

## Councils must start to tackle in-work poverty now

By Marcus Johns, IPPR



One in every three children in Greater Manchester lives below the poverty line, after housing costs, and this continues to rise. These new figures from [End Child Poverty](#) are shocking.

While cuts and reforms to benefits are largely to blame, low wages, insecure work, and poor-quality jobs have also had a significant impact. In 2018, the TUC found the number of children nationally growing up in poverty who live in working households is growing – it's currently around 3.1 million.

The relationship between high levels of employment and lower poverty has been widely assumed. But, in the era of record high employment rates – currently 74% in Greater Manchester – alongside increasing levels of poverty, this view appears defunct.

At IPPR North, we recently published '[Decent Work: Harnessing the power of local government](#)', a report highlighting the North's job quality crisis and some of the things northern local authorities are doing to mitigate it.

This crisis sees 1 in 4 northern workers paid less than the Real Living Wage of £9 per hour, the amount needed to just get by. In Greater Manchester, that equates to 270,000 people. The picture is even worse for women: 1 in 3 are paid below the living wage in the North. This crisis is heightening: average weekly pay has fallen £21 per week in real terms since the financial crisis. This puts pressure on household budgets, leading to parents skipping meals to provide food for their children and harming wellbeing with the constant threat of slipping into uncontrollable debt or being unable to pay rent.

To tackle this crisis, we need to focus on decent work. Decent work means secure and reliable hours, training and progression opportunities, a voice at work and fair and decent pay. So, we are calling for the North to become a 'Living Wage Region' by 2025 – where everyone is paid at least the living wage – and for the creation of a Northern Employment Charter, that brings together the region's local employment charters to a shared minimum standard of work. Our report outlines a roadmap to get there, calling on local government to use all levers at their disposal.

Many authorities are already combating low pay and poor-quality work. Despite the headwinds of a decade of austerity, councils are overcoming financial and legal barriers—both real and perceived—to improve pay and conditions for staff, workers in their supply chain, and in their local economies. Councils like Manchester and Salford are leading the way in these efforts.

But what more can be done in Greater Manchester?

All boroughs in Greater Manchester need to work together to embed decent work – our report outlines 27 practical recommendations for councils to start implementing both internally and in their suppliers' workforces. This is accompanied by our 10-point guide for Councillors on decent work in commissioning and procurement.

We know Greater Manchester's employment charter has excellent potential – it needs to be implemented at pace and used by employers across the city region. It can send a clear message: Greater Manchester won't accept less than decent work for all citizens.

We also know Greater Manchester has many anchor institutions, universities, colleges, hospitals whose geography is "sticky": they can't or are very unlikely to ever leave Greater Manchester. They can be supported to adopt decent work and pay living wages. They are also big customers, who can throw their institutional weight behind decent work by demanding it of their suppliers.



Marcus Johns

But crucially, central government must step up. The minimum wage should be raised to at least the real living wage, employment rights should be strengthened and enforcement improved. Local government needs fair and proper funding to deliver decent work indefinitely.

We have a job quality crisis largely because of political choices central government has made: the choice to allow the number on zero hours contracts to rise and real pay to fall. But local government has a choice to do what it can do locally, right now.

Without decent work, working people – and their children – across Greater Manchester, and across the North, will continue to be affected. Local government here in Greater Manchester and across the North must act now.



## GM Food Poverty Action Plan Pledges

GM Housing Providers report regularly on their attempts to tackle poverty ([GM Housing Providers Spring 2019 Anti-Poverty Newsletter](#)), and this month their pledges have been revamped to include many specific commitments to make the [Food Poverty Action Plan](#) a reality. These include:

*Action to reduce the "poverty premium".* We have pledged to work in partnership locally to identify the best deals for our customers on services such as access to technology, broadband and essentials such as white goods, furniture and clothing and to actively market these lower cost options.



*Increase fuel vouchers provision and affordable white goods to ensure people have the fuel and equipment needed to cook meals.* We have pledged to promote initiatives designed to reduce energy bills and to improve access to financial advice and services for existing and prospective tenants

*Establish more food clubs/food pantries, especially in areas that lack affordable healthy food.* Housing providers already work with and support many of the Pantry type projects in GM and we have pledged to support the expansion of models that divert food waste. We will also coordinate an effort which will support the expansion of bulk buy food and support further coordination of food banks and the development of food co-ops.

*Open up unused land for food to be grown for community use and help to grow food for community use.* We have pledged to increase initiatives to grow and access to affordable fresh fruit and vegetables.

*Show leadership in tackling low pay, insecure work, and unemployment – become accredited Real Living Wage employers –* We have pledged to do this with over half of GM housing providers now accredited.

*Develop and implement local procurement policies to source supplies locally, including but not limited to food.* We have pledged to adopt a consistent approach to maximising the value of our procurement and supply chain by adopting and implementing the principles in the GMCA Social Value Policy.

*All Local Authorities and Housing Associations should pledge to invest in new social housing.* We have pledged to work collaboratively on development sites and schemes to maximise impact and reduce costs and continue to prioritise the delivery of low cost rented housing.



## Inspiring Communities Together: Food Matters

Over the past year Inspiring Communities Together in partnership with Age UK Salford, Salford Royal and Salford City Council Public Health Team and other community venues have tested a variety of approaches to try and address community food-related issues.

The approach developed delivered a programme of activities across the life course of start well, live well and age well.

Whilst the test model developed by this partnership came before the launch the [GM Food Poverty Action Plan](#) they have been able to demonstrate that their approach has:

- provided more people with knowledge and skills to make healthy food choices through a variety of tools;
- the joined-up approach has brought together a variety of partners and funding to test a different approach to addressing food poverty;
- more people are now making healthy food choices from across the life course;
- the programme of activity has supported friendships to grow within neighbourhoods.

To develop and deliver this approach has required not only the commitment of the partnership but also access to funding to support management and co-ordination of the model.

For 2019-20 Inspiring Communities Together have made a commitment to:

- carry on the work testing a place-based approach to addressing food poverty using the GM Food Poverty Action Plan;
- build on the learning developed during this period of work to develop a neighbourhood model which can be replicated in other neighbourhoods;
- use the learning that has already taken place to identify funding sources which can provide the resources needed.

Their full report Food Matters: A Neighbourhood Approach, Lessons Learnt April 2018 - March 2019 is available [here](#).

## Any spare mugs, saucepans, trowels, watering cans?

As part of the [Greater Manchester Food Poverty Action Plan](#) launched in March 2019, Cracking Good Food have set up a sponsorship package to facilitate some offers of support through their organisation. Find out more [here](#)



They have also put out a call for all unwanted cooking and growing equipment in order to furnish the community groups and hostels that they are working in with the tools that are needed. Collected items can also be shared out among families and individuals moving on from temporary accommodation.

Through the sponsorship opportunities, [Apex Storage](#) have donated 4 secure storage units where kitchen and garden items donated by everyone can be collected before being redistributed across the city region. The units are in Cheadle, Ardwick, Radcliffe and near Sport City. Full addresses and drop off instructions [here](#). Please contact [Tracey](#) at Cracking Good Food to arrange delivery.

They are looking for: mugs, plates in all sizes, cutlery, soup and cereal bowls, aprons, baking trays, chopping boards, saucepans, utensils, sieves, graters, colanders and storage including airtight food containers. Also most welcome would be small electrical appliances such as blenders, kettles, toasters, microwaves and slow cookers. Larger white goods, such as fridges, freezers, dishwashers and cookers can also be redistributed.

For the 'grow your own' projects they need: growing containers, trowels, forks, spades, gardening gloves, composting soil, rakes, wheelbarrows, canes, garden twine and string, watering cans and hoses and especially seeds, small fruit bushes and salad plants.

So do pass on that collection of odd dinner plates, or those extra mugs you don't need, the stack of garden tubs that you no longer want to pot up and those lettuce seeds someone gave you that you just know you'll never sow!

If you would like to get more involved please check out the [Action Plan](#) to see how you could contribute.



## Forthcoming events

### What proposals should be made in the next UK White Paper on social security (welfare benefits)?

\*Workshops supported by the UK Social Policy Association

The social security/welfare benefits system is failing, with foodbanks and homelessness just two of the most visible signs of this, but there is little agreement, even within civil society, on ways forward.

*\*None of the workshops are being held in Greater Manchester but if you are interested please check out the locations to find one that you could attend.*

The workshops will stimulate thinking about the future of social security/welfare benefits and provide the opportunity for discussion and collaboration among attendees. In particular, the workshops will input to a project called the [Commission on Social Security \(welfare benefits\)](#), led by [Experts by Experience](#) which is issuing a Call for Solutions. All the Commissioners are people with experience of claiming benefits. The Commission's aim is to produce a White Paper style document setting out a better system and building consensus. The Call for Solutions will include questions such as:

What steps can be taken to make Universal Credit better or if you think it should be scrapped, what would replace it?

How can people who are sick or disabled be better supported and how should the system work out who should get sickness or disability benefits?

Should there be a minimum income level below which no one can fall and if so, how could this be done?

How should benefit rates be worked out and how much should each benefit be?

[More information and booking](#)

## More forthcoming events

### Co-Creating Public Services with stories of Lived Experience

Thursday June 6th 2019 from 9.45am - 4.30pm at The Engine Room, People's History Museum, New Court Street, Manchester M3 3ER  
[More information and book](#)

### Peer Support and Solidarity in Manchester

Wednesday June 12th, from 12.30 - 3.30pm at the International Anthony Burgess Foundation, Engine House Chorlton Mill, 3 Cambridge Street, Manchester M1 5BY  
[More information and book](#)

### Sanctions, Support & Service Leavers: Social security benefits and transitions from military to civilian life

Tuesday June 18th, 2019 from 12.30 - 2.30pm at the House of Lords, London

This event presents the findings of a two-year ground-breaking project funded by the Forces in Mind Trust and represents the first substantive research focusing specifically on veterans' experiences of navigating the social security benefits system, providing unique insights into how people are experiencing the system during a period of significant welfare reform and includes presentations by the University of Salford and the University of York research team, followed by a panel response.

This event is free to attend, but [registration is essential](#) as **access to the House of Lords is by invitation only**. If you have any questions about the event or the project please contact [Professor Lisa Scullion](#)

### Low pay, earnings mobility and policy

Wednesday July 3rd, 2019 from 4pm at MMU Business School, Room 3.08 All Saints Campus, Oxford Road, Manchester M15 6BH

Drawing on recently funded research Paul will discuss patterns of low pay and wage progression in the UK, and examine the factors influencing these. How patterns of mobility differ across low-paid sectors, and the relationship between low pay and in-work poverty will also be discussed. He will then consider the opportunities and constraints around developing policy and practice to support better in-work progression, as well as relating this to wider concerns about 'good work'. This free event is part of the Centre for Decent Work and Productivity's seminar series, Manchester Metropolitan University. [More information and book](#)

### How to make a just food future: alternative foodways for a changing world

July 8th - 10th, 2019 at the University of Sheffield

Sponsored by the Sheffield Food Futures Research Centre and the RGS-IBG Food Geographies Working Group, this conference brings academics, practitioners, food thinkers and policy makers together to consider contemporary approaches to addressing current food issues. Political and economic uncertainty look set to continue beyond 2019 with Brexit, austerity, trade wars and geopolitical instability having global repercussions. Combined with macro-scale anxieties around food safety, public health, global environmental change and the sustainability of food production, discussions around food futures and alternatives for food systems remain pertinent and timely. We are very pleased to announce Professor Julian Agyeman, from Tufts University as our keynote speaker, plus interventions from Gary Stott (Incredible Edible) and Barbara Benish, internationally recognised artist, environmental campaigner and farmer, and Tom Skinner, Dr Charlie Spring and Dr Rebecca St. Clair from Greater Manchester, with more to be announced soon.

Conference registration is **FREE** but places are limited to 100 delegates. If you would like attend please register via our [Eventbrite](#) page.

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

## GMPA Training courses 2019

### Understanding Poverty Data

Wednesday June 5th

A course is for suitable for researcher, third, public and private sector organisations and individuals who wish to strengthen the case for their work by presenting accurate and relevant data about poverty to funders, supporters and policy makers. Participants will develop an understanding of what key poverty datasets tell us, how best to access data sources and how to use this knowledge to support the work that they do. [Book here](#)

There are courses on Exploring the Poverty Premium on September 11th and Risk of poverty among different groups on November 6th. Further information and booking forms are available on our [website](#)

At Greater Manchester Poverty Action we are proud of the work that we do, and we regularly receive positive feedback from organisations and individuals. We would like to develop a deeper understanding of the impact of our work and how useful it is to different organisations. We are asking people who receive our newsletter to complete the following survey by **this Friday** :

## [GMPA Survey May 2019](#)

Thank you

### 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.



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