

## Co-producing solutions to Manchester's Unsupported Temporary Accommodation

One of the main challenges of hidden homelessness is that because it is unseen, it is often ignored. In May last year, Manchester's Homelessness Charter was launched and one of its uniquely defining features was the inclusion of those who were or had experienced homelessness in its development. In addition, 'action groups' were formed out of the charter to address barriers that those with experience of homelessness identified as presenting significant challenge to addressing their needs. B&B's were not part of the original conversation, since they are not visibly part of the homelessness journey, however it was the voices of those with

experience of homelessness who ensured B&Bs were included as an action group, saying that there will be no eradication of homelessness if the issue of B&Bs is not addressed. The B&B action group was subsequently formed.



Written by Christa Maciver  
of JustLife

To put this into context, Justlife has been conducting research with the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) North since 2013 into how living in unsupported temporary accommodation (UTA) (B&Bs, private hostels, lodges, short stay HMOs) affects the health and wellbeing of its residents (*Not Home* (Dec 2014), *Nowhere Fast* (Jan 2016), *The Journey Home* (Dec 2016)). We discovered that up to this point there was very little information on UTA nationally. Shelter published the last full report in 1997.

Our research uncovered a pretty bleak reality. UTA is the accommodation where homeless households end up as a last resort. Sometimes they are placed by local authority teams such as adult social care, housing, mental health teams, sometimes by other charities, through hospital discharge or prison housing services and sometimes individuals self-refer. Often, individuals are caught in a continuous cycle of rough sleeping and living in UTA. We discovered that when individuals enter into this accommodation it is often for an unknown and unspecified amount of time. There is over a 50% chance that they will not have a working lock on their door, most will share filthy, squalid bathroom facilities, which are often out of order. Many will have windows that don't close, most will not be provided with bedding. They will feel intimidated and harassed by other residents and in some cases by the management and they will find illegal money lending and drug dealing on the premises are common. The prognosis for those entering UTA is that they are likely to experience deteriorating mental and physical health, increased anxiety, higher drug and alcohol use, increased social isolation and an increased risk of premature death.

It is important to remember through all of this, that UTA is temporary, insecure and substandard accommodation. Those living in these places are not tenants, have very few rights and certainly do not regard these UTAs as their 'home.' Some have told us they would prefer living on the streets. Yet, because of the combination of lack of housing and a population of single homeless households who typically do not qualify for official housing support, many have no other option but to end up in this substandard temporary accommodation.

Manchester's B&B Action Group has come together to address the challenges posed by UTA on the hidden homeless population within it. Central to the work we are doing is not simply discovering more about the issue itself i.e. how many are there in Manchester? where are they? what conditions are they in? what can we do to improve referrals and support of residents? but the equal inclusion of those with lived experience in this process. Some of our outcomes are already surprising, the most interesting of which has been the residents challenging us to include landlords in this process. We had originally avoided the inclusion of landlords to protect the residents involved, however residents told us that we would not create lasting change if we do not include them. As a result, our next action group meeting will include landlords as we discuss the beginning of a forum for B&B landlords.

Ultimately, the need for and use of B&Bs is a deep-seated systemic issue and it will take time, commitment and continued hope for something better to influence lasting change. We believe we have potential to create this change in Manchester because we have relevant individuals from across sectors coming together to create and test solutions to this complex problem. Change may not be immediate but it is coming. Manchester's Homelessness Charter and all involved are making this seem possible.

More information about [JustLife](#)

## Taking action on local employment issues: how far can voluntary employment charter initiatives take us?

As the Greater Manchester mayoral election approaches, a key issue on the candidates' agendas is raising employment standards across the city. Greater Manchester Poverty Action has been working with Ceri Hughes from the Inclusive Growth Analysis Unit and Emily Ball from Oxfam GB to examine the role that local employment charters can play in addressing labour market issues such as low-paid, insecure employment. Here, our co-authors Ceri and Emily summarise some of the points of [our paper, which you can read here](#).

### What is a local charter?

Local employment charters are voluntary initiatives that set out to describe good employment practices and to recognise those employers that adopt them. A number of local authorities have developed their own employment charters, including [Salford](#) and [Oldham](#).

There are some clear [reasons for focussing on employment standards](#) in the city region. For one thing, 23% of the jobs done by the residents of Greater Manchester are paid less than the Living Wage and by 2020 the Resolution Foundation estimates that 1 in 6 workers in the region will be on the minimum wage. Meanwhile, 180,000 working-age people have no qualifications which can make it difficult for them to enter and progress in work.

Employment charters may help us to achieve a more inclusive labour market that offers more people the opportunity to take part in rewarding, well-paid work, thereby addressing many causes of in-work poverty.

### The impact of voluntary local action on employment standards

Local employment charters can encourage and support employers to *change* their practices and drive up standards. The charters can provide direction, tools and resources for employers interested in offering good employment as well as helping to establish a standard. This can make some headway in outlining fair and decent pay and employment conditions, recruitment practices, employee engagement and investment in training and development.

However, there are limits to what they can achieve. They are usually voluntary initiatives and tend to engage directly only with a small number of employers. The commitments also usually only address the issues affecting current and potential employees, leaving out those people working within a company's supply chain. (The [Living Wage accreditation scheme](#) is a notable exception and has been promoted through some employment charters.)

Maintaining momentum and pushing for organisational change is challenging, particularly where there is limited resource to support business engagement. Many charters offer 'incentives' and an accreditation process to encourage engagement. Some require businesses to sign up to the charter to access council contracts or, in one example, to access a business rate discount for small employers. But regardless of the incentives, charters must be well resourced and regularly promoted and monitored.

### An employment charter for Greater Manchester

We argue that for an employment charter for Greater Manchester to be successful, due care and consideration needs to be taken when making choices about its design, implementation and reviewing process.

Recommendations include:

- Establishing a dedicated independent working group to co-design the charter, with representatives from local authorities, businesses, workers and their representatives, and other stakeholders and experts;
- Being clear on the expected impact; setting out deliverable and measurable commitments and showing how the charter fits within a wider agenda for inclusive growth;
- Balancing flexibility, rigour, and incentives for businesses across different sectors to increase engagement;
- Ensuring robust monitoring is built in along with the resource that is required to support business engagement and accountability.

By learning from the strengths and understanding the limitations of existing charters, Greater Manchester could really test the potential of voluntary employment charters.



Ceri Hughes

Emily Ball

## Skills distribution, social inequality and economic performance

*This Work and Wages article is the third in the series from Mike Booth, Regional Organiser for Unison North West. He argues that skills are being pushed down the pay grades and advocates that the concept of inclusive growth should be used as a guide for skills policies.*

Skills are critically important for the economic performance of communities. Greater proficiency and real opportunities to gain key skills among workers drive productivity and participation in the workforce, leading to increased growth and prosperity. This higher economic output provides individuals, companies, local Councils and Health Services with the resources to further improve the opportunities for acquiring and developing skills.

In a nutshell, economists call this ‘inclusive growth’. In theory if we all work together and share our skills for the greater benefit of us all then we become less unequal. All this assumes that income is similarly shared and redistributed which in turn reduces or eliminates poverty. Well that’s the theory, what about the practice.



It's a mixed bag to be fair. As a Union Organiser in the public sector I have seen workforces become flatter in their structures with less managerial and supervisory roles, less specialism, less technical roles and more front line face to face staff. This is good as it drives the redistribution of skills to those at the forefront of work whatever work that is. However, pay and income equality does not follow suit.

The best skills policies are those that improve skills for everyone, those in work and those out of work. It is indeed possible to design skills policies that contribute to inclusive growth, integrating increased pay rates at the bottom to match the increase skill proficiency required of front line challenging job roles.

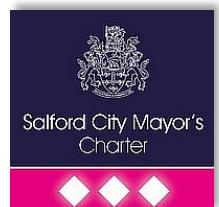
There is little evidence that Public Sector employers have visible policies to develop skills and reward the distribution of skills. Instead skills have been pushed down to lower pay bands, which up-skills the front-line workforce like Health Care Assistants, Home Carers, Residential Carers, Nursery Nurses, Teaching Assistants but at the lower levels of pay.

For example, there has been a filtering downwards of some job duties and skills from Nurses to Health Care Assistants, or from Teachers to Teaching Assistants, or Supervisors to Home Carers or Nursery Nurses to Welfare Assistants. All these new job functions are at a lower rate of pay than the higher valued jobs.

While the skills base is being distributed downwards, it is coupled with savings to employers, so it devalues that work and those skills. In turn, those new lower graded jobs create a job skill ceiling between professional and qualified roles, and I use this phrase reservedly to non-professional jobs.

Workers should be properly remunerated given their increased skills to deliver the same functions on behalf of their employer but this does not happen, unless an employer purposefully tackles this by raising the minimum levels of wages and redistributes its pay bill.

The good news is that Councils in Greater Manchester are starting to do just that. Take Salford City Council for example, they have an Employment Charter to work with Salford employers to create sustainable employment opportunities and access into work through raising skill levels of those in work and those seeking work.



By adopting the best possible working conditions and tackling low pay across all sectors through encouragement to pay the real living wage of £8.45, this is a demonstrable policy of moving towards social and pay equality.



Mike Booth

### Suggested actions:

#### Decision Makers

- Issue guidance for employers to generate inclusive growth amongst workforces

#### Employers

- Redesign pay structures to reward front line workers
- Pay the Real Living Wage rate, currently £8.45 per hour
- Engage with local communities to improve access to work opportunities

#### Workers

- Join and participate in a trade union

## Forthcoming Events:

### Race, Poverty and a Good Society

On Tuesday April 25th 1 - 3pm at Trinity House Community Resource Centre, Grove Close, Manchester M14 5AA



I4P, Edge Hill University funded by The Webb Memorial Trust have been running focus groups around the country asking civil society groups to consider what is a Good Society and how do we get there? Initial findings were presented at the House of Commons in June last year. The document is now on the [website](#). This is an invitation to come along to discuss how do you create a Good Society, specifically addressing the issue of Race and Poverty. Free to attend. [More information and to book](#)

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### Pioneering approaches to housing and addressing homelessness

On Thursday April 27th 6.30 - 9.30pm at MediaCityUK, University of Salford

This free event starts a series to mark 21 years of the Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit at the University of Salford. We are bringing together speakers to share their insights, knowledge and practice related to housing and homelessness, to discuss and debate ways forward and provide an opportunity to network with likeminded colleagues. [More info and book](#).

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### Greater Manchester Citizens - Mayoral Assembly 2017

On Monday May 1st, 2017 2 - 4pm at The Lowry, Salford Quays M50 3AZ

Citizens UK invite you to join them as they seek pledges from the main Mayoral candidates on transport, social care, housing, young people, skills and public sector reform. This event is not a political hustings. Citizens UK seek to establish a public and accountable relationship with whoever becomes our Mayor on a common good agenda. Free to attend. [More information and to book](#)



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### Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign Update Meeting

On Monday May 15th, 2017 from 2 - 4 pm at Salut Wines, 11 Cooper St, Manchester M2 2FW

Members are invited to give a 3 minute update about recent activities. [Please book to attend](#).

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### COOKBank: Setting up a Community Cooking Club 2 Day Course

On May 17th & 18th At Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Ancoats, Manchester M4 7HR

The course includes: defining good food; how to overcome the many barriers to cooking healthy food from scratch; resourceful financial solutions to food poverty and food waste; logistics of setting up and running a Cracking Good Food Community Cooking Club; a hearty meal - you will deliver a cooking workshop to each other; a full 40 page colour toolkit as a guide for future support; a Certificate of Achievement.

Cost: £250 per person inclusive of lunch on both days, refreshments, all written materials, equipment (aprons provided) and ingredients to cook.

[More information and to book](#)



Any events you'd like GMPA to publicise? [Email us with the details](#)

## Why GM Poverty Action?

In the Recommendations Report of the Greater Manchester 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. This group has since grown to over 700 individuals from more than 200 organisations plus Local Authorities and MPs and an increasing number of members of the public.

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. You can also visit our YouTube channel [Community Voices](#)

All these platforms are there to share news and opinion from our readers, from GM Poverty Action and from the 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](#)

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.

