

How can we go about tackling poverty in the aftermath of the pandemic?

By Graham Whitham, Director GMPA

Although the future spread of COVID-19 in the UK is uncertain, with concerns about further waves of the virus, minds are turning to how we recover economically and socially from the pandemic. Of importance will be understanding how we support the recovery in areas and communities hit hardest by the virus. To do this, the country can't simply return to doing things in the same way as they were being done prior to the lockdown. The way the UK economy has functioned, and the way public services have been delivered and funded over the last ten years has reinforced longstanding inequalities and left some places and communities more prone to the pandemic than others.

How places shape the recovery is going to be crucial in the fight against poverty. How our local economies function, how localities use what powers they do have over the welfare, health and social care systems and how services shift away from crisis responses (necessary over the last 12 weeks) and towards prevention and early intervention, will all dictate the scale and nature the issue at a local level over the next ten years.

A common challenge for local decision makers is that many of the main drivers of poverty lie with central government. This can sap energy from responses to the problem and result in councils and their partners picking up the pieces; dealing with the consequences of poverty as opposed to dealing with the root causes. Spending cuts over the last ten years have exacerbated this challenge. In places up and down the UK we have seen many preventative services, the results of which may be harder to evaluate or not understood for years, withdrawn as local authorities and their partners are forced into making short-term budgetary decisions.

The consequence of this is a strong focus on mitigation, often dependent on crisis response services such as foodbanks delivered by the voluntary and community sector or food and energy vouchers delivered through [local welfare assistance schemes](#). These responses deliver easily quantifiable short-term results at relatively low-cost, but don't offer people a pathway out of poverty. It is perhaps not surprising that the number of foodbanks in Greater Manchester has rocketed from an estimated 11 in 2012 to 133 today (with a further 49 food pantries/ clubs and 38 meal providers focusing on supporting people on low incomes [identified by GMPA](#)) at a time when welfare rights and financial inclusion work has diminished.

A way forward in Greater Manchester

These issues will come into sharper focus in Greater Manchester over the coming months and years. The city region is home to 620,000 people living below the low-income poverty line and is beset by strong economic, health and other inequalities. Universal Credit [claimant data](#) since the onset of the lockdown has shown an increased level of need, and all ten boroughs are facing higher costs and reductions in income.

There are already some good examples of strategic approaches to dealing with poverty in Greater Manchester, but all areas will need to prioritise the issue if we are to ensure it doesn't become more entrenched. GMPA believes each locality should adopt a strategic framework that would make tackling poverty a strategic priority and that it is taken into account in all areas of decision making, policy development and service design. This latter point is of heightened importance in light of the severe financial pressures public bodies will be facing over the coming months and years. As difficult decisions about budgets are made, it will be vital to consider the impact of all spending decisions on those on low incomes and we must get the balance right between focussing resources on reduction and prevention of poverty and mitigation.

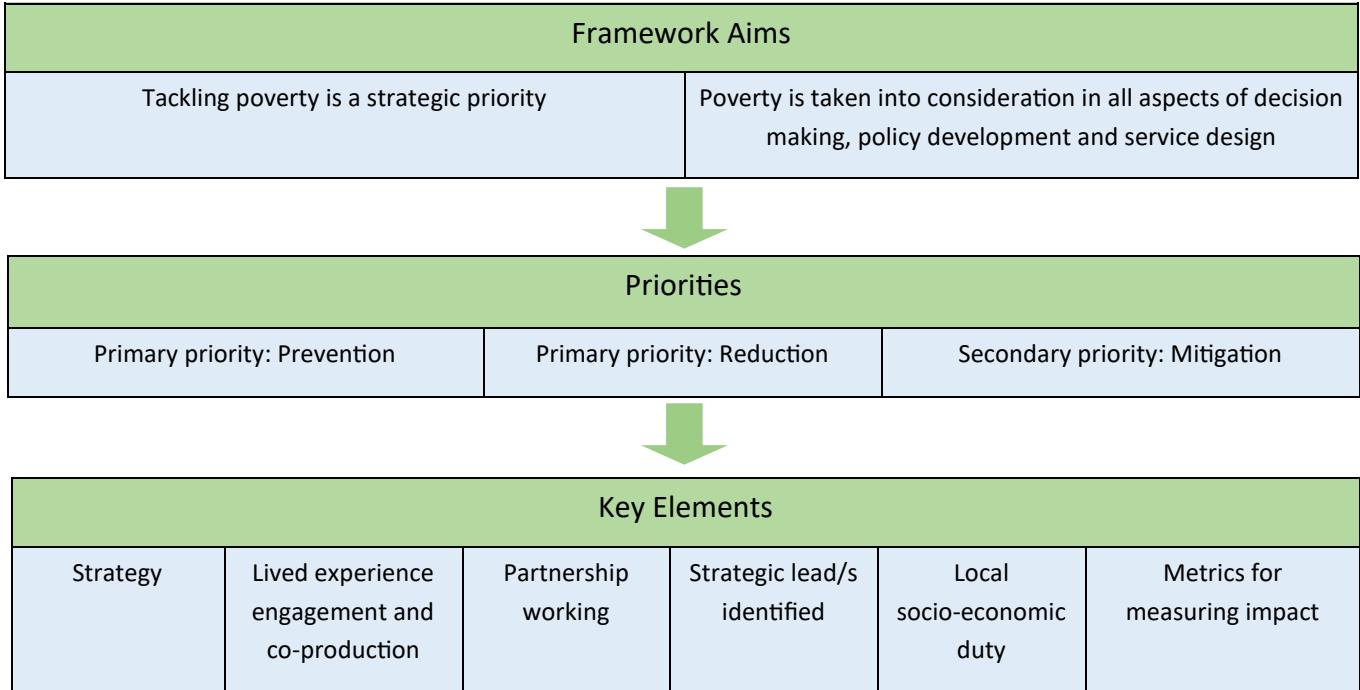
A draft framework for tackling poverty

Figure 1 (shown on the following page) sets out the draft framework developed by GMPA. It is based on our work over recent years, from work in Scotland (where localities are required to develop Local Child Poverty Action Reports) and from existing and past local poverty strategies developed in places across the UK.

continued

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Figure 1: GMPA – Draft framework for tackling poverty at a local level version 1.0 (June 2020)



The framework should be adopted by relevant public bodies in each locality. Whilst councils will always be central to poverty strategy development, this is a crosscutting agenda that can only be successfully addressed through partnership working. The Scottish Child Poverty Act recognises the important role health has to play in this agenda, and as such, the requirement on localities north of the border to report annually on what they are doing to reduce child poverty falls on both local authorities *and* health boards. The framework could also be applied at a combined authority level.

The key elements of the framework

The history of successfully implementing local poverty strategies in the UK is mixed. There is much to learn from what has and hasn't been effective. Strategies are only successful if they are supported by the other elements identified in the framework. All of these elements are complementary and interdependent. A strategy will only be successfully developed and implemented if it is informed by people who have experienced poverty, is built around strong partnership working, is 'owned' and championed by strategic leads with the necessary seniority within their organisation/s and only if progress is tracked against metrics relevant to the nature and scale of poverty in the area.

Strategies can only be successful if all decisions being taken, policies being implemented and services being designed by an organisation share the aims of the strategy and are considered against their impact on poverty. [Local socio-economic duties](#), like the one adopted by [Newcastle City Council](#), can help enable this to happen in a systematic way and would complement existing legal duties on public bodies equalities legislation.



Next steps

To develop the discussion about tackling poverty in the aftermath of the pandemic further, we are holding a webinar at 10.30am on Thursday 25th June. At the event we will consider a number of the issues discussed in this article. You can register for the Webinar [here](#) (the full agenda will be released shortly). We will publish an updated version of the framework on the GMPA website in July. Subsequent webinars in July will focus in on the key policy areas of decent work and local socio-economic duties.

Graham Whitham

Co-production under Covid-19

By Tom Skinner, Director GMPA

Last month Greater Manchester Poverty Action and the GM Health & Social Care Partnership organised a webinar, looking at positive examples of co-production during the Covid-19 pandemic. The aim in highlighting these examples was to explore how other authorities and agencies may be able to co-produce more of their existing activities and their recovery plans. We heard from [GM Homelessness Action Network](#) (GMHAN), the [Manchester Poverty Truth Commission](#) and [10GM](#), and explored how to overcome some common challenges.

GMHAN have been involving homeless people in regular conference calls with the GM Combined Authority and with their whole network. They are speaking to those on the frontline and feeding their thoughts in and acting on their ideas. They are reaching people through fliers going into hotels where homeless people are staying, with options for people to respond through text messages, phone calls or writing. The value of local community organising and personal relationships has been clear as the people who have been most engaged were generally already connected in some way e.g. through another charity or a Housing First key worker.

GMHAN have been maintaining a collaborative through [Convergent Facilitation](#) which makes sure no one needs to compromise on the things that matter most to them, and [Ulab](#) – a process which gives space and permission to collectively process and sense make with depth. They have been encouraging similar ways of working in other homelessness programmes across GM.

They are also supporting [Lockdown Lives](#), in which people share their experiences through videos, pictures or poems. You can [follow these each week online](#).

The **Manchester Poverty Truth Commission**, though disrupted by the pandemic, has been linking Commissioners who have experience of poverty into various local authority teams. In this way they are helping the city to co-produce its Covid-19 response. They have also co-produced a [community-led shopping scheme for sick and disabled people](#). They said there should be a wider shared understanding of poverty and inequality as a frame for experiencing covid-19, sharing this [article about framing](#) but added that it takes changes in behaviour and structure to make the changes in language effective. Meaningful conversations with people experiencing poverty draw on all the assets and resources available in a locality – there is huge capacity, skills, insight and willingness in our communities. Sometimes agencies need to “get out of the way” and amplify the voices of those speaking their truth to power.

They concluded with a similar point to that where co-production is currently working well, it is based on relationships built up over time.

Finally we heard from **10GM**, who talked about the importance of grassroots VCSE and VCSE infrastructure organisations in supporting and facilitating co-production, but they need to be valued and properly resourced. They also spoke about the communications and decision-making/facilitation methods that create the space for co-production.

They also made the offer that if any authorities or agencies want to speak with VCSE sector organisations who do have relationships with people experiencing poverty, to explore co-productive partnerships, 10GM could help make these connections.

Discussion

The speakers joined a panel and discussed challenges that we may face in co-producing GM’s Covid-19 response, including:

- Digital exclusion/technology – IT equipment can be provided for people who have experience of poverty to participate digitally, however we should not assume that video conference calls are accessible even if the equipment is there, and should explore creative ways around this challenge and GMHAN have
- The need to understand and respect that Covid-19 may have affected people’s lives in complex ways and they may not feel able to contribute at this time. However this should not stop us from creating the opportunities for participation
- Building relationships – VCSE sector organisations who have relationships with people in poverty are often needed to make introductions, but their ongoing support may also be needed to ensure participants feel secure and able to be vulnerable

Over all it was a very positive workshop with over 60 participants, and we were very grateful to our speakers and all participants. I would encourage people and organisations across GM to keep working at this – look out for regular meetings of the GM Co-Production Network by [subscribing to the fortnightly Health and Social Care eBulletin](#).



Tom Skinner

Greater Manchester Real Living Wage Campaign Update



As the economy slowly emerges from the lockdown, the full scale and nature of the impact is largely unknown but is widely predicted to be significant and severe. Despite all these unknowns we, as a campaign, are planning now for the challenges and opportunities ahead. I have been in regular contact with partners in Bolton (see Amy's article below) and Oldham to look at activities and events to ensure that the payment of a real Living Wage, for all workers affected by low pay in GM, is front and centre in the plan to Build Back Better in GM. I have also been working closely with the Living Wage Foundation to make sure we are co-ordinating our efforts to maximum affect.

We are supporting the Living Wage Foundation campaign to get all Key Workers up to at least the real Living Wage. Despite the huge contribution they are making, we also know that over 1 million key workers in the UK are not receiving a real Living Wage. We would urge you to [sign the petition](#) and to take a look at [the campaign materials](#).

As part of the campaign planning for the post-pandemic period we will be holding a second Group Think session on the June 16th at 2pm. For joining details or more information [contact me](#). In July we will be holding a webinar to look at the issue of Decent Work and the Real Living Wage Post Pandemic – please look out for details in the next edition of the newsletter.

Best Wishes and Stay Safe.

[John Hacking](#),

Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign Co-ordinator

Follow the campaign on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

The Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign is a GMPA project

Is now the time to be fighting for a Real Living Wage in Bolton?

By Amy Rothwell, Business Development Lead for Boo Coaching & Consulting

An increase in wages for the lowest paid workers in Bolton. An hourly rate calculated according to what employees and their families need to live. How does the case for that stand, now, with recession looming?

1 Capture the Impetus

There are actually strong opportunities while the public feeling is that something needs to change, when social value no longer just a concept to most of us.

Julie Ralph, Policy and Public Affairs Analyst for Bolton at Home, says “Now seems like the right time to join up with other Community Wealth Building initiatives, such as Strength in Places, and Build Back Better. The Living Wage campaign doesn’t need to be a standalone voice.”

One of the common themes of such strategies is a call to keep money local; to spend within our communities and support those local businesses that have kept us supplied us through these challenging times.

2 Shop Wisely

John Hacking, Campaign Coordinator at the Greater Manchester Living Wage campaign says that the current crisis very quickly divided businesses into those that did the right thing, and those that didn’t. “Companies are now being judged on how they instinctively reacted – whether in their treatment of staff, or whether they honoured payments to suppliers. People are now considering more than ever what it means to be a good employer.”

If we, the public, remember this when we make our choices as consumers and services users, we have the power to influence positive change in workplaces. Ensuring that all employees are paid fairly for the work they do seems a natural part of this.

3 Honour our key workers

There has been wide recognition of the burden that ‘key workers’ have shouldered during this pandemic. No more so than in the notoriously undervalued care industry. Adrian Nottingham, Social Value, Quality and Impact Officer at Bolton CVS says “There’s a momentum that cannot be ignored. We’ve been clapping, but now there is a demand for our care workers to be respected in a meaningful way.”

It’s time to strike while the iron is hot. Harness the goodwill of the people - who are customers, services users, decision makers - and fly the flag for fair pay.



Amy Rothwell

How do we Build Bolton Back Better?

By making the Real Living Wage one of the cornerstones.

The impact of Covid-19 on food support providers in GM

By Filippo Oncini, Researcher at the University of Manchester

A new study on the impact of Covid-19 on food support providers in Greater Manchester is being conducted by [Filippo Oncini](#), a researcher based at the University of Manchester.

The research aims to explore in depth the obstacles, the needs and the prospects of the food providers active in Greater Manchester. The findings will be used to increase awareness on the many challenges met by these organisations, to shed light on their needs and to gather a picture on the general situation. Teamsearch, a research agency hired to collect the data, will call each food provider based in Greater Manchester starting from next week to ask permission to conduct an anonymous phone survey. If they agree, the director or a spokesperson of the organisation will respond to a questionnaire on the characteristics of the organisation and on the impact of Covid-19. In addition, the interviewer will also ask if the respondent would like to participate in an hour-long digital interview with Filippo to better explore some aspects of this crisis.

To thank participants for their time, a £10 donation to the food provider will be made for taking part to the survey. An additional £15 donation will be given if the participant decides to take part in the longer interview.

You can find the participant information sheet with detailed information regarding the survey [here](#). If you have any questions or comments, do not hesitate to contact [Filippo by email](#).



Filippo Oncini

Legal action to secure free school meals over the summer

The Government has been [warned it will face legal proceedings](#) if it fails to provide free school meals over the summer holidays, in a letter issued by lawyers acting on behalf of Sustain and Good Law Project. Last week, the Government announced that it will not extend a national food voucher system for children over the summer. A [petition, started by 16-year-old Christina from London](#) is also calling for provision during the summer holidays, and has more than 220,000 signatures.

Housing campaigners have warned that thousands of [tenants are at risk of losing their homes](#) when the government's temporary ban on evictions comes to an end. Locally, tenants' union Acorn is [petitioning GM local authorities](#) to do what they can to minimise this risk.



The 2nd UK research conference on food and poverty: Evidence for change



The forthcoming 2nd UK research conference on food and poverty: Evidence for change, is now only three weeks away. The conference takes place over June 23rd and 24th, 2020 and will be hosted virtually. Details of the conference programme are available [here](#) and the deadline to register is **June 12th**. Please find the link to register [here](#). Registration fees are just £15 for two days and £10 for students.

The conference will focus on highlighting the evidence base which demonstrates the need for action on food insecurity but also on how and what research evidence can be change-making. The aim for the conference is to build understanding on how household food insecurity research can make a difference to policy, practice, and lived experience. The Keynote speaker is Professor Colleen M. Heflin from Syracuse University, USA and the plenary panellists are Emma Revie, Chief Executive, The Trussell Trust; Kartik Raj, Western European Researcher, Human Rights Watch; Dan Crossley, Executive Director, Food Ethics Council and Anna Taylor, Executive Director, Food Foundation. We hope you can join us.

Any questions, don't hesitate to [get in touch](#) with the ENUF team

The Booth Centre has recently celebrated its 25th anniversary but without the party they had planned!

They have remained open and are continuing to offer vital support for some of the most vulnerable people in Manchester. Full details of their revised service can be found [here](#). An information sheet for people who are rough sleeping can be downloaded [here](#).

To celebrate their anniversary they have filmed a quiz, with questions all related to 1995; the year the Booth Centre started. If quizzes are your kind of thing then get your friends, family, work colleagues and your pets ready and click on the image on the right to start.



Supported by the GM Local Enterprise Partnership, **Build Back Better** is a movement of people and organisations who want to explore the opportunity to take stock, re-think and set a new course. If you're a business that shares that ambition, please get in touch with your thoughts on what better looks like and how you can get involved in helping to build a better future. For more information and to get involved click [here](#)



Manchester Community Central Weekly ebulletin

This is a very comprehensive bulletin with a wealth of information including, for the present time, a Coronavirus advice and resources section but also information about funding and grants, events, training, jobs, projects, activities and much more. You can sign up to receive the ebulletin [here](#)



Cracking Good Food

Changing their focus to fit the current situation, Cracking Good Food are cooking and distributing nearly 3,000 meals every week. They have had lots of support from the University of Manchester who have allowed them to use a commercial kitchen and loaned refrigerated vans and drivers. FareShare Greater Manchester have been supplying raw materials, Unicorn Grocery donated amongst other things cool bags to help with delivery, allotment growers have been donating the fruits of their labours, Chorlton Bike Deliveries have been delivering for free, and the College Drive Bakers have been baking cakes and crumbles. To find out more about Cracking Good Food's response please visit their [website](#)

The Coronavirus outbreak and how it relates to GMPA's work

As the effect of the Coronavirus outbreak impacts people's lives across the city region, our small team at GMPA will be doing what we can to highlight consequences of the virus on people experiencing poverty and on efforts to tackle poverty.

We will be working to ensure tackling poverty is at the forefront of people's minds when thinking about how Greater Manchester rebuilds and recovers after the pandemic. Please check on the [Covid-19](#) page of our website over the coming weeks for further details. The page also provides links to useful resources including local authority hubs, national agencies and VCSE infrastructure organisations. Please take every possible care and thank you for all that you are doing.



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 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.