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It's not too late to save the Household Support Fund, says Greater Manchester Poverty Action

- **Sir Stephen Timms held a Westminster Hall debate on the Household Support Fund, which is currently set to end in March 2024, this afternoon**
- **The fund has provided £842m to local authorities in the year 2023/24 and is used to support low-income residents with the cost of living**
- **Greater Manchester Poverty Action backs calls to continue the fund and protect thousands of vulnerable residents.**

As the cost-of-living crisis continues to hit low-income families the hardest, a lack of clarity over the extension of the Household Support Fund has caused an increased level of concern in MPs, charities and councils across the country.

Sir Stephen Timms, Labour MP for East Ham and chair of the Work and Pensions Committee held a debate Westminster Hall this afternoon to press the government over its plans for the fund.

The fund is currently used to help vulnerable households meet daily needs such as food, clothing and utilities. In this afternoon's debate, Timms highlighted the precarious position many councils are already in due to continued funding cuts – with council spending on local welfare schemes having declined 87% in the period 2010/11 to 2019/20 - stating that “failing to extend the fund now without a replacement would end vital support in the midst of a continuing crisis.”

MPs from across the country, including Barbara Keeley MP for Worsley and Eccles South and Rebecca Long-Bailey MP for Salford and Eccles, shared stories of how the fund has helped their communities. Long-Bailey warned that an end to the fund “will have disastrous consequences” for Salford's most deprived residents – and ultimately put their health at “extreme risk.”

Recent research by End Furniture Poverty found that the fund provided 62% of all local welfare assistance year. In Greater Manchester, local authorities have used the HSF to extend free school meal provision, create a network of warm spaces, support vulnerable residents with rising fuel costs and provide dedicated financial support to specific groups.

Graham Whitham, CEO at GMPA said: “The Household Support Fund has been vital in recent years in enabling local councils to support residents experiencing poverty and the cost of living crisis.

“Through our work with local authorities across Greater Manchester, we understand that without the fund, some councils will be unable to deliver crisis support services which provide a safety net to vulnerable residents facing hardship.

“Councils themselves are cash-strapped, and don’t have a significant ring-fenced funding for welfare provision – so this has enabled councils to stand up responses to need they wouldn’t have been able to otherwise, and it’s created some space for innovation as well. We have heard from each local authority in Greater Manchester the devastating impact the withdrawal will have in increasing demand that simply cannot be met.

“Yesterday we held a joint crisis support summit with the Independent Food Aid Network, Cash Perks and Furniture Poverty, and a number of council representatives raised concerns that we are not only potential losing the Household Support Fund, but also the cost-of-living support payments. Combined together this huge amount of support that will be lost, and councils really feel like they’re on a big cliff-edge.”

“At GMPA we continue to call on the government to commit to permanent ring-fenced funding for local welfare provision by councils.”

Ends.

Notes to editor:

Greater Manchester Poverty Action (GMPA) is a leading advocate for the continuation of the Household Support Fund (HSF). Recently, we have signed a joint letter to the Chancellor along with Greater Manchester’s authorities urging him to continue the fund, and co-hosted a webinar on the future of crisis support along with the Independent Food Aid Network, End Furniture Poverty and Cash Perks.

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Interviews are available with Graham Whitham, CEO.

Who are Greater Manchester Poverty Action?

Greater Manchester Poverty Action (GMPA) is a recognised leader on poverty in the UK and exists to end poverty in Greater Manchester and beyond.

We deliver independent, evidence-based activities to address socio-economic disadvantage. These focus on maximising the financial resources available to households, amplifying the voices of people with lived experience, and working with our network to achieve meaningful change.

We won't stop until our city-region is free from poverty.

Work includes:

- [Local anti-poverty strategies: good practice and effective approaches](#)
- [Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign](#)
- [Money Advice Referral Tools](#), supporting people to access advice and maximise their income
- [Money Matters programme](#), providing debt and benefit advice in schools
- [Fortnightly newsletters](#)

Further information can be found by visiting <https://www.gmpovertyaction.org/>.