol, working alone, enforcing COVID-19 rules*]

Have you ever experienced discrimination at work? *[probe for customer, colleague, manager]*

- Did you seek any help?
- Did you receive any support?

Effective voice at work (5 mins)

Who do you report to at work?

How regularly do you meet with this person? *[probe for any formal or semi-formal processes, like appraisals, regular 1:1 catch-ups]*

How is your relationship with this person?

- If you had a concern or issue that you were worried about, would you talk to them about it?
    - Do you think it would be acted on?
    - Is there anyone else you would go to?

Are you ever involved in decisions about how things are run or done at work?

Do you feel your opinions about how things are run matter at work?

Do you feel that the opinions of your colleagues matter more, less or about the same as you?

Are you a member of a trade union?
[if yes] What have your experiences with a union been?
[if no]

- Have you ever considered becoming a member?
- What do you think it would involve to join?
- What do you think the advantages or disadvantages would be?

- How do you think your employer would react?
- Have you ever approached any other organisation for support at work eg. Citizen's advice bureau or Better Than Zero?

Home life (5 mins)

Where do you live? Who do you live with?

Are you happy with your living arrangements? Do you wish to change these in the future?

- Would you like to stay in the area or move?
    - How easy will it be to stay in the area? How easy will it be to move?

How do you get to and from work?

- How do you find this? *[probe for cost, time, ease, safety concerns]*
- Is your cost of travel reimbursed/paid?

How do you spend your time when you are not working?
Finally, is there anything that you would really like to change or improve at work?

Appendix B: Video diary design

We used a video diary software called Vurvey, and asked participants to record videos of themselves after work shifts, on six different days over a period of two weeks. They were asked the following questions on each day:

Day 1:

- Tell us about yourself: where do you work? What is your job? What are your hours? Where did you work before? How long do you intend to stay in this role? (5 mins)
- What were the best things and worst things about your day at work? (3 mins)
- What were the best and worst things today about **your journey into work**? (3 mins)

Day 2:

- What were the best things and worst things about your day at work? (3 mins)
- What were the best and worst things today about the **tasks/jobs that you completed at work**? (3 mins)

Day 3:

- What were the best things and worst things about your day at work? (3 mins)
- What were the best and worst things today about **your relationships with your colleagues?** (3 mins)

Day 4:

- What were the best things and worst things about your day at work? (3 mins)
- What were the best and worst things today about **your relationship with your manager/supervisor?** (3 mins)

Day 5:

- What were the best things and worst things about your day at work? (3 mins)
- What were the best and worst things today about **your experiences with your customers today?** (3 mins)

Day 6:

- What were the best things and worst things about your day at work? (3 mins)
- What were the best and worst things today about **how you felt physically and/or mentally today?** (3 mins)

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