

## Challenge Poverty Week

By Gavin Aitchison, Church Action on Poverty



Groups around England and Wales will take part in Challenge Poverty Week in October, and people in Greater Manchester can all get involved.

The week has been a successful project in Scotland since 2013, and will now be held in England and Wales for the first time, from October 12th to 18th, 2020. An online event for people and projects in Greater Manchester will be held from 11am to 12 noon on Thursday October 15th, 2020 but it's not too late for you too to play your part.

Your group could organise an online discussion or storytelling session, or simply help by sharing photos, videos and messages on social media; writing to local politicians; or attending one of the various events listed on the website.

We know that, at heart, we all want to live in a compassionate society where everyone can thrive and reach their potential. The coronavirus pandemic has reminded us of that – we have seen communities coming together amid the uncertainty with a renewed neighbourly kindness. None of us is happy seeing others hungry, lonely, or struggling to stay afloat.

The pandemic also intensified and showed starkly the inequalities in our society, however. People on low incomes and in disadvantaged areas, and people in ethnic groups already suffering from social and economic injustice, have been disproportionately affected. We're not all in the same boat, and often those who are most weighed down by debt or poverty have been offered fewest lifelines and least support.

Too many people, particularly since the pandemic, are struggling against the threat of being swept into deeper difficulty.

As we navigate these choppy waters, and plan for life after the storm, we have a chance to do things differently. We can harness the compassion, community and connectedness that we have cherished in recent months, and say 'enough' to the systems and structures that have hindered people for so long. We can and must redesign our economy to reflect our shared values of justice and compassion, and by ensuring incomes are adequate and living costs affordable, we can make sure everyone has what we need.

Challenge Poverty Week is an opportunity to highlight the incredible work being done by community groups around the country, and to show what can and must be done differently.

The week aims to:

- Raise voices in unison against poverty and show that we all want to live in a more just and compassionate country.
- Show what is already being done at community level to challenge and alleviate poverty.
- Build awareness and support for long term solutions that focus on enhancing the dignity and agency of people in poverty themselves.
- Change the conversation around poverty and help end the stigma.



Gavin Aitchison

Greater Manchester Poverty Action is co-hosting an online discussion event with Church Action on Poverty and others on Zoom from 11am on Thursday October 15th, 2020, highlighting the effective work that is being done across the city region, and to call for more action to ensure everyone can stay afloat, now and beyond the pandemic. There will be several speakers and a chance to discuss the issues and ask questions. [Sign up here.](#)

Challenge Poverty Week is an opportunity for people in poverty to speak up, and for voices that are often ignored to be heard loud and clear. It's a chance to show that a better, more compassionate society is possible – and that now is the time to start making it a reality.

You can download the Challenge Poverty Week toolkit, packed with ideas and tips, [here](#)

## “Invest in a crucial sector or risk losing it”, say Manchester’s voluntary sector leaders

by Helen Walker, Policy and Influence worker, Macc

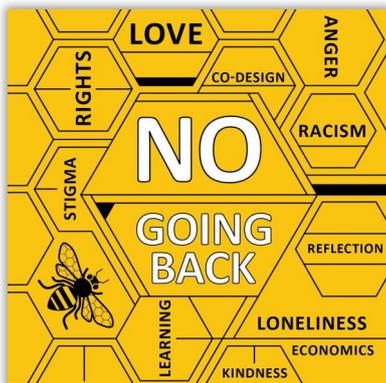
Leaders of Manchester-based charities have shared their experiences of the Covid-19 crisis and their thoughts for the future in a new report produced by Macc, Manchester’s local voluntary and community sector support organisation.



Titled *No Going Back*, the report brings together the experiences of 22 local voluntary sector leaders who shine a light on the critical role that the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector has played during the response to the Covid-19 crisis. As well as reflecting on the lessons learned during the crisis, the leaders make the case for change going forward and highlight the unique opportunity society has to make things better in the future.

Commenting on the launch of the report, Mike Wild, chief executive of Macc said “Manchester’s 3,000+ voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations have responded amazingly to the crisis. They have remade services so people can stay connected and supported during lockdown, worked to ensure nobody is left without access to food, shelter, care, wellbeing support, mental health support, creative activities and provided support around pre-existing matters which had nothing directly to do with Covid-19.

“The sector’s resilience has been tested in ways few of us have ever experienced. That this has taken place at the same time as a sudden drop in fundraising and other activities which generate income for VCSE organisations, speaks to their dedication to make a difference when they are most needed. It is estimated there has been a loss of over £10bn in the sector across the country, yet this has not deterred Manchester VCSE organisations from responding.



“There is a crucially important lesson to be drawn from the voluntary sector’s response to the Covid-19 crisis. That is that these organisations are part of the resilience of our communities and we need them to be there - and never more so than in a crisis. *No Going Back* tells their story. Manchester’s marvellously diverse vibrant, messy, gumption-filled, voluntary, community and social enterprise sector has risen to the challenge of the moment and we must build on this, invest in it or risk losing it altogether.”

For more information and to read *No Going Back*, please visit the Manchester Community Central [website](#).

## Joseph Rowntree Foundation campaign - update

An update on the article in our last newsletter about our support for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s (JRF) “Keep the Lifeline” campaign.



Today, despite the cancellation of the Autumn Budget, a letter has been sent to the Chancellor, signed by JRF and over 50 other organisations including GMPA. In the letter the signatories urge the Chancellor to “*make the temporary £20/week increase to the standard allowance of Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit permanent from April, as well as extend the same uplift to ESA, Income Support and JSA.*”

It goes on to say “*Falling incomes and rising costs throughout the pandemic have put families under immense financial pressure, but the £20 uplift has been a lifeline that has enabled many of them to keep their heads above water and has stopped us seeing a marked surge in poverty levels. However, if the uplift ends in April 2021, this good work risks being undermined.*”

For more details on JRF’s ‘Keeping the lifeline’ campaign please take a look at this [blog](#) from JRF’s Acting Director Helen Barnard. More information about the campaign is available on JRF’s website [here](#).

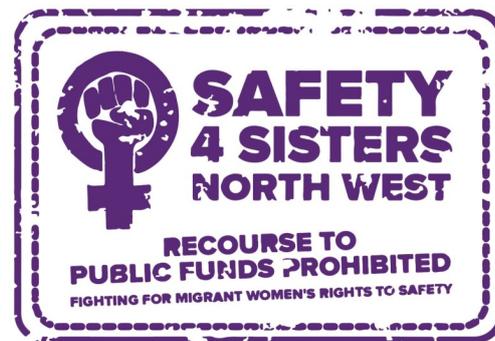
Please [get in touch with us](#) if you would like to support this campaign.

## Safety4Sisters

By Sandhya Sharma, Group Coordinator, Safety4Sisters

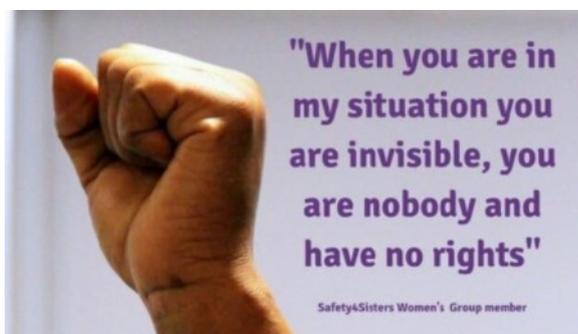
**"I have to choose between topping up my phone or food – my phone is my lifeline right now so I chose that."**

These are the words from one of the members of Safety4Sisters Migrant Women's Support Group, echoing similar statements from other members. Our weekly group meeting, now online, reveals the shocking extent of migrant women's poverty that has largely been written out of local and national government responses, even under pandemic conditions.



To contextualise, Safety4Sisters is a BME led women's organisation working to support migrant women survivors of domestic abuse and gender-based violence who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF) delivering casework, advocacy and group support services. Public funds cover the essential welfare system safety net for those in need including housing benefit, universal credit and access to emergency accommodation. This means that women subject to NRPF, a condition of their immigration status in the UK, cannot access lifesaving support systems and housing such as refuges and emergency council housing when leaving abuse, isolating them from support, resources, and government attention. Women therefore face a stark choice – stay in the abuse or leave and face destitution, taking their chances to survive on the street despite the current public health crisis. Positioned at the intersection of race, class, gender and immigration control, women are living in extreme states of poverty and as migrants, many newly arrived in the UK, they have little social or cultural capital to support and anchor them. Some are subject to the asylum process of dispersed housing, often moving several times unable to put down roots. Others are in and out of temporary accommodation, which we - a small voluntary organisation - often have to fund as housing providers are unwilling to support them unless we pay.

The coronavirus has amplified the already challenging conditions forged by years of austerity for women experiencing gender-based violence and crucially those subject to the NRPF rule. Since lockdown we have seen a surge in referrals, the women we work with have endured longer periods in violent households and we have seen a rise in more complex cases. Those on asylum support were living on £37.25 a week and some women were completely destitute relying on charities such as us to provide money and food parcels. Our forthcoming report, *The Pandemic Experiences of Migrant Women*, details the struggles our users and our small organisation faced. We found that 53% of women surveyed in our group were in the government risk categories, far higher than the national average – according to the Lancet, 29.1% of the British population have an underlying health condition. Additionally, 90% of the women had experienced food and fuel poverty, and several women reported an increase in mental distress and suicide ideation. It was no surprise then that women were coming to the group in desperate situations.



With the few support agencies that migrant women could access closing their community doors, access to a hot lunch, travel expenses and a friendly supportive and safe meeting space were non-existent.

Given the paucity of support agencies available, the lack of consideration for migrant women's experiences at the local and national level, the acute under resourcing and lack of power of groups, like Safety4Sisters, we should not be surprised when women are left to survive in severe poverty, starving and at risk of street homelessness.

We have to ask ourselves, what did we expect and what do we expect? Safety4Sisters believe that we can do more and that 'building back better' demands that migrant women's voices and those at the bottom of the pile are embedded in how we now advance as a society.

For more information about our work and to access the COVID19 report please see our [website](#).

## Stockport Homes - Cheadle 55+ Mobile Pantry Launch

by Elena Vacca, Community Food Officer, Stockport Homes Group



Between April and July 2020, Your Local Pantry Stockport significantly scaled up and adapted its offer to deliver affordable food packages to the doorsteps of Stockport residents who were self-isolating due to the Covid-19 restrictions. It became apparent that a high proportion of those accessing the service were older people in the Cheadle community. The Pantry wanted to continue to support those people to access low-cost food close to their home and the idea for the mobile pantry was formed.



The Cheadle 55+ mobile pantry will initially run as a partnership pilot project with Stockport Homes' Independent Living Service to gauge demand, with plans to roll the scheme out to a wider area if successful. The project has been made possible through a grant from the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) for an additional refrigerated vehicle. For £3.50 per week, pantry members can choose a range of food including fresh fruit and vegetables, meat products, cereal, tinned goods and much more.

For more information, please get in touch with [pantry@foundations-stockport.org](mailto:pantry@foundations-stockport.org).



### JOB VACANCY: Community Food Coordinator

37.5 hours p/w, £19,000 - £23,000 p/a

FareShare GM connects frontline charities and schools with surplus good food, helping them to support people in need. FareShare also protects the planet by reducing food waste. FareShare GM are recruiting a Community Food Coordinator who will grow their diverse membership across Greater Manchester. The ideal candidate will have a working knowledge of food safety, and the many challenges faced by food providers in community settings. For more information please visit the [website](#) or [email](#)

Deadline: Monday October 5th, 2020 midday (12 noon) Interviews: w/c October 12th, 2020

## Kids Community Closet Stockport – Launching 1 October

By Sarah Pitfield

I'm Sarah, Offerton mum of two and lover of all things Stockport. I am launching a Stockport based clothing bank for children six months up to age 12, covering all of the Borough.



We aim to support families and children who are in need of clothing and promote sustainability and recycling. We have a volunteer seamstress on the team who can upcycle most items. We promise clothes will be washed, folded, stain free and non-bobbly. We can't promise we will always have everything in stock, but if we don't have what you're looking for, we will put a call around social media to ask for specific donations.

As from October 1st, 2020, you'll be able to submit a clothing request by [email](#). The service isn't means tested and doesn't need a referral – you just need to be in genuine need. If you're a Social Worker or school or other professional and want to refer a family then please get in touch. If the request is extremely urgent please call 07881 800153

Where possible we will be able to deliver bundles directly to families or arrange drop off to an office/school etc if working directly with a referrer/professional.

We already have lots in the bank thanks to loads of kind donations but will always be collecting so please like us on [Facebook](#) and pass the word round! We can't accept uniform or baby clothes (up to 6 months) as don't want to duplicate the good work of other projects such as Early Essentials or The Stockport Uniform Project.

## Maximising support for people on low incomes

Thursday October 8th, 2020 (virtual using Zoom).



Would you like to understand more about cuts and reforms to social security since 2010 and what this means for families in need of support? Are you interested in how services can be better designed to support people in the new social security landscape?

This course is for VCSE and public sector organisations who work with people experiencing poverty and who wish to understand how to maximise support for their service users and those involved in service design and delivery. It will also be of interest to researchers seeking to understand current social security provision. [More information](#)

## Never the Same Again? Addressing Poverty After the Pandemic, October 9th, 2020



The Poverty Alliance's annual conference this year will be a series of online sessions that will explore different aspects of the impact of the pandemic on poverty. They are designed to open up and contribute to discussions about what we have learned during the pandemic and, most crucially, how we move forward in the months and years ahead.

In addition to an opening plenary with community activists and Aileen Campbell, Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government in the Scottish Government, there will also be workshops on paid employment, social security and community responses, and a roundtable on prospects for change.

Speakers across the day include Julia Unwin, Chair of the Independent Inquiry into Civil Society, Sabir Razai, CEO of the Scottish Refugee Council, Laura Gardiner, Director of the Living Wage Foundation, Dr Katherine Trebeck of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance, Mary Senior, Vice President of the STUC, Dr Ruth Patrick, University of York, and Russell Gunson, Director of IPPR Scotland.

To take part in the conference please register for each session separately - view the [full programme here](#).

## Universal Credit: Taking on the challenge

Thursday October 15th, 2020 from 9.15am to 3.30pm online £129 +vat

The aim of this Housing Systems Conference is to provide you with the guidance and inspiration you need to shake up the delivery of Universal Credit to make it the system we all deserve. Learn more about the difference you can make - helping claimants challenge some of the problem areas. Speakers include: Amanda Garrard, Chief Executive, Berneslai Homes, Matthew Ahluwalia, Public Law Project. You can also choose three online Workshops. [More information and booking](#)

## 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.