

Are you a health and care professional working in Greater Manchester?

Greater Manchester Poverty Action (GMPA) is carrying out a survey aimed at health and care professionals working in the NHS and in private and VCFSE roles to gauge how health and care services are responding to poverty and the barriers they face in advancing anti-poverty work.

The results will inform a wider piece of work GMPA is delivering on behalf of NHS GM looking at the role of health and care services in tackling poverty.

The survey is available [here](#) and is open to responses from all health and care professionals, working in both strategic/policy and frontline roles. Deadline for completion is **Thursday 24 August at 5pm.**

Nonprofits call for a long-term strategy for local crisis support in England



By Joe Farnworth-Mayers, Policy Officer (Local) at The Trussell Trust

Unexpected costs happen in our lives – whether it’s a boiler packing up or facing a larger than usual energy bill. These costs, while inconvenient, should never mean people find their only option is to turn to a food bank for support. Yet sadly, for too many people, this is the case.

Our recent Hunger in the UK research found that **the majority (53%) of people referred to food banks in the Trussell Trust network have had to meet a large and unexpected cost** that they had difficulty paying in the previous three months. The research also showed that the overwhelming majority of people at food banks have been forced to seek help as a last resort having exhausted all other avenues. They are likely to have multiple forms of debt, run down whatever limited savings they may have had, and exhausted all options from family and friends.

At its root cause is a social security system which doesn’t provide people with sufficient support to afford the essentials. But we also know that the impact of these unexpected costs is magnified further when people do not have help to turn to locally. There is a clear and valuable role for discretionary crisis support schemes delivered by local authorities which can provide immediate support to people when they need it most.

We’ve seen first-hand the impact such support can provide. In partnership with Leeds City Council, the Trussell Trust commissioned an evaluation into a cash grant pilot scheme, which provided grants to people in financial hardship in Leeds in place of emergency food parcels so they could pay for the essentials they needed most. It found that this approach **improved people’s immediate financial situation and reduced the need to turn to a food bank** in the short term. The approach was also considered more dignified by those receiving the grants.

The UK Government has provided nearly £2bn in funding to local authorities through the Household Support Fund (HSF) since October 2021, which we strongly welcome. Yet despite this investment, the provision of effective local crisis support in England is still patchy at best. There have been multiple spending constraints in each round of funding, ranging from limiting support to pensioners and children, through to the type of essentials it should be spent on. Local authorities have also had to pull together spending plans at very short notice, without being able to put in place the people, the promotion and the application processes required to support local people in need.

The HSF is a positive first step, but for it to enable local authorities to support people facing hardship and build longer-term financial resilience within communities, it needs to have a longer-term strategy.

The Trussell Trust is proud to be part of a coalition of nonprofits – including GMPA - across the UK who are calling for this long-term strategy. Ahead of the Autumn statement, we will be calling for the Government to commit to a **long-term strategy for local crisis support** in England, which includes a multi-year settlement of funding, a clear outcomes framework for such support, and improved monitoring and evaluation of local schemes.

To explore this further, the APPG Ending the Need for Food Banks and Local Government Association are hosting a panel discussion on Wednesday 13 September on the future of the Household Support Fund. [Register here.](#)

New Greater Manchester partnership with Independent Age to create training to support older people in financial hardship

By Jo Garsden, Programme Manager at Greater Manchester Ageing Hub



National advice charity Independent Age has initiated a new partnership with Greater Manchester to improve the lives of older residents in financial hardship.

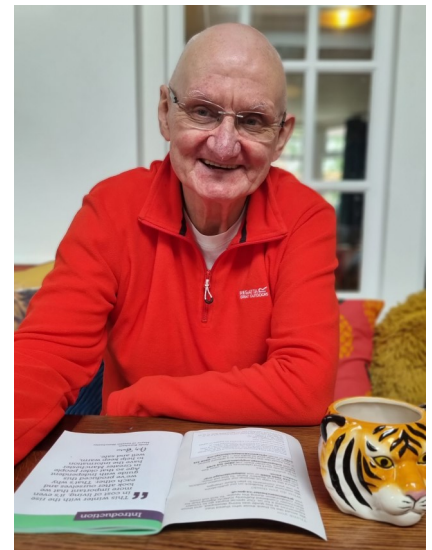
Organisations are invited to be involved in development and piloting of new training offers from Independent Age around older people and financial hardship. The charity plans to share the learning gained here in Greater Manchester at a national level, with the aim of further roll out across the country.

The offer of an initial one year grant agreement follows significant support from Independent Age for the 2022/23 Greater Manchester Pension Top Up and Winterwise campaigns facilitated by the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub and partners, aimed at increasing take up of later life benefits and entitlements.

In 2022, more than 500 frontline workers in Greater Manchester (including housing providers, councils, VCFSE sector, NHS, fire, police) signed up for a free one hour online introductory training session on Pension Credit and Attendance Allowance delivered by Independent Age. From the end of August, a further 15 training dates will be released, with the offer being extended to selected local authorities beyond Greater Manchester.

Independent Age are exploring **new training options for the wider workforce based on feedback from Greater Manchester partners supporting older people**, including:

- Online training sessions via Teams on:
 - * what happens to your benefits when you reach State Pension Age
 - * general benefits training including what's available and how to best answer questions on application forms
 - * how to support older people in debt (focus on signposting)
 - * how to reduce costs including support from utilities providers, energy advice, social tariffs, TV licence, benefits maximisation
- E-learning version of Pension Credit and Attendance Allowance online training (exploring whether this can be uploaded to council and NHS learning platforms)
- Crib sheet to support someone applying for Pension Credit and Attendance Allowance
- Peer ambassador training for older people around financial hardship
- Videos around how to fill in an Attendance Allowance form and what to do if your application is turned down.



An estimated 36,000 eligible households in Greater Manchester are not claiming Pension Credit - that's a third of those who are eligible. The average value to households is estimated at £34 per week, which equates to £70m per year across the region. Many older residents are also missing out on Attendance Allowance and Housing Benefit.

It will be my role to lead this work, with key areas of focus being:

- Scoping what advice is currently available for older people and identifying opportunities for joint working
- Building capacity of Greater Manchester organisations supporting older people around financial hardship
- Developing and delivering 'test and learn' training offers to those supporting older people
- Evaluating the Greater Manchester Winterwise campaign 2022/23.

The work is being supported by a **new financial hardship and older people steering group** which includes representatives from Greater Manchester Older People's Network/Panel, GMPA, the University of Manchester and the DWP. The group meets monthly on a Tuesday 9-10 am.

To find out more about the work around financial hardship and older people, or to get involved in developing the training or the steering group, please contact jo.garsden@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk.

“Really user friendly” and “very useful” – Impact of the Money Advice Referral Tool (MART)



By Daniel Oliver, Head of Programmes at Greater Manchester Poverty Action (GMPA).

GMPA’s money maximising tool has proven to be a success across Greater Manchester.

GMPA established the MART in Greater Manchester over 18 months ago. The tool provides a **framework for a conversation to support someone at risk of falling into poverty**, with a concise summary of options available to get them to the **most appropriate form of preventative support**.

There are now MARTs in six of ten Greater Manchester boroughs: Bury, Oldham, Manchester, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan. An independent evaluation of these has now been completed by ICF, finding that the tools have made it easier for organisations to support people to access money maximising information: **“It’s massively saved me time...I used Google to search. When I saw [the MART], I knew it would save me all that searching”** – MART user.

The evaluation also highlighted the positive role of the collaborative approach we adopted to create the MARTs, bringing together working groups of relevant organisations and people with lived experience of poverty: **“It was good having the service users there. When you’re co-designing something you need that input, so professionals don’t run away and do something that they just assume is going to work”** – working group member.

More than
250
workers & volunteers
are using the MARTs
to support others

One organisation
made a total of
204
referrals in a five-
month period

“
It’s effective in having those
early conversations...
supporting multi-agency
working
- MART user

This process of listening and co-production seems to have paid off, with **over 250 workers and volunteers across 225 Greater Manchester organisations being identified as using the MARTs to support people**, and more than 30% of these being staff within schools and the NHS.

The evaluation found that use of the MARTs varied between organisations, for example between school pastoral staff and foodbank volunteers, and a Wigan organisation shared the MARTs directly with people in the community: **“There was quite a take up, particularly from men, who independently accessed some of the support services relating to mental health, debt and substances”** – MART user. Examples of MART use included: a family being supported to save money on their energy bills through a referral to the Energyworks service; a family accessing legal advice via the MART; and a family being supported to access Universal Credit, Child Benefit and an additional one-off grant, significantly increasing their household income.

GMPA is now reviewing and implementing the learnings and recommendations from the independent evaluation, in partnership with other organisations. These include improving the ways of working of the borough-level MART working groups, providing a more extensive MART training offer, developing an online system to enable automatic MART referrals and developing MARTs in other languages to increase accessibility.

The MART has been funded by the **Trussell Trust** and **Oldham Council** and seeks to maximise household incomes. GMPA would like to thank them for their support, as well as members of the MART working groups and those who participated in the ICF evaluation.

To find out more about the MARTs, please contact Jon Sands at jons@gmpovertyaction.org.



“It sounded like a really good idea to have all the information in one place so that we can refer people on to whatever help they might need -feeding people is only one part of that. **Usually there are underlying things [which explain] why they’re presenting as needing food**, and so it felt like a really good thing we could use to work alongside what we were already doing” – MART user



Policy and research updates

We are providing a summary of the latest news and policy developments to keep you up to date with what is happening across the UK.

Cost of living crisis pushes **debts to highest ever level** for a quarter of all young and middle-aged Brits. [Read more.](#)

Young adults and renters are some of the people worst hit by rising prices as official figures show around one in 20 said they had run out of food in the past two weeks and couldn't afford more. [Read more.](#)

The benefit cap and the two-child limit have **caused hardship to tens of thousands of families**, with both policies failing to meet their original aims, the study concludes. [Read more.](#)

New JRF research finds **unpaid carers experience an average pay penalty of £487 per month**, or nearly £6,000 per year, rising to £744 per month, or nearly £9,000 per year after six years of providing unpaid care. [Read more.](#)

DfE schools survey finds nearly **two-thirds of schools have increased the cost of pupil meals this year** and over a quarter of schools say support with energy bills made no real difference to their financial position. [Read more.](#)

Affordable housing provider Orbit conducted a survey with renters and owners about the impact of the crisis on their everyday living, health, and finances. Some of the key findings of the research include: **three times more renters than owners 'worry all the time' about meeting everyday costs**; nearly a third (31%) of all responders are skipping meals to reduce costs, whilst **nearly three quarters said that they had either turned the heating down (75%) or off completely (72%) during the winter months.** [Read more.](#)

Gen Z are forced to dip into their savings four times more often than the 2022 average, new national research conducted by Money.co.uk savings finds. [Read more.](#)

JRF Cost-of-living Tracker found **that low-income households with a disabled person are being hit hard by the cost of living crisis**, with almost 6 in 10 experiencing food insecurity in April/May 2023 (57%), 7 in 10 going without essentials between November and May (71%), and almost half in arrears with a household bill (48%). [Read more.](#)

United Utilities extends online debt support service to everyone in the North West amid ongoing cost of living crisis



United Utilities' Hardship Hub has now been opened up to everyone across the North West, bringing together hundreds of financial aid schemes in one place so that people can find help for free.

The Hardship Hub was created back in 2019, creating an online portal exclusively for debt advisors to find out about the range of support services available across the region, making it quicker and easier to direct clients to appropriate help. Now, as many households struggle to make ends meet due to the ongoing cost of living crisis, the website is being opened up so that **everyone can get direct access and find out what help is available to them.**

The schemes listed on the site include energy and utility companies, local authorities, housing agencies, charities, and advice and community groups from across the region. There are details on a range of support and advice offerings, from help with utility bills to guidance on applying for housing support. [View the Hardship Hub.](#)

Manchester's New Economic Strategy



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

The Council is currently developing a new Economic Strategy, which will guide the city's vision for growth for the next 5-10 years.

Over the summer we are reaching out to **organisations and people who live or work in Manchester to ask them to help us shape the city's vision for future economic growth.** We want to understand how Manchester's recent economic growth has benefited individuals and any challenges they may have experienced.

An online survey is now live for people to share their views, which is available [here](#) until **21 August 2023.**

Micro-grants now available to support mental wellbeing in Greater Manchester

GMCVO

GMCVO, with funding from [Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership \(GMICP\)](#), are delivering year four of a grants programme to support people the mental wellbeing of people from communities of identity or experience, based in Greater Manchester.

In this rolling micro-grants round, **small voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations (with income less than £75k)** can apply now for **grants of up to £1,000** to run activities that will support the mental wellbeing of people from the following communities of identity or experience: carers; people from communities who have experienced racial inequality; people living with long term physical or mental health conditions; people who identify as LGBTQ+; people experiencing socioeconomic crisis; disabled people; military veterans; people who are unemployed; socially isolated older people. We are also able to provide funding for your organisation to support the mental wellbeing of staff and volunteers in your organisation.

Evidence shows that there are steps that can be taken to improve mental health and wellbeing. We ask that organisations think creatively about how the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' could be used to support people. These include connecting with others, getting active, mindfulness, learning new things and giving to others.

To find out more about the GM Mental Wellbeing grants programme, [click here](#).

Job opportunities



Caritas Salford

Caritas Diocese of Salford is the principal social action agency of the Catholic Diocese.

They are currently recruiting for three roles across their services:

- **Bank Night Support Workers:** to work overnight to ensure a smooth-running service for the Morning Star Hostel in Hulme. Shift times are 8:45pm-9:15am, paid at £11.96/hour. The application closing date is Monday 21 August at 10am.
- **Night Support Worker:** to work overnight to ensure a smooth-running service for the Morning Star Hostel. This is a full-time role with seven 8:45pm-9:15am shifts over a two-week period. The salary is £26,183 and the application closing date is Tuesday 29 August at 10am.
- **Project Worker:** to work at the Young Parents' Accommodation in Bolton, providing a high standard of housing management that delivers a safe environment for young parents and their babies. This role can be worked full-time (37.5 hours p/w) or part-time (22.5 hours p/w). The salary band is £26,549-£27,535 and the application closing date is Monday 11 September at 10am.
- **Senior Finance Manager:** to be responsible for all aspects of financial management for Caritas ensuring an efficient and effective service in accordance with our mission and values. This role is full-time with a starting salary of £43,076. The application closing date is Monday 11 September.

For more information and to find out how to apply, [click 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](#).

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.