



Event spotlight

#CashFirst is Common Sense

Ending the need for charitable food aid

Labour Party Conference Fringe Event
8th October 2023, 17:00-18:30, Liverpool



As the need for food banks and wider food insecurity continues to grow, join Greater Manchester Poverty Action and the Independent Food Aid Network for our event, **Cash First is Common Sense: Ending the Need for Charitable Food Aid**.

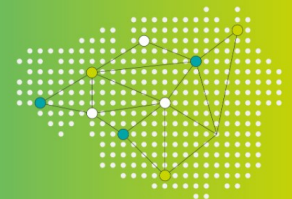
This event will focus on a cash first approach to food insecurity. Please note attendees will need conference passes, available directly from the Labour Party.

[Click here](#) to learn more and book your place.

Challenge Poverty Week 2023: Greater Manchester

Monday 16 October, 10am-4pm

Friends' Meeting House, M2 5NS



Join us on Monday 16 October for the start of **Challenge Poverty Week 2023**.

Supported by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Methodist Central Hall, Greater Manchester Poverty Action (GMPA) will bring together members of our network with business and key stakeholders to identify how we can collectively tackle poverty locally.

[Click here](#) to learn more and book your place.

Manchester Volunteer Advice Partnership: A collaborative anti-poverty approach



By Dawn Kaveney, Volunteer Development Worker at Manchester Mind

As a collective Manchester Mind, Cheetham Hill Advice Centre (CHAC), Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit and Manchester Refugee Support Network believe in the power of information and advice to support change, and that there is strength in our communities.

This has certainly played out in our Manchester Volunteer Advice Partnership (MVAP), which has been running for the past 12 years with the support of The National Lottery Community Fund.

The partnership came together to meet an identified gap in all our services and that was about how to meet the growing tide of demand for advice and effectively support people who wanted to volunteer in advice work.

We developed a project to do this by centrally delivering a structured high-quality training and development programme for volunteers that also enables them to enhance skills, knowledge and confidence. The result has been increased capacity to deliver advice, contributing to workforce sustainability both within the partnership and external organisations.

“Working with the MVAP partnership to recruit and train new volunteers has been immeasurable. The countless hours provided by the dedicated volunteers has **helped Manchester residents with completing applications, re-housing applications, debts, consumer grievances, education applications, travel passes and more**. The tireless work of volunteers has helped us raise over £2.5 million in additional income, prevented homelessness and helped deal with debts of over £783,000 all in the last year alone” - Advice and Volunteer Manager at Cheetham Hill Advice Centre.

We then recognised that other organisations and services were experiencing the same challenges as we were - trying to help people negotiate the complexity of the system, there was no other training about, so we responded by opening up places on our core training and delivering bespoke sessions. We are finding that in doing so we are supporting volunteers and in some cases paid workers, leading to increased confidence and the ability to recognise issues, provide information and advice and signpost effectively.

“I notice I have more visits from my community over the last weeks. I guess that the **better advice I deliver and the confidence I gain while doing my job attract more clients and help them trust me more**” - Ethnic Health Forum employee.

Another one of our original aims was to create a volunteer group that was representative of the diverse communities in Manchester and to reach people who may otherwise not have the confidence to apply. This has all been about recognising the potential of individuals, the invaluable benefits of personal experiences and the resourcefulness that already exists. By providing this opportunity we are **enabling people to build skills, knowledge and confidence to help others**, which is having a trickle-down effect of empowering communities.

To recruit we go out into the community and advertise MVAP as a learning and development opportunity, rather than stipulate that certain skills and knowledge are required. This approach has proved successful with 53% of our volunteers this year being from racialised communities, giving a rich resource of languages mirroring the diversity in Manchester.

“The additional languages spoken has **ensured we could provide help and advice in the client’s first language; no words could express the importance and the impact of this, to ensure our residents are understood and that they are provided with help and advice that they can comprehend, providing empowerment and knowledge**” - Advice and Volunteer Manager at Cheetham Hill Advice Centre.

This approach has led to us being regularly oversubscribed. Rather than turn people away we have developed a good relationship with a smaller organisation who’ve joined our recruitment events. Their volunteers then have access to all MVAP training and events.

Delivering advice is an important aspect of any anti-poverty strategy. Advice **enables people to tackle the complexity of systems that are stacked against them**, and helps them access their rights and entitlements. But this is only one part of it. Volunteering allows us to develop a workforce, and building capacity within our community is a strength of this programme that ticks many boxes.

As MVAP is in the last year of lottery funding and there will be no more (as we have been supported by the lottery over three funding periods), we need to assess where our strengths are and how the sector benefits. We are ready to continue and our partnership believes in what we are doing and what we have achieved.

We are particularly interested in expanding advice training and the delivery of bespoke sessions, as well as offering consultancy on volunteer recruitment and management—but, we would like to hear from you. What would help you to increase capacity to support people? What would enrich your service? How can we be involved?

Please get in touch with dawn.kaveney@manchestermind.org if you want to continue the conversation and/or complete [this short survey](#).

We would love to hear from you.

Volunteering opportunity with The Trussell Trust



The Trussell Trust

An exciting opportunity has arisen for someone interested in supporting a UK charity at the forefront of anti-poverty work.

We are looking for an Area Events and Communications Volunteer to support our Trussell Trust Area Manager for Greater Manchester, to plan and deliver area cluster meetings and create newsletters for the nineteen food banks across the area.

You will be given all training and ongoing support and development opportunities whilst volunteering with us.

For more information and to find out how to apply, [click here](#).

Launch of Enterprising Communities Fund



By Sheenagh Young, CEO at South Manchester Credit Union and Chair of SoundPound Consortium

Greater Manchester is about to be the first place in the UK where local credit unions invest directly in local social enterprises through an innovative £4.1million investment fund for organisations and businesses trading for social good, the Enterprising Communities Fund.

The Fund is close to launch and has been created through a partnership between GMCVO, The Greater Manchester Consortium of Credit Unions (GMCU), Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), Access – The Foundation for Social Investment and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

GMCU is a consortium of 13 credit unions, all based in GM. We are unique in the UK.

We have joined forces to amplify our existing financial services offer and to work together on collaborations across the city region. We have developed strong links with Fair4AllFinance as we share the ambition to **make the financial services sector fairer** for everyone.

Organisations or social businesses working in Greater Manchester who are looking to grow their business activities will soon be able to apply to the Enterprising Communities Fund for an investment of up to £100,000.

There will be a grant element of an average of 20% of each investment to support applicants with the application process, and for them to consider 'net zero' implications and energy efficiency as part of their idea.

The Fund aims to make a large proportion of investments in communities where the need is highest.

Social investment is a loan given to organisations and businesses who are trading for a social, cultural, or environmental benefit to bring about positive change.

This could include addressing social needs, strengthening communities, improving people's life chances, enhancing culture, or protecting the environment.

The launch of the Enterprising Communities Fund represents a milestone for the development of the social economy of our city region; **another solid step in Greater Manchester becoming the social enterprise capital of the UK.**

The community wealth deposited in local credit unions becomes a resource for local people to grow social enterprises. Credit unions are natural investment partners as they also exist to serve local people and improve their life chances.

Gary Millar, Chief Operating Officer at GMCVO, has been an inspiration to GMCU and is the architect of the innovative Fund . He comments:

*"The aims of GMCVO and the credit unions are very much aligned in that we look to support our local communities. Credit unions have supported individuals in their communities for years and this partnership with GMCVO will enable them to **invest in voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations that are having a real impact in their communities** - helping to create more good jobs, positive environmental impact, and social change, all of which is important during this economic crisis.*

"It also enables GMCVO to raise awareness of the availability of financial support for this type of business through the membership of credit unions."

Do you work for, or know of, a local social enterprise which may be interested in this investment fund? Share it with them!

You can find more information about the investment fund as well as other sources of investment and how to apply on GMCVO's website: gmcvo.org.uk/gmsocinvest.



Consortium chiefs with Andy Burnham at the SoundPound loan launch earlier this year

Support at your fingertips



United Utilities

United Utilities has opened up its dedicated online debt support hub to everyone across the North West region, bringing together hundreds of financial aid schemes in one place so that people can find help for free.

The water company created the Hardship Hub in 2019 to give debt advisors a way to see a range of support services in one place, making it quicker and easier for them to direct their clients to appropriate help.

Now, as many households struggle to make ends meet due to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, the website has been opened up so that **everyone can get direct access** and **find out what help is available** to them.

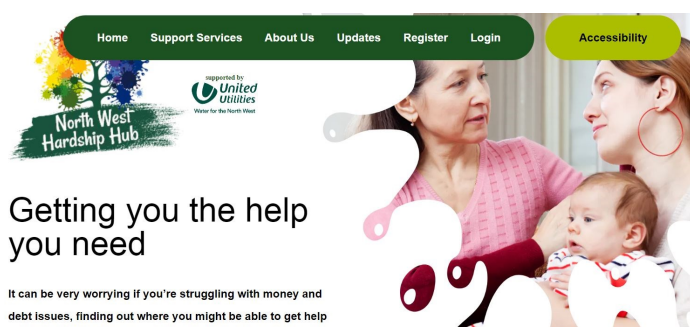
The schemes listed on the site come from energy and utility companies, local authorities, housing agencies, charities, and advice and community groups from across the region. There are details on a range of support and advice offerings, from help with utility bills to guidance on applying for housing support.

The Hardship Hub is open to anyone and there's no need to register or provide any personal details. There are around 500 schemes listed on the site, covering national, regional and local initiatives which can be searched by location or type to find appropriate services.

Michelle Atkinson, Revenue Director at United Utilities, said: **"We've seen a 74% increase in the number of customers filling out our 'struggling to pay' form online, and we know that it won't just be water bills that people are worrying about but other household costs too, so that's why we wanted to open up the Hardship Hub.**

"This will give everyone right across the North West direct access to a vast range of information of financial advice and support services that could make a real difference in their lives."

You can find the Hardship Hub at www.hardshiphub.co.uk.



Policy and research updates

We are providing a summary of the latest news and policy developments to keep you up to date with what is happening across the UK.

The Minimum Income Standard (MIS) latest update sets out what households need to reach the MIS benchmark in 2023. A **single person needs to earn £29,500 a year** to reach a minimum acceptable standard of living in 2023. A couple with two children need to earn £50,000 between them. [Read more.](#)

The Child of the North: Addressing Education and Health Inequity report highlights how children born into the poorest fifth of families in the UK are almost **13 times more likely to experience poor health** and educational outcomes by the age of 17. [Read more.](#)

YouGov poll conducted on behalf of UNICEF UK questioned 2,661 parents of children aged four and under, findings highlighted: **71% said their family budget is "stretched to the limit"** with 56% reporting cutting back on playgroups and sporting activities and half cutting back on books, toys, and crafts. 71% said they feel it is harder being a parent now compared to their parents' generation due to the rising cost of living. [Read more.](#)

New research by the Trussell Trust found that **nearly half of working households who were in receipt of Universal Credit (49%) ran out of food and didn't have enough money to buy more in the past month**, and one in five (21%) working families in receipt of Universal Credit have been unable to make an essential journey such as travelling to work or the school run because they couldn't afford the cost of fuel or public transport in the last six months. [Read more.](#)

80% of school staff say providing universal free school meals to all school children would reduce child poverty in their school, according to a survey carried out by the Education Anti-Poverty Coalition. [Read more.](#)



Upcoming events

Fairer Health for All Fellowship Programme Lunch and Learn



Monday 2 October, 12pm-1pm, online event

Do you work in the VCSFE, primary care, secondary care (including mental health) sector or for wider local authority partners and have a passion for improving health inequalities in Greater Manchester?

If so, you may be interested in joining the Fairer Health for All Fellowship programme where Fellows are able to develop their knowledge and skills in population health, equality and sustainability, putting their learning into practice and bringing expertise from clinical and non-clinical backgrounds to influence health and wellbeing with guidance from professional mentors.

Find out more about this exciting programme through our Lunch and Learn on Monday 2 October. This is a free event beginning with a 30-minute presentation followed by a Q&A. Please [click here](#) to book your place.

Money Guiders England Network



Money & Pensions Service

Wednesday 4 October, 10:15am-3:30pm, in-person at Stretford Public Hall

Are you helping people in your community or through your role with money problems? Do you have experience of facing barriers to receive money guidance yourself?

In this day-long event we will take part in workshops to share good practice in overcoming barriers to good practice in money guidance. Together we will work on identifying barriers, coming up with solutions and we will make sure that giving the best guidance we can and we know when and where to signpost to specialist advice.

Please [click here](#) to book your place.

Together Against Debt People's Manifesto



Thursday 5 October, 6pm-8pm, online event

Debt Justice are creating a Together Against Debt Manifesto to make sure that politicians cannot ignore the household debt crisis hitting our communities.

Everyone who has experienced the stress of debt is invited to have their say and you don't need any specific knowledge to join in.

Together, participants will be creating and taking their shared demands to politicians to influence what they are promising at the upcoming general election.

For more details and to book your place, [click 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.

