

## Implementing the Socio-Economic Duty in Salford

By Penny Rimmer, GMPA Policy Officer and Shairi Bowes at Salford City Council

Salford City Council

The Equality Act 2010 contains a valuable tool to ensure poverty is given due consideration by public bodies when making strategic decisions and designing services: [the socio-economic duty](#).

This duty contained in Section 1 of the Act requires public authorities to actively consider the way in which their decisions increase or decrease inequalities that result from socio-economic disadvantage. Successive governments have chosen not to enact the duty and socio-economic disadvantage is often missing from equality impact assessments that include consideration of other protected characteristics.

One way to overcome this failure to enact the duty is for public bodies to adopt it voluntarily. At GMPA, we are working with local and combined authorities to increase the awareness and voluntary adoption of the duty as a means of creating better outcomes for those with lived experiences of poverty.

We have published [a guide](#) developed in partnership with several organisations for local authorities on socio-economic duty implementation. Our work has influenced a number of Greater Manchester councils to adopt the duty or are in the process of adopting it. Salford City Council is the latest council in Greater Manchester to have adopted the duty bolstered by our encouragement that it is a central element of a strategic approach to addressing poverty. Their experience demonstrates how the socio-economic duty can be implemented and what impacts this can have on the wider work of the council.

In March 2021, Salford City Council launched the refreshed [Tackling Poverty Strategy](#), which brought together a range of actions to combat poverty and inequality. Included in this was a commitment to implement the socio-economic duty, to prioritise tackling inequality caused by socio-economic disadvantage.

To put this ambition into practice, the council set about creating a dedicated toolkit for the incorporation of the duty into the equality impact assessment process. A detailed framework was designed for elected members and for services, which highlighted best practice and guidance in using the duty. This was supported by an integrated training programme which included:

- Utilising specific evidence frameworks to understand how socio-economic inequality directly relates to communities within Salford.
- Incorporating the socio-economic duty into all stages of policy development.
- Wider awareness raising on the importance of Equality Impact Assessments, including duties under the Equality Act 2010.

To support the adoption process, the council implemented a 'soft launch' period, allowing them to explore how the policy could be best utilised, before following this up with a robust evaluation after six months. This evaluation is currently underway, with initial findings suggesting that the duty is having a positive impact on communities across the city.

Debbie Brown, Strategic Director for Service Reform at Salford City Council, described the socio-economic duty as 'a crucial mechanism in [Salford's] tackling poverty framework', highlighting its importance in supporting the council's proactive approach to addressing inequality'.

Cllr Sharmina August, Lead Member for Inclusive Economy, Anti-Poverty and Equalities, also highlighted the advantages of voluntarily implementing the duty: 'By recognising socio-economic disadvantage and the issues that arise from this, we can identify key ways of not only mitigating inequality of outcome but also creating opportunities for progression and empowerment for communities across Salford. We want to actively show Salford's approach to tackling poverty and encourage innovative solutions to these issues. The socio-economic duty is a major part of this process and gives a consistent framework across our council services to do so.'

## Tameside Poverty Truth Commission – update and next steps

By Dan Oliver, Head of Programmes

*Poverty Truth Commissions bring together people with lived experience of poverty with civic and business leaders in a community, to explore what poverty looks like in their area and to develop solutions and recommendations for change. [Tameside Poverty Truth Commission](#) is a GMPA programme.*

**Remembering Karen:** We are mourning the tragic death of Karen McBride, one of our community commissioners, who sadly passed away in August. Karen was a passionate member of the Poverty Truth Commission and was keen to use her own experiences to help prevent others going through similar in future. She used her voice to influence change, and since her passing her children have spoken about the value and purpose that the Poverty Truth Commission brought to her life.

To use the words of one of Karen’s friends, on a [fundraising page](#) to support her four children: “Every now and then you come across someone so special they take your breath away. Karen was that person - funny, kinder than kind, courageous, and the absolute best Mum (to everyone, not just her kids). Karen was a defender and advocate of people living with any kind of pain or injustice. She would give her last penny to anyone who needed it, and volunteered for various organisations that work to meet people’s most basic needs and to influence people with the power to make changes for them.”

**Update on the Poverty Truth Commission:** We met as a full commission twice in September, firstly to come together and remember Karen. We shared our memories of her and her contributions to the Poverty Truth Commission, including the harsh reality of the challenges she faced. Each of our commissioners and our facilitators have shared in their common grief and recognised that we need to continue the work that Karen was so passionate about, in reducing and preventing poverty.



**Next Steps:** Our meetings in September also helped us to create a path forward for Tameside Poverty Truth Commission. Between now and the end of the programme in November 2022, we will host each of our themed working groups (Housing, Mental Health and Access to Services) to bring together our experiences and create specific recommendations for change.

We will then collate these at a full commission meeting in November, when we can start creating our final Poverty Truth Commission report for public release. This report will summarise our experiences as a Poverty Truth Commission, including what we have learned along the way, and what we would like to see change in Tameside.

Back in July we reflected on our progress as a Poverty Truth Commission and the changes we had made possible. These included Tameside Council re-introducing a drop-in approach as part of their customer services, and opening up ‘Tameside One’ as more of a community hub. At this sad time as we remember Karen, we also want to make sure that our efforts continue to help those living in poverty and to keep raising the voices of those with lived experience.

In memory of Karen McBride.



### Allotment and food bank coordinator

Lalley Centre - based in Collyhurst Manchester M40 7RG

37.5 hours per week. Fixed term contract for 12 Months.

Closing date for applications Monday November 7th, 2022 at 10am.

The Caritas Lalley Centre has an allotment to be proud of which encourages a diverse range of community members to develop and grow produce. The Foodbank is also a vital source of support for those in the community. Apply [here](#).

## The importance of involving people with lived experience of poverty

By Jon Sands, Programme Officer, Money Advice Referral Tool

Part of GMPA's strategy is to embed the voice of people with lived experience of poverty in our programmes and decision making and to encourage others to do so as well. [The Money Advice Referral Tool \(MART\) programme](#) has proved to be an example of the invaluable input people experiencing poverty can add.



MARTs have recently been developed for four additional boroughs in Greater Manchester – Bury, Manchester, Trafford and Wigan. Their aim is to provide organisations/professionals who deal with people struggling financially with all the information they need to refer that person onto an appropriate, expert organisation that can maximise that person's income.

In each borough the content of the MART is being developed by a mixed working group including: council officers, voluntary groups and foodbanks along with people with current experience of poverty. In some boroughs individuals with experience of poverty are part in the working group while in others, groups of people are consulted (such as a group who attend the Trust House Community Centre in Bury). In all cases though, this has brought a perspective and experience which would otherwise not have been included and has distinct and positive impacts on the final results.

For example, in one borough Tracy has formed part of the working group. Her background is an all too typical story of how unfortunate circumstances can lead to financial difficulties that spiral out of control through no fault of her own. She left a steady job after an assault that was not dealt with. Having little experience of benefits, Tracy faced a long delay before receiving a UC payment followed by sanctions, difficulty paying bills, court action and ultimately eviction and homelessness. The lack of any ability to control her situation placed her under huge stress which inevitably led to difficulties with her mental health. Tracy's position only stabilised somewhat when she moved 200 miles to Greater Manchester.

Her experience of interactions with agencies and organisations which are meant to provide support to a person in her position, but who have frequently shown a lack of empathy or understanding, added a completely different viewpoint to her working group. Tracy's input has had a direct influence over the wording used in the questions on the MART and to the training on how the conversation should take place between an organisation using the MART and the person struggling financially.

In addition to these, the involvement of other people with lived experience of financial difficulties has also led to

- The prioritisation of the impact financial difficulties have on mental health and the importance placed on providing support for this
- The inclusion of specific support for people with a disability
- The inclusion of specific organisations based on their experiences as a service user



Jon Sands

Finding people with experience of poverty to take part in a project can be problematic, not least because their participation may involve sharing difficult and emotional personal experiences, and many people may not wish to go through that. Our experience from the development of the [MARTs](#) though shows that the viewpoint they can bring is both unique and essential, and the results would have been less relevant without it.

## Job Opportunity at GMPA

### Senior Policy and Research Advisor

We are seeking a Senior Policy and Research Advisor to help drive forward our policy and research work, supporting us to achieve even greater impact. We want Greater Manchester to be at the forefront of efforts to prevent and reduce poverty. In this new position, the successful applicant will play a central role in enabling that to happen. Further information, full particulars and a job description are available on our [website](#). We strongly encourage candidates of all different backgrounds and identities to apply. We welcome applications from people with lived experience of poverty. Closing date Tuesday October 25th, 2022.



## How Bad is That?

Manchester artist Len Grant creates a pop-up exhibition to highlight the city's poverty.

"There are two sides to Manchester," says sketcher and writer, Len Grant. "On the one hand it's now considered the trendiest city to live in. On the other, we still have plenty of neighbourhoods with some of the highest levels of disadvantage in the country."

And while the up-and-coming, hip and trendy side of the city gets lots of media attention; the voices of those at the sharp end of the cost-of-living crisis are rarely heard.

For several months, Grant visited an inner-city foodbank, drawing and listening to the regulars who rely on the bags of weekly groceries as well as to the local volunteers who run the place.



He's now produced a pop-up exhibition of artworks that is helping to raise much-needed funds for the Coverdale and Newbank Community Grocers in Ardwick. The charity's chairperson, Elaine Lovesey told Grant: "We have a nurse come in. She has four kids and works full time on the Covid wards. By the third week in the month she's got no food left and no means to buy any. How bad is that?"

I NEVER PUT THE HEATING ON, EVER



One of Grant's artworks includes 75-year-old Tommy who told him: "I never put the heating on, ever. By half six I'm in bed, watching telly. I have three hot water bottles and I'm as warm as toast."

Another regular user of the community grocers – where locals pay £2.50 for £20 worth of fresh and chilled food – described how she had to pawn the family's only laptop so she could afford enough food that week. "My kids used it for college. So now there's no laptop. I got £70 at 'Cash Gen' for it. I'll need about £90 to get it out again."

"I've worked with the homeless, those with addiction issues and with undocumented migrants," Len says. "So I guess I'm used to hearing stories from those on the edges of our society. But I continue to be shocked at the hardship that so many suffer day by day. Just getting through the week is a struggle. In the coming months more and more people will have to rely on places like the [Coverdale and Newbank Community Grocers](#). And, frankly, in 2022, it should not be like this. It's as if we are going backwards."

"Those on the lowest incomes are least likely to have their voices heard and, however depressing these stories are, I believe it's up to the rest of us to at least take time to listen and then help if we can."

Grant's pop-up exhibition has toured locations across Manchester and is now available to come to you at your place of work, place of worship, community group or event. Just get in touch with [Len](#).



## Policy and research - latest news

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. To find out more, click [here](#).



New research by careers platform Bright Network, shared with Sky News, reveals students expect starting salaries to be over £30,000 - 25% more than the current national average starting salary. [Read more](#).

Due to the impact and stress because of the rising cost of living, the undergraduate student surveyed expressed "genuine concerns around the economic climate, their careers and future working life". If benefits rise in line with wages rather than inflation then 200,000 more children will be pushed into poverty, new analysis suggests. [Read more](#).

Low-income households will be almost £400 a year worse off under No 10's plans to increase benefits at a lower rate than inflation, new analysis for the Observer has revealed. [Read more](#).



According to a poll of 2,000 people, all at least 66 years old, 6% are likely to seek employment in the coming month to top up their pension pot or help pay the bills, they told My Pension Expert. There are 12.2 million retirees in the UK, so this could equate to roughly 730,000 people back on the jobs market in the months ahead – if the study is correct. [Read more](#).

One-fifth of Britons say they are being forced to borrow more money to meet their payments, with half unable to save at all, in a sign that households are feeling the pain of the cost-of-living crisis. [Read more](#).

Attainment among seven-year-olds in England has fallen sharply across all subjects in the first set of tests since before the pandemic, with disadvantaged children's results dropping even further behind, according to government data. Results for this year's key stage 1 (KS1) tests show a significant decline in attainment in reading, maths and, most dramatically, writing, in which the proportion of year 2 pupils reaching the expected standard declined by 11 percentage points. [Read more](#).

Research by Age Scotland has revealed 76% of people over the age of 50 are 'concerned' about paying their fuel bills. The country's largest charity for older people, spoke to over 1,000 people aged 50 or over and discovered four in 10 struggled with fuel poverty throughout the summer. [Read more](#).

Across England, the rate of referrals of under-18s in the poorest neighbourhoods to secondary mental health services was 57% higher in 2019/20 than in the least deprived neighbourhoods. In some local authorities, it was more than twice as high in the poorest neighbourhoods as the richest ones. [Read more](#).

### Research developments

Women are bearing the brunt of the cost-of-living crisis and its damaging impact on anxiety and mental health the BPS has warned, as new figures reveal that 61 per cent of females say they are more anxious about being able to pay their bills than this time last year, compared to 47 per cent of males. [Read more](#).

Black and minority ethnic people are disproportionately falling faster and further below the poverty line amidst the cost-of-living crisis. Falling Faster shows that Black and minority ethnic people are 2.5 times more likely to be in relative poverty, and 2.2 times more likely to be in deep poverty (having an income that falls more than 50% below the relative poverty line), than their white counterparts. [Read more](#).



More information is available on our website [here](#)

## Greater Manchester Real Living Wage Campaign Update



### Manchester's plan to become a Living Wage Place

As part of the Living Wage Foundation's Making Living Wage Places scheme, an alliance of local employers has come together to increase the momentum in Manchester to tackle low pay. The alliance comprises Real Living Wage accredited employers from across the public, private and VCSE sectors. Each of the alliance of Real Living Wage accredited institutions have agreed to a range of targets over the next three years as part of their commitment to support Manchester in becoming a Living Wage City. They will use their influence in their sectors and as anchor institutions to urge more employers to become Real Living Wage accredited employers.

Over 190 employers in the city of Manchester have already voluntarily committed to ensure all their staff and subcontracted staff receive a Real Living Wage of £10.90 an hour.

A full list of the current [Real Living Wage Employers in Greater Manchester](#) can be found on the GMPA website. The Living Wage City action plan sets out how the alliance intends to double the number of workers covered by Living Wage accreditation in Manchester over the next three years. This will result in 4000 extra workers in the city being uplifted to the Real Living Wage as a result of Real Living Wage accreditation by 2025.



John Hacking, GM Living Wage Campaign Coordinator with Cllr Bev Craig, Leader of Manchester City Council

Cllr Bev Craig, Leader of Manchester City Council, said: "Being recognised as a Real Living Wage City is a marker of our commitment to creating a Manchester where all of our residents can live happy and healthy lives – and have the chance to share in the city's success. Being paid the Real Living Wage isn't just an arbitrary number. It's an amount anyone needs in their pocket to lead their life without fear of poverty.

As we see the impact of the cost-of-living crisis become reality, our residents being paid a fair and just amount will be even more important. We know there is a link between good employment, our health and mental health. There remain far too many jobs in Manchester that pay below the Real Living Wage and the challenge we have is to encourage as many businesses as possible to come on this journey with us. Both for the benefit of their employees, but also their own reputation as good employers.

We are pleased to be working with a range of partners including Greater Manchester Poverty Action to work to achieve this ambition."

More information about the local campaign can be found on GMPA's website [here](#).

Best Wishes,

Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign Co-ordinator [John Hacking](#)

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

The Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign is run by Greater Manchester Poverty Action.

### 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.