

Extension of the Household Support Fund

By Alexis Darby, Head of Advocacy, Policy and Research

The Household Support Fund was established during the Covid-19 pandemic as part of the government response to support those struggling with the cost of living. The funding was distributed to local councils in England and the devolved administrations and ran from 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022.

In the [spring budget the Chancellor announced £500 million of new funding for the Household Support Fund](#) which local authorities can spend in the next six months ([£27m has been allocated across Greater Manchester's ten councils](#)). The government hope this extension will help the most vulnerable households deal with rising living costs. A third of the funding has been ringfenced to support families with children and another third will be set aside for pensioners.

Government have said that "Local Authorities will determine how to best use the remainder of the fund within the scope set out by ministers. Previous funding has supported households with food, clothing, energy and water costs, and this extension will ensure that this support continues through to the autumn." The guidance for the latest tranche of funding can be found [here](#).

There are mounting financial pressures on households across the UK. We have seen [inflation rise to 6.2%](#), the cost of essential food products rise by more than that and energy bills soar up to 50% in some cases. All this impacts low-and-modest-income households hardest. The Chancellor [uprated benefits in April by just 3.1%](#) despite the rise in inflation. The JRF highlighted that April saw the basic out of work benefit experience its [biggest drop in value in fifty years](#) – so those who receive benefits are experiencing a real-terms cut in income. JRF predict that as a result [400,000 people could be pulled into poverty](#) and that nine million families who receive benefits due to low incomes will be £500 worse off on average as a result of this real terms cut.

While the extension of the Household Support Fund will provide short term relief for many it is a sticking plaster. Government must increase benefits in line with inflation and reverse the £20 per week cut to Universal Credit. There needs to be a well thought out, long term national strategy for ending poverty the UK and permanent hardship funding for local welfare support, not one off, piecemeal funding.

Across Greater Manchester it is vital that we focus on maximising household income, providing [cash first responses](#) to poverty (something the Housing Support Fund should be used for) and boosting financial resilience by:

- Adoption of the [Real Living Wage](#) by employers. Nearly 200,000 workers in our city region would benefit if all employers paid the Real Living Wage.
- Promoting and supporting benefit take-up so people are accessing all the benefits they are entitled to. The annual amount of unclaimed benefits in Greater Manchester exceeds £100m.
- Maximising the help people receive through Council Tax Support and effective use of Discretionary Housing Payments – aspects of the benefits system that sit locally.
- Providing cash grants rather than in-kind support to people facing financial hardship. This is being done by some councils through their [local welfare assistance schemes](#).
- Making use of support available from utility companies. For example, United Utilities offer a range of different types of help those who are struggling with their bills.
- Supporting people to access affordable, ethical credit, for example through credit unions. [Credit unions in Greater Manchester saved people £13m in interest last year](#).

Until we have a long-term national response to ending poverty in the UK it is through these local actions that we can do what we can, to protect people from the cost-of-living crisis.

Meet new members of our team

We were delighted to welcome three new members to the GMPA team in April - Alexis, Jon and Penny. [Their bios and details](#) of what they'll be working on are given below. All three will help us increase our impact, as we grow our advocacy, policy and research and programme activities over the next 12 months and beyond. We are delighted to say that, in a piece of further recruitment, Elaine Riozzi joined us on a 12 month secondment from CAB on May 3rd. Elaine will deliver financial inclusion support to parents in the M16 postcode area – a new programme that we'll be telling you more about in future editions of the newsletter.

Alexis Darby - Head of Advocacy, Policy and Research

Before joining GMPA Alexis worked for the Northern Powerhouse Partnership, producing policy outputs and developing advocacy partnerships with key stakeholders across several policy areas including transport, education and skills and further devolution – all with the aim of closing the North-South divide and bringing decision-making closer to regional leaders and communities.

Prior to this Alexis managed the Policy@Manchester team at The University of Manchester, highlighting academics' research to key advocacy partners and enabling them to generate more evidence-based national and local policy.

Alexis has also worked for Members of Parliament and a political party in research and campaign roles.

At GMPA Alexis is responsible for driving forward our influencing work and leads on advocacy, policy, and research activities. This involves working with local government and the combined authority on poverty prevention and reduction strategies.

Alexis grew up in the East Midlands and moved to Manchester in 2014. She is passionate about social justice and creating a fairer society. Outside of GMPA, Alexis enjoys taking her energetic sons on outdoor adventures.



Penny Rimmer- Policy officer

Penny studied sociology and international politics at the University of Liverpool. She is currently completing her master's in international relations and security. She is interested in the intersection between gender, economics, and politics.

She is committed to working to make a difference to improve socio-economic outcomes within communities.

Penny works on policy, research, and advocacy for GMPA.

Jon Sands - Programme Officer, Money Advice Referral Tool

Jon was originally from Lincoln but has lived in Manchester for over 30 years. Prior to joining GMPA, he was the Project Manager at Manchester South Central Foodbank but for the majority of his career he has written and delivered training for financial advisers.

Jon has a particular interest in helping people living on low incomes to maximise their income and reduce their financial outgoings, especially in relation to borrowing costs. Jon is responsible for working with partner organisations to further develop and roll out the Money Advice Referral Tool across more Greater Manchester Council areas.



Tameside Poverty Truth Commission Update

**POVERTY
TRUTH TAMESIDE**

It has been an exciting few weeks within the Tameside Poverty Truth Commission with the addition of several new Civic and Business leaders. This has enabled Commissioners to progress positively together and to select three key areas to focus on as they continue to meet regularly, tackle poverty in Tameside and build relationships.

This process is part of phase 3 of a Poverty Truth Commission, whereby Commissioners begin to identify key issues that they would like address and break into groups to explore the issues further together.

For the Tameside Poverty Truth Commission, Housing, Mental Health, and Access to Services have been identified as the three key issues that they would like to spend their time exploring.

Working groups have been formed around these areas and this week saw the Housing group meet for the first time to clarify its mission and vision together. They also chose two co-chairs, one from Civic and business and the other from Community Commissioners. The Co-chairs will be responsible for moving the work forward assisted by the facilitation team and we are pleased to announce that Fran Beeston, community commissioner and Ivan Wright, assistant director for Jigsaw Housing will work together to chair future meetings of the Housing working group.

Speaking to about the work ahead, Fran said: "I am up for the challenge, and I am really looking forward to it. I know it is not going to be smooth sailing, but I know that both Ivan and I are committed to telling the truth about what housing issues really look like for people in Tameside. I can't wait to get started!"



In the next two weeks, Access to Services and Mental Health working groups will also get the chance to meet and follow a similar process. Working groups will meet once a month and all groups will come together once every six weeks to share progress to the full Commission.

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.



Job Opportunities

Stockport Credit Union is currently advertising two job opportunities:

Compliance Manager: This is a part time (14 - 17.5 hours per week) permanent position, based in Brinnington. The applicant must be able to demonstrate career experience of compliance within a financial services organisation.

Finance Officer: Again a part time (17.5 - 21 hours per week) permanent position, based in Brinnington. The applicant must be able to demonstrate experience working within a finance function or in a role which required them to manage and reconcile data.

For more information and to apply please go to the website [here](#). You should upload your CV and a short covering letter which sets out how you fit the job description and why you are right for the role. There is no formal closing date; advertising will cease once the roles have been filled.



Spirit of Manchester Story Week: Cost of Living Crisis 23 - 27 May 2022



Are you helping Manchester residents deal with the impact of the cost of living crisis? Do you assist people with trying to manage housing, energy, household bills or food costs?

Macc needs your help to highlight how the VCSE sector is working with communities during this crisis. Share your stories with them. Email [Helen](#) to find out more.

Greater Manchester Community Response Fund: Ukraine Crisis



In response to the crisis in Ukraine, 10GM and partners are working together to put in place welcome and support for people arriving in Greater Manchester, working alongside local authorities and those who are offering to accommodate people arriving from Ukraine.

To help this work Macc have launched the Greater Manchester Community Response Fund: Ukraine Crisis. This fundraising campaign will raise money to create a hardship fund for people arriving from Ukraine and to provide small grants to local voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations that are playing an active, practical role in providing support.

You can help by donating [here](#) and sharing with your friends, family and colleagues.

Travel support for Ukrainian nationals

Transport operators in Greater Manchester are working together to support Ukrainian arrivals by offering them free onward travel to their final destinations in the UK. All Ukrainian nationals will be able to access free travel on Metrolink, all National Rail services and most bus and coach services in the city-region for up to 48 hours after arriving in the UK. Access to services requires a Ukrainian passport and a boarding pass or ticket showing an arrival date in the UK. For travel onwards from Greater Manchester, all National Rail train operators, and the majority of bus and coach services in England, Scotland, and Wales are also providing this support. More information about this scheme and wider support can be found [here](#).

БЕЗКОШТОВНІ
ПОДОРОЖІ ДЛЯ
УКРАЇНЦІВ

Free travel scheme
for Ukrainians
arriving in GM
tfgm.com/Ukraine

Integrated Communities Strategy - Have your say

Manchester is developing its first Integrated Communities Strategy and they want to hear from you.

“In its simplest form ‘community cohesion’ can be described as the way in which people from different backgrounds get on together. Building ‘cohesion’ in and between communities is an essential part of valuing diversity and improving people’s chances of a good life. Part of that is about supporting residents to integrate; regardless of if they have been living in the city all their lives or are newly arrived. When people feel they belong to their community – when they mix and trust those around them from different backgrounds – they become citizens who are not only integrated but also able to contribute. Then they can use local resources to tackle shared problems and support each other and their communities to build on their strengths, making the very best of what their neighbours and their neighbourhood have going for them.” Find out more and have your say [here](#).



Caritas Salford are currently advertising three job opportunities based at the Morning Star Hostel in Manchester: Support Worker/Housing Management Worker, BANK Support Worker/Management Worker and BANK Concierge. The closing date for all three roles is May 12th, 2022. More information is available [here](#).

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.