

Prosperity and poverty

by Graham Whitham

Increasingly it feels like Greater Manchester is moving slowly but surely towards a much stronger and clearer agenda on poverty. Andy Burnham’s work on homelessness, the development of local anti-poverty strategies by some of our local authorities (some of which are detailed [here](#)), the interest in [Poverty Truth Commissions](#) across the city region and the work of [GMPA’s Food Poverty Alliance](#) are all signs of a determination to tackle the issue of poverty through partnership working and in a sustainable and strategic way.

A good next step would be embedding tackling poverty and raising living standards within the city region’s economic agenda, recognising the negative impact poverty has on the economy of Greater Manchester through lost human potential and reduced productivity and the need for increased spending on public services.



That’s why it was good to see a strong focus on raising living standards and addressing inequalities in the [Independent Greater Manchester Prosperity Review](#), launched last week. The Review was commissioned by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). It updates the [Manchester Independent Economic Review](#) (MIER) published ten years ago.



The Prosperity Review recognises that whilst there has been strong growth in highly skilled areas such as the digital sector, the city region is also home to a lot of jobs that are low paid and offer poor terms and conditions. The growth in ‘poor quality jobs’ has exacerbated existing inequalities within Greater Manchester and left the city region’s living standards lagging behind those of London and the South East.

It has become increasingly accepted that we need to ensure economic activity benefits the lives of everyday citizens. Concentrating on high growth sectors of the economy risks ignoring large swathes of Greater Manchester’s economy, and we can’t expect living standards to rise if we have a two-tier economy – one offering well paid, secure jobs in highly skilled sectors, and the other offering poor quality jobs with limited opportunities for progression in traditionally low paying sectors such as care and retail. Harnessing the role of technology in these sectors should help boost productivity and link them more closely to the ever-expanding digital economy. The challenge will be ensuring workers across the city region benefit from this. We need to develop new ways of measuring that this is happening so that we can better understand whether the ‘economic story’ of Greater Manchester is translating into positive outcomes for its residents.



Graham Whitham
GMPA Director

The Prosperity Review will sit alongside the Greater Manchester Industrial Strategy. The Mayor has also been working on a [Good Employment Charter](#) aimed at encouraging wider take-up of positive employment practices among employers. More details will be announced later this year. Work on these different elements presents an opportunity to set out an economic programme for the city region that focuses clearly on outcomes for residents. As other approaches set out a stronger agenda on poverty, we need to think about how we link the two so that tackling poverty is part of how we develop and grow the Greater Manchester Economy.

Mental Health & Universal Credit: Investigating Claimant Experiences

By Joe Pardoe, PhD Student at the University of Salford

Research has shown that recent changes to the benefits system, especially the rollout of Universal Credit, have profoundly impacted the UK's poorest communities. This has been found to partly account for the massive increase in national rates of poverty, particularly child poverty. The link between poverty and health has long been established; a region with a high rate of poverty tends to correspond with a lower standard of general health and mental health.

My study is interested in how people who live within an area with a relatively high rate of poverty, such as Greater Manchester, may experience changes to their mental health throughout their engagement with the benefits system and receipt of Universal Credit. Claimants who are vulnerable to mental health related issues and mental health conditions, such as those who receive additional disability benefits like PIP, often see their need for support intensified throughout the process of engagement with the benefits system. What is less well known is, how those without pre-existing mental health conditions may experience changes to their mental health throughout the process of claiming.



Prior research has identified various aspects of claiming that may impact upon mental health, such as being subject to the Work Capability Assessment and having to deal with the rigors of meeting conditionality measures to avoid being sanctioned. However, while I am interested to talk about these kinds of issues, I am particularly keen to allow individuals themselves to identify what aspects of claiming Universal Credit may have affected changes to their mental health.

I aim to interview 30 people who have reported changes to their mental health throughout the process of claiming; this may include those with pre-existing mental health conditions, or those who have mentioned experiencing mental health related issues since starting to claim. I am interested to hear from anybody who lives within Greater Manchester and is open to discuss this topic by drawing upon their personal experiences.

The study will explore perceived changes to mental health at various stages of claiming Universal Credit, with a specific focus on:

- The financial impact
- What aspects of claiming Universal Credit may be seen as helping, or being unhelpful, to sustaining a good standard of mental health
- Possible issues around meeting conditionality measures, including in-work
 - How people claiming Universal Credit may feel they are seen by others; both their friends and family, and by wider society



Joe Pardoe

In order to support this study, I would be very grateful to hear from anybody whose job involves providing some kind of support to people who receive Universal Credit and have experienced changes to their mental health and may be open to being interviewed to discuss their experiences. If you are able to support my research or would like to find out more, please contact me via [email](#)

Joe is studying for his PhD within the School of Health and Society at the University of Salford, he is associated with the Sustainable Housing and Urban Studies Unit and supporting the Salford Anti-Poverty Task Force. He gained a 1st Class honours degree in Psychology at the University of Bradford.

GMPA Reports

In the last four months of 2018, GMPA published three reports:

[Local welfare assistance schemes](#): We were concerned that lack of central government funding and support for local schemes, at a time when local authorities are facing unprecedented cuts to their budgets, was undermining the ability of local councils to help residents in need of crisis support.

[Local child and family poverty strategies](#): GMPA developed a new tool to support local authorities and other stakeholders to identify approaches to the development of local child and family poverty strategies to help to fill the vacuum created by the lack of guidance or support from central government.

[The Poverty Premium](#): GMPA's report shows that low income households in Greater Manchester could be paying more than £1000 over the odds for everyday goods and services compared to those on middle and higher incomes.

Greater Manchester Poverty Action: Training Courses

GMPA provides training to organisations working to address poverty across the city region and the rest of the UK. We aim to support organisations to better understand some of the complexities around poverty.



We offer three different courses. [More detailed information and booking for all courses is available here](#)

Understanding Poverty Data: Would understanding how poverty in the UK is defined and measured help you and your organisation in the work that you do? Do you need to identify robust sources of data to support your fundraising bids? Are you regularly challenged about the nature and scale of poverty in the UK and find the myriad of information about poverty hard to navigate? This course is designed to support organisations facing these challenges.

Next available dates are March 7th and June 5th, 2019. It is a full day course.

Exploring the Poverty Premium: Low income consumers in the UK face several disadvantages in the marketplace. Understanding this issue can support service providers, businesses and policymakers to identify changes in policy and practice that can help mitigate the impact of the poverty premium, minimising the risk of debt and financial hardship among people on low incomes. This course is designed to provide a better understanding of the poverty premium, the way it affects customers, clients and consumers and how suppliers can amend and 'poverty proof' their practices.

Next available date is September 11th, 2019. It is a half day course.

Risk of poverty among different groups: This course will look at trends in poverty in the UK among different groups and support participants to think about their own client base and how they can effectively target and design projects and services. This course is designed for organisations seeking to strengthen the case for existing projects or develop new projects aimed at tackling and preventing poverty and will also be of interest to researchers and policymakers seeking to develop a better understanding of poverty in the UK.

Next available date is November 6th, 2019. It is a half day course.

The state we want - Rethinking Poverty (The Webb Legacy)

This short piece is taken from a recent article by Caroline Hartnell and Barry Knight as part of Rethinking Poverty's [new series looking at 45 Degree Change](#)



“On the one hand, there is ‘a huge amount of energy and innovation going on in civil society, public services and the new economy’, with people and organisations everywhere experimenting with new ways of deciding things and doing things, with new forms of collaborative action. On the other hand, ‘we need the state to help resource, legitimise and regulate in favour of these emerging collaborative and socially responsible organisations’. If these initiatives are to be sustained or systematized so they become the basis of a new society rather than scattered examples of what could be, we need to understand what role the state needs to play, at national and local levels.

As a first step they decided to look at the set of inspiring local projects/initiatives documented by Aditya Chakraborty in the *Guardian*. ‘In the Alternatives,’ he explains, ‘I have sought to explore what that democratic, decentralised economy might look like, by reporting the ways people are already doing economics differently.’

The Preston Model: In 2012 Preston declared itself the first living wage employer in the north of England and the council backed a credit union as a way of taking on the loan shops. But the transformative moment came when city councillor Matthew Brown working with [CLES](#) began to harness public services, persuading six local public bodies to commit to spending locally wherever possible. Sometimes this involved splitting a contract up into smaller chunks that could be taken on by local firms. It meant officials actually shaping a market to fit their society and it worked. In 2013 they spent £38m in Preston and £292m in all of Lancashire. By 2017 those totals stood at £111m in Preston and £486m throughout the county.

In Oldham: 86 school kitchens dishing out 17,000 meals a day serving high-quality food, with a menu that’s about 20% organic, with much else sourced regionally. The ‘magic formula’ behind this is again an individual, Anne Burns, head of Oldham’s school dinner department. ‘Having done school dinners for 40 years, since training as a cook aged 16, she abhors ‘ping meals’ and ‘plastic food’.’ Here again we see localism at work, keeping public money close to home and using it to grow the local economy. We can surely imagine this being replicated across the UK.

These examples are merely the tip of the iceberg. The final goal is a self-organising society in which there is significant ownership of development by local people. This is in tune with the movement to #ShiftThePower – so that the responsibility for a good society belongs to everyone and we all take part in addressing poverty, which currently destroys so many lives.”

The full article is available [here](#)

Greater Manchester Housing Providers: Excerpts from 'The poverty issue' 23

These are just snippets – there's much more going on and the full articles are available [here](#)

Motiv8 is a GM programme to help unemployed people aged 25 and over, supporting some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people overcome a wide variety of complex issues and barriers to improve their lives and chances of getting back into work. **New Charter Homes** is leading the Motiv8 programme with support from other Manchester **Athena** housing providers at Stockport Homes, ForViva, Wythenshawe Community Housing Group and Bolton at Home.



Bolton at Home have two projects under Ambition for Ageing: Working Potential is aimed at carers aged 50+ who want to explore employment or training opportunities and their Social Eating project aims to reduce social isolation by bringing people together using food. Withins Action Group, known as WAG, aim to improve their local area and create opportunities for the local residents and one of the outcomes has been a Community Café with a 'Snack and Chat' drop in session.

After asking children to describe what home meant to them **First Choice Homes Oldham** discovered that it was all about a feeling. Since then they have worked with young people in the Clarksfield and Greenacres neighbourhoods focussing on the concept of place and identity. The project aimed to address their sense of safety and security when using public spaces and to look at how their own behaviour in these places could make other people feel.

ForViva, working in partnership with Salford Council Integrated Youth Services & Fighting Fit Kids ran a pilot programme aimed at helping young women aged between 11 and 16 to raise their aspirations, specifically aiming to develop a greater sense of emotional and physical wellbeing whilst gaining self confidence and self-esteem. Sessions included self-defence, body image, relationships with food including nutrition and cooking, the impact of social media, mental wellbeing, internet safety, relationships and domestic abuse.

Not everyone has the knowledge, or the provisions to make their house energy efficient. **One Manchester's** Asset Management and One Money teams partnered with LEAP to offer residents free energy and money saving services through a series of road shows. This allowed them to help people to understand switching their energy provider, smart meters and how to get the most out of their heating system. By the end of January 2019, they had actively engaged with 116 people.

Regenda Homes' Oasis Community Kitchen Project is where volunteers create meals for the community using food collected from supermarkets that would otherwise be wasted. Planning and preparing meals and activities for half term, saw over 100 families attending up to 4 times a week for activities, films and food. Meals are prepared and served by the volunteers in a family dining experience. Media such as phones and iPads were banned during the meals to encourage conversation.

More than £90,000 has been ploughed into community projects and good causes in Salford during the past year thanks to **Salix Homes** Springboard fund. The community grant programme enables Salford-based organisations or initiatives to bid for funding to help support projects that boost community spirit, improve the environment, reduce isolation and promote health and wellbeing. During the past 12 months, recipients have included dance troupes, grassroots football teams, bowlers, computer clubs and community gardening projects.

Six Town Housing's Chesham Fold Tenant and Residents Association's Baby Bank is providing parents in poverty with equipment including cots, pushchairs, toys and baby baths as well as disposable items such as nappies and baby shampoo. Clothes are also available for children up to the age of five. Items are provided on a referral basis, with partnerships set up with local midwives and health workers. The Association also run a weekly youth club for children aged 5 to 16, a foodbank and the 'Friends of Gypsy Brook'.

Continuing to promote South Manchester Credit Union, **Southway Housing Trust** deliver an affordable loan scheme 'Southway Solutions', now in its 5th year with over 900 tenants having borrowed. Southway also launched 'Right Track UC' loans in January issuing its first loan to reduce the hardship suffered by those having to wait for their first Universal Credit payment. The loan is available to those who haven't had an advanced payment from DWP and are being supported by Southway's Advice Services Team.

Every year, **Stockport Homes'** Winter Welfare visits to around 500 older and more vulnerable customers enables staff to provide advice and assistance on keeping warm, eating well, checking vaccinations are up to date and making referrals for equipment and adaptations. They are also working in partnership with Stockport Council, Good Things Foundation and local partners as part of the #digiknow network, to create a web of digital skills support centres, making it easier for residents to find help in their local community.

A Christmas food appeal co-ordinated by **Wythenshawe Community Housing Group** with an army of volunteers to make sure that the most vulnerable people in the community had enough food for Christmas, provided 144 hampers with enough food to feed 425 people, including 243 children. Also following the roll out of Universal Credit, they have been supporting vulnerable and digitally excluded people who require face to face help with their on-line application.

Forthcoming events

Greater Manchester Food Poverty Alliance: Action Plan Launch Event

Monday March 4th, 2019 from 12.30pm - 3pm at Methodist Central Hall, Central Hall, Oldham Street, Manchester, M1 1JQ

Low incomes and high costs mean many people are struggling to put food on the table, and a healthy, balanced diet is even further from their reach. There are now over 170 food banks and other social food providers across Greater Manchester and it is time for a more coordinated approach to ensure no one goes hungry.

The Greater Manchester Food Poverty Alliance has been working with over 100 people and organisations from every borough in Greater Manchester to co-produce this Food Poverty Action Plan. It will be a comprehensive set of aims and actions, for our city region to begin the long-term task of eradicating food poverty.

Join us as we launch the Food Poverty Action Plan for Greater Manchester, and find out the role that you can play in making this vision a reality.

Please [book now to reserve your place](#), to find out what you can do to help us end hunger in Greater Manchester



Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign meeting

On Tuesday February 26th, 2019 from 3 - 4pm at Church House, 90 Deansgate, Manchester M3 2GH



We need your help convincing Greater Manchester Councils and the Co-operative Group to become Living Wage accredited employers!

The GM Living Wage Campaign are planning our next steps to ramp up our campaign to secure a commitment to paying a real Living Wage through accreditation.

[Oldham Council](#) have committed to join Salford as a Living Wage accredited council but there are eight more to go and the Co-op Group lags behind most of [its competitors](#) in terms of pay rates, but have recognised the need to change and are catching up, under our influence.

Join us to share and plan influencing techniques and tactics, discuss campaign actions and develop a collective strategy to influence the Co-op Group and GM Councils and provide you with the support you need to campaign locally. Please RSVP to [Victoria](#)

Family Fund Information and Support Day



On Tuesday March 26th, 2019 from 10.30am - 2.30pm at St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester M12 6 FZ

Learn more about support services, grants and information available to you and your disabled child or young person. They are also running two focus groups on the day to ask families about how they find the information, advice and support they may need. The discussion will last about 90 minutes each and we will be asking families to pre-register.

For further info or to register either [email](#) or visit the [website](#)

**Do you have any events that you'd like GMPA to publicise?
Please Email us with the details.**

Support us

Greater Manchester Poverty Action (GMPA) exists because of the support of likeminded organisations and individuals across Greater Manchester, and beyond, who share GMPA's desire to see an end to poverty in our city region. There are three ways you can support GMPA's work, either through individual donations, signing up as a supporter or becoming a GMPA Principal Partner.

[More information](#)

For more information about Greater Manchester Poverty Action please visit our [website](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) or visit our [Facebook](#) page.

We want to find new ways of working together, share the network's successes and provide a voice for the people living in poverty in our region but we can only do this with your help and support.

Copies of previous newsletters are available on our [website](#). If you would like to submit an article please [get in touch](#)

For more information please contact us by [email](#) or call 07419 774537 and we will reply as soon as possible.

NB GMPA does not have full-time dedicated administrative support so please do not expect an immediate response.



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