

Devolved approaches to social security in the UK – lessons for Greater Manchester

By Graham Whitham

We are pleased to be launching, in partnership with the Sustainable Housing and Urban Studies Unit ([SHUSU – University of Salford](#)), [a series of short essays](#) exploring approaches to social security at a devolved level in the UK. The aim is to understand what lessons there are for Greater Manchester (GM) from approaches taken in the devolved nations, and to consider what COVID-19 means for the future of local welfare provision.

SHUSU
Sustainable Housing &
Urban Studies Unit

Dr Mark Simpson (*Reflections on Northern Ireland's mirror image approach to devolved social security*) highlights the different payment arrangements for Universal Credit (UC) in Northern Ireland (the only part of the UK where welfare policy is wholly devolved). In contrast to England, UC payments in Northern Ireland are made twice monthly by default and the housing element is paid automatically to landlords.

Despite the different levels of social security powers that exists in Northern Ireland and Scotland, both nations have sought to mitigate against some of the worst aspects of UK policy. Professor Sharon Wright (*Social security in Scotland*) explains that in 2018/19 the Scottish Government spent approximately £125 million mitigating UK cuts. According to Professor Wright, Scotland's approach shows the value of listening to those with lived experience of social security and enabling local people to feed into the design of policies and practices.

An approach that responds to the needs of service users was at the heart of the *DWP and Oxfam Livelihoods Training Project* in Wales. Professor Lisa Scullion (to whom we are grateful for bringing this series of essays together) and Dr Katy Jones (*Taking an assets-based approach to Jobcentre Plus support: Lessons from Wales*) discuss how the project took a person-centred approach to tackling poverty, embedding understandings of poverty within DWP across Wales. Findings from this project could inform the development of labour market programmes in GM.

Dr Daniel Edmiston, Dr David Robertshaw and Dr Andrea Gibbons explore the impact of COVID-19 on local responses to welfare provision (*What can local responses to COVID-19 tell us about the potential and challenges for devolved 'welfare'?*). Whilst recognising the incredible local cross-sector working that has happened during the pandemic, they warn of the risks presented by local welfare support operating in a context of diminishing resources. In this context, increased autonomy that a devolved approach to welfare may bring would need to be accompanied by mechanisms of accountability for local citizens to articulate their needs and preferences about local provision.

There are two aspects to approaching social security policy in GM. The first is to consider what can be done with existing powers. The second is to consider whether GM should seek devolution of aspects of the system and, if it were to do so, what powers it should seek and how it should use those powers. GMPA is currently undertaking research on the first of these considerations, exploring local welfare schemes, with a view to developing policy and a good practice guide for local authorities and their partners. This will be published later in the year.

On the second consideration, these essays encourage further discussion about how devolution of social security system could help strengthen the fight against poverty in GM.

What comes through strongly in the essays is the need to for a person-centred approach to welfare policy that ensures people with experience of using the social security are involved in service design. Also important to recognise is that regardless of the levels of power over the system that exist, what can be done locally, as Dr Mark Simpson says, to support people accessing the welfare system depends on the interaction of available powers, available budget and political will.

[To read the essays click here](#)

End Child Poverty Campaign, Marcus Rashford and focusing on the causes of poverty

By Graham Whitham



The End Child Poverty Campaign (ECP), of which GMPA is a steering group member, has written to Manchester United footballer Marcus Rashford to congratulate him on drawing attention to the problem of food poverty among families with children. Marcus is backing calls in the [National Food Strategy](#) for expansion of free school meals to every child from a household on Universal Credit or equivalent legacy benefit, expanding the school holiday food and activities programme and increasing the value of [Healthy Start vouchers](#).

It's brilliant that Marcus has been able to generate such positive coverage for the issue of child food poverty and we fully support his call for an extension of free school meals to all children whose families are in receipt of Universal Credit. However, it is important that we don't see food provision as a solution to poverty, whether that be poverty affecting children or other groups of the population.

It is imperative that the Government puts tackling child poverty at the heart of its post-pandemic economic recovery if we are to see an end to families having to rely on food handouts and vouchers to feed their children.

That is why GMPA supports ECP's call for Government to set out a comprehensive and ambitious child poverty strategy that looks not just at ensuring children have enough to eat, but tackling the causes of low income and the reason families can't afford adequate food in the first place. This would include strengthening the social security system by increasing child benefit by £10 a week; and ending the benefit cap, the two-child limit and the five week wait for Universal Credit. As well as taking action to ensure that companies pay a real living wage; addressing high rents and the cost of childcare; and reinvesting in children's services.

Sian (GMPA's recently appointed Food Poverty Programme Coordinator) set out GMPA's response to the National Food Strategy in our last [newsletter](#). Whilst a national conversation about food poverty is welcome (and necessary), the strategy recommendations do not focus enough on fixing these underlying causes of poverty.



In Greater Manchester it is important that we use what resources and powers we do have to support people in a way that prevents and reduces poverty, and that gives people maximum dignity, choice and control in the way support is provided. This should involve identifying opportunities to boost household income by increasing benefit take-up and widespread adoption of the Real Living Wage, as well as providing people with access to money rather than in-kind support such as food parcels and vouchers (see our ['Cash First' briefing](#) for further discussion about the benefits of this approach).

Graham Whitham
GMPA Director

Joseph Rowntree Foundation campaign

By Graham Whitham



GMPA is supporting the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's (JRF) call to maintain the £20 uplift for Universal Credit (UC) and legacy benefits introduced during the lockdown. The current indications from Government are that they still consider this to be a temporary measure, and as yet are not persuaded of the need to keep it in the autumn Budget. However, we know that many low incomes families were struggling financially prior to the pandemic and that many will be struggling following the lockdown period as the economic consequences of COVID-19 become clearer. Those needs are not likely to go away anytime soon and the £20 uplift needs to become permanent.

For more details on JRF's 'Keeping the lifeline' campaign please take a look at this [blog](#) from JRF's Acting Director Helen Barnard.

Please [get in touch with us](#) if you would like to support this campaign.

Greater Manchester Real Living Wage Campaign Update



Over the previous few months we have been discussing with our partners and supporters of the GMLWC a range of issues relating to the impact of the pandemic and the lockdown on our GM economy, what the future looks like and how we #buildbackbetter. Alongside the discussions about policy and strategy we have also been discussing how, as a campaign, we adapt to the changed circumstances and continue to fight for and promote the Real Living Wage amongst employers and workers. A clear change to the way we campaign is to make more and better use of online campaigning to get the message across.

As part of this different approach we are developing a series of podcasts which we hope will help to stimulate debate about how we put the #better into #buildbackbetter. These podcasts are in a series of three entitled 'Decent Work, Poverty, and the Real Living Wage in the Post Lockdown GM Economy'.

The first of these podcasts is available now. It features GMLWC Coordinator John Hacking in conversation with GM Mayor Andy Burnham. You can listen [here](#).

Look in future newsletters for details of the other podcasts in the series or by checking back at [GMPA Podcasts](#). The remaining podcasts will feature discussions with GMPA Director, Graham Whitham about the work GMPA is doing and also a discussion with representatives of the Manchester Poverty Truth Commission about the impact of the pandemic and the lockdown on those with lived experience of poverty.



GM Mayor
Andy Burnham

To accompany this series of three podcasts is one in which GMLWC Coordinator discusses the Real Living Wage: Extent and Impact with Ed Heery who is Professor of Employment Relations at the Cardiff Business School and one of the country's leading authorities on the Real Living Wage. In the podcast Ed outlines the work he has done on the extent of the Real Living Wage in the UK and the impact it has had on both employees and employers. Ed also talks about the impact of Covid-19 on the Real Living Wage as we emerge from lockdown.



Professor Ed Heery

The podcast interview with Professor Heery can be found [here](#).

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 programme

Greater Manchester's Big Mental Wellbeing Conversation

Last week [Greater Manchester's Big Mental Wellbeing Conversation](#) was launched, asking people who live or work in Greater Manchester to take the time to fill in a short survey [here](#).

The aim is to learn more about how people feel, what worries they have and what they think can be done to make a positive difference to where they live.

Mental wellbeing does not have one set meaning. It might be used to talk about how someone is feeling, how well they are coping with daily life or what feels possible at a specific moment. Good mental wellbeing does not mean a person is always happy or unaffected by their experiences. But poor mental wellbeing can make it more difficult to deal with the day-to-day. Collectively we can and must do more to build a culture that supports and encourages wellbeing and positive mental health. Participants can be entered into a prize draw.



Training opportunities



Over the last 2 years we have delivered a small number of paid for training courses in partnership with Policy North Training. The courses equip stakeholders with the knowledge they need to fight poverty across the city region.

In the next 12 months we will be growing and developing our training offer as a response to things people in our network have said they would find useful. [Full course overviews and costs can be downloaded from the training page of our website](#). We have four courses available:

Maximising support for people on low incomes [BOOK HERE](#).

For Thursday 8th October 2020, Thursday 28th January 2021, or Thursday 4th March 2021.

Understanding poverty measurement, definitions and data [BOOK HERE](#).

For Wednesday 18th November 2020, or Thursday 25th March 2021.

Identifying poverty data in Greater Manchester [BOOK HERE](#).

For Wednesday 4th November 2020, Wednesday 10th February 2021, or Thursday 15th April 2021.

Exploring the poverty premium [BOOK HERE](#).

For Friday 16th October 2020.

Please note, courses will take place virtually using Zoom unless otherwise stated. If you would like to make a block booking we can offer discounted rates. Please email supporters@gmpovertyaction.org

Applications for UpRising Programmes 2020/21 are now open



UpRising was set-up to address systemic underrepresentation in positions of leadership in communities and work. Since then, they've supported young people in communities across the country. They believe that young people are uniquely placed to change the world - youth leadership can tackle pressing social challenges and encourage positive social change.

The aim is to open up pathways to leadership for young adults from diverse and under-represented backgrounds and to equip them with the knowledge, networks, skills and confidence to fulfil their leadership potential, find new opportunities and transform the world around them through social action. All the programmes are free, part-time and digital-only. To apply you need to be aged 18 to 25 years old.

Three programmes are running this year: a Leadership programme; an Environmental Leadership programme; and Fastlaners - which is the employability programme for young people.

For more information please follow them on social media on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), or visit the [website](#)

Manchester Food providers Fixtures and Fitting Fund



Fifteen £1,000 grants are available to voluntary, community and social enterprise emergency food providers in the city of Manchester, for purchasing fixtures and fittings that support preparations for the winter period aimed at: improving the health and safety of service users and workers, particularly regarding Covid-19; helping sustain and improve efficiency of existing food services; supporting increased food service provision.

Click [here](#) for full information including the grant application form.

Priority will be given to those food providers that particularly support Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.

The deadline for grant applications is 12pm Thursday October 1st, 2020.

Help to showcase the work of Greater Manchester's VCSE sector

The State of the Sector survey 2020 is now live. All VCSE organisations are encouraged to take part in this important piece of research so that once again valuable evidence can be provided to decision makers about the significant social and economic contribution the VCSE sector brings to Greater Manchester. [To take part in the survey click here.](#)



GM Legislative Theatre



The [GMHAN](#) and [GMCA](#) invite you to this inaugural event on September 30th, 2020 2.30 - 5pm, working towards a co-produced homelessness prevention strategy for Greater Manchester. This marks the first of a series of public events, addressing the three focus areas for prevention identified by the GMHAN: multiple disadvantage, funding and commissioning, and housing and infrastructure. The Prevention Strategy will encompass the coming 5 years, as well as more immediate policy actions post-covid. In this interactive event (in-person or online in accordance with guidelines), community members will work together with policymakers to generate, debate and negotiate innovative policy ideas around these issues. Your expertise and commitment will be key in this collaborative effort to improve policy and practice. [More information](#)



Breakthrough UK is a member of the North West Regional Stakeholder Network, of the Cabinet Office Disability Unit, providing a channel for input and engagement with central government from disabled people in the region.

They want to find out about the experiences of disabled people/people with lived experience of disability and long-term conditions, regarding employment so far during the Covid-19 pandemic. They would like as many disabled people as possible in the North West to complete [this short survey](#)

Taking a County Wide Approach

So far Sustainable Food Places has largely been a network of cities, but this is changing. They are reaching out to welcome new geographies to their mix, commencing by launching a programme for counties with a webinar on Wednesday September 30th, 2020 from 11am - 12.15pm. Further webinars and interactive online workshops will follow to explore the differences, challenges, and support needs of counties in more depth. [Register here](#)



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.