



In our last newsletter, Tom Skinner described some of the obstacles to tackling poverty through employment. He then asked a group of experts to respond with their own articles about how we can overcome those obstacles, for a Greater Manchester where work really is the best way out of poverty. Mike Booth, Regional Organiser for Unison North West, provides the first response, about representation for care workers, pursuing wage claims for workers who are under-paid, and the importance of the Living Wage.

UNISON, the public Sector Trade Union, is currently engaged in a Gtr Manchester Social Care Project. It covers all private and voluntary sector providers of home care and residential care as commissioned mostly by local Councils and Health services.



Evidence abounds that the continued drive to commission care services in the voluntary and private sector is failing to ensure that workers receive the national minimum wage, let alone the real Living Wage. Councils tend to accept bids from providers on a cost basis, not least because they are unable to afford to continue to provide services direct to our communities.

The commissioning process encourages providers to bid for Care contracts on unit cost per hour basis well below the actual unit cost of providing such services. This means in practice that providers must make up the shortfall in income through other means. The knock on effect is on their workforces, who on average are not paid the national minimum wage and therefore work excessively long hours to earn enough to pay their bills. Many care workers are dependent on tax credits, housing rebates and income support payments in order to provide for their families.

This becomes a treadmill for economic survival by the very workers that our communities rely on to provide personal care support.

UNISON is seeking to engage with these care providers through achieving worker representation rights or by pursuing wage claims to enforce workers' statutory rights e.g. to be paid the national minimum wage. The sums of monies being underpaid right across the board are truly staggering. We are not talking tens of thousands of pounds but hundreds of thousands of pounds, year in year out.

This is the outstanding scale and depth of income reduction suffered by just one identifiable sector of the whole gamut of workforces. There is plenty of research and evidence that demonstrates the economic value of paying higher wages, as workers spend the vast proportion of their income in their local communities and they would have less need to rely on state benefits to avoid in-work poverty.

This mix of Government cuts to Councils and Health services, least-cost-driven procurement processes and providers' failure to challenge the Commissioners on their contract awards and contract fees, all add up to an unsavoury and, to be frank, dishonest approach to care service provision. One would not expect for example, an employer with an Ethical Care Charter or Employment Charter to continue to purposely buy care services at a rate below the actual market cost of so doing, as this inevitably creates downward pressure on workers' incomes.

An easy answer would be for a legal requirement in public commissioning for providers to pay the minimum or the living wage. But the easy solutions tend not to be the most attractive.

Suggested actions:

- **Decision-makers**
 - a commitment in public commissioning for providers to pay the Living Wage, currently £8.45 per hour
 - Ensure proper enforcement of minimum wage laws
 - Make provisions for, and support, employment tribunals
- **Employers – pay the aforementioned Living Wage**
- **Workers – join, and participate in, a trade union**



Mike Booth

Benefit freezes and ‘poverty premiums’ leave struggling families out in the cold by End Child Poverty

Rises in the cost of living will outstrip meagre increases in child benefit by 17 times by 2020, a new report from the End Child Poverty coalition has revealed. The coalition’s “Feeling the Pinch” report shows that reductions in the value of benefits, relative to costs of living, are likely to leave a family with two children living in poverty, worse off by as much as £2800 per year by 2020, compared to the start of the decade.

In addition, analysis shows that a family in a typical privately rented two-bedroom property could also have a rent shortfall of around £154 a month by 2020, after a four-year freeze on housing benefit.

At the same time, families in poverty often have to pay more for essentials, despite being least able to afford them (known as the ‘poverty premium’). Essential household items like a cooker, energy and home insurance are likely to cost a family living in poverty nearly £1700 more than a higher income family would have to pay.



The coalition is warning that the disconnect between increases in financial support and those in the costs of living, together with the poverty premium, is leaving many families struggling to buy food for their children, or heat their home in winter.

End Child Poverty is calling on the Government to take action by ending the current four-year freeze on children’s benefits, by increasing help with housing costs in line with local rents and also by establishing a commission to explore how businesses can ensure that customers on a low income don’t end up paying the highest prices for goods and services.

Sam Royston, chair of the End Child Poverty coalition, said: *“Families living in poverty are trapped between frozen support, rising costs of living, and a hefty poverty premium which means that they pay the most for basic essentials. End Child Poverty members know all too well the impact this poverty trap has on children’s lives.”*

The full report ‘Feeling the Pinch’ from End Child Poverty is available online [here](#)



The coalition’s analysis shows that in April 2010, benefit income for an out-of-work single parent with two children (excluding housing costs) was around £198 per week. In order to keep up with the rise in the cost of living by 2020, this would have to increase to around £267 per week. The family’s actual 2020 income is expected to be around £214 per week. The real loss of £53 per week will leave this family worse off by nearly £2,800 a year.



Where private tenants’ rents have risen between 2010 and 2015 in line with average rental price inflation (a total of 11.7 per cent over the five-year period), a family renting a typical two-bedroom property in 2015 faced a shortfall of £82 per month on their Housing Benefit entitlement, compared with their actual rent.

In 2015, the new government decided to freeze local housing allowance rates for four years – from 2016 through to 2020. If actual rents rise by another 11.7 per cent during the second half of the decade, families in a typical two-bedroom property could see the shortfall increase by £72 per month – a total shortfall of around £154 per month.

The poverty premium calculation updates an illustration previously published by Save the Children. It finds that a typical low-income family could face an annual poverty premium of around £1,700 for everyday goods and services. The items included in the calculation are shown in the table below. There may also be other areas of spending that are subject to a premium, such as food costs, transport costs and cash withdrawals. These are not included in the poverty premium calculation, but are explored further in the full report.

Poverty Premium Table Item	Typical cost	Cost to low-income family*	Difference
Loan for £500	£500	£944.84	£444.84
Basic household item: cooker	£237.33	£780	£542.67
Cost to cash three £200 cheques	£0	£49.50	£49.50
Annual electricity + gas bill	£1,249.55	£1,320.95	£71.40
Home contents insurance	£45.87	£53.11	£7.24
Car insurance	£470.04	£1,010.63	£540.59
Total	£2,502.79	£4,159.03	£1,656.24

As you may recall in November 2016 End Child Poverty published a [Child Poverty map](#) of the UK which clearly showed that parts of Greater Manchester were some of the worst affected by child poverty.

Manchester Central was 2nd in the table of constituencies with the highest percentages of children in poverty in 2015 and Manchester Gorton, and Blackley & Broughton were also in the top 20.





Home and heartwarming news!

In what some have described as *'possibly the most exciting development since the launch of Stockport Foodbank,'* it has been announced that from January 30th, clients will be offered further household support in the form of fuel vouchers when they visit some Stockport Foodbank Centres.

All too often clients face the decision to 'heat or eat', but with the support of the Trussell Trust and other organisations, financial support is being made available to break this cycle, so now help with both can be offered providing a Foodbank food voucher has been issued in the first instance .

Initially being launched at Hazel Grove, Bredbury and St Martin's in Stockport **only**, clients who pay for their gas and electricity on Pre Payment meters may be entitled to further support. If approved, a householder will be awarded a FuelBank voucher for £49 in the winter months and £30 in the summer months and multiple applications may be considered. A FuelBank application will be made on the client's behalf and just hours later they could receive a code on their mobile phone which can be presented at their local Pay Point and their account would be credited with the FuelBank top up.

This doesn't deflect from Trussell Trust's primary mission of getting food parcels into the hands of those who are facing both short and long term difficulties. For more information please contact Stockport Food Bank directly on 0161 487 3370

Salford Anti-Poverty Launch

Thursday 16 February 10am to midday at The Landing, MediaCityUK, Salford Quays M50 2ST

On behalf of Salford City Mayor Paul Dennett you are invited to the launch of Anti-Poverty Strategy – a holistic strategy to link key partners across our city, to tackle both the causes and symptoms of poverty.

Speakers on the day will include Salford City Mayor Paul Dennett, Andy Burnham MP, Niall Cooper from the Poverty Truth Commission and people who live in poverty telling their own stories.

RSVP – public.relations@salford.gov.uk Further details will be sent nearer the date. If you cannot attend please feel free to send a representative.

For further information please call 0161 793 3410



Salford City Mayor, Paul Dennett, working with those counting rough sleepers #NoOneLeftBehind

The Greater Manchester Mayor and the VCSE Sector – a hustings

Tuesday March 7th 2017 from 9.30am - 12 noon at St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester M12 6FZ

The newly elected Mayor of Greater Manchester will be a significant figure. They will have decision-making powers in their own right over transport, housing and planning, fire and police services and will also wield considerable 'soft power' within the GMCA. They could have a big effect on the future of all VCSE organisations.

Please turn out in strength! This is our chance to put questions and requests to the candidates in advance of the election.

All candidates for election as the Mayor of Greater Manchester have been sent a copy of the 'Manifesto for a new relationship with the VCSE sector' and have been invited to attend this meeting.

Andy Burnham - Labour
Sean Anstee - Conservative
Jane Brophy - Liberal Democrat
Schneur Odze - UKIP
Stephen Morris - English Democrats
TBC: Green Party

[Please register to attend](#)

A copy of the Manifesto is available [here](#)

Andy Burnham



Sean Anstee



Jane Brophy



Schneur Odze



Stephen Morris



Wood Street Mission currently have 3 full-time vacancies

- Community Shop Manager** 35 hours per week £20K per annum: to manage our busy community shop, recruit & supervise a growing number of shop volunteers. [More info](#)
- Administrator** 35 hours per week £17K per annum: to ensure the smooth running of our office, look after financial administration and build our supporter database. [More info](#)
- Fundraiser** (maternity cover) 35 hours per week 12 month contract £25K per annum: to work closely with the CEO to support our growing funding base. Contact our [agency](#) for more details

Forthcoming Events:

World Basic Income

Saturday February 4th, 1- 6pm at the Sacred Trinity Church , Chapel Street, Manchester M3 5DW

A new practical solution to global inequality and poverty. With speakers from a wide range of disciplines and organisations the event will explore through panels and discussions:

- The context—inequality, poverty, cash transfers and basic income.
- Practicalities of distributing cash—funding, distribution and ownership;
- Building a movement—grassroots mobilising, influence in high places, pilots, experience and evidence.

[More information and to book.](#) [More information about World Basic Income](#)

Greater Manchester & Manchester BME Networks next joint event

Wednesday February 8th, 2017 at St Tomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester M12 6FZ



Join the Heritage Lottery Fund for a morning of what ‘heritage’ actually means and how HLF can help fund your ideas. Find out about the different funds available and seek some expert advice as to which one would suit your project. Also Sefton Simpson of Macc will provide

an update on other funds available that you might not already be aware of. Free to full members, £20 to all other attendees [More info and to register](#)

Early years and poverty workshop

Monday March 6th 2 - 4.30pm at the Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS

The Family and Childcare Trust and GMPA are hosting a workshop, supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, to discuss the role of the early years in reducing poverty.



Recommendations from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s strategy to solve poverty in the UK will be presented and participants will discuss local and national challenges and priorities for early years services and the opportunities created by devolution in Manchester.

The workshop will be a chance to feedback on JRF’s recommendations, identify shared priorities and network with those with an interest in the potential of early years provision to reduce poverty.

Numbers are limited. Please email [Chris](#) if you would like to attend. There is no charge for attendance.

Why GM Poverty Action?

In the Recommendations Report of the Greater Manchester Poverty Commission, 2.4 *Maintaining Momentum on Poverty* called for the formation of a Poverty Action Group to help take forward the work of the Commission.

A small number of public, private and civic sector individuals came together to form GMPA. This group has since grown to over 700 individuals from more than 200 organisations plus Local Authorities and MPs and an increasing number of members of the public.

GMPA is based upon principles of cooperation between organisations.

For more information about Greater Manchester Poverty Action

please visit our [website](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) or visit our [Facebook](#) page. You can also visit our YouTube channel [Community Voices](#)

All these platforms are there to share news and opinion from our readers, from GM Poverty Action and from the community.

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

For more information or to share your news please contact [Chris](#) or [Peter](#).

Copies of previous newsletters are available on our [website](#)

If you would like to contact us or submit an article for inclusion in a newsletter please get in touch in one of the following ways:

Post: c/o 5th Floor Church House, 90 Deansgate, Manchester M3 2GH

Or contact our Communications Manager: Chris Bagley
T: 07419 774537 [Email](#)
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.

