

Book launch: *Eliminating Poverty in Britain* by Helen Rowe



By Helen Rowe, writer and social researcher

Poverty is unacceptable and yet, if we are honest, it is accepted.

There is a world of difference between alleviating poverty and actually trying to eliminate it, but with a realistic and holistic outlook, it is possible.

Should a political party seek to end deprivation on our Isles, the leadership would need to accept two unpalatable truths. The first is the short timeframe of five years. With no guarantee of re-election, the aim must be to finish the job in a single term of office. The second is that it cannot involve tax rises. Our political history is clear on this point - parties are not elected into government if they say they will raise taxes. It is a recurring and unequivocal 'no'. How then could it happen in a country such as ours with an enormous national debt? How would we fund it?

Three core concepts are essential: **compassion**, **focus** and a **detailed plan** which works in conjunction with the green agenda, and one that can be clearly articulated to the public during an election.

Even with **14.4 million living in poverty**, the stereotype of the undeserving poor perpetuates. This Victorian judgement has been handed down through generations and has benefitted certain politicians who have used it to distance themselves from dealing with the country's problems. Eliminating poverty in Britain can only be achieved by a leader who genuinely understands the country they are leading and who has enough wisdom to use the power they hold in their hands thoughtfully.

The pandemic showed us how broad and rapid action can be made in unfathomably short timeframes. The same type of focus would be needed to break poverty's hold over our country. Five years is not a long time for an issue this large and complex. Fortunately, child deprivation is particularly responsive to interventions and so could be the first success of the poverty elimination programme.

A holistic and expansive plan (as detailed in my book) would require a **combined effort from across society**. Led by Downing Street, it would need to encompass the civil service, devolved and local governments, expert nonprofits like Greater Manchester Poverty Action and the voices of those most affected by deprivation. Money from the Royal Bank of Scotland shares that the government still owns, changes in departmental spending, fewer follies like Boris Johnson's failed Garden Bridge over the Thames (which cost £43m for nothing) and a new system of socially responsible gilts for investment funds, would provide enough money to get the programme started.

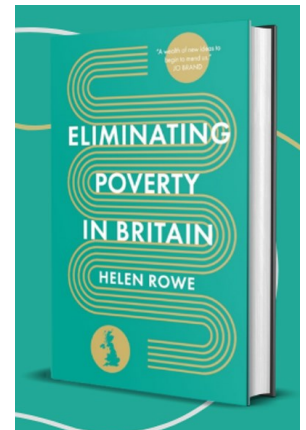
We can have everything we want for our country, but only if we eliminate poverty. We can have:

- **shorter waiting times on the NHS** - poverty makes people sick
- **better attainment in schools** - stress and hunger stop the brain functioning properly and change our DNA
- **a lower crime rate** - serious youth violence and poverty are intimately connected
- **a protected environment** - we cannot deal with climate change unless we deal with poverty
- **a stronger economy** - for growth to begin, people need money in their pockets to spend.

Poverty affects every person in our country. It permeates broadly and exhausts people and services alike.

We have more knowledge, understanding and connectivity than our species has ever known. If we decide not to try this now, when do we do it? In five, ten or fifteen more years? Now is the best time. It is not impossible, it just requires compassion, focus and a plan and then we would create **a society which is fit for everyone** who lives in it.

If you are interested in reading more, *Eliminating Poverty in Britain* is now available in bookshops or [online](#). To contact Helen Rowe, go to www.helenroweuk.net.



An evaluation of The Bond Board's Tenants' Advocacy Service: the innovative homeless prevention service making an impact in Rochdale



By Alison Eastwood, Development Manager at the Bond Board

Covid-19, the cost-of-living crisis and the impending Renters Reform Act have hit the private rented sector hard.

The number of people being evicted by a bailiff following a 'no fault' eviction has risen by 41% in England in the last year. The number of Greater Manchester households facing eviction has reached its highest level on record, with a total of 448 section 21 'no fault' notices served between April and June of this year (Ministry of Justice, August 2023).

Look behind those figures and you'll find 'buy-to-let' landlords raising rents as interest rates go up and those selling up before the Renter's Reform Act takes effect. You'll find families in rent arrears struggling to **pay rent increases of more than £200 a month**, people whose relationship with their landlord has broken down, properties causing health problems due to disrepair and those dealing with the shock of receiving a 'no fault' eviction - a bombshell that reverberates around the whole family.

The lack of affordable re-housing options adds another layer of trauma with only two 'affordable' (within LHA rates) private rented tenancies available in Rochdale between May and October 2022 (Dataloft 2022). The final blow comes from the Homeless Officer who advises of 'months' or 'years' before an offer of social housing is likely.

The Bond Board is a Greater Manchester homeless charity, with a 30-year track record of delivering impactful homeless and housing services for a variety of major funders. It's not surprising that during the current housing crisis our service users tell us they are '**scared**', '**isolated**', '**depressed**' and '**in a deep hole with no way out**'. Our service users are resilient, but they also face challenges which include a lack of affordable housing options, lack of money, benefit issues, rent arrears, food/fuel poverty, health problems and social isolation.

We know many struggle to access telephone support from an advice line, due to lack of skills, confidence and/or resources. For those with issues such as a learning difficulty or depression, accessing complex legal housing advice over the phone and acting on that can be very challenging. It's also hard to make major decisions when you don't know where your next meal is coming from, or the gas meter has run out.

We set up the **Tenants' Advocacy Service (TAS)** during the pandemic, with initial funding from the Greater Manchester Mayoral Fund and the Lottery Community Fund. We sought to prevent homelessness by advising low income private rented tenants, whose tenancy was at risk, at an earlier stage than the 56 day Relief Duty.

Our model combines specialist housing advice and landlord/tenant mediation with holistic support work - a unique approach that enables one specialist worker to provide all services for as long as it is needed, in whatever location works for the service user. We have recruited and trained staff who have specialist housing law knowledge, while at the same time, our TAS Advisers also provide general support—including with furniture, fuel and food, income maximisation and referrals for mental health support.

After a successful first year with a **homeless prevention rate of over 70%**, TAS secured funding for three years from The Henry Smith Charity. We're now halfway through the project and are proud to share an independent evaluation of the TAS service by the creative listener, Len Grant.

The booklet tells the story of the TAS, enabling our service users, referral partners, a landlord and staff to have their voices heard in a unique format. The feedback has highlighted lots of positives, including our high homeless prevention rate and the significant financial gains achieved for service users. It also shines a spotlight on the mental health impact of the threat of homelessness, as well as the remarkable resilience of our TAS service users.

You can read the evaluation here: www.thebondboard.org.uk.

If you would like more information about The Bond Board or to refer to the Tenants' Advocacy Service (Rochdale), please email info@thebondboard.org.uk.



"But, they've helped so much... with everything: my finances, the gas and electric, food vouchers. They're really good."

"I don't know, I think we'd be on the streets by now if it wasn't for them."

Join the Greater Manchester VCSE Anti-Poverty Forum



By Aisha Muhammad, Public Policy Officer at Greater Manchester Poverty Action (GMPA)

GMPA chairs the Greater Manchester VCSE anti-poverty forum, established under the delivery of the Greater Manchester VCSE Accord to build on existing strengths of VCSE sector across the ten boroughs.

The forum brings together VCSE organisations from across the city region to share their experiences and expertise, discuss challenges, and organise strategic influence and action in the fight against poverty. The forum aims to create a powerful VCSE sector voice on an array of pressing topics – from the need of a cash-first approach, to the advocacy of the Living Wage Campaign – and recognises the value of the sector beyond ‘crisis responses’ to poverty in these increasingly challenging times.

Forum sessions are held every two months, with VCSE sector organisations from across Greater Manchester being welcome to participate. For more information and/or to join, please [get in touch](#).



New national data now available on GMPA's Poverty Monitor



The National Poverty page of our Poverty Monitor has now been updated with the 2021/22 figures from the Households Below Average Income (HBAI) survey. The data shows relative poverty rates before and after housing costs, absolute poverty rates before and after housing costs, and data on material deprivation and food security. [Take a look.](#)

Join the End Child Poverty Coalition



As you may know, our organisation is a member of the End Child Poverty Coalition.

This is a group of over 100 organisations all campaigning for an end to child poverty in the UK. Would your organisation be interested in signing up too?

Together the Coalition produces and publicises the local child poverty statistics each year, which detail the levels of child poverty in each Westminster Constituency and Local Authority. We have also launched our All Kids Count campaign ahead of the next general election, calling for all political parties to commit to scrapping the two-child limit to benefit payments.

Coalition members work alongside 19 Youth Ambassadors, some of whom have lived experience of growing up in a low-income family, and who have launched a youth campaign around rates of pay for young people. Plus, the Coalition also organises monthly lunch and learn sessions, and twice-yearly full Coalition meetings.

If you are interested in becoming a member, please [get in touch with Rachel](#), the Coalition Coordinator.

Citizens Advice Good Help training



Are you a frontline member of staff looking to learn more about debt and energy advice to better support and empower your clients?

The training provides some insight and practical tips and tricks for dealing with energy and debt queries you might get.

You'll learn how to determine what constitutes an advice emergency, practical steps to take if you have an energy or debt issue, options and resources you can use, and other things to consider and look out for.

Upcoming training dates are: Monday 18 September at 10am; Friday 29 September at 1:30pm; Wednesday 4 October at 10am, and Tuesday 10 October at 1:30pm.

[Click here](#) to sign up. If you have any questions, please email business-support@casort.org.



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.

Bailiffs hired by councils to recover unpaid debts have seen their profits rise to record levels during the Cost-of-living Crisis, company filings show. [Read more.](#)

Which? research finds **cheese, butter, and bread are up by more than 30%** in the past two years. [Read more.](#)

DWP Universal Credit claimants at a record-high of 6.1 million as the Cost-of-living Crisis worsens. [Read more.](#)

Key findings from Buttle UK's new report on child poverty include: a poll of 1,240 front-line professionals found that **six in 10 of the children they work with are experiencing extreme poverty** — up from 45% the previous year and 36% in 2021. [Read more.](#)

New report by IFS highlights **large mismatches between the funding different areas receive for public services and their spending needs**. For example, Wokingham received 45% more local government funding in 2022–23 than it would if total funding were allocated in proportion to need, while Hounslow received 31% less. This is only partly explained by them setting different council tax levels. [Read more.](#)

Klarna customer numbers in the UK jumped from 17m in the summer of 2022 to 18m at the end of June this year. And the average age of users also rose from 33 in 2021 to 36 today. [Read more.](#)

National Energy Action (NEA) has estimated that **6.3 million UK households could be left in fuel poverty** this October. [Read more.](#)

At least **30% of councils** in some of the poorest areas of the country are considering **declaring effective bankruptcy** this year or next, it has emerged. [Read more.](#)

TUC's strategy for the care workforce report found:

- More than three in five (62%) childcare workers and social care workers earn less than the real Living Wage
- Social care workers earn only about **65% of the median salary for all employees** (£21,500 a year compared with £33,000)
- Childcare workers earn only 56% of the median salary for all employees (£18,400). [Read more.](#)

More than a quarter of claimants who are required to move to universal credit (UC) have not claimed UC and **have had their tax credits stopped as a result**, new analysis has revealed. [Read more.](#)

Universities are looking at three-day weeks to help students struggling with the cost of living crisis, according to reports. [Read more.](#)

One in four teachers gave food to hungry pupils in England last term, survey finds. [Read more.](#)

Nearly **one in four adults say they could not afford an unexpected £200 bill**, a survey by Christians against Poverty finds. [Read more.](#)

More than **four in 10 of poorest parents skip meals** to ensure kids do not go hungry, opinion matters survey for Save the Children finds. [Read more.](#)

The Government needs to find **£36bn to combat poverty effectively**, according to the cross-party Poverty Strategy Commission. [Read more.](#)

92% of parents said that the cost-of-living crisis has encouraged them to **discuss finances more openly with their children**, according to a Legal & General survey. [Read more.](#)



Have your say on gambling

GMCA

GREATER
MANCHESTER
COMBINED
AUTHORITY

Greater Manchester Combined Authority are finding out what people who live, work and study in Greater Manchester think about gambling, and the impact that gambling may have on them or the residents they are working with.

The survey has 15 questions and should take around 10 minutes to complete, although you do not have to answer every question in the survey – we want to capture the information that is relevant to you.

[Please go to GM Consult to give us your views.](#) This closes on Sunday 17 September.

Say yellow to the Bee Network



The first Bee Network buses will start operating in parts of Greater Manchester from 24 September.

Bus services will be under local control in Bolton, Wigan, and parts of Salford, Bury and Manchester. Improvements will also be introduced, including: a new Bee Network app; a new Bee Network website; an extra 30 TravelSafe Officers onboard; 50 electric buses serving Bee Network routes; a range of tickets making travel across the city-region more affordable.

[Click here](#) to learn more.

Volunteer opportunities



Greater Together Manchester are urgently recruiting for regular driving volunteers to pick up and drop off food at our social supermarket in Miles Platting.

Our project provides low cost food and goods to those experiencing financial hardship, and you could be an integral part of our mission. Our food project worker would accompany you for the trip and support with coordinating the delivery. Main tasks will include: driving to pick up and drop off food, packing and unloading at the social supermarket, and communicating with staff and volunteers. Ideally we would like regular volunteers, but even one morning a month would be a huge help!

[Click here](#) for more information. For any questions, contact michaela@greatertogethermanchester.org.

Job opportunities



Caritas Salford

Caritas Diocese of Salford is the principal social action agency of the Catholic Diocese.

They are currently recruiting for the following role:

- **Energy Advice Workers:** to join our new Caritas Energy Saving Service to provide energy information, advice and support to households experiencing fuel poverty in deprived communities of Greater Manchester and East Lancashire. This role is full-time with a starting salary of £31,329. The application closing date is Monday 25 September.

For more information and to find out how to apply, [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.



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.