

## Why Wigan Council have made it their own responsibility to consider poverty

*GMIPA is keen for socio-economic duty to be included in equalities legislation and early in 2020, as part of our work in response to the spread of COVID-19, we developed a [briefing](#). Some public bodies, including Wigan Council, are taking matters into their own hands.*

**Councillor Paula Wakefield**, Lead Member for Equalities and Domestic Violence at Wigan Council, explains why in Wigan Borough, a key consideration when developing new policies, is now the impact the policy will have on lower income households.

"I understand from personal experience the effect that coming from a lower income family can have on your life. My family were in a relatively stable situation until my father died when I was 13. He had received contaminated blood products as part of a treatment he had for his Haemophilia. He went on to die from Hepatitis C.

It was the early 90's and there was massive stigma and discrimination surrounding these conditions. We lost our home, and my father had lost his job and his life insurance. When he died we were forced into bankruptcy.

The impact of suddenly living in a low, single income household affected everything. I stopped asking my mum if I could go on school trips or holidays as I knew she couldn't afford it. My brother and I received free school meals and bills for essentials like utilities suddenly became a real struggle.

I had done well at school but knew that higher education wasn't an option. We couldn't afford for me to go to University, I knew I had to get a job and bring money into the family as soon as possible. If you live in a lower income household, your life choices and pathways become limited, through no fault of your own.

Perhaps because of my background, addressing any type of inequality will always be a passion of mine, so when I was offered the Lead Member role for Equalities and Domestic Abuse at Wigan Council, I knew it would be a perfect fit. In one of the first meetings in my new role we discussed tackling the way people are disproportionately affected if they come from lower income families.

I was informed that a decision had been made by the Government not to include socio-economic disadvantage as part of the Equality Act but that we could include it in our own Equality Commitment, which is already a statutory requirement, in the same way that we had adopted carers and veterans into our Commitment. I made the decision that this would be a priority and last year Wigan Council added socio-economic disadvantage to the protected characteristics listed in our Equality Commitment and our Equality Impact Assessments.

The fact that socio-economic disadvantage is now part of our Equality Commitment means that every time a new policy is developed, we are required to consider the impact it will have on those from lower income households. If we think it may have a detrimental effect, we discuss what we can do to make sure that does not happen.

Considering poverty as part of our Equality Commitment has also helped to raise the profile of the issue. Wigan Council is taking action to improve the life choices for those from lower income families in many different ways including making sure that high quality health services are accessible in lower income areas, providing quality, affordable homes and building more of the right homes, harnessing the power digital connectivity has to improve people's opportunities and creating local economic growth through our Community Wealth Building Strategy.

It is so important for councils to adopt socio-economic duty. The coronavirus pandemic has shown that, yet again, it is the lower income families that are disproportionately affected and we must do everything we can to mitigate it.

We must continue to campaign for socio-economic disadvantage to be included in national legislation. But it's also important to remember that there are small changes we can make locally, that can have a huge and positive impact on lower income families.

Everyone deserves the same life chances - no matter where you are born or how much money you have and if a Local Authority can help on that journey, why would we choose not to?"



Cllr Paula Wakefield

## Training courses available to GMPA's network over the next 6 months



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 both in Greater Manchester and across the UK as a whole. This includes the following course

**Maximising support for people on low incomes** – taking place on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> January and Monday 28<sup>th</sup> June. This course is for housing providers, VCSE and public sector organisations who work with people experiencing poverty and who wish to understand how to maximise support for their service users. Please sign up if you're interested in understanding more about the current social security landscape and the financial and other help that's available to low-income service users. To attend this course [BOOK HERE](#).

**Understanding poverty measurement, definitions and data** - taking place on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March and Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> May. This course is for people who want to understand more about how poverty is measured and how to access robust, accurate and up-to-date data. By the end of this one-day course participants 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, whether that be designing services or writing funding bids. To attend this course [BOOK HERE](#).

We have two other course running during the first half of this year:

**Identifying poverty data in Greater Manchester** – Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> April – [BOOK HERE](#).

**Exploring the poverty premium** – Friday 25<sup>th</sup> June – [BOOK HERE](#).

[Full course overviews and costs can be downloaded from the training page of our website.](#)

## Achieving a fairer Greater Manchester is the focus of Inequalities Commission as new survey launches

People across Greater Manchester are to be asked to help tackle inequality to inform the work of the city-region's Independent Inequalities Commission.

The drive to make Greater Manchester a more equal society will be informed by the online survey designed to capture the views and experiences of residents.

The Commission, which reports to the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, and the 10 local authority Leaders, wants to hear from people who have a passion in making Greater Manchester a fairer and more equal place to grow up, get on and grow old – in particular those with knowledge of the city-region's inequalities or who have experience working with marginalised groups.

The Independent Inequalities Commission is chaired by Kate Pickett, Professor of Epidemiology and Deputy Director of the Centre for Future Health at the University of York. Kate is encouraging people to complete the survey, which closes on 31<sup>st</sup> January, "Working alongside my fellow Commission Members, I am really keen to hear the views of the people of Greater Manchester on how they would create a more equal society.

"Greater equality is better for everyone, but I know that there are barriers and issues such as poverty, low pay, poor health, and unattainable standards in education and skills that are an embedded part of people's lives. That's why we want to hear from you about your ideas on how we can get to grips with the root causes of inequality and change everyone's lives for the better.

"The Commission should be informed by the views of people from as many different backgrounds as possible – please do encourage others you know to take part in this conversation."

To find out more and undertake the survey log onto [www.gmconsult.org](http://www.gmconsult.org).



## Supporting Fuel Poor Households in GM

By Andrew Pinches, Groundwork Greater Manchester



Fuel poverty affects a significant proportion of the UK population and is associated with negative effects on both physical and mental health. It is currently estimated that approximately two and a half million households in the UK live in fuel poverty. Fuel poverty is measured using the Low Income High Cost (LIHC) indicator, which considers a household to be fuel poor if:

- they have required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level of £1,378); and
- were they to spend that amount, they would be left with a residual income below the poverty line.

Greater Manchester currently has the highest number of households in fuel poverty in the North West, with Gorton currently having the highest percentage of households in fuel poverty (20.5%) in the UK. It can also be noted that more than 80% of Greater Manchester's parliamentary constituencies sit above the national average for proportion of households in fuel poverty.

One of the main issues in GM currently is that 80% of the houses in use are over 40 year's old and deemed energy inefficient. As energy efficiency is a driver for fuel poverty, low income families in Manchester are already in danger of fuel poverty from just moving into an energy inefficient home



It can be seen from this graphic, that there are 3 main drivers for fuel poverty: Energy efficiency, energy prices and income. If a household has high energy bills, low income and an energy inefficient house then they will more than likely be classified as fuel poor.

Improving any one of these parameters can help bring a household out of fuel poverty and alleviate the associated stresses.

[Energyworks](#) supports the residents of Greater Manchester with all three drivers of fuel poverty:

- Energy Prices - Providing support and tailored advice with switching tariffs and providers, helping set up affordable payment plans and supporting residents with energy debt to find affordable solutions.
- Energy Efficiency - With the installation of FREE small measures such as low energy lighting (LED bulbs), draught-proofing and the installation of radiator panels, residents can use less energy to achieve the same level of heating and lighting in their homes. Larger measures, including Cavity Wall Insulation, Loft insulation and Boiler Replacement, are also available through grants for eligible residents.
- Income - Through trusted partners, referrals can be made to secure additional income for low income families through increased or additional benefits, grants for essential items/white goods and food and fuel vouchers.

Energyworks is funded at both national and local level with funders such as Ofgem, LEAP and the Local Authorities across GM. Having multiple funders at all levels allows us to go that extra mile for customers ensuring that we give the best possible tailored service to every person. Each customer we speak to is also offered an information pack that they can refer back to at their leisure.

To refer in to the [Energyworks](#) team [please email](#) or call us on 0800 090 3638.

## Promote how you are helping communities this winter on Macc's Manchester Online Directory



As part of Macc's Winter Kindness Campaign they want to make sure everyone has access to up to date information about the support available from VCSE sector organisations in Manchester and, for those wishing to help, how they can support the work of local community organisations to ensure nobody is left behind during these difficult times. Macc's directory is Manchester's public record of VCSE organisations, containing basic information but this will be expanded with much more detailed information about the support and services on offer, opening times, contact details and information about what organisations need, such as volunteer support or asks for donations and fundraising campaigns.

[Register your organisation on our online directory here](#)

If you have any questions please email [Michelle](#)

## Worth a mention



The **Cambridge Science Centre** are distributing [free OpenUpScience magazines](#) for children who are now home schooling, but who may not have easy access to the internet or who prefer to learn away from the computer. The magazine is an 8-12 page A5 booklet filled with STEM-based activities, experiments and puzzles which children from 7-11 years can easily do at home. The magazine is produced every two weeks and posted. It is distributed to community groups and organisations, including food banks for free and via youth community groups who may not be open, but can distribute copies via central collection points.

If you would like to arrange a delivery [please send them](#) the following: number of copies required - anything from 4-200, organisation name, delivery name and address, email address, website (if applicable).

## Fresh fruit and veg donations

Kalwant Gill-Faci continues to donate surplus fresh fruit and vegetables to the Covid 19 Response Hub in Old Trafford (St John's Centre Foodbank) and Reach out to the Community in Chorlton on alternate weeks. With St. John's Centre she applied for social investment funding and were awarded £2000 by Trafford Housing Trust for the winter provision to combat holiday hunger. The money was used to produce 150 Christmas Food Hampers which were supplemented with fresh produce and jars of jam, pickles and preserves! You can contact [Kal on Facebook](#) if you'd like to find out more about her activities and all the hard work on her allotments!



## Yarn bombing

Chorlton Craftivists launched a campaign about food poverty mentioning GMPA's Food Poverty Programme. They yarn-bombed a post box in Chorlton with a crocheted and knitted Christmas dinner, together with an empty plate to raise awareness of food poverty. They then added labels about food poverty, signposting to GMPA, the Trussell Trust and Cracking Good Food. The idea was that people could take photos and use the hashtags, or unpeg the labels to take home for action. Sadly someone stole the whole design on Christmas Day. 😞

## Workforce Development briefings published

CFE, an independent social research company, providing research and evaluation services to government departments, public sector agencies, local authorities, educational institutions and providers and the VCSE sector, have just published four Workforce Development briefings that Inspiring Change Manchester and the other Fulfilling Lives programmes have been working on with them. You may find these briefings of interest. They are:

Involving people with lived experience in the workforce; what makes an effective multiple disadvantage navigator; upskilling the wider workforce and working with commissioners and policy-makers. All these briefings can be accessed through CFE's website [here](#)

## 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.



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.