

## A roadmap for a fairer Oldham

by Debbie Abrahams MP

There is overwhelming evidence of the effects inequality can have on how well we do at school, what types of jobs we get, and how long we will live. Even happiness and trust is enhanced in more equal societies.

This is why I set up the Oldham Fairness Commission (OFC) in 2013. The Commission focused on identifying the causes of local inequalities in education, employment, income and population groups and to define action to address the issues.

Oldham is a wonderful place to live and work, but it is a fact that certain groups of people do better than others. I was under no illusion that 12 years after (at the time the OFC was established) the riots that hit our town, and the Cantle report identified inequalities between Asian and British heritage communities as a key factor, how sensitive this issue was. But I was determined not to shy away from the problem.

I was joined by Commissioners from a cross section of local organisations, from the public, voluntary and private sector, invited to take part based on their professional expertise and their personal commitment to helping build a fairer Oldham.

The OFC analysed evidence and data from expert witnesses at four oral hearings, as well as written evidence submissions. Following the hearings the commissioners and I produced a final report in March 2015.

The report showed that:

- If you come from a low income household, you are less likely to do well at school, with white boys on free school meals performing the worst of all.
- If you are of Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage, you are 30% less likely to be in work than someone of British heritage.
- If you are working woman you will be paid on average 20% less than a male colleague doing an equivalent job.
- If you have a disability you are 30% less likely to be in work than a non-disabled person.
- 1 in 3 jobs in Oldham pay less than the living wage.
- There's more than an 11year life expectancy 'gap' between men who live in the most and least deprived borough areas.

There is no greater inequality and injustice than knowing that you are likely to die sooner just because you're poor. What we now know is that by reducing these inequalities, particularly in income, not only do disadvantaged people do better, but the rest of society does better too. Evidence has shown that educational attainment, social mobility, crime levels as well as life expectancy all improve in more equal societies.

Following the publication of the report, I hosted a conference at Mahdlo, in January 2016 to look at how we could put the recommendations from the OFC report into action. The Oldham Fairness Commission hearings and conference were open to everyone to attend and it was great to see so many people get involved. This included experts, the public and young people including school pupils from a local primary school who had us sweating with their tough questions!

The conference was a culmination of months of hard work by the commissioners, and their chance to share with the public the 'roadmaps' they had produced which was the first steps towards us all working together to build a fairer Oldham.

We are now following up on those first steps and actions. I was proud that during the recent general election, Jim McMahon (MP for Oldham West and Royton), Angela Rayner (MP for Ashton), Oldham Council Leader, Jean Stretton and I pledged to work together to make Oldham a Real Living Wage borough – a key pledge of the OFC.



It's only by working together that local agencies will be able to pinpoint the best use of scarce resources to tackle some of the most ingrained inequalities in our borough. Fairer more equal societies benefit us all and that is what the OFC set out to do.

Read more about the Oldham Fairness Commission on my website [here](#).

**Debbie Abrahams MP**

Member of Parliament for Oldham East and Saddleworth  
Shadow Secretary of State for Work & Pensions



Oldham Fairness Commission Conference with Commissioners and pupils from St Anne's RC primary School



We are now getting ready for Living Wage Week, which commences on Monday the 6<sup>th</sup> of November this year, when representatives from the Living Wage Foundation will be in Manchester to announce the new Living Wage rate.

Our local Campaign theme during Living Wage Week, will be the Good Employment Charter which was part of Andy Burnham's Manifesto. Should you want to know more about employment charters, GMPA's and IGAU's "[Good jobs in Greater Manchester: the role of employment charters](#)" provides a comprehensive introduction:

You may also know of, or be involved in, plans for a Living Wage Week event. If so please do let us know, so that we can help you share the details of your event, via: our webpage, our regular news slot in this Newsletter, and via our social media.

To help you get involved in all the local Living Wage Week activities and events, we plan to have a Campaign meeting at 2-4pm on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> October, at 3rd Floor, Church House, 90 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 2GH, so please ensure you are signed up to receive details of this meeting, by contacting me by email at [Lynn.Sbaih@gmlivingwage.org](mailto:Lynn.Sbaih@gmlivingwage.org) or on 07948 549 485.



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## GM Poverty Action Survey

Over the course of 2017 Greater Manchester Poverty Action (GMPA) has successfully grown its network and increased its activities. We would like to continue that work into 2018 and beyond. We have designed a short survey on the idea of a paid membership scheme, whereby organisations and individuals can support GMPA through an annual subscription. Members would be signalling their support for the values and vision of GMPA, and supporting us onto a more sustainable footing. As GMPA develops we will be able to consider what the benefits of being a member of GMPA might include.

If you would like to respond to the survey it will be open until 5pm on September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017. You will find it [here](#) and we would greatly value your contribution and the time you give us to complete it.

Many thanks



**Voices of Survivors** is a partnership between three of Greater Manchester's women's charities: Manchester Action on Street Health (MASH), Manchester Rape Crisis and Trafford Rape Crisis. They are working with Manchester Metropolitan

University to research the needs of female survivors of sexual violence and exploitation. The aims are to ensure that voices of the women are heard and, by bringing together frontline agencies, to create a network of support across GM. They know that many agencies are offering fantastic support and they believe that by listening to the voices of survivors and coming together they can make a real difference to the support offered to female survivors.

VoS are inviting women to have their say through an online [questionnaire](#). It takes 15-20 minutes to complete. Printed copies are also available.

There will be a launch event on Wednesday September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017 from 1pm-4pm at Methodist Central Buildings, Central Hall, Oldham Street, Manchester, M1 1JQ. Baroness Beverley Hughes of Stretford, Greater Manchester's Deputy Mayor for Police and Crime will be the keynote speaker.

Please [RSVP](#) and further details will be sent out in due course.

The launch event will be an opportunity to hear more about the project and have your say at a GM level. It will also provide a unique chance to meet a wide range of women and representatives from women's organisations from across GM and to sign up to become part of the network of frontline organisations.

**JOB:** Manchester Action on Street Health (MASH) is a busy city centre based charity working with female sex workers. We are looking for a Street Outreach Worker to lead outreach sessions from our new MASH van.



This post is for 17.5 hours per week which includes 2 x 4 hour evening outreach sessions between 8 pm and midnight, one of which will be a Friday.

We are looking for someone with a good understanding of drug and alcohol issues, sexual health, homelessness, trafficking and modern slavery. They will have at least 3 years' experience of working in a challenging front-line environment, experience of case work with individuals and of working with volunteers.

[The job pack](#) Deadline for applications September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## Supporting out-of-work partnered parents with job search and training: lessons from France

By Abigail Taylor

*Throughout 2017 we've been running a series of Work and Wages articles exploring in-work poverty and the challenge of supporting people in to decent work. In this latest article, Abigail Taylor compares employment support in the UK with that of France. Abigail's research illustrates the benefits of a more personalised and person-centred approach to supporting people into work.*



The British economy does not exist in a vacuum. The experience of other countries can be very helpful in developing policy solutions. Comparative policy learning was central to my PhD which compared the experiences of coupled parents who were both out of work in Sheffield and Lille, France.

France represents a pertinent comparison since on paper, its nationally run employment service le Pôle Emploi and the locally administered RSA system (employment and social support for beneficiaries of the RSA the main minimum income programme for those aged 25 or over and either unemployed or on a low salary), would seem to offer personalised support with job search similar to that offered by Jobcentre Plus, the Work Programme and Universal Credit.

As has been previously discussed in this newsletter, the quality of jobs offered is vital in determining whether work will lift unemployed people out of poverty. My study suggests personalised and intensive support with job search is also critical. Whilst a recent report, the Future of Jobcentre Plus, (JcP), (Work and Pensions Committee, 2016<sup>1</sup>) stresses the importance of personalised support, my research indicates that French policy may be more successful in supporting claimants into long-term, sustainable employment because it offers more reactive and less procedural support with job search and training.

Many of the couples I interviewed in the UK, particularly fathers, had taken part in government training schemes and desired to work but nonetheless, were long-term unemployed with few prospects of finding regular work. Whilst parents suggested Community Learning Centres offered strong pre-employment support in a supportive atmosphere, courses appeared short-term. Training courses offered by JcP and the Work Programme<sup>2</sup> were criticised as too procedural and insufficiently person-focused. Participants implied they rarely inspired them to widen their job aspirations or expand their skills with Work Programme providers instead 'creaming' (see Carter and Whitworth, 2015<sup>3</sup>) the most job-ready claimants with those with multiple barriers to employment receiving job search targets rather than training. One father interviewed had been unemployed for six years, having previously worked as a labourer. He described being hindered in finding work by a lack of experience and qualifications. JcP only offered him limited job opportunities, ignoring his job preferences. He added he was unable to set up a gardening company because he did not have a driving licence and funding was unavailable through JcP. In addition, participants in the UK suggested tension with JcP staff and limited support from JcP with things like travel costs.

By contrast, in France, a greater level of tailored support was observed. Parents in France indicated that support available there is more reactive and that claimants build up stronger relationships with work assistance organisations. The way in which the RSA référent system operates at city-level within neighbourhoods and takes a broader focus than JcP appeared important in building trust. Training provision appears longer-term, more comprehensive and more innovative. One father interviewed had been out of work for a year due to his poor qualification level but had received considerably greater support than the father mentioned above in the UK. He was shortly to begin an innovative training programme that built on one of his interests – sport – but combined this with training in how to look for work effectively, confidence building and obtaining a driving licence. The scheme appeared to have been chosen with his interests in mind whilst also offering considerable employment prospects. Whilst support for those with the most complex needs could be improved further in France, parents suggested the subsidised and extensive public transport network was an important factor in aiding their ability to look for jobs.

This study suggests UK policy makers may wish to tailor training courses better to individual needs, provide greater support with transport costs and work to enhance relationships between advisors and claimants, if claimants are to be supported into long-term, sustainable employment. The greater role for Work Coaches within Universal Credit has the potential to lead to claimants receiving more tailored support with job-search and training. However, it is essential that Work Coaches are provided with the appropriate infrastructure to refer claimants to. There is little sign, as yet, of this happening.



Abigail Taylor

By Dr Abigail Taylor, Aston University. Follow her on twitter @taylor\_abigail1

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee (2016) *The Future of Jobcentre Plus*, House of Commons.

<sup>2</sup> The interviews were conducted prior to the roll-out of Universal Credit.

<sup>3</sup> Carter, E. and Whitworth, A. (2015) Creaming and Parking in Quasi-Marketised Welfare-to-Work Schemes: Designed Out Of or Designed In to the UK Work Programme? *Journal of Social Policy*, 44/2, pp.277-296. jc

# WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY ●●●

10th September

## We all have a role to play

By Christine Raiswell

Suicide is a huge public health concern and in England around 13 people take their own lives every day. This has a devastating impact on family, friends, colleagues and communities.

Suicide is also an issue of poverty and inequality. People in the lowest socioeconomic group and living in the most deprived geographical areas are 10 times more at risk of suicide than those in the highest socio-economic group living in the most affluent areas. Men are three times more likely to take their

own lives than women and most people who die by suicide are not in touch with Mental Health Services. There are specific factors too that may increase the risk of suicide including previous self harm, alcohol and drug use, financial difficulties or having experienced abuse. There is growing evidence too of increased risk amongst specific groups such as LGBT and refugees and asylum seekers.

Suicide prevention can be achieved but it needs everyone to play their part and for it not to be seen as just an issue for mental health services. e.g. Network Rail has been making a significant contribution to suicide prevention in Manchester and across the country both through physical measures such as preventing access to tracks and bridges and working in partnership with Samaritans to train their staff to offer emotional support to people in distress who they may come across.

For World Suicide Prevention Day, September 10th, we want to raise awareness about suicide and what people can do to support those who are struggling to cope.

Often people lack confidence to talk to people about suicidal thoughts because they don't know what to say, or may be afraid that asking about it or mentioning may make it more likely that someone will complete suicide. This is not the case. Providing an opportunity for someone to explore suicidal thoughts and feelings can save a life. It is common and perfectly normal for people to have suicidal thoughts.

Here are some tips about supporting someone who you suspect may be suicidal

**Ask** if they are thinking about suicide - be direct in a caring and supportive way

**Listen** and let them know you care - let the person talk about their feelings and listen carefully to what they have to say. Try to understand why they are feeling this way.

**Encourage** them to get help - there is help for people to move forwards with hope. Encourage the person to make an appointment with their GP, call Samaritans on 123 116 (free to call) or contact [the Sanctuary](#) 0300 003 7029 (Mental Health support for adults in a crisis or those experiencing anxiety, panic attacks, depression or suicidal thoughts - for residents of Manchester, Trafford, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Glossop, Wigan and Leigh and Bolton)

**Right now** - if the person is at immediate risk of harm do not leave them alone call 999 or take them to the nearest Hospital Accident and Emergency department

**Take care of yourself** - supporting someone who is suicidal can be distressing and draining. Look after your own physical and mental wellbeing and talk to a friend or family member



Christine Raiswell

Click on the link to see [Manchester's suicide prevention plan](#)

For more information about suicide prevention in Manchester contact [Christine Raiswell](#), Population Health and Wellbeing Team, Manchester Health and Social Care Commissioning.

If you are struggling to cope, help is available in Manchester [here](#).

## Forthcoming Events:

### EndHomelessnessMCR digital community

Tuesday September 12th, 2017 from 5.30 - 9.30pm at Code ComputerLove, Dale Street, Manchester M1 1JB

[StreetSupport](#) has a backlog of features that have been requested by people with lived experience of homelessness and frontline workers. They are looking for DotNet, front end and ionic app developers, designers, content writers, testers, project managers and anyone with time and passion that wants to work with us to deliver these benefits and make a real difference.

#Stronger Together [More information](#)

### Emmaus Mossley's 20th Birthday Bash

Saturday September 16th, 2017 from 10am– 4pm at Emmaus Mossley, Longlands Mill, Queen Street, Mossley OL5 9AH

The event aims to be the biggest in the charity's history, with a programme of music and activities that will appeal to all ages. The community is looking forward to celebrating this significant landmark at Emmaus Mossley. They have some fantastic entertainment lined up: special guests including Terry Waite CBE, President of Emmaus UK, local musicians and lots of activities for kids to enjoy. [More information](#)



### Tackle the Tower

September 16th /17th, 2017

Abseil down the Trafford Centre's Bell Tower and raise money for MASH (Manchester Action on Street Health) £40 registration or raise £145 and abseil for free. [More information](#)



### Ambition for Ageing for All

Tuesday September 26th 10.15am - 3pm at the Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS

Are you keen to make Greater Manchester a better place to grow old? Are you interested in how inequalities and discrimination shape old people's experiences? This is the first public event hosted by the Ambition for Ageing Equalities Board. [More information and to book.](#)



On Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November the Manchester Sleepout will return, and they'd love you to join in.

They're asking you to take on the challenge of sleeping out, for one night only, to highlight the hardships faced by homeless people every night. By taking part you'll help raise vital funds to support homeless people in our community. [Register now](#) to receive an Early Bird discount, places are limited!

Any events you'd like GMPA to publicise? [Email us with the details](#)

## Why GM Poverty Action?

In the Recommendations Report of the Greater Manchester Poverty Commission, 2.4 *Maintaining Momentum on Poverty* called for the formation of a Poverty Action Group to help take forward the work of the Commission.

A small number of public, private and civic sector individuals came together to form GMPA. This group has since grown to over 700 individuals from more than 200 organisations plus Local Authorities and MPs and an increasing number of members of the public.

GMPA is based upon principles of cooperation between organisations.

## For more information about Greater Manchester Poverty Action

please visit our [website](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) or visit our [Facebook](#) page. You can also visit our YouTube channel [Community Voices](#)

All these platforms are there to share news and opinion from our readers, from GM Poverty Action and from the community.

We want to celebrate our successes, find new ways of working together and provide a voice for the people living in poverty in our region. But we can only do this with your help and support.

For more information or to share your news please contact [Chris](#)

Copies of previous newsletters are available on our [website](#)

If you would like to contact us or submit an article for inclusion in a newsletter please get in touch in one of the following ways:

Post: c/o 5th Floor Church House, 90 Deansgate, Manchester M3 2GH

Or contact our Communications Manager: Chris Bagley  
T: 07419 774537 [Email](#)  
and we will reply as soon as possible.

**NB** GMPA does not have full-time dedicated administrative support so please do not expect an immediate response.

