



From causes to solutions: poverty, low income and work in Oldham

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Gareth Brown, Consultant



Objectives and methodology

- to understand low income, poverty and worklessness in Oldham
- to identify routes out of poverty and ways of building resilience
- to contribute to the Oldham Partnership's evidence base

Methodology

- Desk review
- 16 focus groups
- 32 biographical interviews

- Investigated a range of socio-economic issues affect people's lives



Background and methodology

Socio-economic focus groups

- Young NEET residents
- IB claimants generally
- Residents that are regularly in/out of employment
- Low income families with children
- Lone parents and teenage parents

Geographical focus groups

- Alt and Hols
- Chadderton Springhead
- Royton
- Coppice

Demographic focus groups

- Young Pakistani residents
- Young Bangladeshi residents
- Older people
- Pakistani males
- Pakistani females
- Bangladeshi females



The historic township of Oldham

**Welcome to
Oldham**

many places...
one destination





Qualitative findings

Early years / parental impact / motivation - *'It depends on the fire inside you as well. If that fire is put out at an early age then you are fighting a [losing battle]'*

Does work pay? - *'it [rent and bills] works out about eighty pounds a week. If you're getting like hundred pound wage and eighty pounds of that has got to go out then you've got twenty pounds to live off. You may as well just not get a job'*

'Spiralling debt worries - *'You just get loan after loan, after loan, and just get in debt, debt, debt. No one seems to understand, do they?'*

Public services - *'It's all customer services that you've got to get in contact with. You never speak to anybody.'*

Affordability and food choices - *'You struggle. When you used to eat normal, you're struggling to eat now because you can't afford it. You've got to buy the cheaper, cheaper, cheaper products.'*



Key findings - individuals

- Poverty, low income and worklessness are complex and deeply entwined issues
- Poverty, social exclusion and vulnerability often appear at an early age
- Coping mechanisms and reactive behaviour influence individual decision making
- Social networks (family, friends and mentors) are important in influencing experiences





Key findings - governance

- Poverty is played out locally but influenced by national policy agendas and economic issues
- Poverty is challenging for local government, providing challenges such as community engagement, cohesion, disillusionment and myths
- Public sector bodies struggle to react quick enough to deal with poverty
- Tackling poverty requires long-term outcome driven response





Final thoughts

- Big society - Mentoring for young people and the role of the school in the community
- Re-consider the role of shape of public services within communities – 'poverty proofing'
- Work and training need to be economically viable given varied circumstances

