

Tackling economic inequality

by Graham Whitham

As part of Oxfam's Inequality Hearings project, GMPA recently worked with Oxfam to bring together Greater Manchester's citizens, service providers and decision makers to discuss economic inequality in the region and the impact it has on people's lives. Inequality Hearings are a new project by Oxfam being delivered in 10 locations around the UK to engage its citizens in conversation and influence decision makers, encouraging them to take action to reduce economic inequality.



Oxfam is campaigning to tackle economic inequality because apart from it being fundamentally unfair, it undermines their fight against poverty. The drive for growth and profit means millions of people around the world are being left behind despite the vast amount of wealth, resources and opportunities that exist. At GMPA we were keen to understand what economic inequality means to people in our network, people experiencing poverty and how it relates to efforts to tackle poverty. At a well-attended Inequality Hearing in central Manchester in June, people came together to discuss the issues and challenges and chose to focus particularly on employment opportunities. The Hearing built on two 'prep sessions' we held in Oldham and Wigan in May. Attendees from those sessions were joined at the Hearing by other stakeholders and citizens, including influential local leaders and decision makers.



We heard from attendees about their personal experiences struggling to make ends meet, as well as their thoughts and opinions about what needs to change in order to really make a difference. One of the common themes that emerged was that economic inequality often hits women harder than men, as they try to balance caring responsibilities and paid employment. High childcare costs mean that families are struggling to afford a basic standard of living. Among the delegates, married mum of two, Emma, talked about having to pay £50 per day for her childcare. Emma works part time and looks after her children, but the family doesn't have much money. She told us "By the time childcare and travel costs are paid, it hardly seems worth it. I stay in work for the future not because it is financially beneficial. I know when both my children are older, it will help that I have continued to work. Its just a struggle trying to make ends meet now."

The feedback from the hearing was extremely positive, with people appreciating the space for conversation and expressing an urgent need for change. Some of the ideas to reduce inequality that emerged were the need to reevaluate what we see as valuable in society, for citizens to have a stronger voice in decision making processes and for greater opportunities for people to retrain and enhance their skills. The outcomes have been shared with Greater Manchester's MPs.

You can keep in touch with Oxfam's campaign to tackle global economic inequality by following them at [@oxfamcampaigns](https://twitter.com/oxfamcampaigns)

If you would like more information about the Inequality Hearings Project, please contact [Kelly Mundy](mailto:kelly.mundy@gmpa.org.uk)



Graham Whitham,
Director GMPA

Increasing Access to Support in Salford – Outreach and Engagement Approaches

by Angela Eden, Health Improvement Manager

Salford Health Improvement Service is a frontline, neighbourhood based health and wellbeing service which delivers a broad range of community initiatives to help people make behaviour changes. Our core areas of work most often cover areas such as smoking, weight support, healthy eating, physical activity and mental health. However, more recently the service has worked closely with our partner services within the City Council to develop a sustained programme of outreach and engagement work to help to tackle poverty directly within Salford's most socio-economically deprived communities. There have been two key campaigns over the preceding 12 months, one called Better Off (focused on increasing access to anti-poverty services within the most socio-economically deprived communities), and one focussed on increasing uptake of the Pension Credit benefit.

There are 30 frontline staff with the Health Improvement Service who have strong networks and trusted relationships within the local communities in which they work. These staff have a history of successfully delivering campaigns and brief interventions. This meant that the service was ideally placed to get the key messages out to local residents to help them to make small, but often significant changes to their financial and economic situation.

Better Off

'Better Off Salford' Health Bus campaign, was delivered over eight dates, with the health bus visiting two venues per date. This was delivered alongside our partners in Welfare Rights and Debt Advice and Housing. During this time over 150 conversations took place with residents within their own community about the topics of Emergency Financial Support, Benefits Advice, Managing Debt, Health and Wellbeing and Housing. During the campaign 120 referrals were made to other Anti-Poverty services.

Below is some feedback from staff involved in the delivery of the campaign:

'I have had the bailiffs put on hold and agreed an affordable repayment plan' (Debt Adviser)

'I helped him apply for council tax reduction online – now in payment and applied to the council tax bill set up for him and his wife - pointed him to apply online for a discretionary housing payment. Also gave advice for Salford Home Search, as he wanted a social housing property and he also spoke with Housing Options who were on the bus, he spoke to the Credit Union lady who also runs a job club about applying for jobs online and with Universal Credit' (Claims Management Officer)

'I carried out a check the next day and identified entitlement to Employment Support allowance of £73.10 per week and Tax Credits (husband works) of £89 per week. Overall she will be £162 better off each week as a result of the visit to the bus' (Welfare Rights Officer)



'We had a chap with very significant mental health issues who had been offered a flat but as the landlord could not contact him the application had been cancelled. The customer was unaware of all this until he attended the bus and after some emails we agreed to reinstate his application due to the issues he currently faces. This man was very agitated when he first presented to the bus and as we managed to resolve this situation he left the bus a much happier man. He in fact liked all the staff so much he stayed with us the whole afternoon and engaged with other customers. If the bus had not been there then he would not have known his home search situation. We managed to resolve this and this made him much happier with SCC services' (Supported Tenancy Officer)

Pension Credit

There are almost 6,000 individuals in Salford who are not claiming Pension Credit, but are entitled to it. Eligibility for this benefit opens up opportunities for other areas of financial support. It is estimated that there is as much as £12 million unclaimed Pension Credit in the city. Current changes to the Welfare system nationally will mean that if people don't claim soon then they may miss out permanently, so there was some urgency to this work.



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Increasing Access to Support in Salford – Outreach and Engagement Approaches continued

The Health Improvement Service worked in collaboration with our Welfare Rights and Debt Advice service, our Council Tax Benefits team and DWP to deliver an outreach and engagement campaign to encourage take up of the Pension Credit benefit by residents who may be missing out. The campaign focussed on busting myths about eligibility and how simple it is to make a claim. Welfare Rights and Debt Advice Services provided training and resources to the Health Improvement Staff to ensure they were confident in supporting residents to apply for Pension Credit.

Over 1000 conversations took place with individuals to take up Pension Credit during April and May 2019 in a range of community venues, and on the Health Improvement Bus. Targeted engagement took place with the Muslim and Jewish communities, where uptake of Pension Credit is currently even lower than the Salford average.

For more information please contact [Angela Eden](#)



Angela Eden

News from the Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign

There's lots of activity and planning for future events taking place at the moment. We had a very good meeting of the GM Living Wage Campaign Group on September 11th. We heard a useful update from Chris Dabbs about Salford's application to become a Living Wage Place ([more about LW Places](#)) and I

outlined our action plan for the next few months. There was also a brilliant response from people wanting to get involved in supporting the campaign. The next GMLWC meeting is on the October 23rd, 2019 at 2pm in central Manchester. Please look out for the email notice if you are on GM Living Wage Campaign's separate mailing list.

If you're not on this list [contact me](#) and I will put you on.



[John Hacking](#)

GM Living Wage
Campaign Coordinator

We are also busy planning events for Living Wage Week which runs from November 11-17th, 2019. One event already in the diary is on November 13th. This is a joint event between us and the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter. The event will be in the form of a briefing and networking session for employers who are Supporters of the Charter. Another area of activity we are exploring is the [Living Hours Campaign](#) promoted by the Living Wage Foundation. We are currently in discussions with GM Citizens and the Living Wage foundation about delivering a training session on this issue in GM later in the year for those who want to find out more. If you want any information or to get involved with GMLWC please [contact me](#).

GMFA Food Providers Map Update

Our [food providers map](#) is a bit like gardening - for those who enjoy that pastime - its never finished, although it is increasingly colourful!

There are now 220 pins on the map separately showing food banks, pantries and meal providers which is more than a 60% increase on the number of pins when we launched back in January 2017 and the map has been viewed more than 30,000 times.

So, is it complete? Are there still pins missing? Is the information up-to-date? Please [email](#) if you can help.



Research Study: The impact of benefit changes on disabled self-employed people

Are you a disabled business owner, or self-employed, based in the UK? Have you been affected by changes to disability and work-related benefits, such as Disability Living Allowance and Access to Work, over the past decade? If so, please consider supporting a research study funded by Manchester Metropolitan University on the impact of benefit changes on personal well-being, working practices and business performance of disabled people and those with long-term health conditions who are in self-employment.

Taking part in the study involves an interview, face-to-face or over the telephone. More information can be found [here](#)

If you are interested in participating, please email [Dr Eva Kašperová](#) or call 07944 856484.

Miles Platting Community Grocer



Food clubs go by many names such as food pantries, social supermarkets and community grocers. What they have in common is a membership scheme by which people pay a small amount and are able to choose from a wide range of foods of a much greater value. You can read more about them, and other forms of community food retail, in [Food Power's briefing](#). The [Greater Manchester Food Poverty Action Plan](#) calls for more food clubs to be established across Greater Manchester, and we are pleased to share success stories and good practice such as the Miles Platting Community Grocer.



"I think the stigma around people going to a community grocer is still there. In fact, I know it is and a lot of people wouldn't go. I've told everybody about this place and how amazing it is. When you walk through the door no one stares at you; it's welcoming and friendly." says member Debbie

The Community Grocer has taken root in Miles Platting since it opened in 2017 with investment from Adactus Housing, with a team of local dedicated local residents who wanted to help others, improve themselves and make Miles Platting a better place to live. The grocer is more than just a shop, it has empowered residents to get involved in other activities such as cooking courses with a focus on healthy eating, encouraging people to get creative and to experiment with food. It's a place that brings the community together, where people can catch up over a cup of tea or get stuck in and volunteer. It also has its own Savers group set up and run by the Community Grocer volunteers who help each other to save money.

"Miles Platting Community Grocer was set up not only to address food poverty, but to help people make friends, connect people into activities, training, volunteering and partner services." Rich Browning, Chief Executive, Healthy Me Healthy Communities

Child poverty in Miles Platting and Newton Heath is 52% after housing costs.



Niall

"I started coming on one particular week when I was really strapped for cash for buying food. The bills had come in and my wage was low because I'd been off sick. So, I went and signed up as a member and did my shop. Just that little bit gets you through that week. I've been coming here for three months and from my weekly trip I have a fully stocked cupboard of essentials, whether that be pasta, rice, beans, tins of soup and veg which you can always make something of. You always get a potato and fresh fruit which is good and it's healthy." Niall

Miles Platting has had a large amount of change over the last few years, it has seen new residents come into the area, new houses being built, but also a change in local amenities. The Community Grocer provides an essential space for the community to meet, bringing people together and giving local people an opportunity to access projects, training and advice. The grocer has been supported by the [Adactus Housing Association](#) enabling the volunteers to provide this essential community-run project.



Community Grocer volunteers
Bridget and Dot



Eric

"I enjoyed the opportunity to participate, via the social group created by our Community Grocers. It was a good way to pool experiences and learn about aspects of our area, from the last days of its industrial past up to the rapidly changing present. Mapping the results means that this history has been formally recorded for current and future interest, rather than being lost." Eric

The Community Grocers, part of Healthy Me Healthy Communities working in partnership with neighbourhood groups, residents and services, are a network of food projects across Manchester improving access to healthy food options, volunteering, training and improving access to existing services. The grocers also provide opportunities for local residents to get involved in different community projects. Funded by The Lottery and with investment from MHCC and GMMH Trust, they are soon to open a new community food centre and new food projects.



For more information please visit Healthy Me Healthy Communities [website](#)



GMCA's [online survey](#) that explores how people move around the city-region at night, how they feel about it, and what might prevent them from being out and about more at night is open until October 13th, 2019. Its aimed at everyone who travels between 6pm and 6am – whether that's for work or leisure. Is there a form of transport you avoid? How easy it is to get to or home from night-time jobs or shift work? GMCA would like as many people as possible to complete the survey .

Forthcoming events

Citizen Journalism Workshop

Sunday September 29th, 2019 from 10am - 4.15pm at BBC MediaCity UK, Salford Quays M50 2BH

The Community Media Association and BBC MediaCityUK offer this citizen journalism workshop for the community media sector which is free to attend and with refreshments and lunch provided. [More information and book](#)

Thrive Trafford VCSE Sector Strategic Engagement Event 'Developing a Trafford Poverty Strategy'

Wednesday October 16th, 2019 from 12.45 - 3pm at Flixton House, Flixton Road, Urmston M41 5GJ

Trafford Council are currently developing a Poverty Strategy for Trafford and would like to engage with local voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations working directly with residents living in poverty to help co-produce a Poverty Strategy for Trafford that meets local needs. [Further details will be posted here shortly and to book your place](#)



Action for change through community organising - one day workshop

Monday October 21st, 2019 from 9.30am - 4.30pm at Startpoint Coffee Shop, 3 Woodley Precinct, Woodley SK6 1RJ

This free interactive one-day course will explore how you can make change for good through collective action. [More information and to book](#) - booking is essential!

Risk of poverty among different groups

Wednesday November 6th, 2019 from 9.30am - 12.30pm



Risk of poverty among different groups of the population is not static and has changed considerably over the decades. This half day course will look at trends in poverty in the UK among different groups and support participants to think about their own client base and how they can effectively target and design projects and services. More information including a course overview and to book your place please go to our [website](#).

The Manchester Sleepout

Friday November 8th, 2019 kindly hosted again by Manchester Cathedral

Each year [the Booth Centre](#) invites people to take on the challenge of sleeping out for one night to highlight some of the hardships that people have to face every night. They are working to end homelessness, in all its forms. Join them in their mission. Sleep out once, so that others don't have to. [More information, FAQs and registration is now open.](#)



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.



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