

How funders can help address the underlying causes of food insecurity and poverty.

Presentation to Greater Manchester Funders Forum – 09/03/21

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Overview

- About GMPA
- Poverty in the UK and Greater Manchester
- Understanding what we mean by poverty
- Responding to poverty
- Responding to food insecurity
- Next steps
- Questions for panel.

About Greater Manchester Poverty Action (GMPA)

We convene and network organisations from across the public, private and VCSE sectors to foster collaboration and innovation and to maximise the impact of efforts to address hardship and deprivation across Greater Manchester. We equip stakeholders with the knowledge they need to tackle poverty. We carry out research and advocate for changes in policy at a local and city regional level and sometimes at a national level to address the structural and systematic causes of poverty.



Vision

Our vision is 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.



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Poverty in the UK

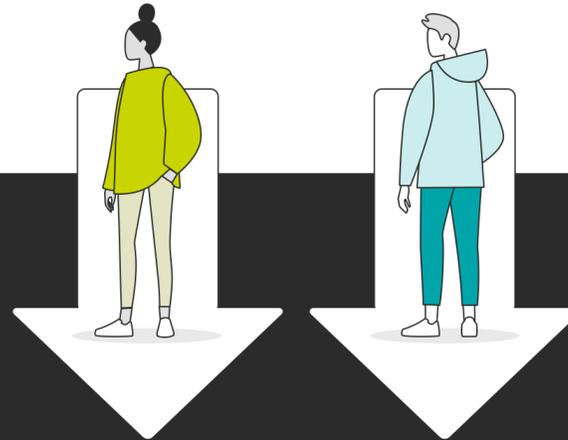
14.5 million people are in **poverty** in the **UK (data pre COVID)**. Of these:

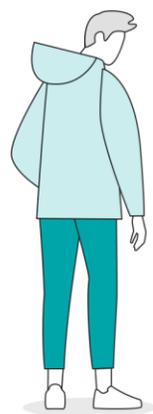
- 8.4 million are working-age adults,
- 4.2 million are children, and
- 1.9 million are of pension age.
- Rise in in-work poverty.

Poverty in Greater Manchester

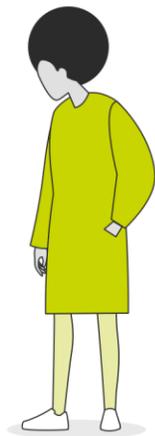


620,000
people are living
below the poverty
line in Greater
Manchester.



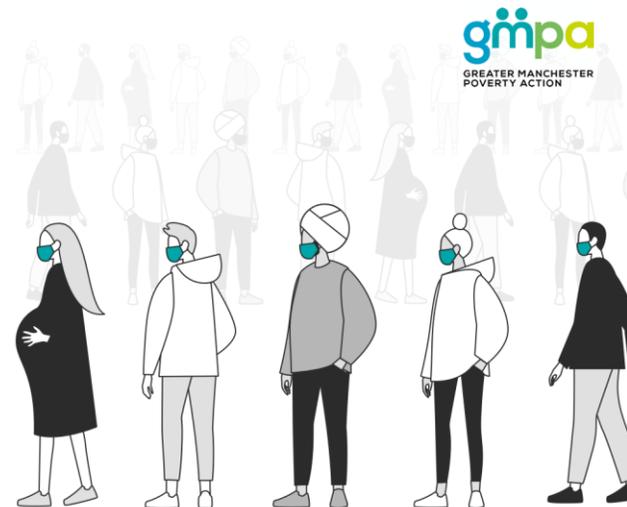


Both **men and women** in Greater Manchester **have a lower life expectancy** than the England average.



There has been a **huge increase** in Greater Manchester residents **claiming unemployment-related benefits** during the pandemic.

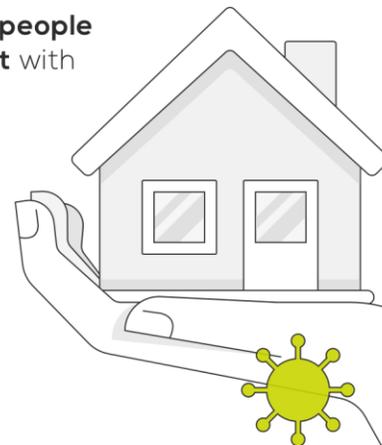
Up 93% between March and August 2020.



200,000 children are **living in poverty** in Greater Manchester.



A quarter of a million people were claiming support with housing...



...prior to the **pandemic**.



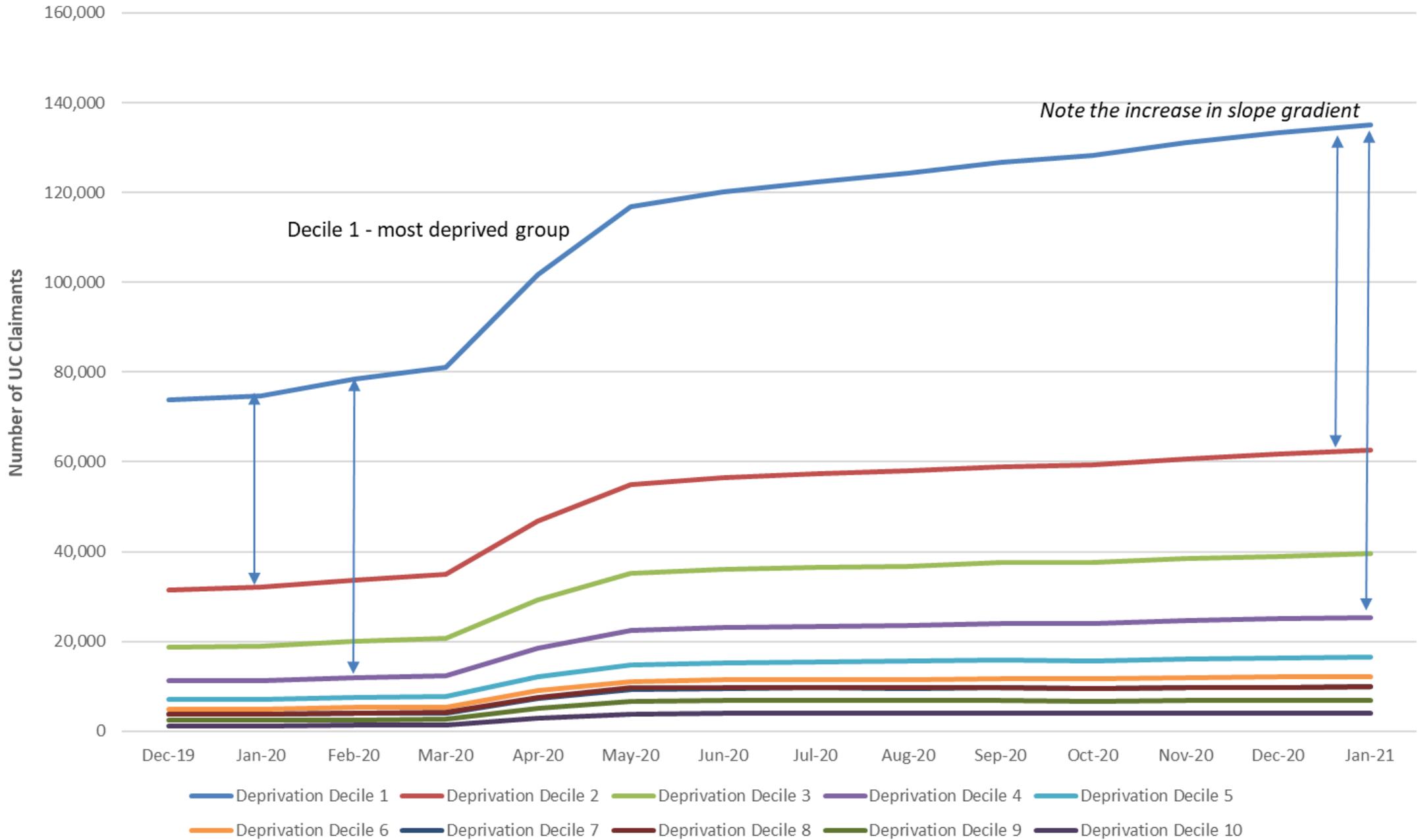
Impact of COVID

- Many of those groups already struggling most to stay afloat have also borne the brunt of the economic and health impacts of COVID-19. These include:
 - part-time workers, low-paid workers and sectors where there are much higher rates of in-work poverty, such as accommodation and food services
 - Black, Asian and minority ethnic households
 - lone parents – mostly women, many of whom work in hard-hit sectors – who are more reliant on local jobs, and are more likely to have struggled with childcare during lockdown
 - private renters, who have higher housing costs, and social renters, who tend to have lower incomes, both leading to higher poverty rates. Renters in work are also more likely to be in a sector more affected by coronavirus
 - areas of the UK where there were already higher levels of unemployment, poverty and deprivation.



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Number of Universal Credit Claimants in Greater Manchester by Deprivation Decile; Dec-19 to Jan-21



Understanding poverty in the UK

“By necessities I understand not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without.”

Adam Smith, Wealth of Nations (1776)

“Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong”.

Peter Townsend, (1979) Poverty in the United Kingdom: a survey of household resources and standards of living.



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Causes of poverty

- Low pay and limited progression
- Job insecurity
- Insufficient support through the benefits system
- Limited savings/ability to save (prone to financial shocks)
- Limited social mobility.

Poverty and food insecurity in GM

- There are 620,000 people living below the low income poverty line in the city region and an estimated 100,000 children are at risk of malnutrition.
- Food insecurity is highly concentrated in some of our localities. More than 30% of residents are at 'risk of food poverty' in one in seven of Greater Manchester's communities.
- GMPA found that people shopping at local convenience stores in deprived parts of Greater Manchester could be paying 36% more for food and household items compared to shopping at a large supermarket.

Responding to food insecurity – the problem

- In January 2017 there were 136 food providers in total. Now is 221 (134 food banks, 49 pantries or food clubs and 38 meal providers) - an increase of more than 60%.
- This proliferation of VCSE sector food provision also happened during a period when many local services that help prevent and reduce poverty, such as welfare rights and debt advice, have faced cuts.
- GMPA is concerned that foodbanks have become institutionalised and that the capacity to address poverty at a local level increasingly lies with crisis responses delivered by the VCSE sector.
- The focus on 'food poverty' may distract resources and energy away from more impactful responses.
- Very few areas lack food banks or other food responses to poverty, but they do lack services that offer a pathway out of poverty.

Responding to food insecurity – a solution

- Stop atomising poverty – food insecurity is a ‘consistent access to adequate food being limited by a lack of money and other resources’.
- Address the underlying causes of poverty – poverty prevention and reduction through:
 - Benefits advice/ benefit uptake
 - Debt advice and financial inclusion work
 - Employment advice and support
 - Policy and campaigns work (focussed on the national and the local)
 - Improve the quality of work available to people
 - Give people money rather than in-kind support – A ‘cash first’ approach
 - Join up support locally (see: <https://www.gmpovertyaction.org/strengthening-role-lwas/>) – what’s missing?
- Make reducing the reliance on food handouts an explicit goal of work aimed at addressing poverty and food insecurity (Menu for Change, GMPA pilots in Oldham and Tameside).

Key messages

- Poverty is a major problem in Greater Manchester, primarily because too many people have insufficient access to financial resources.
- Atomising poverty into 'food poverty', 'fuel poverty' and so on can narrow responses to the issue.
- There's no shortage of food in the UK, but there is a shortage of financial resources.
- Preventing and reducing poverty through 'cash first' responses, debt advice, employment support, benefit uptake, financial inclusion are likely to have a greater impact on poverty, and therefore food insecurity, than food based responses.
- All responses to poverty need to prioritise choice, control and dignity.
- Responses to poverty must be coordinated and a balance has to be sought.
- No handouts without exit strategy/ systems and policy change.

Questions for breakout

1. What are you funding already that is aimed at reducing poverty?
2. From what you have heard today, what could you do differently to reduce and prevent poverty?

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