



Better Jobs for Greater Manchester – What Can the Mayor Do?

As part of the ongoing Work and Wages series, Ceri Hughes from the Inclusive Growth Analysis Unit writes about some of the employment challenges facing Greater Manchester, and what the new mayor might do to address them.

Shortly after the election on May 4th the new Mayor for Greater Manchester will take up their post. Their working hours will likely be long but they will also have one of the more rewarding jobs in the city region. Our [research shows](#) that 23% of people living in this city are in jobs that pay below the Living Wage, while many more are unable to find work or are doing work that does not match their interests or needs. For example, less than half of working-age disabled people are in work in Greater Manchester (43% compared to 47% for the UK as a whole) and there are also wide disparities in employment rates across the city region.

These are just a few of the symptoms of the flexible, service-oriented labour market that operates across the city region and they won't be 'solved' by one person, but local action can be taken to support people to find work that means something to them.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation [have put forward](#) several ideas for improving the quality of jobs in Greater Manchester. One idea is for the Mayor to work with businesses and industry bodies to try to raise productivity in low-paying sectors and boost wages. This would mean turning the focus on sectors such as retail, care and hospitality and could have a real impact: together low paying sectors account for [over a third](#) (36%) of the jobs in Greater Manchester. Previous blogs in this series have also called on local leadership to establish [a Living Wage Zone](#) in Greater Manchester and in a forthcoming paper we will also consider the role that employment charters can play in changing employment practices and raising standards for people in Greater Manchester.

The point is not just to tackle low pay but also to create opportunities for people to move into rewarding and better paid roles. Oldham, for example, is now trialling a Careers Advancement Service that aims to support 400 low skilled residents to progress in work. The Mayor could build on this initiative, trialling different approaches to support people in their progression. We also urgently need to find ways to support the long-term unemployed, disabled people and others that have not been served well by mainstream employment support services.

This is only the start, but it hopefully illustrates that the Mayor can play a decisive role in championing these issues. There is scope for them to work with, and lessons to learn from, existing projects across Greater Manchester and elsewhere.

Suggested actions for the Mayor and city region leadership:



Ceri Hughes

Work with businesses and industry bodies to develop strategies to raise productivity in low-paying sectors;

Take on the employment challenges facing the long-term unemployed and others.

Test employment support programmes that build on the evidence and extend support to those who move in to low-wage work;

Find out more about these ideas, or get in touch to share your own [@CeriDwenHughes](#)

Further reading: [JRF Mayoral Briefing Paper](#) and [IGAU "How the Mayor can help to deliver inclusive growth"](#)

GMCVO Hustings with the candidates for GM Mayor

On March 7th, the candidates for Greater Manchester Mayor attending a hustings hosted by GMCVO with a full house of VCSE people from across the city region to talk about the future relationship between the sector, the Mayor and GMCA.

GMCVO's Alex Whinnom commented on a manifesto for a new relationship: "*The manifesto has been developed in collaboration with other VCSE leadership organisations and networks in Greater Manchester. We would like to see a step-change in the way the Mayor, the GMCA and local government relate to our sector, which would play on the strengths of all parties. The manifesto is a brief summary which we hope will open up some discussions.*"

You can view GMCVO's manifesto [here](#).

At the hustings, the candidates answered a range of questions. We have picked out a few relevant topics and lifted key comments from their responses. For their full answers please view the [video](#)

On rough sleeping:

Will Patterson (WP) Green: Support Housing First

Jane Brophy (JB) Liberal Democrat: Find out underlying causes, voluntary sector has key role. The reasons for homelessness can be very complex. Everyone needs to work together.

Andy Burnham (AB) Labour: Person centred, committed to ending rough sleeping by 2020, using voluntary contributions (inc. 15% of Mayor salary if elected) for localised solutions.

Schneur Odze (SO) UKIP: Need discussion with all agencies eg the army who have a legal and moral obligation for life-long care, we need more social housing.

Stephen Morris (SM) English Democrats: Looking to provide, within months of taking office, a warm and dry unit for all rough sleepers paid for by a tobacco premises tax.

Sean Anstee (SA) Conservative: Current approach is fragmented, people are passed from pillar to post, we need to concentrate not only on getting people off the street but keeping them off the street and need to tackle issues including health and social care and employment to get people back into work.



Sean Anstee, Stephen Morris, Schneur Odze, Ben Gilchrist (Chairman), Andy Burnham, Jane Brophy and Will Patterson

On other aspects of Homelessness such as sofa-surfing:

SA: Our Housing Associations across Greater Manchester are doing a great job but we need a mix of more homes from social housing as well as those for open market sales. We need to look at affordable housing and better jobs, unless we do both we won't be able to tackle the issue.

SM: We need to provide housing that allows people to stay in one place, with the support of the services from the voluntary groups.

SO: it comes down to building the right kind of housing and better planning.

AB: We need to build the right kind of homes and undo the right-to-buy damage, we need to better regulate the private rental sector and we need to work with employers to end the culture of zero-hour contracts.

JB: We need affordable housing and social housing, not on green belt but close to transport links and jobs. We won't have a healthy population until we can provide a healthy environment.

WP: How can we ensure that these people get the right support when they can't be seen? We need to build the right sort of houses where people can beat the bedroom tax. We need a benefits system that supports people into better times.

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On the Living Wage:

SM: We need to lead the way, to lift people out of poverty, encourage business to promote the ethics of their business rather than zero-hour contracts.

SO: We need the Living Wage but it can't be seen in isolation, its not easy in areas like social care where the funding is being squeezed and the council is not providing the services directly, and can say its not us not paying the Living Wage. For skilled workers, the Living Wage needs to be a minimum not a maximum.

JB: Yes absolutely support the Living Wage, people have less time off work and are loyal to their company, it will be the Mayor's responsibility to lead on the Living Wage.

SA: Yes, to the Living Wage but we need to look beyond that to the skills of the workforce and encourage progression.

AB: People look to GM to lead. 100 living wage employers is good but its nowhere near good enough. How do we get more: No 1 Procurement – build it into contracts that go through the Mayor's office and cascade down where we commission No 2 we need a flatter pay structure, freeze the top salaries to pay for the Living Wage.

WP: Agreed with ABs comments and beyond that I want to push the Government to support a pilot basic income scheme in GM to support people volunteering or in caring roles.

GMCVO

Other questions covered young people being heard and having affordable housing in GM; transport, specifically audio visual announcements on buses; equality and diversity issues, for example replacing local VCSE bodies with national organisations; and the relationship between statutory bodies and the VCSE sector.

If you would like to hear the candidate's full answers please do view the [video](#). GMCVO have provided time stamped links to each question within the description on YouTube.

Women waiting for a promised pension

Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) campaigns for the thousands of older women forced to wait longer than they expected for their state pensions. While they agree with the equalisation of the pension age between men and women they don't agree with the unfair way the changes were implemented – with little or no personal notice, faster than promised, and no time to make alternative plans. Many retirements have been shattered with devastating consequences.



Former Pensions Minister Steve Webb said that the coalition government in which he served “made a bad decision” when it decided to speed up existing moves to raise women's state retirement age to match men's. Under a policy set in 1995, the age at which women could start drawing the state pension was to rise from 60 to 65 in line with men by 2020 (although the Government didn't start to write to anyone about the changes until 2009 and even then failed to write to everyone affected) but the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition decided in 2011 to speed up the process so the age for women would reach 65 by 2018, and then rise to 66 for both sexes by 2020. This meant as little as one year's notice of up to a 6 year increase for women, compared to men who received 6 years' notice of a one year rise.

The women who are hardest hit were born between April 1953 and 1955 and they effectively learned when they were aged between 57 and 59 that they would not get their pension at 60, giving them little or no time to plan.

Across the country there are tens of thousands of women who have no choice but to continue to work if they can find a job and if they are fit enough. The alternative is applying for benefits.

Over the last 12 years there have been two other major changes that impact on this issue, the first was the Age Discrimination Act, now superseded by the Equality Act, which allowed anyone to ask to work beyond the default retirement age. Most women who are now 58+ have spent their working lives believing that they would *have* to retire – except perhaps at the discretion of their employer – at 60 and that when that happened their state pension would be there for them. The second change was the introduction of workplace pensions which requires every employer to offer a pension scheme to their staff – including the women, who had been excluded from many existing company pension schemes. This has become law at various stages since April 2012 (with the last date being April 2017) but before then employers weren't required to offer any private pension scheme in which you could enrol.

There are approximately 2.6 million women in the UK who were promised their pension at 60 but won't receive it, with an estimated 400,000 of them now reduced to living in poverty. They should have had their state pension, no one told them it could be 6 years late arriving.

To find out more and/or to join an active and well supported campaign check out WASPI's [website](#)

Forthcoming Events:

Greater Manchester Mayoral Housing and Homelessness hustings

On Monday April 3rd, 2017 6 - 10pm at St Philip's Chapel, 2 Wilton Place, Salford M3 6FR

In this one-off special hustings, the leading candidates for mayor will debate two of the defining issues that face Greater Manchester - housing and homelessness.

With social housing stock declining, private rents rising, and homelessness at its highest in decades, this is a vitally important issue that affects so many in our region. Greater Manchester Housing Action, University of Manchester Students' Union, Unite Community, Generation Rent and Manchester TUC are hosting this special hustings. It will give you the opportunity to understand how candidates for Greater Manchester mayor hope to address these problems and their vision for housing in Greater Manchester. The Eventbrite page gives the opportunity to submit your own questions to the candidates. Free to attend.

[More information and book](#)

Race, Poverty and a Good Society

On Tuesday April 25th 1 - 3pm at Trinity House Community Resource Centre, Grove Close, Manchester M14 5AA

I4P, Edge Hill University funded by The Webb Memorial Trust have been running focus groups around the country asking civil society groups to consider what is a Good Society and how do we get there? Initial findings were presented at the House of Commons in June last year. The document is now on the [website](#). This is an invitation to come along to discuss how do you create a Good Society, specifically addressing the issue of Race and Poverty. Free to attend.

[More information and to book](#)

Greater Manchester Citizens - Mayoral Assembly 2017

On Monday May 1st, 2017 2 - 4pm at The Lowry, Salford Quays M50 3AZ

Citizens UK invite you to join them as they seek pledges from the main Mayoral candidates on transport, social care, housing, young people, skills and public sector reform. This event is not a political hustings. Citizens UK seek to establish a public and accountable relationship with whoever becomes our Mayor on a common good agenda. Free to attend. [More information and to book](#)



COOKBank: Setting up a Community Cooking Club 2 Day Course

On May 17th & 18th, 2017 At Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Ancoats, Manchester M4 7HR

The course includes: defining good food; how to overcome the many barriers to cooking healthy food from scratch; resourceful financial solutions to food poverty and food waste; logistics of setting up and running a Cracking Good Food Community Cooking Club; a hearty meal - you will deliver a cooking workshop to each other; a full 40 page colour toolkit as a guide for future support; a Certificate of Achievement.

Cost: £250 per person inclusive of lunch on both days, refreshments, all written materials, equipment (aprons provided) and ingredients to cook.

[More information and to book](#)

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.

