

The disproportionate impact of poverty on BAME communities

By Graham Whitham

Many of you will have seen the recent [Social Metrics Commission report](#) highlighting the shocking extent to which certain parts of our community are at much greater risk of poverty. The report found that nearly half of BAME UK households live in poverty and many in deep poverty, and BAME families are between two to three times more likely to be experiencing persistent poverty.

The pandemic has highlighted many of the inequalities we were already aware of. The virus has sought out and disproportionately affected some of the most vulnerable in our society. Those who said at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak that the virus was a 'great leveller' and that the consequences would be felt by rich and poor alike were talking nonsense.

We invited a number of leading figures from the VCSE sector in Greater Manchester, who have been at the forefront of tackling poverty and inequalities across the city region to provide their comments on the Social Metrics Commission figures and what they mean for the fight against poverty in light of the pandemic.



Miranda Kaunang,
Head of Development,
FareShare GM

"We were in no doubt that thousands of families were struggling to get by before the lockdown, and that hundreds of organisations want to help them. The lockdown, and the Greater Manchester humanitarian response, confirmed that even more. The FareShare GM team has worked very hard to respond to the need for food aid for years.

To see these statistics, and have confirmed once again the scale of the problem, particularly among certain BAME communities, compared to the scale of our response, is daunting. Without further action from government to address the root causes of poverty, the work of FareShare GM will continue to be needed.

One challenge we face is being able to bring more certainty to our attempts to reach those in most need. To do that we need better data and a more tailored reach, and we need to think about how the intelligence we gather can inform policy and practice in a way that reduces the need for food aid. Like many other practical responders, we will keep on providing important support but the systemic landscape has to change. This really matters."

"The majority of BAME people in the UK are migrants. Many lack the knowledge of how things work in their new environment and need support to help them settle. Many have suffered poverty because they do not understand the system and the operation of the country, they lack awareness of rights and entitlement. Many, for lack of knowledge of housing rights, have endured living in accommodation which are not suitable for living, examples being damp ceilings, condensation and overcrowding.

In situations where BAME people educate themselves on their environment and the system, they quickly realise that the system is rigged, and a lot of things are out of their control. Some service providers at different levels who are biased or prejudiced or are point blank racist have not always given the right advice or support when a member of the BAME community have asked for help.

Those who migrate to Britain without a degree find it hard to get employment of their choice and are often put in the 'unskilled labour' bracket. This makes it hard for members of the BAME community to progress."



Elizabeth Dotun
Project Director ,
Rehoboth for families

"These figures show huge disparities for BAME communities and these are figures before COVID -19's big hit on BAME communities. It is shocking and frightening to think what the figures in coming years will say about the huge disparities and persistent inequalities in our western, modern and rich society.

The Social Metrics Commission report should be a must-read for all of us concerned with levels of poverty in our country. It headlines some disturbing and worrying figures for 2018-19 levels of poverty showing some shocking facts.

Greater Manchester is home to a significant BAME population with many districts like Manchester approaching fifty percent ethnic diversity. We should be very concerned locally about what this means for us now and as we begin to understand the aftermath and ongoing impact of COVID on our BAME communities. We need some serious action now!"



Atiha Chaudry
Chair
GM BAME Network



Charles Kwaku-Odoi,
Chief Officer,
Caribbean & African
Health Network

"It is shaming that there is growing inequality for BAME households in a rich country like the United Kingdom. There are structural issues including unfair immigration policies that drive BAME households further into poverty depriving hard working people of a level playing field.

Tackling the structural issues driving BAME households into deeper poverty requires a listening exercise for Government to understand the issues with a commitment to right the wrongs. The Government's commitment to levelling up must be reflected in proportionate investment for communities that have been marginalised for decades and an internal soul searching within institutions like the Home Office that charges BAME households exorbitant fees when they want to remain legally in the UK. Please don't give with one hand and collect with two hands!

Employers including the NHS also have a crucial responsibility to deal with the race pay gap where there are hardworking BAME people who continued to be under paid and not valued equally like their White counterparts."

"These findings highlight once again the disparity of outcomes for BAME communities in comparison with the rest of the UK population. The tragedy of Grenfell 3 years ago, coupled with the adverse effect of COVID-19 on BAME people, provide alarming evidence of the failure of systems and institutions for non-white UK residents.

As it stands, BAME communities' health remains adversely affected by COVID-19; the majority of frontline workers during the pandemic have been those from BAME backgrounds. These findings, therefore, paint a grim picture of the lived experience of BAME people in the UK and deeper work is needed to establish the causes behind these harrowing findings. As Bryan Stevenson, Author of Just Mercy and founder of the Equal Justice Initiative said: "the opposite of poverty is not wealth, it is justice". Justice work is therefore needed to address the often systemic injustice that exists behind these statistics and to establish long-term and sustainable solutions with and for BAME communities."



Beatrice Smith,
Facilitator,
Tameside PTC, GMPA

GMPA Impact Survey – please help us evidence the impact of our work

Last week we launched [Greater Manchester Poverty Action's Annual Impact Survey](#). We want to find out more about how people in our network feel about our work, what they value and the different ways in which GMPA has impact. The findings will help inform our work and support us when making a case to funders and other stakeholders.

The survey should take around ten minutes to complete. We really value the way in which our network engages with and supports us, and would greatly appreciate you taking the time to complete the survey to give us your views.

[Click here](#) to complete the survey. The deadline for completion is 5pm on Wednesday July 29th, 2020.

Ten Years of the Austerity Crisis

By Marcus Johns, IPPR North



On June 22nd, 2010, the then Chancellor delivered his first budget. He said: “we are all in this together.” He said his Government would “protect the most vulnerable in our society.” That budget started the imposition of a decade of austerity. [On June 22nd 2020, IPPR North published new research into the impact that ten years of austerity has had.](#) It highlights the damage that the austerity programme, pursued by successive governments, has done to our region and our resilience to face today’s challenges.

[IPPR has previously comprehensively argued that austerity has been a failure: economically, fiscally and socially.](#) And, IPPR North has pointed to its disproportionate impact on the North and [the role it has played in holding back our region](#), taking in the North West, North East, and Yorkshire and the Humber.

In our new research, we reveal that despite promises, we were not all in this together. Many of the cuts and impacts of the cuts were felt unequally between different people and different places. There are stark regional differences.

Despite promises, the most vulnerable in our society were not protected. For example, 5,165 households in the North now live in temporary accommodation because of homelessness. This includes bed & breakfasts, the quality of which has been found severely lacking in many cases.

Over half of these households include children, who are growing up in dire conditions. In the North West alone, the number of children living in temporary accommodation skyrocketed from 910 in 2009 to 4,580 in 2019. From welfare reform to an undersupply of social housing - austerity has created a generationally significant homelessness crisis.

Another example of austerity’s impact is the growing dysfunction of adult social care. Many of our most vulnerable older people are trapped in hospital beds ready to move into more appropriate settings. This is a symptom of the near permanent social care crisis, arising from squeezed council budgets while demand for many social care services has risen.

From education to health, many people’s life chances, especially in the North and especially our most vulnerable, have been damaged. For ten years, opportunities were missed to improve people’s lives. In fact, these were ten years of a programme that actively undermined them.

Much noise, until Covid-19’s scale became clear, was made of a booming economy. But, the reality is that benefits of growth did not flow to normal people.

As their public services and their social safety net were pummelled, people’s pay stagnated and their job quality came under pressure. Work diminished as a route out of poverty as the institutional capacity to relieve poverty was withdrawn by central government decisions.

Austerity is a decade-long crisis, it has caused many decade-long crises including in council funding, and it has undermined our region’s resilience.

We now find ourselves in another, acute crisis with Covid-19. As the disease spread and the country locked down, our public services and local councils responded, admirably. But their foundations are weak following these ten years; they lack financial stability, have hundreds of thousands fewer staff, and Westminster continues to hoard the power and resources they need to handle this crisis and build back better.

Whatever the policy rhetoric around ‘Levelling up’ means to Government, the North and its people’s potential cannot be realised until the true scale of the challenges created by austerity are understood, unpicked, and undone.

A recovery from the crisis caused by Covid-19 to the status quo would remain a social, economic, and environmental crisis. We need a sustained long-term investment - not just in infrastructure but in our people too, to rebuild people’s life chances and allow them to flourish. And through real devolution, our people must be given the powers across the towns, cities and regions of England to decide how building back from 10 years of austerity and the Covid-19 crisis will serve them and their futures.



Marcus Johns

Put healthy food vouchers online



The Government's decision to [extend free school meal vouchers through the summer holidays](#) is welcome. However, childhood food insecurity doesn't begin at school age – families on a low income need support during crucial early childhood development years. At the end of June, Sustain led a coalition of 35 organisations in writing to health minister Jo Churchill MP [calling on Government to accelerate digitisation of the Healthy Start scheme](#) in order to ensure that pregnant women and young children in low-income families can access healthy food.

Sadly, 47% of families missed out on the vouchers in 2019, an estimated £46 million lost to household shopping budgets. With more people facing economic hardship as a result of the pandemic and with limited access to community and health services, modernising this scheme has never been more important.

Inspiring Change Manchester (ICM) Strategic Group event 'Building Back Better'

Covid-19 recovery planning and multiple disadvantage on Friday 17th July running 10am - 12 noon

This will be a chance to explore the impact of the pandemic and emergency responses on people experiencing multiple disadvantage and to consider what next for social policy, public services design and delivery post-Covid. It will draw from learning from ICM, the other cities in the national Fulfilling Lives programme it as part of and the work of Make Every Adult Matter (MEAM). As always, we'll have a particular focus on learning from people living in the situation, as well what system change is needed, and how might it be brought about. We look forward to having you join the debate. Join [Zoom Meeting](#) Meeting ID: 516 186 6731 Password: 509185



Cracking Good Food Co-Director Role

Last chance to apply: closing date **July 17th 2020**

Freelance 3 – 4 days per week

Cracking Good Food has become a very substantial organisation and needs strong co-leadership to take it through its current post-covid transition into the next phase of grass roots engagement, broadening the Board's membership to encompass representation of communities where food and fuel poverty are evident; and establishing new consultation and co-design procedures when it comes to prospective beneficiaries' involvement in project development and continuing service improvement.

Further information about the role, its responsibilities, the essential skills and experience required and more information about Cracking Good Food can be found [here](#). Applications should be submitted to [Tracey Torley](#)

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.

Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of GMPA. We try to fact-check all articles and events, but if you notice an error please [let us know](#) so we can correct it in a future newsletter.