

## Living Wage Week 2021



Living Wage Week 2021 will take place from November 15th - 21st and there are a number of events in Greater Manchester to mark this important week in the fight for a decent wage for all workers. It is the 20th anniversary of the launch of the national Real Living Wage Campaign, and we've got an awful lot to celebrate in Greater Manchester. Since our city region campaign started, the number of accredited [Real Living Wage employers](#) here has increased from 26 to over 300.

Below is a list of events in Living Wage Week in the city region aimed at those interested in supporting the GM Living Wage Campaign, employers considering becoming Living Wage Accredited Employers, and workers wanting to know how they can take action for the Real Living Wage in their workplaces.

We are particularly keen to see people at the event we're jointly hosting with Mustard Tree on Friday November 19th (full details below). Please come along! Both myself and GMPA CEO Graham Whitham will be speaking. To register for that event please [email Jack at Mustard Tree](#)

**Monday November 15th**, 9am - 11am, People's History Museum, M3 3ER and online – Greater Manchester City Region launch event. This is an in-person event and so attendance is restricted to a limited number of invites. However the event is being live-streamed and you can [register your interest in the online event](#).

**Wednesday November 17th**, 12.45pm - 2pm, Bruntwood Works, M2 3AW – [What Good Employment Looks Like in Greater Manchester](#). The event is organised by [Pro-Manchester](#) and will feature a selection of Greater Manchester's business and public sector leaders to consider how paying the Real Living Wage can benefit your business. Click [here](#) to book your place.



Mustard Tree

JOIN US FOR OUR  
**LIVING WAGE WEEK**  
CELEBRATION EVENT

FRIDAY 19TH NOVEMBER  
2pm - 4pm  
Mustard Tree Ancoats  
110 Oldham Road, M4 6AG

RSVP to [jack.barton@mustardtree.org.uk](mailto:jack.barton@mustardtree.org.uk)

REAL LIVING WAGE  
Living Wage  
gm living wage campaign  
gmpa  
GREATER MANCHESTER  
POVERTY ACTION  
Charity No: 1135192

**Friday November 19th**, 2pm - 4pm, The Mustard Tree, M4 6AG – come along to celebrate the role of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in promoting and adopting the Real Living Wage. There are more details on the Mustard Tree website and to register please [email Jack at Mustard Tree](#)

In addition to the events happening in Greater Manchester to celebrate Living Wage Week (15th – 21st November) there are some national events online, being run by the [Living Wage Foundation](#), which are accessible to all. As this is the 20th anniversary of the start of the national Real Living Wage campaign, the Living Wage Foundation have produced a guide to [How to Make the Most of Living Wage Week](#) which you may find useful.

If you have any questions or suggestions about Living Wage Week 2021 then please contact me. I look forward to seeing you at one of the events!

**John Hacking**,

Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign Co-ordinator

Twitter: [@GMLivingwage](#) Facebook: [facebook.com/gmlivingwage](#)



## Relief for some, but poverty will remain stubbornly high

**GMPA's reaction to the BUDGET and Comprehensive Spending Review** By Graham Whitham

A much trailed budget ran the risk of leaving us with little new being announced on the day. The government had already announced a 6.6% increase to the statutory minimum hourly rate of pay for over 23s (termed the 'National Living Wage' by government) and funding for 'children's hubs'. However, the budget included further positive news with a reduction in the Universal Credit taper rate from 63% to 55%. This is the rate at which the benefit is withdrawn for every extra £1 a person earns. The Work Allowance in Universal Credit is being increased by £500. Positively these measures commence in December, rather than April. These positive steps forward wouldn't have been possible without the powerful campaign against the £20 a week cut to Universal Credit, ably led by the [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#). Whilst the cut may have still gone ahead, the Chancellor was forced into doing something to compensate at least some of the people affected.

With any budget it is important to look at the detail, and consider not just those things that were announced, but the things that were missing. GMPA has been supporting calls for the government to commit dedicated funding for local welfare assistance schemes. At present, schemes are non-statutory and councils have to find funding from budgets that have been drastically cut over the last 11 years.

The government have stepped in during the pandemic, providing additional hardship funding for councils so they can support people facing financial hardship and families eligible for Free School Meals during the holidays. This funding has usually been announced at short notice, with overstretched councils having to establish one-off support schemes. We need a permanent funding solution for both local welfare assistance schemes and the provision of Free School Meals during the school holidays.

In terms of what else was missing, not enough was done to stem the alarming rise in child poverty in the UK. We urgently need to see an end to the two-child limit on children's benefits and a boost to Child Benefit of £10 per week if we are to stand any chance of driving down poverty rates.

Whilst the improvements to Universal Credit are welcome, they fall short of compensating people for the £20 a week cut to the benefit introduced in October. Millions of people on low incomes won't benefit of course, including those unable to work. According to the Resolution Foundation: Of the 4.4 million households on universal credit, about three-quarters (3.2 million households) will be worse off as a result of decisions to take away the £20-a-week uplift, despite the government's new Universal Credit measures. A total of 1.2 million households will be better off by around £900 a year than before the Budget.

As we approach Living Wage Week (LWW) (see the frontpage for events you may want to join us at), it is important to remind ourselves that the Real Living Wage is the only UK payrate based on what people need to achieve a reasonable standard of living. At the start of LWW, the Living Wage Foundation will announce the new annual rates for the UK (and a separate higher rate for London). This will illustrate how far the government still has to go in tackling low pay.

In Greater Manchester, GMPA will continue to advocate for adoption of the Real Living Wage by employers and support councils to strengthen local welfare schemes, develop robust plans for tackling poverty with partners and adopt the socio-economic duty. Now more than ever, it is important to maximise households income in Greater Manchester and to protect people from rising living costs and an ineffective social security system.



Graham Whitham,  
CEO, GMPA

## Job Opportunity

Stockport Credit Union are currently advertising a vacancy for a full-time Customer Engagement officer. The main responsibilities will be to promote the services and products of Stockport Credit Union, increase awareness of the Credit Union amongst Stockport Homes' customers and support their interactions with the Credit Union and process loans.

Salary range £21 - £22.5K. 35 hours per week. 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday but there will be some flexibility on hours to accommodate out of hours events. There is no fixed closing date. **Further info.**



## Tameside Poverty Truth Commission Introducing Carol Baguley

**POVERTY  
TRUTH TAMESIDE**

We are delighted to welcome Carol Baguley to the GMPA team. Carol's role as Poverty Response Officer is jointly managed between Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) and GMPA. Half of Carol's time will be spent working alongside Beatrice and Hannah delivering the Tameside Poverty Truth Commission. She'll spend the rest of her time developing Tameside MBC's policy responses to poverty.



Carol has worked in a variety of roles over the years in education, housing, voluntary and public sector. She has worked to support young people into employment, on green spaces to improve health, to address isolation for elderly people, and on Tameside's financial capability project.

Recently Carol assisted schools and colleges to support to children, young people and families with early help, and she is passionate about using her skills and knowledge to tackle poverty on a local level. When not working she is an avid gardener and crafter.

The Tameside Poverty Truth Commission's launch event will take place on November 9th, 2021. This event is now fully booked so please contact [Hannah](#) if you would like to be added to the waiting list or be able to access the event online.

## Linklaters and the Real Living Wage

By Matthew Sparkes, Head of Sustainability at Linklaters

**Linklaters**

Linklaters is a global corporate law firm with 5,000 people working in 31 offices across the globe. Half of our people work in the UK, either in the London head office or in a support office in Colchester, Essex. On top of the direct workforce, key suppliers to the firm – in security, catering, front of house, cleaning and so on - employ a further 300 people indirectly across both sites.

The Real Living Wage has become something of which Linklaters has become hugely proud and even a little evangelical. We started paying in 2009 and joined the movement – run by Citizens UK - as a Principle Partner in 2011. That reflects the very real passion we have for paying the Real Living Wage, not only because it is the right thing to do but also because we have seen some tangible benefits. These include the impacts on job satisfaction (higher), willingness to be flexible (much higher) and staff turnover (much lower). Many of those we indirectly employ have been with us for 5 or 10 years plus and genuinely feel recognised and rewarded as equals. This matters as those benefitting are often those individuals that visitors first meet on entering the building and the warmth of that welcome is something of which we are rightly proud.

Alongside the Real Living Wage, we also provide access to the staff restaurant, gym and other 'perks' equally to both directly and indirectly employed staff. We also promote the local credit union so that as well as access to a fair wage, anyone can access fair borrowing and saving. This all creates an important sense of equality across the firm no matter whether directly or indirectly employed. That was demonstrated by the way we treated indirect staff so carefully during lockdown with no furlough and all roles retained. The Real Living Wage has brought to life a culture of respect and a real sense of collegiality no matter what role is performed.



Matt Sparkes

We now see the Real Living Wage as indicative of the firm we aspire to be. We are supporting the movement in Hong Kong, the US and Ireland, underlining our belief in its importance and our role in advocating in its adoption by City firms like ours. As a very successful business, it is hard to justify not sharing the rewards fairly and there's no reason why that should only apply in the UK. Wherever you are, we believe that the benefits are clear, and I would urge anyone considering adopting the Real Living Wage to take that first step and join a movement that will bring advantage to your business as well as life-changing improvements to those who need it most.

More information about [Linklaters](#).

## Hunger and the welfare state

By Lisa Scullion, University of Salford & Ben Baumberg Geiger, University of Kent

**WELFARE — AT A  
SOCIAL DISTANCE**

A major new research report looks at food insecurity among benefits claimants during COVID-19, finding that half of Universal Credit (UC) claimants are insecure, and one-quarter severely food insecure – even before the removal of the £20/week uplift.

This is the conclusion of a new report by [Welfare at a \(Social\) Distance](#), a major national research project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council as part of UK Research and Innovation's rapid response to COVID-19.

Using a large nationally representative survey of benefits claimants in May/June 2021 together with a survey of the general public, the [Hunger and the welfare state report](#) shows people claiming UC (which received the £20/week COVID-19 uplift) saw no rise in food insecurity during COVID-19. In contrast, those claiming ESA/JSA (which did not) saw sharply rising insecurity. This suggests the £20/week uplift helped reduce food insecurity.

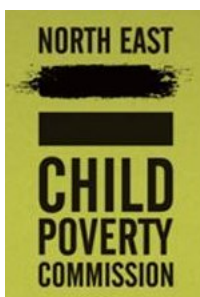
The new Household Support Fund will not compensate for the end of the UC uplift or benefit announcements made in the Budget. Simple arithmetic means that a £500 million fund can only make up for the loss of £20 a week for around 1.3 million of the nearly 6 million people claiming UC. Even if the fund is targeted perfectly, it cannot cover even the 1.7 million who were severely food insecure and can cover less than half of the 3 million UC claimants who had any food insecurity. Most UC claimants already in food insecurity will therefore lose £20/wk.

Yet the report finds that food insecurity is a broader problem: even with the uplift, 50.0% of UC claimants were food insecure, and 28.8% were severely food insecure. Even among UC claimants receiving the £20/wk uplift and not subject to any policies that raise the risk of food insecurity, we estimate that 29.4% were food insecure, and 16.1% were severely food insecure. A significant fall in food insecurity would require a much broader increase in the level of benefits.

The report also finds that food insecurity is noticeably higher among (i) claimants receiving deductions from their benefits (e.g. due to past advances), or subject to the under-occupancy penalty ('bedroom tax') or benefit cap; (ii) the 55.1% of claimants who made debt repayments in the previous month; and (iii) disabled people, particularly those not receiving multiple disability-related benefit payments.

Even ignoring DWP deductions from benefits, more than half of claimants repaid debts in the last month. These claimants are 20 percentage points more likely to be food insecure than other claimants. Inescapable debt payments reduce the amount that people have to live on and need to be taken into account in poverty measures.

If benefits are to provide an adequate income, then the DWP cannot ignore claimant debt. While the Government have taken useful steps towards tackling problem debt by launching the 'Breathing Space' scheme, more needs to be done to check for debts among all claimants and then to help them by comprehensively providing or signposting claimants to debt advice.



## The safety net beneath the safety net?

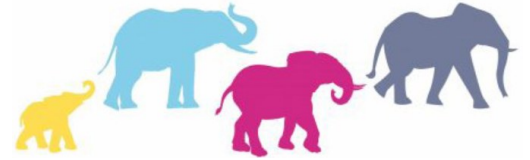
The North East Child Poverty Commission (NECPC) is calling for the Government to strengthen both the national and local welfare safety nets if it wants to build back better from the Covid-19 pandemic, after new analysis has revealed the dramatic decline in funding for 'local welfare assistance' in the North East over the last decade.

This new report from NECPC acknowledges and strongly echoes the [recommendations made by GMPA](#) on strengthening the role of local welfare assistance schemes (LWAS).

NECPC urges local authorities to use their full LWAS budgets each year and review how they communicate their LWAS. Also review the different routes for accessing their LWAS, with no scheme having online-only applications. To reconsider the practice of not providing cash awards, to promote dignity, choice and autonomy; to reverse the entrenchment of emergency food aid as a response to poverty and to consider working with other local councils to develop agreed minimum standards of LWAS. They also urge local authorities to undertake all of this work in ongoing partnership with VCSE organisations and local communities, particularly those with lived experience of socio-economic disadvantage, to co-design improvements to local welfare assistance schemes in the region.

To read the NECPC's full report please go to the [website](#)

## MADE IN BURY: ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM



A new film, made by local people has been released that reveals big social challenges facing many communities in Greater Manchester.

The film, '[Made in Bury: Elephant in the Room](#)', draws on local and diverse voices rarely heard in mainstream media or politics. It explores insecurity, poverty and inequality, and how local people are organising to create system change that will tackle and prevent these issues. The film reflects the work of the [Elephants Trail project](#). Presently working in both Bury and Rochdale, the Elephants Trail creates spaces for local people to explore issues around severe and multiple disadvantage and then produce solutions together with agencies and professionals. These currently include challenges such as homelessness, mental health and community power.

'Made in Bury: Elephant in the Room' was made jointly between a community reporting team from the Elephants Trail and video journalists at The Guardian, with support from The Guardian Foundation as part of the Made in Britain series.

Members of the Elephants Trail commented: "We all have that power within us to be able to say: 'this is not how my story ends'", said Juliet Eastham. "How amazing to have a group of people with lived experience able to advise those people that really are at the top", added Melanie Humphreys. "We feel that there is a need to do journalism differently in our communities", reflected Patrick Tierney "We think that people like us who have experienced severe struggles should have a role in bringing issues in our communities to light."

John Domokos, video producer at The Guardian said "With Made in Britain, we are trying an experimental and participatory approach to film-making: giving up or sharing control with the people we work with locally".

## United Utilities – supporting customers affected by a reduction in benefits

United Utilities is inviting customers affected by the recent changes to benefits to get in touch if they are worried about their water bill. The company has a range of support schemes to help make water bills more affordable, especially if you're receiving benefits such as Universal Credit. The number to call to find out more is **0800 072 6765**.



They can also offer support to those customers who are applying for Universal Credit for the first time, delaying water bill payments for up to eight weeks until their first UC payment arrives. Then, when the customer is able to start paying again, United Utilities can spread those payments across a much longer period of time so they are not under any additional financial pressure.

Jane Haymes from United Utilities says: "When you call, we will also check to see if you are eligible for any of our other support schemes, such as Back on Track which provides a lower bill based on the benefits you receive or if you have been financially affected by COVID, such as being furloughed or made redundant at any time since the start of the pandemic."

People who qualify for the warm home energy discount are also being encouraged to contact United Utilities to apply for a reduction in their water bills. The company's Help to Pay scheme is aimed at customers who receive Pension Credit and can reduce water bills by as much as £168 a year.

"If you're eligible for the warm home discount from your energy company due to receiving Pension Credit, I would encourage you to give us a call as it's likely you are also eligible for a lower water bill." added Jane Haymes

To find out more about the Help to Pay scheme, please call the team on **0800 072 6765** or visit the [website](#)

## 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.

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.