

Getting child poverty back on the national agenda

By Graham Whitham Director, GMPA



Last Thursday GMPA joined other [End Child Poverty Coalition](#) (ECP) members on a Zoom call with Angela Raynor MP (Deputy Leader of the Labour Party), Jonathan Reynolds MP (Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions) and Kate Green MP (Shadow Minister for Child Poverty, and now also Shadow Secretary of State for Education) to discuss the opposition's policy approach to tackling child poverty. In light of that conversation and the government's recent U-turn on [Free School Meal \(FSM\) vouchers](#) during the summer holidays, it feels like child poverty is back on the national agenda for the first time in years.

FSM meal provision during the school holidays is just one of the many things that needs to happen to drive down child poverty across the country. There have been several calls on government in recent months to do more on poverty, as well as research reports highlighting the scale of the challenge facing the UK. These include:

- Save the Children and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation have issued a [joint call](#) for a £20 weekly increase in the child element of Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit to help stave off millions of families falling into financial hardship over the coming months. This would support up to 4 million families and 8 million children at a time when, according to research published by Save the Children, 70% of families have had to cut back on food and other essentials, while half have fallen behind on rent or other household bills, sparking fears of more hardship ahead if unemployment rises further.
- Child Poverty Action Group's [The cost of learning in lockdown](#) report details results of a survey of 3600 parents and carers and 1300 children and young people. The survey found that Covid-19 magnified some of the factors that contribute to negative outcomes associated with children growing up in poverty. The low-income parents and carers responding to the survey were just as likely to be concerned with helping their children to continue learning through lockdown. However, they reported facing significantly more stress and worry around home learning and household finances than parents and carers in better off homes.
- [Data released by Citizens Advice](#) shows the nature of the issues for which people are seeking support. Citizens Advice is warning that its data shows people are becoming increasingly concerned about redundancy, as the nation moves into a new phase where government support packages are scaled back. For 66 days straight, the charity's page on being furloughed was the most viewed on its website. On June 5th, the numbers of visitors to the charity's main redundancy webpage took the number one spot from being furloughed.

You'll note that all three shadow ministers that ECP met with are MPs for Greater Manchester constituencies, and it is a helpful link for GMPA as we seek to ensure poverty is central to the local recovery from the pandemic. In our last newsletter we discussed what a [local framework for tackling poverty](#) could look like. We followed this up with a webinar last week – *Poverty and the recovery* – which many of you attended. Please keep an eye on our newsletter and website as we develop this work further.

Graham Whitham
Director, GMPA



Stockport Integrated Support

By Cllr Amanda Peers, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Neighbourhoods , Stockport MBC

As many of you will be aware, [and has been covered in depth by](#)

[GMPA](#), responsibility for crisis loans and financial assistance for those experiencing difficulties was transferred from DWP to local authorities in April 2013 in the form of local welfare assistance schemes. You are also probably aware that since 2010 the

government has continued to reduce budgets for essential services to local authorities year on year. In Stockport this reduction has amounted to around £110 million in total (i.e. over 60% of the overall budget).



STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Over the last 4 years in Stockport we have been working hard to deliver a balanced budget without making excessive cuts and reductions in services. As you can imagine this is virtually impossible with increasing costs and reducing funds. We have tried where possible to do things differently, to do more with less and to work efficiently and effectively with partners to maximise resources and avoid duplication.

The Stockport Local Assistance Scheme was reviewed over 2019/20, and from this review, which included 2 pieces of consultation, a proposal to change to Stockport Integrated Support was agreed for the 2020/21 budget.

Under the new proposals a number of funding streams that are used to support people in financial crisis are to be administered under one system, a 'one door entry system'. On initial contact residents will be advised what funding is available to them, plus additional support through a variety of partners including CAB, Age UK, Signpost for Carers etc, who will all offer specialist advice and services. This could include money management, debt advice, employment support and housing support.

As a large proportion of the applications to the Stockport Local Assistance Scheme were for white goods and furnishing for new tenancies we have worked with our Social Housing partners to look at how we can support people with these needs. Our housing partners are able to offer furnished tenancies, providing a good start for those with little or no means, enabling and supporting sustainable tenancies, the costs of which can be met through housing benefit, which then comes back into the system to support others.

We have also worked with our local Credit Union who have developed flexible loan packages in response to residents' needs.

The administration team behind the new process will be trained to seek and secure additional external funding streams from specialist charities and organisations to meet the needs of the individuals, this in effect will bring more funding into the borough for the benefit of local residents.

This holistic person-centred approach will ultimately offer our most vulnerable residents a hand up rather than a handout, with advice and support empowering people and enabling them to move onto a pathway out of poverty. As an experienced community worker by profession, I know this is preferable to so many people who like to maintain their independence and are often finding it difficult to accept help.

With Brexit and other political and funding uncertainties facing Stockport Council, it was felt that there were many unknowns that may adversely affect our residents so we have set aside some reserves to meet the needs of our residents over time.

The new scheme was due to be implemented at the start of the new financial year. However, with the impact of Covid-19 we have deferred the implementation until a later date and in parallel provided a small grant pot through our Stockport Local Fund to support the voluntary and community sector, charities and mutual aid groups in our neighbourhoods who have been providing direct support to those vulnerable residents adversely affected by Covid.

[Stockport MBC Community webpage](#)

Cllr Amanda Peers



Poverty Truth Commissions

By Tom Skinner, Director, GMPA

Poverty Truth Commissions (PTC) are built on a principle of collective and participatory decision-making to tackle poverty, in which people with lived experience of poverty build relationships with those in positions of influence. Working together, they co-create meaningful and longer-term solutions and change.

GMPA has supported many of the six PTCs in Greater Manchester that have either been completed, are taking place, or are being set up. In particular we are taking the lead on the PTC in Tameside, which is in its early stages and not yet publicly launched. We are pleased to introduce Beatrice Smith who has joined the GMPA team to start recruiting commissioners, seek funding, and help launch the Commission next year.



Beatrice Smith

Beatrice was born in Rwanda and grew up there until the genocide of 1994 forced her and her family to flee to the UK. She spent her teenage years in London and moved to Manchester in 2002 to study at University. On graduating, she spent nearly a decade working as a policy coordinator for the DWP until 2015.

Since then, Beatrice has worked to help build a network of grassroots projects and charities within Manchester and Tameside, where she lives.

Beatrice is passionate about social justice and in April 2020, she came on board as a Facilitator for the Tameside Poverty Truth Commission.

Outside of her role with the PTC, she is a speaker and author of *The Search for Home*, which chronicles hers and her family's journey from Rwanda to the UK as refugees.

West Cheshire has just completed its second PTC (WCPTC2) and [published its evaluation](#), showing the material impact that PTCs can have, including:

- Individual changes: 100% of Community Commissioners reported more/much more respect, motivation, inspiration, hope, friendship, and understanding of others, and 100% of Civic & Business Leaders reported more/much more understanding of others.
- Organisational changes: A 75% reduction in evictions in a housing association, improved access to food in schools, improved 'pick lists' at food banks, and increased socio-economic inclusion awareness across 7 organisations.
- Policy and future changes: Through influencing the Housing Allocation Policy and Homelessness Strategy, The Place Plan 2019-2024, the Mental Health Partnership Board, and many more.

Using a Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology, it is estimated that for each £1 spent on WCPTC2, there was a return of £9.17 (which almost doubles to £18.51 once the changes made to a single social housing provider are rolled out further).

The impact of Covid-19 on food support providers in GM - reminder

Filippo Oncini, a researcher at the University of Manchester, is conducting a study into the ways food support providers are dealing with the outbreak of Covid-19. The research aims to explore in depth the obstacles, the needs and the prospects of the food providers active in GM. Your participation is very important, and to thank you for taking part, a donation to a charity of your choice will be made.

If you would like to participate please either:

- Click [here](#) and fill in a 20 minute survey (£10 donation)
- or get in touch with [Filippo Oncini](#) or via whatsapp on 07340 483318 and schedule a longer interview via Zoom or Skype (£30 donation)

Welfare at a (Social) Distance: Accessing social security and employment support during the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath

By Lisa Scullion, University of Salford; Daniel Edmiston, University of Leeds; and Kate Summers, London School of Economics.

The [Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit \(SHUSU\)](#) at the University of Salford, working with the universities of Leeds, Kent and the London School of Economics, is [leading a large-scale national research](#) project to understand how the working-age benefits system responds to the coronavirus crisis.

**WELFARE — AT A
SOCIAL DISTANCE**

Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council as part of UK Research and Innovation's rapid response to COVID-19, this project will rapidly produce large-scale evidence to inform policymaking in the coming months.

As newsletter readers will know, the benefits system is crucial to supporting people during, and after, the COVID-19 crisis. With a growing number of new claimants, it faces two challenges. Firstly, to ensure people quickly get the money they need. And afterwards, that people are helped to quickly return to work or supported further if unable to work. This project will provide vital information on how we are meeting these challenges and where the system is struggling in order to help develop rapid solutions.

The project has three main components. We are conducting an online survey of 8,000 new and existing claimants, to provide a nationally representative picture of what is happening. Second, we are conducting four local area case studies in Leeds, Newham, Salford and Thanet, to identify how local support systems, including local authorities, third sector providers, and others, support claimants. Third, we are interviewing 80 claimants twice over the next year. These in-depth interviews will help us understand the details of claimants' experiences.

This project is particularly important because of the ongoing and new challenges that the benefit system is facing. The coronavirus crisis has created a group of 'new' claimants, who might not have prior experience of the social security system: we need to understand how their experiences compare to those of existing claimants. Specifically, we need understand if support and income is reaching all claimants in a timely way, when the wave of new applications has put higher levels of strain on DWP processes. COVID-19 has also accelerated the shift to a digitalised benefits system - navigating this 'virtual' system often depends on in-person help for some claimants (from e.g. advice agencies) and the extent to which claimants can access support remotely is unknown. Later, claimants will need support to quickly return to work, while those who remain out of work will need ongoing security.

Can you help us?

We are looking to speak to current benefit recipients from across England about their experiences. If you can help put us in touch with anyone currently in receipt of Universal Credit, JSA, ESA, or Tax Credits we would be grateful to hear from you. Interviews are treated confidentially and participants receive a voucher as a thank you for their time.

We would also like to hear from organisations in the Salford area who are currently supporting benefit claimants and are able to share their experiences of providing support during this time.

For further information about the project, or if you would like to be added to our project dissemination list to receive updates from the project, please contact:

[Professor Lisa Scullion](#) (University of Salford)

[Dr Daniel Edmiston](#) (University of Leeds)

[Dr Kate Summers](#) (London School of Economics)



University of
Salford
MANCHESTER



What should change after Covid-19?

Do you think we should go back to how things were before Covid-19 or do you think some things should change for the better? What should change in your day-to-day life, local community and/or the North as a whole?



Have your say in this [survey](#) and share with your community to get your voices heard in the debate over what comes next. [The People's Powerhouse](#) wants northern communities to be heard in the post-Covid19 recovery debate.

Greater Manchester Real Living Wage Campaign Update



As Greater Manchester emerges from the lockdown, we need to work to make sure the coming recession doesn't mean a race to the bottom for workers in GM.

We need to work together to ensure that we deliver the 'Better' in the #BuildBackBetter strategy and build back in a way that protects and improves the conditions and pay of our lowest paid workers.

We need to support the key workers who have supported us all through this crisis and campaign to make sure that at the very least, they are paid the Real Living Wage.

That was the message from the most recent GMLWC Think Group held on June 16th.

It will also be the theme of the **GMLWC Webinar on July 8th**, 2020 entitled [Decent Work, the Real Living Wage and Post Covid](#). Click on the link to register a place, or [email me](#) for more details.



The wider question of [Equalities Issues in the Workplace, The BAME Community, the Real Living Wage and Pay Disparities](#) was the title of a discussion by the GM Employment Charter Supporters Network on June 18th, 2020. I was a panellist and the blog arising from the discussion and the reply of the webinar can be viewed by clicking on the link.

Best Wishes and Stay Safe.

[John Hacking](#),

Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign Co-ordinator
Follow the campaign on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

The Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign is a GMPA programme



Out-of-hours Citizens Advice helpline service

By Rachel Howley, Director - Citizens Advice Greater Manchester

Citizens Advice Greater Manchester (CAGM) is a consortium of all 10 GM local Citizens Advice services. In March they escalated plans with GMCA to launch a new helpline service to all GM residents in direct response to the critical situation we faced with the Coronavirus Pandemic. In the space of 4 just weeks they set up an Out of Hours Emergency Support Service for vulnerable people facing crisis or emergency across GM via a clear, single point of contact. On April 19th, they officially launched their new Helpline to all residents of Greater Manchester, funded by a £100,000 grant from the GMCA.

The Helpline is available for all GM residents to call Monday to Sunday from 7pm to 10pm on 0161 850 5053. Calls are charged at local rates. This service will increase access to generalist and specialist advice: Debt and Money, Welfare Rights and access to Benefits, Housing and Mortgage, Employment.

In addition, the service will also increase access to specialist support from a joined up, comprehensive network of Greater Manchester agencies. Initially through the GMVCS Leadership Group, CAGM will build up a strong holistic network of external partners to signpost clients to support for mental health and suicide prevention, employment, foodbanks, domestic violence, young people older, people, family, and immigration,

Through the suspension of most face to face services as a result of Covid-19, they are particularly interested to explore how they can support the most vulnerable and hard to reach clients through new technology.

A further objective of the project is to improve the strategic partnerships with Foodbanks. CAGM will work together with local Foodbanks across GM to develop a better understanding of how the services can work more seamlessly together. This will include a dedicated CAGM Campaign to highlight, combat and alleviate food poverty, linking into the current [GM Food Poverty Action Plan](#).

CAGM will work closely with GMCA to spot occurring trends across GM as a direct result of the pandemic including: welfare reform including Universal Credit; debt; employment including furlough, redundancy and discrimination; unemployment, particularly 16-24 year olds; housing including mortgage and rent and landlord tenant issues.

[Citizens Advice Greater Manchester website](#)



Bite Back 2030: Youth Leaders wanted!

Applications are open for the Bite Back 2030 Youth Leadership training programme this summer. They are looking for Youth Leaders that can help get the big players in business and government to listen and act on a very important topic - the right to healthy food for all young people. The deadline for applications is **Sunday July 19th, 2020**. More information and the application form can be found [here](#) Why Bite Back 2030? [Watch this](#)

Macc Voluntary Sector Assembly - No going back

Tuesday July 7th, 2020 from 2pm - 4pm online



This assembly event is an opportunity to reflect with other organisations, think about the future and consider what we individually and collectively want to do next. After a brief opening address, the assembly will divide into four workshops: learning and reflection; funding in the long term; influencing the future direction of services; and crisis response and VCSE/public sector relationships. [Register here](#)

Macc Webinar: Fundraising in the time of Covid-19

Thursday July 9th, 2020 from 1pm - 2pm online

In a world where everything is changing it is vital that those in leadership positions within charities and other VCSE organisations are taking stock. Are the assumptions we made about our organisation and its future pre Covid-19 still valid? What implications does the pandemic have for our organisation and our beneficiaries and how should we respond? And having identified our path forward, what funding will we need, and how will that be secured?

This webinar is suited and aimed at trustees or those within senior management team roles.

[For more information and to register click here](#)

Have you been affected by Covid-19?

Are you worried about money and making ends meet? Are you accessing all of the financial support available? Greater Manchester Law Centre is here to help.



They offer a free confidential income check that will review benefits, grants and other support that may be available. Call them on 0161 769 2244 or [email us](#)

The Coronavirus outbreak and how it relates to GMPA's work

As the effect of the Coronavirus outbreak impacts people's lives across the city region, our small team at GMPA will be doing what we can to highlight consequences of the virus on people experiencing poverty and on efforts to tackle poverty.

We will be working to ensure tackling poverty is at the forefront of people's minds when thinking about how Greater Manchester rebuilds and recovers after the pandemic. Please check on the [Covid-19](#) page of our website over the coming weeks for further details. The page also provides links to useful resources including local authority hubs, national agencies and VCSE infrastructure organisations. Please take every possible care and thank you for all that you are doing.



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 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](#)

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

Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of GMPA. We try to fact-check all articles and events, but if you notice an error please [let us know](#) so we can correct it in a future newsletter.