

New anti-poverty training courses

Have you seen our new training courses yet? Equip your organisation with the knowledge and best practice to tackle poverty by joining us at one of our [upcoming sessions](#). Discounted rates are available for the VCSE sector.

If you're interested in attending a November session, **book soon to avoid disappointment.**

'No crib for a bed': 894,000 UK children share a bed or sleep on the floor



By Ivy Mullen, Policy and Research Assistant at Barnardo's

In December we set up an emergency fund at Barnardo's to help families with the cost-of-living crisis. This was designed to help those struggling to afford essentials with things like food vouchers, winter clothing, or replacing furniture.

We were surprised by the number of our frontline workers who were asking for **help with children's beds and bedding**; many highlighted how the families were having to prioritise essentials like food, heating and electricity over things like repairing a broken bed or replacing mouldy bedding. This prompted us to investigate further and in September 2023 we published a report looking at this.

In interviews with frontline workers, we heard how some families were struggling to afford beds and bedding. One worker recounted seeing times where **'bedroom furniture was being held together with tape'**. We also heard numerous examples of children having to either share beds or sleep on the floor. To understand the scale of this issue we commissioned polling with YouGov. We estimate there are **894,000 children in the UK who have had to share a bed or sleep on the floor** because their families were unable to provide another bed.

The guilt that parents feel when they are unable to provide beds and bedding also came out in the report. One of our practitioners said: **'These parents know the bare minimum is providing a warm bed – they're fully aware but they're ashamed they can't provide this.'** In the last 12 months, our polling with YouGov found that there were over 1 million families in the UK where parents had given up their own bed so their child had somewhere to sleep.

For the report we surveyed over 700 Barnardo's practitioners. We found that around half of them (49%) are worried about how rising costs are affecting the ability of families they work with to afford beds and bedding. In many of the interviews we conducted we heard how families are having to prioritise paying for food, heating or cover rising housing costs above things like fixing a broken bed. One of our practitioners said: **'feeding and keeping their children warm was more of a priority than having decent beds and bedding.'**

Our research focussed on the negative impact of this on children's wellbeing, particularly the impact on school life and mental health. Some of Barnardo's attendance officers contributed to the report. They support children and families with getting young people to go to school and they highlighted how not being able to afford appropriate beds or bedding meant that for some children they were **'just too tired, and it means they start falling behind in school'**. Using our YouGov polling of children we estimate there are currently 73,000 children in the UK who feel **'anxious'**, 92,000 that feel **'unhappy'**, and 123,000 that feel **'moody'** due to not having adequate beds to sleep in.

In our report we set out three key recommendations: ending the **two-child limit**, implementing an **Essentials Guarantee in Universal Credit** (as proposed by [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) and the [Trussell Trust](#)) and fixing **local crisis support**. This last recommendation is our key focus with the UK Government in the coming months.

In March, the Household Support Fund will come to an end, posing a huge challenge to local authorities in how they deliver help and support to people in financial crisis. Analysis by [End Furniture Poverty](#) found that 45% of funds for local crisis support comes from the Household Support Fund as opposed to core funding. We, alongside organisations like GMPA, are **calling for the fund to be extended** and a long-term solution for local crisis support.

To read more about our report, [click here](#).

'There's only so much we can do': School staff are calling for action to tackle child poverty



By Georgina Burt, Senior Education Policy Officer at Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)

In a unique piece of collaborative research, for the first time the whole school workforce (including headteachers, senior leaders, teachers, governors, support staff, admin staff, school business managers, catering teams and facilities managers) were asked about the effect poverty has on their school and the pupils and families that they work with.

In total, more than 1,000 professionals working in schools across England shared their views via an online survey. This research was led by the Education Anti-Poverty Coalition and was carried out over the course of the summer term at the end of the 2022/23 academic year.

The results show that our school system is being thwarted by high levels of child poverty, with staff stretched and children's learning and life chances being impacted.

The findings show the increasingly challenging context our schools are facing. Responses demonstrate that school staff are seeing child poverty levels in their schools increasing with more and more families struggling financially. School staff also reported that there are less support services available and that they have less capacity to help families, with staffing cuts being cited as one reason for this. As a result of this complex picture, school staff overwhelmingly believe that the learning of children in low-income households is being impacted:

- **Almost all (89%) staff say child poverty in their school has increased** in the last two academic years. (97% of head teachers/senior leaders, 95% of governors)
- **88% of school staff say more families** in their school who previously appeared to be managing financially are **now struggling to cope**
- **Three-quarters of school staff (74 per cent) say there is evidence that children growing up in poverty have fallen further behind** their peers in learning in the last two years, compared to previous years.

It is against this backdrop that school staff are increasingly being diverted from their roles to deal with issues caused by poverty. Key findings include:

- **79% of school staff** in England say time must be diverted from allocated roles to combat child poverty
- **68% of school staff** say more pupils don't have money for enough food at lunchtime
- **70% of head teachers** say more parents asking for help with essentials like food and clothing
- **82% of school staff** say government should do more for struggling families.

School staff across a variety of roles listed the ways in which they and their colleagues are being required to support families and pupils. From following up on dinner money debt, making referrals to specialist services, sourcing food bank vouchers and children's clothes, applying for hardship grants, and even sourcing home equipment like washing machines – all of these tasks are **pulling staff in our schools away from their designated responsibilities**, leaving them with less time and capacity for other traditional parts of their roles.

Child Poverty Action Group established the Education Anti-Poverty Coalition to bring together organisations working across the education sector who share a deep concern about the impact that high levels of child poverty are having on our education system. Members of the coalition include organisations that represent school leaders, governors, teachers, support staff and parents. The coalition provides a unified and united voice, with all members in agreement that our pupils, families, staff and the school system as a whole is being hindered by the consequences of child poverty.

The findings of this survey demonstrate unequivocally that our schools cannot do it all and should not be expected to. Education professionals are going above and beyond to support families facing financial hardship, but this is taking a toll on our education system. School staff want to see **families supported with school costs, free school meals extended** and families with children offered more **direct financial support**.

Eradicating child poverty would unlock the potential held within our school system, allow our school staff to get back to their core roles, and all of our young people to flourish.

The full report can be accessed [here](#).

New real Living Wage rates announced for 2023/24



By Hollie Griss, Communications and Media Officer at Greater Manchester Poverty Action (GMPA)

Greater Manchester Poverty Action (GMPA) has welcomed the Living Wage Foundation's announcement that the real UK Living Wage will rise to £12 per hour for 2023/24.

This will mean a pay rise for the 430,000 workers employed at over 13,000 Living Wage accredited employers across the country, including at least 145,000 workers in Greater Manchester.

Unlike the Government's statutory minimum National Living Wage for over 23-year-olds, the real Living Wage is the only rate of pay independently calculated on the actual cost-of-living, and it also applies to workers over the age of 18. It also has a London weighting, with the real London Living Wage rising to £13.15.

Full time workers on the real Living Wage rates will earn a further £3,081 a year across the UK and £5,323.50 a year in London than the government's current National Living Wage.

In response to the new rate, Graham Whitham, CEO at GMPA said: **"The prevalence of low-paying work in the UK means that many working people lack the money they require to meet their basic needs and to participate fully in society. This is one of the reasons why in-work poverty is so high in this country.**

"Therefore, as living costs continue to soar, we welcome today's announcement that the real Living Wage will rise to £12 an hour. Paying people a decent wage is more important than ever, and the new real Living Wage rate will provide thousands of workers and their families in Greater Manchester with a much-needed income boost."

The new rates were announced ahead of this week's **Living Wage Week**. Living Wage Week is the annual celebration of the real Living Wage movement.

Against the backdrop of spiralling prices and a cost-of-living crisis, this movement has never been more important—so we're pleased to be hosting three events this week, celebrating the employers and individuals championing the real Living Wage in Greater Manchester and encouraging more employers to accredit.

If you've not yet signed up to our events, it's not too late:

- **Living Wage Week: an online event for VCSE organisations and their supporters** will be held over Zoom on Wednesday 8 November, 1pm-3pm. [Learn more and book.](#)
- **The real Living Wage in Bolton: how it benefits my business** will be held at the Octagon Theatre in Bolton on Thursday 9 November, 11:30am-1pm. [Learn more and book.](#)
- **The real Living Wage in a cost-of-living crisis: an employee's view** will be held online on Friday 10 November, 10am-11am. [Learn more and book.](#)



Talk Money Week



6-10 November 2023

This week we're supporting #TalkMoney Week, designed to get us all talking more about the pennies in our pocket, our thoughts and feelings around money, and how and where to get help if and when you need it.

Quite often, it's just saying the words out loud that's the hardest part. So, we're asking you to Do One Thing to help take the first step: check the cost of living guides available on the [MoneyHelper](#) website.

Research shows that people who talk about money: make better and less risky financial decisions; have stronger personal relationships; help their children form good lifetime money habits; feel less stressed or anxious and more in control. Building money conversations into our everyday lives also helps us build financial confidence and resilience to face whatever the future throws at us.

Let's talk money: making it easier for older people to manage the cost-of-living crisis



By Jo Garsden, Programme Manager at Greater Manchester Ageing Hub

In my work around financial hardship, which is supported by national charity Independent Age, I've been struck by how few older people are willing to speak openly about their money worries.

This tendency to shy away from talking about financial struggles is not limited to those in later life, but I believe it is unhelpful and only increases the isolation felt by those caught in the current cost-of-living crisis.

A recent YouGov poll commissioned by [Independent Age](#) demonstrates both the financial strain on many older people and a resistance to ask for help. The poll found that nationally, **1 in 7 people aged over 65 were reliant on loans and credit cards to make ends meet**, with more than half (57%) of respondents also saying they wouldn't feel comfortable asking friends or family for support.

I see this pattern reflected when I speak with older people about the huge sums of unclaimed Pension Credit in Greater Manchester. The conversation inevitably turns to the stigma, embarrassment, and shame many of their generation feel about claiming benefits. But if we can make talking about money more normal, could we create more safe opportunities for older people in financial crisis to speak up? And could these conversations lead to more of us in later life receiving crucial support and claiming the benefits we are entitled to?

The scale of the opportunity is vast – an estimated **£70 million goes unclaimed in Greater Manchester** each year, with around 36,000 households eligible but not claiming. Over the past few years, GMCA's Ageing Hub has facilitated the Pension Top Up and Winterwise campaigns to help resource councils, housing providers, the voluntary sector, and other organisations. So far, over £10 million per year of additional income has been claimed by older residents in GM. Despite the focus on Pension Credit, more income has been generated through take up of Attendance Allowance and Housing Benefit, suggesting even larger sums of money go unclaimed.

It's so powerful for decision-makers to hear from older people about their lives, so I am thankful for a new report from Independent Age, '[Who wants to listen to me? Why England needs a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing](#)'. Based on a series of listening events across England, including one in Greater Manchester, Independent Age sought to hear from older people about their most pressing issues. Not surprisingly, spiralling costs came in the top three alongside transport and ageism.

Importantly for us, the report contains quotes from older people in Greater Manchester, given anonymously, around the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. It's distressing reading and gives voice to the hidden anguish experienced by too many in our city region:

"I'm making cutbacks, just to survive. Even the things I need, I need to count the pennies."

"My bank sent me a letter saying I was overdrawn. And I've not been overdrawn since I got my first bank account at the age of 17. I've always managed."

"There are so many older people living in poverty. I know people who have ripped up floorboards to heat their homes, because they can't afford energy. Costs keep going up and up, and it's not impacting people equally."

These quotes echo what we've been hearing from councils, the voluntary sector and housing providers – rising debt, **high levels of fear and stress**, older people cutting essential utilities and care support.

As we approach winter, it's a good time to ask older people we know how they are managing, particularly around energy and food costs. Our talking tips guides ([Winterwise Talking Tips guide](#) and [Keeping Well This Winter Talking Tips](#)) suggest some simple conversation starters:

What's on the menu tonight? How's your appetite? Has your weekly shop gone up much?

Are you warm enough at home? Do you know about warm spaces in your area? Have you checked you are getting all you're entitled to? Are you getting the best deal on your energy? Would you like help to get anything sorted?

It can really help to share our own experiences too. People of all ages have been hit by rising prices. Hearing how we have cut back, saved money, or found great deals can **help reduce stigma**. If we can normalise and even encourage talking about money pressures, perhaps older people will feel more comfortable asking for support.



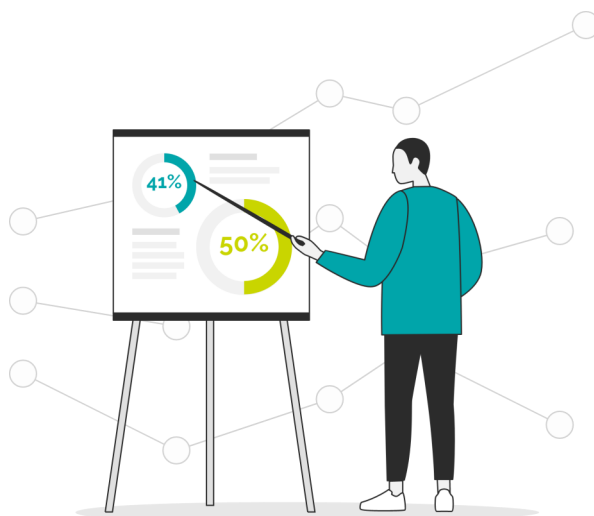
Policy and research updates

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.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation's new study, the fourth in the Destitution in the UK series, reveals approximately **3.8 million people experienced destitution in 2022**, including around one million children. [Read more.](#)

A study by the ESRC Center for Society and Mental Health and the Policy Institute at King's College London finds certain groups are more likely than others to be negatively affected by the cost-of-living crisis:

- **80% of people who said they were struggling financially** reported feeling negative about life over the next year given rising costs —far higher than the figure for people who said they were coping financially (31%)
- **39% of social housing tenants report struggling to sleep** because of increasing costs, compared with 15% of those who own their home outright. [Read more.](#)



A new study by the Trussell Trust highlights that 62% of people in disabled households referred to Trussell Trust food banks are **not receiving any benefits specifically related to their disability**, and the figure in Scotland is even higher at 74%. [Read more.](#)

London Mayor's £3.5m free holiday meals programme helped around **500,000 free meals** to be delivered during October half-term. [Read more.](#)

Research from insurer SunLife shows **a third of women in the UK over 50 are relying on the state pension alone** and will fall short of the minimum standard of living deemed necessary for retirement. [Read more.](#)

Child poverty and caregiver mental health problems have **large negative impacts on the health of the next generation**, finds a large-scale study published in the Journal of Adolescent Health. [Read more.](#)

Virgin Media O2's support with the cost-of-living



Virgin Media O2

Virgin Media O2 believe everyone should be able to get online and stay connected to loved ones, no matter their circumstances.

We're committed to helping people and communities across the UK stay connected during a difficult financial period. We've got support available if you need extra help with your services or you're struggling with your bills. Here are some of the ways we can help:

- **Virgin Media Essential Broadband:** giving a basic connection for day-to-day browsing with average download speeds of 15Mbps for £12.50 a month for people who receive certain benefit payments
- **National Databank:** the National Databank can help you get connected with free O2 mobile data, texts and calls through our network of more than 1,500 community organisations across the UK
- **Help with bill payments:** this could mean giving you a few extra days to pay, creating a payment plan that's more manageable for you, or reviewing your package or plan to see if it's the best one for you.

We're also helping thousands of people affected by data poverty to get online with free WiFi through a **multi-year partnership with technology charity, Jangala**, and have **teamed up with Hubbub** with our Community Calling programme to data-wipe, clean and rehome unused smartphones along with 6 months' free data, minutes and texts, to get more people digitally connected. To learn more about this work and more, take a look at our **better connections plan** – our new environment, social and governance (ESG) strategy.

Welfare research focus groups



Monday 27 November, 9:30am-11:30am and Monday 27 November, 1-3pm, Gorton Central

Are you a professional working in a VCSE or statutory service providing welfare services to GM residents?



If yes, you're invited to join a research study with the University of Lincoln. The research is about how clients/service users access and engage with services, and we're interested to hear your thoughts and reflections on how people access services, what works and what doesn't, with respect to food aid, homelessness projects, housing, benefits, health and wellbeing services etc.

The focus groups will be held at Gorton Central, Highmead Street, M18 8PE and last for a maximum of two hours. A light lunch will be provided and there will be chance at the end to network with others too. [Click here](#) to sign up. Or to find out more, get in touch with Hollie Louise Walsh at hwalsh@lincoln.ac.uk, PhD researcher at the School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Lincoln and Lead Researcher for this project.

What is being done to tackle youth homelessness in Greater Manchester?

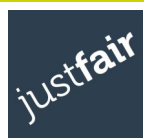


Thursday 30 November, 12:30pm-4pm, St Paul's Church Withington

Last year one young person became homeless every four minutes in the UK, what is being done to prevent this?

Join the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network together with our partners working to prevent youth homelessness across the city, to explore best practice, build connection, and link into the national call for a strategy to end youth homelessness. We will hear from GM Pathfinder partners GMBOP, AKT & Depaul about the impact of the GM Pathfinder project, as well as from the young people at the heart of the Care Leavers National Movement. Our full network events are a space to find out how we can work together to create change and build to the amazing work already being done in Greater Manchester and beyond. Please [click here](#) to book your place.

Human Rights: not a game



Just Fair

Just Fair is excited to announce the launch of 'Human Rights: Not a Game' - a new free tool for organisations and communities that helps people claim 'their right to talk about rights'.

In this new card game you'll work as a team to explore your everyday rights. Because when we claim the right to talk about rights, we can make change happen. This pilot version of the game is co-designed, co-developed and co-owned by Kayleigh Roussel (Sheppey is Ours!), Hinda Mohamed (Intisaar), and Nic Cook (Difference NE) and Just Fair. Human Rights: Not a Game will open people's eyes to why human rights really matter in everyday life. Whether used in a formal setting to build confidence amongst staff, in community outreach as an engagement tool, or as an icebreaker during events, the game provides a positive space to gently open discussions on rights, how we experience them, and what we can do when systems go wrong.

You can find out more about the game [here](#), download a copy [here](#) or request a hard copy of the game [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.