

Time for a step change in how we address socio-economic disadvantage

by Graham Whitham

It was good to see the launch of the [Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission](#) report last month. The Commission was launched in October 2020 with a six-month mission to examine inequalities across the city region, consider how they should be tackled and outline some specific and hard-hitting recommendations. The Commission viewed inequalities within a framework that considers how interacting and intersecting inequalities create barriers that stop people from living the good lives that they want.

COVID-19 has exposed the extent of these inequalities in Greater Manchester. To address this, the Commission's report calls on everyone in the city-region to work towards an agreed set of wellbeing and equality targets that aim to leave no-one behind. Alongside this are a series of recommendations under the themes of *People Power*, *Good Jobs and Decent Pay*, *Building Wealth* and *Services for a Good Life*. You can read more about the recommendations [here](#).



GMIPA supported the work of the Commission by bringing together a 'Poverty Reference Group'. The group was made up of people with lived experience of poverty who have been involved in engagement and co-production projects across Greater Manchester (including poverty truth commissions, the Elephants Project, Migrant Help, Creative Inclusion, the BME Network, GM Coalition of Disabled People, Support & Action Women's Network, and Legislative Theatre). The aim of the group was to inform and reflect on the work of the commission, complementing other engagement work (including engaging with the [Equalities Panels](#)). The meetings generated a range of innovative recommendations that were grounded in real world experience of poverty, including how to:

- Reduce barriers to employment, and tackle stigma and bias in recruitment and in the workplace;
- Improve job quality, and increase access to education and training;
- Listen meaningfully to communities;
- Give communities the power to tackle for themselves the problems that affect them.

A number of key areas that GMIPA has been working on are included in the report, including a call for the Combined Authority to adopt the [socio-economic duty](#) and, building on the Poverty Reference Group, the establishment of a new Panel for people with lived experience of poverty to inform and shape policy.

GMIPA wants to see a city-region where we put tackling socio-economic disadvantage at the heart of what we do. We have more councils (working with partners) with poverty strategies in place and examples of good practice and innovation in tackling poverty across Greater Manchester. The Real Living Wage has become more embedded, with plans to create a Living Wage City Region. GMIPA is working hard to create a stronger focus on preventing and reducing poverty.



Graham Whitham,
CEO GMIPA

We need to go further and embed a focus on poverty and socio-economic disadvantage in everything we do. It is helpful therefore, that the Commission has articulated a clear framework for understanding the intersection between socio-economic disadvantage and poverty and other inequalities.

Next week Greater Manchester goes to the polls for the Mayoral Election. It is important that together with whoever wins, we implement the recommendations of the Commission.

Raising awareness of the financial and wellbeing support available from grant-giving charities – ACO's Here to Help campaign

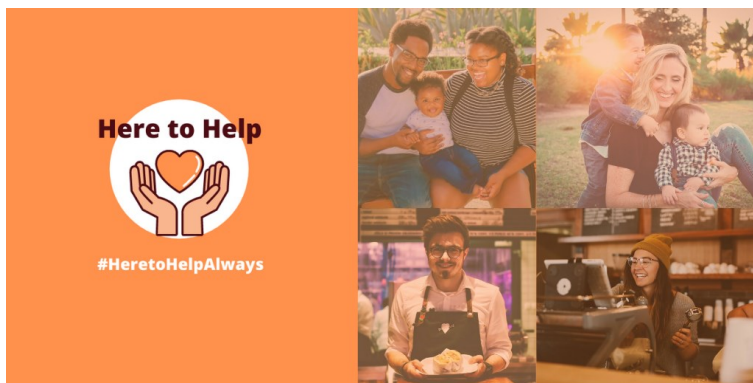
By Hannah Page, Marketing & Communications Manager, The Association of Charitable Organisations (ACO)

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues, we sadly anticipate more people will be plunged into poverty due to the economic impacts of the crisis as we expect further job losses and redundancies once the government's Job Retention (furlough) scheme ends. We also expect more people may need mental health and wellbeing support due to the impacts lockdown and long-term isolation has caused.



The Association of Charitable Organisations (ACO), the umbrella body for benevolent funds (charities that give financial support to individuals), is therefore running the [Here to Help campaign](#) to highlight the support available from benevolent charities for those facing financial hardship, who may be struggling to afford basic essentials, or are facing mental health struggles during this challenging time.

While people tend to know the big-name charities, many are unaware there are hundreds of these benevolent funds operating throughout the UK to support individuals and their families through offering financial grants or other support services. Grants can be awarded in all kinds of circumstances, and requests are judged on a case-by-case basis, but some of the most common reasons include help paying for day-to-day essentials (food, bills etc.), furniture and white goods, disability adaptations, childcare costs, covering bankruptcy/insolvency fees and more.



Other examples of support awarded throughout the pandemic by these charities include paying for interview clothes where someone was made redundant, support with funeral costs, IT equipment so children could continue studies from home and paying for someone's internet as libraries closed. Many benevolent funds also provide a range of holistic support services for free to those in need, from counselling services and helplines, online wellbeing materials, to sleep therapy, addiction support and advice services, such as debt or benefits advice.

In terms of finding the right benevolent fund to support someone, most have a certain group they help. Many are occupational funds, supporting those that have ever worked in a certain profession (including former employees) and their families. Many occupations have a benevolent fund, from hospitality workers, retail staff and carers through to architects, bankers and former miners.

There are also benevolent funds specifically for older people, children, disabled people, homeless people and women. Some benevolent charities help those that live in a certain region of the UK and there are general grant-giving charities that will award grants and furniture items to those that don't fit the criteria of other benevolent funds.

To find the right benevolent fund the [Turn2us Grants Search](#) is a simple tool that helps people find support they may be eligible for. By someone filling out a few details about themselves (or behalf of someone), such as location, age and any previous jobs, the Turn2us Grants Search's database finds all benevolent charities that person could apply for support from.

The ACO has also made a short guide to support available from benevolent charities, which is available on [its website](#) to download. The ACO is encouraging organisations working closely with the public to share this guide with individuals that approach them looking for help.

For more information about the Here to Help campaign or the ACO please [visit our website](#) or contact Hannah Page (Marketing & Communications Manager) by [email](#) or call 020 7255 4496.



Hannah Page

Innovative solution getting cash to hardship grant beneficiaries

By Gareth Evans, Director, GRE Consulting

The pandemic has focused attention on the importance of local safety-nets in providing crisis grants for struggling households. Many councils have redesigned or reinstated their Local Welfare Assistance schemes to give emergency support for food, fuel and other essential household goods and items.

The recent [GMPA report](#), which examines such schemes across the region, backs the growing calls for a cash-first approach to these hardship grants. It is shown to maximise dignity, autonomy, choice and ultimately impact, compared to the provision of food parcels or vouchers.

A new payment solution, [Cash Perks](#) is helping Councils, housing associations and local/national charities overcome the challenges of cash disbursement to those in financial difficulties – especially where clients might not have bank accounts but more commonly are overdrawn.

Gareth Evans, a leading researcher and anti-poverty campaigner who launched Cash Perks explains: “The idea came about when we were helping design an emergency food and fuel scheme for one of the country’s largest housing associations. We recognised the limitations of other payment options to get cash immediately to those that need it, so went out and created a solution.”



The technology enables organisations to securely send payments between £10 and £500 to their beneficiaries by SMS text message. Recipients can instantly collect their allocated funds 24/7 at over 17,000 ATMs nationally – all without the need for a card or bank account.

One local authority that has already embraced the facility is London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, which originally piloted it to send hardship payments for those without bank accounts. But following its success, the Council has just used it to disburse almost £250,000 of its Covid Winter Grant Scheme allocation in individual payments to its approved households. “It’s really straight forward and it’s a fast, efficient, flexible system that supports us to implement frequently announced new government initiatives,” explains Donna Radley, Head of Benefits. The Council’s Children’s Services directorate has now adopted it to replace the myriad of petty-cash payments that it makes to clients.

Anthony, one of the recipients of the Councils support explained the difference the emergency cash payments had made, “This has literally saved my life. I have had such a bad couple of years and this went some way to helping me eat properly and getting myself back to myself after the death of my son in 2019 and losing my job and then lockdown. I can’t thank you enough.”

With no setup costs or monthly charges, just a fixed fee per transaction based on the amount sent and usage volumes, it enables organisations of all sizes to access the innovative technology.

Wimbledon Guild, a small benevolent charity that operates in South London has used Cash Perks to continue offering its small emergency grants throughout Covid despite its offices being closed. Vanessa Robins, the charity’s Welfare Manager says, “It is a fast and convenient way to get cash urgently out to clients at little cost to the charity, especially for those without access to a bank account or who have overdrafts where transferred cash would be swallowed up. It reduces admin time and fewer staff need to be involved in the transactions, although there is a strong audit trail.”

Find out more [here](#).



cash
PERKS

New NEA Supporter membership

In celebration of NEA’s 40th anniversary, a new ‘Supporter Member’ category has been introduced. NEA is determined to remove barriers to building an even stronger coalition of support to help those in fuel poverty.

The supporter member category of membership has been developed for Local Authority, Citizens Advice and not-for-profit registered housing providers who want to work with NEA but do not need access to discounted training and conference places. Please [click here](#) for further details on this.



Action for Warm Homes

Tameside Poverty Truth Commission: Recruiting for Commissioners

Do you live in Tameside and have lived experience of poverty or know anyone who does?

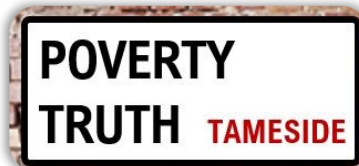
Would you be interested in sharing your story of the struggles you have faced with people in positions of influence within Tameside so that together we can come up with ideas that will help others living in poverty?

The Poverty Truth Commission is a unique project where relationships are prioritised. A group of people who would not normally meet are brought together because of their lived experience and expertise and are able to use their voice to influence and shape a better Tameside.

We are looking to invite 12-15 people of all ages and backgrounds to join this commission. Initially we will meet weekly (using zoom until we can meet face to face) to get to know each other. There will then be a launch event where we will invite key decision makers to hear the impact of poverty in Tameside. After that, we will meet monthly with a group of 12-15 civic/business leaders and together we will spend time getting to know each other and deeply listening to the struggles that people face. We will not jump to quick solutions but instead think about better solutions that will help Tameside become a place where everyone can thrive.

If you are interested in joining this commission we would love to hear from you. Do get in touch with Beatrice Smith on 07423 014430 or by [email](#).

The Tameside Poverty Truth Commission is a GMPA programme



Job Opportunity

FareShare Greater Manchester is looking for an experienced Warehouse Co-ordinator to oversee the day to day safe operation of a food warehouse, which includes supervising a diverse team of staff and volunteers, and providing exceptional customer service to our Community Food Members.

If you are passionate about making a difference and thrive in a busy environment please click [on this link](#) and scroll down to Regional Centre Vacancies for more information. **Closing date:** noon on Monday May 12th, 2021

Transport for the North Survey



Transport for the North (TfN) is launching a new research programme to understand the links between transport and social exclusion in the North of England. As part of this, TfN are asking VCSE organisations that work with communities affected by poverty, deprivation, and social exclusion in the North to complete an online survey.

This survey focuses on the ways in which transport affects social exclusion in one neighbourhood or community that your organisation is connected with. The more local area insights TfN can gather, the more they can understand about the link between transport and social exclusion in different areas of the North of England.

[Complete the survey here](#)

TfN are also undertaking research with members of the public across the North to understand lived experiences of transport-related social exclusion. Information from both parts of the research will be drawn together – combining expert perspectives with lived experiences.

This research will inform the further development of TfN's Strategic Transport Plan and advice to government on investment priorities for the North of England. It will also support their Northern Transport Charter aims of delivering more inclusive and sustainable transport investment.

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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