

GMPA joins calls for national action on poverty

By Graham Whitham



Even before the devastating impact of Covid-19 on household incomes, child poverty has been rising rapidly in some of the poorest communities in Britain, leaving growing numbers of children cut adrift and ill equipped to cope with the impact of the pandemic.

As a member of the End Child Poverty Coalition, GMPA is joining calls on the Government to take seriously the four year rise in child poverty and to commit to an ambitious and comprehensive strategy to end child poverty in the UK as it plans the nation's recovery from Coronavirus.

New analysis of government poverty data undertaken by Loughborough University, on behalf of the [End Child Poverty Coalition](#) (ECP), tracks four years of child poverty across Britain before housing costs are taken into account (2014/15 - 2018/19). The analysis highlights those parts of the country where children are most likely to have been swept into poverty since 2014.

The research shows that the North West of England experienced the third highest increase in child poverty between 2014/15 to 2018/19 (see table 1), and that the largest increases in child poverty happened in already deprived areas. Among Greater Manchester's ten local authorities, Oldham saw the largest increases in child poverty as it rose from 28.7% to 38% (see table 2). Stockport and Trafford were the only Greater Manchester boroughs to experiences increases in child poverty lower than the increase across the country as a whole.

Table 1 Change in child poverty by region, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Region	Child poverty rate		
	2014/15	2018/19	% point increase
NORTH EAST	17.3%	23.7%	6.5%
WEST MIDLANDS	19.1%	23.8%	4.7%
NORTH WEST	18.5%	23.0%	4.5%
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE	19.2%	23.4%	4.2%
SCOTLAND	14.5%	18.1%	3.6%
LONDON	14.2%	17.5%	3.4%
SOUTH EAST	10.8%	13.7%	2.9%
EAST	13.1%	15.4%	2.2%
EAST MIDLANDS	16.6%	16.6%	0.0%
WALES	18.4%	18.1%	-0.2%
SOUTH WEST	15.0%	13.5%	-1.6%

The pandemic has underlined the need for urgent action to address child poverty. Recent ONS analysis, carried out 17-27 April 2020, found that 23% of adults said the coronavirus was affecting their household finances. The most common impact in this group was reduced income (70%), and nearly half saying they had needed to use savings or borrow to cover living costs. A number of announcements over the last month or so will be helping some people. The government's furlough scheme and increase in support through Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit will help. Although welcome, these measures are unlikely to be enough to stop the pandemic pushing many households into financial hardship, either in the short or long-term.

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There are additional measures GMPA would like to see, and we have been adding our voice to national campaigns calling for changes which include:

- Substantially increasing Child Benefit. This is the quickest and most efficient means of getting extra money into the pockets of families;
- Ending the two-child limit that restricts benefit payments to the first two children in the household;
- Scrapping the benefit cap that limits the total amount of support a household can receive through the benefit system; and
- Providing extra funding towards council's local welfare assistance schemes so that they can meet the extra demand for support over the coming weeks and months.

	2014/15	2018/19	Percentage point increase, 2014/15 to 2018/19
Oldham	28.7%	38.0%	9.3%
Bolton	24.8%	32.2%	7.4%
Manchester	27.8%	33.6%	5.8%
Tameside	19.4%	24.7%	5.3%
Rochdale	25.3%	30.2%	4.9%
Bury	18.2%	22.9%	4.7%
Wigan	16.6%	20.2%	3.6%
Salford	20.7%	24.0%	3.3%
GB total	15.6%	18.4%	2.8%
Stockport	12.6%	15.2%	2.6%
Trafford	11.1%	12.8%	1.7%

For the full report from ECP, please go to the [website](#)

GM VCSE leaders are asking the Government for urgent help

The Chairs of GMCVO, the GM VCSE Leadership Group, the GM BAME Network and GM BAME SE Network and the GM Social Enterprise Network have written to the Chancellor, the Rt. Hon. Rishi Sunak asking for more support for voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations.

The response of our local voluntary organisations, charities, community groups and social enterprises to the current crisis has been genuinely inspirational. The letter explains just how vital they are to people in need, and how important they are to 'building back better'. But their future has never been less certain, with every income stream disappearing at once.

So far we have had very little help for our local organisations from national government. Of course we welcome the funding recently announced, but it is just not enough. In Greater Manchester alone we need an additional £19.5 million. Meanwhile the job retention scheme is unhelpful when organisations need to stay open and keep staff working and they have had no access to the small business grants offered to other SMEs.

Without urgent action from the UK government to provide support, we are afraid that many GM VCSEs will soon be gone – just when they are needed most. [More information and to read the letter in full](#)

Framing your message during Covid-19

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation have shared a guide about framing your message when talking about coronavirus and poverty.



“How we talk about poverty matters and amidst the stress, uncertainty and pressure of the coronavirus pandemic, our words, for right now and for the future, are more important than ever. The guide is here to help you frame your messages on coronavirus and poverty - to help your words inspire action and drive change.”

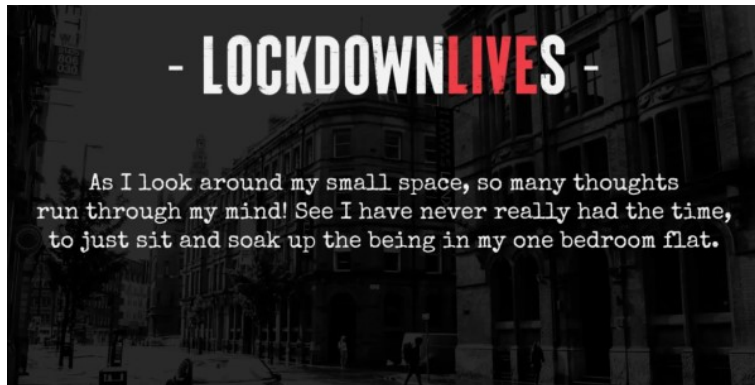
The five step guide is available [here](#)

LockdownLIVES: Co-Production and Creative Advocacy during Covid-19

By Katy Rubin, LockdownLIVES

When the pandemic hit, the first priority for the Greater Manchester Homelessness Action Network and the GMCA was to ensure that GM residents in hostels or rough sleeping would be able to self-isolate and stay safe. The next priority has been to direct food, health care and other essential services to these emergency accommodations. While this urgent work has been underway, the needs for creative expression, co-produced research, and a sense of connection were also increasingly pressing.

In mid-April, the LockdownLIVES project was born, in collaboration with the GMHAN and Street Support Network. LockdownLIVES is a docu-series co-created by GM residents in emergency and temporary accommodation during the pandemic. The project aims to creatively connect people who are self-isolating in emergency accommodation; and help the broader public understand how this crisis affects those who don't have their own homes. All GM residents experiencing homelessness are invited to submit 1-minute videos, poems, drawings, and photos about what life is like right now. The submissions are edited into twice-weekly, themed episodes that air on social media (@StreetSupportUK and @LockdownLIVES) on Tuesdays and Fridays at 3pm. LockdownLIVES aims to offer an opportunity for viewing and discussion online, to help build community over the weeks and months that the lockdown continues.



In the first three weeks, five episodes have been released addressing the challenges of communicating with GPs and support workers over the phone, and the resulting feelings of isolation and anxiety; the experience of food insecurity, and not having choice about your own diet; the frustration when those around aren't observing social distancing; and the added anxiety when the government is unclear about their response. There have also been examples of collaboration, beauty and hope:

residents in hotels bringing music back to the lockdown; working together (with masks and gloves) to build planters for flowers; and sharing humorous poems about what to watch (or not watch) on TV.

Project coordinators have heard from staff at front-line organisations that watching these videos at the end of a workday has been both emotional and encouraging; overall, the project has been received with enthusiasm from staff and residents. Some residents don't have access to devices or data to send content, so staff are helping to coordinate the submissions; additionally, the Mayor's Charity and other groups are endeavouring to distribute more devices and data, as internet access is crucial in the current moment.

The LockdownLIVES team is working with other groups conducting research, so that co-produced reporting and artistic expression can support more formal evaluation efforts. A final video product will tie various themes together, to be used as an advocacy tool. Upcoming episodes will dive deeper into the experience and help shed light on what's working in the GM response to covid-19; what's not working; and what GM residents experiencing homelessness hope will happen next.

Currently, the team, consisting of Jez Green of Mustard Tree, Katy Rubin, an arts-and-policy strategist, and Alex Bower, video editor, are working to spread the word to include a diversity of voices in the project. Any organisation supporting emergency or temporary accommodation is very welcome to participate: new prompts go out on Tuesdays and Fridays, and staff or residents can send any content - videos, images, poems - via WhatsApp or text message to Katy at 07926 358983, or [email](mailto:katy@lockdownlives.com). Watch and share past videos via [Vimeo.com/lockdownlives](https://vimeo.com/lockdownlives), and reach out with any other inquiries or suggestions.



Katy Rubin

Government urged to keep feeding children during school holidays

By Barbara Crowther, Co-ordinator for the Children's Food Campaign

Charities, organisations and education unions have called on Education Secretary to announce additional funding for continued food provision during the forthcoming school half-term and summer holidays.



In [a joint letter to the Secretary of State Gavin Williamson MP and Schools Minister Vicky Ford MP](#), the organisations point to recent figures from the Food Foundation that show around 2 million children across the UK are directly experiencing some level of food insecurity or hunger. Before the crisis, 1.3 million children in England were eligible for benefit-related free school meals, however a further 1.4 million families have applied for Universal Credit since the start of the outbreak.

Campaign Co-ordinator for the Children's Food Campaign Barbara Crowther says, "Hunger does not know the difference between term time and school holidays, and the Government's support for families should be continuous through this crisis. Given the scale of food and income insecurity being experienced by so many families, it is critical that the Government makes national level funding available to cover all the school holidays until the start of the new academic year."

The [Welsh Government has already committed £33m additional funding to cover all holidays until the end of August](#), which is equivalent to holiday provision of £19.50 per week per child eligible for support. However, in England, the Department for Education has so far only committed to £9m funding for pilot holiday food projects in a few selected areas, with successful funding bidders still to be announced. In the letter, the organisations say this is not enough and a national level holiday provision funding formula is now needed "at a level sufficient to expand provision of free school meals substitutes, and to the National School Breakfast Programme, to cover all holiday periods across the whole of England until end of August."

The Government did extend funding to allow [the national school voucher programme for England](#) to cover Easter holidays. The organisations are arguing that giving more advance notice for forthcoming holiday periods would allow schools, academy trusts and local authorities to make better plans with their relevant food and catering suppliers, or alternative voucher/cash support provision, with confidence that they will have the funds to deliver.

More information about Sustain's Children's Food Campaign and a list of the organisations who have signed up is available [here](#)

Emergency Fund opens for Manchester's unpaid carers



A fund of £200,000 is being made available to carers in Manchester (Manchester City Council area) who need additional support as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The efforts of unpaid carers to support the most vulnerable members of society are more important than ever due to recent upheaval of everyday life. However it has been recognised that due to the negative impact of social distancing and the economic effects of the nationwide lockdown there is a risk of unpaid carers being disproportionately affected as a result. Jobs and livelihoods have been hugely impacted by the pandemic, which is why Manchester City Council and Manchester Health and Care Commissioning have taken steps to ensure that unpaid carers are not suffering financially as a consequence.

The fund will be open for carers to ensure the ongoing health and wellbeing of both the carer and the person who needs care. This includes those households where a child or young person is the carer.

It can be used for a range of purposes including transport costs (including taxis) or fuel, furniture, emergency delivery of food and one-off practical costs to help with the caring role at this time.

How to apply for help: [Cash grants](#) [Help with furniture and white goods](#) [Help with gas and electric bills](#)

Manchester Carers Centre helpline is open for carers Mondays to Thursdays, 9am to 4.30pm on 0161 272 7270.

Alternatively carers can get in touch by [email](#)

Greater Manchester Real Living Wage Campaign Update



As I reported in the previous newsletter, we are starting to plan how we as a campaign will need to respond to the world post-Covid.

On May 13th we held a Think Group meeting (online of course) to start to look what our priorities should be both for what we campaign on and how we will need to change how we campaign. A group of partners from the VCSE, local authorities, trade unions and the private sector were joined by colleagues from Living Wage Foundation, spent time discussing these issues. It is obvious that we are in a changing landscape and in an unknown and uncertain one. However some themes are beginning to emerge such as the need to build on an increased sense of social solidarity and support for key workers, whilst being aware of the potential for real problems for workers in the 'foundational economy' and particularly those in retail and hospitality, many of whom are unlikely to have earned the Real Living Wage even before the Covid-19 crisis.

We will be continuing the discussion in a second 1-hour online Think Group on June 9th at 2pm. The session will be informal and will focus on thoughts and ideas for campaigning post Covid-19, short and long term. **Please [contact me](#) to take part.**

Whilst planning for the future we are also continuing work in the present. I have had meetings with colleagues from Oldham Council, including the Leader of the Council Cllr Sean Fielding, about how we can work together to support their aspiration for Oldham to become a Living Wage Place. I have also had a catch up with the Growth Company about how the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter will evolve in the short and medium term future.

I also recently had a first meeting with the new Living Wage Foundation Programme Manager, Dan Howard, who will be covering their activities in the North West and who we look forward to working with closely in the coming weeks.

Best Wishes and Stay Safe.

[John Hacking](#),

Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign Co-ordinator

Follow the campaign on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

The Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign is a GMPA project

Passport to Housing

By Clare Maskrey



Over the last fifteen months Bolton's Money Skills Service and Furniture 4U (part of Bolton Council) have been delivering a programme of 'pre-tenancy' sessions to residents in supported and temporary accommodation to teach them about sustaining a future tenancy.

The aims of the project are to provide residents with the essential tools, skills and knowledge to maintain their tenancies and to educate them on their tenancy rights and responsibilities and make sure they are 'tenancy ready' before they move into their own homes.

The Passport to Housing is delivered direct to residents via 1-2-1 sessions over several weeks with each session lasting around an hour and covering one or two topics such as budgeting and banking, furniture options, a pre-residency check list, energy efficiency, value for money and credit repair and understanding a wage slip.

Feedback from those who have taken part in the programme has been excellent with everyone saying that they felt more confident, particularly around budgeting and energy consumption, with many applying for Warm Home Discount, switching their supplier and buying energy savings bulbs. Their awareness of the alternatives to high street lending or rent to own schemes has meant that none had bought furniture on payment plans.

One gentleman who attended the session said he had found it very useful and was now fanatical about switching things off at the sockets. He said that he was able to read the meters correctly and the knowledge gained helped him notice when there was a problem. He felt confident raising issues with his supplier.

A staff member at a hostel in Bolton who provide supported housing to young people and their children, promoting independence and enabling them to sustain their own tenancy said: "I met with Money Skills initially to learn more about their service and the Passport to Housing scheme. A Money Skills team member came into the hostel for around 3 months to work with some of our most vulnerable customers. During that time, they met on a weekly basis, supplementing the support that we offer. Using their expertise and connections they were also able to signpost some of our customers to other relevant services such as 'Furniture4U' who also worked closely alongside us.

They understood that some of our customers are dealing with some complex and challenging personal issues and circumstances and they took this into consideration when helping our customers to budget and plan for various different outcomes. They were kind, friendly and approachable and The Passport to Housing idea was welcomed by our customers, one of whom said 'everyone should make sure they do the Passport to Housing Course because it helps you so much'. We would always welcome them back!"



Beelieve in Greater Manchester is a campaign to provide mental health support during and after the Covid-19 outbreak.

Mental health charities from across Greater Manchester have teamed up in a new campaign, Beelieve to support individuals, families and communities affected by Covid-19. Charities are seeing new issues emerge as people try to cope with the social and psychological distress that Covid-19 and isolation can cause. Beelieve will support individuals by providing resources and equipment which will allow them to access emotional and practical help now and into the future.

Mancunian band The Lottery Winners have offered their support and are donating all profit from the sale of their new single, 'Love Will Keep Us Together' and related merchandise to support this campaign. You can listen to the single [here](#). The campaign is also supported by Mayor Andy Burnham and the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership. Further information about Beelieve is available [here](#).



Job Opportunities: Just Fair exists to realise a fairer and more just society in the UK by monitoring and advocating the protection of economic and social rights.

Just Fair has two current home-based job vacancies: Campaigns and Advocacy Lead - a key role within the organisation, working with the Director to drive Just Fair's evidence-based advocacy and campaigning activities; and Social Rights Alliance Coordinator - to lead the development of a new three-year project to build an England-wide network of grassroots groups, individuals with lived experience of socio-economic discrimination and disadvantage, and members of civil society – the Social Rights Alliance.

The closing date for both vacancies is May 25th, 2020 and more information is available [here](#).

Greater Manchester Combined Authority online support or assistance form

An online form has been developed to help record offers of aid and/or requests for assistance across Greater Manchester in relation to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Any organisation, business or individual who has an offer of support to make is asked to complete the online form. Equally any organisation that is in need of support or assistance must also complete the form.

Once the form is completed, you may receive a response using the contact details provided. However, they will only respond to an offer of assistance where they can usefully utilise the offer. Please provide as much information as possible so that those responding can do so efficiently. The online form can be accessed [here](#). Requests submitted via this form are monitored Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm only.

The Coronavirus outbreak and how it relates to GMPA's work

As the effect of the Coronavirus outbreak impacts people's lives across the city region, our small team at GMPA will be doing what we can to highlight consequences of the virus on people experiencing poverty and on efforts to tackle poverty.

We will be working to ensure tackling poverty is at the forefront of people's minds when thinking about how Greater Manchester rebuilds and recovers after the pandemic. Please keep an eye on the [Coronavirus page](#) of our website over the coming weeks for further details. The page also provides links to many useful resources including the local authority hubs, national agencies and VCSE infrastructure organisations. Please take every possible care and thank you for all that you are doing.



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.