

Government response to the cost of living crisis

Last Thursday the Government announced help for households to deal with soaring energy (and other) costs. All households will receive £400, with extra support for households in receipt of means tested benefits (£650), pensioners (£300) and people receiving disability benefits (£150).

The Household Support Fund (funding from central government to local councils to support residents who are struggling financially) has also been extended. Next year, benefits will be uprated in line with inflation.

Whilst welcome, it is now time to move on from piecemeal and ad hoc responses to poverty. It is time to fix the benefits system so that it effectively supports people year in, year out to avoid financial hardship and enables them to cope when living costs are soaring.

Greater Manchester Poverty Monitor 2022 – please tell us what you think

Last week we published the [Greater Manchester Poverty Monitor 2022](#). The Monitor reveals the scale and nature of poverty in Greater Manchester. By developing this resource we're able to get a multi-dimensional picture of poverty in the city region across ten themes:

Child poverty	Debt	Education	Fuel, utilities and food	Health
Homelessness	Housing	Deprivation	the Labour market and	Social security

This vital resource equips stakeholders with evidence to inform policy development and service design and delivery. We've already received positive feedback from users, and it is good to know that the Monitor is proving a useful tool for organisations in our network.

"The Poverty Monitor is very, very useful when we're planning our strategies for most social impact, really helping local people and subsequently speaking to funders. I found the local statistics in the interactive maps that Chris pointed me to. They are incredibly helpful." *Director of a local VSCE organisation supporting low income families in the Leigh area of Wigan*

"I have passed details of the Poverty Monitor to our policy team who will find this valuable in terms of our policy development and lobbying of the DfE and DWP." *National children's charity*

In the Monitor we strive to provide data at below local authority level as we know this is particularly useful when developing local responses to poverty. Whilst this isn't always possible, local (i.e. at either ward, MSOA or LSOA level) fuel poverty, child poverty and life expectancy data are provided. We intend to add some further neighbourhood level data over the coming months, along with a small number of other updates and additions. Watch this space!

Beyond that, we don't currently have the resources to keep the Monitor updated on a rolling basis. We know from the feedback we have received in the last week and from comments on the previous iteration of the Monitor that this is a well-used and valued resource.

To support us to secure funding for future updates, and to understand how we can develop and improve the Monitor please complete this [short survey](#).

Thank you for everyone who helped us raise awareness of the Monitor. Please keep doing so by sharing it with colleagues and stakeholders.



VACANCY: Finance, Administration and Operations Manager

Community Led Action and Savings Support (CLASS) and GMPA are jointly recruiting a Finance, Administration and Operations Manager. This is an interesting and varied role with the opportunity to contribute to two innovative and growing organisations.

CLASS is a community development agency that works in alliance with Community Savers – a network of majority women-led and neighbourhood-based community groups – to reduce poverty and inequality.

You will have a significant impact on the growth and development of both organisations by ensuring they have the financial and operational systems in place to remain agile and effective.

You will work closely with the senior staff and leadership teams at both organisations to plan, manage and monitor annual and project budgets, prepare management accounts and manage our day-to-day administration and operations including policy review and implementation.

Closing date Friday June 10th, 2022. For more information and how to apply please visit our [website](#)

Greater Manchester Pension Top Up campaign 2022

By Greater Manchester Ageing Hub

People in Greater Manchester are being urged to check if they are eligible for pension top up payments after figures revealed approximately 36,000 qualifying households are missing out on around £70m in unclaimed Pension Credit.

Greater Manchester Housing Providers, a partnership of 24 social housing providers, and Greater Manchester Combined Authority, through its Ageing Hub, have launched an awareness raising campaign to encourage older people to take up pension age benefits. The Pension Top Up campaign is being rolled out across the city region and is supported by Independent Age, Age UK, and Citizens Advice.

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, said: “With so much pressure on household finances, it’s vital that older people are getting all the money they are entitled to. A third of those eligible for pension credit in Greater Manchester aren’t claiming, with many missing out on income from attendance allowance and housing benefit too. If you own your own home or have a private pension you could still be eligible, so please take a moment now and check – for yourself or your loved ones. It’s going to be another tough winter, and getting this top-up could make all the difference.”

The main reason older people don’t claim is that they don’t think they are eligible. When it comes to finance and benefits, older people are most likely to respond to one-to-one prompting from family and friends or from trusted local contacts. The campaign encourages everyone to ask their older family, friends and customers, ‘have you topped up?’.

Jean, aged 86, from Gorton said: “Pension Credit has helped me with lots of the costs including food, clothing and bedding. My son helped me fill the forms out – I wouldn’t be able to do it without his help.”

Pension credit is designed to bring the weekly income of pensioners up to a minimum amount and could make those eligible £34 a week better off on average. In addition to the extra weekly cash, Pension Credit also unlocks other financial benefits including a free TV licence for over 75s, council tax support, and money towards green home insulation.

Karen Mitchell, Greater Manchester Housing Providers’ Ageing Well Lead and Chief Executive of Southway Housing Trust, said: “For many people that bit of extra income can make a crucial difference between struggling to pay the bills and living more comfortably”.

To check if you or someone you are close to is getting all the entitlements they are due, contact your local social housing provider or Independent Age freephone helpline 0800 319 6789 or go to the [website](#)



Tameside Poverty Truth Commission Update

Tameside Poverty Truth Commission had a full agenda when they met on May 11th, 2022, including special guest speaker Sonia Bassey MBE. Sonia inspired the community and civic commissioners with a “You need to Inspire to make change” presentation about how West Cheshire Poverty Truth Commission had worked collaboratively to implement their recommendations.



The Commission also welcomed Sharman Birtles MBE, the Vice Lord-Lieutenant of Greater Manchester, who agreed to take on the role of chair of the commission. Sharman will work with the Commissioners to embed the voices of people with lived experience in the decision-making structures and systems to tackle poverty in Tameside.

Three key issues have been identified to focus on over the next five months. Working groups will be chaired by one community commissioner (CC) and one civic commissioner:

- CC Fran Beeston and Ivan Wright, assistant director from Jigsaw Homes for Housing
- CC Helen Lomas and Dawn Action, partnership officer from Action Together for Access to Services
- CC Ed Seager and Lynzi Shepherd, Head of Mental Health and Learning Disabilities from NHS Tameside & Glossop CCG for Mental Health.

The working groups will continue to meet once a month, with all commissioners coming together once every six weeks to share progress to the full Commission.

#nothingaboutuswithoutusisforus

For more information about the Tameside Poverty Truth Commission please visit the [website](#).



The Tameside Poverty Truth Commission is a Greater Manchester Poverty Action programme.

Employment Legal Advice Service

By Naomi Ilagoswa, Head of Strategic Partnerships & External Projects, The Growth Company

The Growth Company together with Citizens Advice Manchester, Citizens Advice Bury and Bolton and a network of legal partners, have set up [Employment Legal Advice](#) - a new service to help individuals across Greater Manchester to access free employment-related legal support. The service is designed to help you access the right advice at the right time as quickly and easily as possible. They have supported people with a wide range of employment issues including discrimination, unpaid wages, dismissal, bullying, contractual issues, harassment, long term sickness, redundancy and pregnancy.

Of those who contact the service; 35% are disabled or have a health condition, 13% speak English as a second language and 17% work in a low paid industry

Hayley Hughes, Head of Business Development & Local Services, Citizen’s Advice Manchester: “Our key reason for partnering on this project was an increase in the demand for employment advice, although this specific increase was generated by the pandemic, we have long been aware that there is a gap in access to employment (legal) advice in Manchester. Unfortunately, when people encounter an employment issue, they are often left with nowhere else to turn other than fee paying solicitors. Many of the people who access this service simply do not have the financial means to instruct a solicitor and therefore often they will not pursue their case.”

Stockport Homes also commented: “The free Employment Legal Advice Service provided has been exceptional. The empathic, professional, supportive and efficient service the customers have received has not only resulted in successful outcomes but also provided reassurance, hope, clarity and direction at a time when customers are feeling most vulnerable, overwhelmed and unable to cope.”

For more information please visit the [website](#).



Families face a £400 per month rise in the cost of basic necessities

By Penny Rimmer, Policy officer, GMPA

Research conducted by [Loughborough University for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) (JRF) has revealed that families with children face price rises of £400 per month on basic necessities including rent, heating, and food. The findings have been calculated using the [Minimum Income Standard](#) (MIS), which is based on what members of the public think is required for a minimum acceptable standard of living in the UK.

The cost of living crisis is worsening for everyone, but those on the poorest incomes are being affected drastically, as they spend a higher share of their income on food, electricity, and other essentials. We have seen inflation rise by [9% in the 12 months to April 2022, up from 7% in March](#) (on the CPI measure). However, the research has shown that families with two children are facing a cost rise of 13% compared with last year. Families spend an extra £120 per month on energy, £90 on transport including petrol, and £65 on childcare. This is plunging low-income households into devastating circumstances. Families face constant tough spending decisions day-in and day-out about whether to pay bills, eat or use gas and electricity. The never-ending cycle of struggling to afford the basic necessities should not be the reality for so many households across the UK.

Further to the support announced by government last week (detailed on the frontpage), we need a long-term fix to the benefit system. Strengthening the social security system is central to this, as [JRF findings](#) have shown that the basic rate of social security in 2022/23 will be the lowest since 1982, at a time when inflation is at a 40-year high. Therefore, to protect the poorest families, the government needs to fundamentally review the value of benefits and end policies such as the 'bedroom tax' and two child limit on children's benefits.

If the government continues to fail to provide an adequate state safety net, more families will be pushed into poverty, which will have a lasting impact on the economic, physical, and mental well-being of future generations.



Penny Rimmer

Greater Manchester Real Living Wage Campaign Update

Increase in Real Living Wage Employers across Greater Manchester



The 'Action Plan' launched last November by the Real Living Wage Campaign continues to be successful with the number of Real Living Wage Employers in the city region now at 483. This is an increase of over 100 accredited employers since the Action Plan started.

This month Citizens UK and the Living Wage Foundation launched a new steering group to focus on [making London a Real Living Wage City](#). There's an old saying that "what Manchester does today, London does tomorrow!". Seriously though, we wish them well and send our support.

UK wide the campaign has reached new heights as this month as the 10,000th employer was given Real Living Wage Accredited employer status. New research shows the Real Living Wage campaign has put over £1.8 billion of extra wages in the pockets of low paid workers since the campaign started 20 years ago. 1 in 13 UK workers now work for a Real Living Wage employer.

However, millions of workers still suffer from low pay. Our recently launched [2022 Poverty Monitor](#) found that 195,000 workers in Greater Manchester earn less than the Real Living Wage of £9.90 an hour.



If you want to join in the campaign against low pay and for a Real Living Wage get in touch for more details.

Best Wishes and Stay Safe.
Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign Co-ordinator
[John Hacking](#)

Twitter: [@GMLivingWage](#) Facebook: [facebook.com/gmlivingwage](#)

The Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign is run by Greater Manchester Poverty Action.

Social Housing: Supporting communities for the future Conference

at The University of Salford 13 July 13th 2022 from 9am - 4.30pm [Link for registration](#)



Bringing industry experts together to discuss the levelling-up agenda and its implications, the importance of Together with Tenants, the role social housing plays in partnership with individuals, communities, and local authorities, in the delivery of more affordable housing and ending homelessness. This one-day event is filled with useful case studies, practical advice, methods of improving customer experience, as well as an opportunity to discuss your challenges and ask questions to the panel of experienced speakers. The Conference is free to attend.

One of the speakers is Alexis Darby, Head of Advocacy, Policy and Research with GMPA, whose presentation will provide a picture of socio-economic disadvantage and the related inequalities of outcome in the GM region.



University of
Salford
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Other speakers include Lara Oyedele - Vice President, Chartered Institute of Housing; Anna Furlong - Head of Policy and Strategy, Regulator of Social Housing; Molly Bishop - Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Lead, GMCA; The Conference chairman is Dr Graeme Sherriff - Co-Director, Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit. More information [here](#).

Action on Poverty Conference

At Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 2DF on June 20th, 2022 from 9am - 5pm.

Conference speakers include leaders from the Re-Thinking Poverty network, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Portland Inn Project and the Faculty of Public Health, alongside academics from Staffordshire University.

Breakout sessions are also planned and currently include working with families and young people experiencing deprivation, working with people to manage and eradicate debt, approaches to co-creating with people with lived experience, participatory research, mental health and poverty campaigning, and working with asylum seekers.

This conference aims to bring together community members, activists, practitioners and researchers, voluntary and public sector leaders, public health specialists, academics, students, and next generation leaders in tackling poverty to learn about the current UK poverty landscape and to share practice and research relating to addressing poverty and hardship issues. The Conference is free to attend.

To find out more and to register click [here](#)



Basic Income Month — a crowdfunded basic income pilot

In December 2021 the Basic Income Conversation paired with London Solidarity Funds to crowdfund [a basic income pilot](#) and assess the impact that unconditional cash payments have on the lives of recipients. While payments amounted to a modest £50 a month, even this small sum helped 96% of respondents feel less stressed, and 89% feel more financially secure. The findings are summarised in [this report](#). As the cost of living continues to climb, the demand on solidarity funds across the country may continue to grow. As such, more communities may want to establish similar solidarity funds, which the report suggests could build the long-term case for a national basic income, while providing immediate relief for those who need it most.

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](#).

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.