

## Opinion: Response to the Budget by Kate Green MP

Last week's budget was a do-little effort from a government which, like the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition before it, has effectively dismantled Labour successes in ending child poverty and in homelessness reduction. It was a miserable offer to low income families, doing little to deal with the government's self-inflicted policy failures.

**Rough sleeping and Temporary Accommodation:** One of the most obvious and stark examples of these failures is the growth in rough sleeping and people living in temporary accommodation. The number of households in temporary accommodation in Greater Manchester has more than tripled since 2010. That's an appalling situation for families unable to settle and put down roots in the community, it's especially damaging for children whose education faces disruption, and it's shockingly expensive for the taxpayer. But, while the chancellor did announce money for a rough sleeping pilot in Manchester to help those already on the streets, there was little beyond a consultation on longer tenancies in the private rented sector to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place.

While I applaud the Chancellor's aim of halving rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminating it by 2027, even halving it over the next 5 years would still not bring the number down to the position in 2010. What's more, this is not a new pledge, but simply a repetition of the Conservatives' election manifesto commitment - it's clear the government are running out of ideas

Andy Burnham has taken a lead in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping, but without concerted and sustained support from the party that caused the problem, and as cuts to social security continue, and work increasingly doesn't pay enough to maintain a decent standard of living, growing in-work poverty will push more working families and individuals into perilous positions.

**Child Poverty:** So it was also disappointing that there was so little in the budget in the way of efforts to address the effects of benefits and tax changes that threaten to reverse all the progress made in cutting child poverty in the last decade. Cuts to universal credit - which originally promised to lift 350,000 children out of poverty - are now predicted to push a million children *into* poverty, and 900,000 into severe poverty, by the end of the decade.

Families with children lose most from universal credit cuts. A couple with children stand to lose almost £1000 a year; single parents lose £2380, according to the Child Poverty Action Group. Working families stand to lose £420 a year on average from cuts to Universal Credit. The Resolution Foundation says the poorest third of households are set for an average loss of £715 a year by the end of the parliament.

I'm pleased the secretary of state for work and pensions made some additional announcements on Thursday that will help those on universal credit: cutting the waiting time by one week, delaying the introduction of the so-called '2-child' policy, and allowing a run-on for existing claimants of housing benefit. But the bigger problem with universal credit is the cuts to the taper and work allowance, which mean you keep less of your earnings as your pay starts to increase - hardly a great work incentive. And all this sits alongside freezes and cuts to other benefits for children, which are also contributing to rising child poverty. There was no sign the Chancellor intends to do anything about that.

**Paying the bills:** There wasn't much help for families battling the rising cost of living either. Rising inflation and the fall in the value of the pound have forced the price of essential items like food and clothing to rocket, but there was no sign of the promised cap on energy bills, and in particular, nothing to help disabled people who face additional costs (such as for equipment, extra laundry or turning up the heating because they have to spend more time at home). As we approach the winter months, many will be worrying about the bills - but they too got nothing from the Chancellor.

If anyone expected the budget to bring an early Christmas present to those on the lowest incomes, they'll have been sorely disappointed by Wednesday's Scrooge budget.

Kate Green is the MP for Stretford and Urmston. [More information.](#)



Kate Green

## **“Is it OK to invest public money in building a multi-million-pound conference centre while the A&E down the road is crumbling?”** written by Victoria Bettany from the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES)

This question for me highlights the glaring errors in the mainstream economic model. For decades, it has been an accepted wisdom that investment in big shiny things will eventually trickle down to the masses. In some instances, investments of this type have brought new jobs to a failing economy. But time and again, this kind of investment fails to create good local economies where wealth is truly dispersed and broadly held, with local roots.

A flawed economic model operating alongside prolonged austerity has pushed much of the public sector into damage limitation mode, where innovation is considered a risk, too complex and costly to contemplate. This view is disastrous for public services and the economy at large.

Poverty, low wages and inequality are just a handful of myriad issues proliferated by the old economic model. Progressive economics promotes a system where the distribution of wealth extends to many more than the privileged few. Businesses, the social sector, the public sector, pension funds and more are the change agents required to embrace and further the movement from the old way to the new way, where prosperity, Living wages and equality are enjoyed by all.

If we want to create good local economies, we really need to think differently, and be bolder and more ambitious than ever.

In early July, an event took place at the Nishkam Centre in Birmingham, an audience of Policy makers, Think tanks and Enterprise networks gathered to hear how five cities have rejected the accepted wisdom of the old way and became part of a movement centred around progressive local economics.

Funded by the Friends Provident foundation, CLES and NEF have worked with Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff and Leeds to develop and action innovative approaches to tackling the issues affecting real people that remain largely unchanged through the old economic model. This has not involved throwing up shiny new buildings or an obsessive focus on GDP. Instead they are spending their time embedding anchor institutions in the local economy to repatriate leaking wealth, engaging their community in creating a community economic plan with real outcomes, and shifting the narrative around the foundational economy specifically for sectors such as social care.



A community taking charge of new housing in their area

As well as working intensively with these five cities, we also created an online handbook to help community groups and local government to create good city economies across the rest of the UK. [The handbook](#) details all of the existing powers and tools available for each of these actors to help them take the first step towards creating better housing, procuring and commissioning for good, offering and accessing finance that works for people and places, creating affordable renewable energy and a thriving local economy. Alongside every existing power or tool we have showcased a local example of where the use of that particular tool or power has been a force for positive change.

But this is just the beginning.

The five cities we worked with and this brand new handbook are part of a bigger movement, operating outside the auspices of the existing neoliberal economic model, with a drive to grow sustainable, liveable, and connected good local economies.

Find out more here: [Creating Good City Economies in the UK](#), [Five Cities Five Good Local Economies](#) and [Building a Good Local Economy: What do you want to do?](#)

We had a great Living Wage Week and hope you did too. As you may know, we ran three events, during Living Wage Week supporting the GM Combined Authority led public engagement process for the proposed GM Good Employment Charter.



Our thanks to everyone who attended and contributed to the events. Also to our hosts and everyone who made them such a success. Since Living Wage Week, we have been collating all the feedback, and notes, from the events. By the end of November, we will have submitted a report, containing all the feedback, to the GM Combined Authority so that they can add it too all the other public consultation feedback.

Once we have submitted the report, we do not see this as the end of our involvement and anticipate that we will be continuing to help shape the content of the proposed Good Employment Charter. If this something that you would like to be involved in, then please do let Lynn, the Co-Ordinator know. Also, if you have some Living Wage news of your own that you would like to share here, again please get in contact via [email](#) or 07948 549 485.

## University of Manchester's Big Change Society – a personal journey

By Lily Fothergill

Walking around central Manchester over the last five years, it has been impossible to not notice the ever-growing number of people sleeping on the streets. Equally distressing is the amount of people walking past, nonchalant and not even engaging in eye contact with anyone sleeping rough. An invisible but almost tangible barrier separates walkers from sitters, creating social divides between the housed and the homeless.

This also used to be me; a white middle class girl brought up in London, I was almost ashamed to talk to homeless people, afraid that I represented everything in the system that had failed them. But after moving to Manchester and witnessing the devastating impacts of slashes to social services and housing, I found this division unbearable. There are a few regulars who sit outside a local Sainsbury's, and I began to introduce myself, ask their names and have a chat. These chats would sometimes last half an hour or so, getting deep into conversations about social inequality and the state of current affairs, or laughing about shared interests. I came away from every chat wondering why I'd taken so long to initiate that conversation, as it led to a connection which we both enjoyed. I realised there was probably a huge student body who had the same inclinations but felt as awkward as I first had.

Following these interactions, I attended a talk called 'Honest Discussions About Homelessness' which featured speakers from a variety of homeless charities in Manchester, namely the Big Change Society, Barnabas and Street Support. I was inspired by this conference and introduced myself to the curator, a chemical engineering student called Jonah. We shared a passion to fight social injustice and we both had a desire to change the stigma around homelessness, particularly around students' participation and interaction with homeless issues.



It's easy to assume that it will 'never be me'; an assumption which many people at university can afford to have, as we all know it's no cheap privilege. However it is the senseless dehumanisation of homeless people which is excruciating: the ability for some to ignore another person and degrade their basic human needs



A frenzied conversation with Jonah led to planning a campaign to encourage students and young people to engage with issues about homelessness at a deeper, more compassionate level, thus the concept of '[Love for the Streets](#)' was born. We wanted to bridge the gap between young peoples' love for partying with a desire to make a meaningful social impact, and sought to facilitate a deeper network between students and homeless charities. Hence two main tenants of the campaign emerged: events to establish the LFTS brand as a reputedly fun night amongst young people, which would also raise revenue through ticket sales; and secondly events which facilitate conversation about the prevalent issue. This would be in the style of conferences, discussions and talks highlighting the issues local charities face to empower youth action and make information about volunteering more accessible.

Following my conversation with Jonah, I joined the [University of Manchester Big Change Society](#), and began volunteering at Barnabas' drop-in breakfast centre. I was amazed at how easy this process was, and I went from an intrigued student who felt helpless in the face of such a huge problem, to a regular volunteer at a centre which provides support and basic necessities to people in dire situations. I have now graduated, and have returned to Manchester to ensure this campaign grows and delivers its goal of ensuring like-minded individuals can access volunteering services and make a change they deem meaningful. The response to this campaign has been unprecedented - we now have a team of over 40 people who are willing to contribute their time to this cause, and we have an executive team working tirelessly to ensure we deliver promises to local charities. Essentially, we want young people to immerse themselves in charity endeavours and to break down those barriers which separate 'us' and 'them', and challenge the presumption that this issue is too large for individuals to make a difference.

The collective student population of Manchester is roughly 100,000 people, so even if we could encourage just 1% of these to participate in volunteering services, this would increase the number by at least a thousand engaged and passionate individuals supporting charities - there is a huge potential for a very significant impact here which Love for the Streets aims to tap into to help end homelessness in Manchester!



Lily Fothergill

## Red Door and homelessness in Bury

Homelessness is big news in Greater Manchester at the moment, thanks mainly to the new Mayor of the region Andy Burnham. Recent announcements of measures to help, alongside the new Homelessness Fund are very welcome. But what is the reality of homelessness across Greater Manchester away from the bright lights of city centre Manchester? As new MP for Bury North, James Frith recently went along to the Bury Red Door project to find out first hand about the problems faced by homeless and vulnerable adults.

Red Door is a small project in Bury town centre, which is part of the social welfare charity Caritas Diocese of Salford. They help rough sleepers, homeless and vulnerable adults, including those with drug and alcohol dependencies, and mental health issues. The project provides much needed support in finding temporary and permanent accommodation, and help their clients to access and appeal benefits, and offer help with other services. They also provide a friendly drop in centre where beneficiaries can have a shower, wash their clothes, and socialise with other people.

But there are significantly fewer services available for single homeless people in Bury, particularly for rough sleepers, than in neighbouring areas, such as Manchester and Burnley. Even when the local council does accept a responsibility for a homeless single person, the accommodation options are very limited. In terms of emergency accommodation, the nearest hostels are in Rochdale and Salford, and are often difficult for people from Bury to access. The local connection rule often means that accommodation outside Bury in general is very hard to access. People under 35 years old cannot access private rented accommodation due to Housing Benefit regulations and lots of private landlords are pulling out of the sector, so limiting options even further.

Punitive benefit sanctions are affecting more and more of Red Door clients, and project staff are spending more time supporting clients in appeals against benefit decisions. With the impending introduction of Universal Credit this situation is only going to get worse.

On just one day recently, three new rough sleepers turned up at the Red Door project and were not able to be helped by the local council. As winter approaches it is more urgent than ever that additional provision is made available in Bury for homeless single people to be able to have a roof over their heads and avoid having to sleep on the streets or on a friend's sofa. During James' recent visit, he met and was subsequently able to help one of the Red Door clients who was sleeping rough. That is obviously great for that person, but it should not take the intervention of an MP to get results. Shelter is a basic human right. But in Bury today the options for shelter are limited for an increasing number of people.

[More information about Red Door](#)



Lawrence Bettany, Community Services Manager, James Frith MP and Julia Coulton, Community Centres Manager

## Greater Manchester Law Centre: New housing service & Christmas Quiz



### New Housing Service:

Greater Manchester Law Centre (GMLC) are pleased to announce that Platt Halpern Solicitors will be providing free Housing Advice at their premises. The housing advice sessions will be on the second Friday of each month, 1.30 - 4.00pm, by appointment only. Bookings can be made by calling 0161 769 2244, or [emailing](#). Service-users must reside in Greater Manchester.

GMLC will not act for landlords.

Advice is available for: Possession Claims; Anti-Social Behaviour; Disrepair; Unlawful Eviction/Harassment; Homelessness; Rehousing options; Owner Occupiers; Housing for People from Abroad

GMLC is supported by volunteers, pro bono lawyers and donations and provides free, professional, face-to-face legal advice and representation. They also use their voice to campaign on issues relating to their services, and they are embarking on legal challenges against unjust welfare reforms. To make a donation, go to the [website](#) or [email](#) to find out more.

### Christmas Quiz:

All GMLC supporters are invited to the 'Law and Disorder' Christmas Quiz, Thursday 7th December, 7:30pm, at TROF in the Northern Quarter. There will be great prizes and a raffle.

Here is a taster: When is International Human Rights Day?

What song resulted in a legal dispute between The Who and Shel Talmy?

Tickets cost £10 per team member, and you can pay on the door.

We recommend reserving a place on [Eventbrite](#)



### LAW & DISORDER CHRISTMAS QUIZ

at TROF, Northern Quarter, Manchester

Thursday, 7th December, 7.30pm  
GREAT PRIZES & RAFFLE

Fundraiser for

Greater Manchester Law Centre  
Fighting together for free access to justice

## Forthcoming events



### Rethinking Poverty: Can GM lead the way?

On Monday December 4th, 2017, 3:30 - 6:30pm at the Methodist Central Hall\*, Oldham St, Manchester M1 1JQ

On December 4th leading figures from across the city region, including **Mayor Andy Burnham**, will come together to ask how Greater Manchester can lead the way in developing new initiatives to tackle poverty and create a society that works for all. The event will use the recently published *Rethinking Poverty - What Makes a Good Society?* by **Webb Memorial Trust Director Barry Knight** to frame discussions.

Leading figures from across the city region, will give their response to the book and set out how they believe we can do things differently here. There will be time for networking at the beginning and close of the event. Places are limited so please book as soon as possible via [Eventbrite](#).

\*The Hall has full wheelchair access

The event follows the IGAU's '[Local Approaches to Improving the Quality of Work](#)' conference - see right. There is an overlap between these events. You are welcome to join us slightly later if you are attending both but please let us know so we can make sure enough seats are set aside for everyone.

### Local Approaches to Improving the Quality of Work

On Monday 4th December 4th, 9.15am - 4.30pm from at the Pendulum Hotel, Sackville Street, Manchester M1 3BB

While employment levels continue to rise we have less cause to celebrate other increases, like widening pay inequalities and the growth of the working poor. The UK's flexible labour market also leaves considerable scope for employers to shift risks onto their workers, leaving gaps in protection for some of the most vulnerable.



What can be done to address these challenges? Research and practice point to ways that employers, campaigners and policymakers can engage in this agenda. In particular, the Greater Manchester mayor, Andy Burnham, has committed to introduce an employment charter for the city-region, an idea also being explored in other parts of the UK. How can good ideas be taken forward and scaled up and how much can be done at a local level?

This conference will bring together business leaders, HR professionals, trades union representatives, local and national policy makers and others to discuss what can be done to promote quality, well-paid work locally.

[More information and to register](#)

### I am a Survivor not a Skiver: Disabled people's experiences of welfare conditionality by [Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit \(SHUSU\)](#)

On Thursday December 7th, 2017 from 1 - 2pm at the University of Salford, Room MD167, Mary Seacole Building, Frederick Road Campus, Salford M6 6PU

Drawing on repeat interviews over three years with 58 disabled welfare service users across England and Scotland, Katy Jones explores the experience and impact of welfare conditionality. The findings reveal that notions of 'deservedness' are embedded in this system as disabled recipients argue for their entitlement to welfare claims relative to what are deemed to be less deserving groups of benefit claimants. [More info and book](#).

### Cooking to raise awareness of homelessness in Manchester

On Saturday December 9th from 12noon - 3pm at Reach out to the Community, 488 Wilbraham Road, Chorlton, Manchester M21 9AS

Cracking Good Food will be cooking a one pot nutritious dinner with help from volunteers. You can help them to prepare the meal and to spread awareness of homelessness in Greater Manchester.



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

### For more information about Greater Manchester Poverty Action

please visit our [website](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) or visit our [Facebook](#) page.

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

Copies of previous newsletters are available on our [website](#) if you would like to submit an article for inclusion in a newsletter please [get in touch](#)

For more information or to share your news please contact Chris by [Email](#) or call 07419 774537 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.



Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of GMPA. We try to fact-check all articles and events, but if you notice an error please [let us know](#) so we can correct it in a future newsletter.