

The Greater Manchester Food Poverty Alliance is off to a Great Start!



GMIPA were delighted to launch the Food Poverty Alliance at a packed Methodist Central Hall last week. Individuals with their own experiences of food poverty and representatives from councils, charities and businesses, all came together with one aim – fighting food poverty in Greater Manchester.



Bishop John Arnold

Bishop John Arnold who will chair one of the alliance's groups, said, "Food poverty is a scandal that reflects on all of us. Working together we can make a difference to Greater Manchester." He went on to thank all those already involved in making a difference but added that a city region like Greater Manchester should not need to have over 170 food banks.

The aim of the alliance in the first year is to co-produce a Food Poverty Action Plan for Greater Manchester that will aim to:

- Reduce and prevent food poverty
- Support communities to plan and adapt to the challenge of food poverty
- Address structural issues that underlie food poverty, such as the benefits system and precarious and low-paid employment

The launch event was based around group discussions, encouraging everyone to play their part in developing the Action Plan. The first group discussion discussed a set of principles that should guide the way we work together.

We broke up into seven groups for the second set of workshops, based on different aspects or themes of food poverty, and discussed what the Action Plan should aim to do for Greater Manchester on each theme. Our starting question was, "If all of Greater Manchester were to get behind the work of the Food Poverty Alliance, what could we achieve?" The aims that have emerged from those discussions are as ambitious as we hoped, and come from a real understanding of the issues, the challenges and the possible solutions.



We were also due to hear from local writer and campaigner Charlotte Hughes on her own experience of food poverty, but she was unable to attend, so we have featured her story on page three of this newsletter as part of our Beyond Poverty series.



Jo Wilson, Co-production and Policy Officer at the GM Mayor's Office, compered the event



Greater Manchester Poverty Action Director, Tom Skinner

To have gathered so many people, and to have a hall so full of energy, passion and great ideas, was a perfect way to start this work together. The Driver Group (see next page) will now develop a brief for each themed sub-group based on their discussions at the event, and then each sub-group will continue meeting to develop a Food Poverty Action Plan for Greater Manchester, which will be launched early next year.

Please read on to see how you can get involved.

Empowerment Evening, Monday 21st May

The Alliance will have a place for people from all walks of life, from all across Greater Manchester, and in particular we are asking people who have lived experience of food poverty to get involved. The Alliance, and the action plan, will be stronger if co-produced with people who are living with the experience of food poverty.



FOOD Power

Next week, Food Power, the national network of food poverty alliances, will run an Empowerment Evening in Manchester, exploring how we can work together well, including experts by experience (people who have lived experience of poverty). You might be new to co-production or you might have been working this way for years, you may or may not have experience of food poverty, but the idea is to bring everyone together to learn from each other and find ways of working together that will bring out the best in all of us.

Time: 6 - 8pm

Date: Monday May 21st, 2018

Venue: 3rd Floor Training Suite 2, Church House, 90 Deansgate, Manchester M3 2GH

Food: will be provided so [please do book online](#) to give us an idea of numbers and any dietary requirements

Travel expenses: will be reimbursed for anyone experiencing poverty – just talk to Tom Skinner at the start or the end of the event

We ask every organisation that works with people who have lived experience of food poverty, 'experts by experience', to encourage some of them to attend the evening.

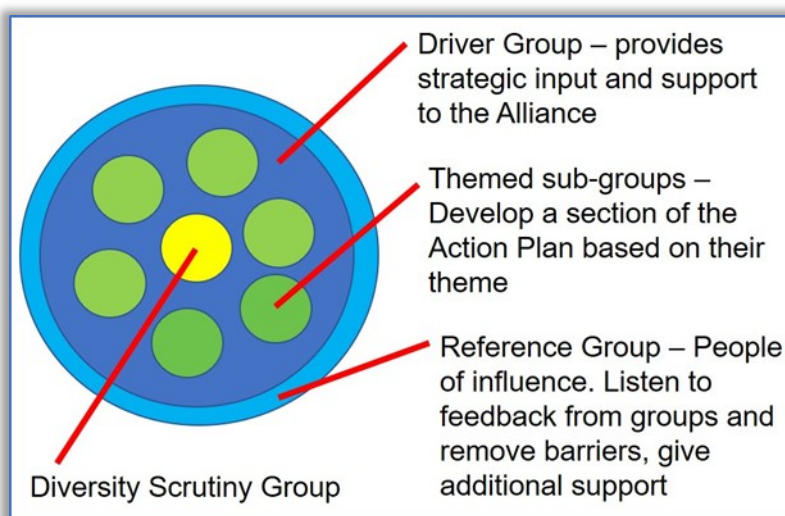
[Please book online if you would like to attend the Empowerment Evening, all are welcome.](#)

Join the Greater Manchester Food Poverty Alliance

You can still join GMPA's Greater Manchester Food Poverty Alliance – just email [Tom](#)

If you are interested in one of the sub-groups, please also indicate that in the sign-up email so you can be added to the list for that group. There are nine groups – the Driver Group, the Reference Group and seven themed sub-groups:

1. Place-based access to food, looking at areas of Greater Manchester that do not have healthy and affordable food options
2. Children experiencing food poverty
3. Causes of food poverty, looking at underlying structural and economic issues such as universal credit and low-paid or precarious jobs
4. Food banks and beyond, looking at how we can better coordinate, develop best practice models for, and explore different models of food aid and social food provision
5. Measuring and monitoring food poverty
6. Skills and training for people in poverty, looking at issues such as health, budgeting, and cooking
7. Diversity Scrutiny Group, which will advise the other sub-groups to make sure the Action Plan addresses food poverty for everyone





Charlotte's Story

Charlotte, a domestic abuse survivor and anti-poverty campaigner, talks about the impact of national policies on the lives of people in poverty.



Charlotte is in her forties and has four children. "I was born and bred in Ashton", she says, "my Dad was an engineer, he worked at a factory in Oldham, and Mum stayed at home to look after us. When Thatcher got elected, Dad's factory got shut down, and he had to go and sign on at the Labour exchange on Scotland Street. I remember the queues were massive. When Dad lost his job, it put the family into poverty. We had holes in our shoes, and the family couldn't afford much. They hid a lot of it from us as kids. But it wasn't as bad as now. At least then we had a sense community."

Charlotte became a nursery nurse and started a family in her 20s. "But it was such a bad relationship. He was violent, beat me up. I spent over a year in a woman's refuge, and then was moved several times, because he kept finding me. He started taking drugs after we met, and it sent him crazy. He nearly killed me twice. I met another man later on, and he became violent too when I got pregnant. I had to go back to women's shelters, taking my family with me. It was a nightmare. There were no staff on at night, and people were shrieking, and hitting others. We had to lock ourselves in the room, the children were crying. I couldn't work at this time, what with everything I was going through and two young babies", says Charlotte. "Tony Blair brought in child tax credits, which was great, I could provide for my young babies. Life wasn't a struggle then. I knew I wouldn't have to look for work until my children were older, too."

"Governments slowly took that safety net away, little tweaks. The first thing they touched was us single parents. The money went down slowly, we had less and less each week.

It's horrendous now. Poverty is being deprived of the basics other people take for granted. Putting your heating on. Buying clothes. I eat once a day. I skip my meals to feed the kids."

But things got worse for Charlotte with changes to the benefit system.

"Governments slowly took that safety net away, little tweaks. The first thing they touched was us single parents. The money went down slowly, we had less and less each week. It's horrendous now. Poverty is being deprived of the basics other people take for granted. Putting your heating on. Buying clothes. I eat once a day – I skip my meals to feed the kids. When my youngest daughter is not at home, the heating doesn't go on, I can't afford it." Charlotte has £80 a week after she's paid her rent, much of which is needed to cover bills.

Charlotte feels especially strongly about benefit sanctions. "There should not be punishment, there should be guidance. In the old days you were given lots of chances, guidance and courses. You weren't sanctioned unless you just went in and said 'I've done nothing'. It was a very last resort, they would try everything with you before that. Now, if your face fits, they will try it on. It's not a last resort any more, it's a first resort. People don't often get the sanction letter. Your money just stops and people can't cope and just end it – we know people who have come out of the job centre and committed suicide."



Charlotte sees these issues all around her community in Ashton, and spends a lot of her time supporting people who suffer as a result. She writes a blog, "the Poor Side of Life", and organises a weekly protest outside Ashton Jobcentre, challenging sanctions, and informing people of their rights – so they can empower themselves, to prevent sanctions, or if they do get a sanction, to know what to do afterwards. "People think you're loaded when you do the stuff I do. People ask me for money. But I'm in the same position as them."

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Working Wardrobe

Working Wardrobe, funded by Bolton at Home, is being set up to tackle another barrier into employment that so many men and women face today. That barrier is the lack of suitable clothing to wear in order to make a good first impression at an interview.

Working Wardrobe want to give those people the best possible chance of making the right first impression and of being successful in getting that job.

Their offer is a one to one appointment in Bolton town centre, choosing an outfit and accessories. The customer will be given this outfit to keep at no cost to them and they will also get final interview preparation advice. If they are successful at the interview then they can return to the store for additional clothing and critically in-work support for as long as they need it. This is so important as making the transition from benefits to work is often a difficult and troublesome period. They will be assigned their own officer who will help with any issues that may prevent the client sustaining that employment - this support will be tailored to their needs.



Members of the Working Wardrobe team: Tony Cottam, Carrie Riley, Dawn Juson, Linda Jones

Working Wardrobe will be available to all of working age across Greater Manchester. They now have to complete furnishing and stocking the store with interview type clothing and accessories and they will be looking to the community and local businesses to support this project.

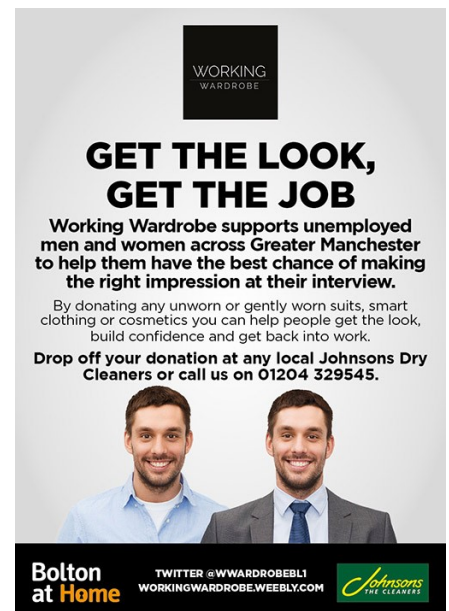
It is a life changing concept. It's more than providing an outfit. It's about changing the mind set and empowering every individual who walks through the door. Working on their strengths and motivating each customer to be the best that they can be.

Working Wardrobe have recently launched a [crowd fund appeal](#). Please do take a look and support them where you can.

They will be open for business on **Monday June 18th, 2018**. For more information please visit their [website](#)



Working Wardrobe believe this to be a unique selling point for this project. They will have already built up a good relationship with the customer through the first dressing visit. Trust and engagement will have already been established therefore making it more likely that this support will be well received and successful.




WORKING WARDROBE

GET THE LOOK, GET THE JOB

Working Wardrobe supports unemployed men and women across Greater Manchester to help them have the best chance of making the right impression at their interview.

By donating any unworn or gently worn suits, smart clothing or cosmetics you can help people get the look, build confidence and get back into work.

Drop off your donation at any local Johnsons Dry Cleaners or call us on 01204 329545.



Bolton at Home TWITTER @WWARDROBE1 WORKINGWARDROBE.WEEBLY.COM **Johnson's THE CLEANERS**

Persuasive Evidence

Persuasion began with the Greeks and Aristotle, with an emphasis on rhetoric and elocution. To succeed Aristotle advocated three proofs: ethos (credibility), logos (reason) and pathos (emotion). The relevance of persuasion is still a real imperative in modern business contexts and one which we, at the Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign, are keen to learn more about.

How can we persuade employers to take the steps to become a real Living Wage employer? What are the barriers to following through to Accreditation? What behaviours lead to employers making changes? What can we learn about influencing behaviours of employers?

Why not come along to our next Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign Meeting from 2 - 4pm on June 13th 2018 at GM Chamber of Commerce, Elliot House, 151 Deansgate, Manchester M3 3WD?

Chris Dabbs, Chief Executive at Unlimited Potential, will be presenting a workshop called 'Nudging towards the real Living Wage' where he will share some ideas about what can work to achieve behavioural changes in employers and how we might apply these ideas when influencing about the real Living Wage.

Email [Lynn](#) or call 07948 549485 to receive your invitation

Article written by Debbie Leigh, Core Team, Campaign Support



Forthcoming Events:

Greater Manchester VCSE Assembly: Personal Health Budgets

on Wednesday May 30th, 2018 from 10.00 - 12.30pm at GMCVO, St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Ardwick Manchester, M12 6FZ

This assembly event, facilitated by Paul Donovan, Senior Advisor, Person and Community Centred Approached at GMHSCP, is aimed at those in the VCSE community who would like to understand this area of personalisation that is taking place across the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care economy. [More info and book](#)

Energy (in)efficiency: what tenants expect and endure in private renting by University of Salford SHUSU

Thursday June 7th, 2018 from 2 - 30pm at the University of Salford, The Crescent, Salford M6 6PU

We must seek to understand the tenants' perspective, this presentation disseminates a study that explored: how tenants understand energy efficiency; how the absence of it affects them; their relationship with their landlord and the barriers they face in challenging the status quo. [More information and book](#)

Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign Meeting

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Introduction to Community Organising

on Wednesday June 13th, 2018 from 9am - 4pm at Starting Point Community Learning Partnership, Woodley Precinct, Stockport SK6 1RJ

Looking for better ways to motivate people to get involved in your community or organisation? Bothered about what's going wrong in society? Bring people to work together to make a change.

This one day training course introduces you to the core foundations of community organising - how to organise and motivate people to take effective action together to address common concerns. For more info about the Learning Partnership please visit their [website](#)

The course is free and more information and booking is [here](#)

Manchester Day

on Sunday June 17th 2018 all day across the city centre

Manchester Day is an annual event that celebrates everything great about the city. It is a day for families, residents and visitors to get together and celebrate all things Mancunian that have made Manchester one of the world's most iconic cities. [More information](#)

Do you have any events that you'd like GMPA to publicise? Please [Email us](#) with the details.

All Party Parliamentary Group on Poverty

Inquiry: Poverty Premium and Business Toolkit

You can read Greater Manchester Poverty Action's response to this enquiry here [GMPA APPG on Poverty Poverty Premium Inquiry Response](#)

You can also read our response together with the GM Living Wage Campaign to the **GM Employment Charter** here: [GMPA GMLWC consultation response](#).



Changing the world of work for good

The Mechanics Institute in Manchester is best known as the birthplace of the TUC in 1868 - 150 years ago.

To commemorate this anniversary the TUC is running a series of events throughout the first week of June 2018. To find out more about these events please visit their [website](#)

General information about the TUC's 150th anniversary, including the stories of some of those who helped shape the movement, can be found [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 for inclusion in a newsletter please [get in touch](#)

For more information please contact us by [email](#) or call 07419 774537 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.



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.