

Early Years Special Interest Group - would you like to be involved?

Last week GMPA teamed up with the Family and Childcare Trust (FCT) to host a workshop on Childcare and Poverty in the Early Years. The FCT had produced a policy paper "[Creating an anti-poverty childcare system](#)", developed as part of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's [strategy to solve poverty in the UK](#), and wanted to consult people on its findings and recommendations. The workshop brought together experts and practitioners from local authorities, the 3rd sector, universities and housing associations from half of Greater Manchester's boroughs, and the discussion was hugely informative.

There is much that has been going well in many places in Greater Manchester, against a backdrop of major child poverty challenges. Two points that came across strongly were forthcoming challenges associated with national funding levels, and the need for benefits to be part of the conversation as the incentive to work is often very weak when childcare costs are taken into account. It was agreed that it would be valuable to keep this conversation going, and to start some related conversations, so we agreed to form GMPA's fourth [Special Interest Group](#), on the theme of Early Years Poverty. We would welcome additional members from health services for young children



and from private, voluntary or independent childcare providers, so if you are from these groups and are interested in taking part, please email [Tom](#).

Fighting Fuel Poverty on the Front Line with Naila

Naila Ilyas is a member of GMPA's Fuel Poverty Special interest Group. She works as an energy adviser for Northwards Housing, a social landlord managing council homes in some of Manchester's most deprived areas. This article profiles Naila's work, which over the last three years has helped 700 North Manchester residents to save a total of £108,000 on their fuel payments.



Marilia lives in Blackley and was struggling with expensive energy bills and water rates. Marilia is on a low income and has two small children to provide for but now she saves over £500 a year on her energy bills and a reduction in her water rates from £40 to £25 per month. Marilia hadn't understood exactly how much her water bill should be, so she kept paying the higher rate without question.

Naila carried out a price comparison to find her a cheaper energy supplier and has given Marilia an energy monitor so that she can keep a closer eye on her energy use.

Also living in Blackley is Sharon who is disabled and lives on her own. Severe arthritis makes it very difficult for Sharon to turn on her fire. She had tried to avoid having to turn it on frequently by leaving the thermostat set quite high which left her with very steep gas bills. Add to that the £10.50 each week that she was paying for 'Bedroom Tax' and Sharon's financial situation was unmanageable.

Naila helped Sharon change to a cheaper energy supplier, saved her over £100 by switching to a water meter, applied on her behalf for a Warm Home Discount, and in total saved Sharon £487 a year. Now she can stay in her home as she can now afford to pay that extra tax.



Naila Ilyas

In addition to face-to-face advice for residents, Naila trains others so that she can reach more people with her energy and money saving expertise. Members of the public become 'energy champions' - volunteers who provide energy advice to their local community. She also delivered 'carbon literacy training' to all 320 Northwards staff in 2016. It's a comprehensive course, equipping participants with the knowledge to shrink their own carbon footprint and then share the information with tenants to help make a big money-saving difference in their own lives.

Naila said: "It is really rewarding to see so many people reducing their fuel bills. A lot of people still hesitate to switch suppliers and are also unaware of the grants or tariffs that can save them a lot of money, so energy advice is really important in tackling fuel poverty."

Find out more about [Northwards Housing](#)

As part of the ongoing Work and Wages series Emily Ball, Policy and Advocacy Officer from Oxfam, and Mike Booth, Regional Organiser for Unison North West, write about structural causes of the gender pay gap, and what employers can do to close the gap.

The Gender pay gap is the measure of the difference in pay between men and women – in the UK, women workers' wages are [18% less than those of male workers](#).

The causes of the gender pay gap are complex and varied. There are certain critical moments within a woman's life which set in motion and reinforce the gendered pay gap. This can begin in school and university by the types of subjects studied (female students are less likely to study STEM subjects including science, technology, engineering or mathematics), then the type of career chosen (there are less women in highly paid roles such as information and communication industries) and then whether a woman chooses to start a family or takes on other caring responsibilities. In fact, caring responsibilities are mainly carried out by women. This work is often unpaid and not acknowledged (or compensated) as a valid contribution to society. Employers can discriminate against women due to maternity pay costs and the disruption of women having dual priorities rather than focusing on their career full time.

Due to time constraints caused by caring responsibilities, women often need jobs that incorporate flexibility and are part-time. In fact women sometimes go back to jobs that are below their skill level after having children. Women more than men, (both with and without caring responsibilities) tend to be in low paid employment sectors including retail, administration, hospitality and social care all of which operate on models that advocate precarious and low-paid work and insecure working conditions. As a result, women generally do not have the same continuity of employment or career opportunities as men due to having career breaks, not having opportunities for progression and/or having to go part-time. Consequently, women are less likely to be financially secure or to have opportunities for in-work progression or to reach managerial positions.

In addition, women are more likely to face discrimination based on their age.

There are policy measures and other steps that could be taken to reduce or eliminate the gender pay gap. These include improving equal opportunities both at work and in education, job recruitment, training and promotion at work. One example is to encourage women into STEM jobs that mostly male-dominated with high wages.

The Government is making laws to require public authorities and large private companies to publish their pay data to show if and where there is a gender pay gap. This is welcomed, but on its own, it is just a statistical analysis.

There are actions that can be taken by companies, public authorities and Unions in order to tackle the gap, after all there is a cost to the whole economy if employers do not take action. If the pay gap can be closed, this will help increase women's participation in the region's labour market, generating increased income to women and families – more spending power in their local communities – in tandem with increased productivity, outputs and profits for employers.

Suggested Actions for Employers:

- Ensure transparency in pay rates for male- and female- dominated jobs and publish gender pay reports;
- Analyse where the pay gaps are;
- Agree workplace action plans for addressing the gender pay gap: to include better paid part-time work; better paid shared parental leave so that fathers and partners can afford to take time off to look after their children; improved workplace training and promotion plans;
- Review these practises and outcomes at regular intervals, in consultation with workers and their trade unions;

Suggested Actions for Decision-Makers:

The upcoming election is also a timely opportunity for the devolution of powers to the Mayor, to ensure that challenging the gender pay gap is at the heart of the candidate's agenda. By adopting a leadership role, the Mayor should put pressure on employers to incorporate this example of good working practice into their business procedures.

More information about [Unison North West](#) and about [Oxfam](#)



Emily Ball



Mike Booth

Lifeline Project Report on Substance Misuse and Homelessness in Greater Manchester

People who are homeless and misusing drugs, alcohol or both are amongst the most vulnerable within our society.



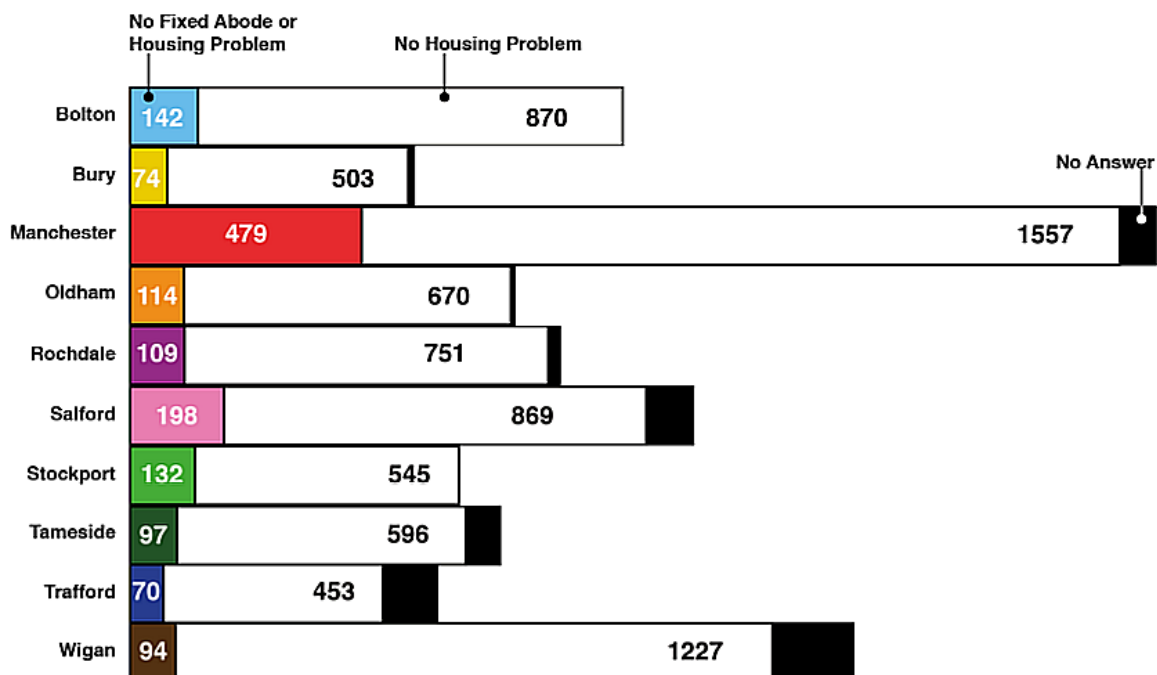
Lifeline’s Data Analysis Unit has published a series of infographics and reports on health, inequality, and homelessness in Greater Manchester, the latest of which focuses on homelessness and substance misuse. This area of analysis was chosen based on Lifeline’s 40+ year history of delivering substance misuse services nationally, and in reflection of the ever-increasing visibility of homelessness on the streets of Greater Manchester.

Although the links between substance misuse and homelessness are widely acknowledged, data regarding the people experiencing both is severely limited. Consequently, the Report utilises the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS), to identify the scale of the issue throughout all ten local authorities in the conurbation. NDTMS collects information from specialist substance misuse services and includes datasets on the housing needs of people as they begin treatment.

The data reveals that in 2015/16, 10,108 people entered drug and/or alcohol treatment in Greater Manchester and over 1 in 10 (1,509) of these reported either a housing problem (staying with friends/family short term, B&B, squatting, night winter shelter, or short stay hostel) or had no fixed abode (living on the streets, hostels on a night-by-night basis, or sleeping on a different friend’s floor each night). This equates to 15% of all new presentations, but is lower than the national rate of 17.8%.

The Report also explores how housing need changed between treatment entry and exit, and found that Greater Manchester achieved a 70% decrease in the number of people citing a housing or eviction risk.

Figure: Accommodation need at client journey start – client quantity breakdown



Although NDTMS provides a vital insight into the size of an often-hidden population, the analysis is restricted due to the highly variable nature of how data is recorded across services and localities. The information presented is for reported activity only, and there is no guarantee that it reflects the full scale of the problem. However, in the absence of a substantive national dataset on people who are homeless and have a substance misuse issue, we believe that the data is an important contribution to any attempt to understand the scale of need in Greater Manchester.

The report concludes by commenting on devolution and health and social care integration in Greater Manchester, and the potential to be at the forefront of innovative service delivery and new effective commissioning practices that could address entrenched, highly complex problems. Although by no means everyone who is homeless uses drugs and alcohol, and not everyone who uses alcohol and drugs is homeless, the level of complex need amongst those that do is such that the issue cannot be effectively tackled in isolation. Devolution could be the catalyst to allow service providers in the health and social care sector to take an inclusive approach to helping those most in need. Appropriate and robust data on this population is, therefore, vital if we are to understand the full scale of the challenge.

For further information, and to access the full report, please visit [Lifeline’s website](#).

Last week the Food Poverty Special Interest Group held their 3rd meeting. The group have plans to expand the [Emergency Food Providers map](#) and will continue to raise awareness of the shocking levels of need in GM.



In the immediate future many people will be facing the challenges of feeding their family during the school holidays. If you are involved in or aware of a scheme in your neighbourhood that works really well, please tell us about it so that we can investigate whether it would be possible to replicate it elsewhere in the region. Group members also reported on meetings they had recently attended including the [End Hunger UK](#) campaign, the [Leeds Food Aid Network](#) and the Bolton Strategic Food Partnership. Current members of the Food Poverty Special Interest Group come from:



Why GM Poverty Action?

In the Recommendations Report of the Greater Manchester Poverty Commission, 2.4 *Maintaining Momentum on Poverty* called for the formation of a Poverty Action Group to help take forward the work of the Commission.

A small number of public, private and civic sector individuals came together to form GMPA. This group has since grown to over 700 individuals from more than 200 organisations plus Local Authorities and MPs and an increasing number of members of the public.

GMPA is based upon principles of cooperation between organisations.

For more information about Greater Manchester Poverty Action

please visit our [website](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) or visit our [Facebook](#) page. You can also visit our YouTube channel [Community Voices](#)

All these platforms are there to share news and opinion from our readers, from GM Poverty Action and from the community.

We want to celebrate our successes, find new ways of working together and provide a voice for the people living in poverty in our region. But we can only do this with your help and support.

For more information or to share your news please contact [Chris](#)

Copies of previous newsletters are available on our [website](#)

If you would like to contact us or submit an article for inclusion in a newsletter please get in touch in one of the following ways:

Post: c/o 5th Floor Church House, 90 Deansgate, Manchester M3 2GH

Or contact our Communications Manager: Chris Bagley
T: 07419 774537 [Email](#)
and we will reply as soon as possible.

NB GMPA does not have full-time dedicated administrative support so please do not expect an immediate response.



Forthcoming Events:

Connecting Communities Together

Sunday March 19th from 12.30 - 5pm at The Mechanics Institute, 103 Princess Road, Manchester M1 6DD

This event brings together people who wouldn't normally meet, to celebrate our differences, as well as all we have in common and build relationships across our wonderfully diverse city. Throughout the afternoon we will be asking 4 big questions that are affecting us all:

Things I get asked a lot: confronting damaging stereotypes

Things I'm scared of: how to make our Manchester safer

Things I wish I'd been taught: valuable lessons you've learned

Things that help make me feel like I belong: what connects you to Manchester and your communities.

[More information and to book by March 15th](#)

Join in the conversation on [Facebook](#)



COOKBank: Setting up a Community Cooking Club 2 Day Course

On May 17th & 18th, 2017 At Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Ancoats, Manchester M4 7HR

The course includes: defining good food; how to overcome the many barriers to cooking healthy food from scratch; resourceful financial solutions to food poverty and food waste; logistics of setting up and running a Cracking Good Food Community Cooking Club; a hearty meal - you will deliver a cooking workshop to each other; a full 40 page colour toolkit as a guide for future support; a Certificate of Achievement.

Cost: £250 per person inclusive of lunch on both days, refreshments, all written materials, equipment (aprons provided) and ingredients to cook.

[More information and to book](#)