

Greater Manchester Real Living Wage Campaign Update



Living Wage Week Monday 9th to Sunday 15th November 2020

The new Living Wage rates will be announced on Monday 9th November but this year we're going online for Living Wage Week – so please join us and talk about #GMLivingWage on social media.

GM Living Wage Campaign is involved in events throughout the week. Below are details of three online events we are holding with our partners to highlight a range of issues relating to the Real Living Wage and its importance in building back better, as we all try to deal with the impact of the pandemic on our working lives, businesses and our families and communities.

Tuesday 12th November 2 - 3pm: Pay all key workers the Real Living Wage rally

Come and join the GM Living Wage Campaign and GM Citizens as we hold an online rally in support of the Real Living Wage for all key workers. We will be hearing testimonies from key workers and finding out about the national Citizens UK campaign for the Real Living Wage in social care. We will also be using the opportunity to inspire each other to continue campaigning for a Real Living Wage, so together we can make Greater Manchester a truly Living Wage City Region.

Register for this event [here](#)

Wednesday 11th November 2 - 3pm: Bolton – A Real Living Wage

Join GM Living Wage Campaign and our partners in Bolton, Boo Consulting and Coaching, as we celebrate and promote the Real Living Wage in Bolton. Join us for a 60 minute webinar where we will hear from accredited Living Wage employers in Bolton as well as employers who are interested in joining the movement.

Register for this event [here](#)

Thursday 12th November 12 - 1pm: Exploring Challenges to Paying the Real Living Wage

In partnership with the Greater Manchester Employment Charter, this event will look at the Real Living Wage in the context of the post pandemic economy. While many aspects of our lives have changed this year, a hard day's work still deserves a fair day's pay. The business case for paying the Real Living Wage hasn't changed, but we should recognise and acknowledge that the context has. Businesses are faced with a multitude of challenges at the moment and together, we want to face these head on and discuss how employers can realistically build back better with the Real Living Wage.

Getting accredited as a Real Living Wage employer may be a big ask for many businesses in the current climate – we want to have an honest and open discussion about the experience. Our panel, made up of representatives of the GM Living Wage Campaign, The Living Wage Foundation, USDAW, employees, and employers, will discuss the approach to encouraging employers through getting accredited, along with a Q&A session with attendees.

Register for this event [here](#)



In addition to these events the GM Living Wage campaign will be using social media to promote the Real Living Wage during Living Wage Week so look out for the hashtag #GMLivingWage for more information and activities about the Real Living Wage.

Best Wishes and Stay Safe.

Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign Co-ordinator, John Hacking.

Email John

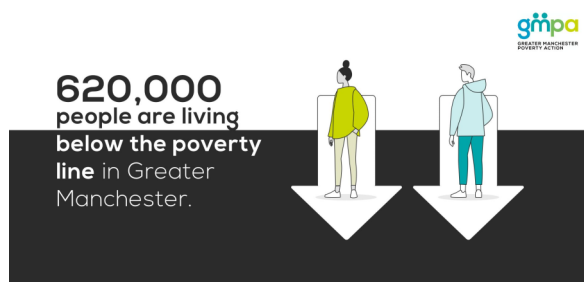
Twitter: [@GMLivingWage](https://twitter.com/GMLivingWage)

Facebook: facebook.com/gmlivingwage

GM Poverty Monitor, Free School Meals, the £20 uplift and shifting public opinion

by Graham Whitham

Thank you to everyone who got in touch following the launch of the [Greater Manchester Poverty Monitor 2020](#) last week. We've had some really positive feedback, and already been told by local VCSE organisations that they've been using the data in funding bids. That is the main aim of the Monitor – supporting local stakeholders to strengthen responses to poverty across the city region.



The launch of the Monitor was covered by several media outlets, including the [Manchester Evening News](#) and [BBC Radio Manchester](#) (Becky Want Show news bulletins).

Thank you to everyone who supported us by promoting the Monitor on social media. GMPA's tweets were liked or retweeted almost 300 times, and over the first two days after the launch the Poverty Monitor was mentioned by more than 50 other twitter accounts. There have been over 2,500 visits to the Poverty Monitor section of our website so far.

Although the Monitor is an unfunded project and we don't have the resources to keep it updated on a rolling basis, we are happy to add data and would welcome your support in doing so. With that in mind, do [contact us](#) if you have any sources of data that you think would complement the statistics already featured.

On the same day that the Monitor was launched, there was a vote in Parliament on extending Free School Meal provision to cover the school holidays. Sadly, this didn't pass. In response, we saw an incredible outpouring of support across Greater Manchester for families struggling to put food on the table. Local authorities across the city region stood up different types of support to help people during October half-term. GMPA collated details of this support and the information and links through to relevant council websites can be found [here](#). With local authority budgets coming under pressure, and local authority officers responding to multiple demands, we know a lot of effort went into these responses.

Whilst the October half-term has now passed, the vouchers that have been made available by some councils can be backdated and applications will remain open into November.



Even more important than Free School Meal provision is the future of the £20 Universal Credit uplift introduced at the start of the pandemic. Latest reports suggest that the Chancellor is open to the idea of extending the uplift, saying it will depend where we are with the pandemic come the Spring. Regardless of where things are up to with COVID-19, the uplift should be made permanent. We know that the benefits system wasn't generous enough prior to the pandemic and left many people in poverty. It isn't just because of COVID-19 that many families find themselves struggling financially.

Alongside this, we need to see the £20 uplift extended to families in receipt of legacy benefits (i.e. those benefits that Universal Credit is replacing). You can support this campaign by writing to your MP. Please see details of how to do this from [our friends at Z2K](#).

The Chancellor would likely find public support for this. The British Social Attitudes Survey 2020 (released last week) found an upsurge in support for more [generous welfare benefits](#). Hopefully the absurd arguments made over the last ten years to support cutting social security support can be consigned to the past, and we can move towards an adequately funded welfare system that acts to drive down poverty.

Graham Whitham
CEO, GMPA



GM Community Credit Unions unite to unveil £15m support in Covid recovery plan

Press release from the Sound Pound Campaign

Eight Community Credit Unions have joined together to launch a Covid-19 recovery plan that will offer hope and £15m in financial support to millions of people across Greater Manchester.

The consortium, known as [Sound Pound](#), wants to show communities across the city region that there is light at the end of the tunnel and that their local community credit union is there to support them at this time of uncertainty and financial hardship.

SOUNDPOUND
Greater Manchester Community Credit Unions

David Batten, chief executive of Hoot Credit Union in Bolton and chair of the Sound Pound consortium, said: “We have come together to launch this joint recovery plan and to pool the resources and financial support we have available. Together, we have a very clear objective to rebuild communities, support people and lend responsibly. And, by doing this, it will also provide a vital boost to the local economy.

“We want to encourage anyone who is struggling financially due to the impact of Covid to speak to their community credit union about their borrowing needs. By supporting local people and offering them credit, it will increase spending and keep our economy moving forward. It’s a cycle and, if we work together, we can keep going.”

The Sound Pound consortium is made up of Manchester Credit Union, South Manchester Credit Union, Stockport Credit Union, Cash Box Credit Union (Tameside), Unify Credit Union (Wigan), Hoot Credit Union (Bolton), Salford Credit Union and Oldham Credit Union. All eight have signed up to the initiative in order to provide support to their local communities.

David continued: “Credit Unions are ethical, not-for-profit financial organisations. They are there to put people first and to help anyone who needs financial support. Credit unions also help people to save for the future and become financially independent.”

Angela Fishwick, chief executive of Unify Credit Union in Wigan, said: “Our communities are really struggling right now. Many who never experienced debt or hardship before, are facing a very uncertain future and we can help. Because of the unique way that credit unions operate, we are able to lend money to help them with their day to day living costs and even help them save for a more secure future.”

Nathan Walters, member of Cash Box Credit Union in Tameside, said: “I first joined Cash Box because I wanted to start saving but they really came to my rescue recently when I needed urgent financial support. They are so friendly and helpful and because they are a part of my community they really understand me and my circumstances.”

David added: “Credit unions offer support to local people whatever their needs are. Whether they are a single parent struggling to make ends meet, are looking for a deposit for their first home or need some help with managing their finances and putting some money away. Credit unions are also there to support local businesses and we offer a range of support services to help them with the increasing pressures they are currently experiencing.

“Our Sound Pound recovery plan has been created to rebuild communities, support people and lend responsibly and it will play a crucial role in driving our local economy forward, helping all of us to build back better from the impacts being felt by our communities across Greater Manchester due to the Covid-19 pandemic.”

To find out more about the support offered by your local community credit union, visit the [website](#)



Income affected by COVID restrictions? Get help with your water bill

By Colin Gallagher, United Utilities



United Utilities is appealing for customers who have been financially impacted by COVID-19 to get in touch so they can help. Their 'Back on Track' scheme is aimed at customers who receive benefits or tax credits and are struggling with their water bill payments due to their income being affected by COVID restrictions.

Jane Haymes, affordability manager at United Utilities said: "We know that many of our customers have already been impacted by coronavirus over the previous seven months and even more will be affected by new restrictions being introduced across many parts of the North West.

"Our Back on Track scheme is a way we can help those customers who need our support the most by reducing their annual bill until the end of March 2021.



"We would encourage customers to get in touch with us whether they've been previously furloughed under the Job Retention Scheme or are likely to be affected by the Job Support Scheme introduced on November 1st. Even if you don't meet our criteria for the Back on Track scheme there are other ways we can make your water bills more affordable until these restrictions are eventually lifted."

For further details about the scheme download the full application pack from the United Utilities [website](#).

To apply, customers can either return the application form included in the pack or complete the online affordability form [here](#). Customers can also call the affordability team at United Utilities on 0800 072 6765 to apply.

Unsuccessful benefit claimants in the Covid-19 pandemic - new report released

By Ben Baumberg Geiger, University of Kent

A new [Health Foundation](#)-funded report, '[At the edge of the safety net: Unsuccessful benefits claims at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic](#)' has been released:

- It looks at the 290,000 people who started making a claim for benefits, but who were unsuccessful – a group largely missed from previous research.
- It finds that many had seen sharp falls in income, were struggling financially, and had poor mental health. Some were even going hungry because they couldn't afford food.

Unsuccessful claims were largely because people were not eligible for benefits (about 220,000 people). The numbers of people who had started making a claim but failed to complete it was relatively small (40,000).

You can find out more and read the executive summary and full report [here](#).

**WELFARE — AT A
SOCIAL DISTANCE**

Tackling loneliness: support for people feeling lonely

At times, life can feel overwhelming. It can be hard to know where to look for advice or how to reach out to others for support.



The British Red Cross have resources and activities that are there to give you a helping hand. Follow [this link](#) to find tools to connect with others, build confidence and learn new coping skills. Resources will be updated regularly so there will always be opportunities to learn something new, too. There is also [The Kind Place podcast](#) series, featuring members of the public talking about how loneliness affects them and their strategies for coping with it.

Policy North Training

There is one more course in 2020:

[Understanding poverty measurement, definitions and data](#) on Wednesday November 18th, 2020.

There are a number of courses in the diary for 2021 including the above subject on March 25th, [Maximising support for people on low incomes](#) on January 28th and March 4th; and [Identifying poverty data in Greater Manchester](#) on April 15th.

For more information and to book please go to the [webpage](#).



Webinar: Tackling inequality in Greater Manchester with local authorities

GMMA is working with Just Fair and the Equality Trust on a [webinar](#) exploring how we could adopt the socio-economic duty locally in Greater Manchester. The Equality and Human Rights Commission will also be joining us.

The duty - contained in Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 - would require public authorities to actively consider the way in which their decisions increase or decrease inequalities that result from socio-economic disadvantage. Sadly, the UK government has not commenced the duty, and socio-economic disadvantage is often missing from equality impact assessments that include consideration of other protected characteristics. However, some public bodies in England have chosen to enact the duty voluntarily.

[Do sign up via EventBrite if you're interested](#) - the event is taking place early evening on November 11th, 2020 so that we can accommodate local councillors.



Annual General Meeting Tuesday November 24th 2020 from 6.00pm (Zoom)

GM Law Centre have plans (and funding) to expand their services. Sign up and hear what they are doing and how you can support their work over the coming months.

[Zoom link for the event](#)

Social security for all of us - agreeing a way forward.

The Commission on Social Security, led by Experts by Experience, is a national project that has identified 8 ideas for a better benefits system. The proposals are available at this [link](#).

The Commission is undertaking a public consultation to see what people think of the proposals.

You are warmly invited to join an online zoom session to discuss the proposals on Friday November 6th, 10.30am - 12 midday. The session will be run by members of the Commission, in partnership with GMMA. The session will: explain the background to the Commission on Social Security; talk through the proposals for a better benefits system; have small group discussions using zoom breakout rooms to get your feedback, and a Q&A. To attend the event, please register [here](#)

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

As the effect of the Coronavirus outbreak impacts people's lives across the city region, our small team at GMMA 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 GMMA 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 GMMA. 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.