

## Every voter counts - winning over low income voters

By Frank Soodeen, Deputy Director - External Affairs, Joseph Rowntree Foundation



*With a General Election looming, Frank Soodeen from Joseph Rowntree Foundation looks at the importance of low income voters to political parties.*

At the start of this election season the Government re-announced that the four-year benefit freeze would come to an end in April of next year. The welcome move will hardly make up for the substantial losses that many households on low incomes endured in the wake of the financial crash and especially since 2015. But the timing of the announcement is significant, signalling that appealing to low income voters is now on the agenda of all the major parties. The contrast with the 2015 election, when the question of taking £12bn out of the social security budget was a major dividing line, could hardly be starker.

So why the difference? There's been a lot of commentary recently about the extent to which Brexit is shaking up the traditional voting axes – rather than the conventional left-right divisions and class oriented voting preferences analysts argue that the electorate is now polarised between leave and remain; open and closed; and liberal and authoritarian tendencies. We'll soon see whether any of these hypotheses are right but what is certain is that politicians are recalculating their routes to power.

Recent research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation suggests that the choices of low-income voters will be a key determinant of the eventual outcome. For several years JRF has tried to understand better what the 9.5 million voters living in low-income households think about their lives and prospects. We do this for two reasons. First, to persuade those running the country to pay more attention to the needs and aspirations of this key demographic and second, to guide our own policy and campaigning work.

Our latest report in this strand of work Every voter Counts, took it a step further, quantifying for the first time the extent to which low income voters could swing the election either way. New estimates suggest that there are approximately 9.5 million such voters in Great Britain, and they are voting in greater numbers. Between 2015 and 2017, low-income voter turnout increased by seven percentage points, the first noteworthy rise for 30 years. And, in a recent poll, 59% of low-income voters who had not voted in the 2017 election said they now planned to vote at the next one.

Separately our research partners at Hanbury Strategy developed an original framework for thinking about the next contest based on seat demographics and past elections. Current polling suggests that numerous seats in Scotland, the West Country, and Remain heartlands may change hands. What happens in three distinct types of constituency in England and Wales which Labour currently hold will therefore play a major role in determining the occupant of Number 10 after the next election. Of these 109 seats, 40 have more low-income swing voters than the 2017 majority achieved.

Like everyone else, low-income voters will vote for parties that are nearest to their values and attitudes, and those of the social groups they identify most closely with. These decisions are shaped by personal circumstances, the health of their respective communities, and the experiences and views of friends, families and neighbours. On many questions about how society should be run, low-income voters don't appear to have a dramatically distinct set of preferences compared with the average voter. But the struggle of living on less than everyone else gives rise to specific considerations around the cost of living, health, and housing especially, with Brexit being important but not that important to this group of voters.



Frank Soodeen

The striking finding from the research JRF has commissioned is just how disillusioned many people are. Distrust is high, and the current parliamentary fractures are serving to reinforce an existing perception that politics is not working well for people on a low income. Whether it is 'a country that works for everyone', 'for the many not the few', slogans will need to be backed up by reality if the voter coalitions assembled for this election are to hold.

The full report is available [here](#)

## Healthy Holiday Voucher Scheme

by Kenny Flint, Health Improvement Service, Salford City Council



GMPA's [Greater Manchester Food Poverty Action Plan](#) calls for boroughs to support and coordinate provision of activities with food during school holidays, and we are pleased to share stories and good practice such as Salford's Healthy Holiday Voucher Scheme.

Salford City Council delivered a food voucher scheme during July and August 2019, to offer help and support for some of the most vulnerable families in Salford who access the current system of free school meals. This was developed to complement the existing programmes of summer play schemes and Save for Summer, which were delivered by Salford Community Leisure, Integrated Youth Support, Life Centre, VCSE's and other partners. The Healthy Holiday Voucher Scheme was funded by the Health Improvement Service, Salford Assist and the Booth Charity.

The issue of 'Holiday Hunger' has been significantly increasing in recent years with many charities reporting that the pressure on food banks has doubled during school holidays. Children who would usually be entitled to free school meals cannot access them during the holidays. There is evidence to suggest that many children are regularly skipping meals, which has a detrimental impact upon their behaviour and cognitive development. Many families in Salford are forced to face the choice of heating their home or feeding their children.

Families who met certain criteria were provided with an ALDI voucher equating to an additional £30 per child, to help during the 6 weeks of the summer holidays. ALDI was the chosen supplier as the organisation has an existing agreement with the company via Salford Assist, [Salford's local welfare assistance scheme](#)

We contacted eligible parents via school communication systems and social media, and required completion of an application form and an eligibility assessment conducted by the Health Improvement Service. After this assessment, the parent and most accessible neighbourhood Gateway were notified of the successful application and given a unique ID number. Upon production of the unique ID number and a form of ID at the chosen Gateway, the parent was then issued with the vouchers. Over 70% of residents found the application process for the scheme 'Very Easy' to complete and just under 70% found it 'Very Easy' to collect the vouchers. Some of the feedback can be viewed below.

*"I found the scheme very easy and of course every little helps with hungry mouths to feed so thank you."*

*"It helped me and my family out massively, thank you. Due to my household being on a low income, buying food is a struggle, especially in the school holidays. So this was very much appreciated by family."*

*"Single mum of two teen daughters on ESA so massively helped with the grocery shop during the school holidays as the girls want to snack and eat more when home all day. Enabled me to buy extra fruit and keep freezer stocked up. Thank you for the support during this time very much appreciated."*

*"I think this scheme has been very helpful! You don't realise how much extra shopping you need for children when they are not in school. I would definitely apply again if I got the chance to. Thank you also for providing this service."*

*"Just helps people who are on low income and not only on low income but the way everything's going up it makes life a little better to be offered help, I'm in the middle of moving too and it's help me a lot to buy food for the children."*

*"Being a single mum of 2 and struggling at the best of times. This really helped feed the extra hungry pair all day and night whilst still leaving me with money to be able to take them out to have fun."*

*"Bought activity sets as well as lunch for my 5 year old with ASD. Keeps him happy in the afternoons on rainy days."*

Recommendations given to streamline the scheme were to review the process of assessing eligibility to ensure it is quicker and more accurate. This would include greater clarity on the eligibility criteria in relation to Salford residency, or attending a Salford school. Similarly, greater clarity in relation to children attending nursery, such as an Excel formula to quickly calculate from a date of birth if someone is eligible. This could be achieved by creating a bespoke database.



As of September 2019, during the 8-week period there were just over 2,100 applications to the Healthy Holiday Scheme, resulting in a total of 3,667 children being supported. This is 42% of all the children in Salford who are eligible for free school meals. Salford City Council would like to continue the scheme next year.

Kenny Flint

**Salford City Council**

## Inclusive Economy case study: Anchor Removals

GMPA has been working on behalf of the GM VCSE Leadership 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 final case study. Further information, a short film and all of the case studies are available on our [website](#)



Anchor Removals aims to exceed its customers' expectations, care for its team and deliver for society.

Anchor Removals is a private limited company, incorporated in 2008. It became a member of the co-operative moving group [Britannia Movers International](#) in 2009.

Anchor Removals specialises in furniture relocation logistics, both residential and business. It caters for local and long-distance in the UK, full and part loads in Europe, full and part container freight worldwide, specialist container storage, professional packing and furniture protection services, and heavy lifting.



Director Chris Smallwood on BBC Breakfast on the benefits of paying the Living Wage

They seek to show care and not put money before compassion and selflessness. Its commitments to the community and to the environment are: employment of 100% within 15 miles of its operating base; deliver and support programmes that address economic inequalities within society; reduce its carbon footprint; engage with young people in the community; pay over the real Living Wage; work with Reuben's Retreat to support people experiencing bereavement; and supporting local voluntary sporting institutions with physical, technical and financial help.

The key challenge facing Anchor Removals in making a positive impact is that the furniture relocations, storage and overseas relocations industry is renowned for 'casual', seasonal, sub-contract and cash in hand resources, and has an inertia against change. While experiencing unpredictable hours of work, many industry workers are on 'zero hours' terms and without training, leaving them often in debt and reliant on cash in hand payments from secondary jobs. Anchor Removals has found that formal tenders from either the public or private sectors are much more interested in price than quality.



Anchor Removals makes things work effectively through good employment. 40% of employees were previously unemployed and 30% formerly in the 'cash in hand' economy. Anchor Removals pays all staff at least the [real Living Wage](#) and operates no 'zero hours' contracts. It runs a salary scheme and all employees are in the company pension scheme. This creates a secure environment, stable family circumstances, and job security as far as is possible, leading to much less illness and better lifestyle choices. In 2018, the average sick leave per employee at Anchor Removals was just three days.

[Further information](#)



**Living Wage Week:** November 11th - 17th, 2019 was Living Wage Week and many special events took place across the city region. There was some excellent news - Twitter and Facebook were buzzing with #GMLivingWage posts. We'll have a full report in the December 4th, 2019 newsletter.

## Last chance for Manchester school breakfast clubs to get £1000

Kellogg's has been supporting school breakfast clubs in the UK since 1998. The growth and success of these clubs is a testament to the benefits they bring including attendance, attainment, alleviating hunger and providing pre-school care.

We offer grants of £1000 and the funding can be spent on anything that help schools provide breakfast, whether that's crockery, cutlery, arts and crafts, books or food.

The funding window is about to close so apply by the end of November 2019. All you need to do is visit the Kellogg's website [here](#) and go to the grants for schools section to fill in a short application form. This only takes a maximum of ten minutes.

The Kellogg's Breakfast Club team



## Consultancy Opportunity: Social Enterprise Research and Development Consultancy Brief



Breakthrough UK is a Manchester based disabled people's organisation, led by disabled people, that supports other disabled people to work and live independently. As part of their refreshed Strategic Growth Plan, they are keen to understand the feasibility of investing in a new Social Enterprise which will be part of the next stage of Breakthrough's development.

They wish to develop a social enterprise that will provide high quality training and employment opportunities for disabled people and operate as 'profitable' social enterprise.

Breakthrough UK are looking for a consultant, or two consultants, to conduct primary market research and early feasibility into the development of two possible social enterprise models which will benefit disabled people in Greater Manchester. A bakery or an employment support agency.

They are seeking someone with a strong understanding and working knowledge of Social Enterprise sector and models. The work needs to be complete by Monday January 6th 2020 [Further information](#)



MANCHESTER  
CITY COUNCIL

## Welfare Reform Survey

Manchester City Council would like to understand how Manchester residents have been affected by Welfare Reform and Universal Credit. If you are a Manchester resident and you or your family claim Universal Credit, this is your chance to answer a few questions to tell Manchester City Council how Universal Credit is affecting your life. Your response will also be used to help the City Council and partners develop services to help you. Deadline for responses is December 18th, 2019 [Further information and to take part](#)

## Forthcoming events

### Food Collection

**STARTS TOMORROW:** November 21st - 23rd, 2019

For three pre-Christmas days each year, Tesco hosts a nationwide drive to encourage customers to buy an extra item or two of food when they shop in store and donate it at a collection point on their way out. The food donated is used to support people who are struggling to put food on the table. You can volunteer to help out at your local collection or simply shop at Tesco over those three days and drop a few items into the collection. Tesco tops up customer food donations, by making a financial contribution equivalent to 20% of the value of the food collected. Find out more or offer to help [here](#)



## More forthcoming events

### Manchester Voluntary Sector Assembly - Volunteer Involvement - making it happen

Tuesday November 26th, 2019 from 1.30 - 4.30pm at Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service Training Centre, Cassidy Close, Manchester, M4 5HU



Do you manage or co-ordinate volunteers in Manchester? Would you like to meet with others to discuss the current issues, share information and find out how to support each other? This Assembly will look at how the world of volunteer involvement looks now including issues such as peer support, diversity and advocacy. There will also be speakers from organisations who are doing great work in volunteering and a number of workshops including an open space where you can bring your issues and questions for discussion. This event is aimed at anyone who manages or co-ordinates volunteers in Manchester. [Register here](#)

### The World's Big Sleep Out

Saturday December 7th 2019 at Lime Square, Openshaw

The World's Big Sleep Out Campaign was founded by Josh Littlejohn, the co-founder of the charity [Social Bite](#) based in Scotland which started as a small Edinburgh sandwich shop offering employment and free food to homeless people. The event is run in partnership with the Institute for Global

Homelessness, UNICEF USA, Malala Fund and Social Bite. Josh Littlejohn commented "As well as raising money and investing in charities that make a difference, we want to send a message to the World's political leaders to enact compassionate policy and find solutions for homelessness locally and the global refugee crisis that affects us all. We are a small, interconnected world. By collectively sacrificing our beds for one cold night we can reach out a hand of compassion and solidarity with those who need it most – homeless people on our doorsteps and refugees internationally. Over 50,000 people sleeping out on a December night is a mandate for action."

50% of the funds raised will go to Homeless Friendly, 50% will go to supporting people displaced internationally.

[More information and to register](#)



### Understanding poverty measurement, definitions and data

Thursday February 6th, 2020 from 9.30am - 3.45pm at the Honeywell Centre, Oldham, OL8 3BP

Debates about whether poverty exists in the UK and how to define and measure it have raged for decades. A multitude of data is available that helps quantify poverty, but that wealth of data can make finding the most useful and best supporting evidence difficult. By the end of this one-day course participants will have developed 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. [More information and book](#).

### Maximising support for people on low incomes in the austerity era

Friday February 28th, 2020 from 9.30am - 3.45pm at Church House, 90 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 2GH.

This course will explore how to access and identify support for people on low incomes in the context of social security reforms and cuts. This course is for VCSE organisations who work with people experiencing poverty and who wish to understand how to maximise support for their service users and public sector professionals involved in service design and delivery. It will also be of interest to researchers seeking to understand the current social security landscape. [More information and book](#).

**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.