

Rethinking Poverty: Greater Manchester Can Lead the Way

Tom Skinner, Director of Greater Manchester Poverty Action

We had a fantastic time at our Rethinking Poverty event last week, and I want to thank everyone who helped to make it run so smoothly, all of our wonderful speakers, and everyone who attended and contributed to the discussions. You can read a report of the event on the next two pages, which concludes that "All of the speakers, and the audience who asked questions, complemented each other well and we explored many challenging questions and innovative approaches through the afternoon. It really was an event in which we rethought how to address poverty here, and how Greater Manchester can lead the way in the UK." Here I share my personal reflections from the night.



Tom Skinner

Children and young people are not just the future, they are now. They bring fresh perspectives and ideas, hope in abundance, and they see things with a clarity that is so valuable in a complex world. You can find the two videos that Young Manchester made in the report on the next page – please do watch them and share widely as they deserve to be seen by many people.

Barry Knight, author of the Rethinking Poverty book around which our event was based, is definitely on to something. His book poses questions as much as it provides answers, and I believe he is asking the right questions. Beatrice Webb laid down the intellectual foundations of the welfare state more than 30 years before it was implemented – we will strive to ensure that it does not take so long for Barry's vision to be realised. You can read more comprehensive reviews and responses from the likes of [Gerry Salole](#), Chief Executive of the European Foundation Centre, and Greater Manchester's own [Kate Green MP](#), or even better, [buy the book and see for yourself!](#)

Despite the challenges facing Greater Manchester, we can and must be ambitious in developing a vision of a good society here without poverty, and working towards it. We have some great leaders and public servants, a varied, determined and engaged third sector, many businesses who want to be part of the solution, and most importantly, millions of people with incredible passion and potential. Greater Manchester Poverty Action will help unlock this potential through encouraging cross-sector and cross-boundary collaboration for years to come, with your help...



Can you be a Supporter of Greater Manchester Poverty Action?



WE SUPPORT GMPA 2018

At the event we launched our paid Supporters Scheme, to encourage more organisations and individuals to support our work with small annual financial contributions. All Supporters will be listed on our website, and will be sent a "Greater Manchester Poverty Action Supporter" image for use in their own publicity.

More than three quarters of respondents after the event said that they would be interested in becoming Supporters – will you join them?

Please visit our [website](#) for more information and to fill in the online form to start the process of becoming a GMPA Supporter for 2018.

You will also find information there about our Principal Partners, a smaller number of organisations who will support GMPA with larger pledges of funding and support. If you or your organisation are interested in becoming a Principal Partner please don't hesitate to [get in touch with us](#).

Report from Rethinking Poverty Event

The event started with GMPA's Directors Graham Whitham and Tom Skinner talking about GMPA, what we seek to do, some highlights from the last year (which regular readers of the newsletter will be aware of), and our hopes for the year ahead. Graham also talked about Joseph Rowntree Foundation's [UK Poverty 2017](#) report which had been published that morning, and that highlighted 14 million people living in poverty in the UK – over one in five of the population.

Our first guest speaker was Barry Knight, Director of the Webb Memorial Trust and author of [Rethinking Poverty](#). He outlined the challenge that our society faces in reducing poverty through existing paradigms, and invoked Beatrice Webb in his insistence that poverty is a function of social structure and economic mismanagement, not individual character failings. The two decades immediately after WW2 were characterised by full employment and a comprehensive welfare state safety net but we now face threats from the likes of automation, low wages and low public spending. He said that policies should not focus on economic growth, but ensuring a basic standard of living, allowing people to participate in and contribute to society, and characterised by intergenerational fairness. In particular, it's critically important that young people and poorer people work together and make their voices heard; change will only come from the bottom up.



Barry Knight

He concluded by calling for triple devolution: power should be shared by national government, regional and local government, and communities themselves. Local authorities should devolve power to local organisations which have a broad base of community engagement, especially involving young people. A good society, without poverty, will not come from top-down redistribution, but through new transformational relationships based on mutuality.

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, spoke next, and said that devolution offers major new opportunities to rethink politics and poverty. He agreed that real change will come from the bottom up, not from Westminster, so Greater Manchester has the opportunity to make changes and inspire others to do the same. He shared a tragic story about the death of a young homeless man whom he had known. Society is now deeply unequal, not just in relation to income/pay but also in experiences of insecurity. The rise in demand for mental health services reflects this increased insecurity.

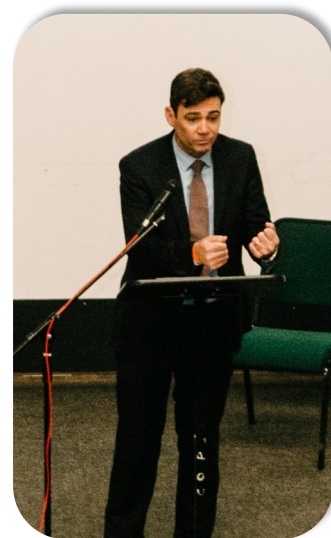
He urged us to question high pay as well as low pay, and inequalities within organisations, as well as between individuals. He said that he is committed to ensuring that the cynicism that people feel about Westminster politics should not be replicated locally; indeed, devolution offers an opportunity to correct the problems created by Westminster. We therefore need to demonstrate new approaches, and show that change is possible.

Andy outlined his plans to end rough sleeping in GM by 2020, citing the introduction of a Social Impact Bond to provide accommodation for 200 rough sleepers, and to address in-work poverty through the Good Employment Charter and the Living Wage. He said that we need to work together to improve school readiness, with 13,000 children in GM starting school without the necessary skills to develop. Free bus passes for 16–18 year olds and a 'Curriculum for Life' will help young people after school to get the start that they need as they approach the world of work. Andy then took questions on issues including:

- The need for leadership on food poverty – Andy is organising a Green Summit in March 2018 and will consider appointing someone to lead on food policy in particular
- Universal Credit – Andy said that some of the DWP budget should be devolved to GM. A suggestion was also made from the audience that credit unions could play a role in helping to address the long wait for UC to come through that is putting many people into rent arrears, and Andy expressed a willingness to explore this possibility.
- Involving the private sector more in poverty reduction – Andy talked about those who are supporting the Mayor's Homelessness Fund, and the role that the Good Employment Charter could play in improving job quality in many businesses
- Universal Basic Income – Andy said that evidence from the pilot in Finland will be important, and said that as well as income, other issues need to be factored in for real poverty reduction, e.g. in housing, security of tenure, quality of housing and rent controls for people in private rented sector.
- The need to channel more resources into affordable housing – Andy has appointed Paul Dennett as GM lead on housing, and with 85,000 people on the waiting list, we do need to increase supply of affordable housing



Graham Whitham



Andy Burnham



We recently attended the Local Approaches to Improving the Quality of Work event organised by the [Inclusive Growth Analysis Unit](#) in Manchester. The event was chaired by Ben Lucas of [Metro-dynamics](#) and speakers included:

Lesley Giles, [Work Foundation](#)

Matthew Taylor, [The RSA](#)

Stephen Clarke, [Resolution Foundation](#)

Damian Grimshaw, [University of Manchester Alliance Business School](#)

Carol Atkinson, [Manchester Metropolitan University](#)

and Andy Burnham, [Mayor of Greater Manchester](#)

Headlines: We need to:

Use the devolution agenda to reduce in-work poverty via paying the real Living wage. As illustrated in the following [Joseph Rowntree Foundation report](#)

Work together, across the sectors, to create inclusive workplaces where employees can develop their abilities, skills and knowledge, via a local employability framework, that promotes retention and progression. At the same time, employees should be supported to manage their physical and mental health.

Consider, across Greater Manchester how we can measure progress on the good work agenda, including increasing productivity in the workplace.

Consider the four I's:

- 1) *I*ntention to promote good work;
- 2) *I*ntelligence to identify good practices;
- 3) *I*ntegrate with relevant agendas and
- 4) encourage *i*nnovation from all the workforce.

More about how we can build on this in the new year, via our continuing contribution to the GM Good Employment Charter. In the meantime, have a great Christmas and New Year!

To get in touch with the GM Living Wage Campaign please either [email](#) Lynn or call 07948 549 485

Report from Rethinking Poverty Event continued

We then welcomed Young Manchester, two of whom gave powerful speeches about the impact of poverty on young people, told us about their *Poverty Speaks Volumes* work and presented their video: watch it [here](#).



Finally we had a panel discussion with Jayne Gosnall, Salford Poverty Truth Commissioner, Dr Carolyn Wilkins, Chief Executive of Oldham Council, Barry Knight who had spoken earlier, and Paul Dennett, City Mayor of Salford. Jayne, Carolyn and Paul each gave short speeches reflecting on the other talks and presentations.



Left to right:

Jayne Gosnall

Dr Carolyn Wilkins

Barry Knight

Paul Dennett

Jayne talked about the principles behind the Salford Poverty Truth Commission and the outcomes, such as making council tax bills easier to understand, information about what to do if struggling to pay the bill, and free replacement birth certificates for homeless people. Carolyn said that Oldham has been working differently for some years, after rethinking its fundamental purpose: not just service delivery but also economic development, listening to people's lived experiences. Paul said that poverty is a systemic issue and a symptom of the failure of neoliberalism, and that we need more progressive taxation. Poverty cannot be addressed just through local actions, but devolution presents an opportunity to challenge the highly centralised UK government. He said that we need to campaign for social justice, further devolution and local democracy. There was then a lively discussion with questions from the audience.

We finished with some final thoughts from Graham, and "I don't want to live in poverty", another powerful [song from Young Manchester](#). All of the speakers, and the audience who asked questions, complemented each other well and we explored many challenging questions and innovative approaches through the afternoon. It really was an event in which we rethought how to address poverty here, and how Greater Manchester can lead the way in the UK.



All photographs from Rethinking Poverty taken by Luke Owens

Allot of help!

By Kal Gill-Faci, Senior Architect at Levitt Bernstein



Kal Gill-Faci

Since the start of this summer, I have been making weekly donations of organic fruit and vegetables to a homeless day centre in south Manchester. I live in Urmston and have an allotment at Humphrey Park Allotments in Stretford, a sizeable self-managed site with 80 or so plots in total. I grow all sorts – plenty to sustain my family – and the idea of donating surplus produce was sparked after I received a free polytunnel (essentially a lo-fi greenhouse), which has allowed me to extend the growing season and increase the amount I can produce.



Cornerstone Day Centre

I have persuaded a number of my fellow allotment owners to donate too, and I collect the produce every week and deliver it to the [Cornerstone Day Centre](#) in Moss Side. I also plan to donate to Stretford Food Bank on Barton Road next year, as the growing season has now slowed down. This work has begun to spread more widely too – most recently to 36 other allotment sites across Trafford through the Allotment Officer, Janet Long, who has very kindly circulated my details and raised the idea at a recent allotment forum meeting. Through Janet, I have met with the Chairman and Secretary of Moss Park Allotments, Lesley Road, who wants to get involved next year.

My personal efforts are mirrored in my professional life. Levitt Bernstein, comprised of architects, landscape architects and urban designers, was founded 50 years ago in the midst of the housing crisis, and the Practice continues to have a strong sense of social responsibility. I am involved with a business support group aligned to the Manchester Homelessness Partnership (MHP), where I share my work with a network of like-minded and influential contacts. I have spoken to Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, about the work I'm doing with food donations and MHP, which in turn led to a meeting with Beth Knowles, the Councillor leading on rough sleeping/homelessness, to discuss further ideas for how design professionals can support this increasingly important issue.

I am very keen to find out if there are opportunities to work with other allotment sites in Greater Manchester, who would consider donating to charitable organisations or food banks. If you know someone or a community that can help, please contact me by [email](#) or call me on 07958 513 828.



Pre-Christmas Neighbourhood Food Collection 2017

Many people across the country gave up some of their time over the three day food collection weekend helping out at Tesco stores, encouraging people to donate and sorting the food that was generously given.

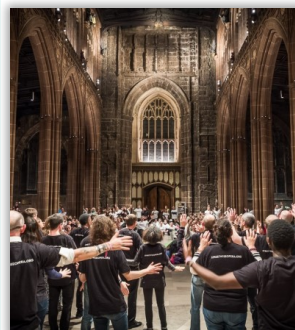


Its too soon to report how much was collected in total but we do know that at one store in Handforth Dean the collection weighed in at 4.5 tonnes which is over 12% up on the pre-Christmas collection last year.

Many thanks to all the donors and a special thanks to Dan from Colgate Palmolive who dropped off boxes of toothpaste that will make a welcome addition to the parcels being given out over the next few months.

We all believe that the pressure on food banks is going to increase in the near future, not just because families will be coping with the school holidays but also because of Universal Credit. If you would like to help, check for details [here](#)

On Friday 22nd December 2017 at Manchester Cathedral the Booth Centre will be holding their [Christmas Carol service](#)



The service will run from 2.30pm – 3.30pm. Their fantastic [Streetwise Opera](#) group will be performing once again and there will be Christmas treats galore. Did we mention it's FREE to attend? [RSVP](#)

Even before that on Saturday December 16th 2017, the Booth Centre Theatre Company will be returning to [the Edge Theatre](#) in Chorlton for its latest production, 'Oh Yes We Are!' Tickets are just £6 [Book your place now](#).

The Booth Centre will be open as usual on Christmas day, serving Christmas dinner, playing games and swapping gifts. They couldn't do this without your support, so thank you.

They would like to wish all the best to you and yours!



A very new charity, Sponsorstars, is aiming to help UK children living in poverty. Money given by donors will provide much-needed extra help with everyday costs. Founders Deborah Streatfield and Sue Laidlaw explain how it will help those who are missing out.

“Tis the season for Christmas television adverts. It’s an implausibly perfect world of plenty, with tables heaving with party food and families waiting to open mountains of presents.

Every advert is a shopping list of things to buy, applying extra seasonal pressure on stretched family budgets and for parents there’s the unspoken message that they should try not to let their children miss out on what everyone else is enjoying.

But for millions of families that kind of financial pressure is there all year round. They’re constantly trying to balance what is and isn’t affordable and how they are going to tell their children that they’re going to have to miss out. Again.

Child poverty is a phrase that can seem remote and even something from another era. But even if it’s out of sight, it’s never very far away. Almost four million children are classified as living in poverty and they are increasingly likely to be in working families. Official figures this year showed that more than two thirds of children in poverty were in families where at least one parent was working. It was the highest-ever recorded rate for in-work poverty and it reflects the tough lives of people in insecure, low-paid employment, working long hours to pay the rent.

For parents, without any spare cash and maybe already having to borrow, it’s even harder when they are asked for extra funds from their children’s school. The letter arrives about a school trip. The children are excited and looking forward to it, but the parents just see another unaffordable expense. Or it could be sports equipment or cash for revision materials or a new piece of uniform or an extra lesson for music... the list of extra expenses is a long one.

How are parents meant to make a decision between making sure their children don’t lose out at school and the pressure to have enough money for the weekly shopping, or to pay for the heating or the rent?

These are impossible choices being made every day by millions of families.

The idea behind Sponsorstars is to make those choices a little easier. Financial support will go to fund such extra expenses, with schools allocating the money to those that they see are most in need. Teachers are very aware of these financial problems, they see the children who arrive without having had breakfast or who have to rely on the school for clothing.

The [Sponsorstars](#) approach is to provide sponsorships for those children. The donors are the ‘stars’ providing a little bit of extra light for families in dark times.”



At Christmas Wood Street Mission provides children up to the age of 14 with new toys and gifts. The presents are new as they want the child to feel no different from any other children opening their gifts on Christmas morning.

This year they will also have everyday food items as well as luxury food items and treats available in our community shop at Wood Street, for families to pick from and help them enjoy the Christmas holidays. The extended school holidays during this time of year really can be a stressful time for many parents who may struggle with the extra costs of providing meals for their children, when they might normally receive free school meals during the week.

Wood Street relies on support from the local community who organise collections or simply add an extra item to their own shopping trolley in the run up to Christmas. Local companies and manufacturers also make donations of presents and food, and raise funds to help them meet the ever increasing numbers referred to us each Christmas for help.

Last year they gave new toys and food to over 2,000 families and 4,500 children. This year they expect the numbers referred to them to be even higher.

You can help by donating a present*, it could be a new toy, gift, book, toiletries or new clothes suitable for a children and young people up to 14 years old. Suggested value £10. No high value items please and do remember older children as Wood Street struggles to secure enough donations for this age group. Or you could donate non-perishable food suitable for families. They are looking for donations of tinned fish, meat, beans, fruit, vegetables, soup, pasta sauce, pasta, rice, long life juice or milk, biscuits, confectionery. All food should have an expiry date of no earlier than January 2018

More information at [Wood Street Mission’s website](#), [email](#) or call 0161 834 3140.

* Please do not wrap any presents



Universal Credit 'The Nightmare before Christmas'

In this and forthcoming issues of the newsletter we will be sharing information about Universal Credit that we think may be of interest or helpful to claimants and anyone who is trying to assist them:

The UCSavvy Course is a new initiative from Just Finance Foundation and Just Finance Black Country. They have listened to claimants and agencies that work with them, and heard their worries about the complexity of the UC application process. In response, they have quickly developed a short course, to get help to people as UC rolls out. They know that there will be scope to improve and refine it in the light of your feedback as you use it.

UCSavvy is a short course that can be delivered in under an hour, either to claimants (the grassroots version) or to those who support them - in drop-in centres, charities, churches, community projects etc (the organisation version). It is designed to help people understand and negotiate some of the complexities of Universal Credit. It is not designed to enable you to give advice but will help with understanding and with signposting to advice. If you have any questions, please contact [Julia Hill](#)

You can sign up to access Just Finance Foundations' UCSavvy course free of charge on their [website](#)

The following is going to affect front-facing advice organisations more than others, but it should be useful for anyone who deals with Universal Credit (UC). Imminent changes to UC are upon us as a result of the budget:

Written by the UC Director-General Neil Couling to the Chief Executives of local authorities setting out the timetable for the policy changes to Universal Credit:

- from January 2018 - availability of advance payments of up to 100% of notional entitlement with a 12 month repayment period;
- from February 2018 - seven waiting days at the start of Universal Credit claims to be abolished;
- from April 2018 - stays in temporary accommodation to be paid through Housing Benefit; and
- from April 2018 - transition to UC housing payment of two weeks for anyone transferring across from Housing Benefit.

Also, new claims for Universal Credit in live service areas will **cease** at the end of December 2017:

"... the Universal Credit live service, which is being steadily replaced by the roll out of the full service, has a very limited shelf-life ending in December 2018. It would not represent value for money for taxpayers to invest in the system changes, required by these policy announcements, for such a short duration. Accordingly I have agreed with Ministers that in live service areas we will curtail the flow of new Universal Credit cases from the end of December. Whilst this will not affect any existing claimants already on Universal Credit it will mean that **any new claims will, until Universal Credit full service is commenced locally, be made to legacy benefits and tax credits.**"

Dear Readers

This will be our last newsletter of 2017. We'll be back on January 17th, 2018 (copy deadline January 12th, 2018) so do get in touch if you would like to submit an article for possible inclusion in our newsletter in the New Year - contact details shown here. →

We hope that you have found our newsletters of interest.

For now, we would like to wish you
a peaceful, healthy and
HAPPY CHRISTMAS SEASON
and a successful and prosperous
NEW YEAR
that can be shared by everyone.



Do you have any events in 2018 that you'd like GMPA to publicise?

[Email us with the details](#)

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 for inclusion in a newsletter please [get in touch](#)

For more information or to share your news please contact Chris 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.

The logo for Greater Manchester Poverty Action (GMPA) features the letters 'gmpa' in a lowercase, rounded font. The 'g' is blue, 'm' is green, 'p' is yellow, and 'a' is green.

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.