

## How we can create a fairer and more inclusive economy in Greater Manchester

by Graham Whitham

The way the UK economy operates and functions results in unequal outcomes for people and places. The growth in in-work poverty in recent years has shown that our current economic model, even when it is creating lots of jobs, doesn't necessarily lead to the improvements in people's living standards and reductions in poverty that we'd all like to see. This is a challenge for us in Greater Manchester, where thousands of people are stuck in low paying jobs and in-work poverty and where many of the business active in our economy extract wealth out of the area.

GMPA has been leading on a project, on behalf of the GM VCSE Devolution Reference Group\*, to develop thinking about how we can create a fairer and more inclusive economy in Greater Manchester. At the heart of this is understanding the role of voluntary and community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations in achieving this.

VCSE organisations contribute a huge amount to the Greater Manchester economy. However, VCSE organisations are not often perceived as economic actors in their own right. This is in spite of the sector employing 42,600 people across the city region and contributing £1bn to the local economy.



The Greater Manchester economy isn't working for everyone.

240,000 people in Greater Manchester are in **low paying work**

# £1bn



There are **42,600 paid employees** working in the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

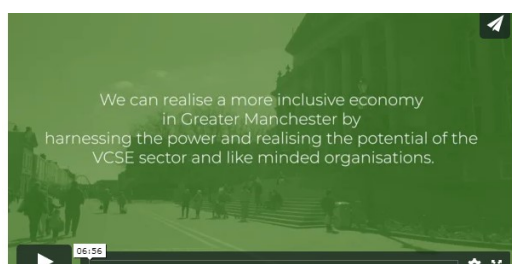
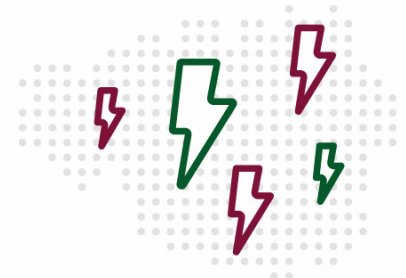
These employees contribute nearly **£1 billion** to the economy of the city region.

Promoting the growth of VCSE and likeminded organisations within the Greater Manchester economy makes a lot of sense. These organisations create jobs, help retain money in the local economy and often support economic activity in places that the 'mainstream economy' has forgotten.

The value of VCSE organisations goes beyond their economic footprint. They deliver against important social agendas and are often central to the foundational economy (that is activities which provide the essential goods and services for everyday life, regardless of the social status of consumers, for example health, education and welfare).

It is time to harness the power of the social economy.

In an unequal city region hit by austerity, VCSE organisations act as **lightning conductors**, focusing energy into a place or a community.



A [film GMPA has commissioned](#) as part of this project explores these issues in more detail. The film looks at some of the socio-economic challenges Greater Manchester faces and explores how greater involvement and promotion of the VCSE sector within our economy can help create a fairer and more inclusive city region.

Continued on the following page

Please do take a few minutes to watch the [film](#) share it with colleagues, and let us know if the film would help you make a stronger case for your organisation, and the VCSE sector, to your stakeholders.

The recent [Greater Manchester local industrial strategy](#) recognises the need to create the conditions to support social enterprises and likeminded organisations to play an active role in the region's economy. However, it remains unclear whether the VCSE organisations will be 'mainstreamed' within the region's economy or remain on the periphery.

The [webpage](#) GMPA has created for this project also includes a series of case studies developed by Unlimited Potential. These highlight examples of VCSE and other organisations that are contributing significant social value through their operations. We will be running these in forthcoming editions of the newsletter. The first one, looking at B4Box can be found on the following page.

\*The GM VCSE Devolution Reference Group seeks to promote the role and involvement of the VCSE sector and communities in devolution. It comprises individuals from eighteen voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprise organisations from across Greater Manchester. GMPA is a member of the group.



Graham Whitham

## GREATER MANCHESTER VCSE DEVOLUTION REFERENCE GROUP

### Manchester City Council sets out its ambition to be an accredited Living Wage Employer

The Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign launched in 2013, and within months, Luke Raikes, a campaign supporter, who was also a councillor, proposed a resolution for Manchester City Council to pay at least the Real Living Wage. The Campaign played an active role in the Task & Finish Group that followed, and the Council resolved to also attempt to roll out the Living Wage to the Council's contracted workers.



One of our first successes was therefore with Manchester City Council, resulting in a pay rise for over a thousand workers. However, the Council was reticent at the time to make this a public long-term commitment by becoming accredited with the Living Wage Foundation. So while we celebrated the success and the resulting increases in take-home pay, we maintained that the job was incomplete.

Accreditation is the best platform from which to engage other employers and encourage them to implement the Real Living Wage. It commits employers to making a clear plan for the rollout of the Real Living Wage to their contracted and sub-contracted workers, and enables the Living Wage Foundation to support the employer to do so. Accredited by an independent organisation, it gives employers the right to use the Living Wage kite mark and to promote their credentials as a Living Wage Employer.

The Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign affirms the importance of accreditation, and has a vision of a Living Wage City Region in which all councils and other major employers accredit, and take action to bring other employers on board. We have raised this consistently in several subsequent meetings with the Council.



Tom Skinner  
Director,  
GM Poverty Action

For this reason we are delighted to share that Manchester City Council has set out its ambition to be an accredited Living Wage Employer. They join Oldham in making this announcement, and seek to join Salford as fully accredited Living Wage Employers. We will support these Councils with this process, and call on the remaining seven GM join to join them as accredited Living Wage Employers.

If you would like to join us in action on the Real Living Wage but are not yet signed up to receive updates directly from the Campaign please [email](#) us.

If you can pay the Real Living Wage but are not yet accredited, why not join GMPA, Manchester City Council, and over 100 other employers based in Greater Manchester, and apply for accreditation today – even better, let us know so we can support you and share the good news.

# GREATER MANCHESTER VCSE DEVOLUTION REFERENCE GROUP

## Inclusive Economy case study: B4Box



B4Box is a construction company that specialises in employing and training people from disadvantaged backgrounds. The majority of B4Box employees and trainees are new to the construction sector when recruited and face multiple barriers to work including long-term unemployment, few or no qualifications, care leavers, ex-offenders, and physical and mental health issues.

B4Box describes itself as a social venture. While its legal structure is a private company (incorporated in 2008), it has been recognised as a social enterprise in terms of annual surplus reinvestment into the organisation and social impact.

B4Box's work is focused on the construction and building maintenance sectors where there are significant skills shortages and employment opportunities available but a lack of pathways for people, particularly from disadvantaged groups, to be appropriately trained to enter the industry and take the jobs. B4Box maximises social value by prioritising working with unemployed people in tough circumstances. It extends elements that are already being offered by other contractors to new levels (such as the levels of local labour and apprenticeships achieved) and doing things never done before (such as setting up a community construction Training Centre delivering industry-accredited qualifications to unemployed local residents).

B4Box makes a positive impact by ensuring the construction pound works harder than ever, delivering trailblazing social and economic value. The public purse has benefited from reductions in rent arrears, welfare payments, justice and NHS costs from participants moving into sustainable employment. Participants have benefited from improved well-being and quality of life, increasing confidence, feeling more in control of life, financial inclusion, and improved overall health.

The challenging austerity environment has dictated that business as usual would not deliver the desired employment and training outcomes. B4Box's partnerships have faced a choice between a 'race to the bottom' through cuts or forming a ground-breaking new style of collaboration that maximises opportunities for local residents. It has been able to use the Social Value Act to overcome procurement and legal barriers that previously limited client aspirations. Patience and resilience have been required to sustain the approach and overcome set-backs and challenges. 'Expect change' has become the motto of B4Box in delivering apprenticeships after experiencing funding cuts, age group restrictions, inconsistent and changing national standards, the apprenticeship levy, and off-the-job training requirements.

B4Box ensures that money that is spent through construction expenditure works harder for employment and training outcomes than ever before. It has developed a sustainable pathway for new talent to embark on construction careers, learn new skills and gain industry-accredited qualifications in its innovative Training Centre, and has helped to address the construction training crisis and reduce skills shortages.

[Further details](#)



## **Food Ladders: A multi-scaled approach to everyday food security and community resilience**

by Dr Megan Blake, University of Sheffield

*Dr. Megan Blake is a member of Reference Group for GMPA's Food Poverty Alliance. The Alliance [recommends](#) place-based approaches to tackling food poverty, to complement city-regional and national action, and the following approach can be used to frame and inform those localised approaches.*

### **Finding innovative interventions for building food secure communities**

*Food Ladders* is a novel, evidenced-based approach for creating household and community resilience by building on the capacity of food to bring people together. *Food Ladders* is not like existing household food insecurity approaches that focus on the lack of good food within households that then feed that gap. Instead, *Food Ladders* activates food and its related practices to reduce local vulnerability to food insecurity and its knock-on effects.

Specifically, *Food Ladders* advocates for:

- Mobilising the more than nutrient, calorie and commercial aspects of food, such as its capacity to bring people together to foster shared understanding and collaboration;
- Creating safe and inclusive spaces for experimentation and interaction with food;
- Using a positive language of empowerment around food;
- Building place-specific levels of support that enable the recognition and enhancement of locally based skills and assets to create transformations in communities.

### **What is the *Food Ladders* approach?**

*Food Ladders* are community scale interventions aimed at building local level resilience in the face of food insecurity. The approach was developed for low-income communities to address the wider effects that poverty has on health, wellbeing, and community cohesion. However, all communities can benefit from *Food Ladders*. The approach is not intended to replace national level campaigns, but instead complements those campaigns and may even foster activism. *Food Ladders* works with the specific characteristics of places to enable three levels of intervention These include:

**Catching.** This first rung provides a starting point for those who are in crisis. Such interventions might include emergency food aid, mental health support, access to social services, etc. Catching enables the ability to cope with a shock, whether that be the loss of a job, an unexpected large payment, debt, longer-term illness or relationship breakdown.

**Capacity building to enable change.** This second rung supports those not currently in crisis, but who may be struggling to afford and/or access good food. Activities include training programmes, shared cooking and eating activities, food pantries, children's holiday clubs, and voucher schemes. Done in a manner that celebrates difference and is not stigmatising, activities provide residents with accessible choices that relieve the stresses that co-exist with low-incomes, expand skills, and enable the recognition of personal and local assets. These interventions connect people together by creating networks of trust and reciprocity through shared activity around food. This sort of intervention enables people and communities to be more adaptable by expanding what they can bring to the table to make change.

**Self-organised community change.** This third rung supports communities to realise goals through self-organised projects that capitalise on what is good in communities. Projects meet community needs as residents identify them. Examples include developing a social enterprise based on community cooking knowledge that provides employment, community story-telling that leads to activism, cooperative food growing and food procurement that increases the local availability of good food, regular social cooking and eating activities to overcome loneliness, cross social divides and create intergenerational knowledge transfer.

### **What can Local Authorities, Community Organisations, Food Alliances and others do to support local *Food Ladders*?**

There is a lot that these different types of organisations can do to support and build *Food Ladders*, including undertaking mapping, reflective reviews and evaluations of existing practices. There is a [longer description of Food Ladders](#) with pointers for how different types of organisations can start building food ladders in their area.

### **The research behind the *Food Ladders* approach:**

*Food Ladders* was developed through a series of interdisciplinary research projects funded by the ESRC, MRC, and The N8 AgriFood Programme, involving local authorities, food industry actors, national charities and community organisations across the UK, which enabled a better understanding of what is working in communities and where different levels of resources and challenges are situated. A special mention goes to Gary Stott (Community Shop and Incredible Edible) and Samantha Siddall (ECO), Rupert Suckling (Doncaster Metropolitan Council), and the teams at Greater Manchester Poverty Action and FareShareUK.

If you would like to know more about *Food Ladders* please contact: [Dr. Megan Blake](#), or Twitter: [@GeoFoodieOrg](#). Megan is also an organiser of the [Just Food Futures conference](#) in July – see more on the events page of this newsletter.



Dr Megan Blake

## Call for a “Right to Food” in UK policy

The Cooperative Party's [Campaign for Food Justice](#) recommends actions at a local level, which align closely with our own Food Poverty Action Plan, such as designating a lead member for food poverty, and measuring food poverty.



At the national level they are calling for a right to food to be enshrined in law, saying, "The UN's Sustainable Development Goals are well-known and form part of our obligations to support developing countries. Less well-known is that they apply domestically too – what we are proposing is embedding them in UK law. The second goal is 'zero hunger by 2030'. It would be relatively easy to incorporate this into UK law, and send a powerful message about the UK's commitment to delivering food justice." While the Greater Manchester Food Poverty Action Plan stopped short of making specific UK government policy recommendations, we recognise that the primary drivers of food poverty (and of its solutions) are national, and will support actions to tackle food poverty at the national level.

The Cooperative Party's Campaign has identified an opportunity, for Labour Party members at least, to influence that party's policy on the topic. If you are eligible to respond to Labour's National Policy Forum, please have a look at the [Cooperative Party's briefing](#) and consider making a response. The deadline for consultation responses is Sunday 30 June 2019.

*While this action is only open to members of one political party, there are of course many actions that everyone can take, regardless of political affiliation, to push for action at a national level on food poverty - see [End Hunger](#) for more.*

Tom Skinner

## Forthcoming events

### New frontiers: The social sector through Brexit, Greater Manchester

Thursday July 11th, 2019 from 9.30am – 6.40pm at The Mechanics Centre, 103 Princess Street, Manchester M1 6DD

A free conference, bringing together the social sector to discuss the potentially momentous changes Brexit will have on charities, voluntary organisations and the communities they champion and represent. The three years since the country voted to leave the EU have thrown up a series of questions that remain unanswered: how best to respond to it, how to prepare for it, how to mitigate against it where needed.

Ongoing uncertainty for the VCSE sector is as big an issue as it is for businesses, and the likely impact on the people, places and causes they represent are just as great but neither have had the attention they rightly deserve. There is urgent need for the social sector to discuss the changes that Brexit will bring, provide a public platform to raise concerns and begin to develop a greater sense of collective understanding of, and responsibility for, the challenges ahead. [More information and booking](#)

### REBUILD - what's next?

Monday July 15th, 2019 from 4 - 6pm at Bury Christian Fellowship, Manna House, Irwell Street, Bury BL9 0HE

What happens following the demise of REBUILD in Bury? A project to offer starter packs of crockery, bedding and other essentials has been identified but there is still a need for affordable furniture. Views from relevant agencies and individuals to enable a coherent and sustainable plan to be developed would be welcome. Light refreshments will be available. Please confirm your attendance by [email](#)

### What proposals should be made in the next UK White Paper on social security (welfare benefits)?

**New date in Salford:** Tuesday July 23rd, 2019 from 1 - 4pm at The University of Salford Media City, B4, Orange Tower, Salford Quays, Salford M50 2HE

The social security/welfare benefits system is failing, with foodbanks and homelessness just two of the most visible signs of this, but there is little agreement, even within civil society, on ways forward.

The workshops being held across the country will stimulate thinking about the future of social security/welfare benefits and provide the opportunity for discussion and collaboration among attendees. In particular, the workshops will input to a project called the Commission on Social Security (welfare benefits), led by Experts by Experience which is issuing a Call for Solutions. All the Commissioners are people with experience of claiming benefits. The Commission's aim is to produce a White Paper style document setting out a better system and building consensus. The Call for Solutions will include questions such as:

What steps can be taken to make Universal Credit better or if you think it should be scrapped, what would replace it? How can people who are sick or disabled be better supported and how should the system work out who should get sickness or disability benefits? Should there be a minimum income level below which no one can fall and if so, how could this be done? How should benefit rates be worked out and how much should each benefit be?

[More information and booking](#)

Event hosted by



University of  
**Salford**  
MANCHESTER

## More forthcoming events

### Low pay, earnings mobility and policy

Wednesday July 3rd, 2019 from 4pm at MMU Business School, Room 3.08 All Saints Campus, Oxford Road, Manchester M15 6BH

Drawing on recently funded research Paul will discuss patterns of low pay and wage progression in the UK, and examine the factors influencing these. How patterns of mobility differ across low-paid sectors, and the relationship between low pay and in-work poverty will also be discussed. He will then consider the opportunities and constraints around developing policy and practice to support better in-work progression, as well as relating this to wider concerns about 'good work'. This free event is part of the Centre for Decent Work and Productivity's seminar series, Manchester Metropolitan University. [More information and book](#)

### How to make a just food future: alternative foodways for a changing world

July 8th - 10th, 2019 at the University of Sheffield

Sponsored by the Sheffield Food Futures Research Centre and the RGS-IBG Food Geographies Working Group, this conference brings academics, practitioners, food thinkers and policy makers together to consider contemporary approaches to addressing current food issues. We are very pleased to announce Professor Julian Agyeman, from Tufts University as our keynote speaker, plus Gary Stott (Incredible Edible) Barbara Benish, and Tom Skinner, Dr Charlie Spring and Dr Rebecca St. Clair from Greater Manchester, with more to be announced soon.

Conference registration is **FREE** but places are limited to 100 delegates. If you would like attend please register via our [Eventbrite](#) page.

### Greater Manchester and Manchester BME Network Joint Networking Event

On Friday July 19th, 2019 from 9.30am - 2pm at GMCVO, St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester M12 6FZ

Manchester BME Network and Greater Manchester BME Network will be holding our next joint networking event on Friday 19th July 2019 at St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Ardwick, M12 6FZ. We will be starting promptly at 10am (registration from 9.30am).

Lunch will be provided by BME Network members who are social entrepreneurs.

Please note that this event is FREE to FULL members of the Greater Manchester and the Manchester BME Networks. For Associate members and other organisations the charge will be £20. The full criteria for membership can be found [here](#) [Book here](#)

### NEA Annual Conference & Exhibition

From September 16th - 18th, 2019 at Sheffield City Hall Barker's Pool, Sheffield S1 2JA



The NEA Annual Conference and Exhibition is a major three-day event in the fuel poverty and energy efficiency calendar. The conference attracts over 300 delegates from around the UK, including government, the energy industry, health sector, local authorities, housing associations and other not-for-profit agencies.

The conference is open to all and NEA members benefit from a discounts.

The conference covers a wide range of topics in high-quality sessions with entertaining social events and a trade exhibition. It is a fantastic opportunity to keep up-to-date with trends, access new ideas and practical information and to catch up with colleagues and network.

[More information on the draft programme and the delegate booking form](#) Early-bird booking is available until June 30, 2019.

**Do you have any events that you'd like GMPA to publicise? Please [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 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.