

Food Security Pilot Project

By Sian Mullen, Food Security Programme Coordinator

Alongside the VCSE sector and Local Authority partners, GMPA has started trialling a new approach to supporting people experiencing food poverty in Tameside and Oldham. The approach centres around three fundamental points:

1. Whilst emergency food handouts are currently necessary, they do not prevent or reduce food poverty.
2. The only real way to reduce food poverty is to ensure people have access to a decent and reliable income.
3. Identifying what kind of advice or support people need to maximise their income or access cash support, and who provides that advice, can be difficult.

Our response has been to develop and begin embedding a referral tool that enables anyone who refers people to a food bank to first identify income maximisation advice for people. We are also encouraging these agencies to make an active referral to an organisation who can support with this as opposed to signposting e.g. giving someone a phone number to call or a website to visit. The aim is to help tackle the underlying causes of food insecurity, and reduce demand for food banks and clubs.

The tool itself, based on a model developed in Scotland by [A Menu for Change](#) begins by identifying underlying issues that people presenting in food insecurity may be experiencing, such as job loss, benefit delays or sanctions, or debt.

The tool then directs referrers to some options that could help with these issues. For example, support to challenge a benefit sanction, budgeting advice, advice to reduce energy costs, or access to discretionary housing payments or the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme. If someone has no recourse to public funds, they may be eligible to get a cash grant to support themselves.

Finally the tool then directs referrers to a local organisation who can support the person with this process. For example, in Tameside, the Welfare Rights Team, Citizens Advice, and the GM Law Centre could all support someone to challenge a benefit decision. Or Infinity Initiatives could enable someone with no recourse to public funds to access a cash grant from the [Migrant Destitution Fund](#).

As well as direct income maximisation support the tool also identifies areas of support that may help someone manages their finances better, for example it guides people to support for addictions, mental health issues, and homelessness.

We know that there are great organisations already working to refer service users on to the best support they can find, and this tool and process aims to embed this on a wider scale. People experiencing food insecurity often turn to places like schools, GPs, places of worship, and small community groups, so we need to ensure that these places, as well as larger VCSE sector organisations or Local Authorities recognise food insecurity as a symptom of poverty and treat it at its root cause. Equally, the tool allows those who may already be doing this kind of work, to more easily identify where to refer someone to, streamlining the process and maximising the chances of people getting the advice and support that they need.

[Link to the online tool](#) and [Link to Advice Tameside website](#)



Food Security Pilot Project continued

[Every year hundreds of millions of pounds of benefits go unclaimed across the UK](#), so we want to ensure people are accessing what they can. Other people may just need some help reducing energy costs or budgeting, or an interaction they have with a referrer might be the point when they're finally able to ask for help with other issues such as mental health, or an addiction. Or there may be schemes that people have been unaware of such as a [local welfare assistance scheme](#). During the consultation process that we carried out to develop the tool in Tameside, we already identified support that other organisations were unaware of.

We are continuing to work to ensure the tool is accessible and helpful for diverse ethnic communities. This includes developing translation documents to go alongside the tool in key languages used across the boroughs, and looking at how we can identify organisations which have language support available for people in need of advice.



Sian Mullen

The Oldham tool is still being developed but you can download or use an online version of the tool for Tameside [here](#). If you're an organisation in Tameside who refers people to food banks we really encourage you to use this tool with people before sending them on to the food bank. If you are using the tool we're really keen to collect any feedback you may have on it so we can adapt it as needed. You can share your feedback with us, or report how you've been using it, using the online forms available [here](#).

When we have feedback from the pilot projects, we hope to encourage the development and rollout of similar tools in other boroughs of Greater Manchester – please look out for more information on this later in the year.

The Food Security Programme is a Greater Manchester Poverty Action programme.

Greater Manchester Real Living Wage Campaign Update



We continue to work closely with our partners and colleagues to develop the Action Plan to make Greater Manchester the first Real Living Wage city region in the UK. Part of GMPA's role in this Action Plan is delivering the Campaign sub-group in partnership with GM Citizens.

In order to engage with as many potential contributors to the Campaign sub-group as possible, we are holding a GM Living Wage Campaign meeting on Thursday June 24th, 2021 at 2pm. The meeting, which will be online, will focus on how you can get involved in the Action Plan over the next few months and will look at our priorities for the sectors, places, and events where we want to see action. To register for the meeting please go to this [Eventbrite booking page](#).

We cannot sufficiently stress the importance of the Real Living Wage campaign. New [research produced by the Living Wage Foundation](#) has found that key workers are £1.6bn out of pocket, as a result of being paid less than the Real Living Wage during the pandemic.

Keeping the nation's key workers working has been a priority for government throughout the pandemic. However, while great effort has gone into ensuring key workers can continue to work, there has been much less focus on making sure this work allows them to earn enough to live.

Low pay for key workers after a year on the frontline
Joe Richardson, Living Wage Foundation, March 2021

The analysis used the government definitions of 'key worker' occupations to highlight that, in the year from March 2020 to March 2021, almost a fifth of the UK's key workers were being paid less than the Real Living Wage with this disparity amounting to an average of over £900 a year.



All are welcome to join us to help shape the priorities in our efforts to make Greater Manchester a Real Living Wage city region.

[John Hacking](#),

Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign Co-ordinator

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

The Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign is a Greater Manchester Poverty Action programme.

Private sector tenants and evictions: The end of the temporary eviction ban

By Tom Togher, Chief Officer, Salford Citizens Advice Bureau

First the advice!

The special rules protecting private sector tenants – most of whom are Assured Shorthold tenants, during the Covid pandemic, ended at the beginning of this month. Over the last months the courts have not been granting permission for bailiffs to make evictions. This is changing:

- A section 21 notice must give at least 6 months' notice at the moment.
- From 1 June, a section 21 notice must give at least 4 months' notice.
- A landlord can only apply to court after the notice period ends.
- Bailiffs can carry out section 21 evictions from 1 June. Tenants will get at least 2 weeks' notice of eviction from the bailiffs.



There is a backlog of cases and the eviction process takes time. A section 21 notice starts the legal process to end an assured shorthold tenancy. Most private renters have this type of tenancy. If the landlord tries to evict a tenant without going to court first, it could be an illegal eviction. Seek advice! (Where people live with a landlord then they are probably a lodger, and this does not apply.) The section 21 notice must be on Form 6A.

The landlord doesn't need to give a reason for wanting a tenant to leave. But they must follow certain rules if they want to give a section 21 notice. For example, protect the tenant's deposit and give a gas safety certificate. Notice periods have been temporarily extended because of coronavirus. Section 21 notices received before 26 March 2020 are no longer valid unless the landlord started court action within 4 months of the date on the notice.

Court Action: A landlord can apply for a possession order if the tenant stays past the date on the notice. They could also apply to restart a case that has been put on hold during coronavirus. The tenant will get a 'reactivation notice' if this happens. There may not be a hearing if the landlord uses the 'accelerated procedure' so it's important to return the defence form. A judge decides if a hearing is needed by looking at the information, they have from both the tenant and the landlord. The court can only stop an eviction if there's a problem with the section 21 notice.



If you need advice about a threatened eviction, and live in Salford, then call us on 0808 27 87 802. Our specialist private sector housing adviser will be able to check whether the notice has been drafted properly, or to give advice about an illegal eviction. We can also give you advice about what your rights are if you are evicted. For help in other parts of Greater Manchester check out our [website](#) or call or text the Citizens Advice Greater Manchester Out of Hours Service on 0161 850 5053.

Now the campaigning:

We at Citizens Advice have been campaigning for the abolition on 'no fault evictions' (Section 21 evictions) for many years. The system of Section 21 evictions mean that private tenants have virtually no security of tenure. When the government held a consultation on reform of this system in 2019, we at Citizens Advice Salford called for indefinite security of tenure to be created, as is the case in other countries. We believe this to be a major reform to a highly dysfunctional private sector housing market. Section 21 evictions are one of the highest reasons for people becoming homeless, and we believe it to be a major contributor to housing poverty over the longer term. You can see what we said in this consultation on our [website](#).

There is a glimmer of hope contained in the Queen's Speech at the beginning of May, when the government announced a plan to 'help more people to own their own home whilst enhancing the rights of those who rent'. The Citizens Advice movement has joined the [Renters Reform Coalition](#), where you can find out more about what you can do to support private sector renting reform and keep up to date with the campaign for change.

How do those aged 30-50 in zero-hour, self-employed, or temporary work manage their financial situation?

Researchers at the University of Manchester are looking at how individuals have fared financially during the Covid-19 pandemic, and what impact they feel the pandemic has had on their finances.



They would like to interview individuals currently working within gig-economy roles – on self-employed, zero-hour, or temporary contracts. Ideally, they are seeking people who work in social care, hospitality, delivery, health and fitness, or office administration (although respondents from other sectors would be welcomed). In particular, the researchers would like to speak to individuals aged 30-50 who are earning roughly between £12,000-£20,000 per annum and living in Greater Manchester or the surrounding area.

The research team is especially interested in understanding how people in this kind of work manage their financial situation in the absence of benefits from an employer such as full-time hours, sick pay, maternity pay, and pensions. They believe that working in a more precarious situation places an increased level of personal or financial risk on people that in other kinds of work would be shared with an employer, and they want to know how people feel about that.

The research team are working in collaboration with NEST pension scheme. They want to help contribute to raising awareness to the inequality's workers on these contracts face, and what this means for them in terms of financing their later lives.

You can find out more information about the research [here](#). To take part in an online Zoom or Skype interview please contact [Kris Fuzi](#)

Turn2us publish an Impact Report and launch a new Benefits Calculator

Turn2us, have released their first [Impact report](#), which has a particular focus on the charity's response to Covid.

TURN2US
FIGHTING UK POVERTY

The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic has had profound effects on the UK economy and caused many people to experience severe disruption to their employment and personal finances.

Since March 2020, 11.4 million people have been placed on furlough, 2.2 million more people are now claiming Universal Credit due to the pandemic and 693,000 people have been made redundant.

While certain groups have seen their income and livelihoods particularly affected - including women, single parents, younger people, and people from minoritised backgrounds - the effects of the pandemic have been felt throughout UK society.

This [Impact Report](#) tries to highlight this inequality while demonstrating the impact we've had on people's lives.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with the [External Affairs team](#) or other members of the charity's team if you have any questions, or would like to talk about how we might work together.

Also, after two years of work with users and stakeholders from across the sector, Turn2us have launched a new Benefits Calculator in order to help millions of people every year to understand the welfare benefits they may be able to claim.



To support the launch of our new Benefits Calculator, Turn2us undertook new research which showed that:

- [More than 7.1 million people are missing out on £15.1bn of benefits](#)
- 45% of people have never checked to see if they can claim benefits

More information about [Turn2us](#)

The cost of missing lunchtime

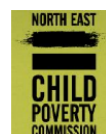
(although this report is focussing on the North East we have included it as we believe it will be of interest to our readers)

Child Poverty Action Group, Children North East and the North East Child Poverty Commission, are publishing [The Cost of Missing Lunchtime](#), a new briefing on free school meals in the North East of England.

New calculations in the briefing show that one in four North East children living below the UK poverty line (over 35,000 children) are not currently eligible for free school meals, and therefore miss out on the many proven benefits associated with the policy. In addition, more than 11% of North East children who are eligible for free school meals do not take up this offer, meaning they do not benefit from the support that they are entitled to.

The briefing includes case studies and examples of good practice that have helped to increase take up of free school meals and reduce stigma for eligible children and families. The authors have made three key recommendations:

- The government must restore the previous free school meals eligibility threshold (in place prior to April 2018) which included all families in receipt of universal credit. This should also be extended to all those on equivalent benefits.
- Local authorities should review their free school meal policies, processes and practices to ensure they are maximising the number of families taking up their free school meal entitlement.
- Schools should work to identify and address any existing policies or practices that either prevent pupils taking up their free school meal entitlement or further disadvantage them.



Z2K's #PeopleBeforeProcess campaign

Following a recent survey on disability benefit assessments and the Government's upcoming Health & Disability Green Paper, [Z2K](#) have published their findings [here](#).

Responses informed them that the benefits assessment process seemed 'hostile', 'discriminatory' and 'degrading' and revealed a deep lack of trust in the Government's commitment to positive reform.

- Over 70% felt the assessor did not understand their condition and 66% felt the assessor's report did not reflect what they'd told them.
- 87% who appealed a negative decision at the Social Security Tribunal were successful.
- 89% said they were not confident the Government will consider the changes disabled people want to see made to the assessment process.
- 74 % think the Government won't make the required changes to the process that are identified by disabled people.

[Z2K](#) need your help in making sure Government works with disabled people to create a process based on fairness, dignity and respect. Please write to your MP asking them to call on DWP ministers to publish the long-overdue Health & Disability Green Paper - including proposals to fundamentally reform the assessment process for disability benefits.

Webinar: The benefit cap and two-child limit - histories, narratives and lived experiences

TOMORROW: Thursday June 10th, 2021 11am - 12.30pm

Join in with this webinar to explore experiences and narratives tied to two of the key 'welfare reforms' of recent years: the two-child limit and the benefit cap. Both policies create new breaks between need and entitlement in our social security system, disproportionately impacting families with more than two children. Register for your place [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](#) 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.



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