

Launch of GMPA's Beyond Poverty Report

At Greater Manchester Poverty Action we are committed to strengthening the voices of people in poverty. People who have lived experience of poverty are sometimes referred to as experts by experience, rightly recognising the potential that they have to bring about real change for themselves, for their communities, and for wider society. Sharing people's stories is important for raising their voices and helping them to be heard, and for developing everyone's understanding of poverty.



The reasons why poverty exists in Greater Manchester, and in the UK as a whole, are well understood; high living costs, a housing market that is incapable of meeting everyone's needs, a broken social security system that fails to provide a sufficient safety net, and an economy that relies too heavily on insecure and low paying work in order to function are all among the structural factors that result in people experiencing poverty and hardship.

However, the reasons why one person experiences poverty and one person doesn't, and why some people are at greater risk of poverty are complex and multifaceted. Policy and practice needs to be designed in a way that responds to these complexities and challenges. To do so the voices of people with lived experience of poverty must be heard, and furthermore they must be involved in re-designing policy and practice.

We are therefore pleased to announce the launch of GMPA's Beyond Poverty report, which will be serialised in this newsletter over the next few months. The report will share the stories of people from across Greater Manchester who are either currently experiencing poverty or who have experienced poverty in recent years, describing the experience, the causes and the effects of poverty. We don't offer detailed commentary alongside the case studies, we want the voices of these experts by experience to speak for themselves. When all the articles have been published we will print them as a single report – please [let us know in advance](#) if you would like a copy.

We start in this edition with David's story that describes being out of work due to illness and disability, and shows the importance of a supportive and effective welfare system for those unable to work.

We want to take the opportunity to thank everyone whose story you will read in the coming months, who have showed great courage and understanding in coming forward and telling their stories, as well as Peter Cruickshank for having conducted the interviews with such sensitivity and dedication.

Going beyond the Beyond Poverty report, sharing stories is important, but it is only the beginning. Poverty can only be addressed when those who experience it first-hand are involved in the process of identifying problems and working on solutions. We are therefore also inviting experts by experience to co-chair each sub-group of the Food Poverty Alliance ([launching on 8th May, please sign up if you haven't already](#)). In so doing, we aim to co-produce a Food Poverty Action Plan for Greater Manchester with a deep understanding of the causes, effects and experience of food poverty.

Tom Skinner and Graham Whitham, Directors, and Chris Bagley, Communications Manager of Greater Manchester Poverty Action

David's story

An army veteran and former labourer, David's injury prevented him working. His story shows the importance of a supportive and effective welfare system for those unable to work.

Born in Blackburn, David joined the army after school and served in Lebanon. After returning to civilian life, David did manual work, "All kinds of labouring, heavy duty jobs like loading wagons and the demolition of buildings". He had enough money to live on, and was happy. David's face lights up when he talks of Jean, his wife. They met in their 30s, and were married within a year.



Then in 1998 David had an accident, falling down the stairs at home. It left him with serious back and leg injuries, unable to work. David had spent 20 years "paying in". He received Incapacity Benefit to support him while he recovered. However, his back injury was not easy to treat and he suffered from depression. A terrible throat infection then stole David's voice, and he has not talked since – for 10 years he has communicated by typing on a computer. Everything became overwhelming, and David would only leave the house for doctor appointments. He became very dependent on his wife, putting a strain on their relationship.

"When my ESA was stopped, it put my family deeper into poverty. There were times we went without food, once we didn't eat for three days. It was a vicious circle. To keep my bones strong and healthy I needed a healthy diet, but I couldn't afford a healthy diet, so my condition got worse. We wouldn't have survived without food banks".

David received Incapacity Benefit and Employment Support Allowance (ESA) until 2012 when he was summoned to a Work Capability Assessment (WCA). In a wheelchair, and unable to talk, David recounts that "I had my WCA and they said I was fit for work. They took no notice of my very obvious problems. There's not even anywhere in the report talking about my silence during the assessment, and some of the things in the report were simply false, they must have just made that up."

With ESA taken away, David was left living on the lowest rate of Disability Living Allowance. Receiving less than £100 per month, he and his family began to starve. "When my ESA was stopped, it put my family deeper into poverty", he says. "There were times we went without food, once we didn't eat for three days, the benefits were not enough to support us. It was a vicious circle. To keep my bones strong and healthy I needed a healthy diet, but I couldn't afford a healthy diet, so my condition got worse. We wouldn't have survived without food banks. The benefits system should have been better".

David now lives in Wigan, and attends a community centre called [Sunshine House](#) which has given him a greater sense of purpose. He has made good friends, playing Scrabble and other games, and writing science fiction at the writers' group.



David says he has been "struggling, maybe like a lot of people" in the last few years. He is accepting of his condition, remarking, "After this amount of time I don't think that it will improve. I gave up on miracles ages ago". But he smiles and notes the many riches he does enjoy. Through it all, there is a real determination to be part of society, to be accepted. He says, "I want other people to accept my condition as it's not going to get any better. I'd like to be known as me, as I am now. I am David."

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Since their introduction in 2008 Work Capability Assessments have come under much criticism from disabled groups, academics and independent assessors for [damaging mental health](#) and [wrongly removing funding from many people in need](#). Furthermore the National Audit Office has found that about 70,000 [ESA claimants have been underpaid](#) for years, some as much as £20,000.

[DWP's fit-to-work tests 'cause permanent damage to mental health', study finds](#)

[2,000 disabled people wrongly declared 'fit to work' by DWP in just three months](#)

Interview carried out, and photos taken, by Peter Cruickshank for Greater Manchester Poverty Action



End Hunger UK: Many of End Hunger's members and supporters work for emergency food providers including pantries, kitchens and foodbanks. One of their founding principles was to represent the voices of those who work to end hunger and just recently they have been gathering information about the impact of Universal Credit. The Trussell Trust research shows that specific issues with Universal Credit are driving up the numbers of people who use their foodbanks. End Hunger UK has also collected data from other emergency food providers with a view to identifying reforms to Universal Credit that could reduce the number of people relying on emergency food aid. End Hunger UK will be calling on the government to make these changes, and will be seeking support from food providers and others for their campaign. [More information](#)



FareShare: Please, if you haven't already done so, sign the #feedpeoplefirst petition now - **it closes tomorrow!** By making charitable food redistribution easier, FareShare will be able not only to feed many of the 8.4 million people who go hungry in the UK, but also cut emissions. The fund they are asking the Government to create would make it possible to redistribute 100,000 tonnes of food every year, which would save 420,000 co2 emissions. Please sign the petition at feedpeoplefirst.org



Foodinate: In case you haven't come across this yet . . . Order any item on the menu in a Foodinate restaurant that has been marked with a sticker like this:

and enjoy your meal! For every sticker item sold, the restaurant funds a nourishing meal for a local person in need - 20,000 meals and counting! Foodinate aims to match each restaurant with a food-giving charity in the same area, so the meals funded by each restaurant can be served to people in need in the same community. It really is that simple and there's no extra cost to you at all. [More info](#)



Foodinate restaurants in Greater Manchester are currently: Proove Pizza, 160 Burton Road, West Didsbury M20 1LH; Crazy Pedro's 55 - 57 Bridge Street, Manchester M3 3 BQ & Crazy Pedro's NQ, Short Street, Manchester M1 1JG; The Lead Station, 99 Beech Road, Chorlton, M21 9EQ; Tariff & Dale, 2 Tariff Street, Manchester M1 2FN; and George's Dining Room & Bar, 17 - 21 Barton Road, Worsley M28 2PD

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation published a report on April 25th, 2018 entitled '**Universal Basic Income - not the answer to poverty**' This is the opening section - the full report can be read [here](#)



"Universal Basic Income is mooted as a solution to many of the ills of modern economies and stigmatised benefit systems. It's been in the news after [Finland decided to end its short-lived UBI experiment](#). But is UBI a good idea and would it be good for solving poverty? JRF thinks, on balance, it is not.

It is not affordable, unpalatable to most of the public because of its 'money for nothing' tag and perhaps most importantly - it increases poverty unless modified beyond recognition. It fails to deal with the higher needs that many have because of rent, childcare, children or disabilities. As recently put by the last Secretary of State for Work and Pensions: "An affordable basic income would be inadequate, and a basic income that's adequate for all would be unaffordable." "



Meetings

We hope you can join us on May 22nd from 2pm - 3.30pm, at the Manchester Universities' Catholic Chaplaincy, Avila House, 335-337 Oxford Road, M13 9PG.

At this meeting, we are going to begin planning some action that, we hope, will enable the Cooperative Group to agree to become an accredited Living Wage employer. The decision to target the Cooperative Group was decided at our last Campaign Meeting in March.

Following this meeting, agreed actions will take place on May 29th from 2pm onwards. We hope you can join us on both days. Alternatively, if you cannot attend on one or both days, but would like to get involved in other, future action, then please do get in touch via the contact details below.

These are exciting times and together we can make a real difference to people working in Greater Manchester. So please join us on May 22nd and 29th. In the meantime should you have any questions, queries, comments or suggestions for the GM Living Wage Campaign, please get in touch via an email to Lynn or call 07948 549485.

Forthcoming Events:



Greater Manchester Food Poverty Alliance Launch

Tuesday May 8th, 2018 from 1 - 4pm at the Methodist Central Hall, Oldham Street, Manchester M1 1JQ

The proliferation of food banks and other social food providers has been one of the largest movements of this decade - now we must work together for a Greater Manchester in which no-one has to go hungry. Further information and registration is available [here](#)

Manchester BME Network & Greater Manchester BME Network

Friday May 11th, 2018 registration from 9.30am at St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Ardwick, M12 6FZ

A joint networking event. [The draft programme and to register](#) Free to full-members, others £20. Lunch will be provided by BME Network members who are social entrepreneurs. [Full criteria for membership](#)

Lunch & Learn: Achieving Funding & Income Generation Success

Friday May 18th, 2018 from 11am - 2pm at Innospace Business Incubator, Chester Street, Manchester M1 5GD

Learn how to develop a balanced income generation strategy, then get to put that new knowledge into action with a practical training session. Light lunch provided at this free event [More info & book](#)

Energy (in)efficiency: what tenants expect and endure in private renting by University of Salford SHUSU

Thursday June 7th, 2018 from 2 - 3pm at the University of Salford, The Crescent, Salford M6 6PU

We must seek to understand the tenants' perspective, this presentation disseminates a study that explored: how tenants understand energy efficiency; how the absence of it affects them; their relationship with their landlord and the barriers they face in challenging the status quo. [More information and book](#)

Introduction to Community Organising

on Wednesday June 13th, 2018 from 9am - 4pm at Starting Point Community Learning Partnership, Woodley Precinct, Stockport SK6 1RJ

Looking for better ways to motivate people to get involved in your community or organisation? Bothered about what's going wrong in society? Bring people to work together to make a change.

This one day training course introduces you to the core foundations of community organising - how to organise and motivate people to take effective action together to address common concerns. For more info about the Learning Partnership please visit their [website](#)

The course is free and more information and booking is [here](#)

Do you have any events that you'd like GMPA to publicise? Please [Email us](#) with the details.

Poverty in the UK: statistics

The House of Commons Library has published a briefing paper summarising the latest government poverty statistics (published as part of the Department for Work and Pensions annual Household Below Average Income statistics series which was released in March) Download the report [here](#).

How many people were in poverty in 2016/17 after housing costs were deducted?

- 14.3 million were in relative* low income (22%), up 300,000 from the year before.
- 12.4 million were in absolute** low income (19%), down 400,000 from the year before.

Looking specifically at children:

- 4.1 million were in relative* low income (30%), up 100,000 from the year before.
- 3.5 million were in absolute** low income (26%), down 200,000 from the year before.

*people in relative low income – living in households with income below 60% of the median in that year;

** people in absolute low income – living in households with income below 60% of (inflation-adjusted) median income in some base year, usually 2010/11.

Source: DWP [Households below average income, 2016/17](#)

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 for inclusion in a newsletter please [get in touch](#)

For more information please contact us by [email](#) or call 07419 774537 and we will reply as soon as possible.

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.