



Greater Manchester celebrates having over 100 Living Wage employers

Greater Manchester is now home to over 100 accredited Living Wage Employers, who pay the full Living Wage rate of £8.25/hr or above to all of their staff. GM is the first city region in the country outside London to reach this milestone, and it means a significant pay rise for thousands of the lowest paid staff in the region.

Four businesses in GM were accredited on the same day, so each counts as the 100th employer! This takes the number of GM-based Living Wage employers up from 99 to 103. More than half of these are within the city of Manchester. That compares to 39 in Birmingham, the next highest besides London.

Tom Skinner, Coordinator of the Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign said: *"When this campaign launched two and a half years ago, there were only 16 Living Wage employers across the whole of Greater Manchester. What's more, in-work poverty was not widely discussed or understood as a major concern for the region. We set out to change that and today we celebrate having 103 Living Wage Employers. We have shown that GM can go one better than the Government's "National Living Wage" of £7.20/hr, which isn't a Living Wage because it's not based on the cost of living. But this is only the start – we want to make GM a Living Wage Zone; to put Living Wage policy and a culture of social equality at the heart of how Greater Manchester works. There are still many people in work who struggle to get by, so there's a lot more work to be done."*

Niel Bethell, Managing Director of High Access said: *"I'm proud that High Access has been accredited as one of the 100th living wage employers and wanted to share why we felt this was an important move. First things first. When was the last time any of us went into a business meeting or started a day's work thinking we'd give it the minimum investment required and expected to get the best results? Nothing about the way we do business at High Access involves a minimum effort as we seek to consistently deliver the height of expertise. We wanted to ensure our people felt valued and rewarded fairly for the great work they do. For us, we're looking to harness the ambition and discretionary effort of our already motivated team, so that we can all grow together and allow future investment by going the extra mile (or in our case skyward) for our clients."*



GM Interim Mayor Tony Lloyd said: *"Without the Living Wage, people can find themselves in work, yet still in poverty. This is scandalous and counter-productive. The Living Wage helps people to live their lives, realise their aspirations and contribute fully to their local communities and the economy, which benefits us all. If Greater Manchester is to flourish and thrive, we must provide the incentive, opportunities and skills that will enable local people to support themselves and their families. I urge more local employers to look at the benefits of providing a Living Wage and help GM establish itself as a place that truly values the people that live and work here; that sees employees as assets to be nurtured and protected, not just an expenditure that must be offset against profits."*

Katherine Chapman, Director of the Living Wage Foundation said: *"I'm excited to see more and more Greater Manchester employers becoming proud adopters of the voluntary Living Wage. It's great that we have such a diverse group of employers ranging from The Co-operative Bank to Bradley's Bakery showing their belief that a fair day's work deserves a fair day's pay. This is the best route to fighting the in-work poverty that so many people in Greater Manchester struggle with."*

[More information about the Living Wage](#)



Recent Parliamentary debates about the legal status of sex work hit the national headlines, but in Manchester the organisation working on the front line with those in the industry is MASH, Manchester Action on Street Health. Cate Allison, the CEO, welcomes GMPA to their drop in centre in east Manchester. Selling sex on the streets is a *“dangerous, cold, unpleasant life”*,

Cate explains, and MASH’s focus is on frontline support to those women. They tend to stay away from discussions about policy, preferring to focus on influencing local responses on the ground. Even if selling sex became entirely illegal, the role MASH plays wouldn’t go away, *“it would make our work so much harder”*, because those involved would be pushed underground, be harder to reach, harder to support.

The drop in centre is warm, colourful, friendly. In one room, there are counselling facilities, in another medical support and a sexual health clinic is established. The main room is a big open space, with computers, books, sofas and a cosy kitchen. A freshly baked cake is being shared around the main table where volunteers and service users sit making greeting cards. Pictures and framed art decorate the walls, except for one section which is covered in posted notes detailing incidents of assault and attack on the women sex workers. Amongst the comforts, the danger and the difficulty is ever present.



“When we’ve asked women working on the street the majority have told us they don’t want to be there” says Cate. And it’s not just a question of personal danger. It’s about feeling trapped, dependent, desperate. *“80-90% of the women misuse substances with heroin the biggest issue.”*, Cate estimates. The figures are staggeringly high, and are a signpost that selling sex on the street is done not out of choice, but as a last resort. We talk for a time about the huge levels of violence many women have experienced during their lives. Many were abused, many were sexually abused, as children, and there are high levels of mental health problems across the street sex workers as a whole. Indeed, multiple complex problems create multiple complex needs.

There are different types of sex work. Some women work indoors in saunas or parlours, others work as escorts, others might rent a flat in the city. For many of this group, which form the largest bracket of ‘sex workers’, the women are more likely to have made a choice to do what they do, there is increased volition to selling sex as a way of generating a planned personal income. The work might fit in with childcare or complements studies for example. While we note the appalling incidences of trafficking and slavery which are notable exceptions to this, we can say with clarity that these women working indoors are different from those who sell sex on the street, where desperation, compulsion and drug addiction are more likely drivers.

MASH offers no moralising judgements whatsoever on the women they work with, and how could they, when so many have such dark personal stories. Neither is the model based on trying to ‘stop’ the women working selling sex on the street. *“At the beginning, it was all about harm reduction”*, says Cate. *“The philosophy was, ‘if this is what you want to do, do it safely’”*. *And that model has been the only way to build trust. Cate relates the story of one woman who said, “it was only when I believed that they weren’t trying to fix me, that I believed and worked with them.”*



Building trust opens new doors for the service users. MASH supports women who have been sexually assaulted to pursue justice, works with them on ensuring their sexual health, offers pathways to tackle addiction, and helps support sex workers to make lasting changes in many other ways. But given the difficulties of the women MASH work with, and the multiple and complex needs many have, interventions have different effects. Cate notes *“for some people, the only thing you stop is them getting hepatitis, and they’ll still carry on the same.”*

We discuss what Cate would do if she was leader of the Council with a £100m budget. The reply is direct. *“Services need to be provided which are very, very flexible at the point of access. It’s about services where people are, at the times they need them, and delivered in ways that recognise where they are on their journeys”*. Cate is enthusiastic about tailored, individual provision, not boxing women with multiple and complex needs into a system where missing a 9am appointment means undoing months of good progress.

“There will always need to be support for people who haven’t engaged with services”. Frustration with progress is very human, explains Cate, *“it can be very frustrating when you sort someone’s house out, and then they don’t turn up for an appointment”*. She smiles wryly. *“I never thought I’d say this, but there will always be some people where it is going to be charities at the bottom of the safety net, because we’re working with people who find taking control of their lives so difficult and need multiple chances to move on in their lives.”*

This surely is the most inspiring part of MASH’s activities. Working with women who have suffered extreme levels of abuse and deprivation, and who have mental health and drug addiction difficulties cannot be easy. Enduring those frustrations to drive success stories for women whose lives have been turned around is a very worthy and inspirational achievement.

[More information](#)

Who's who? In this section we focus on some of the organisations and individuals that make up GMPA. Some will be very familiar to you, others not so much. We hope that by sharing this information our community will find opportunities to collaborate and to support each other. Together we're stronger.



Jez Green tells GMPA "I've worked at Mustard Tree for seven years, piloting two new projects in that time. Recently I've been seconded to Manchester, working across all sectors to facilitate the co-production and

implementation of a homelessness charter for the city. The charter will act as an umbrella for all partners to work together in new ways to tackle homelessness, and to bring in new organisations not currently involved in this sphere. It is an exciting opportunity to be involved with a growing people movement, with those who have experienced homelessness being at the heart of the work."

Mustard Tree

Combating homelessness and disadvantage

For over 20 years Mustard Tree has been a Greater Manchester based charity committed to providing life support for the homeless and marginalised. We support communities where 'poverty and disadvantage remain a key challenge' and where 'levels of unemployment and economic inactivity are amongst the highest nationally' (Manchester Poverty Commission, 2013). For those facing homelessness and the greatest disadvantage, we seek to open doors to a better future. Our involvement begins with the provision of life support such as providing emergency food, clothing and furniture and quickly progresses to sustainable solutions which is offered through our work readiness and life skills programme, the Freedom Project. We aim to improve the life skills, resilience and well-being of our clients so they have the choice and opportunity to move into employment, training or volunteering.

[More information](#)



Adele Jordan, with the rest of her amazing team, has run Cracking Good Food, a sustainable cooking network across Greater Manchester since 2010. Run as a social enterprise, they teach people how to cook from scratch with 70% of their work being with hard to reach communities like Mustard Tree, Life Share and Compassion Foodbanks as well as City West Housing Association residents in Salford. They believe that everyone has the right to good food and that it's not expensive once you know what to cook and how. There's a full summary of the 100 organisations they've cooked with to date (that's nearly 10,000 people) on their [website](#).

Cracking Good Food also run 4 Cookery Schools for the public, promoting local seasonal food and independent shops and growers to support the local economy. The revenue helps to support the organization to enable the Community Outreach work to continue. Most of the food for the community work comes from Fareshare Greater Manchester, the organization that redistributes unwanted food to those in need.

Cracking Good Food run workshops in Schools about the global and local issues surrounding food waste and as well as a Train the Trainer 2 day COOKBank course, they help communities to set up Cooking Clubs. [Details of the next one in April](#)

They're always looking for volunteers too. You can follow them on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) or check out the [website](#)



Adele Jordan

Who's you? If you haven't already been contacted about sending us your details for this Who's Who page then an email will be coming your way very soon or you could pre-empt that by sending in your profiles! We are asking for 1) a head and shoulders photo of you with approximately 40 words about who you are and what you do and 2) a slightly longer piece about the work of your organisation and how important its contribution is to the community and the region. We also need your logo. These profiles not only go in to the newsletter but are also added to our website and Facebook page.

Please email this information to [Chris](#) Thanks 😊

Forthcoming Events:

'Democratic Devolution: The Future of Greater Manchester'

a Young Citizen's Assembly hosted by Symmetry Creative

On Monday 25th April 2016 10am - 3.15pm

At the People's History Museum, Manchester.

The event will bring together one hundred participants (aged 14-21) and a broad range of stakeholders from across GM to take part in a series of interactive workshops and discussions, aimed at generating new ideas about the future of the city region.

[More information](#)

GMCVO Access and Connect

A resource fair for social enterprises

Tuesday April 26, 2016 9.30am to 4pm at St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester, M12 6FZ

Need advice to raise investment for your social enterprise? Ever wondered how to negotiate your way through local supply chains? Want to meet, network and share information and experiences with other enterprises who can understand the challenges you face? On the day, the St Thomas Centre will be buzzing with stalls from social investors providing practical advice and information and representatives from local social enterprise networks and hubs.

Delegated fee: £10 (payable in advance)

[More information](#)



Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign

Tuesday May 17th, 2016 from 2—4pm at Unison, Arena Point, 1 Hunts Bank, Manchester M3 1UN

Please join us for our next meeting to discuss how we encourage more employers to pay the Living wage.

We hope to see you there. Why not in the meantime keep 'liking' and sharing our [Facebook page](#) to show your support.

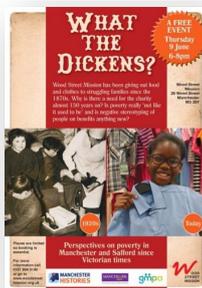
What the Dickens?

Thursday, 9 June 2016 from 6.00 to 8.00pm at Wood Street Mission - 26 Wood St, Manchester M3 3EF

This event, in association with the University of Manchester and GMPA, explores how poverty, and perceptions of poverty and inequality, have changed over the years. Is it really 'not like it used to be'? And is negative stereotyping of people on benefits anything new? A lively, interactive discussion chaired by Julie-Marie Strange from the University of Manchester with drinks and nibbles.

Please go to the [website](#) or email [Sophie](#) for further information. Click here to [book your place](#)

Wood Street Mission building will be open from 5pm for a tour and talk about their work prior to the main event.



Why GM Poverty Action?

In the Recommendations Report of the GM Poverty Commission, 2.4 *Maintaining Momentum on Poverty* called for the formation of a Poverty Action Group to help take forward the work of the Commission.

A small number of public, private and civic sector individuals came together to form GMPA - a 'coalition of the willing'. This group has since grown to nearly 90 organisations and individuals.

GMPA is based upon principles of cooperation between organisations.

For more information about Greater Manchester Poverty Action

please visit our [website](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) or visit our [Facebook](#) page.

All these platforms are there to share news and opinion from our readers, from GM Poverty Action and from our community.

We want to celebrate our successes, find new ways of working together and provide a voice for the people living in poverty in our region. But we can only do this with your help and support.

For more information or to share your news please contact [Chris](#) or [Peter](#).

Copies of previous newsletters are available on our [website](#)

If you would like to contact us or submit an article for inclusion in a newsletter please get in touch in one of the following ways:

Post: c/o 5th Floor Church House, 90 Deansgate, Manchester M3 2GH

Or contact our Communications Manager: Chris Bagley T: 07419 774537 [Email](#) 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.

