

POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

By Debbie Abrahams, MP for Oldham East and Saddleworth

In May, on the 49th anniversary of the Equal Pay Act 1970, the [Equality Trust published](#) analysis of the CEO pay ratios, gender pay gaps and gender bonus gaps in FTSE 100 companies revealing the ongoing pay inequality across different sectors. It followed on from the ONS reporting in February of the increase in income inequalities in 2018 as measured by the Gini coefficient (it increased from 31.4 to 32.5). The average income of the poorest fifth of the population after inflation contracted by 1.6% in the last financial year, while the average income of the richest fifth [rose by 4.7%](#). And 'Fat Cat Friday' in January exposed that top executives were earning 133 times more than their average worker. [The ratio was 47 in 1998.](#)

Last year's Equalities and Human Rights Commission [report](#) showed that the poorest tenth of households will on average lose about 10% of their income by 2022 – equivalent to £1 in every £8 of net income. This reflects other distributional analyses, for example from the Institute of Fiscal Studies.

[Much is also known about inequalities in wealth:](#) the richest 1,000 people in the UK have wealth estimated at £724bn, greater than the wealth of the poorest 40% at £567 billion. This privileged 1,000 saw their income increase by £66bn in one year alone, and £255bn over the last 5 years.

The impact of these inequalities on life expectancy, which is now stalling after decades of growth, has not gone [unnoticed](#). For women, the gap is the largest since the 1920s. For older women life expectancy is actually reversing. The data also indicates that deprived areas, where people on low incomes are most likely to live, also have lower life expectancy rates. The analysis shows that whilst the USA and some European countries are seeing this life expectancy slow down, it is worst in the UK. Interestingly, this doesn't appear to be a developed country phenomenon as Japan, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark have all seen continuing increases in life expectancy.

This stalling in life expectancy has been picked up the actuaries. PriceWaterhouseCoopers estimates that '[a] sharp slowdown in the improvement to life expectancy could wipe £310bn from the pension deficits of thousands of UK companies with final salary schemes', [equivalent to a 15% reduction.](#)

There is also a persistent north–south divide in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy, with, for example, people residing in southern regions of England on average living longer and with fewer years in poor health than those living further north. For example, in 2015–17, life expectancy at birth for men was lowest in Blackpool and highest in Hart in Hampshire, with a difference of about nine years. For women, life expectancy was again lowest in Blackpool and highest in East Dorset, with a difference of about six years. Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales [all had lower life expectancies than England.](#)

And the poverty that more and more of our children are growing up in is having a devastating effect on them, with an increase in child mortality and decline in children's health as a direct result.

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Debbie Abrahams

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None of this is new. Seminal works such as the Health Divide back in 1987 first highlighted this. The Spirit Level ten years ago showed that in societies and communities where the gaps between the rich and poor are narrow, life expectancy, educational attainment, social mobility, trust and more, increases. In addition, more equal societies see economic benefits as described by the [International Monetary Fund](#). Fairer, more equal societies benefit everyone.

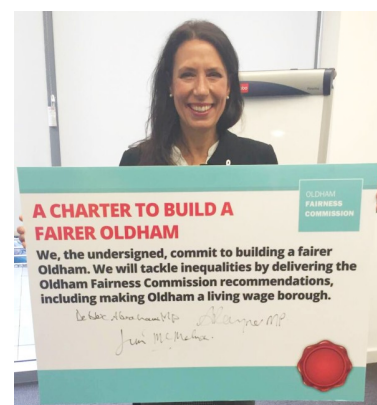
Wilkinson's and Pickett's most recent work, *The Inner Level*, examined how more equal societies reduce stress and improve everyone's wellbeing, unpicking the evidence of the pathophysiological pathways and mechanisms through which inequalities act to affect our health and wellbeing, physical, mental, emotional and more.

Our health and longevity depend on how and where we are able to live, which in turn depends on our financial means. But on top of this, there is [an independent and universal effect](#) that reflects our positions in a hierarchy: our 'class', status and relative power.

But I believe it is the impacts of these inequalities in power that are worthy of greater exploration and analysis. For example, political power includes the state's 'power to' do many things on behalf of the general population, but given the falling turnout at elections do our citizens feel this political power vested in our politicians is more about 'power over' rather than 'power with'? How can our political and electoral systems ensure more effective involvement of citizens in political life so that the state is bound to the 'common good'?

There's more to be done on inequalities in everyday or practical power too. The powerlessness people experience on a daily basis is immense: struggling to access services to get housing repairs done; being on a zero hours contract and not knowing from one week to the next how many hours you may be working and what your income will be; having your social security claim refused or delayed in a way that dehumanises the claimant; or, being in pain and unable to get the timely treatment you need from the doctor. How much control we feel we have over our lives, our self-efficacy or personal power can in turn have an immense impact on our emotional and physical health as we know from, for example, the [Whitehall Studies](#).

I became a politician to tackle these inequalities. I believe we need action at all levels to address them. At a national level, I am hopeful that the recently launched Deaton Inquiry into inequalities will look at the power inequalities I have described, including their inter-relationship between each other. Similarly, the work of the APPG for Health in All Policies which I chair, is currently examining the health impacts of the 2016 Welfare Reform and Work Act, particularly on children and disabled people.



Debbie Abrahams with
Oldham's Fairness Charter



Oldham Fairness Commissioners

At a Greater Manchester level, I am delighted that the GM Mayor, Andy Burnham, will soon be launching a GM Fairness Commission. And in Oldham, as we review the progress from the Oldham Fairness Commission, we will be also looking at how we can work differently across all sectors, tackling the inequalities in practical power too many of our citizens experience.

For a copy of the fully referenced article please visit our website [here](#).

No Recourse to Public Funds – the Lalley Centre experience

by Julia Coulton, Community Services Manager, Caritas Salford



The Lalley Centre, one of the community projects of the charity Caritas Diocese of Salford, helps people from across North Manchester who are struggling to feed their families and to make ends meet. We provide food support, help and advice to many people. One of the groups of people who come to us for help are those directly affected by the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) legislation, which is not very well known. We wanted to highlight the situation that people subject to NRPF find themselves in, and how hard it is for them to support themselves and their families.

NRPF status was introduced via the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act, and further widened in 2012. People with NRPF status are not allowed to claim benefits or to seek work. This status can last for up to 10 years, while people negotiate the costly and lengthy immigration processes. Many of these people are families with children, and these children sometimes have British citizenship, but are not given access to basic support such as benefits and free school meals like other children in their position receive. They lose out on these vital lifelines to prevent people falling into poverty, simply due to the NRPF status of their parents.

Some research recently published by The Unity Project, which is based in London and supports people with NRPF status, found that nationally, the NRPF policy disproportionately affects women, and people from BME communities. Our experience in North Manchester certainly bears this out. In 2018/19 – 22% of our Lalley Centre food bank members (36 out of 164 members) had NRPF status.

So far in 2019/20, 16% of our Lalley Centre food bank members had NRPF status. These family groupings consist of 17 women, 7 men, and 35 children. 10 of these families are female single parent households. All the families are from BME communities.

The Home Office has recently agreed to review its policy regarding NRPF, but in the meantime its consequences are that children are living in poverty and unable to access the basics like a hot meal and adequate clothing.

You can read the full Unity Project report, “Access Denied: The cost of the ‘no recourse to public funds’ policy” [here](#)



Julia Coulton

News from the Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign



I'd like to introduce myself as the new Co-ordinator for the GM Living Wage Campaign. My employment background has been mostly in the voluntary and community sector, developing social enterprises, and working on employment and skills projects in Manchester. Latterly I was working to increase the amount of European Funding coming into communities in the North West to help to tackle poverty and inequality. I am a local councillor in Manchester and am a Governor at The Manchester College. I am really excited to be working with GMPA and other national and regional partners on this campaign which is of central importance to the quality of life of lots of workers in Greater Manchester.

I am committed to working to bring local authorities and other public bodies on board with the campaign, as well as businesses and charities. The recent announcement that Manchester City Council are seeking accreditation as a Living Wage Employer is fantastic news. The work going on across various sectors in Salford to create the first Living Wage Place is another really positive step forward for the Campaign. I believe that the key to a successful campaign is to get the Real Living Wage embedded into employment contracts and contracts right through the supply chain.



I want to build a campaign where everyone can help out and where we use the skills and knowledge of our partners to bring real tangible benefits to low paid workers across the North West. If you would like to join us in action on the Real Living Wage but are not yet signed up to receive updates directly from the Campaign please email me. If you can pay the Real Living Wage but are not yet accredited, why not join over 100 employers based in Greater Manchester, and apply for accreditation today – even better, let us know so we can support you and share the good news.

[John Hacking](#)

Coordinator, Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign

Reflections on the 2019 Food Power conference

By Rebecca St. Clair and Megan Blake



Last month, [Food Power](#), an initiative that helps local communities and alliances work collaboratively to reduce food poverty, held their second annual conference in Newcastle. We went to represent the Greater Manchester Food Poverty Alliance, and as it so closely followed the launch of the GM Food Poverty Action Plan, the conference provided the ideal opportunity for us to hear from groups at a more advanced stage of action plan implementation, and to share our experiences with those just beginning on the journey of forming alliances or partnerships.

The event kicked-off on the Tuesday evening with a get-together at Seven Stories, the National Centre for Children's Books. The venue reflected an integral theme of the conference, around sharing experiences, learning from one another and telling stories. The Men's Pie Club, a project that brings people together to cook while combatting social isolation and mental and physical health problems, provided delicious pies for everyone. After our meal, we heard about the [Darwen Gets Hungry](#) campaign and Edgelands, a film made by young people, about young people and food poverty.

Wednesday was structured around a series of parallel workshops and key themes from our perspective included:

- Local knowledge and a place-based approach
- Action plans and advocacy informed by research and collaboration
- Inclusivity

In a workshop discussing the role of networks and national programmes, questions raised included: Can national campaigns effectively support experts in localities while being aware of local sensitivities and avoiding the duplication of efforts? How can national programmes ensure they communicate with all the relevant local people/community groups, particularly when landscapes shift so frequently? Conversely, where can local groups go to find out about national campaigns? It seems that there is a need for easily accessible information about national and local initiatives and while the [Sustainable Food Cities](#) website details numerous campaigns and food partnerships, the lists are by no means an exhaustive. As Kath Dalmeny of [Sustain](#) observed, navigating networks and activities can be a messy process, but this often seems unavoidable.

In a workshop on the development of alliances and action plans, Moray Foodbank spoke about their food poverty action plan and the research carried out to support its development. During focus groups and interviews, the group learnt that people experiencing food poverty were often exposed to judgemental attitudes from professional service providers and it became clear there is still a desperate need to remove the stigma around food poverty. As a result, Moray included this as the top priority of their action plan. Others seeking guidance on framing conversations about food poverty may find the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's [Project Twist](#) a useful point of reference.

Regarding the need for partnerships and alliances to be inclusive, ideas raised included varying the location of meetings to give everyone the best chance of attending; identifying common aims and ensuring participation is mutually beneficial; recruiting experts by experience first (Oxford used this approach and reported that it has worked well).

One workshop focused on the [Healthy Start](#) voucher scheme, designed to support families with young children and pregnant mothers on low incomes to buy fruit, vegetables and milk. The vouchers, which must be signed-off by health professionals, are allocated per child/per week and distributed on a monthly basis. Currently only 64% of eligible households claim their vouchers, so Food Power is working to raise awareness and increase uptake. Sustain's [Healthy Start toolkit](#) outlines actions that can be taken on a range of levels.

The conference gave us a real sense of the pride that Newcastle has in its history, its reputation for hospitality and community spirit and its food heritage. As with many areas, Newcastle has suffered sustained cuts to local services and witnessed the all-too-familiar trends of more people accessing food banks, finding themselves at the mercy of precarious employment, low wages and a weakened welfare system. A message that featured throughout the event was that while organisations and individuals are rightly proud of their communities coming together and supporting those most in need, they are simultaneously outraged by the very existence of food poverty. Clearly, local action should take place alongside campaigns for national-scale structural adjustments and longer-term planning to ensure the continuation of place-based forms of support that help to restore and strengthen our communities.



Rebecca St. Clair

Megan Blake

Unlimited Potential wins 'Against All Odds industry' award for dedication to real Living Wage

At the national Living Wage Champion Awards, Salford-based Unlimited Potential was recognised for its role in leading the way and demonstrating that not only is paying the Living Wage possible in low-paid industries but that by doing business differently, they can change the industry for the better.

Awarded the 'Against All Odds Industry' Champion Award for its dedication to spreading the real Living Wage in health and care in Salford, Unlimited Potential is also tackling the challenge of outsourced and sub-contracted services by promoting the real Living Wage within procurement. This is the second national Living Wage Champion award that Unlimited Potential has received, having won the Industry Leadership Award in 2018.

Chris Dabbs, Chief Executive, said: "We are very proud to have been given this award and to pay the real Living Wage. Paying the real Living Wage is simply the right thing to do and we really hope that other local employers follow our lead. We are aiming to spread the real Living Wage in health and care across Greater Manchester."

The real Living Wage is currently £9.00 per hour across the UK (£10.55 in London). Unlike the government's 'National Living Wage' it is independently calculated based on the cost of living. There are over 5,400 Living Wage employers in the UK including 27 in Salford, of whom 11 are in health and care.

"We are pleased that almost every main health and care organisation in Salford is an accredited Living Wage employer" continued Chris. "We were especially pleased that Aspire, a social care provider in Salford, also won a Living Wage Champion Award this year for going Beyond the Living Wage."

For more information about Unlimited Potential please visit their [website](#)

In total there were five Living Wage Champions from Greater Manchester - an exceptionally strong showing from our city region. Congratulations from GMPA and the GM Living Wage Campaign to our partners Trafford Housing Trust, GM Citizens, Facicom, Unlimited Potential, and Aspire.



Robert Stephenson-Padron (Penrose Care), Chris Dabbs, Marcia Powell, (Unlimited Potential) Martin Lewis (MoneySavingExpert.com)



Finance Administrator

Wood Street Mission are looking to recruit a Finance Administrator to provide bookkeeping, treasury and accountancy support to their small and dedicated team.

For an informal chat about this role, please call Des Lynch on 0161 834 3140. A full [job description](#), [person spec](#) and [application form](#) can be downloaded from their website. Applications should be sent by [email](#). The closing date for applications is July 16th, 2019

Supporter Administrator & Office Manager



Church Action on Poverty are looking for someone who will have the knowledge, skills and experience of managing a small office environment, to help the continuous development of efficient and effective systems and processes to help the charity thrive. The role is for 28 hours per week

For more information and application pack please visit their [website](#). The closing date is July 17th, 2019. Interviews July 23rd, 2019.

Forthcoming events

Greater Manchester High Rise Residents' Forum

TOMORROW: Thursday July 11th, 2019 from 6 - 7.30pm at GMFRS Training and Development Centre, Cassidy Close, Manchester M4 5FP

Residents of high rise blocks across GM are invited to the next Forum. The Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service will provide an update on the ongoing work to reassure people living in high rise buildings across the region since the Grenfell Tower tragedy. They will also be using the meeting to help shape the GM High Rise Task Force response to the current government consultation. The meeting is open to all affected high rise residents and is an opportunity to discuss issues and concerns about fire safety. [Please register](#) to attend

More forthcoming events

New frontiers: The social sector through Brexit, Greater Manchester

TOMORROW: Thursday July 11th, 2019 from 9.30am – 4.30pm at The Mechanics Centre, 103 Princess Street, Manchester M1 6DD

A free conference, bringing together the social sector to discuss the potentially momentous changes Brexit will have on charities, voluntary organisations and the communities they champion and represent: how best to respond, how to prepare and how to mitigate against it where needed. [More information and booking](#)

REBUILD - what's next?

Monday July 15th, 2019 from 4 - 6pm at Bury Christian Fellowship, Manna House, Irwell Street, Bury BL9 0HE

What happens following the demise of REBUILD in Bury? A project to offer starter packs of crockery, bedding and other essentials has been identified but there is still a need for affordable furniture. Views from relevant agencies and individuals to enable a coherent and sustainable plan to be developed would be welcome. Light refreshments will be available. Please confirm your attendance by [email](#)

Greater Manchester and Manchester BME Network Joint Networking Event

On Friday July 19th, 2019 from 9.30am - 2pm at GMCVO, St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester M12 6FZ

Manchester BME Network and Greater Manchester BME Network will be holding our next joint networking event on Friday 19th July 2019 at St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Ardwick, M12 6FZ, starting promptly at 10am. This event is FREE to FULL members of the Greater Manchester and the Manchester BME Networks. For The full criteria for membership can be found [here](#) [Book here](#)

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

Tuesday July 23rd, 2019 from 1 - 4pm at University of Salford Media City, B4, Orange Tower, Salford Quays, Salford M50 2HE

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. The workshops being held across the country 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. [More information and booking](#) This event is hosted by GMPA and the University of Salford.

NEA Annual Conference & Exhibition

From September 16th - 18th, 2019 at Sheffield City Hall Barker's Pool, Sheffield S1 2JA



The NEA Annual Conference and Exhibition is a major three day event in the fuel poverty and energy efficiency calendar. The conference attracts 300+ UK delegates including the energy industry, health sector, government, local authorities, housing associations and other not-for-profit agencies.

The conference is open to all and NEA members benefit from discounts.

[More information on the draft programme and the delegate booking form](#)

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

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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