

## Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> October 2022

Subject: Challenge Poverty Week England and Wales – Feedback from the GM  
Launch Event

Report of: Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham

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### Purpose of Report

To provide the GMCA with an update from the ‘Challenge Poverty Week’ GM partnership event that took place on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2022

### Recommendations:

The GMCA is requested to:

1. Note the feedback and suggestions made by cross-sector partners and residents who attended the third party ‘Challenge Poverty Week’ GM partnership event.
2. View the report with reference to and alongside the GMCA Cost of Living Resilience update. Recognising that those responses are immediate, and this paper points to the need for GMCA to consider the medium to long term anti-poverty approach across the city-region.

### Contact Officers

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## Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion		
Health	N/A	
Resilience and Adaptation	N/A	
Housing		
Economy		
Mobility and Connectivity		
Carbon, Nature and Environment		
Consumption and Production		
Contribution to achieving the Greater Manchester Carbon Neutral 2038 target.		

*No direct impacts arising from this report.*

### **Risk Management:**

N/A

### **Legal Considerations:**

N/A

### **Financial Consequences – Revenue:**

N/A

### **Financial Consequences – Capital:**

N/A

**Number of attachments to the report:0**

### **Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

N/A

# 1. Introduction/Background

## BACKGROUND

- 1.1 We all want to live in a just and compassionate society, but to achieve this, action must be taken to loosen the grip of poverty on people's lives. The pandemic and now the cost of living crisis has brought into stark relief the inequalities in our society and intensified them. People on low incomes and in disadvantaged areas, and people in ethnic groups already suffering from social and economic injustice, are disproportionately affected.
- 1.2 Challenge Poverty Week England & Wales 2022 is the annual Campaign Awareness Raising week which provides an opportunity for us all to say what needs to change and a chance for voices that are too often ignored to be heard loud and clear. It is an opportunity to show that it is possible to build a better, more compassionate society in which everyone can live life to the full.
- 1.3 The theme of this year's campaign (which is coordinated nationally by the charity Church Action on Poverty) is 'Living not existing – Dignity for all.' GMCA in collaboration with key partner organisations from the 10 Local Authorities, the Voluntary, Community, Faith, Social Enterprise and business sectors organised a launch event which was hosted by Reverend Ian Rutherford on Monday 17th October at Methodist Central Hall Manchester.
- 1.4 The key objectives of this event were:
  - Raise awareness of the impact of the Cost of Living Crisis on the residents of Greater Manchester.
  - Identify a range of practical solutions at a local and regional level.
  - Campaign for Government action on the cost of living.
  - Provide opportunities for attendees to say what needs to change to enable our own communities to thrive.
  - To change the conversation around poverty and help end the stigma.
  - Promote local and national activities taking place across this week of action.

## **2. HEADLINES FROM THE GUEST SPEAKERS**

2.1 **Opening Address** - The Keynote address was given by Cllr Amanda Chadderton who made it clear that the Cost-of-Living Crisis is the biggest issue for our residents right now. She emphasised that we are facing an even more challenging winter ahead with a lot of our residents having to choose whether to heat or to eat and over the next two years we are going to see more people falling into poverty, in communities already scarred by entrenched deprivation and the impact of the pandemic. However, she recognised that there is so much within the gift of Greater Manchester that we can do to support residents through this very difficult time.

2.2 **Scene Setting** - David Ottiwell from the GMCA Research Team and Jane Partington from 'The Bread and Butter Thing' (TBBT) a registered charity that provides a mobile food club to various locations within GM set the scene by providing some bleak statistics and qualitative insights based on the findings from the recent GM Residents Survey and TBBT member survey. Key findings include:

- 4 in 5 Greater Manchester respondents say their cost of living has increased over the past month.
- Over 4 in 5 Greater Manchester respondents are worried about the rising costs of living.
- 22% of TBBT members are already cutting back on essential food/drink and household essentials.
- 62% of TBBT members have already had to borrow more money or use more credit than usual in the last month, compared to the last three months.

2.3 **Experiences of people with lived experience of poverty** – Two members of Oldham Poverty Truth Commission delivered a candid account of their participation in this initiative. They explained how it had enabled them to not only tell their individual and unique stories but had allowed them to grow in confidence and learn new skills.

Their personal journeys had led them into further volunteering opportunities and an ambition to seek paid employment in the near future.

**2.4 Perspectives from Regional and National Partners** – Several partners were keen to showcase their current initiatives to support GM residents through the Cost of Living Crisis.

- **GMPA** – Outlined their vision of a “Greater Manchester free from Poverty where all residents can realise their potential and access the benefits of living in a diverse and vibrant city region.” Key areas of work included: promoting a Cash First approach; Maximising Incomes; Embedding their Money Advice Referral Tool across GM and promoting the use of the GMPA Poverty Monitor.
- **Trussell Trust** – Presented their 4 key responses to Poverty and the Cost of Living Crisis which are Provision through their Foodbanks; Partnership working to provide wrap around support for customers; Participation to listen the voices of lived experience to understand what needs to change; Policy Change through National Campaigning.
- **FareShare** - Focused on their Slow Cooker Project which will see 250 Slow Cookers distributed to families across GM through their charity partners. Not only are Slow Cookers fuel efficient, but they are also a much healthier option to conventional cooking. Families will also be encouraged to attend ‘Supper Clubs’ to learn new cooking skills and weekly recipe cards will be sent based on the availability of local seasonal fruit and vegetable.
- **GM Integrated Care System** – Summarised the work that is underway in response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis in the short, medium, and longer term. With a focus on maximising signposting opportunities to benefits and debt advice, improving uptake of free prescriptions, patient transport and action to address cold homes. In addition, The GM Workforce Wellbeing Programme is delivering a programme of workshops and masterclass sessions to support individual financial wellbeing, as well as

promoting financial wellbeing resources which collates practical support and links to support colleagues with the cost of living.

## **2.5 Organisations and local Businesses supporting GM Residents**

- **National Illegal Money Lending Team** – Highlighted the increasing prevalence of illegal money lenders across Greater Manchester and new techniques via social media to lure vulnerable individuals and families to borrow money. A recent campaign 'Ask the Question' encourages advice services to ask if someone owes money to someone 'they think is a mate but isn't.' An information pack including an online toolkit for public sector and VCFSE organisations is available to support
- **Lloyds Banking Group** – Offered to make available branch advisors in community hubs and other locations across GM to provide digital skills and financial advice and support. They have recently produced a Cost of Living leaflet based on the GMCA Helping Hands Website that they will be giving to their customers in an effort to target cohorts who may never have experienced poverty before.
- **One and All** – A local SME that has already signed up to the GM Good Employment Charter and pays the Real Living Wage. In addition, this business is committed to supporting their staff through the Cost of Living crisis. Key activities include: Regular confidential surveys to ask how employees are coping financially; Training programmes for managers to support colleagues more effectively with financial difficulties; Providing No Interest Loans, extra tax free money staggered over a 6 month period, Shopping Vouchers and Money Management Programmes.

## **3. KEY OUTCOMES FROM THE ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS WITH PARTNERS**

### **3.1 How can we change the conversation around poverty and help end the stigma?**

- Importance of not attaching blame to the word 'Poverty'

- Framing the causes of Poverty by external factors e.g. Covid/Cost of Living Crisis rather than an individual's fault.
- Actually listening to people and asking them to tell their story without judging them but asking how you can help.
- Importance of sharing these individual stories and ensuring decision makers/leaders are present when these stories are shared.

### **3.2 What else could be done at a Local and Regional Level?**

- Ensure information and support is accessible and available in one place through a number of communication channels.
- Consider the value of a Greater Manchester Poverty Truth Commission that could support future policy making decisions.
- Improve cross sector collaboration to avoid duplication and gaps in service provision.
- Consider appointment of a local level lead/voice for the Cost of Living response for each of the 10 Localities.
- Corporate responsibility and accountability – Real Living Wage, GM Good Employment Charter.
- How could more direct funding be made to local, grassroots organisations who already have the trust of local people and are already delivering successful, practical solutions.

### **3.3 What are the key issues that we need to lobby Central Government about?**

- Increase state benefits in line with inflation.
- Increase Minimum Wage.
- Extend Free School Meals and Healthy Start Voucher eligibility.
- Continued lobbying to ensure individuals that are eligible for Healthy Start Vouchers, Free School Meals and Pension Credits are aware/accessing this entitlement ideally through auto enrolment.

- Provision of more funding for Local Authority Local Welfare Provision Schemes.

### **3.4 Overarching Themes from the event.**

- Engage more Elected Members and Leaders in these conversations
- More time, energy and funding could be directed into peer support and Poverty Truth Commissions that represent the whole of GM and are an ongoing source of intelligence, advice and targeted solutions
- We cannot simply engage with trusted leaders who know what needs to change. We need to bring those on board who are not yet involved but have the power and influence to make a difference to GM residents` lives.

### **4. Further opportunities**

- To note the feedback and recommendations from other Challenge Poverty events taking place across Greater Manchester and Nationally during the week of action.
- To hold a Round Table event with Business Leaders to share best practice interventions
- To engage with the existing GM Poverty Truth Commission Network to ensure that we continue to systematically involve people experiencing poverty in generating change.