

New guide for local authorities on socio-economic duty implementation

By Graham Whitham

At GMPA we are delighted to have published a [new guide](#) for local and combined authorities on voluntary adoption and implementation of the socio-economic duty. The guide is for use by organisations across England, including here in Greater Manchester.

We believe the socio-economic duty is a central element of the [framework](#) that localities seeking to address poverty should adopt. The duty ensures that local authorities assess the impact of policy and practice on socio-economic disadvantage. Adoption of the duty should be done meaningfully. The guide provides detail and advice on how to ensure that is the case, working closely with people with lived experience of poverty.

There's a lot of interest in the duty in Greater Manchester following GMPA's advocacy work on it over the last year or so. [Wigan are applying the duty locally](#), and Salford and Trafford have committed to doing so. The [Independent Inequalities Commission](#) recommended adoption of the duty by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority in their recent report.

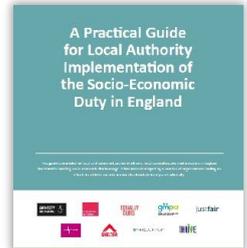
The scale of socio-economic inequalities in the UK have been highlighted by the pandemic. In spite of this, the UK government continues to choose not to enact the socio-economic duty nationally (the duty is contained in Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010). If enacted, the duty would legally require public authorities to actively consider the way in which their decisions increase or decrease the inequalities that result from socio-economic disadvantage.

As the duty hasn't been enacted, some areas have taken matters into their own hands. The duty is now in force in Scotland ('Fairer Scotland Duty') (and is also being taken forward in Wales), and some combined and local authorities in England are voluntarily implementing it.

The need to formally recognise and address socio-economic disadvantage alongside other forms of inequality has never been more clear, as those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds have experienced some of the most severe health and economic impacts of the pandemic.

We believe that, if implemented, the socio-economic duty would provide a powerful foundation for the fairer society we all want to see. In the absence of action at a national level, we need to identify what we can do locally. Voluntary adoption of the duty can bring a number of benefits including:

- Improving outcomes for local people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.
- Supporting cross organisational and cross departmental working.
- Raising awareness of socio-economic inequalities within organisations and among partners.
- Ensuring widespread organisational commitment to, and consideration of, socio-economic inequalities.
- Supporting the participation of low-income residents in decisions that affect them, especially in the context of (proposed) cuts to services.
- Achieving greater consistency in practice - and an increased likelihood of maintaining such consistent practice across political administrations and between changes of individual leadership and turnover of staff.
- Improving systematic approaches to equality impact assessments and assessment of policy and practice more broadly.
- Strengthening systematic data gathering and analysis, especially in the conduct of equality impact assessments, thereby strengthening accountability.
- Supporting the effective and efficient allocation of resources.



The guide is broken down into six sections:

1. Meaningful impact assessments to understand the consequences of socio-economic disadvantage
2. Using data effectively as a tool for decision-making and accountability
3. Encouraging strong and visible leadership
4. Principles of working in partnership with people with lived experience of socio-economic disadvantage
5. Engaging with residents, civil society, and voluntary and community sector organisations
6. Ensuring access to justice, and monitoring impact and compliance



The Guide has been developed by GMPA in partnership with Amnesty, Compassion in Politics, Equally Ours, Just Fair, Runnymede, Shelter, The Equality Trust and Thrive Teeside. It is available [here](#).

Please get in touch if you'd like to know more.

[Graham Whitham](#), CEO GMPA

Tameside Poverty Truth Commission update - July 2021



Over the past year, GMPA has been working to establish a Poverty Truth Commission (PTC) in Tameside. This is an important piece of work, central to GMPA's belief that people with lived experience of poverty should be embedded in the decision-making structures and systems of Greater Manchester. The Tameside PTC will bring together people from various parts of the borough for the purpose of understanding the lived reality of those impacted by poverty and influencing policy and practice.

The Poverty Truth Commission, in a nutshell, starts by questioning what would happen if the people who have directly faced poverty, were involved in the making of decisions around poverty. This question comes from the belief that no lasting social change happens, without the people suffering under the status quo taking a lead in bringing about the change, a principle that can be seen throughout the history of social change, from the suffragettes to the civil rights movements.

The process involves bringing together fifteen testifying commissioners, all of whom have experienced poverty in one form or another and over time, this group spend time sharing stories and experiences with each other. They then consider who in the borough might have influence to bring change. Civic and business leaders are then invited to join the commission as co-commissioners. The Poverty Truth Commission is not about the leaders and organisations providing the solutions but is instead about developing a relationship of empathy between both sides and seeing what happens when their combined resources and wisdom are brought together.

You can hear from Fran, one of the Commissioners, about why she is involved and her hopes for bringing positive change in Tameside through the Commission [here](#).

Over the past year, we have managed to recruit ten lived experience commissioners and 8 civic and business leaders. We have begun to meet in person and share stories over a few cooked breakfasts and have enjoyed getting to know one another and sharing experiences. We are on track to meeting our deadline for a launch event in Autumn 2021, where we will share publicly, some of the stories from our current commissioners. Our recruitment of lived experience commissioners is also still open until early September. For more information, email [Beatrice](#) or call 07423014430. We look forward to sharing more with you next time. We are also delighted to welcome Hannah Lamberth to GMPA. She will be working on the Tameside PTC with me, and you can read more about her in the next newsletter.

Beatrice Smith
Tameside Poverty Truth Commission Facilitator



IPPR report shows growing trend of in-work poverty

By Emily Wilbourn, Policy Officer, GMPA



In May 2021, the IPPR released a new [paper](#) tracing the rise of in work poverty over the first two decades of this century. Key factors driving this trend include the significant growth of people living in the private rented sector, and the 'runaway' cost of rent. These developments, coupled with the insufficient supply and escalating cost of childcare, and an increasingly ungenerous social security system, mean that a growing number are 'locked out' of decent living standards, and pushed into poverty.

IPPR's report highlights that in-work poverty reached a new high of 17% in early 2020, up from 13% 25 years ago. This rise, combined with the fact that the number of in-work households is so large, means that the majority of those living in poverty in 2019/20 were in households that had some form of paid work. The North of England, London, and Wales saw the highest rates of in-work poverty, and certain household types were disproportionately affected, including single parents, single earner couples, and families with three or more children.

With unemployment set to rise by the end of 2021, the government's focus is likely to be on reducing unemployment. However, it is vital that when people do secure employment, they are not swapping 'workless poverty' for 'in-work poverty'. The report argues that in order for the government to achieve its 'levelling up' agenda, it must implement policies that boost incomes after essential costs, and makes the following recommendations:

- Containing housing costs as a share of income per household;
- Containing childcare costs as a proportion of income per household;
- Making work pay, through a combination of labour market and skills policy and income support.

The full paper can be downloaded [here](#)

Support with your water bill payments

By Colin Gallagher, Customer Communications Manager, United Utilities



The last 15 months have been difficult for many people across the North West with coronavirus restrictions having an impact on jobs and income. So if you're having problems paying your water bill, the message from United Utilities is simple - give them a call so they can see how best they can help.

Jane Haymes, affordability manager at United Utilities says: "We know that many of our customers have been furloughed or made redundant due to coronavirus. If this has happened to you, please get in touch so we can discuss how to make your water bill more affordable. The last thing we want is for you to be worried about your bill and there are lots of ways we can help. We're easy to talk to and we have a range of support schemes to help with your bill payments. We're already supporting more than 200,000 of our customers in this way so the sooner you call, the quicker we can help.

"For example, if your household income is less than £21,000 and you've been affected by COVID-19, we can immediately reduce your bill so it's worth getting in touch to discuss your options."

The company also offers a Payment Break scheme which delays your water bill payments for an agreed length of time if, for example, you suddenly lose your job, or an unexpected household emergency needs to be paid for.

Being in debt can be stressful which is why it's important to make sure you get the right support. There are a number of independent organisations who provide free services to help you out of debt. These organisations will work with you to help you manage your debts with different companies.



"It's important that our customers know there are some great organisations out there providing the support you need to help you out of debt," says Jane. "We have details about these organisations on our website, together with a link to a benefits calculator so you can make sure you're not missing out on any welfare payments you may be entitled to."

For more information visit this [webpage](#) or call 0800 072 6765.

'Left behind' Neighbourhoods

by the Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion

This new [report](#) brings together a range of socio-economic data to provide an understanding of the strength of community in 'left behind' neighbourhoods (LBNs) in comparison to other deprived areas and England. Community strength is explored in terms of the availability of civic and cultural assets such as public halls, schools and leisure centres; the strength of the third sector via the work of charitable organisations and grant giving in local areas; and an overview of participation in the community with an exploration of voter turnout rates, civic participation, volunteering and the strength of local social relationships.

Key findings

LBNs have a lower density of community spaces, cultural, educational, leisure and green assets than other deprived areas and England:

- 72.9% of LBNs have less community space assets in their local neighbourhoods per person than the national average with the lowest density in Manor House in Hartlepool.
- 77.8% of LBNs have a lower density of educational assets than the England average - Sheppey East in Swale and Knottingley in Wakefield have the lowest density of educational assets of all LBNs.
- 77% of LBNs have less sport and leisure assets per person than nationally, with the lowest rates in Talavera in Northampton.
- Three LBNs record no green space assets in their local areas – these are in Bolton, North West Leicestershire and Middlesbrough.
- Four LBNs are amongst the areas with the lowest density of community or cultural assets on three or more of these measures: Brightmet (Bolton), Norton South (Halton), Sheppey East (Swale) and Yarmouth North (Great Yarmouth). LBNs have a lower density of local shops than on average and eight LBNs have no shops in their neighbourhood or within 1km of the local area, including Norton South in Halton, highlighted above as also lacking in community and cultural assets. LBNs are less likely to have heritage assets within their Local Authorities than in other deprived areas as well as having lower levels of heritage assets than the national average.

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this paper highlights the extent of the scarcity of assets across communities identified as 'left behind'. LBNs have lower concentrations of all key community spaces, cultural, educational, heritage, leisure and green assets than other deprived areas and England. A number of LBNs are entirely lacking in shops, cultural assets and open spaces that provide places for people to meet and engage in community life.

This lack of social focal points is likely to contribute towards relatively poor levels of community engagement in LBNs compared with the national average, with 97% of LBNs having a higher proportion of citizens who have not taken part in any civic engagement and 98% having a higher proportion of residents who do not engage in any volunteering.

This is also reflected in the lack of third sector activity in many of these areas, despite relatively high levels of socio-economic challenges that would benefit from the energy and investment from the voluntary and community sector. LBNs are less than half as likely to contain a registered charity and have received considerably lower levels of grant funding not only when compared to other deprived areas but also compared to less deprived areas across England as a whole. This pattern has continued in the pandemic with fewer grants issued by charitable foundations in response to COVID-19 in LBNs than elsewhere in the country.

Building community capacity, expanding third sector activity, and ensuring that residents have places to meet and make connections is likely to be an essential ingredient to addressing some of the currently unmet needs and complex deprivation challenges in these neighbourhoods.

The full report is available [here](#)



Tomorrow: An online celebration event for the Manchester Poverty Truth Commission

On Thursday July 8th, 2021 from 11am – 12 noon

This event will celebrate the work of the Manchester Poverty Truth Commission over the past two years, since its launch in July 2019. We will hear from some of Commissioners, the issues they have explored together in relation to child poverty, welfare and exploitation, the actions they have taken together, and their reflections on the process, during this most challenging of times.

Come prepared to be challenged to think afresh about the truth of poverty in Manchester, and inspired to act in new ways in playing your part in tackling poverty in the city in future. Book your free place [here](#)

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Social Prescribing in Manchester - A VCSE manifesto

Online on Wednesday July 14th, 2021 from 1.30 - 3.30pm

Social prescribing (Be Well) is now operating across Manchester. A core element of the social prescribing model is linking people with long-term needs to neighbourhood organisations and assets, many of which are VCSE organisations. It is good that the value of the VCSE sector is being recognised by the statutory sector as essential to people's health and wellbeing. However, this is also highlighting a number of issues including: lack of capacity in the VCSE sector; one-way referrals; inequality of access to VCSE support across neighbourhoods; inequality of access to VCSE services for the diverse communities of Manchester; poor information sharing and the role of city-wide VCSE sector

The aim of this Assembly is for the VCSE sector to discuss and agree what it wants and needs in order to increase the impact and effectiveness of social prescribing. Together we will write a manifesto which will be presented by representatives of the assembly to senior representatives of Manchester Health and Care Commissioning and Manchester Local Care Organisation.



Join in for an afternoon of discussion and debate to help shape the future of social prescribing in the city. [Register here](#).

COVID Cash Recovery Course

Developed by the Just Finance Foundation, this free 2 hour Train the Trainer course up-skills churches, charities, community leaders and organisations to provide accurate information, resources and signposting to help people in their communities recover from money issues that have arisen due to COVID-19.

Dates: Friday July 16th, 2021, 12noon [Book here](#)
Monday July 19th, 2021, 2pm [Book here](#)

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Towards Greater Food? Taking Stock of Food Support in the COVID-19 Crisis

Thursday/Friday September 9th and 10th, 2021 Cost: £10

By focusing on Greater Manchester, this two-day event aims to take stock of the many ways food providers, mutual aid groups, and food support programs tackled the COVID-19 crisis by giving voice to spokespersons and directors of several third-sector organisations that have been on the frontline during the crisis. By doing so, the event aims to open up a broader discussion about the role that food support provision and community programs play in the UK welfare state and more generally in the fight towards a more sustainable, inclusive, and healthy food system.

[More information and book](#)

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.

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