

**Tameside Poverty Truth Commission launch – what if?**

By Beatrice Smith, Programme Facilitator



What if people who struggled against poverty were involved in making decisions about tackling poverty?

Over the past 10 months, GMPA has been working with a group of brave and courageous individuals with lived experience of poverty from the Tameside area. Together they are seeking to inspire action and change to solve poverty in Tameside. By sharing their individual stories, they hope to bring more awareness to the decision-making process by putting a face to the statistics and building relationships with decision makers.

This is the principle of the Tameside Poverty Truth Commission, which seeks to embed the voices of the lived experience in decision making processes. This will deepen the understanding of the multi-faceted nature of the impact of poverty on those who experience it, leading to better informed decisions across the business, public and voluntary sectors.

After months of hard work, preparation and anticipation, 100 people from various local organisations, partners and stakeholders came together to witness the launch of the Tameside Poverty Truth commission, a year long project, which seeks to explore issues of poverty in Tameside.

The event centred on the voices of the lived experience Commissioners, who shared powerful stories from their own lives and how poverty impacts them daily. It was a hard-hitting event, which highlighted several issues, including housing inequalities, failings in the benefits system and limited access to mental health services.



*Commissioner Ed  
with Hannah Lamberth,  
Administrator and Event Organiser  
(Tameside PTC)*



*Commissioner Christopher*

One Commissioner spoke of being wrongly advised to take up a pension when he was made redundant, resulting in him ending up financially worse off and unable to claim government assistance. Too young to officially retire but rejected by new employers as ‘too old’.

Many of the Commissioners also spoke of falling through the cracks of several services and being traumatically impacted by the vicious cycle of poverty and mental health, not knowing where one ends and the other begins.

As a result, Commissioners spoke of being locked in a cycle of poverty, exacerbated by the rising cost of living, low paid, insecure work, benefit freezes and rising housing and energy costs. Many called for a redesign in the way that services work and called for a collaborative effort in Tameside to free people from the tightening grip of poverty.



*Commissioner Helen  
with Beatrice*

Attendees at the launch included several senior members of local organisations and Tameside Council leader, Councillor Brenda Warrington. Also present were senior cabinet members and council officers, some of whom form part of the Commission as civic and business leaders.



*Commissioner Karen*

## The Grassroots, Civic and Business Commissioners stand together



There was an opportunity to hear positive reflections from some of these leaders as they responded to stories from commissioners and the event. Ivan Wright, Assistant Director of Jigsaw Housing said:

“I think all of us in the room were impacted by everything that each of the commissioners said and certainly the bravery that was shown to tell their story. It was a hard listen, but it should be a hard listen because everyone needs to know that this is the reality of living in poverty. We recognise that we have got responsibility for the end result and the experience that everyone gets. I think the right people are in the room and with the Commissioners’ help, I think we could really identify ways of improving things in Tameside.’

Councillor Warrington, spoke with conviction about her intention to see the work of the Tameside Poverty Truth Commission fully established in Tameside. She said:

“It is absolutely clear to me that poverty in Tameside is a crisis that we need to redouble our efforts to address. The time is right now to think and to act radically.”

Cllr Warrington emphasised the impact that COVID 19 has had on those in the area already struggling with poverty. Her commitment was to see the trends laid bare by the pandemic begin to be reversed in Tameside, not just by goodwill but by determined action from all involved in decision making. She noted that while there may be cause for concern, there is also cause for optimism as collective response to the pandemic has been built upon a wave of grassroots solidarity and mobilisation.



Cllr Brenda Warrington

Local communities and organisations supported by the public, private and voluntary organisations will need to continue to come together to offer services and assistance to those most impacted by the double misfortune of poverty and the pandemic.

It is clear, therefore, that in order to begin to tackle poverty in Tameside, it will take a collaborative effort from everyone, a renewed optimism and a determination to trying new things and to ask together: ‘what if...’.

So what happens next?

The newly launched Commission, formed of lived experience Commissioners and civic and business Commissioners will now get underway and spend the next few months building relationships and identifying issues that they would like to address together. Once these have been identified, working groups will be formed to explore these issues on a deeper level and design possible solutions to some of those identified. Finally, a closing event will be held at the end of next year to communicate the findings of the Commission with the wider public.



The Commission forms part of GMPA’s commitment to embedding the voices of people with lived experience of poverty in the decision making structures and policy making processes of Greater Manchester. Regular updates on the progress of the Commission will be shared through this newsletter and social media so please make sure you subscribe to keep in touch.

At the end of the launch I read out a poem, written by the Grassroots Commissioners entitled ‘What if...’. Listen to the poem [here](#).

You can follow the work of the Commission on the [website](#) and through future newsletters.

*Beatrice Smith at the launch reads the poem ‘What if..’*

## GM Living Wage Campaign: Living Wage week



We are half-way through Living Wage Week and its a special celebration as its the 20th anniversary of the launch of the national Real Living Wage Campaign. We've got an awful lot to celebrate in Greater Manchester. Since our city region campaign started, the number of accredited [Real Living Wage employers](#) here has increased from 26 to over 360.

At the first Living Wage Week event at the People's History Museum on Monday November 15th, the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, launched the campaign to make GM the UK's first Real Living Wage City Region. In recent months the Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign has been working with the Mayor and other partners to develop an Action Plan to make this a reality. At the event on Monday Andy Burnham formally announced the launch of that Action Plan and urged every sector in GM to get involved in delivering it over the next three years.



*Greater Manchester Mayor  
Andy Burnham with the GM Living  
Wage Campaign Coordinator  
John Hacking*

At the same event, the new Real Living Wage rate was announced. It will be £9.90 across the UK (and £11.05 in London), and all employees should be on the new rate by May 2022.

The final event this week is one we are jointly hosting with Mustard Tree on Friday. Both myself and GMPA CEO Graham Whitham will be speaking. Please come along! The details are as follows:

**Friday November 19th**, 2pm - 4pm, The Mustard Tree, M4 6AG – come along to celebrate the role of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in promoting and adopting the Real Living Wage. There are more details on the Mustard Tree website and to register please [email Jack at Mustard Tree](#).

[John Hacking](#),

Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign Co-ordinator  
Twitter: [@GMLivingWage](#) Facebook: [facebook.com/gmlivingwage](#)

The Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign is a Greater Manchester Poverty Action programme.

## Budget Changes Calculator

By Pamela Carysforth, Housing Systems

## Housing Systems

In the Government's October 2021 Budget they announced that the Universal Credit taper rate will reduce from 63p to 55p by 1st December 2021. This means a claimant's award will be reduced by 55p, rather than 63p, for every £1 of net earnings above any work allowance.

In his speech Chancellor Rishi Sunak gave the example of a single mum of 2 who works full-time being better off on UC after the changes announced in Budget 2021.

But how would other claimants fare? Housing Systems have devised a calculator to check what claimants can expect once the new measures are in place. You can access the calculator [here](#).

## DWP Information session on PIP - Oldham-Rochdale-Tameside

On November 30th, 2021 from 11am - 12.30pm



Join Action Together for this information session delivered by DWP Disability Services Advocacy Team.

The aim of the session is to ensure as many supporters, staff and volunteers working in the Voluntary, Community Faith and Social Enterprise sector have as much knowledge as possible on supporting people with Personal Independence Payments and how it can help if you have long term ill health or disability. [Register here](#).

The DWP Disability Services Advocacy Team will be on hand to answer any questions.

## We need a new deal for workers

By Paddy Lillis, General Secretary, Usdaw

*The new Real Living Wage rate of £9.90 outside London announced this week reflects the struggles that workers on low pay are facing to afford what they and their families need, amidst a cost-of-living crisis, and cuts to household incomes. In-work poverty is increasingly a reality for workers in low-pay sectors such as retail, but as USDAW General Secretary outlines, a new deal for workers, including a rise in the government's National Minimum Wage, could immediately improve the lives of so many.*

The retail sector is in crisis. The most recent figures show that we are experiencing the longest continuous drop in retail sales since records began in 1996. With Christmas trading just around the corner, the Government needs to urgently deliver a retail recovery plan.

This plan must go beyond supporting business and local government and focus on the people who work in shops, warehouse and distribution settings. This will help businesses recruit and retain staff and at the same time ensure staff are appropriately rewarded for the important work they do. If we want retail to prosper, we need to make sure that retail jobs are good jobs.



For too long retail jobs have been overlooked and considered unimportant, despite the fact that retail is the largest private sector employer in the UK. All too often, retail jobs have been characterised as low paid, insecure employment.

In this context, it is unsurprising that many retail workers are struggling to make ends meet. Usdaw has recently surveyed over 2,500 low paid workers on their experiences of low pay and insecure work. The results of this survey show that:

- 69% have struggled to pay gas and electricity bills in the last year;
- Over 1 in 3 have missed or been late with rent/mortgage/council tax payments;
- In the past 12 months, 71% of respondents have had to rely on unsecured borrowing to pay everyday bills, and two-thirds of these are now struggling with the repayments;
- Three-quarters reported that financial worries are affecting their mental health.

This is not sustainable, especially when so many retail workers have been at the forefront of our response to the Coronavirus pandemic and kept our country going through challenging times. Now, everyone understands the important role retail workers play.

We need the Government to introduce a new deal for workers, to tackle in-work poverty. Usdaw is calling for:

- An immediate increase in the National Minimum Wage to at least £10 per hour for all workers;
- A minimum contract of 16 hours per week for everyone who wants it;
- A right to a 'normal hours' contract;
- A ban on zero-hours contracts;
- Improved sick pay;
- Protection at work, through legislation to protect public facing workers which makes it a specific offence to assault them;
- A proper social security system and a fundamental overhaul of Universal Credit;
- A voice at work for all employees, through strengthened trade union rights.

It is time for the Government, employers and the public to recognise that retail workers have been undervalued for too long. They deserve a new deal. The provisions that Usdaw are calling for will lead to a substantial improvement in life experience for millions of workers across the economy and will help tackle the growing scandal of in-work poverty that blights our country.

More information about [Urdaw](#).



## An Equal Recovery: Treasury Select Committee Inquiry

This inquiry examined different forms of inequality that had emerged or that may have been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, and what HM Treasury could do to mitigate them. The inquiry focussed on disability, gender, race, regional imbalances, and intergenerational inequality, including housing.

GMPA's written evidence submitted to this inquiry can be read [here](#).



### Older adults and money

Two researchers at the University of Manchester are exploring what happens when older adults need support to manage their money.

The Greater Manchester Ageing Hub believe this is an important area of research as staff can struggle to have conversations around finance, particularly where there are issues of cognitive impairment. The Hub is working with Alex Hall and Christina Straub to link them to those working with older people and those involved in conversations around finance, to ensure that the output of the research is helpful to those working on the front line in GM.

The researchers are keen to speak to people working in a wide range of roles supporting older adults and families about their experiences of this topic - if you can help, please contact [Alex](#) or [Christina](#).

## One Manchester Inclusive Community Welfare Support Fund

One Manchester is offering a total of £100,000 of grants, with a maximum grant size of £25,000 that will support more effective and coordinated access to welfare support and assistance in our communities. They want to hear from organisations that already have experience in providing relevant support in our communities, that are committed to sharing information and increasing coordination of the support they provide with One Manchester, and other service providers.

Applications close 5pm Wednesday 8th December 2021. [More details](#).



## State of the Manchester VCSE Sector 2021 Report Launch. Creating the future: Online event

Tuesday December 7th, 2 - 3.30pm



"This is a report about the past, but it has to start a conversation about the future." This Manchester Voluntary Sector Assembly event will launch the State of the Manchester VCSE 2021 report, talk about its findings and you will have the chance to discuss with VCSE colleagues what the future could look like and how we can work towards this together.

**Please note that this event is for Manchester VCSE staff and volunteers only.**

A copy of the report can be found on Macc's [website](#). Bookings are open [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.

