

Fighting Together for Free Access to Justice

By Tom Skinner



Under austerity, welfare reform and cuts to essential services have resulted in not only financial hardship but also confusion about how to access support, disproportionately affecting people in poverty who rely more on those services. In that context, reliable accessible to advice and justice can be a crucial lifeline to millions of people in need or support, advice and information to help them maximise their incomes, minimise their exposure to financial shocks, and navigate the changing support services available to them.

Unfortunately, this type of support has come under huge pressure in recent years. The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO) [removed more than £350m from the Legal Aid budget](#) and ended the right to legal representation in many areas of the law. Funding for Citizens Advice Bureaux from cash-strapped local authorities and from other agencies [was significantly](#)

[reduced](#), and law centres [closed at an astonishing rate](#) – Greater Manchester, which once had nine law centres, [now has only three](#), in Bury, Rochdale and Manchester.

This is why Greater Manchester Poverty Action endorses Greater Manchester Law Centre’s manifesto, “[Fighting Together for Free Access to Justice](#)”, a vision of a fairer society in which everyone has a part to play. It calls for:

- Law Centres to enforce the legal rights of individuals and campaign with others for change.
- The restoration of a fully funded legal aid system to sit alongside publicly funded and accountable health, social security, transport and housing services.
- A supportive social security system.
- A new generation of social welfare lawyers, developing and retaining legal expertise in social welfare law.
- The right to a secure home and the protection of renters’ rights.
- An end to the hostile environment for claimants and migrants, including adequate compensation for those affected by the Windrush scandal.
- Collaboration between legal and advice services, community groups and campaigning organisations to launch strategic legal challenges to injustice

“The whole approach puts pressure on you to feel shit about yourself, to feel shit about everything.

You want to feel good about yourself and not talk about the bad stuff... Why should we have to be humiliated when we try to explain what we’re capable of?”

A welfare claimant speaking about the process of obtaining their benefit entitlement.



By working together we can build towards a country and a city region that ensures access to justice, so we encourage you to [read the manifesto](#) to see what role you could play.

Tom Skinner,
Co-Director, Greater Manchester Poverty Action

News from the Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign



The Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign is continuing to plan activities for Living Wage Week which runs from November 11th - 15th. In particular we are working with the GM Good Employment Charter team at The Growth Hub to deliver a specific event on the Real Living Wage to employers who are Charter Supporters employers during Living Wage Week. We are also working closely with the Living Wage Foundation and Citizens GM on a collaborative approach to the Week.

Meanwhile, we are continuing to work on persuading and enabling the Co-operative Group to become a Real Living Wage Employer, and there are more campaign activities planned for the Autumn involving more grass roots local actions.



[John Hacking](#)
GM Living Wage
Campaign Coordinator

We continue to support Citizens GM in their campaign to get Manchester United and Manchester City to pay the real Living Wage to all their contracted and sub-contracted workers. The GM Living Wage Campaign has been promoting and supporting the Citizens UK petition which can be signed [here](#). You can also see more about this campaign at [GM LW Campaign's Facebook](#) page dedicated to this City/Utd campaign.

We are also putting a specific focus in the next few weeks on the Third Sector. The Campaign will support 10GM (the various Third Sector associations and coalitions in each borough) to encourage their members to become Real Living Wage Employers, devising specific offers and ways they can communicate it to their members, driving up pay in another sector that tends towards low pay.

GREATER MANCHESTER VCSE DEVOLUTION REFERENCE GROUP

The [VCSE Devolution Reference Group](#) with support from colleagues at GMCA have developed a VCSE Policy Position Paper which sets out a long term ambition for the VCSE sector in GM.

Please share your views on the draft Paper. Does it describe a way forward that is meaningful for all VCSE organisations? The paper builds on the [Accord with Mayor of Greater Manchester and GM Combined Authority \(GMCA\)](#), and the [Memorandum of Understanding with the GM Health and Social Care Partnership](#).

It is intended to be really ambitious, describing a future role equal to those of the state and business. It sets out what our sector could bring over the next 25 years to Greater Manchester people and communities, and what would need to be done to enable it, including investment.

It isn't an action plan, but after the Policy Paper is finalised in November an 'implementation and transformation plan' will be developed over the following year in each of the 10 localities as well as for Greater Manchester. The plans will vary, but will all be co-designed with relevant partners within the broad framework set out in this Paper.

Please respond to the [online survey](#) by September 30th 2019.

The poverty *issue*



Greater Manchester Housing Providers (GMHP) anti-poverty newsletter

Issue 25 of the GMHP anti-poverty newsletter, puts the spotlight on the work they do to help reduce poverty and some of the projects and communities they are working with. The cover picture shows One Manchester's Lunch and Learn project which is addressing holiday hunger and is featured in the newsletter.

Also in this issue there are contributions from Motiv8, Bolton at Home, ForHousing, Jigsaw Homes, Regenda, Salix Homes, Southway Housing Trust and Stockport Homes.

You can read the newsletter [here](#) or download a copy [here](#)

Inclusive Economy case study: Open Kitchen MCR

GMPA has been working on behalf of the GM VCSE Devolution Reference Group to develop tools that help promote the voluntary and community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector's role in the Greater Manchester economy. As part of this project, we are publishing a series of case studies highlighting organisations delivering social value and operating alternative and ethical business models. This is the third case study. Further information, a short film and all of the case studies are available on our [website](#)



Open Kitchen MCR has two purposes. Environmental: to reduce and stamp out food waste, with a focus on eventually fixing the problem for a sustainable and fairer food future. Social: to provide access to good food for all, and to upskill, educate and support people to come together to further level social inequalities.

Open Kitchen MCR is a community interest company and social enterprise, incorporated in 2014 (originally as Real Junk Food Project Manchester).

Open Kitchen MCR tackles environmental and social problems through a mix of practical action and campaigning. It intercepts food that would otherwise go to waste, and transforms it into amazing catering for conferences, meetings and special occasions. With its sharing ethos, Open Kitchen MCR caters at corporate/private events, for community/not-for-profit organisations, and works with vulnerable people at the grassroots. It also runs 'pay as you feel' staff canteens for housing organisations.

Open Kitchen MCR aims to balance fulfilling its environmental and social aims with operating a financially sustainable business model. It stops food from going to waste, and thus reducing carbon footprints. Open Kitchen MCR supports vulnerable people, including delivery of food and toiletries to three hostels for homeless people. It provides work placements as a step towards mainstream employment for disadvantaged people.



The biggest challenge for Open Kitchen MCR is financial sustainability, so that it can achieve positive environmental and social impact. It seeks to balance its business with its wider impact, such as purchasing environmentally-friendly goods and services. Integrity is crucial for Open Kitchen MCR, not only for ethical reasons, but also to attract new customers. It can be a challenge for staff to fully understand the implications of their purchasing and behaviour. There is also a wider challenge that, in their diversity, people can be messy and unpredictable.

Open Kitchen MCR makes things work effectively by taking the best from all sectors, not least in terms of practical issues such as people management, communications and performance appraisal. It also seeks to ensure that all of its people get what Open Kitchen MCR is about. It wants people to live its policies, not just write or know about them, and seeks to support them to make the policies come alive.



Open Kitchen MCR's vision for the future, as a social enterprise, is to be a business that values its environmental and social aims as much as its financial sustainability. More generally, it wants social enterprise (balancing environmental, social and economic aims) to be seen as 'normal business', rather than profit-driven business being the norm.

Further details are available on their [website](#)



GMCA have launched an [online survey](#) that explores how people move around the city-region at night, how they feel about it, and what might prevent them from being out and about more at night. Its aimed at everyone who travels between 6pm and 6am – whether that’s for work or leisure. Is there a form of transport you avoid? How easy it is to get to or home from night-time jobs or shift work? GMCA would like as many people as possible to complete the survey by October 13th 2019.

Forthcoming events

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 and booking form](#)

Spirit of Manchester Quiz

Tuesday September 17th, 2019 from 6.30 - 9.00pm at The English Lounge, 64-66 High Street, Manchester, M4 1EA

Now in it's 4th year [The Spirit of Manchester Fund](#) continues to successfully provide mini-grants to local voluntary community groups, social enterprises or registered charities to help deliver projects, events or community activities which improve the wellbeing of people who live, work or study in Manchester. In order to raise additional money to the fund this year they are hosting their very own quiz and invite you or team (maximum of 6 per team) to come along. Tickets are priced a £10.00 per person including food. [More info and book](#)



Risk of poverty among different groups

Wednesday November 6th, 2019 from 9.30am - 12.30pm

TRAINING

Risk of poverty among different groups of the population is not static and has changed considerably over the decades. This half day course will look at trends in poverty in the UK among different groups and support participants to think about their own client base and how they can effectively target and design projects and services. More information including a course overview and to book your place please go to our [website](#).

The Manchester Sleepout

Friday November 8th, 2019 kindly hosted again by Manchester Cathedral



Each year the Booth Centre invites people to take on the challenge of sleeping out for one night to highlight some of the hardships that people have to face every night. They are working to end homelessness, in all it's forms. Join them in their mission. Sleep out once, so that others don't have to. [More information, FAQs and registration is now open.](#)

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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