

Poverty Commission begins work in Greater Manchester

A commission “To define the nature of poverty and inequality across Greater Manchester, examine the extent and impact of poverty, raise awareness of the issue and to report on its causes and possible solutions” has been established in Greater Manchester.

The Greater Manchester Poverty Commission will be holding 10 participatory events, one in each of Greater Manchester’s boroughs, where the public will be invited to tell commissioners of their experiences of poverty. In addition, the Commission is inviting submissions of evidence and research already compiled for review. The submissions together with the first-hand testimony gained from the participatory events will feed into the Commission’s final report, which is due in the autumn of 2012.

The Greater Manchester Poverty Commission was initiated by a small number of local Members of Parliament (MPs). Presenting their ideas to their Parliamentary colleagues, the Greater Manchester Poverty Commission now enjoys cross-party support (Conservative, Labour and Liberal-Democrat) across Greater Manchester.

In addition to obtaining cross-party support, the Commission has been built to provide representation from Greater Manchester’s key sectors and stakeholders including community and faith groups, advice and welfare organisations, trades unions, social housing providers, the business community, the public and the media.

The ambitions of the Greater Manchester Poverty Commission are set out in its terms of reference:

- determine the overall extent of poverty in Greater Manchester
- determine the principle areas of poverty that impact on Greater Manchester residents
- determine differential impacts of poverty on different groups within Greater Manchester
- determine the causes of poverty within Greater Manchester
- recommend integrated policy solutions to mitigate the effects of poverty
- challenge all sectors, public, private and voluntary and community to implement those policies

Local Hearings

The Chair of the Commission, the Right Reverend Nigel McCulloch, Bishop of Manchester, has written to groups and organisations from Greater Manchester's key sectors and stakeholders to invite submissions of evidence. However, the Commission are eager for their work not to be a purely technical review of poverty data, but should engage local people living in deprived communities in order to hear the experience of poverty as it is lived in Greater Manchester. Therefore, The Commission is holding 10 'Hearings' across Greater Manchester between May and September to listen to the views of people with first-hand experience of poverty in relation to five key questions:

- What does poverty mean to you?
- What, if anything, has changed for you to be in your current situation?
- What do you think it would be like not to be in poverty?
- What would you say are the barriers or obstacles that keep you in poverty?
- What would need to change for you to get out of poverty?

Church Action on Poverty is convening the Hearings, each of which will be attended by at least two Commissioners. To explain the process and to help people prepare presentations of their first-hand experiences of poverty, staff from Church Action on Poverty will try to meet with as many potential testifiers as possible in advance. Individuals will have the opportunity to respond to the key questions above in whatever way they see fit. The testimonies will be recorded, subject to the agreement of participants.

The Hearings will also feature a roundtable discussion, facilitated by staff from the Commission, for participants to explore some of the key themes that have emerged in relation to poverty within their locality. Again, these will be recorded subject to agreement by the participants.

Defining Poverty

To achieve its aims, the Commission believes that the definition of poverty must identify what poverty is, and where and why it exists. Consequently, the Commission believes there is a need to think about the wider economic areas surrounding Greater Manchester and to identify what factors pull people into poverty and what prevents them from escaping from it.

The Commission has noted that lack of access to transport plays a part in poverty, but the issues are not just about physical access to jobs and amenities. Skill levels, health, and family structures are also factors. Therefore, the Commission intend for their final report to take a multi-faceted view about what prevents people from pulling themselves out of poverty.

Further questions the Commission seeks to explore are whether people need to live in the same area in which they work, the locations of certain types of employment and where they might be located in the future. Consideration will also be given to the impact made by Greater Manchester's universities, together with exploring possible links between poverty and aspiration.

Whilst the Commission wishes to define poverty, and identify where and why it exists, it also wants to suggest solutions. Therefore, the Commission will be making

recommendations that require actions. It is anticipated that recommendations will be put to Greater Manchester's key sectors – public, private, voluntary, community and faith. All of

Greater Manchester MPs will also receive the Commission's final report and recommendations.

Where to Submit Evidence and Research

GMCVO is providing the secretariat to the Commission, and relevant evidence and research can be submitted in writing to: Andy Rawling, c/o GMCVO, St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Ardwick, Manchester, M12 6FZ, or by e-mail to andy.rawling@gmcvo.org.uk.

Whilst relevant evidence is sought from as many people as possible. The Commission would be particularly interested in receiving submissions which address the key questions that are being used at the Hearings.

When and Where the Hearings are Taking Place

10 hearings of the Greater Manchester Poverty Commission are being held across Greater Manchester over the next few months. The Hearings will be convened by Church Action on Poverty. To register an interest in participating in any of the Hearings listed, please contact Daniel Nkrumah on 0161 236 9321 (option 4) or e-mail him on daniel@church-poverty.org.uk

Manchester

30 May 2012 (Afternoon)

Church Action on Poverty (Micah Room), Dale House, 35 Dale Street, Manchester, M1 2HF

Tameside

9 Jun 2012 (Morning)

Hyde Town Hall (Godfrey Suite), Corporation Street, Hyde, SK14 1AL

Trafford

15 Jun 2012 (Afternoon)

St Matthews Church Stretford (Horrocks Room), St. Matthew's Hall, Chapel Lane, Stretford, M32 9AJ

Oldham

20 Jun 2012 (Morning)

Oldham Gallery (Performance Area), Gallery Oldham, Oldham Cultural Quarter, Greaves Street, Oldham, OL1 1AL

Stockport

28 Jun 2012 (Morning)

Stockport Guildhall, 169 Wellington Road South, Stockport, SK1 3UA

Wigan

3 Jul 2012 (Morning)

St Peters Pavilion, Hurst St, Hindley, Wigan, WN2 3DN

Please note: this venue may change

Bury

10 Jul 2012 (Afternoon)

The Mosses Centre, Cecil Street, Bury, BL9 0SB

Rochdale

17 Jul 2012 (Afternoon)

Kashmir Youth Project (KYP), Unity House (Apnagar), Belfield Road, Rochdale, OL16 2UP

Salford

24 Jul 2012 (Morning)

Pendleton Gateway, 1 Broadwalk, Pendleton, Salford, M6 5FX

Bolton

2 Aug 2012 (Afternoon)

The Bolton Hub, Bold Street, Bolton, BL1 1LS

Who are commissioners?

The commissioners who comprise the Greater Manchester Poverty Commission are listed below:

- Colin Barson (Voluntary & Community Action Trafford)
- Melanie Bryan (Why Not Change)
- Imam Irfan Chisti (Rochdale Multi-Faith Partnership)
- Eileen Fairhurst (NHS Greater Manchester Cluster)
- Dr. Alison Giles (Our Life)
- Kate Green MP (Stretford & Urmston)
- Paul Horrocks (Essential Communications & Media)
- Baroness Hughes of Stretford
- Jon Lord (Bolton at Home)
- Phil Lowthian (Jobcentre Plus)
- Alan Manning (Trades Union Congress)
- Right Reverend Nigel McCulloch (Bishop of Manchester and Chair of the Greater Manchester Poverty Commission)
- Clive Memmott (Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce & Industry)
- Jawahir Mohamed (Greater Manchester Somali Senior Citizen Care)
- Councillor Paul Murphy (Manchester City Council)
- Allison Foreman (Greater Manchester Pay & Employment Rights Advice Service)

Further information

GMCVO are secretariat to the Greater Manchester Poverty Commission. For enquiries and further information, please contact Tanya Coutts, tanya.coutts@gmcvo.org.uk, 0161 277 1002.

ESI – Building Economic and Social Inclusion

ESI is the **Economic and Social Inclusion Network**, which brings together Greater Manchester's voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, plus friendly individuals and groups, who work towards building economic and social inclusion in the region.

Since its creation in 2011, **ESI** has grown and now boasts 252 members. Since the New Year, **ESI** has delivered 20 **weekly updates** to its members, providing the very latest information on consortia working, contracting and funding opportunities, public policy developments, events, training and lots more. **ESI News** is the bi-monthly newsletter of the network, and features more in-depth articles on key issues regarding economic and social inclusion.

The next phase of **ESI's** work will be to create an **Economic and Social Inclusion Task Group** from amongst its members. The **ESI Task Group** will provide for greater ownership of the project by its members, and undertake projects towards building economic and social inclusion in Greater Manchester.

ESI is free to join and provides an opportunity for information sharing, as well as participation in consultation, research and the chance to influence social and economic policy across Greater Manchester.

For more information, or to join the **ESI** mailing list, please contact: Andy Rawling, Policy and Partnerships Officer, 0161 277 1032, andy.rawling@gmcvo.org.uk

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ESI News is produced six times a year by GMCVO and can be downloaded free of charge from the GMCVO website. It is edited by Andy Rawling, andy.rawling@gmcvo.org.uk, 0161 277 1032.

GMCVO is the support (infrastructure) organisation for the voluntary sector in the sub-region of Greater Manchester. Our aim is to strengthen the voluntary sector, build bridges with other sectors, and influence local and national policy. Our work is representing, promoting and developing voluntary organisations, working in partnership with other organisations doing similar work.

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