

Please support Greater Manchester Poverty Action

Tom Skinner, Director of Greater Manchester Poverty Action



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Since its launch in 2013 GM Poverty Action has brought together hundreds of people and projects for anti-poverty collaboration. We have raised awareness of poverty, strengthened the voices of people in poverty, and profiled dozens of positive projects. We have carried out research and given advice on policy and practise, to help understand and reduce poverty.

Highlights include:

- ★ fortnightly newsletters over several years, sharing news and opinions, keeping you all in the know about anti-poverty action in Greater Manchester;
- ★ our map of emergency food providers has been viewed over 9,700 times, along with a second map of household items and repairs providers, and a map of advice and information providers coming soon;
- ★ convening groups to work in-depth on fuel poverty, food poverty, in-work poverty and early years poverty – running training, informing policy, and taking many other actions together;
- ★ helping the Mayor's Good Employment Charter take shape to have a real impact on the working lives of thousands of people;
- ★ advising local authorities and national organisations on their anti-poverty strategies and actions.

This has relied greatly on the good-will offers of voluntary support, staff time and other resources from partners and allies, for which we are very grateful. But it has also relied on some core funding that has until now been in the form of seed funding to help us get set up. That seed funding will come to an end in the spring of 2018.

Our plans and our future are dependent on bringing in funding from our fantastic network – that means you! There are so many of you that a little from each will go a long way. This will help GMPA maintain and eventually expand our capacity to coordinate action on poverty.

The huge problem of poverty in Greater Manchester is not inevitable, but without coordinated action we risk it becoming deeply embedded. Our job is to prevent this by giving Greater Manchester some big wins in addressing and reducing poverty. We aim to develop a vision of a good society here without poverty, so we can build together towards it. We will do that, with your help...

Can you be a Supporter of Greater Manchester Poverty Action?

We are asking everyone who reads this to join our Supporters Scheme – organisations and individuals who 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 last month's Rethinking Poverty event said that they would be interested in becoming Supporters and some have already started signing up – 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 on our Principal Partners, a smaller number of organisations who will support GMPA with larger pledges of funding and support. If you or your organisation is interested in becoming a Principal Partner please get in touch with [Graham](#). There will be more information about the Principal Partners scheme in the next issue.

Coming up in 2018

Mike Wild, Chief Executive of Macc, looks ahead at issues and opportunities for the voluntary sector and all who are working to tackle poverty. This is an abridged version of [his update in Macc's newsletter](#) that some may have seen.

The **Office for Civil Society** will start consultation on a Civil Society Strategy and will provide an opportunity for a new conversation about the role of our sector in shaping places that people live in, not just an abstract national strategy

Welfare Reform: the rollout of Universal Credit is going to continue to put pressure on local support organisations. We need to keep campaigning and sharing stories of the impact this is having on people's lives. Partly to challenge media stories of 'benefit scroungers' which have created a whole set of urban myths and prejudices but also to identify possible legal challenges to this system. (there's more comment and information on UC on the following page)

The **Greater Manchester Devolution** experiment could be at risk of becoming less daring as time passes but only bold solutions will work on housing, planning, inclusive growth and so on. Andy Burnham's big theme this year is transport so expect attention on buses, cycling and a possible rethink of Manchester's 'Oyster Card'. We need the conversation to be inclusive to avoid social isolation, barriers to employment and the exclusion of people with physical and learning disabilities.

Homelessness will continue to be a highly visible issue, politically and practically. There's attention on emergency support and getting people off the streets but there are harder conversations ahead about ongoing support for people with complex needs, collaboration between agencies and some honest discussions about economic priorities.

I am hoping to see plenty of discussion about how the GM Mayor's **Accord** with the VCSE sector will be implemented, as we build collaboration and understanding of why it's important and how it can practically be done.

There's no sign of the Government doing anything to tackle the financial pressures faced by **Local Authorities** and with the national political agenda hypnotised by the fast approaching headlights of Brexit, that's unlikely to shift any time soon. Remember also there are Local Elections in May so it's a good time to be talking to candidates about local issues.

Social Prescribing is getting a lot of attention at GM level but still no overall agreement on what a good model looks like and still a lack of recognition that it's not just about GP's prescribing voluntary sector stuff, it's the whole design and system of our sector working with public services.

Nationally and locally **social care** is under pressure. I think there is room to develop local social enterprises and co-operatives to provide home care but it's hard to see where the investment in that could come from as costs are rising and the only sizeable customer (the Council) has less and less money to spend. And of course pressures on the **NHS** continue. I recently heard someone say that in NHS terms 'winter' now lasts for 12 months. We'll be starting a conversation about how the VCSE sector and hospitals can work together.



So, I'm going to leave you with a quotation which sits on my office wall.

"I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits. I believe that what self-centred men have torn down, men other-centred can build up." Dr. Martin Luther King

Mike Wild, Chief Executive, Macc



Happy New Year! We hope you can join us on our GM Living Wage journey this year, starting with attending our Campaign Group meeting on: **Wednesday March 14th 2- 4pm**. This meeting will be organised using the [World Café principles](#), as we want you to have the opportunity to help shape the Campaign Group work for the next few months.

Potential areas for our work include: young people 18 -24; voluntary and not for profit sector; social care; public sector and education; retail and a big employer such as Manchester Airport. Overall, we want to continue to:

- Support more employers, across the whole of Greater Manchester to become accredited Living Wage employers;
- Build partnerships to take our work forward;
- Raise awareness about the real Living Wage;
- Support the creation of the GM Good Employment Charter.

These are exciting times and together we can make a real difference to people working in Greater Manchester. So please join us on March 14th. Further details will be available in the very near future.

In the meantime, should you have any questions, queries, comments or suggestions, please do get in touch via Lynn.Sbaih@gmlivingwage.org or 07948 549 485.

Roll-out dates for 2018 in Greater Manchester:

March 2018: Ashton under Lyne and Hyde

April 2018: Ashton in Makerfield, Leigh and Wigan

May 2018: Middleton and Rochdale

July 2018: Bury, Cheetham Hill, Prestwich and Wythenshawe

September 2018: Eccles, Irlam, Salford and Worsley

November 2018: Bolton and Stockport

There are 3 different [Benefit calculators](#) available: Turn2us, entitledto and Policy in Practice. The last one includes an earnings slider, which shows how Universal Credit will be affected if earnings change.

Universal Credit and Foodbanks – perspectives from the Trussell Trust

Last year [The Trussell Trust](#) provided 1.2 million three-day emergency food supplies. Most people referred to their foodbanks were at the time supported by working age benefits. Yet the average income for households was just £319 in the month before they were referred. Most households had been unable to afford heating, toiletries or suitable shoes or clothes for the weather. 78% had skipped meals and gone without eating – sometimes for days at a time, often multiple times a year.



Our current system of benefits is letting many of the most vulnerable people in our country down. **Last year, Trussell Trust foodbanks in areas of full Universal Credit rollout saw an 16.85% average increase in referrals for emergency food**, more than double the national average of 6.64%.

It is not just the way Universal Credit has been designed that is leaving people in crisis. There are also serious issues in its implementation. Due to poor administration and IT issues, some people are waiting 11, 12 and even 13 weeks to receive their first Universal Credit payment.

So, what can be done? In the immediate term, work to amend Universal Credit's design and tackle poor administration in the system is needed before it should be rolled out further without causing more hunger and destitution. The Trussell Trust also knows there are some areas where Universal Credit hasn't led to huge increases in the number of people needing foodbanks and they want to find out why. But what the Trussell Trust must not become is a charity safety net that catches people because our benefits system is fundamentally flawed, not just for moral or ethical reasons, but because the evidence on Universal Credit leads them to believe that even with the enormous generosity of donors and the hard work of volunteers and staff, they and the other foodbanks across the country will simply not be able to catch everybody who falls.

[More information](#) [Now is not a time for celebration](#)

To find your nearest foodbank please check GMPA's [Emergency Food Providers map](#).

Universal Credit and Housing

In a recent article by the Residential Landlords Association, they stated that 38% of landlords saw their Universal Credit tenants fail to pay their rent and start to fall into arrears.

“Currently, if Universal Credit tenants leave a home where they owe rent there is no mechanism for the landlord to recover the money owed to them via the benefit system. They simply have to write it off. This is not fair, and against a backdrop of draconian tax changes and the pressures of increased regulation and licensing, it is a risk fewer and fewer landlords are willing to take. **Only 13% of landlords we questioned were willing to let properties to tenants on Universal Credit as it stands.**

On January 9th MPs met at Westminster Hall to debate the effect of Universal Credit on the private rented sector. This debate provides an important opportunity to get past the politics and show how all the parties, working with landlords and tenants can secure the benefit system we all want – one that is easy to understand, fair to all, supports the vulnerable and ensures the security of a home for all claimants.”

[Full article](#)

Universal Credit deductions excerpt from an article by Kate Belgrave

“A Freedom of Information request revealed that between April 2016 and October 2017, 95,620 Universal Credit claimants had deductions made from their payments due to tax credit debt. The average monthly deduction in October was £50.85 – no small amount for people who are already on such low incomes and who often already have money deducted from their benefits for other debts such as rent arrears, council tax, court fines and more recently, advance Universal Credit loans which they are forced to take out to cover delays in initial payments.

People don't know how much money they will receive from one month to the next. Trying to find someone who will help them resolve complex, cross-department benefits problems is soul-destroying. People who receive Universal Credit can't afford financial uncertainty, or the stress that goes with using these systems.”

[Full article](#)



The **Manchester Homelessness Partnership** is currently recruiting for two new positions

Business Engagement Co-Ordinator
Lived Experience & Sector Engagement Co-Ordinator

The Manchester Homelessness Partnership (MHP) is a coalition of people who have lived experience of homelessness, charities, grassroots groups, public sector services, businesses and individuals. In May 2016, MHP launched the Manchester Homelessness Charter, a mission to end homelessness. You can find out more about MHP and the Charter [here](#)

As MHP is a partnership and not an organisation, Street Support Network will be the employer for these roles. Street Support Network is an independent not-for-profit company based in Manchester, with a mission to make it easier for people experiencing homelessness to get the help they need will be the employer for these roles. The new people will join the Street Support Network team, with support from other members of MHP.

For more information about the new roles and to apply (closing date January 22nd) please visit the [website](#)



Manchester Cares is a brand new community network of young professionals and older neighbours hanging out and helping one another.



Two in five older people say the TV is their main form of company and while people over 75 are the loneliest age group in the UK, the second and third loneliest are people between 21 and 25 and 25 and 35.

The city is growing and changing and that can leave some people feeling anonymous, isolated and left behind. For our older neighbours in particular, many of whom have spent a lifetime in one local area, the rush and pace of the city can often now feel too much.

This year we will begin much-needed work by:

- Delivering blankets and warm clothes to those feeling the cold;
- Helping people to access healthcare and connecting them to organisations who can provide benefits and energy saving advice;
- Letting people know about free events in their area, including our own free [Social Clubs](#)
- Matching up those who struggle to get out and about with a younger neighbour who could visit them once a week through our [Love Your Neighbour](#) project;
- Supporting people whose circumstances are particularly difficult with small financial grants.

If you'd like to partner with us or if you know any older neighbours who may benefit, please email [Kathryn](#) or call 0161 207 0800.

[More information](#)

Community Challenge Prize

How would you use £2,000 to help people spend less money?

Good Things Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation have teamed up. Together, they have created a competition which rewards the best ideas in the Online Centres Network. They know the difference that you make in your community. Now they want to know how you solve problems.

Register by January 26th . [More information, deadlines and an application form](#)

Forthcoming Events:

Manchester Soup on Thursday January 25th, 2018 from 5.30 - 8pm at PwC, 1 Hardman Square, Manchester M3 3EB

Enjoy a bowl of soup, meet the community and support a local charity or project for £5. During the evening a number of local charities and groups get a chance to pitch, the audience vote and the winner gets money from the door plus a generous donation of £500 from PwC. [More information and book](#)

Manchester BME Network & GMBME Network joint networking event

Tuesday January 30th 2018 from 9.30am at St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Ardwick, M12 6FZ

[For more information and to book](#)

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 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.



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.