

AT HOME IN  
EUROPE

EUROPE'S  
WHITE  
WORKING  
CLASS  
COMMUNITIES



OPEN SOCIETY  
FOUNDATIONS

MANCHESTER

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At Home in Europe has final responsibility for the content of the report, including any errors or misrepresentations.

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# Preface

Over the past 50 years states in western and northern Europe have undergone dramatic demographic, social and economic changes, including de-industrialisation, a shift to a service economy, growing inequality, challenges to the sustainability of social welfare, and increasing ethnic and cultural diversity. The challenges these changes create to sustaining social cohesion and ensuring integration are experienced at the local city-level.

Since 2007, the At Home in Europe Project of the Open Society Foundations has worked to support improved social inclusion, participation and advancing equality across 20 cities in 10 countries, in partnership with local policy makers, practitioners and civil society. The impetus for the engagement arose from Open Society Foundations' mandate to address and mitigate the concerns of vulnerable groups at a time when Europe's governments were beginning to accept that it's myriad of immigrant communities—particularly those with a Muslim background—were here to stay and an integral part of the social, political, and cultural landscape. As Europe's Muslims and other minorities became more visible and demographically larger, there has been a pursuit of policies to encourage integration but this has been set against a backdrop of growing anxiety about migration, the perceived erosion of national identity, and the perception that communities from the majority population of European countries have been ignored and consequently disenfranchised.

While there is rhetoric of integration as a 'two way' process, too often integration and social cohesion policies have failed to engage with the views and experiences of existing settled communities, focusing instead on what immigrants or their descendants must do to integrate. For many this failure to address the concerns or anxieties created by changes in the economic and social structures of their neighbourhoods reinforces a sense of being ignored, left behind and demonised. In some cases this has fed into resentment of mainstream political parties and the liberal political values they are seen to represent and increased the appeal of populist parties on mainly the right but also the left. Too often this has led to disengagement from political processes of any kind.

The Europe's White Working Class Communities project documents the experiences of 'white' communities in six cities across Europe (Aarhus, Amsterdam, Berlin, Lyon, Manchester, and Stockholm). Each report in the series focuses on a specific district or neighbourhoods within the city. In doing so it provides new groundbreaking research on the experiences of a section of the population whose lives are often caricatured and whose voices and views are rarely heard in public debates and discussion on integration, cohesion and social inclusion. Through a comparative lens, the project seeks to highlight parallels and differences in policies, practices and experiences across the different European cities.

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*“The working class were always giving back. My mother used to say, we come from Givington because they were always giving back. One of my eldest sisters was in the guides, I was in the scouts and one was in the Red Cross and they went out to give, they never went out to take. That’s what we did as a family.”*

(Woman, 96-year-old resident of Higher Blackley, who had lived in the area for over 60 years)

# Executive summary

The research presented in this report is part of a European-wide study undertaken on behalf of the Open Society Foundations' At Home in Europe programme to further understand marginalised majority communities (MMC). The term MMC has been used interchangeably with white working-class communities and for this report are representative of the same community. The terminology and cultural understanding of class and race are quite specific to a UK context and represent this in the report. For the purpose of this report, marginalised majority communities are defined as those who are British citizens born in the United Kingdom and whose parents are also British citizens born in the United Kingdom, so not explicitly defined by race.

The report focuses on Higher Blackley, a ward in the north of Manchester, as its case study. Twelve focus groups were conducted with 100 local residents alongside 23 stakeholder interviews including politicians, community activists, public service providers, police representatives and religious leaders. The findings culminated in the body of evidence presented in this report, supported by wider UK policy and articles related to the subject matter.

White working-class communities have become an increasingly marginalised and maligned majority in the United Kingdom. Many social, political, economic and cultural changes have taken place over the last 40 years that have had persistently negative impacts, including the following.

- Economic marginalisation as the jobs lost to communities as a result of de-industrialisation have been replaced by low-paid and insecure jobs in service industries, making people more dependent on social security benefits and leaving them without a skills base to aspire from.
- Political marginalisation as the political elites have increasingly neglected communities and focused on a middle-class section of society perceived as more likely to bring them electoral victory, while at the same time politics has become more professionalised and working-class institutions have been eroded.
- Social and cultural marginalisation as the media create stereotypes that demonise working-class communities as feckless scroungers who do not want to work, yet want to be “kept” by hard-working taxpayers while they claim social security benefits. There have also been changes in family structures, meaning that there is more reliance on childcare, which is becoming increasingly expensive.

In the recent past, we have seen the advent of 24-hour media, which has created a perpetual news cycle and the development of an intensified and sensationalised profiling of white working-class communities to be seen as a commodity—albeit one

to be ridiculed and abused. This in turn has contributed towards the creation of a powerful mythology that deems the white working class as a “problem community”.

One factor behind this situation persisting is a lack of knowledge and evidence about the realities of white working-class communities and the dynamics that shape their lives. An increased professionalisation of sectors including the media and politics, together with the change in skilled manual work being replaced by service sector employment, the erosion of traditional pathways for the working classes has further isolated these communities.

This gap in knowledge allows for an entrenchment of negative perceptions of white working-class communities. Within this space, behavioural explanations for marginalisation, which individualise blame, seep into the public consciousness. This neglects the way in which the challenging and unequal economic and social realities of the United Kingdom affect people’s lives. This research intends to address this gap in knowledge in order to provide the basis for improved advocacy and policymaking.

Rarely recognised, there has always been a strong sense of kinship woven throughout the fabric of white working-class communities. Throughout the research in Higher Blackley, north Manchester, there was a strong and often supportive community with a sense of identity and belonging based on solid social bonds and connections. These tight-knit communities create networks of support that often serve as an antidote to the precarious nature of low-paid jobs, the changing structure of families and the erosion of the state-provided social security net. This has created a new dimension to the social and community insecurity that serves to marginalise the relative position of white working-class communities. This creates the conditions that can allow suspicion of outsiders to become more intense in a way that can threaten social cohesion and create fertile conditions for populist parties and an often anti-immigrant media to sow tensions and anxiety.

The report covers a range of themes that have been designed to provide a holistic understanding of the dynamics that affect white working-class communities. To be able to work with communities to offer hope for a future shaped by equity and fairness, it is important to understand the complex inter-relation of all the different elements that shape people’s lives. The research has found that there is a social insecurity that is impacting on people in different, but cumulative and intersecting ways. It affects all aspects of people’s lives—lives that are becoming increasingly precarious in recent years following the impact that the recession and welfare reforms are having on already marginalised communities. Influenced by all of the above, there is an erosion of the historical identities that have existed in the past and a difficulty in adapting to an uncertain future and changing demographic make-up of communities. Below is a summary of each major theme addressed in the research.

**Identity and belonging:** There has always been a strong sense of community and kinship in white working-class communities existing between long-standing residents, which is often overlooked by the proliferation of negative portrayals. These kinships and networks provide support across a range of different areas from childcare to security from crime. Higher Blackley has families who have lived there for generations. This nurtures the supportive conditions for individuals within the community, but it can also make it harder for people perceived to be “outsiders”. Alongside increased precariousness and anxiety, there is the added potential for resentment of people perceived not to belong. This becomes especially pertinent as access to state-led social security and housing becomes scarcer, while a sense of a loss of identity undermines people’s sense of belonging even further. The research discovered that many residents felt there is a lack of local shared spaces where they could openly discuss some of these fears and concerns without being branded as racists. The research found a proud sense of belonging to the local area and to the city of Manchester that formed an important part of people’s identity, even if they had themselves migrated to Higher Blackley or to the city.

**Education:** The disparity between educational outcomes for white working-class pupils and more privileged white pupils is higher than for any other ethnic group. Although this is a complex area, the research found clear connections between social inequality and educational outcomes. However, in spite of this, there were strong aspirations from all participants interviewed. The research has captured ways in which poverty, challenging social conditions and poor housing all affect achievement. There is a strong need to stem the way in which lower levels of academic and social attainment have become embedded. Educational achievement can be a crucial means through which to support young white working-class people to have better life chances and feel that they have a stake and sense of belonging in wider society. Although not a panacea to structural social conditions, cross-agency support and careful monitoring can serve to improve educational outcomes for young people and Higher Blackley has examples of successful work in this arena.

**Employment:** The economic model that has developed over the last 30 years means that many residents are employed in low-skilled and low-paid jobs. Decreasing wages, stagnant living standards and increased difficulties in accessing local jobs have created insecurity that impact on all spheres of people’s lives. Everyone interviewed wanted to work with varying conditions being of importance to different sections of the community. For example, having local, flexible work that fitted in with children’s school hours was a key factor for younger mothers. Traditional jobs in manufacturing, which were particularly strong in Higher Blackley, have not returned—leaving a vacuum for a potential local workforce. There is also an important gendered element that often goes unrecognised, with women facing additional barriers, resulting in the fact that women are overrepresented in low paid and insecure employment.

**Housing:** The security previously provided by social housing is being undermined and—consistent with national and long-standing trends—there are high levels of competition for accommodation in the context of decades of little in the way of house-building programmes, as well as an uncapped private rented housing market. The research showed that the perception of unfair housing allocation is a major source of tension and, despite robust city policies being in place, at times is seen to be undermining community stability and affecting people’s networks of support that they have come to rely upon. Evidence suggests that welfare reforms (such as the changes to housing benefit) will create further insecurity, both for residents and housing providers. The private rented sector is failing to provide much needed cost-effective, good quality housing, and people are severely limited in the ability to buy their own properties, as well as having less confidence to take on a long-term debt.

**Health:** The connections between poor health outcomes and economic marginalisation have been long known and discussed. The research has found strong qualitative evidence to support this, especially in terms of mental health, unemployment, substandard housing and food poverty. Existing health structures must further recognise this, and be more proactive in their role in tackling wider social determinants of health in order to address health inequalities. Higher Blackley has the largest municipal park in Europe, as well as other green spaces in the locality and supportive community networks, yet there should be more scope to realise the potential that this provides. The research showed a lack of understanding on the part of officials particularly in relation to seeking work and the impact of mental health on an individual or family. There was an understanding demonstrated by the residents of the need to eat healthily and look after one’s mental and physical well-being. However, many of the residents’ health problems were compounded by the impact of low wages, insecure work and long waiting lists for counselling. A number of residents spoke about the increased demands on local GP services and the length of time one had to wait for appointments, which was often connected to their concerns over immigration.

**Police:** There was a strong feeling that there needed to be more police on the street, with a keenness for the “old bobby on the beat” and the notion that increased investment in community policing with better communication could be a real positive for the area. However, in line with other public sector agencies, Greater Manchester Police have had their budgets reduced and the redeployment of resources could undermine their immediate ability to achieve this. People felt that the police were often unresponsive and sometimes overly harsh in their treatment of individuals, with some residents reporting that they would rather rely on their social networks to provide the security that otherwise should be provided by the police. The research found residents’ perceived crime rate was higher than the figures suggest, with the evidence showing that Higher Blackley is an area of relatively low crime.

**Participation and influence:** There has been a marked and steady decline in democratic engagement and participation over the last 40 years with an increased sense of

isolation from mainstream politics. The research uncovered a deep-rooted frustration about formal politics and powerful institutions, even though many of the older residents participated in democratic processes. For some residents, this stemmed from a lack of knowledge about the political process, which was seen to be complex, and a growing sense of apathy and disillusionment. What is also clear is the cultural divide between the socially liberal world of individuals and institutions in positions of power—termed the “do-gooders”—and many people in white working-class communities. This contributes to a significant dislocation from mainstream political parties and the ability to influence key institutions, for example the police, registered social landlords and the local authority. This could potentially widen the opportunities for more populist parties to come forward with simpler messages that resonate with certain issues and anxieties, creating further tensions in the community.

**Media:** Like many sectors, there has been a change in the profession, with the days of people working their way up from being runners to reporters becoming increasingly scarce. The media have become increasingly professionalised, with journalist graduates often filling vacancies and the narrowing of any other pathways into the profession. The media have not been immune to austerity measures, with national and local print media cutting reporters and increasingly relying on established networks. This is all within the context of print media competing with broadcast and online media and a declining readership base and an extremely competitive environment to get the “best” story. There was a strong feeling throughout the research that the media do not represent working-class communities accurately or fairly. This feeling was concentrated on the national broadcast and print media in particular. This leads to a misrecognition of the realities of people’s lives and can have a damaging effect on communities and how they are collectively perceived. The local media were perceived as being more relevant in reporting local issues, though there was still little recognition of how working-class communities could influence or shape stories.

These different themes all reveal a general pattern of a challenging erosion of traditional identities for white working-class communities and an increased insecurity and undermined sense of belonging: many people within white working-class communities do not have access to decent jobs, have decreasing living standards and experience poorer health outcomes, especially in terms of mental health. Meanwhile, the social security net provided by the state is not responding to their needs, with difficulty in accessing social housing, increasingly punitive welfare reform and austerity measures impacting on public services, and policing that struggles to meet the perceived needs of communities within the context of reduced funding. This is all occurring against the background of media that have become increasingly hostile towards the culture and identity of white working-class communities.

This all contributes to impact negatively on individuals and families, and also has a negative effect on pupils’ educational achievement and overall public health. This further adds to the conditions that create a marginalisation from mainstream politics,

institutions and an increased suspicion of immigration and people who are perceived as outsiders.

However, despite these increasingly difficult conditions there are many positive aspects that were found in Higher Blackley, which must be valued, recognised and built upon. The social networks of support provide a real sense of security for people, and despite some suspicion of new people coming into the area, there were many instances of people being welcoming and empathetic. The desire to work was strong amongst those people who participated in the research and public service providers in the area are highly motivated and committed to supporting communities. Higher Blackley is surrounded by wonderful green spaces and the connection to the place is strong for many people.

The report seeks to build upon these strengths and offers suggestions in creating an increased sense of belonging and positive sense of identity and support, which is collectively delivered by the community, the state and the economy. Suggestions include:

- an integrated approach to education and food poverty;
- a democratic engagement programme to increase the connection between communities and policymaking;
- a shared space development to increase opportunities for participation, open discussion and community-led local activities;
- community mental health provision that draws upon existing assets;
- a partnership between the local media and key community media ambassadors to work together and report factual, interesting news and provide journalism of integrity.



# Methodology

The methodology used for this research has included extensive desk-based research on policy, academic literature and secondary data analysis. Alongside this we carried out primary research, which was composed of 12 focus groups and 23 stakeholder interviews.

There were 12 focus groups with residents in Higher Blackley as follows.

1. Education
2. Employment
3. Housing
4. Health and social services
5. Policing
6. Civil and political participation
7. Identity and belonging
8. Role of the media
9. Young women aged 18–35
10. Young men aged 18–35
11. Older men aged 45 and above
12. Older women aged 45 and above

As part of this, the research team spoke to over 100 people who were residents of Higher Blackley, including a range of age groups from 13 to 85, people in work and unemployed people, both male and females, from a range of educational backgrounds and with people who had lived in the area for varying lengths of time. Focus groups were held in a range of diverse community venues including a nursery, the local Sure Start centre, a primary school, the community centre, a local church, sheltered accommodation, a local pub and at one of the local hairdresser's shops.

Some of the subject areas were more easily discussed than others, with particular themes proving more elusive in terms of starting a discussion. However, all of the focus groups were completed and all participants engaged to varying degrees. An outreach approach was undertaken to get underneath the first layers of the community structures and reached out to individuals meeting in the local pubs, at the hairdresser's and the youth club as well as taking the more traditional route of engaging with tenant groups, voluntary sector organisations, schools and the local churches.

This approach provided the scope to encourage a diverse range of participants to attend the focus groups. However, the strong sense of kinship in the area and the existence of families who had lived in Higher Blackley for three generations meant that many had social relationships with each other even though they were recruited independently. This created focus groups that sometimes involved people catching up on gossip and family news, which in itself revealed the interconnected nature of white working-class communities in Higher Blackley.

Two focus groups were segregated based on gender and separately based on age profile. This allowed the recruitment of an all-male group under 35 years of age, which was a rich addition to the research material. There was also a focus group with young people aged under 18 that provided a valuable insight into the thoughts of the next generation of residents. Many of the informal conversations undertaken as part of the initial scoping of the area helped immensely in forming a foundation to recruit volunteers for the focus groups and to gain an insight into how the community operated and interacted.

There were also interviews with 23 people who live and work in Manchester at different levels and in different service areas, as well as politicians and policymakers, teachers, doctors and local community and religious representatives.

The report is laid out with an introduction to the local policy and city context, followed by chapters on each of the different thematic areas. These include the evidence gathered from the stakeholder interviews, the focus groups and are supported by the literature review. The recommendations and conclusions are presented at the end of the report.

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

This report is part of a European-wide study across six cities as part of the Open Society Foundations' research on Europe's White Working Class Communities (EWWCC) in Higher Blackley, Manchester. For the purposes of this project, the marginalised majority population is defined as comprising those who are British citizens with white ethnicity born in the United Kingdom, and whose parents are also British citizens born in the United Kingdom. Although not explicitly defined by race, the term white working classes is used interchangeably with marginalised majority throughout this report. The research is based on 12 focus groups, 23 stakeholder interviews with community activists, politicians, voluntary sector leaders and the media, as well as a comprehensive literature and policy review.

The report focuses on a single locality, the ward of Higher Blackley, which is located at the very north of the city of Manchester. This area was chosen as it fitted the profile of a community that had significant pockets of deprivation alongside areas of relative affluence, a majority white working-class community which has undergone social change including increased migration into the area, and a history of far-right political activity.

Research that explores the marginalisation of white working-class communities is relatively scarce. Explanations seep into this vacuum that point to a “culture of poverty” and rest upon assumptions that can tend to exclusively cite the behaviour of working class communities as the sole cause of marginalisation rather than a more nuanced approach that also considers social, economic and cultural structures of exclusion.

Charles Murray reveals this cultural explanation of poverty in a more extreme form, in which he identifies the development of an underclass, people who are not “merely poor, but often at the margins of society, unsocialised and often violent.”<sup>1</sup> The theory of an underclass is increasingly being drawn upon in mainstream media accounts of white working-class communities.

This identifies moral standards and not inequality as the major issue, highlighting a widespread cultural explanation that neglects structural economic factors. In his classic book *Blaming the Victim*, William Ryan identifies that “the logical outcome of analyzing social problems in terms of the deficiencies of the victim is the development of programs aimed at correcting those deficiencies.”<sup>2</sup> This creates policies that aim to address a deficit model of “Broken Britain” and do not build upon or recognise the strengths that exist within communities, nor seek to address the systemic conditions that drive inequality.

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1 C. Murray and M. Philips, *Underclass + 10. Charles Murray and the British Underclass 1990–2000*. Great Britain, Cromwell Press, 2001, p. 2 (hereafter, Murray and Philips, *Underclass + 10*).

2 W. Ryan, *Blaming the Victim*. New York, Vintage Books, 1976.

This focus on a deficit model that is based on behavioural analyses is predominant within much of the literature and policy debate—as can be seen through the Centre for Social Justice’s approach, which asserts that “a child who experiences family breakdown is more likely to fail in school. Someone who fails at school is less likely to be in work and more likely to require benefits ...”<sup>3</sup>

While family dynamics clearly affect a pupil’s performance, it is a well-established fact that social inequality by itself is not the sole factor that impacts on educational achievement, and that it is rather a combination of complex causes that have a cumulative effect—yet this wider social dynamic is neglected at the expense of blaming family breakdown for being the chief causal factor. This example is largely indicative of the explanations that are dominant within such an approach and which powerfully shape public policy today.

On top of this, a 24-hour media cycle often portrays working-class communities according to these stereotypes, thereby reproducing the narrative until it becomes seen as fact from which policy should be shaped. This further entrenches the sense of a lack of belonging in wider society and erodes further the traditional notions of identity that have existed in white working-class communities. This misrepresentation of the white working class and the neglect of the impact that wider socio-economic dynamics have on shaping people’s lives lead to policies that do not provide the necessary interventions required to address the root causes of marginalisation, as they are not dealing with the relevant conditions. This in turn contributes to a growing sense of resentment and dislocation from the political system that many people feel is failing them, resulting in the voice of disenfranchised citizens becoming isolated from policymaking and thus perpetuating the cycle.

There is currently a polarised debate between behavioural explanations and those based on structural inequalities, which can fail to address the nuances behind the interaction between the social and individual factors that shape lives and communities. A publication by the Webb Memorial Trust on “attitudes to poverty” found that any solution to the problem of poverty must stress both the role of economic management and social structure and the role of individual agency and empowerment. This is not a question of either/or; it is a question of both/and.<sup>4</sup> Research for this report addresses this gap in knowledge about the complexities within these communities and is designed to provide a more complete understanding of the issues that contribute to the marginalisation of working-class communities.

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3 See the Centre for Social Justice website, “Social breakdown and poverty,” at <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/about-us/social-breakdown-and-poverty>.

4 Webb Memorial Trust, “Attitudes to poverty: Research on poverty and inequality—Note 1”, 2013, at [http://www.webbmemorialtrust.org.uk/download/WMT\\_Findings\\_1.pdf](http://www.webbmemorialtrust.org.uk/download/WMT_Findings_1.pdf).

In order to achieve this, the report focuses on the ward of Higher Blackley in order to provide an in-depth study of how political, economic, cultural and social changes play out at a local level and have contributed to the marginalisation of white working-class communities living there. By exploring this at a hyper-local level, it is possible to delve deeper into the particular dynamics of a community and how these interact with each other.

This report is intended to give a voice to communities that are often disconnected from policy, politics and culture and has involved in-depth qualitative work to identify a more nuanced analysis of white working-class communities. Additionally, the report highlights some of the strengths of these communities that serve as an antidote to the often negative portrayals that dominate and which create more protective conditions for people to live and work in. Through this, the research provides the basis for more effective decision-making that can raise standards of living, promote more social equity and contribute towards strengthening social cohesion. The research was an opportunity to delve into the social and cultural norms and values that bind this community together, in order to gain an insight into white working-class communities and their sense of belonging to wider society.

## 1.1 | LIVING STANDARDS

The marginalisation of the white working class must be situated within the wider socio-economic and cultural changes that have occurred in the United Kingdom. The white working class has experienced significant transformation over the last 30 years: the social structure of their communities and the nature of employment has changed, migration has impacted on their localities and an adequate supply of social housing is becoming increasingly more difficult to obtain. Overall, there has been stagnation in the rise of the living standards of the bottom half of society.<sup>5</sup>

Economic growth is seen as a central plank to tackling poverty and reducing inequality. However, research findings indicate that over the past 20 years, economic outputs have largely been decoupled from increases in wages.<sup>6</sup> As a result, it could be surmised that overall economic growth has not necessarily benefited all sectors of society equally. Many jobs created in the “flexible” labour market are precarious and fail to pay enough for a socially acceptable standard of living. The seminal report by the Commission on Living Standards shows how living standards across the United Kingdom have stagnated over the last 30 years, and how only a relatively small

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5 S. Garner, *White Working-class Neighbourhoods: Common Themes and Policy Suggestions*. York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2011, p. 5 (hereafter, Garner, *White Working-class Neighbourhoods*).

6 Resolution Foundation, “Gaining from growth”, 2012, at [http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/media/media/downloads/Gaining\\_from\\_growth\\_-\\_The\\_final\\_report\\_of\\_the\\_Commission\\_on\\_Living\\_Standards.pdf](http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/media/media/downloads/Gaining_from_growth_-_The_final_report_of_the_Commission_on_Living_Standards.pdf) (hereafter, Resolution Foundation, “Gaining from growth”).

proportion of overall gross domestic product (GDP) growth trickles down to the wages of the bottom half of the working population.<sup>7</sup>

This is becoming more pronounced, with many people on lower incomes becoming increasingly squeezed due to what Hirsch identifies as a combination of “sluggish income growth, restrictions on increases in benefits and tax credits, and rising living costs.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) has found that there has been a deterioration in living standards in recent years, with the proportion of people living in households below the identified Minimum Income Standard (which shows how much households need for an acceptable standard of living according to members of the public) increasing by a fifth between 2008/2009 and 2011/2012. Most of the increase came in the final year of this period.<sup>9</sup>

The increase in insecure low-paid employment over the past 30 years has meant that the living standards of working-class communities have not risen in line with economic growth, and they are now falling following the recession.<sup>10</sup> The jobs lost from de-industrialisation have not returned and are unlikely to come back in the near future. These have often been replaced by insecure, low-paid and low-skilled jobs, whilst employment in the so-called knowledge economy is often out of reach for many communities, due to the need to have specific expertise and skills. This has created a labour market with a lack of intermediate level jobs that provide a decent wage and job security.

The labour market creates what Tracy Shildrick and colleagues have called “poverty and insecurity: life in ‘low-pay, no-pay’ Britain”, in which there is alternation between low-paid, insecure jobs and periods out of work. This is described as a “longitudinal pattern of employment, instability and movement between low-paid jobs and unemployment, usually accompanied by claiming of welfare benefits.”<sup>11</sup>

It is within this context, as well as with regard to changes in the relative position of women in society, increased migration and rising social inequality that the historical identity of white working-class communities has been transformed and continues to dynamically evolve.

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7 Resolution Foundation, “Gaining from growth”.

8 D. Hirsch, “A Minimum Income Standard for the UK in 2013”, 2013, at <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/households-below-minimum-income-standard> (hereafter, Hirsch, “A Minimum Income Standard for the UK”).

9 Hirsch, “A Minimum Income Standard for the UK”.

10 Hirsch, “A Minimum Income Standard for the UK”.

11 T. Shildrick et al., *Poverty and Insecurity: Life in “Low-pay, No-pay” Britain*. London, Policy Press, 2012, p. 18 (hereafter, Shildrick et al., *Poverty and Insecurity*).

# 2

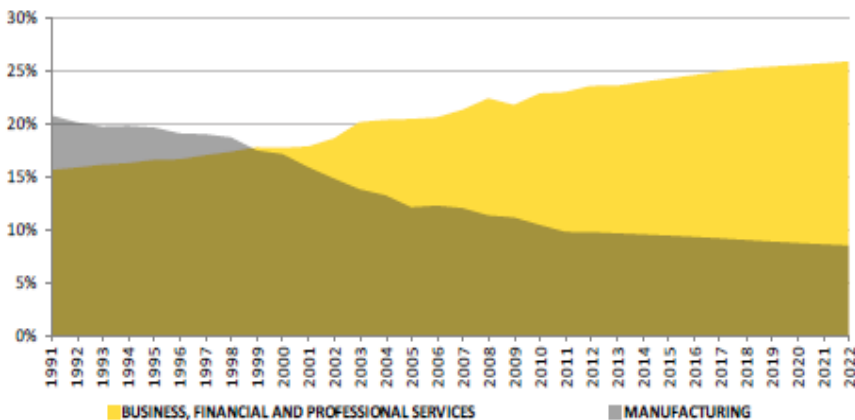
## MANCHESTER AND HIGHER BLACKLEY



This section considers some of the historical background and demographic data to provide information on the white working class in the ward of Higher Blackley and places it within the context of the city of Manchester.

Manchester was the birthplace of the industrial revolution, and as a result it has experienced acute effects of de-industrialisation. Only 15 years ago there was a falling population, high levels of unemployment, dereliction and an economic base that was limited in scope. However, in recent years the city has undergone what the State of the City Report describes as “an economic renaissance, with traditional industries and low-value services making way for an economy based on knowledge, expertise and entrepreneurialism.”<sup>12</sup> Evidence from the *Manchester Independent Economic Review* showed that the city has a higher concentration of jobs in key knowledge-based industries than any of the comparator areas bar London.<sup>13</sup> This shift in jobs away from manufacturing and towards more employment in the service sector is a pattern that is consistent across Greater Manchester, as illustrated by the graph in Figure 1.<sup>14</sup>

**FIGURE 1. THE DECLINE OF MANUFACTURING AND THE RISE OF BUSINESS, FINANCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES, PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT IN GREATER MANCHESTER, 1991–2022 (FORECAST)**



Source: Oxford Economics (2012)

**Source:** Oxford Economics (2012) in *New Economy, Welfare reform in Greater Manchester*, 2012, p. 9., at [neweconomymanchester.com/downloads/2476-Welfare-Reform-Full-Report-final-pdf](http://neweconomymanchester.com/downloads/2476-Welfare-Reform-Full-Report-final-pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Manchester Partnership, “State of the City Report,” 2012, at [www.manchesterpartnership.org.uk/manchesterpartnership/downloads/file/190/state\\_of\\_the\\_city\\_report\\_2012\\_complete\\_report](http://www.manchesterpartnership.org.uk/manchesterpartnership/downloads/file/190/state_of_the_city_report_2012_complete_report) (hereafter, Manchester Partnership, “State of the City Report”).

<sup>13</sup> Manchester Independent Economic Review, 2009, at <http://www.manchester-review.org.uk/projects/view/?id=722>

<sup>14</sup> New Economy, “Welfare reform in Greater Manchester. Impact on people, services, housing and the economy”, 2012, at <http://neweconomymanchester.com/downloads/2476-Welfare-Reform-Full-Report-final-pdf>

The ward of Higher Blackley is situated in the far north of the city. Higher Blackley historically developed from a small village community of ancient origin. The surroundings of this rural settlement were fields and woodlands. Many of the properties were farms, one having a date stone of 1723.

Spinning and weaving were carried out by hand in some of the cottages, whilst during the 18<sup>th</sup> century small-scale, textile-related mills were established for bleaching, dyeing and the making of fustian, a coarse twilled cloth. This historical connection to dyeing was to be a long one, as the roots of what was to become ICI emerged in 1788 on the banks of the River Irk. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Industrial Revolution took the textile industry out of cottages and into purpose-built mills, more power was available from the River Irk and water-driven mills were established.

Developing from a rural village to the north of Manchester, Higher Blackley became part of the city's urban spread during mass house building in the 1930s, with homes that were considered to be of an extremely high standard.

In many ways, Higher Blackley represents the history of British manufacturing. After ICI established its world famous plant and UK headquarters in Blackley, the area's name became synonymous with the dyeing and chemicals industry, which employed 14,000 people at its peak in 1961. ICI went through increasingly difficult times and several reorganisations from 1969 onwards. By 1993, in response to takeover fears, ICI split itself into two parts, ICI and Zeneca. Zeneca was the higher-tech part made up of pharmaceuticals, agrochemicals and specialties. Zeneca sold the textile dyes business to BASF in 1996.

The remaining parts of the business were sold in 1999 in a management buyout backed by venture capital, and Zeneca merged with Astra to form AstraZeneca, which is now well over 10 times the size of the restructured ICI, but very few jobs remain in Higher Blackley.

Hexagon Tower, the former ICI research, development and production centre is now home to Northwards Housing and has serviced offices and laboratory accommodation for scientific and technology-focused business. There is a Sainsbury's superstore located in Higher Blackley, which is now one of the largest employers in the area. Sainsbury's pay £5.14 per hour for so-called "juniors" and £6.71 per hour for 'Adults'. Where many people used to work in manufacturing, in 2011 40 per cent of Higher Blackley residents in work were employed in caring, sales and customer services and elementary work.

## 2.1 | DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the 2011 Census figures, Manchester was the third fastest growing of the local and unitary authorities, and the city experienced the greatest percentage population growth outside the London region, with an increase of 19 per cent to 503,127 people. Of these, 59.3 per cent of people in Manchester identify themselves as White British.

## 2.2 | ETHNICITY IN HIGHER BLACKLEY

Higher Blackley has a population of 13,686—of whom 79.6 per cent identify themselves as White British;<sup>15</sup> in 2001 this was 85 per cent, reflecting the demographic change that has taken place over the last 10 years.

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15 Office of National Statistics, “2011 Census—Population and household estimates for England and Wales”, 2012, p. 15, at [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778\\_270487.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_270487.pdf) (hereafter, Office of National Statistics, “2011 Census”).

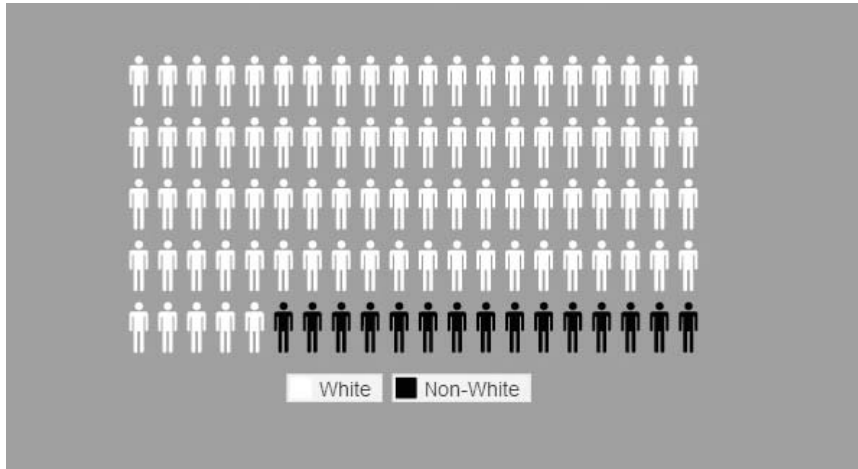
**TABLE 1. ETHNICITY IN HIGHER BLACKLEY 2011**

Variable	Higher Blackley	Manchester (Metropolitan District)	England
All usual residents (persons)	13,686	503,127	53,012,456
White; English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British (persons)	10,897	298,237	42,279,236
White; Irish (persons)	295	11,843	517,001
White; Gypsy or Irish Traveller (persons)	8	509	54,895
White; other White (persons)	396	24,520	2,430,010
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups; White and Black Caribbean (persons)	177	8,877	415,616
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups; White and Black African (persons)	111	4,397	161,550
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups; White and Asian (persons)	70	4,791	332,708
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups; other mixed (persons)	53	5,096	283,005
Asian/Asian British; Indian (persons)	101	11,417	1,395,702
Asian/Asian British; Pakistani (persons)	398	42,904	1,112,282
Asian/Asian British; Bangladeshi (persons)	30	6,437	436,514
Asian/Asian British; Chinese (persons)	107	13,539	379,503
Asian/Asian British; other Asian (persons)	130	11,689	819,402
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British; African (persons)	575	25,718	977,741
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British; Caribbean (persons)	82	9,642	591,016
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British; other Black (persons)	117	8,124	277,857
Other ethnic group; Arab (persons)	82	9,503	220,985
Other ethnic group; any other ethnic group (persons)	57	5,884	327,433

Source: Office of National Statistics, "2011 Census"

The census data reveal that the ethnic composition of the ward remains predominantly White British, especially when compared to the average for the city. Indeed, when other white minorities are included, the number of white residents accounts for 85 per cent.

**FIGURE 2. ETHNICITY IN HIGHER BLACKLEY**

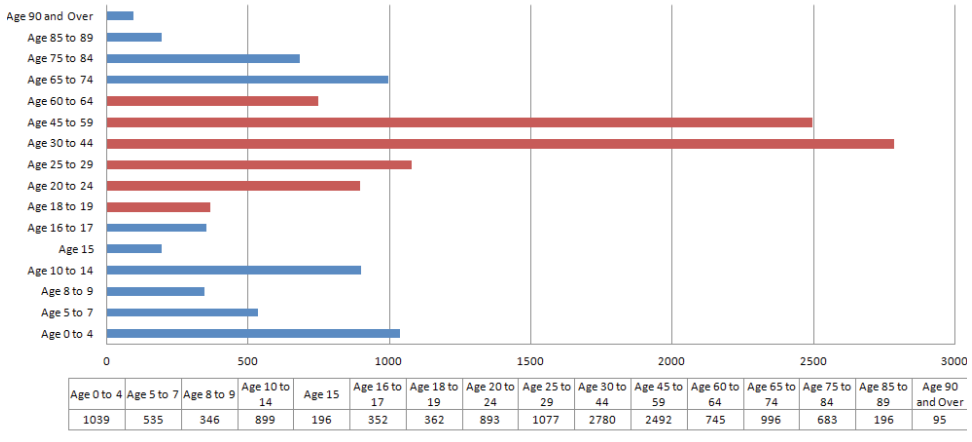


Source: Office of National Statistics, “2011 Census”

## 2.3 | AGE PROFILE

Higher Blackley has a median age of 36 years, which is younger than the Manchester figure of 39 years and is in contrast to a commonly held perception that Higher Blackley has an ageing population. There are 3,015 residents aged under 16 years, 11,481 working-age adults (16–64) and 1970 residents aged over 65.

**FIGURE 3. AGE STRUCTURE IN HIGHER BLACKLEY**

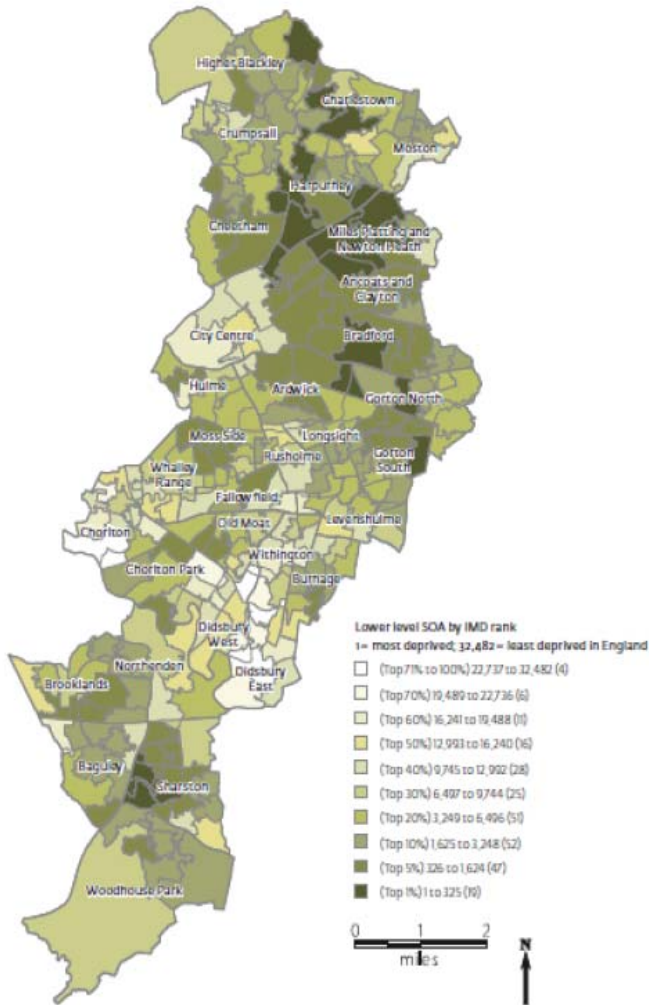


Source: Office of National Statistics, “2011 Census”

## 2.4 | DEPRIVATION

Across a number of issues, Manchester suffers significant levels of deprivation. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 (IMD 2010) is based on seven domains of deprivation relating to income, employment, health and disability, education, skills and training, barriers to housing and services, crime and living environment.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Manchester City Council, “State of the Wards Report”, 2011, p. 32, at [http://www.manchesterpartnership.org.uk/downloads/download/7/state\\_of\\_the\\_wards\\_report\\_2011](http://www.manchesterpartnership.org.uk/downloads/download/7/state_of_the_wards_report_2011).

**FIGURE 4. MANCHESTER INDEX FOR MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION 2010**

Source: Manchester City Council, IMD 2010 CLG

Higher Blackley has particular neighbourhoods within the ward that are amongst the top 1 per cent of deprived areas in England, although there are also areas that are relatively better off by comparison, thus providing a ward of contrasts. Within certain Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), deprivation is highly concentrated in small pockets of the ward, which sees high levels of poverty, unemployment and poor health.

This can be seen through the child poverty figures. Manchester has amongst the highest levels of child poverty in the country, estimated to bring a financial cost of £446 million to the city.<sup>17</sup> In 2009, Higher Blackley had a higher proportion of children under the age of 16 in poverty than the Manchester average (42.8 per cent compared to 39.9 per cent), and a higher rate than the average for England as a whole. Within the ward, rates varied from 19.9 per cent to 61.9 per cent (which is amongst one of the highest LSOAs in Manchester). In 2013, there was a child poverty rate of 42 per cent across the ward.<sup>18</sup>

Acorn is a postcode-based typology used to identify and understand the population of any given area by postcode. It works by attributing a typology to individual postcodes based on census and other data sources, such as income, spending, education, health and housing tenure.<sup>19</sup> The results are shown in the map in Figure 5.

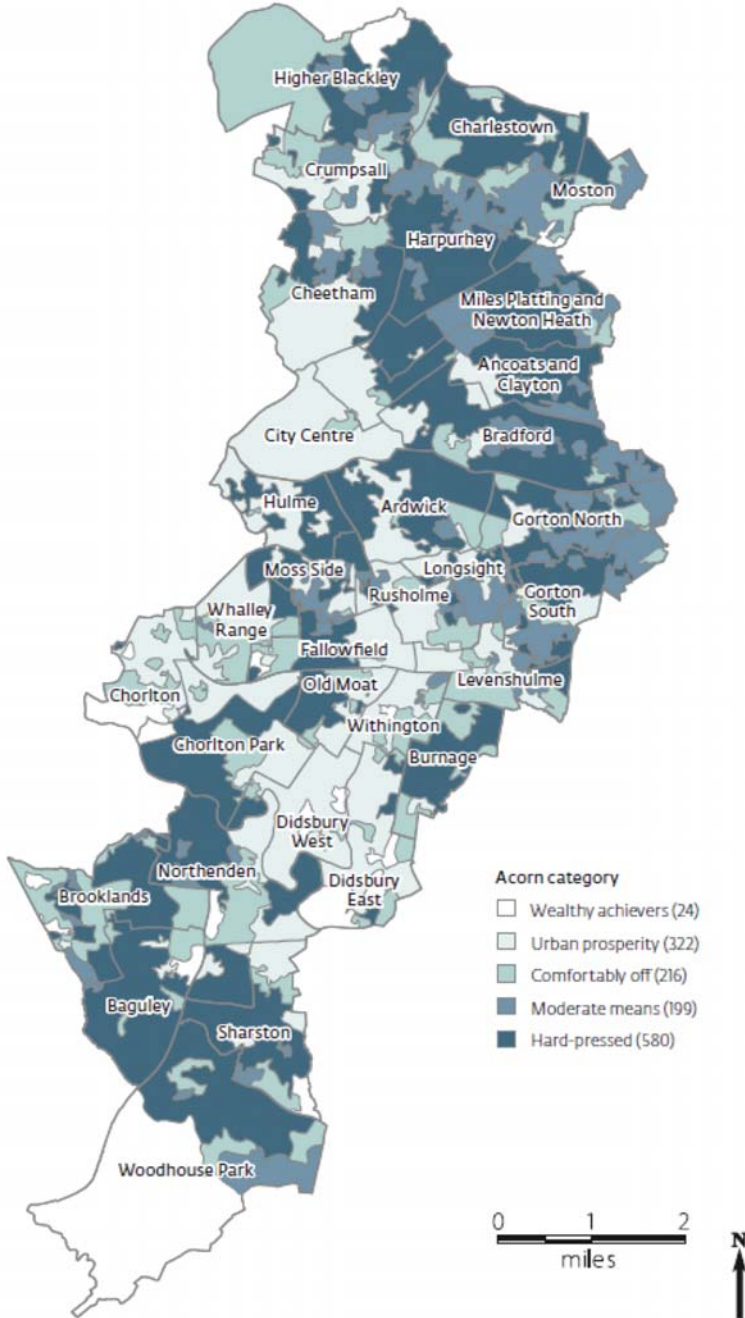
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17 Child Poverty Action Group, "Local authorities and child poverty: Balancing threats and opportunities", 2013, at [http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-local-authorities-child-pov-0713-amended\\_o\\_o.pdf](http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-local-authorities-child-pov-0713-amended_o_o.pdf).

18 See <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/why-end-child-poverty/poverty-in-your-area>.

19 Manchester Partnership, "State of the City Report 2012-2013," p. 11. At [http://www.manchesterpartnership.org.uk/manchesterpartnership/downloads/file/190/state\\_of\\_the\\_city\\_report\\_2012\\_complete\\_report](http://www.manchesterpartnership.org.uk/manchesterpartnership/downloads/file/190/state_of_the_city_report_2012_complete_report)



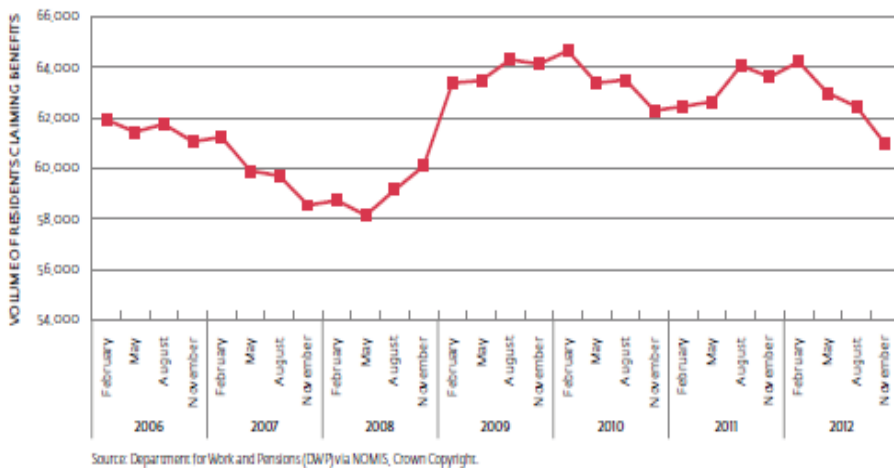
**FIGURE 5. MANCHESTER ACORN CATEGORIES**

Source: Manchester City Council, Acorn

Higher Blackley includes high proportions of “hard-pressed” individuals and people living on moderate means. This means that many people are struggling to have a socially acceptable standard of living and are more vulnerable to changes in the economy and the labour market, as well as the rising costs of living. It is not only higher levels of unemployment that affect residents, but also the relationship with a labour market where people are paid wages that are not able to deliver adequate standards of living.

Manchester has a relatively high number of residents on Jobseeker’s Allowance,<sup>20</sup> a number that was affected considerably by the recession, as shown in the graph in Figure 6 below.<sup>21</sup>

**FIGURE 6. RESIDENTS CLAIMING BENEFITS IN MANCHESTER**



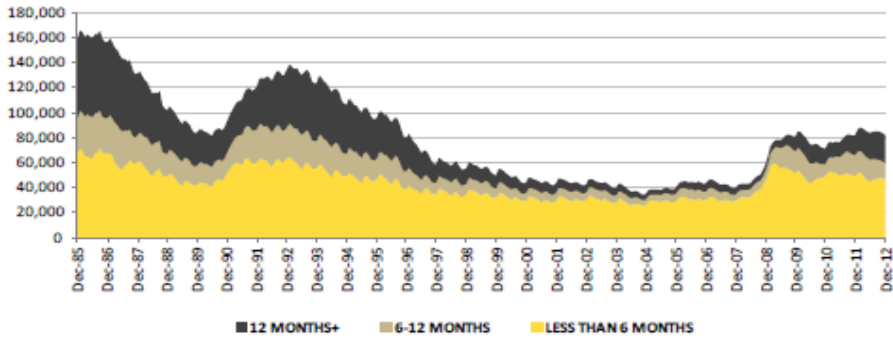
\* The key benefits are Jobseeker’s Allowance, Incapacity Benefit/Employment and Support Allowance, lone parents claiming Income Support plus other out-of-work benefits.

**Source:** Department of Work and Pensions via NOMIS

Across Greater Manchester, the data suggest that there has been a steady decline in the number of people eligible for work who are out of work for more than 12 months, although this number also rose following the recession.

20 Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) is at least £57.35 a week to help claimants while they look for work. How much they get depends on their circumstances and the type of JSA they qualify for. To qualify for JSA claimants usually have to be: 18 or over (but below state pension age); able and available for work; meet the other rules for eligibility.

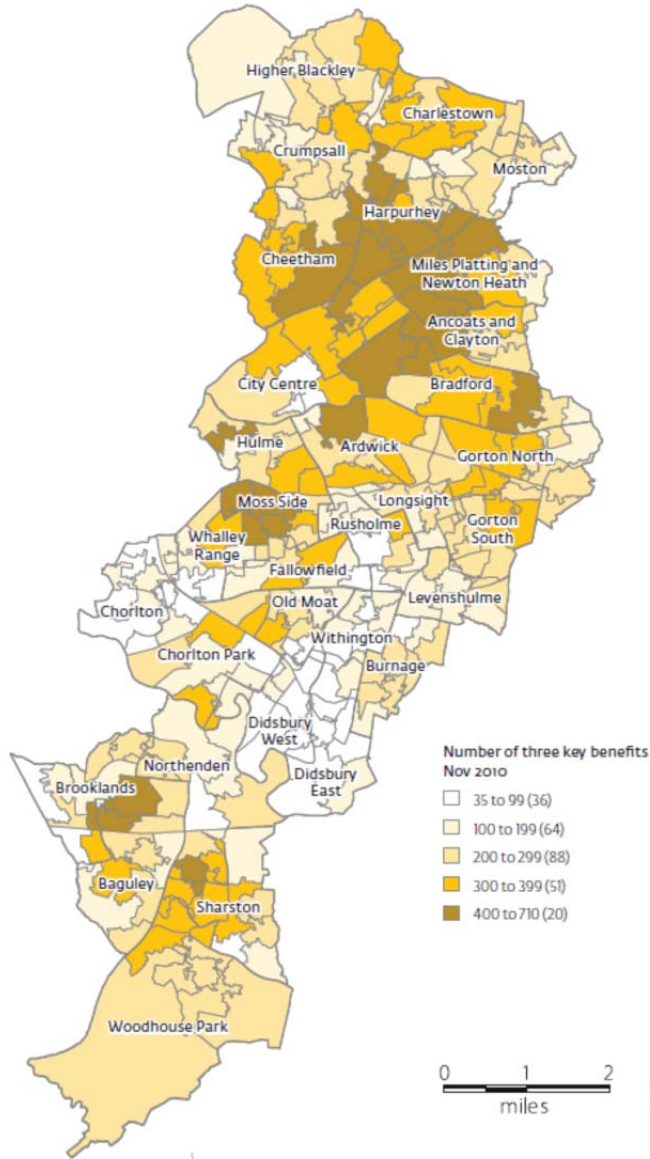
21 Manchester Partnership, “State of the City Report 2012-2013,” p. 66. At [http://www.manchesterpartnership.org.uk/manchesterpartnership/downloads/file/190/state\\_of\\_the\\_city\\_report\\_2012\\_complete\\_report](http://www.manchesterpartnership.org.uk/manchesterpartnership/downloads/file/190/state_of_the_city_report_2012_complete_report).

**FIGURE 7. JOBSEEKER'S ALLOWANCE CLAIMANTS BY DURATION OF CLAIM IN GREATER MANCHESTER, 1985–2012**

**Source:** Department for Work and Pensions, 2012, in New Economy, Welfare reform in Greater Manchester, 2012, p. 9 at [neweconomymanchester.com/downloads/2476-Welfare-Reform-Full-Report-final-pdf](http://neweconomymanchester.com/downloads/2476-Welfare-Reform-Full-Report-final-pdf)

Data from the 2011 Census suggest that across Manchester there are 60,394 people who have never worked. This is 15 per cent of all Manchester residents aged 16–74 years old.

The map in Figure 8 shows the concentration of benefits claimants in each ward. Higher Blackley also includes a high proportion of people claiming benefits, although as is the case throughout the series of data, it is not as challenging an area as, for example Harpurhey, Cheetham Hill or Newton Heath, but it experiences significant social disadvantage in particular concentrated pockets.

**FIGURE 8. NUMBER OF THREE KEY BENEFITS CLAIMANTS,  
NOVEMBER 2010**

**Source:** Manchester Partnership, “State of the City Report 2012-2013,”  
at [http://www.manchesterpartnership.org.uk/manchesterpartnership/downloads/file/190/  
state\\_of\\_the\\_city\\_report\\_2012\\_complete\\_report](http://www.manchesterpartnership.org.uk/manchesterpartnership/downloads/file/190/state_of_the_city_report_2012_complete_report)

Manchester is one of the largest city-region economies in the United Kingdom. Within the city there are significant challenges presented by the long-term impacts of de-industrialisation. Higher Blackley has a higher rate of unemployment than the city average, more children growing up in poverty and a less ethnically diverse composition of residents.

# 3

## POLICY CONTEXT OF THE CITY

The governance arrangements of Manchester are multi-layered and complex. However, it is important to be able to understand them and how they connect in order to provide a report that is orientated towards action that can make a difference at a local level.

Manchester City Council has 96 elected councillors, three for each ward. The city of Manchester has 32 wards, each of which is a designated electoral and geographical area with a clear boundary. Each ward is in the main evenly represented in terms of a stable population. Wards are the boundaries that are used to facilitate the electoral process in local and national elections.

The council is made up of 86 members from the Labour party, nine members from the Liberal Democrat party and one independent. There are five members of Parliament who serve Manchester; four are from the Labour party and one is from the Liberal Democrat party. The local elections are held three years out of a cycle of four, with the fourth year classed as a fallow year with no elections. The general election is held every five years in a fixed-term parliament since the present government brought in this system in 2010.

The leader of the council is elected through an internal election within their party. This is carried out shortly after the local election, and each councillor has one vote to cast for his or her desired candidate. The party with the majority of seats forms the ruling party and Labour has held the leadership of Manchester since 1974, when it was reconstituted as a metropolitan borough under the Local Government Act 1972. Sir Richard Leese has been the leader of the council for the Labour party since 1996. The council has responsibility for a wide range of services. The leader of the council and the executive members direct this for Children's Services, Neighbourhood Services, Finance and Human Resources, Environment, Culture and Leisure and Adult Health and Well-Being.

Manchester City Council is also a part of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA).<sup>22</sup> This is an organisation that allows for collaboration between local authorities through a Joint Committee; the GMCA is a statutory body with competence in the areas of transport, economic development and regeneration. The GMCA states:

*The governance arrangements have been developed in order to boost economic performance and help deliver a brighter future for Greater Manchester and the North West so that by 2020, the Manchester city region will have pioneered a new model for sustainable economic growth based around a more connected, talented and greener city region where the prosperity secured is enjoyed by the many and not the few.*<sup>23</sup>

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22 The GMCA is made up of the following local authorities: Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan. See <http://www.agma.gov.uk/agma/authorities/index.html>.

23 See <http://www.agma.gov.uk>.

A key policy frame for the relationship between the municipal authorities of Greater Manchester and national government is set out in what is called the “City Deal”. The City Deal was innovative and the first type of devolution of this kind undertaken by central government towards a local authority. It is seen as a major step in empowering the region to make local decisions to maximise its economic growth.

The City Deal document sets out a range of bespoke agreements between the government and the GMCA based on the needs and opportunities of the region’s economy.<sup>24</sup> It is geared towards accelerating growth, boosting skills and encouraging local decision-making and increased self-sufficiency. A key element within the City Deal is the identified connection between economic growth and competitiveness and public sector reform. The City Deal states that, “without addressing the latter and reducing the economic drag of dependency Greater Manchester will not achieve its full potential.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, reducing the perceived dependency of marginalised communities on the public sector is seen as an important aspect of delivering improved economic growth.

Community Budgets are a new way for local public service providers to work together to meet local needs and are a key element of this approach to working with communities. Community Budgets allow providers of public services to share budgets, with the intention of improving outcomes for local people and reducing duplication and waste. Within this, there is a focus on: Early Years; Troubled Families; Transforming Justice; Health and Social Care; and Work and Skills.<sup>26</sup> Figure 9 shows how this is intended to work in an integrated manner.

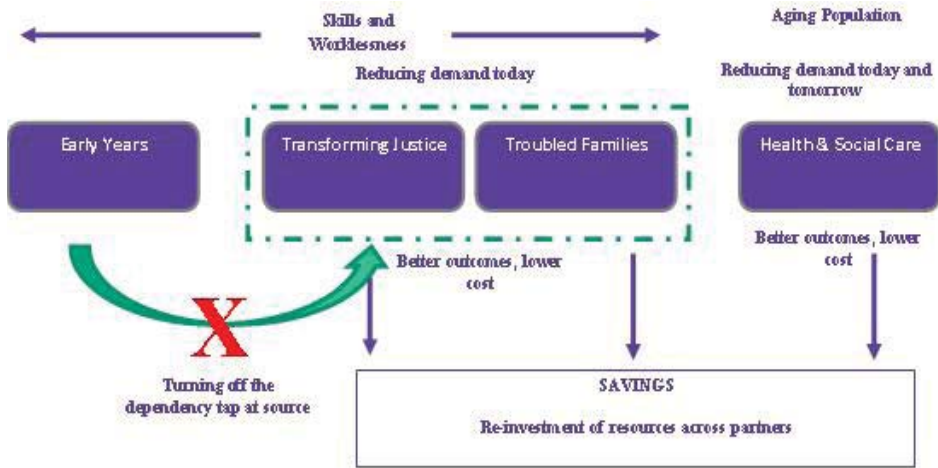
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24 Association of Greater Manchester Authorities “Greater Manchester hails City Deal announcement”, at <http://www.agma.gov.uk/gmca/city-deal-announcement>. [Association of Greater Manchester Authorities]

25 Association of Greater Manchester Authorities “Greater Manchester City Deal”, p. 7, at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/221014/Greater-Manchester-City-Deal-final\\_o.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/221014/Greater-Manchester-City-Deal-final_o.pdf) (hereafter, AGMA, “Greater Manchester City Deal”). [Greater Manchester Combined Authority]

26 GMCA, “Community Budgets in Greater Manchester”, [online] at <http://www.agma.gov.uk/gmca/community-budgets/greater-manchester-s-approach/index.html>.



**FIGURE 9. COMMUNITY BUDGETS IN GREATER MANCHESTER**

**Source:** GMCA, "Community Budgets in Greater Manchester", online at <http://www.agma.gov.uk/gmca/community-budgets/greater-manchester-s-approach/index.html>

In terms of the work and skills element, the strategy sets out plans to reduce the numbers of people who are receiving Employment Support Allowance<sup>27</sup> by reducing the numbers who rely on it, and to ensure those already receiving support are better able to find work; there are plans to improve qualifications and work opportunities for young people, particularly those not in employment or training; and the strategy also focuses on increasing the progression in the labour market for low-skilled people, especially those who have repeated spells on Jobseeker's Allowance.

Taken together, this is designed to create a "well sequenced, integrated approach to work and skills within all other public services."<sup>28</sup> An example of this is that skills and employment interventions are included within the toolkit for all public service workers involved with individuals and families.

The City Deal also includes an unprecedented Earnback model, whereby the government has agreed in principle that up to £1.2 billion invested up front in infrastructure improvements by Greater Manchester will be "paid back" to the combined authority once real economic growth is seen. This is the first tax increment finance-style scheme in England outside London and it has changed the framework of how devolved power from central government to local government is agreed. These

27 The Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) offers: financial support for those unable to work; personalised help to get people into work. Claimants can apply for ESA if they are employed, self-employed or unemployed.

28 GMCA (online), "Work and Skills", at <http://www.agma.gov.uk/gmca/greater-manchester-public-service-reform/work-and-skills/index.html>.

“earned back” funds will be reinvested in further infrastructure improvements to allow Greater Manchester to reach its economic potential.

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are voluntary partnerships between local authorities and businesses formed in 2011 by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within the local area. The intention is to create an economy that is driven by private sector growth, with business opportunities evenly balanced across the country and between industries.<sup>29</sup> The Greater Manchester LEP is a partnership between Manchester and other Greater Manchester authorities, the private sector and others across the public and voluntary sectors. LEPs are designed to shape strategic private sector-led leadership and drive progress in key policy areas, including employment and skills, planning, housing and transport and business support, ensuring they maintain a sharp focus on economic growth and driving efficiency.<sup>30</sup> Whilst the LEP provides strategic direction, the GMCA has statutory functions relating to economic regeneration and transport, enabling issues to be addressed on a sub-regional basis.<sup>31</sup>

In the area of policing, the key local actor is the Greater Manchester Police and Crime Commissioner. Created by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility (PRSR) Act 2011, this is a new role whereby the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is democratically elected by the general public, has a four-year term of office and is elected in each police force area in England and Wales (except London). The PCC for Greater Manchester is Tony Lloyd, a former Labour Member of Parliament who had served for 30 years in the House of Commons. The PCC has responsibility for holding the chief constable to account for policing in their force area and to be the voice of the people. Police Authorities previously covered this role through a body made up of representatives nominated by the local authority, independent members and magistrates.

The chief constable is the rank used to describe the chief police officer for all territorial police forces in the United Kingdom, except the City of London Police and the Metropolitan Police. There are currently 50 chief constables throughout the United Kingdom. The PCC answers to the public on the delivery and performance of the police service in their area. The PCC also consults the chief constable when setting the aims of the force in their area. They answer to the electorate (everyone who votes) and the chief constable answers to them. In addition to elections, the police and crime panel in each force area assess the performance of the PCC. How these roles and responsibilities will interact is included in the policing protocol. PCCs assess, support

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29 Department for Communities and Local Government (online), “Supporting economic growth through local enterprise partnerships and enterprise zones”, at <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/supporting-economic-growth-through-local-enterprise-partnerships-and-enterprise-zones>.

30 GMCA (online), “Local Enterprise Partnership”, at <http://www.agma.gov.uk/local-enterprise-partnership>.

31 Manchester City Council, “Annual Governance Statement,” 2012.

and challenge the overall performance of their forces against the priorities agreed within the plan.

In the area of employment, note should be taken of the role of the Work Programme. The Work Programme covers all out-of-work benefit claimants and is designed for those who are further from the labour market and/or do not secure employment through the Jobcentre Plus service offer. Jobcentre Plus makes all referrals to the Work Programme. The Work Programme brings all previous welfare-to-work programmes under the delivery of 18 Prime Contractors, who are commissioned centrally by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) at a potential cost of up to £5 billion. These delivery organisations are accountable through a contractual model of payment by results to government, but there is no local democratic control as this is managed by contract with the DWP. Across Greater Manchester, there are three Prime Contractors—Avanta, G4S and Seetec. The most recent DWP performance figures from May 2013 revealed that 19,120 referrals have been made to the Work Programme since June 2011, and from those 2,540 job outcomes have been registered—which means that the overall job outcomes to referrals rate is 13.3 per cent.<sup>32</sup> Of the 560 people referred in Manchester who are on ESA and have complex needs, only 10 have found work, which is just 1.79 per cent.

There have been significant changes in health and social care polices since 2010. Prior to the new legislation, the main responsibility for the organisation of the delivery of local health care rested with organisations called Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities. The Health and Social Care Act of 2012 abolished both Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities. It established an independent NHS Commissioning Board to allocate resources, provide commissioning guidance, oversee performance of Clinical Commissioning Groups and deliver some specialised commissioning; created Clinical Commissioning Groups that increase GPs' powers to commission services on behalf of their patients; transferred responsibility for Public Health to local government; developed Health and Well-being Boards, which bring agencies together to create Joint Health and Well-being Strategies based on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, summarising the health and well-being needs of local populations. There has also been the creation of HealthWatch England and Local HealthWatch to act as a consumer champion for health and well-being.

All this governance reform must be viewed within the context of the decreasing financial settlement that Manchester has received from central government since 2010, as this shapes every decision and impacts on residents in a range of different ways. Across England, local government spending (excluding police, schools, housing

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32 Manchester City Council report for Information Report to Economy Scrutiny Committee—5 February 2014. Subject: "The Work Programme December 2013 update", 2014, at [http://www.manchester.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/16403/6\\_the\\_work\\_programme\\_december\\_2013\\_update](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/16403/6_the_work_programme_december_2013_update).

benefit) is set to fall by nearly 30 per cent in real terms between 2008 and 2015.<sup>33</sup> This is part of the austerity agenda that has been set by the coalition government since the 2010 election.

The financial settlement of 2010 meant that the council needed to make £109 million of savings, rising to £170 million in 2012/2013, which is a 28 per cent real term reduction in the budget. On top of this, the council needs to find another £80 million (15 per cent) funding by 2015. This has resulted in many job losses, a withdrawal from the services that they are able to deliver and a reduction in amenities for the community, such as libraries, children's centres, swimming pools and community centres, as well as a reduction in grant funding for voluntary sector organisations. Despite being one of the most deprived local authority areas in the United Kingdom, Manchester is in the top five most adversely affected local authorities, and by 2017 it will have had its budget cut by 40 per cent since the 2010 general election. Furthermore, as the JRF show, "reductions in spending tell only part of the story as authorities also have to cope with rising costs and demands."<sup>34</sup>

### 3.1 | WELFARE REFORM

The UK government is implementing welfare reforms that apply to all parts of the country. These are designed to "make work pay" and also to reduce the fiscal deficit through reducing welfare benefit costs by £19 billion. There are many layers of reform that affect people in different ways.

The reforms include changes to housing benefit and new rules governing the size of properties for which payments are made to working-age claimants in the social rented sector (widely known as the "bedroom tax"). If a claimant in social housing has extra bedrooms, they have their housing benefit reduced by 14 per cent for one bedroom, and 25 per cent for two. This affects up to 12,300 Manchester residents, especially in areas with fewer smaller social housing properties.

Reductions in the entitlements of working-age claimants arising from a 10 per cent reduction in total payments to local authorities mean that more households will be liable. Incapacity Benefit and related benefits have been replaced by Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), with more stringent medical tests, greater conditionality and time limits on non-means-tested entitlement for all but the most severely ill or disabled.

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33 Hastings et al., "Coping with the cuts? Local government and poorer communities", 2013, at <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/local-government-communities-full.pdf> (hereafter, Hastings et al., "Coping with the cuts?").

34 Hastings et al., "Coping with the cuts?"

Disability Living Allowance has been replaced by Personal Independence Payments (PIP) as the basis for financial support to help offset the additional costs faced by individuals with disabilities. This reform has come with a 20 per cent reduction in the budget and it includes more stringent and frequent medical tests. People claiming DLA in the city are typically clustered in the more deprived wards of the city. The potential loss of benefits for an individual on the highest level of care component is £77.45 a week and £54.05 for those on the highest level of the mobility component. Manchester City Council estimates that entitlement to DLA may be lost by almost 7,000 residents. The largest number of these is located in north Manchester.

The Welfare Benefits Up-rating Bill means that increases in certain working-age welfare benefits and tax credits are limited to 1 per cent, rather than increasing them in line with inflation.<sup>35</sup> As the Institute for Fiscal Studies argue, the actual effects of the bill on real benefit rates are unknown, because they depend on future price levels, which expose the poorest in society to inflation risk.<sup>36</sup>

There have been changes to Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. This will affect all claimants, but has a disproportionate effect on lone parents because they are more likely to have a higher take-up of the childcare element. The charity Gingerbread has shown that for a single parent working full time on the minimum wage this loss of support could equate to up to 13 per cent of their income (around £1,630 per year a year), if they have two children and are paying £300 per week or more for childcare.<sup>37</sup>

The impact on lone parents is particularly salient in Manchester, as the 2011 Census showed that there are 28,701 lone parent households. Since January 2012, new claims for Income Support for lone parents are only allowable if there is a child under the age of 5 (reduced from 7 in October 2010) living with the parent. If not, then parents “sign on” for JSA. Existing claimants with no child under 5 will have the benefit removed in phases.

There are about 8,800 Income Support claimants in Manchester, mainly clustered in the north and east of the city, but with pockets in central Manchester and Wythenshawe. Many thousands of lone parents have been switched from Income Support to Jobseeker’s Allowance since October 2010. Nominally, the rate of benefit

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35 N. Newson, Welfare Benefits Up-rating Bill (HL Bill 78 of 2012–13)—Lords Library Note, 2013, at <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/LLN-2013-004/welfare-benefits-uprating-bill-hl-bill-78-of-201213>.

36 Institute for Fiscal Studies, “The effects of the Welfare Benefits Up-rating Bill”, 2013, at <http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/6539>.

37 H. Reed and J. Horton, “Analysis of the impact of tax credit changes on working single parents”, 2011, at [http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/file\\_download.aspx?id=7414](http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/file_download.aspx?id=7414).

is the same but parents must “actively seek” and be “available for work” or face sanctions.<sup>38</sup>

The impact of the reforms varies enormously from place to place, not least due to the fact that benefit claimants are so unevenly spread across Britain.<sup>39</sup> Manchester is particularly affected due to the high number of benefit claimants, and it is estimated that the city will lose £217 million a year to the local economy, and £610 per working-age adult.<sup>40</sup> This also has a differential impact within cities, as those neighbourhoods that have the highest volumes of out-of-work benefit claimants, DLA claimants and social tenants affected by under-occupancy penalties will be more adversely affected.

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38 Manchester City Council, Report to Economy Scrutiny Committee—6 February 2013. Subject: “Impact of welfare reform”, 2013, at [http://www.manchester.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/14757/5\\_impact\\_of\\_welfare\\_reform](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/14757/5_impact_of_welfare_reform).

39 C Beatty and S. Fothergill, “Hitting the poorest places hardest: The local and regional impact of welfare reform”, 2013, p. 4, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, at [http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/sites/shu.ac.uk/files/hitting-poorest-places-hardest\\_o.pdf](http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/sites/shu.ac.uk/files/hitting-poorest-places-hardest_o.pdf) (hereafter, Beatty and Fothergill, “Hitting the poorest places hardest”).

40 Beatty and Fothergill, “Hitting the poorest places hardest”, p. 15.

# 4

## IDENTITY AND BELONGING

This chapter explores issues of identity and belonging in Higher Blackley. The Open Society Foundations' research found a strong sense of community and kinship in white working-class communities that exist among long-standing residents, which are often overlooked by negative portrayals of the community. These kinship networks provide support across a range of different areas from childcare to security. This helps the collective strength of a community to be able to deal with difficult social conditions, but can make it harder for people perceived to be "outsiders" and creates conditions for resentment; this becomes especially pertinent as there has been a perceived sense of a loss of identity, and more difficult access to state-led social security and social housing, which has become more scarce.

There was also a proud sense of belonging to the local area and to the city of Manchester, which formed an important part of people's identity even if they had themselves migrated to the city or to Higher Blackley. Throughout the research there was a welcoming nature to many of the people who participated and a willingness to engage and have their story told. In many ways, the themes of the focus group on identity and belonging underpinned the rest of the focus groups and interviews.

Most of the interviewees felt a sense of pride and commitment to Higher Blackley and the wider area of Manchester. Even when asked where they would like to live, after initial joking around of living in an exotic place and recognising that there improvements to the area were needed, most of them replied that they would like to stay in Higher Blackley or nearby due to the fact that their families, friends and social groups were based in the vicinity and that it was "not a bad place to live". Social networks were central to the connection with the place, as a man, aged 34, said:

*It's a nice place to live. It's family orientated, a lot of it. There's a lot of families that have lived here for a long time.*

Many white working-class communities are facing change, often as a result of social, cultural or economic transformations, which for a significant majority of people are happening at a scale and pace that some people appear to struggle to keep up with. Some of these changes are to do with government policy, some about the changes in the labour market and education, and others are to do with demographic change—often it is how these factors have interacted over time. There is a sense of instability for white working-class identity in terms of the jobs people have, changing family make-up and gender roles in society and the more diverse range of people that make up everyday encounters and relationships.

Whereas people's angst may often be based on perception rather than on reality, it is shaping the ways they engage, interact and build social bonds and relationships. The issue of immigration was a constant source of conversation in our focus groups, even though it was not a targeted social policy theme; many participants expressed a sense of fear about the unknown and the "other", and expressed a perceived inability



to be able to discuss their feelings about it in public or with political decision-makers. A number of participants showed a curiosity about their new neighbours but often felt ill equipped to approach them and felt a distinct lack of invitation or openness from them, which caused resentment and tensions.

## 4.1 | A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY

*[The community] is a safety net to people. You know the faces, you know the people.*

(Focus group participant, 34 years old)

There is a real sense of belonging in Higher Blackley within the white working-class communities, driven largely through family, neighbours and long-standing social bonds. Much of this is the result of networks within families who have stayed within the area. Many participants echoed these comments and we often heard illustrated similar observations.

*All my family live here, on this estate.* (Man, 32 years old)

*I've noticed that everybody knows everybody. And we see that as parents, everybody knows each other.* (Teaching Assistant, 25 years old)

What is particularly striking about Higher Blackley is the fact that people have lived in the area for several generations, as reflected by the head of a local primary school who said that: "It's a very strong community; generation after generation coming to the same school ..."

This extends beyond family connections and reaches across the community amongst people who have been residents in Higher Blackley for many years. A sense of kinship has been created over the years, where individuals who are unrelated are nevertheless seen as and treated as relatives. This creates strong relationships between a relatively broad range of people within the local area, and also an ability to recognise people with whom there might not be such a close bond.

This was apparent in the recruitment for focus groups. Throughout the research process, attempts to bring together people who did not know each other proved difficult, as there were often social and public connections between participants in one form or another. These could take the form of people attending the same primary schools, knowing each other's relatives, shopping at the local supermarket, going to the same hairdresser's or living next to someone who had previously lived next to a mutual contact. This was interesting to observe, especially as many participants did not necessarily see or understand the impact or strength of these stable bonds.

Indeed, the evidence suggests that Higher Blackley has among the lowest incidences of transience in the city;<sup>41</sup> whereas there are many areas of deprivation that have a greater turnover of population, Higher Blackley is an area that is characterised by stability. McDonald and co-workers uncovered similar findings about the strengths and bonds of “poor neighbourhoods”, which helped to guarantee a sense of “social inclusion” and which really help people get by—but which also play a part in keeping people in place (geographically and socially), thereby compounding “social exclusion”.<sup>42</sup>

## 4.2 | A COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL NETWORK OF SUPPORT

This stability has been a factor in creating support structures and high levels of bonding between individuals and families in Higher Blackley. This may contribute towards communities being more resilient to the impact of the difficult socio-economic conditions that prevail. Many people provide a major source of social, emotional and at times financial support to individuals within the community. For instance, the research showed that with the high costs of childcare, having a family member to be able to provide this is essential:

*When you are raising two children and don't have much money, it's always convenient to have [support] on your doorstep. (Woman, 47 years old)*

This sense of shared care for children among family members and the wider community was confirmed in an interview with a teaching assistant at a local primary school, who noticed that:

*[Parents] do support each other in terms of picking up ... if so and so can't come they'll say, oh I'm picking up a certain child today, they're coming with me and they'll go round for tea and they live next door or down the street. So, there is that strong bond as well. And the children tend to see each other a lot outside of school ...*

These strong supportive aspects of the community should not be neglected in policymaking, as they are a major strength. Such connections between individuals and families serve to strengthen the more protective factors within the community, in turn providing essential mechanisms for support for many families who are otherwise marginalised. Throughout the focus groups there were many examples of these strong social bonds, which are often hidden and not picked up within structural frameworks.

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41 Manchester City Council, “Higher Blackley ward profile 2011/12”.

42 R. MacDonald et al., “Growing up in poor neighbourhoods: The significance of class and place in the extended transitions of ‘socially excluded’ young adults”, *Sociology* 39(5) (2005), pp. 873–891.

The existence of strong community-based social networks of support is an example of what the New Economics Foundation call the “core economy” of family, friends and social life.<sup>43</sup> The core economy is made up of all the unpaid labour that is crucial to keeping society and communities functioning—the time that is put into raising children, volunteering for the community and looking after older people. These different functions, which are disproportionately carried out by women, are not valued in the current market economy.<sup>44</sup>

The often invisible kinship that exists among residents provides the essential social security for many individuals and families in white working-class communities, enabling them to be able to overcome the wider challenges that exist. However, this community-based support is rarely talked about, identified or valued. While regeneration activities have traditionally focused on physical changes to an area, it is these social networks that provide the essential mechanisms of support for residents to be able to overcome the challenges that they face. Greater social value should be placed on this community-based social security net for many families who live in conditions often characterised by insecurity. These bonds are often facilitated by women, who support each other through informal friendships and relationships, and create a sense of camaraderie through a common struggle.

These non-state support mechanisms, which are rarely measured or evaluated, provide crucial foundations for people. A further example is given below of a man, who moved back to Higher Blackley after moving out when his family of four could not get any housing in the locality. However, when his mother became poorly, the family moved back to Higher Blackley so his mother could be in close proximity to the people and places where she had grown up. He and his family looked after her for a number of years until she died. Again, this is something that working-class communities often just do as part of their social norms and values that is often underplayed and rarely recognised.

*We've only come back because my mam wanted to die on there. She moved in with us at the end of her lifespan, but we've moved back on there 13 year ago.*

This is an important form of undervalued community-led social security, which fills the gaps left by the retrenchment of the social security net that has been traditionally provided by well-paid and secure jobs or through the welfare state. These informal support structures have always existed; however, in times of economic crisis they are placed under increasing strain and so the pressure on such networks becomes even more intense. As the New Economics Foundation notes, as the more formal structures

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43 New Economics Foundation, “The Great Transition”, 2009, p. 5, at [http://dnwssx4l7gl7s.cloudfront.net/nefoundation/default/page/-/files/Great\\_Transition.pdf](http://dnwssx4l7gl7s.cloudfront.net/nefoundation/default/page/-/files/Great_Transition.pdf) (hereafter, New Economics Foundation, “The Great Transition”).

44 New Economics Foundation, “The Great Transition”, p. 37.

of support are withdrawn despite the demand for care being likely to rise, there will be an increasing strain placed on these supportive networks, with women “more likely to be left picking up the pieces.”<sup>45</sup>

There is also an important interaction here with the labour market. One example was a 23-year-old single mother. She had to leave her job when she found out she was pregnant, but was very happy in her work and has aspirations to return. The job was based in the city centre, which was seen as a barrier to many women who wanted a job in the local area. However, she has a friendship with her previous boss and will use that relationship to help secure her employment when her daughter is in school.

*Yeah I would and I reckon I could go back there when she's in school because I know the supervisor, she's my mate and she knows that I would want to work there.*

This example illustrates a stark counter-narrative to the portrayal of young single mothers often seen in the media, and is based on personal and social bonds that could not be replicated through a structured employment programme. With strong networks of support in the local community that reach beyond state provision, this community-based social security provides an essential means through which people deal with the challenges that economic marginality create. Whilst such support structures are largely not recognised by policymakers, they are highly valued by the people who live in the community and indeed seem to underpin the sense of belonging much more than anything more physical:

*I'd never move. I love where I live. Because I know that if I was in trouble, walking down my road, I could knock on any door and I'd know they would help me ... because that's the way we are. (Woman, 35 years old)*

Diane Curry, who grew up in Higher Blackley and is CEO of Partners of Prisoners, a charity established to support offenders' families that is based in north Manchester, notes that:

*people stick together ... support structures are very local, whether it be your next door neighbour, family or someone from the community—there is a glue that binds.*

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45 New Economics Foundation, “Everyday insecurity: Life at the end of the welfare state”, 2012, at [http://s.bsd.net/nefoundation/default/page/file/37db94cf8b4209e641\\_5em6btfwx.pdf](http://s.bsd.net/nefoundation/default/page/file/37db94cf8b4209e641_5em6btfwx.pdf).

The findings of the Open Society Foundations' data are consistent with research by the Social Market Foundation, which has found that familial support is a prevalent and often forgotten source of support among lower-income families.<sup>46</sup>

The existence of such mutual resources of support in Higher Blackley is evident, and extends to what is traditionally understood regarding security in terms of the impact of crime; several people commented on how they would be more reliant on their immediate social support structures than the police:

*I would phone my friends and family to come and help me before I'd phone the police. (Man, 37 years old)*

It is a well-established finding that positive social support in the face of shocks such as ill health, bereavement or unemployment can have a considerable impact on being able to show increased resilience.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, having positive social support has been associated with improved outcomes in terms of psychological and physical health.<sup>48</sup> In areas where more residents are likely to experience ill health or job insecurity, social support through relatives and neighbours therefore becomes even more important due to the abundance of risk factors associated with living in low-income households, and so the community-based social security that people mentioned is of critical importance.

Not all residents have these structures to rely on, leaving them more vulnerable to the vicissitudes of economic marginalisation. One doctor mentioned in particular,

*women with young families who are single parents. They're often on sickness benefits for anxiety or depression but in truth they would find it very difficult to work because they can't find anyone to look after their children. So the lack of social support and family networks for young people with families trying to get into work is a real issue.*

Research by the single-parent charity Gingerbread showed that supporting single parents into work that they can successfully balance with childcare is important, but that, without additional policy measures to help them balance work and home life, financial incentives designed to encourage longer working hours may not necessarily have the desired effect.<sup>49</sup>

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46 R. Shorthouse, "Family fortunes: The bank of mum and dad in low income families", 2013, at <http://www.smf.co.uk/research/poverty-and-social-mobility/family-fortunes-bank-mum-and-dad-low-income-families>.

47 G.W. Brown and T.O. Harris (eds), *Social Origins of Depression: A Study of Psychiatric Disorder in Women*. London, Tavistock, 1978.

48 "Understanding society", 2012, p. 5, at <https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/system/uploads/assets/000/000/024/original/Understanding-Society-Findings-2012.pdf?1355227235>.

49 S. Harkness and A. Skipp, "Lone mothers, work and depression", 2013, at <http://gingerbread.org.uk/uploads/media/17/8683.pdf>.

There is a difference for people who are not able to rely on family or friends for support. This is illustrated through a young single mother of two children, aged 7 and 3, who noted how the high costs of childcare presented a major barrier to seeking employment (see *chapter 6*). When searching for jobs, she described having to

*go to the library for that and you can't bring your kids with you when you look for a job ... And you don't get childcare paid for until your first day at work.*

The social relationships that exist can be complex and are not always positive. If people are seen to have transgressed the dominant social norms in an area, such as talking to the police, life can become difficult and the research found at least once incidence of someone who was reluctant to speak openly. Furthermore, as Diane Curry notes:

*People will fight with each other, but will also protect each other ... it is quite clannish. Outsiders may find that difficult.*

### 4.3 | ATTITUDES TO NEWCOMERS AND OUTSIDERS

Higher Blackley is an area in which many families have lived for several generations. While on the whole this provides strong social networks of support, there is a negative and narrowed element in this sense of solidarity and community. It means that while there are strong networks among people who have lived in Blackley for many years, there are people who are seen not to “belong” and do not know the social norms that bind that particular community together. Although it included people who were not from the area, this is predominantly in relation to immigrants, or people perceived as such due to being from a black or minority ethnic background. As Waldinger argues, “the same strong ties that bring benefits to members of a group commonly enable it to bar others from access.”<sup>50</sup>

People develop attitudes towards a range of things based on their environment, family, the dominant local culture, who they mix with, the media and their own personal histories. The psychological and community identity of historically white working-class communities creates strong connections between members who have lived there for many years, but also means that interaction with people who are different has been more of a recent phenomenon.

Higher Blackley has historically been a predominantly white working-class area with little ethnic diversity. Some participants in their thirties and forties mentioned how there had been an extremely low number of black and minority ethnic (BME) pupils in

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50 A. Portes, “Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology”, *Annual Review of Sociology* 24(1) (1998), p. 15.

their schools (sometimes only one), and that they had no friends within their networks from different ethnicities. This lack of knowledge about different communities only helps to contribute to a strong sense of the “other”.

As a man, aged 34, who is unemployed but studying part-time at college shared:

*And you go to different areas and, I'm not saying integration is a bad thing, I'm not, but in certain aspects it does work out that it is a bad thing. Because people are at each other's throats, there's no community spirit and I've noticed recently, only the last 12 months around here, people are becoming more distant because they're seeing more and more immigrants...*

This raises important issues for Manchester to consider. Bernard Priest, executive member for neighbourhoods, said:

*I think our strategy for promoting community cohesion is in need of strengthening. I don't think it's the wrong strategy, I just think it sometimes needs to be strengthened. We aren't as determined about building community cohesion as we are about equality and equal value to individuals.*

The strong bonds within the community and the historical culture create more potential for suspicion directed towards people who are seen as benefiting from the social security provided by the state that is being reduced for people who have lived in the area all their lives:

*You can understand if these people have had to leave their country due to security ... but at the end of the day there's people who struggle here as well. (Man, 35 years old)*

Alistair Bonnet shows how it was not until the 1950s that “white” became closely associated with working class, and it was non-white immigration that was the central catalyst of this—this brings with it a relational aspect and also implies competition. Welfare structures are set up as “ours”, and so non-white immigrants are seen as a “threat” to working-class gains.<sup>51</sup>

This is clearly seen through the allocation of social housing; not only is the traditional security of social housing undermined, but community-based security is seen to be under threat as housing resources are squeezed and the flexibility of previous years is replaced by urgent and acute housing needs, which means people cannot always live in their priority areas. In light of a national shortage of social housing, it is perhaps unrealistic for people to expect to be able to prioritise a single area as their area of

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51 A. Bonnet, “How the British working class became white: The symbolic (re)formation of racialized capitalism”, *Journal of Historical Sociology* 11(3) (1998), pp. 316–340.

choice, but simultaneously people feel aggrieved at what they see as new arrivals coming in to the area they have lived in for years.

The combination of cultural anxieties and socio-economic insecurity is a potent mix that can undermine social cohesion. The insecurity that many people face in their daily lives in Higher Blackley clearly has an impact on how communities interact with each other. In seeking to understand anti-immigrant feelings within certain communities, there is a real need to be able to comprehend the impact this has on people's mind-sets rather than just dismissing such feelings as the irrational racism of a reactionary social class.

This grievance about the perceived unfair allocation of public resources and the favouring of people who were not previously connected with the area came up consistently through the research in a range of different areas, which will be explored in turn throughout the report. The Runnymede Trust has argued that there is a focus on competition for scarce resources, and not a discussion on "how that scarcity is shaped in the first place."<sup>52</sup> While this was largely true among many members of the community, there was also a more nuanced understanding from a fair proportion of participants.

A 63-year-old grandmother with several children who all lived in Higher Blackley, spoke in welcoming terms about a family newly arrived to her street. However, she suggested that the existing policies of the council and the government were creating an increasingly difficult environment for new arrivals to come into:

*Don't get me wrong, there's a black family that lives up the road from me, she's got four little girls and what a beautiful woman, what beautiful children. They're so polite; they're lovely, I've got nothing against them at all. [Housing allocation] is making people turn on them. And people will turn, because they're not getting treated right.*

The perception of immigration is undeniably shaped by socio-economic difficulties, as indicated by a male focus group participant, aged 73:

*If there was work, and there was houses, and there was everything what's needed, I wouldn't have a problem with [immigration]. The problem is that there's too much looking for too little, and you're bound to get trouble when that happens. If you have starving people and throw a loaf in amongst them, there'll be a murder committed to get that loaf. That's what's happening here on a much bigger scale. There's not enough.*

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52 K.P. Sveinsson, "The white working class and multiculturalism: Is there space for a progressive agenda?", in the Runnymede Collection, *Who Cares about the White Working Class?* 2009, p. 7.



This is something that came up consistently throughout the discussions with communities. There was a clear racial dimension to the discussion of scarce resources, but also a sense among many participants that these problems were created by the policymakers, and that their responses were driven by conditions rather than any inherent racism within the individuals who held such views. Even though the evidence often did not support their justifications/perceptions of things they had heard, people persisted in these views even when challenged. A strong sense of mistrust and fear of the “other” was prevalent, and most often that “other” was someone who was not white.

As public funding is cut and the impacts of welfare reform begin to bite, there is a widespread feeling that some communities are faring worse than others. Quite often this anger becomes directed at people perceived as “outsiders”. This reveals deeply held cultural attitudes mixed with socio-economic perceptions. This can then result in people thinking:

*Look after your own and then look after everyone else.* (Man, 30 years old)

The conversations in the focus groups suggest that if people see their families and friends struggling, whilst believing immigrants are being given preferential treatment over the people who are seen to belong more to the area, then tensions will clearly become more pronounced as a result. As one participant said:

*It's not that we're racist, just resentful.* (Woman, 37 years old)

The research suggests that in areas of particular stability and tight social networks, such as Higher Blackley, the issue becomes more emotive as it is people's friends and families who are seen to be struggling, and therefore the resentment at the situation and those deemed to be at fault becomes more keenly felt. However, this sense of division is not just limited to white working-class communities' perceptions of immigrants, but is also extended to those who are perceived to be undeserving.

Many participants clearly associated the “working-class” identity as being in work, and at times displayed anger towards people who they felt were not contributing:

*It frustrates you ... in a lot of cases people are on the minimum wage and they're trying to put a roof on their head and the food on their tables and they're getting by. And it's frustrating to see people can't be arsed getting out of bed until one o'clock.* (Woman, 44 years old)

Despite some people revealing that this image of people not working and lounging in their pyjamas was intensified as a result of rhetoric from the mainstream media and some politicians, more than one participant challenged this. For instance, as a female focus group participant, aged 21, said:

*You don't have to show a programme on television to know that. It's in your community. We all know people like that.*

Evidence suggests that those identified as working class are keen to distance themselves from people who don't work and, importantly, those who are considered not to want to work.<sup>53</sup> This was supported by the Open Society research:

*I don't know how you can call yourself working class if you don't work.*  
(Man, aged 36)

Batty and Flint argue that as a way to manage the stigma that might be directed at themselves, families on low incomes often suggest that other families conform to stereotypes of poverty, while at the same time distancing themselves from such descriptions.<sup>54</sup> This can be seen through working father's comment that:

*I work so I'm not on the dole and I'm not on drugs.*

Interestingly, when such views were expressed in groups that included unemployed people, the refrain of "oh, not like you" was brought up. This may in part be because the participants might have known each other and understood some of the personal circumstances that people were facing and were therefore displaying a level of empathy that was not extended to people with whom they had no emotional relationship.

This is not to argue that there are not people who appear to conform to the stereotypes, and who can provide a reference point for such negative views to flourish. Partners of Prisoners work with some of the most disadvantaged families in north Manchester, and Diane Curry argues that there is a "group of families who are totally disengaged from society", and that it is a "foolish environment that doesn't recognise that those people exist and need real emphatic support." However, Diane feels that the numbers of such families have been overestimated by the government's Troubled Families programme and by the media, suggesting that it is a few families with often hidden complex needs that can serve to re-enforce such opinions.

The French sociologist Loic Wacquant argues that neo-liberal governance functions through widespread social insecurity and an increase in the punitive role of the state, using stigma as a means of consent, which builds on the interplay between social realities and powerful myths.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, Imogen Tyler notes how this social insecurity is

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53 T. Shildrick and R. MacDonald "Poverty talk: How people experiencing poverty deny their poverty and why they blame 'the poor'", *Sociological Review* 61(2) (2013) pp. 285–303 (hereafter, Shildrick and MacDonald, "Poverty talk").

54 E. Batty and J. Flint, "Conceptualising the contexts, mechanisms and outcomes of intensive family intervention projects", *Social Policy and Society* 11(3) (2012), pp. 345–358.

55 L. Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*. Durham, Duke University Press, 2009 (hereafter, Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor*).

“continually fuelled and orchestrated through the proliferation of fears.”<sup>56</sup> This can be fear of immigration, terror threats or economic insecurity and labour precariousness, which become commonplace in the minds of the public. Tyler argues that this creates an environment in which public anxieties are directed towards certain groups in the population who are deemed to be a “parasitical drain and threat to the scarce national resources.” This is often immigrants or welfare recipients, and it builds upon existing historical assumptions and prejudices with powerful stereotypes that become stronger in the light of public insecurity and anxiety.<sup>57</sup>

## 4.4 | INTERACTIONS

There were a number of participants who were curious about their different neighbours, but often felt ill equipped to approach them or know how to start a conversation with them. This was often in contrast to how they felt about any white working-class newcomers, and several participants often said they felt a distinct lack of invitation or openness from black and minority ethnic (BME) people who were newly arrived in Higher Blackley (although this was not always the case). However, a couple of residents did differentiate between the Vietnamese and Kosovan people who came in the early 1990s and the more recently arrived African residents. A 96-year-old resident said that:

*The coloureds across, they have just had a baby and you know you want to see the baby, but nothing. You didn't see them. A whole host of people came to see the baby and in the past we would have been invited. The boat people, we got very friendly with them. They really wanted to get into the neighbourhood.*

There was a general sense that although there were strong community ties, this was being undermined somewhat by new people moving into the area, but also as a result of people having to work longer hours to be able to afford to provide for their families. The older women's focus group commented on how the fact that more women had to work was having an effect, as previously mothers would develop family ties that would then widen out. However, much of the discussion on interaction, at least the challenging aspects of it, was based on race. One resounding statement was one statement by Amy, aged 29, that the “whites are actually the minority now.”

While this is clearly not true (non-whites in Higher Blackley accounted for 15 per cent of the population according to the 2011 Census), the perception is powerful. Immigration figured centrally in many discussions, and while opinions were often

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56 I. Tyler, *Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain. Revolting Subjects*. London, Zed Book, 2013 (hereafter, Tyler, *Social Abjection and Resistance*).

57 Tyler, *Social Abjection and Resistance*.

shaped by the media, the role of people's everyday experiences is also a powerful driver that cannot be ignored.

Higher Blackley has historically been a very white working-class area, with little ethnic diversity and so even 15 per cent of residents being non-white could seem to be a significant number to the local community. This distance between perceptions and realities suggests a community anxiety about the levels of immigration and its place within society. Indeed, anxiety and insecurity are closely related. When people are feeling threatened or insecure, they retreat to the familiar and the safe, which can exacerbate an already tense environment. Within this context, reaching out to people who have a different culture and approach to relationships and interactions becomes more difficult and more of a leap of faith, leading to a lack of shared understanding among different individuals and communities in the local area.

The sense of new arrivals in Higher Blackley living separate but parallel lives was consistently expressed throughout the focus groups. In terms of interaction between communities, there were frequent instances of participants who were aggrieved at the lack of English spoken by immigrants, with a man, aged 72, declaring that:

*there should be certain standards to say at least you should be able to speak the bloody language ... I made the joke to my sister that this is the only country in the world where you can go on a bus journey and you speak a different language at the end of it.*

The language barrier seemed to be one of the main signifiers of difference between communities. However, not all residents were critical, and there was some nuanced understanding and real empathy displayed. For example:

*On our street, there are African refugees, somewhere from Africa, and they don't speak a word of English. They really don't speak any English at all. And I'll smile at them, and they'll smile at you, God love 'em, and I think, do you know, why don't whoever is looking after them take them to English lessons so they can converse.*  
(Woman, 62 years old)

This statement shows the importance of some interaction between communities that have not been used to interacting in the past; even if it is not in actual dialogue to begin with. Evidence suggests that social contact between members of different groups is an important element in creating a common identity.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, the apparent lack of interaction between groups in Higher Blackley is a concern with regard to social cohesion.

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58 F. Levrau and P. Loobuyck, "Is multiculturalism bad for social cohesion and redistribution?", *Political Quarterly* 84(1) (2013), p. 106.

There were some participants who had Polish neighbours, but reported having little interaction with them. Here, the blame was not always placed particularly at the door of the new arrivals in the area, but often that the opportunities to build relationships were limited, and for this they blamed neither the Polish residents nor themselves. The language issue came up again, suggesting its particular (and unsurprising) importance in terms of interactions between residents. As a woman participant, aged 64, said: "You have limited conversations because of their language."

Data from the 2011 Census suggest that in Higher Blackley only 33 people cannot speak English, and only another 173 cannot speak it well. This amounts to only 1.5 per cent of people living in Higher Blackley who cannot speak English well. While the data should be treated with some caution, this perhaps suggests that it is not exclusively the inability of immigrants to speak English, but other factors connected to the different aspects of integration which are compounding tensions.

**TABLE 2. MAIN LANGUAGE SPOKEN**

Variable	Higher Blackley	Manchester (Metropolitan District)	North-west	England
All usual residents aged 3 and over (persons)	13,033	480,738	6,791,907	51,005,610
Main language is English (English or Welsh in Wales) (persons)	12,079	400,886	6,446,819	46,936,780
Main language is not English (English or Welsh in Wales); can speak English very well (persons)	368	31,159	131,068	1,689,406
Main language is not English (English or Welsh in Wales); can speak English well (persons)	380	32,114	130,578	1,535,579
Main language is not English (English or Welsh in Wales); cannot speak English well (persons)	173	13,898	69,718	709,862
Main language is not English (English or Welsh in Wales); cannot speak English (persons)	33	2,681	13,724	133,983

**Source:** Office of National Statistics, “2011 Census”

Language was not seen by participants as the only obstacle to integration, and some of the apparent differences were based on perceived attitudes. There was a sense that new arrivals in the area were not making the effort to fit in with the community.

*They don't want to fit in with us. They segregate themselves from us. They want to be different. (Woman, 46 years old)*

This feeling of an active disassociation from long-term residents caused some frustration and a sense that the new arrivals were being deliberately impolite. Within Higher Blackley, there is an impression of everyday interactions being limited between members of different communities, and a perception that those people coming into the area not making connections with the local residents:

*If they stay in their own bubble this causes problems. (Man, 32 years old)*

*We've got a lot of coloured people where I live, but they don't integrate. You try to speak to them and they just walk past. They just don't mix at all. We've got a lot round here. (Man, 64 years old)*

Research conducted by Ipsos Mori in 2010 on the Riverdale Estate in Higher Blackley echoes the findings from this research, and showed that “long-term white residents make explicit mention of differences in attitudes between those from different ethnic communities and their apparent reluctance to mingle and interact.”<sup>59</sup> The 2010 study also spoke to new residents in the area from ethnic minority backgrounds, and found that from the perspective of new residents it is the long-term residents who set the tone of interaction. In the Ipsos Mori research, new arrivals in the area felt that there were some older white residents who actively discouraged what would be normal social interaction with the new residents’ own culture. One respondent from this study said that as a result, “I refrain myself from greeting people.”<sup>60</sup>

The perception that new arrivals do not interact contrasts sharply with the relationships that exist between long-standing residents and can cause divisions and misunderstanding, which can in turn cause resentment as there is a feeling that immigrants are actively choosing to be different. This results in segregation in terms of everyday interactions which allows perceptions of unfair treatment and access to resources to fester and contributes to the belief, fed by the media, that immigration is to blame for a wide range of social ills. With limited social interaction, there is much more potential for resentment and suspicion to grow. This was most keenly felt in the belief that there were some BME people who were quick to play a “race card” in order to advance their claims above the needs of the white working class—as can be seen in the discussion below.

*I had to get the police onto the ones that moved into my avenue, cos all they did, I knocked on the door, asked them to move the car politely, and they started calling me racist. (Woman, 62 years old)*

*Yeah, that's the card. (Woman, 38 years old)*

This is not to deny that there was some recognition of the existence of discrimination and racism towards BME communities by focus group participants, but there was a feeling in several of the focus groups that such claims are not always made honestly or fairly.

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59 Ipsos Mori, “North Manchester investigation of attitudes in Riverdale and Ashley Lane estates”, 2010 (hereafter, Ipsos Mori, “North Manchester investigation”).

60 Ipsos Mori, “North Manchester investigation”, p. 21.

*Woman 1: You do get coloured people and all that who's in the papers saying they are getting racially abused, and some of them play on it, but some do get racially abused.*

*Woman 2: Course they do.*

*Man: Oh yeah, of course. Not saying they don't.*

*Woman 1: There's some right bigoted people.*

*Woman 2: But they are using it as their weapon.*

Some people felt that BME people were being protected and favoured, while their own culture was being denigrated and their security undermined. As a result, many participants did not seem to welcome the multiculturalism that has taken place in the United Kingdom. This could be seen during a discussion involving a couple who had been asked to move to Moss Side, an area in south Manchester that has high levels of residents with a BME background:

*There's a really bad culture there on Moss Side ... you know it's not white culture, it's black ... (Man, 31 years old).*

There has been much discussion about the context of communities living segregated lives, an issue that was seen to be a major cause of the riots that broke out in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in 2001. However, one focus group discussion suggested that such parallel communities were not seen as entirely problematic, as they ensured that the strong sense of community was protected as a result, rather than being undermined by diversity and the perceived lack of shared understanding that this created:

*Leicester Road in Cheetham Hill, that is a prime example. And I'm not saying segregate everybody, I'm far against that, but you look at that community and they stick together, they know each other, they look after each other. (Man, 31 years old)*

The above statement highlights the perceived erosion of white working-class culture due to multiculturalism, and the failure of communities to be able to “get on well together”. There has been unprecedented demographic change to Higher Blackley at a time when economic recession and government policy has had negative impacts on the security that people feel. This has created anxiety among residents who are used to seeing the same faces across generations.

Multiculturalism was seen to have been imposed by “do-gooders” who had little knowledge of working-class communities, and did not experience the challenges that were felt by communities brought about by increased immigration. This suggests that it is not just socio-economic issues that drive separation and suspicion towards immigrants, but rather the complex interrelation of this with local cultures and



histories, as well as the way in which new arrivals interact with people and their local environment.

Beyond this, there was a sense from some participants that the fact of people moving into the area was having a detrimental effect on the whole of Higher Blackley—although this was not only restricted to immigrants. Respect for the area was seen as an important aspect of community, but one that was being undermined by new people moving into the area:

*There's more people coming in now, so that they don't have respect for the area.*  
(Woman, 43 years old)

Higher Blackley has a high proportion of elderly residents who were seen to take a lot of care of their properties and the wider area, and there was a feeling that the changing community is a concern for people:

*It is a worry that who comes when older people leave ... we have had a few problems on our street.* (Woman, 47 years old)

As many older people are owner occupiers, there is the potential that these properties could end up in the hands of private landlords, as there are decreasing levels of home ownership and limited ability for local people to get onto the housing ladder. This means that in the years to come, there could potentially be fewer people who have a long-standing connection with Higher Blackley and it could become a more transient place. This could impact on the community bonds and strong social kinships that currently are an asset to the community and provide a basis to be built upon and made more accessible.

## 4.5 | PLACE

Beyond the connections with family and friends that have been discussed above, Higher Blackley has historically been seen as a desirable place to live for white working-class communities in the city. Blackley was historically the destination for families who were moved out of the Manchester slums. For the majority, this was a welcome move away from terrible living conditions to a leafier suburb with high standards of housing. William Turner Jackson, a senior Labour councillor speaking in 1931 stated that the living conditions in the slums were shocking and created public health emergencies, with diphtheria and tuberculosis twice as prevalent as in suburbs such as Blackley.<sup>61</sup> Peter Shapely documents how in 1963, a group of 30 mothers from Collyhurst organised a protest on the town hall to speed up slum clearance, keen to

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61 D. McHugh, *Labour in the City: The Development of the Labour Party in Manchester 1918–31*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006, p. 25.

move their families out of homes that were “literally collapsing around them and were described as an affront to decency and human dignity.”<sup>62</sup>

Participants saw it as a “step up” from other areas in the city. This was something that the focus group with older women discussed, as many had moved in the 1930s or 1960s following the expansion of social housing, which at the time was seen as of very high quality. One woman, aged 82, who had lived in the area from 1960 described the difference in living conditions:

*Nobody had nothing, because we've come from areas, you know, like Collyhurst and all that. Came up here, we thought we was in another country ... couldn't believe it. We only lived down the road.*

On the whole, most residents were attached to the place, although there was certainly a sense that it could be improved on. Higher Blackley has a high number of accessible green spaces including Heaton Park, which is one of the largest municipal parks in Europe. The area is also well connected to transport routes in terms of buses, trams and motorways.

In recent years, a considerable amount of regeneration activity has taken place. The north Manchester area has secured in excess of £600 million of investment in housing improvements and new build, new school buildings, further education facilities, improved transport connections, new retail offers and high-quality green spaces.<sup>63</sup> In Higher Blackley alone, there is a brand new library, and the Co-op Academy is a new-build school that has replaced the former Plant Hill School. However, this does not always provide people with the day-to-day services and social activities that they feel are required, which may shape people's perceptions. The Riverdale estate came into sharp focus in particular regarding the lack of engagement, as it is geographically isolated and was often seen as being forgotten.

*The Riverdale estate ... There's one shop that charges extortion prices because it's the only shop you can get to without getting the bus ... [When the council] did the consultation years ago [people said] we need shops, we've got nothing. You can't use your cash card ... you are isolated and you are stuck unless you get on a bus. You can't do anything, you can't access anything.” (Woman, 42 years old)*

There were some real challenges with many people feeling that there were not many amenities, especially for children and young people, despite the relative proximity of

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62 P. Shapely, *The Politics of Housing: Power, Consumers and Urban Culture*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007, p. 167.

63 Manchester City Council, “North Manchester Strategic Regeneration Framework document”, 2004, at [http://www.manchester.gov.uk/site/scripts/download\\_info.php?fileID=280](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?fileID=280) (hereafter, MCC, “North Manchester SRF”).

Heaton Park (although this could be a 40-minute walk for people from certain parts of the ward who are not able to drive).

*My little girl is turning five and she wants to do something so where do I take her? I don't drive and I've got a little boy I have to take care of as well and he wants to do something do. It's hard. And I can't take them to the fields outside our house because there's syringes and the council won't clean it. (Woman, 25 years old)*

The concern with litter was shared by young and old alike. A boy, 15, felt that:

*Blackley is just full of scruffy places, litter everywhere and you look around and everything is shut and it's not a good environment.*

There has been a lot of focus on physical regeneration in Manchester. However, even during the discussion of Higher Blackley as a place, the issue of many people feeling less secure in their lives remained pertinent, whether in terms of physical safety, or the hygiene of local places, or in terms of the provision of social and community resources. This may suggest why some people still feel disconnected despite investment in physical regeneration through several major capital projects, which people may not necessarily feel belong to them as a local community. As people feel less secure, they are less likely to be content with the changes that have taken place, and feel less of an attachment.

In a consultation to guide the North Manchester Strategic Regeneration Framework, there were strong priorities around the need to improve local services, including shops, better medical facilities, the need to improve or upgrade existing primary schools and community-based facilities for children and young adults.<sup>64</sup> This suggests more community-rooted investment is a strong concern for local residents.

There was a perception amongst some local residents that the allocation of resources to Blackley was not as forthcoming as other areas:

*I've lived around this area for a long time and we've always been a lost community, we never get any funding ... we're not the best and we're not the worst so there's no money ... because you have to be the worst. It's because we behave ourselves, we don't get anything. (Woman, 39 years old)*

This was echoed in a focus group with fathers in the area, who felt that despite many people in Higher Blackley struggling financially to the same extent as other neighbouring and more deprived wards, the concentration of pockets of poverty meant

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64 Manchester City Council, "Public Consultation Report: North Manchester Strategic Regeneration Framework Consultation", 2012.

that they were not seen as a priority area for the city council. This creates a perception articulated by a 32-year-old joiner, who said that,

*Harpurhey gets, Moston gets ... what does Blackley get? No disrespect, we've got you two [researchers] talking about it.*

This perception of a lack of investment was challenged by Sir Richard Leese, the leader of Manchester City Council. He explained that there had been millions of pounds worth of investment in Higher Blackley including the brand new library, investment in schools and in the local housing stock.

*First of all there is serious investment in education, and the two new high schools, Our Lady's and what was Plant Hill and is now the Co-op Academy, which are fairly clear examples of that. The Co-operative Academy, I think GCSEs 5 A–Cs including English and Maths is something like 56 per cent this year, so it's come from being one of the worst performing schools in the city to certainly performing above the city average now. Clearly, that's significantly improved prospects for young people growing up in that area. Higher Blackley has clearly a very high proportion of social housing. It's all under Northwards management, but most if not all the housing there has now had investment to bring it up to decency standards, so physical conditions in people's houses have been improved over the last few years.*

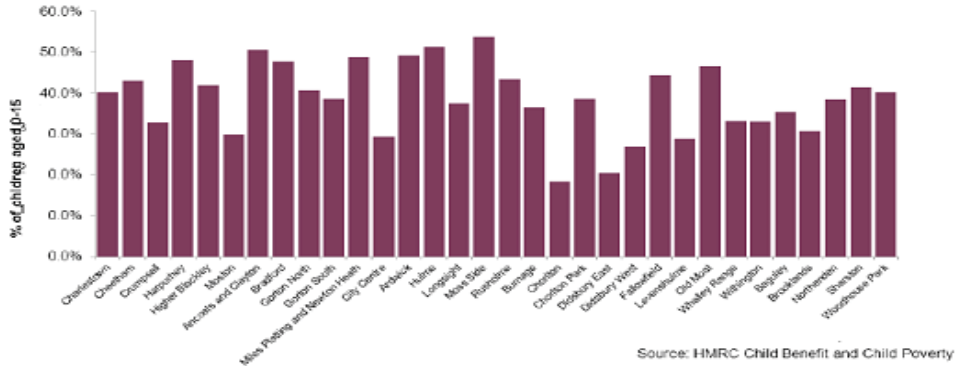
It is difficult to challenge the evidence provided by Sir Richard Leese, but the perceptions of the community are important and raise the issue of how resources are distributed according to need, and how they are directed to communities beyond physical improvements to capital projects that are important for the long-term future of the area and provide essential services, but which people do not always feel a particular attachment to.

As noted by one of the participants, Higher Blackley is neither the most deprived, nor the most affluent area in Manchester, which can result in it not being classed as a priority in terms of reducing poverty or attracting wealthier residents to the city. However, despite this, there were 1,405 children living in poverty in Higher Blackley according to figures from 2010. The Child Poverty Action Group have estimated the cost of child poverty to society.<sup>65</sup> According to this estimation, child poverty in Higher Blackley alone costs £15.25 million.

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<sup>65</sup> The estimate is based upon the costs of services to deal with the consequences of child poverty, costs in lost tax receipts from people earning less as a result of having grown up in poverty, benefits for people spending more time out of work as a result of having grown up in poverty, loss to individuals in net earnings (after paying tax). See CPAG, "Local authorities and child poverty: Balancing threats and opportunities", 2013, at [http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-local-authorities-child-pov-0713-amended\\_o\\_o.pdf](http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-local-authorities-child-pov-0713-amended_o_o.pdf).

**FIGURE 10. CHILDREN IN FAMILIES WITH LESS THAN 60% OF MEDIAN INCOME, 2010**



Source: HMRC Child Benefit and Child Poverty

While the distribution across the city reveals Higher Blackley to be below the median in terms of child poverty at a ward level (although it is still much higher than the national average), the data from Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) reveal a different picture, as some areas within the ward would figure much higher in the distribution, with as many as 55 per cent of children living in poverty. This is concentrated in those areas of social housing or estates that have a higher level of deprivation and poverty within the wider Higher Blackley area.<sup>66</sup>

**FIGURE 11. CHILD POVERTY IN HIGHER BLACKLEY 2010**

Lower Layer Super Output Area's (LSOA)	Children in IS/JSA families		Children in families receiving WTC and CTC, and income <60% median income		Children in families receiving CTC only, and income <60% median income		Children in families in receipt of CTC (<60% median income) or IS/JSA		% of Children in "Poverty"	
	Under 16	All Children	Under 16	All Children	Under 16	All Children	Under 16	All Children	Under 16	All Children
E01005098 Manchester 001A	100	120	5	5	10	10	115	135	38.2%	38.3%
E01005099 Manchester 001B	270	300	15	15	15	15	300	335	57.2%	55.9%
E01005100 Manchester 001C	135	145	-	5	20	25	155	175	39.8%	38.5%
E01005101 Manchester 002A	155	180	5	10	25	30	185	220	43.3%	41.9%
E01005102 Manchester 001D	50	55	-	-	15	15	60	70	24.1%	24.9%
E01005103 Manchester 001E	135	155	-	-	25	25	160	180	49.8%	47.4%
E01005104 Manchester 004A	145	160	10	10	20	25	175	195	40.6%	40.1%
E01005136 Manchester 002C	65	75	-	-	15	20	80	95	26.3%	25.6%

HMRC Estimates mid 2010: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/statistics/child-poverty-stats.htm>

Source: HMRC Estimates mid 2010, see [www.hmrc.gov.uk/statistics/child-poverty-stats.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/statistics/child-poverty-stats.htm)

These areas consistently show up on all indicators of disadvantage, such as high numbers of unemployment, high numbers of people on benefits, poorer health and low levels of average pay. There is concentrated neighbourhood-based poverty, but not at the level of the ward.

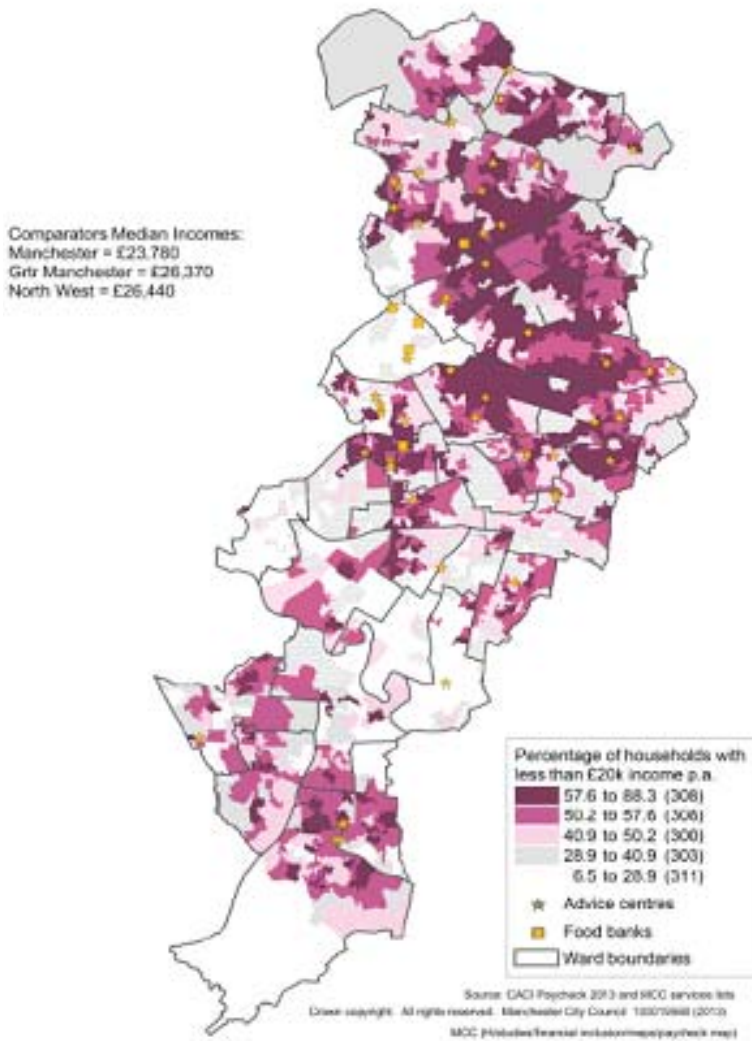
Ward-based approaches are absolutely central to the governance of Manchester and provide the basis of service-delivery arrangements. Place-based strategies can be an essential means of being able to identify and tackle particular areas that require additional support. However, a purely ward-based analysis can fail to provide the support needed for particular neighbourhoods and estates, and people can fall between the cracks.<sup>67</sup>

Higher Blackley provides evidence of how the use of aggregate statistics can serve to obscure complex differences within areas, especially in terms of neighbourhood level deprivation, unemployment and child poverty. This can then affect any interventions that are deemed necessary. For instance, despite these clear levels of need and low income concentrated within pockets in Higher Blackley, there are currently no advice services or food banks that are located directly in the ward.

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67 R. Andersson and S. Musterd, "Area-based policies: a critical appraisal", *Tijdschrift voor Economisch en Sociale Geografie* 96(4) (2005), p. 386.

**FIGURE 12. PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH LESS THAN £20,000 INCOME PER YEAR BY OUTPUT AREA WITH ADVICE CENTRES AND FOOD BANKS**



**Source:** MCC Financial Inclusion Strategy

Policies that focus exclusively on regenerating places can essentially mean that people in poverty will simply be moved elsewhere, potentially disrupting the social networks that are so important for providing a level of security and support that people need in order to survive. When assessing the high levels of deprivation in particular parts of Higher Blackley, there is a need to question structural issues that influence people's

outcomes and how life chances become shaped not just by where people live, but also to include the wider social inequalities that affect their lives.<sup>68</sup>

Whilst place-based strategies can provide targeted interventions for areas in which there are higher concentrations of people in poverty, this needs to be complemented by addressing structural inequalities such as unemployment, low pay, gender inequalities and lone-parent disadvantage. The North Manchester Strategic Regeneration Framework identifies that the area's "key role in the City and the conurbation is as a strong residential area that supports the growth of the regional economy."<sup>69</sup> Therefore, it is important that the policy is designed to benefit existing residents to ensure that they benefit from this growth and continue to be able to live in Higher Blackley, where there are strong community networks of support that would be able to consolidate any forthcoming gains.

## 4.6 | FAMILY

Post-war Britain has seen considerable social and cultural change within families, including changing terms of gender roles and the make-up of traditional family households sitting alongside increased numbers of stepfamilies, single-parent households and second marriages. The shift in the labour market away from industrialisation and manufacturing towards more jobs based in the service industries has seen more women enter the job market, though at a much lower rate of pay. The changing gender roles in working-class communities have been a significant impact, with many families having shared childcare arrangements. As a man, aged 27, said:

*More [women] now go to work. When I was brought up, my mum was at home with the kids and my dad was out providing for the family.*

Economic and social transformations have changed the nature of family life and gender roles, which has led some people to believe that there has been a "crisis of masculinity".<sup>70</sup> However, this did not seem to affect the fathers in the Open Society Foundations' focus group:

*The man always went to work. Nowadays if your wife gets a job and you don't, it's see you later love, have a good day at work, I'll make you tea when you come home. Simple. (Man, 32 years old)*

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68 T. Slater, "Your life chances affect where you live: A critique of the cottage industry of neighbourhood effects research", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37(3) (2013) (hereafter, Slater "Your life chances").

69 MCC, "North Manchester SRF", p. 10.

70 L. McDowell, *Redundant Masculinities? Employment Change and White Working Class Youth*. London, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.



*I mean if you were a bit chauvinistic it would [bother you] but you can't be like that any more. Like your mum and dad, when your dad went to work and your mum stayed at home. It doesn't go like that any more. (Man, 28 years old)*

The make-up of families in the United Kingdom has undergone significant changes and is constantly evolving. Changes over the last century have seen radical changes in legislation, technology, attitudes and expectations, which has led to more women in the labour market, the introduction of contraception, which has led to deferred decisions about when people decide to have children, and attitudes that have resulted in divorce and cohabitation becoming much more acceptable.<sup>71</sup> Increasingly, married couples make up a smaller proportion of all families, and there are more co-habiting and lone-parent families.

**TABLE 3. FAMILIES AND NUMBER OF PEOPLE LIVING IN FAMILIES BY FAMILY TYPE (PERCENTAGE)<sup>72</sup>**

	Families		People in families	
	2001	2011	2001	2011
Married couple family	72.4	67.2	74.7	69.4
Civil partnership family	–	0.3	–	0.2
Cohabiting couple family	12.5	16.0	11.7	15.4
Same sex cohabiting couple family	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.3
Lone-mother family	12.7	14.2	11.7	13.2
Lone-father family	2.1	1.9	1.7	1.6

**Source:** I. Macrory, (2012), “Measuring national well-being—Households and families, 2012, at [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766\\_259965.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766_259965.pdf)

Manchester has a higher than average number of lone-parent households with children, and there are particular LSOAs in Higher Blackley that have well above even the Manchester average.<sup>73</sup>

71 S. Jenkins et al. “Families in Britain. The impact of changing family structures and what the public think”, 2008, at [http://www.ipsos-mori.com/DownloadPublication/1215\\_sri\\_families\\_in\\_britain\\_2008.pdf](http://www.ipsos-mori.com/DownloadPublication/1215_sri_families_in_britain_2008.pdf)

72 Ian Macrory, (2012), Measuring National Well-being – Households and Families, 2012. Available from [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766\\_259965.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766_259965.pdf)

73 Office of National Statistics, “2011 Census standard table KS105EW Household composition”, produced by Nigel DeNoronha, 2013 (downloaded from Nomisweb.co.uk on 4 February 2014).

Family set-ups and relationships have often been seen as the foundation of familial and community stability. In recent times, the change in family make-ups has been seen as a core issue and the cause of persistent social problems. This has led to increased government intervention in the family. Indeed, the notion of family breakdown has its own section in the UK government's Social Justice Strategy, which states that: "We should be concerned about the long-term trend in all types of family breakdown: marriage rates have more than halved in the last 40 years, while the number of lone parent households increased by an average of 26,000 a year from the early 1980s to 2010."<sup>74</sup>

The concept of the family has been constructed in policy terms in such a way as to mean household unit, and it focuses on the relationships of spouses as the key element of analysis. However, this does not recognise the realities and values of many working-class communities that the research found in Higher Blackley: families are extended and connected at a local level, and support structures also include wider networks of family friends, as described above.

This finding is also supported by research by Kate Morris with families who were receiving support from multiple statutory sector agencies, which found that: "Family descriptions were not bounded by household membership; extended family members played significant roles in family life and were presented at times as having the same value and importance as those that lived together in the same household."<sup>75</sup>

Different households will have particular circumstances that may create different supportive environments, and a wider conception of the 21st-century family could bring benefits in terms of how policies are addressed to support families. For instance, a lone parent might live in close proximity to relatives, or have friends who will support them—and this makes a difference.

Government policy often reflects concern with individual behaviours over structural issues. Lone parents, predominantly women, are more likely to face financial difficulties. Evidence shows that children in single-parent families are twice as likely as children in couple families to live in relative poverty—over four in 10 children in single-parent families are poor.<sup>76</sup> This is a particular issue for Higher Blackley, as there are significant numbers of lone parents in the ward. The Charity Gingerbread points

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74 HM Government, "Social Justice: Transforming lives", 2012, at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/49515/social-justice-transforming-lives.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/49515/social-justice-transforming-lives.pdf).

75 K. Morris, "Troubled families: Vulnerable families' experiences of multiple service usecfs\_822 198..206", *Child and Family Social Work* 18(2) (2013), p. 201 (hereafter, Morris, "Troubled families").

76 M. Brewer and P. DeAgostini, "Credit crunched: Single parents, credit crunched: Single parents, universal credit and the struggle to make work pay", 2013, at <https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/d/156>.

to several reasons for the more difficult conditions for single-parent households.<sup>77</sup> A woman focus group participant, aged 36, explained the difficulties of being a lone parent, both in terms of being out of work and working on low pay:

*For about 8–9 years I was claiming single-parent benefits for two children ... but when I went into work full time I was just about surviving. And getting into debt or just surviving with my credit card because I was working ... and I wasn't getting out of that debt. I just wanted to work, I was sick of sitting in all day.*

Despite progress, the cost of childcare in the United Kingdom has increased considerably in recent years and is amongst the highest in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).<sup>78</sup> The increasingly high costs of childcare can make paid employment not financially prudent, especially for parents from low-income backgrounds. After the government cut support through the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit, a quarter of parents living in severe poverty reported that they had given up their jobs because the cost of childcare was too expensive.<sup>79</sup> Single parents in particular rely heavily on informal childcare; as per Gingerbread evidence—of those using childcare, 46 per cent said it was informal.<sup>80</sup>

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77 These include: the limitations on earning power when there is just one adult in the household; the higher rate of unemployment in single parent-headed households (40 per cent of single-parent family households are out of work compared with 6 per cent of two-parent family households); the lower income which single parents receive when they do work; the income from benefits or parents who do not work is insufficient to lift them above the poverty line; and the lack of child maintenance. See V. Peacey, "Family finances", 2010, at <http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/content/665/Policy-work--money>.

78 The Social Market Foundation has forecast that a low-income family is likely to contribute 62 per cent more—or £600 in today's money—for typical childcare costs in 2015–2016 compared with 2006–2007. See R. Shorthouse, J. Masters and I. Mulheirn, *A Better Beginning: Easing the Cost of Childcare*. London, The Social Market Foundation, 2012, p. 6, at [http://www.smf.co.uk/files/4313/2864/0423/SMF\\_NCCS\\_final.pdf](http://www.smf.co.uk/files/4313/2864/0423/SMF_NCCS_final.pdf) (hereafter, Shorthouse et al., *A Better Beginning*).

79 Shorthouse et al., *A Better Beginning*, p. 7.

80 Victoria Peacey, (2010), Family Finances. Available from <http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/content/665/Policy-work--money>

**BOX. 1**

The Government's Troubled Families agenda works with "those that have problems and cause problems to the community around them, putting high costs on the public sector." Each local authority has been funded by central government to deliver this programme on a payment by results basis—in which funding follows when families have been shown to have been "turned around". The programme is designed to prioritise help and support for families with multiple issues with an identified key worker and more integrated service. They focus on the whole family and intervene early. This support at an early stage rather than crisis management is important for some families; as Kelly who was 42 and being supported by Partners of Prisoners said: "... if you're not in trouble ... you've got no support. It seems like everything needs to be bad before something gets done."

In Manchester a "troubled family" includes single adult and adult only families and works to the following issues: crime and anti-social behaviour; school exclusions; school attendance below 85 per cent; unemployment/in receipt of work benefits; looked after children and children on the edge of care; homelessness; mental health issues; alcohol misuse; substance misuse; benefits (not only out of work); domestic abuse; debt; transiency and non-engagement. An evaluation from July 2013 which covered a total of 490 families who have had at least 6 months' intervention identified some notable successes including an 81 per cent reduction in anti-social behaviour, a 42 per cent reduction in fixed-term exclusions and 35 per cent of families with children who are less absent. However, economic problems persist, with a reduction of just 15 per cent of council tax arrears, and only a 3 per cent reduction in families claiming out-of-work benefits.

The Council notes that "moving troubled families from 'stability' towards 'employment' remains one of the biggest challenges for the programme", noting that to "achieve sustainable change for these families the opportunities to integrate with work and skills provision in the city need to be maximised." This requires considerable support, and should ensure that family members are not pushed into work in a punitive way, but rather engaged in a long-term process that delivers a supportive approach. This appears to be the approach that Manchester is adopting. Sir Richard Leese, the leader of Manchester City Council said that,

*Some of [the troubled families] will require pre-employment training even to get to that stage. Thirty are in work, but you will find more have entered training in some form or other, or members of those families have.*

It could be argued that the existing engagement model is perhaps not reaching the families that are most in need of support. The Council recognised that this might be the case and note that "Most families on the programme engage well with the interventions and it is a vital skill of the family-lead worker to encourage families to engage. Where this starts to slip, however, the use of sanctions is important."

In an interview, a council officer said there are real ambitions to engage complex families and to 'reduce dependency on welfare':

*They don't engage now, so it's difficult. In the past, when a family had been identified, children's services/social workers would visit three times—couldn't get an answer, case closed—not allowed to do that now. You've got to keep going. If a family's been identified you're not allowed to close the case until they've been picked up ... You can't just slip under the radar and hope that because everyone else on your street lives like that that's the norm. It's not acceptable, and in fairness, given all the changes that are coming—welfare reform ... it's not going to be so easy to carry on living your life like that. If they're struggling now with money, they're going to struggle more ... if we can help them move towards that world of work, and maybe start to become self-sufficient, reduce that dependency ... then hopefully they'll function. And obviously that's going to have an economic impact on Manchester so we have less people claiming benefits and more people in work ...*

Diane Curry from Partners of Prisoners believes that:

*There has been an overestimation of how many troubled families there are, but there is a group of families who are totally disengaged from statutory support services, and those people need engaging. There will always be those families, and they are the troubled families that you really want to work with—who won't engage, can't engage and don't care what the consequences are ... they need another way of working, you can't keep beating them over the head ... it's not creative or community owned and doesn't look at what the strengths of a family might be or the community.*

Research with families who had experienced multiple interventions by multiple statutory sector agencies showed that: "Poverty was a stark reality of family life—but was rarely, if ever, given by families or professionals as the primary reason for service intervention."<sup>81</sup> Therefore, intensive interventions to support families with complex needs to address must at the same time consider the more structural issues that can affect people's lives. It is therefore important that citywide strategies also exist to be able to address poverty and the root causes of many issues that present in the families that are engaged as part of the Troubled Families agenda.

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81 K. Morris, "Troubled families", vulnerable families' experiences of multiple service use, *Child & Family Social Work* Volume 18, Issue 2, p. 199.

As well as the targeted Complex Families programme, Manchester also has a much broader Family Poverty Strategy.<sup>82</sup> This focuses on the following three key themes: parental employment skills;<sup>83</sup> education, health and family;<sup>84</sup> and place.

In relation to place, the strategy notes that child and family poverty is clustered in certain parts of Manchester. Research has identified certain wards with multiple problems—high unemployment, poor housing, lack of open spaces and poor local facilities. The Strategic Regeneration Frameworks that are in place in five areas across the city set out the priorities for physical and social regeneration, and also the social benefits that can be achieved through regeneration. Large-scale economic regeneration projects in north, east and central Manchester in particular are seen as key opportunities whereby the environments and lives of the poorest families can be improved. However, there is a need for an holistic approach to be taken to regeneration and poverty alleviation in these areas—one that harnesses the human, social, physical, financial and place-based assets to create sustainable livelihoods for the residents who live there.

While statutory sector agencies working intensively with the household unit, and aiming to address structural inequalities, are necessary and will have an impact, a wider conception of family that reflects the extended networks of support that the research found in Higher Blackley could add a new dimension to the strategies to reduce poverty in Manchester.

## 4.7 | CONCLUSIONS

The historical identity of white working-class communities has been eroded by social and economic transformations, as well as demographic changes that have happened at a pace and scale that is unsettling for many people in the community. Higher Blackley provides a case study of a particularly stable community, where families have lived for generations. This means that strong social networks of support have developed over time, which people place considerable value upon. However, the rising social insecurity together with increasing anxiety about immigration means that social cohesion remains a challenge.

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82 The Manchester Partnership, “Manchester Family Poverty Strategy 2012–15”, 2012 (hereafter, Manchester Partnership, “Manchester Family Poverty Strategy”).

83 Most of the children in poverty in Manchester are growing up in unemployed households, and so the strategy aims to support at least one parent into work and then sustain paid employment. This includes training to tackle skills barriers, which are identified as essential in allowing parents to move into more highly skilled, better paid and longer-lasting employment. The availability of local affordable childcare, cheap transport and, increasingly, debt and financial advice services are also highlighted as important related initiatives.

84 The strategy supports the continued investment in early years’ childcare; improving attainment and aspiration in primary and secondary education; integrating support for families and children from NHS and local authority services and, most importantly, using the Community Budget for Complex Families approach as a key mechanism to integrate service support around specific families who are on low incomes.

# 5

## EDUCATION

This section shows how education can be affected by a complex range of individual, community and socio-economic factors. It points to the importance for schools to understand their local neighbourhoods and the sometimes challenging conditions that pupils live in. Higher Blackley, consistent with Manchester in general, has seen an increase in educational achievement in recent years, and there is good practice from within the ward to learn from and build upon.

Higher Blackley has five mainstream primary schools<sup>85</sup> located around the ward and one primary school for children with special educational needs, which covers the whole of north Manchester. There are two main secondary schools, which are located in Higher Blackley: the Co-op Academy and Our Lady's Roman Catholic High School. Many of the children attend their local schools and are well placed to do so.

## 5.1 | ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTAINMENT IN MANCHESTER

Primary outcomes (Key Stage 2 at age 11) are much improved and are almost at national level. The 2012 GCSE examination results for Manchester schools show improvements across the board. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\*–C grades including English and Maths in Manchester improved to 53.2 per cent in 2012, compared with 51.8 per cent in 2011. The Manchester average is still below the England average, but the difference between the Manchester and England averages continues to converge, improving from 7.1 percentage points in 2011 to 6.2 percentage points in 2012. Increasing attendance and reducing persistent absence in Manchester's primary and secondary schools is also a priority for the city, and this is critical to the ambitions to raise standards, narrow the attainment gap and safeguard all children.

Progress is being made—attendance in Manchester primary schools is now slightly better than the England average, although in Manchester secondary schools attendance continues to improve but is still below the national average.<sup>86</sup>

## 5.2 | THE MANCHESTER SCHOOLS' ALLIANCE

Manchester City Council set up the Manchester Schools' Alliance and a Strategic Education Partnership in 2012, in order to help create further improvements in education and skills in the city and as a response to the changing educational landscape nationally, which the Council feels is becoming more fragmented with a rise in the number of Academies and Free Schools that have moved outside of local authority control.

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85 Primary schools educate children from five years until they are 11 years of age and they then transfer to secondary schools, where children stay until they are 16 years old.

86 Manchester Partnership, State of the City 2012–13, 2013.



The Manchester Schools' Alliance (MSA) is a partnership body, maintained and led by and for all Manchester schools. It is an independent organisation focused on school priorities and self-improvement and is a key vehicle in the city to improve educational outcomes for children and young people. The core principles of the MSA are cooperation, collaboration and reciprocity.

This initiative is driven by the belief that with this ethic and strong strategic connectivity the education system as a whole can best support its constituent parts in an increasingly fragmented landscape. Amongst many other things, the MSA is better placed to commission and support shared improvement and aims to represent the local authority both locally and nationally in collaborative discussion with central government, and maximise benefits from engagement with the emerging cultural and economic opportunities in the city.

### 5.3 | EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT IN HIGHER BLACKLEY

The educational achievements of pupils living in Higher Blackley are currently below the average levels for Manchester, although the gap is closing, and in terms of the percentage of pupils achieving five GCSEs at grades A\*–C this number has risen considerably in line with wider improvements in Manchester.

**TABLE 4. ACHIEVEMENT OF PUPILS IN HIGHER BLACKLEY.<sup>87</sup>**

<b>Percentage achieving key stage 2 in English at level 4 and above</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Higher Blackley	68,0%	71,7%	68,5%	72,8%
Manchester	75,4%	75,0%	75,0%	76,2%
<b>Percentage achieving key stage 2 in Maths at level 4 and above</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Higher Blackley	66,4%	72,8%	73,9%	81,0%
Manchester	74,9%	76,0%	78,2%	77,2%
<b>Percentage achieving key stage 2 in Science at level 4 and above</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Higher Blackley	79,3%	85,0%	83,6%	82,9%
Manchester	85,6%	85,0%	80,7%	78,4%
<b>Percentage achieving 5 GCSE A*-C</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Higher Blackley	54,8%	58,9%	72,1%	76,7%
Manchester	57,0%	61,3%	71,2%	79,0%

**Source:** EDWARD 2011, Manchester City Council

Higher Blackley has a high proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals, which has been shown to have a correlation with lower educational achievement and attainment. Indeed, according to the 2011 figures, Blackley has a much higher number of pupils on free school meals than the national average—14 per cent.

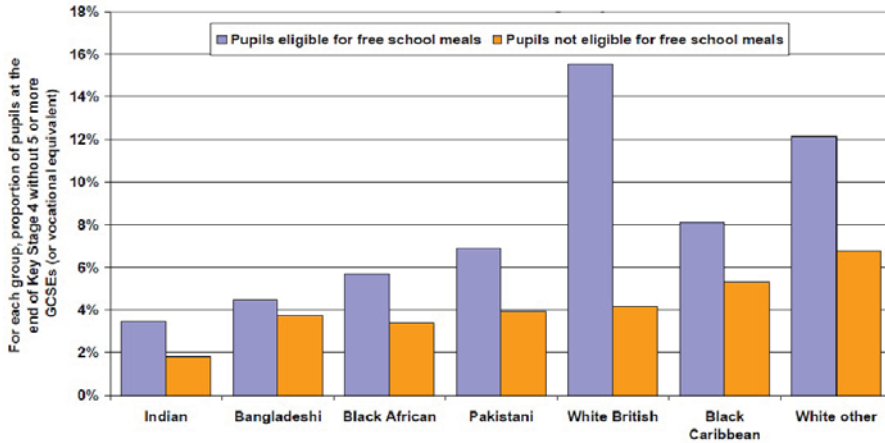
**TABLE 5. CHILDREN IN RECEIPT OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS**

<b>Primary school children in receipt of free school meals</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Higher Blackley	39,4%	41,1%	42,6%	41,8%
Manchester	39%	38%	37%	37%
<b>Secondary school children in receipt of free school meals</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Higher Blackley	47,2%	44,5%	45,1%	41,5%
Manchester	37%	39%	35%	34,8%

**Source:** Manchester City Council, "Higher Blackley ward profile 2011/12"

There is a considerable amount of evidence that shows a clear correlation between social inequality and educational achievement. As the researchers Feysia and Kirsten argue, in terms of educational achievement the figures that are most often debated are the distinctions between different ethnic groups, with less focus on the socio-economic background of pupils. This skews the debate in a particular way, when it is clear that there is an impact of social class on educational achievement across all ethnicities.<sup>88</sup> However, the disparity between white pupils on free school meals (used as a proxy for low income) and those not on free school meals is much more significant than for any other ethnic group.

88 D. Feysia and L. Kirsten, "White working class achievement: An ethnographic study of barriers to learning in schools", *Educational Studies* 37, (3), (2011), PP. 245–264

**FIGURE 13. ACHIEVEMENT OF PUPILS BY FREE SCHOOL MEALS AND ETHNICITY**

**Source:** National Pupil Database, DfE; the data is for 2009/10; England; updated Feb 2011

The disparity between educational outcomes for white working-class pupils and more privileged white pupils is higher than for any other ethnic group. In particular, one head teacher, Pat Adams, noted that:

*White British boys in particular are a concern and they throw themselves up in the data every time, every time we do any assessments we look at that vulnerable group, and we call them a vulnerable group.*

There are clear connections between social inequality and educational outcomes, although this is a hugely complex area and it is difficult to assess causation. The research for this report has captured ways in which poverty, difficult social conditions and poor housing all affect achievement. The social insecurity picked up in other areas throughout the report has a negative impact on pupils' ability to achieve, although careful monitoring and cross-agency support can serve to reduce the effects of this to a degree, and Higher Blackley has examples of successful work in this arena.

## 5.4 | THE DYNAMICS OF LOCAL AREA AND LOCAL FACTORS

When understanding the relationship between inequality and the educational achievement of white working-class pupils, it is important to develop a more complete picture of the dynamics of the local area and how local factors may have an impact, rather than designating specific causal factors, such as a “poverty of aspiration”, a factor that is often cited. As the Centre for Equity in Education notes, it “seems improbable that one ‘causes’ the other in any simple way.” Instead, it seems that there is a complex set of mediating factors linking the two. These might include a lack of material resources, parental attitudes and behaviours, children’s own attitudes and behaviours, access to good schools, the characteristics of the neighbourhoods where children live, and the parents’ levels of education.<sup>89</sup>

As a result, it is important to look at different layers that can have an impact:

- the individual (the micro level);
- the immediate social context, which might be located within families, communities, schools and peer groups (the meso level);
- the social structures (the macro level).<sup>90</sup>

## 5.5 | RAISING ASPIRATIONS?

*“Raising the aspirations and results of white working-class boys would do more than anything to cut the supply route to Britain’s burgeoning underclass.”*  
Rt Hon. Frank Field MP, in evidence to the Centre for Social Justice<sup>91</sup>

Government approaches to tackle inequality in educational achievement have included a range of programmes that have specifically targeted schools in areas of disadvantage. Much of the government focus appears to be on the low levels of aspirations in particular communities, which is said to have an impact on educational achievement. Analysis centred on explanations that are based on the behaviours of individuals can neglect many of the issues that this research has found to have an impact on education. The focus on the “aspirations” of individual families does not properly consider the wider structural issues that contribute to underachievement

89 A. Dyson et al., “Developing children’s zones for England”, 2012, at <http://www.education.manchester.ac.uk/research/centres/cee/publications/Developing-Childrens-Zones-low-res.pdf> (hereafter, Dyson et al., “Developing children’s zones”).

90 C. Raffo et al., “Education and poverty: A critical review of theory, policy and practice”, [2009] at <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/2028-education-poverty-theory.pdf> (hereafter, Raffo et al., “Education and poverty”).

91 Centre for Social Justice, “Requires improvement. The causes of educational failure”, 2013, p. 39, at <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/UserStorage/pdf/Pdf%20reports/requires.pdf>.

and fails to address some of the underlying symptoms of poverty and the detrimental impact that this can have on children and young people's educational achievement, as well as the necessary means by which aspirations can be made concrete.

This view also fails to acknowledge people's differing aspirations that are not linked to higher education, but rather are based on providing a steady income for their families, a secure home to live in and building roots in their local community. This research found that many people did have aspirations, but these were not always those that are often pushed forward by middle-class "do-gooders", who see higher education as the panacea for all. Many residents spoke about their desire to have secure employment, with the opportunities to train in the skills sector that they were interested in, be that hairdressing or plumbing.

Lowered expectations may be due to the realities of life for many people from working-class communities.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, one head teacher interviewed for this report suggested that against expectations, sometimes "the [parents] who haven't had a good experience are the ones that strive for a better experience for their children."

Fathers at a focus group held at a local primary school in Higher Blackley were keen to point out that they wanted the best for their children, so they would be able "to better themselves", and also that their children "hopefully get better than what we've got."

A man, aged 32, described how, "You've got to help them in any way you can. My daughter is just about to go to Uni and that's going to cost me a fortune, but if it helps her get the job she wants and the lifestyle I know she wants then good."

This sense of aspiration was supported by the focus group with young people. For instance, a girl, who was 14, said that she wanted "to do well in school and get qualifications."

The problem may not be aspiration but "knowledge of how to make those aspirations concrete and obtainable."<sup>93</sup> A family's experience of employment has a long-term effect on the expectations that both pupils and parents will have. This is not necessarily a case of low aspiration, but rather a more limited horizon of what is possible. As Mrs Leaver, Principal of the Co-op Academy, stated:

*In terms of this particular community, they are a very close-knit community, they don't tend to move out of that community. They haven't experienced the opportunities that are available out there, and it's tough.*

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92 K. Kintrea et al., "The influence of parents, places and poverty on educational attitudes and aspirations", 2011, at <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/young-people-education-attitudes-full.pdf>.

93 R. St Clair et al. "Silver bullet or red herring? New evidence on the place of aspirations in education", *Oxford Review of Education* 39(6) (2013), p. 719.

A teaching assistant in a local primary school recalled one discussion with one of her young pupils, saying that:

*Oh well, mums and dads just stay at home during the daytime ... and it's funny for them to understand that this is your job. I teach—this is my job, I get paid to do this. If you want to have one of these jobs you have to work hard; and he said, no, mums and dads just stay home. That was his genuine idea of what you did; it wasn't his fault, he was only a young child. That's not the same for every child.*

This means that there is a significant responsibility for schools to be able to provide effective advice and the wider connections that young people need to be able to make their aspirations more concrete. However, this clearly does not happen in all schools. For instance, a boy, aged 15, suggested to the researchers that he was keen to join the police, but felt that he was not receiving the support that was required from the school:

*They don't really ask us where we want to be. They just do what they need to ... Schools don't really care what you want to be when you grow up. It's like colleges that, you just pick the lessons you want to do in college.*

It is not just the aspirations of pupils and their parents, but also of the school environment and the belief they have in their pupils. The Co-op Academy has been built on the former site of Plant Hill High School, which has an historical poor-performing legacy. Many people in the community reported the former school as lacking in aspiration and discipline for young people who attended, and that it is important that this is being turned around. As Mrs Leaver, the Principal of the Co-op Academy, noted:

*This is a two-way process, I've got to deliver good quality [education], it's no good me saying, aspire high, have self-belief, believe in yourself, you can do it, when I'm not offering good quality here. So ... the learning has got to be good.*

The learning environment is also an important factor in a school being able to provide the most effective education for pupils, something noted by a boy, who was 15 years old:

*The Co-op is really tidy and not Plant Hill, which had wallpaper peeling off the walls and the ceilings were dripping. Co-op is really nice and tidy.*

The focus on aspirations often focuses on the attitudes of pupils; however, the need for schools to have high expectations of all pupils is essential, as noted by the Head of Crab Lane Primary school:

*That's why we get high results; we do push children quite hard because they are capable of doing it regardless of the support they get at home, despite their background.*

However, this is not always forthcoming from schools that may potentially have lower expectations for all working-class children, or who are perhaps pressured through the regime of targets that assess school performance on the basis of how many pupils achieve certain grade boundaries, notably those who achieve A–C grades.

The chief inspector for Ofsted, the government department that regulates schools, warned that the poverty of expectation and the tolerance by some teachers of low-level disruption in the classroom was a major factor in underachievement.<sup>94</sup> This was supported by the experience of a girl, aged 12, who noted that,

*If someone's got a really good mark they'll just go on about that and not pay attention to the others.*

Another girl, aged 13, also commented that,

*It depends what your teacher thinks about you. Like, most of my teachers hate me because I can't do any of the work that's given to me because they're either too easy or too hard. So I need the middle level but they still give me the full work even though I can't understand it. They just don't help me because they think I'm not bothered.*

## 5.6 | EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND INEQUALITY

As the Centre for Equity in Education shows, the “systems” that can affect a young person’s educational achievement include: the family, the school, the neighbourhood, the wider social and cultural context in which these are located, and the links between these different levels and contexts.<sup>95</sup> This suggests that, when analysing education achievement for white working-class pupils, it is important to understand the social conditions in which young people are growing up. Interviews with stakeholders and comments by focus group participants point to a strong connection between the social insecurity of families and the ability of pupils to be able to perform well in school.

The Head of Crab Lane Primary said:

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94 D. Boffey, “Ofsted chief says England’s schools failing white working-class children”, *Guardian* online, 2013, at <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/dec/08/ofsted-says-schools-let-white-poor-down>.

95 Dyson et al., “Developing children’s zones”.



*We uncover quite chaotic lifestyles—so no regular eating habits, no regular sleep, television constantly on, no stimulation in their house in terms of toys, and those kinds of things. Children coming into school smelling of urine and not having been washed; children coming in hungry, children falling asleep. Those are key indicators that something isn't happening that's the right thing at home. However, there are other poor families who have overcome all of those difficulties, managed to have really lovely lifestyles, despite being poor. So poverty isn't the only thing that keeps people trapped, if you like, it's about whether the parents are willing to engage.*

In order to fully understand the relationship between educational achievement and social insecurity, it is important to discover the wider dynamics that impact on a community, which this study is seeking to address.

Just because a child is poor does not necessarily mean they will fail in education. However, the more risk factors that are present in a child's and a family's life, the higher the risk of their falling through the safety net and becoming a family with more complex needs and all that that brings with it. Risk factors included poor and inconsistent parenting, erratic discipline, substandard housing, complex family issues and parents with mental health or addiction issues. Understanding the risk factors is an essential step within this process. Bronfenbrenner chooses not to focus on single “presenting problems”, and instead focuses on an “ecological systems theory”, which argues that the pupil interacts with a series of different systems that combine to create an “ecology” that shapes outcomes.<sup>96</sup> It is important to be able to understand what these risks are, as well as the positive characteristics and capabilities within a community that create protective features.

This is illustrated by a discussion between a head teacher and a teaching assistant about one particular family who have many of the issues that would be of concern:

*Head teacher: They live in a house that is very overcrowded. [The children] live upstairs, with a workless father, a mother who goes out and does several part-time jobs, overcrowded accommodation, yet those children are still achieving well. Attainment is at least at the level they should be at.*

*Teaching assistant: I think their mum is very supportive, I really think she does her best.*

*Head teacher: She's a hard worker herself; she's got that attitude and drive in her, whereas the father maybe hasn't, and I think that reflects on the children because she's there every morning, they've got that mind frame in their head, they're also well-behaved children, they come in well presented.*

As this conversation shows, things are often not as simple as they appear. One thing is clear—the importance of a secure home environment for children is crucial, although this may take different forms; a child’s experience in its early years, particularly in terms of secure attachment and the home learning environment, has a significant impact on parent–child relationships, which is linked to whether that child is “school ready”, which is then connected to lifetime outcomes.<sup>97</sup>

A major challenge for policymakers is to be able to unpick the factors that create these protective factors for children and consider how to develop measures that can be put in place to strengthen them. It is important to strengthen the family and community-orientated supportive characteristics that can most successfully contribute to an effective education for pupils. In the case of the pupils mentioned above, the role of the mother in parenting her children is clearly absolutely crucial to their being able to come to school and attain. Therefore, support structures should be put in place for this mother that are focused on strengthening her clear capabilities.

## 5.7 | HOUSING

Housing was an issue that affected the ability of pupils to be able to come to school best prepared to learn. One persistent problem raised by focus group participants was that of overcrowding, which means that children and young people do not have the rest that they need, the space to grow (especially in the teenage years) in times of change, and are not able to do homework in a suitable environment. One mother we spoke to had been living in overcrowded conditions for a year:

*I owe arrears for them anyway. So until I pay them, which is quite a lot of money ... but until I can pay it all off I can't get a house. So at the moment I'm sharing with my sister, her husband and their two children ... One family in one room and one family in the other ... It is so frustrating. And it is hard work because my children, my daughter's 11 and my son is 8. So she wants her independence anyway. And then I want my space too. It's really difficult.*

This family’s housing situation affects the ability of her children to be able to do well in an educational setting. She felt powerless to be able to change anything and believed that she had not received appropriate support. She was in employment, but working within the childcare sector, which pays low wages and fails to provide the security that is needed for long-term planning. This example illustrates how the social insecurity that runs through the report’s analysis has a direct impact on children’s lives and potentially their future ability to succeed. The situation of this family covers so many of the difficulties faced by families—low-paid work, housing insecurity and the ways in

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97 AGMA “Greater Manchester Early Years Business Case”, p. 5, at [http://www.agma.gov.uk/cms\\_media/files/121031\\_ey2\\_business\\_case.pdf?static=1](http://www.agma.gov.uk/cms_media/files/121031_ey2_business_case.pdf?static=1) (hereafter, AGMA, “Greater Manchester Early Years Business Case”).

which they feed into each other. It also shows the personal resilience that such families have to cope in these sorts of circumstances.

## 5.8 | PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND INTERVENTIONS

The intergenerational aspect of a lack of skills within working-class communities is a factor in lower levels of achievement for some white working-class communities. For example, the poor literacy and numeracy skills of some parents means that they are not in a position to be able to provide support for their children in terms of homework, which can have an impact on how the pupils progress throughout the year. The importance of early intervention has been clearly established in the Allen Report. Evidence shows that pupils who are eligible for free school meals<sup>98</sup> are less likely to achieve a “good level of development” in the Early Years Foundation Stage,<sup>99</sup> as can be seen in Table 6.

**TABLE 6. NATIONAL PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS ACHIEVING A “GOOD LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT”**

	Percentage of pupils achieving a “good level of development”
Pupils eligible for free school meals	48.2
All other pupils	67.0

**Source:** Department for Education, “School Readiness at 5”, at <http://www.education.gov.uk/researchandstatistics/statistics/keystatistics/b00221154/school-readiness-at-age-5>

In Manchester, this gap is lower than the national average, but pupils who are entering primary school from low-income households are still clearly less developed and so therefore face more challenges in being able to achieve well throughout their education.<sup>100</sup>

98 In the UK, a free school meal is a school meal provided to a child or young person during a school break and paid for by the government for parents on one of the qualifying benefits: Income Support; Jobseeker’s Allowance; Employment and Support Allowance; Child Tax Credit (provided they are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190); Working Tax Credit run-on paid for four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit; Universal Credit.

99 This is the framework for children from birth until the 31 August after their fifth birthday.

100 Department for Education, “EYFSP attainment by pupil characteristics in England: Academic year 2011 to 2012”, at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eyfsp-attainment-by-pupil-characteristics-in-england-academic-year-2011-to-2012>.

**TABLE 7. MANCHESTER PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS ACHIEVING A “GOOD LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT”**

	Percentage of pupils achieving a “good level of development”
Pupils eligible for free school meals	52.0
All other pupils	62.0

Source: Department for Education, “School Readiness at 5”

## 5.9 | MANCHESTER EARLY YEARS NEW MODEL

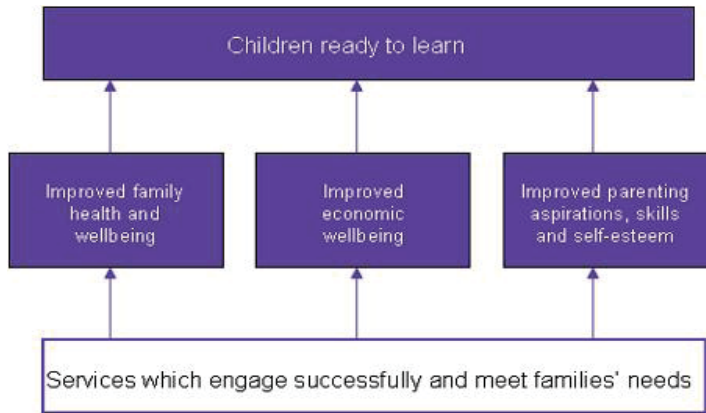
The Combined Authorities in Manchester argue that,

*Early years is key to the future success of Greater Manchester and prosperity of individuals. Re-designing public services and the way they are delivered will increase the numbers of children arriving at school ready to learn and is the focal point of this success. Prevention and intervention programmes for children up to the age of four and their families will reduce future demand and dependency on expensive, acute public services.<sup>101</sup>*

There is a new model that has been developed around this, which includes:

- system-wide commitment to a whole family approach;
- improved universal/preventative services;
- shared responsibility for children’s development;
- a core integrated set of assessment points.

<sup>101</sup> AGMA, “Greater Manchester Early Years Business Case,” p. 9.

**FIGURE 14. MANCHESTER EARLY YEARS MODEL**

**Source:** AGMA, “Greater Manchester Early Years Business Case”

The intended outcomes of the programme are that within five years, Greater Manchester will match the national average and within 10 years will halve the proportion of children who are not school ready; that there will be improved outcomes for all children in their early years and there will be a tracking of inequalities; more Greater Manchester parents will be economically active and there will be a reduced long-term cost of failure (estimated to be approximately £400 million per annum in the health and school system).<sup>102</sup>

Despite enjoying apparent political consensus, early intervention is being affected by the austerity measures and the reduction in services that are available to support transitions into primary school, which is an extremely important phase in the lives of young people. This is illustrated by one of the teaching assistants who works in reception at a local primary school:

*Last year we had a whole time table of Sure Start activities for children in reception and nursery children who are coming up to the reception to access over the summer, children who are a bit more vulnerable, who might be out on the street otherwise ... there was a massive list of different free activities they could go to, there's not been anything this year, there's no funding, it's all gone, so what are those children accessing over the summer now? They're probably out there on the street. It doesn't help them get school ready does it? All these activities over the summer help them get school ready, prepare them for reception, nursery, meet some of the local children in the area for when they start, but you know, it's not there this year, which is a shame, I know it did support a lot of children ...*

<sup>102</sup> AGMA, “Greater Manchester Early Years Business Case,” p. 9.

The Greater Manchester Business Model for Early Intervention calculates the financial costs of failing to intervene early at over £300 million per year.

**TABLE 8. ESTIMATED FINANCIAL COSTS OF FAILING TO INTERVENE**

Sector	Service	Estimated cost in GM (£ pa latest available year)
Health	Unnecessary A&E admissions for <4s	2,351,346
	Special Educational Need (SEN) spend in reception class	4,213,440
Local govt	SEN support in primary and secondary schools funded by local authority (proportion relating to behavioural, emotional, social and communication difficulties)	34,000,000
	Children in need case management	10,938,720
	<i>Exclusion</i>	393,969
	<i>Total local govt</i>	<i>28,254,549</i>
Schools	SEN support in mainstream schools (proportion of Dedicated Schools Grant relating to behavioural, emotional, social and communication difficulties)	170,000,000
	Pupil Premium (deprivation element only)	70,659,084
	<i>Total Schools</i>	<i>240,659,084</i>
Cross-public sector	Truancy-primary school	10,211,018
	Truancy – secondary school	18,000,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>320,767,577</b>

Source: AGMA, “Greater Manchester Early Years Business Case,” p. 9.

There was concern among those interviewed about the withdrawal of such services as part of the wider cuts in local authority spending. Interviewees felt that without such interventions, attempts to raise achievement will be stunted, and less favourable social outcomes will be achieved as a result. Within this challenging context, there is some excellent work being delivered by local schools and a range of different interventions that take place. Much of this rests upon effective monitoring of vulnerable children:

*The children are selected carefully depending on their pupil progress; the data that we generate every term generates the interventions. (Pat Adams, Head Teacher)*

This involves rigorous analysis across a range of issues. Such careful monitoring allows schools to track the pupils through the school term in order to make targeted interventions that can raise attainment. Crab Lane Primary School, which has been transformed from a school in special measures into one that is achieving well, delivers essential and effective interventions in terms of identifying and supporting children who are behind in reading and writing in primary school.

This system ensures that children who are not attaining receive the extra support from specialist staff that is necessary in order for the children to reach the national average for their age. This includes support around numeracy, literacy, speech and language. This early intervention provides pupils with the best opportunity to progress to secondary school more prepared, and so therefore more likely to achieve throughout education and in later life. Research suggests high economic returns measured in terms of reduced criminality, educational progression, behavioural and emotional resilience, health improvement and reduced welfare payments.<sup>103</sup> The financial cost of employing specialist staff in this area provides long-term savings to the city.

Recognising the role of the family in achieving high educational outcomes is essential.<sup>104</sup> As noted earlier, the challenges that many families face are considerable, and some pupils are more vulnerable to increased exposure to the risk factors that might undermine their abilities. The research in Higher Blackley found schools on the whole recognised the importance of enabling families to provide a secure environment for education and acted to provide relief in some emergency situations. This is done on an informal basis in some schools. For example, the Co-op Academy provided housing support to some families:

*It might be that they've moved house, they've no furniture, no nothing, we'll help them with that. Whatever it takes, whatever the barrier is, we will work with it to remove it, whatever it is. (Kathy Leaver, Principal at the Co-op Academy)*

Such an approach depends on caring and dedicated teachers and staff:

*Keeping an extra eye open for certain families who you know, certain children you know need that extra bit of attention, quiet words with the parents, letting them know you know the child didn't have breakfast and letting them know that they can have breakfast here and the school will pay for it. (Mrs Adams, Head of Crab Lane)*

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<sup>103</sup> R. Cassen and G. Kingdon, "Tackling low educational achievement", JRF online, 2007, at <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/2063-education-schools-achievement.pdf>.

<sup>104</sup> Raffo et al., "Education and poverty".

There is also more formal family support based on a model of cross-agency support and collaboration. Mrs Adams, the Head of Crab Lane Primary, noted the importance of the Common Assessment Framework. This involves agencies delivering frontline services and aims to make them more integrated and focused around the needs of children and young people. It is a standardised approach used by practitioners to assess children's additional needs and decide how these should be met.<sup>105</sup>

This is the first phase of a multi-tiered agency working approach to family support. According to Mrs Adams, within these meetings the intention is to “unpick what it is that that family needs to be able to improve the quality of life for their children.” This requires engagement from parents, who are not always keen to become involved in the process. In order to overcome this, the school must develop relationships with parents that are based on a position of trust, whereby staff at the school are able to show the parents how they will receive additional support that will be positive for their family. Mrs Adams recognises that this does not always succeed, “because the parents are so resistant to that process, and then that escalates that situation, so it’s no longer just a group of professionals, it then becomes a child protection issue if we think children are being neglected.”

The Co-op Academy was also clear about the importance of a multi-agency approach, especially in terms of addressing truancy:

*We have a connection with ... the complex families, other external agencies. We're connected with agencies to do with mental health, CAMS. We have a school nurse who's based on the academy site. We will say, right, what is the barrier? What is preventing your child from coming in to school? Tell us what it is. And we will remove that barrier. We will do everything to remove it. But some parents, you've got to be realistic, don't want them to come in. Well, sorry, the law states your child has to come in. (Mrs Leaver)*

There is evidence of strong collaborative work occurring in Higher Blackley, but this is becoming more difficult with the impacts of austerity on the capacity of services. As one teaching assistant in a local primary school stated:

*The health visitors used to come in and support me with special needs but they've had their funding pulled and they can't get out to schools as much because they've got more children to see in a larger area ... we're supposed to be doing more multi-agency, but it's harder to do it because there isn't enough time to do it all and it's so frustrating.*

Also, integration of services is not complete, as one local GP noted:

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<sup>105</sup> Department for Education website, “Strategy and working practice”, at <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/strategy/integratedworking/caf>.



*We don't have any contact with schools as GPs. It always struck me as ironic that the school down the road probably has quite a lot of my young patients in it. And in the end we have the same aspirations, providing the best possible outcomes for them in terms of health and for them in education and we still don't have any kind of a relationship.*

On the whole, the work happening at a local level appears to be focused around providing holistic support for particular pupils who are in need. This targeted approach of support is essential in being able to overcome some of the challenges that arise in terms of educating children and young people who are from low-income backgrounds and therefore face increased risk factors. There is potential in Higher Blackley to build upon this integrated model of working to be able to provide this holistic support to all pupils.

## 5.10 | TRANSITIONS

There is a lack of skills and job opportunities within many working-class communities that stunts social mobility and can lead to a life of low pay and poor work (explored in more depth in *chapter 6*). This makes young people's transitions, particularly from school to work, more difficult.<sup>106</sup>

The focus on aspiration, which places emphasis and priority on higher education (and, by extension, professional careers) as the most acceptable "aspirations" to have, overlooks the wide range of other ambitions young people have for their adult lives (and how these often rest upon the desire for emotional security and happiness).<sup>107</sup>

While all young people are "living, learning and negotiating transitions to adulthood and independence in an increasingly complex and challenging world, in which they face greater levels of choice and opportunity, but also unprecedented uncertainty and risk", for young working-class people greater risk factors and more uncertainty are involved.<sup>108</sup> For instance, in the past young working-class people (especially young men) were more able to find unskilled or semi-skilled jobs in manufacturing. However, for young people today who do not achieve well enough academically to fit into the emerging "knowledge economy", these are very different economic times in the present post-industrial city than existed in Higher Blackley in the past. As Steve Roberts argues, "service sector employment increasingly dominates the labour market

106 O. Galland, *Sociologie de la jeunesse*. Paris, Armand Colin, 1991. From Alan Mackie. 2013) "Poverty and youth transition", in I. Fyfe and S. Moir, eds, *Concept Youth Work Reader*, 2013, pp. 112–122, at <http://concept.lib.ed.ac.uk/index.php/Concept/article/view/201/174>.

107 G. Brown, (2011) "Emotional geographies of young people's aspirations for adult life", *Children's Geographies* 9(1) (2011), pp. 7–22.

108 B. McNeil et al., "Framework of outcomes for young people", 2012, at <http://youngfoundation.org/publications/framework-of-outcomes-for-young-people>.

of most British towns and cities and provides fewer opportunities of steady full-time, meaningful employment and more chance of low-skill and low-pay positions.”<sup>109</sup>

Education needs to provide a firm foundation to provide young people with the necessary skills to navigate the difficult entrance into the labour market, as well as to manage the residential and domestic transitions that young people make. Mrs Leaver, Principal of the Co-op Academy said:

*Gone are the days of a career, it's about a variety of careers in your working life, and to develop the skills which give you the breadth that you can change careers and have an opportunity of different employment ... we need to look at developing these transferable skills and the basic ones are: can you communicate, can you sell a product, can you convince someone they should employ you, can you show them that you have got that adaptability.*

This adaptability is important, but points towards a recognition that the transitions from school to work for many young people will be insecure, creating long-term consequences. The research found that young people are not oblivious to the state of the labour market that faces them upon leaving school, and this is affecting the way that potential transitions are viewed, which could serve to perpetuate inequality, poverty and low pay.

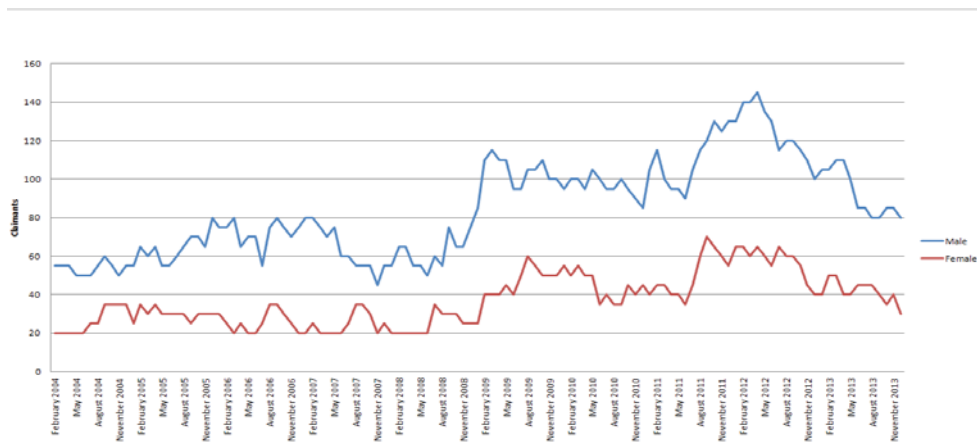
*Boy 1: What's the point in going to college if you can't get a job after it?*

*Boy 2: To me [to go to] universities and spend, like, £9,000 a year and say that gives you a better chance of getting a job but you spend so much for your whole education and still might not find a job.*

These young people reflect a knowledge of the difficult labour market that faces young people, which has become more challenging in recent years.

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<sup>109</sup> S. Roberts, “Beyond ‘NEET’ and ‘tidy’ pathways: Considering the ‘missing middle’ of youth transition studies”, *Journal of Youth Studies* 14(1) (2011), p. 27.

**FIGURE 15. JSA CLAIMANTS AGED 18–24 IN HIGHER BLACKLEY  
(FEBRUARY 2004 TO NOVEMBER 2013)**

Source: NOMIS Labour Market Statistics, 2014

The figures from the Office of National Statistics for December 2013 show that 3,790 people aged 18–24 were claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance in Manchester, including 1,180 who had been claiming for more than six months.<sup>110</sup> This includes 110 young unemployed people signing on in Higher Blackley alone, which amounts to nearly one in 10 of all young people in the area.<sup>111</sup> Also, such figures do not capture the young people who have become totally disengaged from society and who do not sign on, making their money from alternative sources.

Supporting young people in their transitions is an essential element of educational institutions. The Co-op Academy provides a good example of preparing young people for the future labour market, in terms of their flexible approach, described below:

*We look at our curriculum, we look that it's suited to the individual, we run a lot of personalised curriculum timetables. So gone are the days when traditionally in schools, you did your timetable and you ran it for a year ... other opportunities come along that can be offered offsite, so we have for example a teens and toddler group which is linked to a nursery, of which they gain a qualification ... sometimes these opportunities come along midyear and we want to take that opportunity there ...*

However, this never comes at the detriment of learning in the core subjects that young people need: “So even though that experience is really worthwhile, boosts self-esteem, prepares them, gives them an idea of what it’s really like in the outside world,

110 NOMIS Labour Market Statistics, 2014, at <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157083/report.aspx?town=manchester#tabempunemp> (hereafter, NOMIS Labour Market Statistics).

111 NOMIS Labour Market Statistics.

they still need maths, they still English, they still need science, they still need ICT qualifications.”

There also needs to be some focus on the types of qualifications that young people are being guided towards. As a mother, aged 25 with two children, said:

*I went to college and everything before I had my kid and when I came out of ... I still didn't know what I wanted to do and that was three years out of my life really if I'm being honest. I went in and filled out the application form [for a job] but they never asked me for an interview, just said I didn't have the qualifications and I'd been in college for three years; I didn't get anything out of it.*

This is indicative of a wider problem: it is not just youth unemployment figures that should concern policymakers, but also the numbers of young people who are currently doing qualifications that do not prepare them for the labour market. Indeed, as Roberts and Evans argue, “... more than 350,000 young people each year end up with vocational qualifications which have absolutely no value in the labour market. This is the context in which young people are encouraged to raise their educational aspirations and it amounts to a situation where the government is selling a dream but young people end up living a nightmare.”<sup>112</sup>

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112 S. Roberts and S. Evans, “Aspirations’ and imagined futures: The im/possibilities for Britain’s young working class”, in W. Atkinson, S. Roberts and M. Savage, eds, *Class Inequality in Austerity Britain: Power, Difference and Suffering*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 77.

**BOX. 2****BEST PRACTICE: CRAB LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

The proportion of children eligible for free school meals at Crab Lane Primary is well above the average, as over half of all pupils are eligible. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, but there is a small and increasing number of pupils of minority ethnic heritage. Crab Lane Primary School offers an excellent example of how a school can improve to be able to deliver a more equitable and successful education for all its pupils. Key to this is strong leadership, effective teaching, knowledge of the community, rigorous monitoring, cross-agency work, the creation of a secure and attractive place to learn and engagement with parents and carers.

In 2008, Crab Lane Primary was put into special measures<sup>113</sup> following an inspection by Ofsted.<sup>114</sup> The 2008 Ofsted inspection report stated that, “The standards pupils reach by the time they leave school are exceptionally low in all subjects. Pupils in Key Stage 1 underachieve and do not make the progress needed to prepare them adequately for learning in Key Stage 2. This pattern is maintained during Key Stage 2, although girls do a little better than boys, especially in English. Achievement is, therefore, inadequate and pupils are ill-prepared to meet the demands of the secondary curriculum.”<sup>115</sup> Also, the report stated that, “Equality of opportunity for all learners is not effectively promoted as gaps in provision are not identified or addressed adequately.” However, since 2009 this has been turned around and the school is now rated as “good”. The most recent report notes that “Crab Lane is a good school. It is not outstanding because recent initiatives have not had time to impact fully in countering the legacy of significant underachievement. Attainment in English and mathematics are now in line with the national average. Previous weak performance in mathematics has been remedied. Pupils of all levels of ability now make good progress throughout the school.” It continues to state that, while “most children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are low in relation to those expected for their age, children settle in quickly and make good progress. This

<sup>113</sup> Special measures is when a school is judged by Ofsted to fail to supply an acceptable level of education and appears to lack the leadership capacity necessary to secure improvements. A school subject to special measures will have regular short-notice Ofsted inspections to monitor its improvement. The senior managers and teaching staff can be dismissed and the school governors replaced by an appointed executive committee. If poor performance continues, the school may be closed.

<sup>114</sup> The Ofsted inspection is carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 20 lessons involving 14 teachers and listened to a sample of pupils reading. Meetings were held with pupils and staff, parents and carers, members of the governing body and the local authority adviser for the school. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation provided by the school, which included pupils' work, teachers' planning, assessments of pupils' progress and information about safeguarding and child protection. Questionnaire returns from staff and pupils were analysed along with 49 returns from the questionnaires sent out to parents and carers.

<sup>115</sup> Ofsted, Crab Lane Primary School Inspection Report, 2008.

continues through Key Stages 1 and 2.”<sup>116</sup> Pupils enjoy their work and attendance has improved and is now above average.

Pat Adams, the head teacher who arrived at the school to begin this transformation, noted that it is the holistic approach taken by the school to address all elements that contributes to a child’s successful education. However, in terms of identifying the key elements of this, she pointed out that:

*The quality of teaching had to improve, plenty of the systems had to improve, the quality of the curriculum had to improve, extending the leadership roles of key people was necessary, improving the quality of the environment was critical, because the school was a blank canvas, especially outside. So we equipped the outside with playground equipment. We made the building secure, because when I arrived, children felt it was okay to wander out of the classroom if they didn’t like the lesson or they didn’t like the teacher. We created an ethos of this is a good place to be, this is the best place to be if you want to be here, and you want to be part of it, this is how you behave, so we redecorated throughout. We made sure we valued everybody, and the children and the parents knew they were part of that process.*

The 2012 Ofsted report noted that Crab Lane “... has enjoyed a good measure of success in identifying and closing gaps in attainment that existed previously when compared to pupils nationally. Pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable have closed the gap in attainment in relation to their peers, as have pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.” A key means of being able to achieve this are the actions that the school takes in terms of “knowing the children and understanding the community”. (Pat Adams).

This can take a range of different forms and includes the particular importance placed on involving parents in their children’s learning. Ofsted recognised “the positive partnerships ... formed with parents and carers [as a] key strength in driving improvement.”<sup>117</sup> This includes more formal interventions as noted above through the Common Assessment Framework, but also more informal engagement mechanisms, for instance—parents with children in early years invite parents in regularly to show them how to do certain things with their young children, like cooking, and how that enhances learning. Also, as the catering is delivered by the school, the school cook knows which families are struggling and which children might need extra food. The importance of a nutritious diet was commented on by Pat Adams:

<sup>116</sup> Ofsted, Crab Lane Primary School Inspection Report, 2012.

<sup>117</sup> Ofsted, Crab Lane Primary School Inspection Report, 2012.

*Over 50 per cent of the children in our school are entitled to free school meals, so that's a real indicator of poverty. With that knowledge, however, we're able to identify groups of families whose children may come to school without breakfast and we can target those families, provide them with breakfast at no cost to them. Because one of the key indicators to being able to learn is having nutrition, having a decent diet. So we provide for those children really lovely meals at lunchtime. Every child gets a really lovely meal. We look at packed lunches to see what's in those packed lunches and if we don't think they're adequate we'll talk to the parents about them, but we'll also top up with extra fruit, things like that.*

## 5.11 | CONCLUSIONS

Schools alone cannot compensate for social inequality. This report shows the need for more nuanced, structural accounts of working-class educational achievement. This requires further creative interventions that seek to genuinely engage with and value the unique lived experiences of working-class families, whilst also addressing the wider issues that impact on communities. A multi-agency approach to education based on integrated services delivering a holistic package of support throughout all stages of a pupil's development can provide an effective means through which to achieve this.

# 6

## EMPLOYMENT

*“Working class nowadays, you’re struggling anyway.”*  
(Focus group participant, male, 35 years old)



This chapter shows how the changing nature of the labour market has affected white working-class communities in Higher Blackley. Traditional working-class jobs in manufacturing have left the area, and have been replaced predominantly by jobs in the service sector outside the locality, which are largely insecure and low paid. The low-pay, no-pay cycle was a feature of employment in Higher Blackley, but there was a strong work ethic among the people who participated in the research, who were drawn predominantly from those with low-paid jobs, people who had been out of work for differing periods of times, and unemployed lone parents who struggled to find any work.

Blackley has a relatively high proportion of people claiming out-of-work benefits. In May 2013 at the time of the fieldwork for this study, Higher Blackley had a 6 per cent proportion of the resident population aged 16–64 claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, compared with 5.2 per cent for Manchester and 3.5 per cent for Great Britain as a whole.

The employment story of Higher Blackley that the research found was not one of a widespread dependency on benefits, but of a community with a strong work ethic facing economic difficulties as a result of low-paid and insecure work, which shaped people's lives in many different ways.

**TABLE 9. BENEFIT CLAIMANTS MAY 2013<sup>118</sup>**

Higher Blackley DWP benefit claimants May 2013	Blackley (numbers)	Blackley (%)	Manchester (%)	Great Britain (%)
<b>Total claimants</b>	2,210	28.0	19.2	13.9
<b>Job seekers</b>	475	6.0	5.2	3.5
<b>ESA and incapacity benefits</b>	1,075	13.6	8.8	6.2
<b>Lone parents</b>	275	3.5	2.0	1.3
<b>Carers</b>	185	2.3	1.5	1.3
<b>Others on income-related benefits</b>	55	0.7	0.5	0.4
<b>Disabled</b>	135	1.7	1.1	1.2
<b>Bereaved</b>	10	0.1	0.1	0.2
<b>Key out-of-work benefits</b>	1,880	23.8	16.5	11.0

**Source:** NOMIS, DWP benefit claimants, in “Benefit claimants—working-age clients for small areas”, May 2013, at <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/ward/1308629575/report.aspx#ls>

118 NOMIS, DWP benefit claimants, in “Benefit claimants—working-age clients for small areas”, May 2013, at <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/ward/1308629575/report.aspx#ls>.

Higher Blackley provides a pertinent case study of how economic marginalisation of white working-class communities has persisted over the years following the withdrawal of traditional jobs in manufacturing. Higher Blackley had once been full of industry. At its peak in 1961, ICI used to employ 14,000 people. An 85-year-old resident who had lived in Higher Blackley most of his life, recalled that, “It was easy to get a job; there was industry all over the place ...”

As Guardian columnist Aditya Chakraboty points out, “ICI used to maintain one of the biggest industrial research centres in the world [in Higher Blackley]. From here, they developed colour-fast dyes, the anti-malarial drug Paludrine and the first modern mass spectrometer, without which much contemporary lab analysis would be unthinkable. They also gave mankind polyester.”<sup>119</sup>

The legacy of de-industrialisation has continued to have a significant impact on white working-class communities. Indeed, in a symbolic statement that reveals the replacement of manufacturing and industry with the service sector, Sandra, an 80-year-old resident of the area, noted the changes she has observed: “The area has changed in that all the industry is gone ... having had a mill—that’s now a Sainsbury’s.”

There is a Sainsbury’s superstore located in Higher Blackley, which at £5.14 per hour for “juniors” and £6.71 per hour for “adults”, pays below the considered living wage.<sup>120</sup>

Low-paid work was a feature of discussions around employment in the focus groups and contributed towards residents finding living expenses increasingly difficult to meet. Manchester City Council increased the Manchester Minimum Wage to £7.15 in October 2012 and applied this to all staff. In the Family Poverty Strategy, the Council states that,

*As the private sector is the largest employer in the City, MCC and partners need to use any leverage and influence to encourage private sector companies to follow the positive lead set by major public sector organisations in the city in relation to fair wages for their lowest paid employees.*<sup>121</sup>

It is not just the nature of jobs that has changed, but also the location of where most jobs are to be found. Whereas previously there had been employment opportunities in

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119 A. Chakraboty, “How UK wonder substance graphene can’t and won’t benefit UK”, *Guardian* online, 2013, at <http://www.theguardian.com/science/2013/dec/03/graphene-wonder-substance-uk-economy>.

120 This is calculated according to the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) and is based on what members of the public think is enough money to live on, to maintain a socially acceptable quality of life. This work on minimum budgets is based upon increases in living costs and also reflects changes in the tax and benefits systems, which affect both people’s living standards and the earnings required to reach a minimum net income. In April 2013, according to MIS: a single working-age adult needs a budget of £200 per week; a couple with two children need £470; and a lone parent with one child needs £285. See JRF, “Minimum Income Standards”, at <http://www.jrf.org.uk/topic/mis>.

121 Manchester Partnership, “Manchester Family Poverty Strategy”

the area, now people often have to travel to find work. The North Manchester Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) notes that:

*There has been a significant decline in the number of jobs actually based in North Manchester, which reinforces the area's role for the City and the conurbation, as predominantly a strong residential area that supports the growth of the regional economy.*

High growth rates and substantial concentrations of employment in the knowledge-based economy tend to be found mainly in the southern part of Greater Manchester and North Cheshire.<sup>122</sup> Therefore, there is distance to be travelled from the growth sectors in the economy, both in terms of the more highly skilled work that is available, and also in terms of location.

The SRF notes that north Manchester “has the capacity to create new jobs, but it is also essential that residents are supported to connect to employment opportunities throughout the Greater Manchester [area].”<sup>123</sup> Higher Blackley is well connected in terms of transport routes and the plan for the area and connecting residents with opportunities is based on both high-quality public transport in the form of the Metrolink network, bus and rail, as well as digital connectivity such as superfast broadband.

## 6.1 | CHANGING LABOUR MARKETS: THE LOW-PAY, NO-PAY CYCLE

It is possible to trace much of the marginalisation experienced by working-class communities to this shift in production away from manufacturing and towards service industries. According to local resident and Manchester city councillor, Bernard Priest, “... a lot of white working-class communities feel neglected, particularly in north Manchester, where the last 50 years have been one of declining opportunities for employment, declining status.”

Young people in Higher Blackley leaving school now have many difficulties in successfully entering the labour market. This was reflected by a boy, 15 years old, who said that:

*for one job there's like a million people applying for it, you've got more of a chance winning the lottery.”*

The labour market has developed into an “hour-glass” economy in which there is a lack of jobs that are based on intermediate level skills, and a significant gap between

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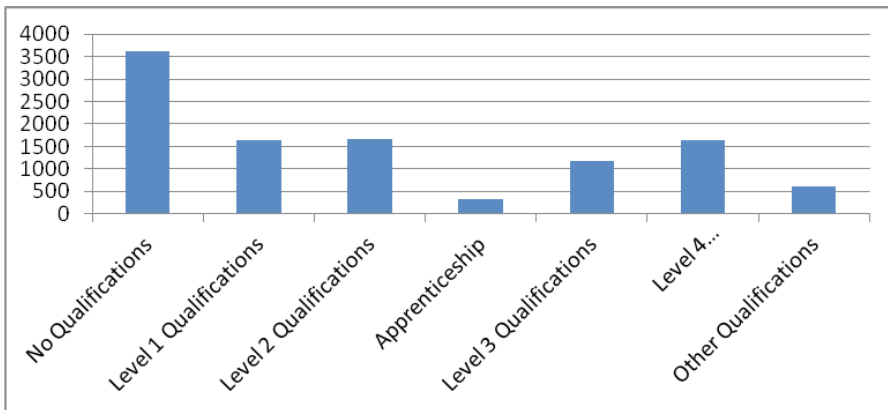
122 Manchester Independent Economic Review, 2009, p. 8, at <http://www.manchester-review.org.uk/projects/view/?id=722>.

123 MCC, “North Manchester SRF”.

low-skilled, low-wage jobs and the so-called knowledge economy that Manchester bases its economic growth on.<sup>124</sup> As noted above, unemployment is relatively high in Blackley, and there is a high proportion of people who work in the service industries, often in low-paid work.

The Greater Manchester Strategy and the Manchester Independent Economic Review (MIER)<sup>125</sup> identified the key causes of Greater Manchester’s underperformance in terms of productivity as low levels of economic activity and a weak skills base.<sup>126</sup> As the graph based on the 2011 Census in Figure 16 shows, there is a real skills gap within the Higher Blackley community. Almost 50 per cent of residents lack skills above Level 1.

**FIGURE 16. LEVELS OF QUALIFICATIONS FOR HIGHER BLACKLEY RESIDENTS**



**Source:** Office of National Statistics, “2011 Census”

Low qualification levels means that the residents are more likely to be employed within the bottom half of the labour market, which feeds into poor job and pay progression for those in work. This also has wider economic implications for the economic performance of Greater Manchester, as the Manchester Independent Economic Review asserted that skills already account for around three-quarters of the gap in productivity between Greater Manchester and the south-east of England, and forecasts suggest that by 2020 half of all job opportunities will require Level 3 or more advanced skills.<sup>127</sup>

Sir Richard Leese noted that:

124 Resolution Foundation, “Gaining from growth”.

125 The Manchester Independent Economic Review (MIER) consisted of a Commission of prominent economists and business leaders, supported by a Policy Advisory Group and Secretariat, with responsibility for commissioning high-quality evidence-based research to inform decision-makers in Manchester.

126 AGMA, “Greater Manchester Early Years Business Case”, p. 7.

127 AGMA, “Greater Manchester City Deal”.

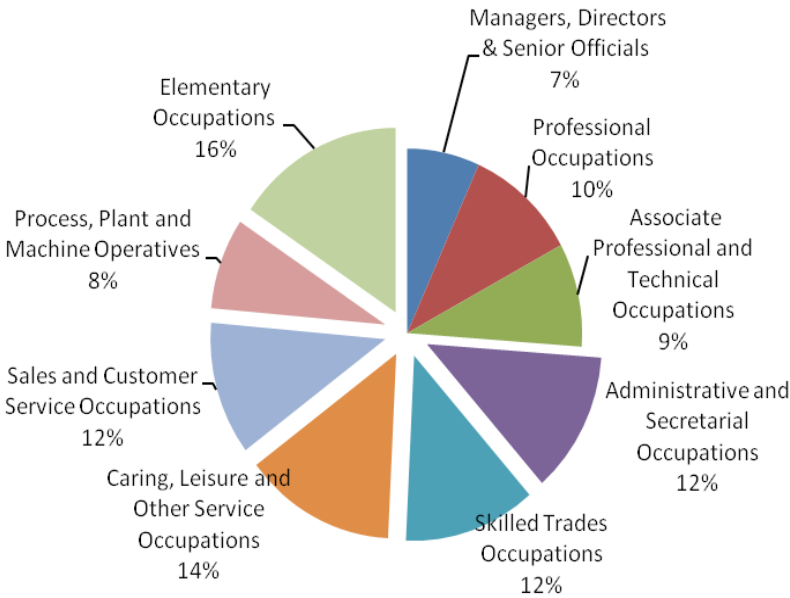
*At the moment we have difficulty filling the apprenticeships which are available in the city ... it's not that they're not there.*

There are plans in the City Deal to create effective alignment of the skills system with economic opportunities. In addition to the skills partnership, Greater Manchester also has unique status as a pilot for Community Budgets, which brings together all the major statutory sector organisations in Greater Manchester to deliver more coordinated public services to ultimately create jobs, reduce dependency on social security, and save money. There are plans to integrate this into the City Deal, which is focused on ensuring economic growth.

*Skills and employment policies, in addition to driving our labour market will, working with and helping to deliver the community budget, help us make a step change in labour market participation, driving down welfare dependency.<sup>128</sup>*

The relatively low skills base of Higher Blackley residents is reflected in the jobs people have—caring, sales and customer services and elementary work accounts for nearly 40 per cent of the residents, which means there is a disproportionate number of people in low-paid and largely insecure employment.

**FIGURE 17. OCCUPATIONS OF HIGHER BLACKLEY RESIDENTS AGED 16–75 IN EMPLOYMENT**



**Source:** Office of National Statistics, “2011 Census”

People on low to middle incomes are much more vulnerable to a weaker labour market.<sup>129</sup> The sectors in which Higher Blackley residents are employed reveal that there are higher than average proportions in these particular sectors of the labour market.<sup>130</sup> This fits the profile of low-wage jobs, which have become increasingly precarious following the recession.

There is a difficult labour market, with a significant number of jobs in sectors that are low paid and insecure, and this results in people feeling under pressure, as one woman who worked in caring said: “I literally think that it’s all people who are working who are feeling the squeeze” (Woman, 29 years old).

In the north-west region of England, the median hourly pay for the bottom decile of earners is extremely low. The occupations of residents in Higher Blackley are predominantly based in those sectors that are notable in terms of low pay, and nearly 74 per cent of all residents work in sectors where the bottom decile hourly pay is below the living wage, meaning a large proportion are vulnerable to low pay.

**FIGURE 18. BOTTOM DECILE HOURLY PAY BY OCCUPATION IN THE NORTH-WEST (APRIL 2013)**



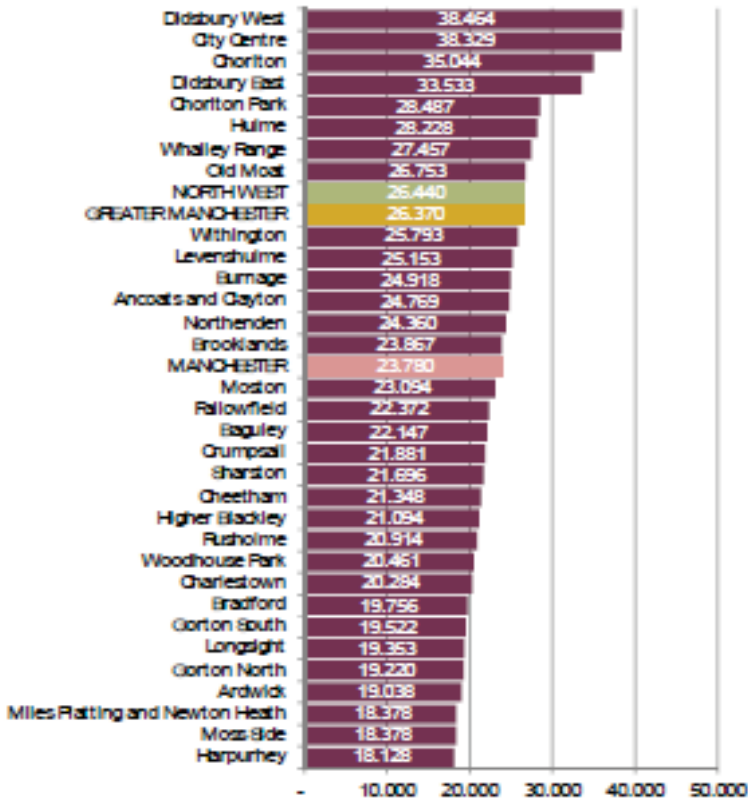
**Source:** Office of National Statistics, (2014) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

Low pay is clearly an issue that affects Higher Blackley. The median wage for Manchester is £23,780, and for Higher Blackley it is £21,094.<sup>131</sup> This is by no means the lowest in the city, although it is below the city average and is significantly below the Greater Manchester average.

129 Resolution Foundation, “Gaining from growth”, p. 19.

130 Manchester City Council, “Higher Blackley ward profile 2011/12”.

131 Manchester City Council, Economy Scrutiny Committee—16 October 2013. Subject: “Affordable credit: Manchester—A financially inclusive city”.

**FIGURE 19. MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOMES BY WARD**

Source: CACI Paycheck, 2013

As explained above, the ward has significant pockets of deprivation and low pay, and the graph in Figure 19 does not show the whole picture of low pay within particular areas of Higher Blackley. The interviews from research participants identify the need for government's stated ambition of making work pay to recognise the impacts of low pay:

*My brother works nights like nine hours a day and he's still struggling with his money. And he's got a job. And he's still struggling to live. And he's got a full-time job. (Woman, 22 years old)*

These findings reflect the fact that there has been considerable stagnation in living standards for working-class people, driven in large part by the low levels of wages paid.

*If you go back 20 years, working class didn't need any benefits ... whereas now you need them. (Male, 31 years old)*

As this participant noted, in the past low pay was compensated in part by the development of the Tax Credit system. It had a significant impact on the income of the lowest paid—particularly families with children—accounting for an estimated 40 per cent of the increase in average net household income over the period 2002/2003 to 2008/2009. It has been estimated that, without Tax Credits, those on low to middle incomes would have seen a fall in real income between 2002/2003 and 2008/2009).<sup>132</sup>

Work is becoming less well paid and more precarious.

*I think a lot of the problem is that there are too many people chasing a lot of the same jobs. A lot of the jobs now are done through agencies,. I mean at one time if you applied for a job, you could get it. But now it's done through an agency ... some people don't get much wages anyway when they do it. Because I think the problem is that if people get a position, whatever employment it is, and they get so many hours, they can cope with that. But if they say no full time, they've got to come off their benefits, once they come off their benefits they've got a helluva job getting back on them again. Because sometimes, when you get a contract, it's on a temporary basis. If you don't take it, they stop it. (Woman, 22 years old)*

Tracy Shildrick and colleagues have defined this dynamic explained by the participant as the “low-pay, no-pay cycle”, which they describe as a “longitudinal pattern of employment instability and movement between low-paid jobs and unemployment, usually accompanied by the claiming of welfare benefits.”<sup>133</sup> This causes great insecurity, as the jobs that are available often do not pay enough to secure a socially acceptable standard of living and people alternate between poverty and having an income just above the poverty line. This does not create a secure life for people. For participants in the Open Society Foundations’ research, the prevalence of low-paid jobs is becoming an increasingly desperate issue, as at the same time, the costs of living are rising.

*The wages are crap. Absolutely pants. I'm a qualified joiner ... When I first started as a joiner it was 15–20 quid an hour. Now you're lucky if you can get 6. (Man, 32 years old)*

*I love my job but it doesn't pay enough. (Man, 33 years old)*

*Me and my wife both work, both working class but we're skint. (Man, 29 years old)*

*Because everything's going up, but money that you earn is not going up. (Woman, 41 years old)*

132 J. Holden and L. Raikes, “Pay up? Living costs and the living wage in Manchester”, 2012, p. 12, at [http://neweconomymanchester.com/stories/1656-revealed\\_the\\_true\\_cost\\_of\\_living\\_in\\_manchester\\_p.12](http://neweconomymanchester.com/stories/1656-revealed_the_true_cost_of_living_in_manchester_p.12).

133 Shildrick et al., *Poverty and Insecurity*, p. 18.



Zero-hours contracts are a particularly insecure form of work in which there are no guaranteed hours and no continuous paid work periods. Over recent years, the use of zero-hours contracts has risen dramatically, and according to the Office for National Statistics the number of people employed on zero-hours contracts rose from 134,000 in 2006 to 208,000 in 2012.<sup>134</sup> There are also reasons to believe that these headline figures are a substantial underestimate of the true scale, which could be closer to a million.<sup>135</sup>

Workplaces that utilise zero-hours contracts have a higher proportion of staff on low pay. Those employed on zero-hours contracts also work fewer hours and so have less weekly income.<sup>136</sup> The sectors in which zero-hours contracts are prevalent—health and social care, hospitality, administration and retail—are all sectors in which Higher Blackley residents are employed at a high rate.

## 6.2 | BARRIERS TO THE LABOUR MARKET FOR WOMEN

As mentioned in the section on families, the shift in the labour market away from manufacturing and to more jobs based in services has seen more women enter the job market. This is a major social change, and the Resolution Foundation argues that, “women’s work and part-time work are now central to living standards.”<sup>137</sup> The key barrier for female employment seems to be the affordability and availability of childcare, especially for mothers with low education and low income.<sup>138</sup> The barriers that exist for women with caring responsibilities were discussed in a focus group with some mothers, for example the lack of availability of suitable work which fitted around caring for children:

*It’s just that there’s not that many jobs out there that we’d want to do. Like, if she were in school that would be 9–3 wouldn’t it? There’s not many jobs with those hours. (Woman, 38 years old)*

Furthermore, it is not simply the availability of flexible work and the provision of childcare that impacts on women with caring responsibilities, but also the location of the work.

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<sup>134</sup> Resolution Foundation, “A matter of time The rise of zero-hours contracts”, 2012, at [http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/media/media/downloads/A\\_Matter\\_of\\_Time\\_-\\_The\\_rise\\_of\\_zero-hours\\_contracts\\_final\\_1.pdf](http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/media/media/downloads/A_Matter_of_Time_-_The_rise_of_zero-hours_contracts_final_1.pdf).

<sup>135</sup> CIPD, “Zero-hours contracts: Myth and reality”, 2013, at [http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/6395%20Zero-Hours%20\(WEB\).pdf](http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/6395%20Zero-Hours%20(WEB).pdf).

<sup>136</sup> Parliamentary Debate, 9 July 2013, at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm130709/halltext/130709h0002.htm>.

<sup>137</sup> Resolution Foundation, “Gaining from growth”, p. 62.

<sup>138</sup> Forecasts produced by the Social Market Foundation (SMF) suggest that low-income families will contribute 62 per cent more for childcare costs (£600 annually in real terms) in 2015/2016 compared with 2006/2007. See Shorthouse et al., *A Better Beginning*.

*People want jobs locally, especially if you've got children. I mean, you could get a call anytime from school saying can you come and pick your child up they've been sick. If you're in employment you don't want to work an hour and a half away. I mean, that's what they're saying to people now. You can do a 90-minute journey to get a job ... you've got to take that job because that's what they're saying ... That's very difficult to get back to your children if they need you back at their school straight away.*

A key aspect of the government's welfare reform, Universal Credit, is designed to make work pay. However, the discussion in the focus group with participants raises questions about the security that is provided by low-paid work:

*When you've got a job it's all the bills. Your rent and that all, that's when you start losing your house and all that ... You've got your childcare and your worries about everything else, you've got your worries about your bills. (Woman, 26 years old)*

This reveals a sense that even though the levels of benefits meant people were struggling, and they would like to work to better provide for their families, the insecure nature of work could be less appealing than the relative regularity of social security that meant at least people were secure in their homes.

## 6.3 | WOMEN AND LOW PAY

Women earn considerably less than men in the constituency of Blackley and Broughton. In terms of median hourly pay, there is a gender pay gap of £1.63 an hour, which is a gap of 16.5 per cent. With regard to the median weekly pay difference of £95.10 per week, on average women earn 73 per cent of what men do in the area.<sup>139</sup>

There is a clear gendered element to low pay. Women are disproportionately represented in part-time work. As Fran Bennett points out: “workers who are female, part-time on temporary or casual contracts and working in the private sector are at greater risk of low-paid work.”<sup>140</sup> When women are employed, they remain subject to the gender pay gap and are disproportionately employed in insecure work, leaving them “economically isolated and vulnerable to low wages, sporadic employment and segregation into stereotypical ‘women’s roles’.”<sup>141</sup>

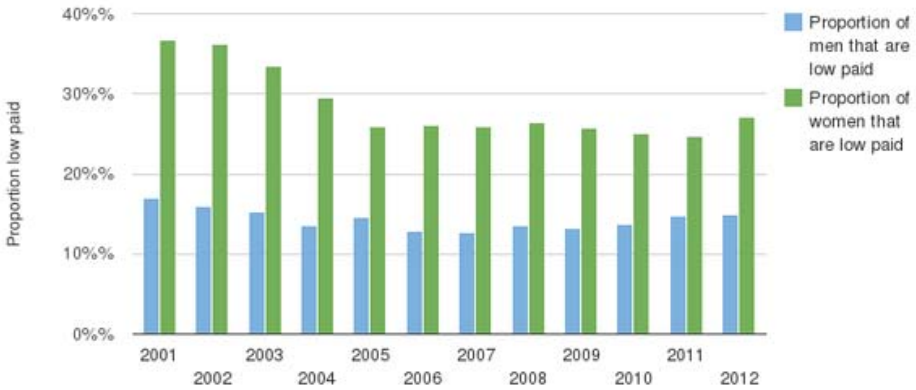
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<sup>139</sup> Office of National Statistics, “Annual survey of hours and earnings 2013”, at <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ashes/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings/2013-provisional-results/stb-ashes-statistical-bulletin-2013.html>.

<sup>140</sup> Fran Bennett, (2013) The ‘living wage’, low pay and in work poverty: Rethinking the relationships *Critical Social Policy*.

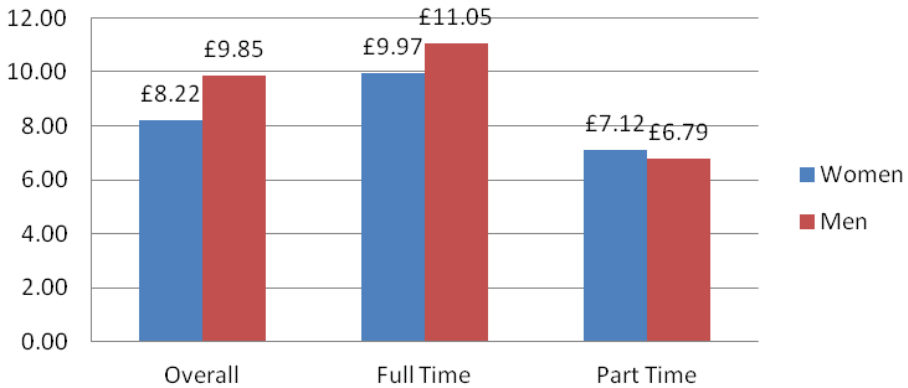
<sup>141</sup> Katherine Trebeck & Stuart Francis (2013), *Our Economy: Towards a new prosperity*. Available from <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/our-economy-towards-a-new-prosperity-294239>, p. 21.

**FIGURE 20. PROPORTION OF OVER-21S WHO ARE LOW PAID OVER TIME**



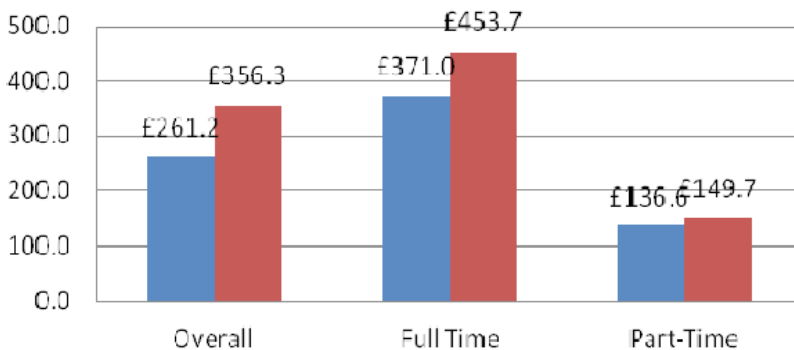
Source: JRF Data (online), “Proportion of over 21s that are low paid over time”, 2012, at <http://data.jrf.org.uk/data/low-pay-over-time>

**FIGURE 21. MEDIAN HOURLY PAY IN THE BLACKLEY AND BROUGHTON CONSTITUENCY**



Source: Office of National Statistics, (2014) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

**FIGURE 22. MEDIAN WEEKLY EARNINGS IN THE BLACKLEY AND BROUGHTON CONSTITUENCY**



**Source:** Office of National Statistics, (2014) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

This can be explained by a number of factors. There are labour market penalties for women as a result of their being the main carer for children, whereby they lose out on promotions, training opportunities and job progression more generally. Added to this, women are often faced with negative attitudes, discrimination and even dismissal in the workplace because of their roles, actual or potential, as mothers and carers.<sup>142</sup>

As women in the United Kingdom are still responsible for the bulk of unpaid care for children and elderly relatives, many women require part-time positions in order to balance work with their caring commitments.<sup>143</sup> In the north-west of England, consistent with national trends, almost three-quarters (73 per cent) of part-time workers are women.<sup>144</sup> The gap between the average hourly earnings of men in full-time work and workers in part-time work in Blackley and Broughton is £3.93 per hour.

The Open Society research also picked up on gender differences in the journey to work and the return to commuting, which can cause occupational bias.<sup>145</sup> As a mother of two, aged 25, said:

<sup>142</sup> Fawcett Society website, “Campaigns: Equal pay”, at <http://fawcettsociety.org.uk/equal-pay/#sthash.zWSW7Bto.dpuf> (hereafter, Fawcett Society, “Campaigns”).

<sup>143</sup> Fawcett Society, “Campaigns”.

<sup>144</sup> Office of National Statistics, “Regional labour market: H102—Headline indicators for the north-west, January 2014”, 2014, at <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/taxonomy/index.html?nscl=Average+Hours#tab-data-tables>.

<sup>145</sup> B.S. Burnell, “Some reflections on the spatial dimensions of occupational segregation”, *Feminist Economics* 3(3) (1997), pp. 69–86.

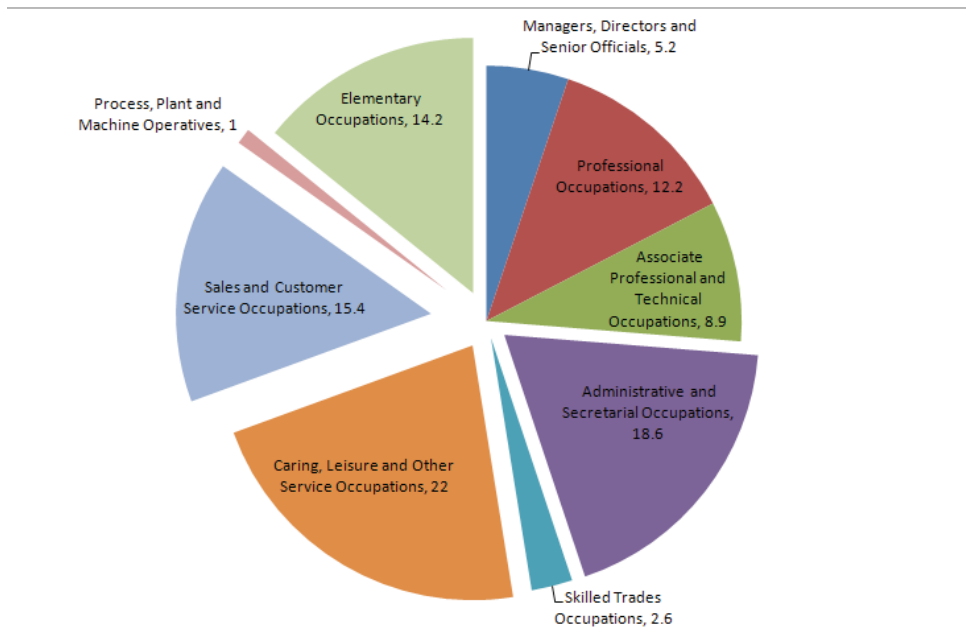
*Men can just go out and get a job, can't they? We've got to be at home with the kids ... they can travel as far as they want. They don't have a problem going to town to find a job and they don't have to wait around for school for the kids ...*

This is of particular note for residents in Higher Blackley, as local work is predominantly in low-paid sectors such as care and retail, with the better paid jobs tending to be either in the city centre, or in the south of the city. A female research participant, aged 45, was keen to find work, but her main priority was the care of her children and ensuring that she was always available, while also feeling that childcare costs would mean that it would not be worth working:

*I'd go to the school, me, to do like cleaning or be the dinner lady or something like that ... Then when the kids are off, I'd be off too.*

This occupational gender bias is evident in Higher Blackley, with women disproportionately working in sectors where they are particularly vulnerable to low pay, such as caring, retail and elementary positions. This suggests that measures to address low pay should pay particular regard to gender.

**FIGURE 23. EMPLOYMENT SECTOR FOR WOMEN IN HIGHER BLACKLEY**



Source: Office of National Statistics, "2011 Census"

## 6.4 | RISING COSTS OF LIVING

Low pay has become an even more urgent issue because the rising costs of basic items such as food are inflating much faster than average living costs, while wages have hardly risen at all.<sup>146</sup>

A woman, aged 81, commented on the cost of inflation: “you need a mortgage now for a piece of fish.”

The rising cost of living affects both those who are unemployed and those who are working:

*It affects people who work as well. Both me and my partner work, he works full time and I work part-time and always have but we've seen a massive input in this that the cost of living has gone up so much that it is difficult ... The cost of living seems to be going up every week. (Woman, 39 years old)*

In the experience of many research participants, since 2009 a combination of stagnant wages, high inflation and reduced hours worked has resulted in a dramatic reduction in real pay for the lowest paid in Manchester, even when there are jobs available. The fear among many participants is that even when growth returns to Manchester, without increased pay many residents will not benefit, and their living standards will not reach the levels that existed prior to the recession. Indeed, for many communities, there did not appear to be much positive change even during the years of economic boom.

*There is just no work at all. When all the building work was going on in Manchester there was thousands of jobs going. But you just couldn't get them. Because of the influx of people they were bringing in was multiplied ... Some local people did (get jobs), like my wife did, she was working there feeding them up in the canteens and stuff. But it was German, Dutch, Kosovan, every sort of people came to do the jobs that local people could have done. To bring more money into the area but they just contracted it all out. It's absolute madness. (Man, aged 29)*

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<sup>146</sup> Research by the JRF shows that costs have been rising fast, especially for working families, who have seen childcare fees increase by over a third. The cost of a Minimum Income Standard (MIS) [basket of essential goods and services that the public define as necessary to have an adequate standard of living has become a quarter more expensive. See D. Hirsch, “The worst five years for struggling families”, 2013, at <http://www.jrf.org.uk/blog/2013/06/worst-five-years-struggling-families>.

## 6.5 | ATTITUDES TO WORK

The research suggests that the economic marginalisation of white working-class communities might continue if there are no reforms of the demand side of the labour market. The North Manchester Strategic Regeneration Framework focuses more on supply side issues, as opposed to issues of production and the nature of the labour market, outlining how:

*the educational and employment/skills development infrastructure, supported by a wider holistic family approach, needs to be harnessed to ensure that residents who are both out of and in work, are able to connect and remain in the jobs market, and can achieve the higher levels skills that growth sector employers are looking for.*

There is concern among the council about the behaviours of people looking for work. Sir Richard Leese, leader of Manchester City Council, noted that:

*This is a real sort of cultural issue in areas like Higher Blackley ... some, but not all, because if you look at Higher Blackley, most of the people work and are on a reasonable level of income, and so on, it's not a particularly high unemployment area, but you will have some people and not insignificant numbers, one of the things they have to do is take responsibility for their own lives, and not expect that somebody else is going to do something else for them ... an example of a very big employer in Higher Blackley is Sainsbury's ... they want people who work flexible hours and so on, but require people with a reasonable level of personal skills, ability to turn up on time, appearance and so on, that's kind of the individual's responsibility.*

Shildrick and co-workers note the tendency of public policy to focus on the “deficits of job-seekers and not the deficit of jobs”.<sup>147</sup> They argue that such an approach leads to poverty and unemployment being re-cast as a social and not an economic phenomenon, in which “cultures of poverty” are to blame. As discussed in previous sections, there are clearly some people who are a long way from the labour market and have complex needs. However, this research found a strong work ethic among the people who participated in the research.

The focus group discussion with local residents has found that the notion of work is deeply ingrained in working-class identity. A woman, aged 25, summed up what many people felt, saying that to be working class means:

*paying your way ... I'd rather go and work than sit at home on my backside. It's boring. And I've always worked.*

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<sup>147</sup> Shildrick et al., *Poverty and Insecurity*, p. 77.

Indeed, work was seen by many participants to have considerable value beyond the impact on living standards. A single mother aged 23, declared that:

*I was told by the Job Centre if I work I will get less money than what I get if I'm on benefits, [but I would rather work] because I don't want my children to see their parent sitting at home. I want them to know that I'm coming to work for them. It might be harder, but that's going to give them a kick up the backside when they are older, because they will say, well, my mum worked so I'm gonna work too.*

In fact, the research found strong evidence to correct many of the dominant stereotypes that exist in society and that are perpetuated by the media. The idea that people enjoy living a life on benefits and make this a conscious lifestyle choice is not one that emerged from the interviews. This frustration with the representation of those who receive benefits was articulated by a mother of six, aged 45:

*It's not a life of luxury being on the social. You get fed up, as well you know. You just live day by day. Everybody wants to work.*

A 15 years old boy, also shared this desire not to live on benefits:

*When I'm older I want to get a job, I don't want to be on benefits and stay in the house. You need to do something to the area ... If they could bring people into Blackley instead of building Tesco's or Sainsbury's or a golf course where no one goes, if you make something that brings people in, you put money into your area and get more people to bring money in.*

The prime focus of government programmes relating to “supply-side” issues, such as improving people’s employability and overcoming “barriers” to employment, tends to be on individual characteristics and it largely ignores the impact of de-industrialisation, recession and rising unemployment and under-employment, as well as particular barriers for women and lone parents. There are implications in terms of policy that Nik Theodore identifies, including a

*shift in focus of policy analysis from demand-side concerns of job availability and job quality to supply side issues of worker motivation and attitudes; to individualise problems of economic hardship, defining long-term poverty as the result of personal failings rather than as a condition borne of societal or macroeconomic forces; and to call into question governmental action aimed at improving the economic position of the poor in favour of strengthening market mechanisms for determining opportunities and rewards.<sup>148</sup>*

<sup>148</sup> N. Theodore, “Urban underclass: The wayward travels of a chaotic concept”, *Urban Geography* 31, (2) (2010), p. 172 (hereafter, Theodore, “Urban underclass”).



The Greater Manchester City Deal provides a more nuanced understanding which sets the priorities to drive growth through both supply-side and demand-side action. For instance, Manchester will invest £4 million to incentivise small and medium-sized enterprises to recruit apprentices and young people who are currently not in employment, enterprise or training. The strategy, supported by both the Combined Authority and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), “recognises the need to create new jobs in the economy and increase productivity through raising the skills of our workforce and reducing dependency on the state.”<sup>149</sup>

There is a clear need to improve the skills of residents in Higher Blackley, but there should also be a focus on the types of jobs that are available and the levels of pay for these jobs, as well as the barriers that exist for people.

## 6.6 | FINDING WORK

Job Centre Plus is part of the Department of Work and Pensions, and it is responsible for face-to-face interaction with people who are out of work. It provides regular face-to-face contact to ensure that benefits are paid correctly and customers supported where appropriate and, in particular, so that customers who are identified as being vulnerable and who may have more complex needs are given additional help and support in understanding and accessing services.<sup>150</sup>

Among interviewees for the Open Society Foundations’ research, Job Centre Plus was consistently seen to be stigmatising and not very useful in finding people work:

*They make you feel very small by the time they've finished with you, and in the end, I found my own job because going in there was just a waste of time.*  
(Woman, 25 years old)

There is some feeling that the Job Centre staff are discriminatory in their approach towards people from white working-class communities, and that they are influenced by the rhetoric that exists, considering people to be scroungers:

*The Job Centre—you got absolutely interrogated, asking all sorts of questions, this that the other, I stopped going for it in the end. It's unbelievable the way they speak to you at the Job Centre, as if it's your fault you're out of work ...* (Woman, 38 years old)

For some participants, social networks are more important than the Job Centre in terms of being able to find employment:

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<sup>149</sup> AGMA, “Greater Manchester City Deal”.

<sup>150</sup> D. Duffy et al., “Accessing Job Centre Plus customer services: A qualitative study”, 2010, at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/214421/rrep651.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214421/rrep651.pdf) (hereafter, Duffy et al., “Accessing Job Centre Plus”).

*They're useless; I've never had a job through the Job Centre. No, I've had one, I've had one, actually. I've had one job through the Job Centre; I was on something called the Work Trial. It was just after my accident, so I wasn't really ready to go back to work anyway. And it was called the Work Trial, and they said you have to work two weeks just getting your benefits and after that you get paid. I was there for three months before I actually got paid off them, and that's the only job I've ever had in 30 years off the Job Centre. Every other job I've got I've just gone out and got it myself, just off people I know.*

Research by the JRF found that social networks tended to be “like-with-like”, so while they were used to access employment, this was often into low-paid jobs that relied on informal recruitment processes.<sup>151</sup> This suggests that while the strong social networks in Higher Blackley can provide access into employment, it is only likely to be into the type of jobs that have been highlighted above: poorly paid and insecure.

With the recent welfare reforms, there has been an increasing use of sanctions, designed to create a “stick” to incentivise people to work within the low wage sector of the labour market. However, this neglects individual factors that can affect people’s ability to work, as well as the labour market that is difficult to enter and even more difficult for white working-class communities to be able to find a secure and well-paid job. DWP research on customer experiences found that Job Centre staff were often insufficiently trained to identify any but the most obvious cases, and that staff were not sufficiently trained to deliver a service to all vulnerable customers.<sup>152</sup>

A woman, aged 21, commented that sanctions connected to welfare reforms are becoming increasingly harsh:

*My mum she's 48 now and they're sending her on courses and all that. And she's not well, she has panic attacks and stuff like that. They stopped her money and all that ...*

## 6.7 | CONCLUSIONS

Much of the social insecurity identified in the report is connected back to the existing economic model in the UK, which has created a cycle among working-class communities in which they are either on low pay or they are unemployed and relying on benefits to survive, which are being reduced in real terms. As the costs of living are continually increasing, this provides a real crisis of social insecurity that requires addressing through a transformative policy.

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151 A. McCabe et al., “Making the links: Poverty, ethnicity and social networks”, 2013, at [http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-ethnicity-social-networks-full\\_o.pdf](http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-ethnicity-social-networks-full_o.pdf).

152 Duffy et al., “Accessing Job Centre Plus”, p. 11.



# HOUSING

This chapter shows how Higher Blackley has a high proportion of people who live in social housing. This means that the often seen tension over the allocation of social housing in the light of immigration is a major issue in the area. While people's perceptions of how housing is allocated do not always fit with the realities of existing policy, the shortage of available houses and the strong importance placed on keeping family and community networks together within a local area means that such issues are more emotive. Higher Blackley is not seen as an area that has considerable problems in terms of private sector housing; however, the research found several instances of residents reporting significant problems. The former aspiration of working-class families to own their own homes was now seen as being out of reach for many families. Housing was also probably one of the most resonant issues, as Shelter point out:

*[a] home is more than just a roof over your head. Housing is an issue that affects every one of us. We all know how important having a decent home is. From our health and emotional well-being, to our achievement in education and our ability to get work, where we live has an enormous impact on our lives. A home is a place that provides security, privacy, decent living conditions, and links to a community.*<sup>153</sup>

Manchester is similar to the rest of the country in that there is a chronically greater demand for housing than there is supply. In Higher Blackley the security previously provided by social housing and the opportunity to be able to live close to family was felt to have been undermined. Housing was an issue that came up in every focus group. In terms of feelings of growing social insecurity, where families live—their home—is perhaps the area that is most keenly felt.

The allocation of scarce social housing was raised in the focus groups as a source of tension. There was a perception among some participants that families were being split up, which was seen to be affecting people's social networks of support that they have come to rely on. The tensions around housing indicate how social insecurity and public anxieties can affect people's perceptions, since the existing policies for the allocation of housing (based on need and the recognition of local connections) seem in fact to reflect what most people recognised as reasonable. The critical issue is that there is a shortage of housing, which means that those with the most pressing need get housed first before these factors come into play.

Welfare reform in the form of the so-called bedroom tax and Universal Credit create further insecurity, both for residents and housing providers. The "bedroom tax" can affect the housing benefit that people receive, reducing it by 14 per cent for one bedroom, and 25 per cent for two. The proposed direct monthly payments of Universal Credit make people worried about their finances. Both these factors may mean an increase in tenants' arrears, which means less revenue for the housing providers

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153 Shelter, "The housing crisis", at [http://england.shelter.org.uk/campaigns/why\\_we\\_campaign/the\\_housing\\_crisis](http://england.shelter.org.uk/campaigns/why_we_campaign/the_housing_crisis).

and also the potential eviction of tenants. The private rented sector was not seen to provide the security that people desire, and there seemed to be a reluctance for people to buy their own properties.

There is an extremely high proportion of people living in socially rented housing in Higher Blackley. Households that are socially rented from the council (through the Arms Length-Management Organisation, Northwards Housing) account for 30.1 per cent of all households. This is in comparison to the city average of 13.5 per cent and 7.7 per cent for England. In addition to this, there are also registered social landlords, which take the total of social renting in Higher Blackley to 39.9 per cent of the housing market. It is not surprising that social housing was a major issue for people throughout our research.

The proportion of owner-occupied households is higher than the city average, and many of these are actually owned outright—as many as 20 per cent. Private rented levels are currently below the levels for the city. However, as Alex Marsh argues, it is no longer possible to consider social housing in isolation, as there is increased interaction between the social housing system and the bottom end of the private rented sector.<sup>154</sup> Participants discussed the impact of private sector renting on the community, which is addressed later in the chapter.

**FIGURE 24. HOUSING TENURE IN HIGHER BLACKLEY**



Source: Office of National Statistics 2011 Census

154 Alex Marsh et al., (2000) Housing Deprivation and Health: A Longitudinal Analysis, *Housing Studies*, 15 (3) pp. 411–428.

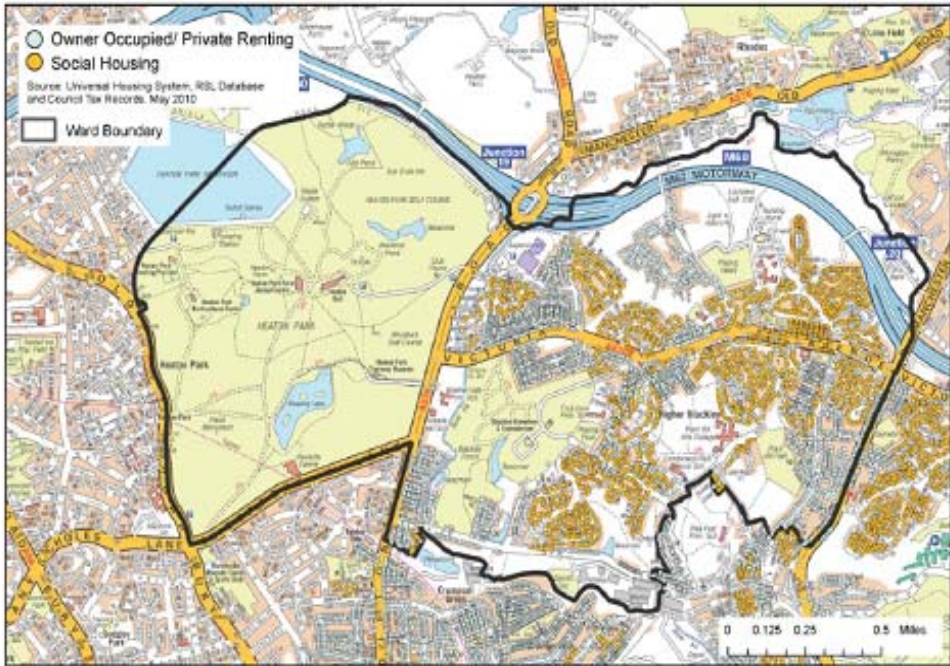
**TABLE 10. HOUSING TENURE**

Variable	Measure	Higher Blackley	Manchester (Metropolitan District)	North-west	England
All households (households)	Count	6,063	204,969	3,009,549	22,063,368
Owned; owned outright (households)	Count	1,214	31,145	934,101	6,745,584
Owned; owned outright (households)	%	20.0	15.2	31.0	30.6
Owned; owned with a mortgage or loan (households)	Count	1,507	46,250	1,007,463	7,229,440
Owned; owned with a mortgage or Loan (households)	%	24.9	22.6	33.5	32.8
Shared ownership (part owned and part rented) (households)	Count	31.0	1,481	15,787	173,760
Shared ownership (part owned and part rented) (households)	%	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.8
Social rented; rented from council (local authority) (households)	Count	1,827	27,585	231,730	2,079,778
Social rented; rented from council (local authority) (households)	%	30.1	13.5	7.7	9.4
Social rented; other (households)	Count	597	37,097	318,751	1,823,772
Social rented; other (households)	%	9.8	18.1	10.6	8.3
Private rented; private landlord or letting agency (Households)	Count	737	55,043	424,667	3,401,675
Private rented; private landlord or letting agency (households)	%	12.2	26.9	14.1	15.4
Private rented; other (households)	Count	67.0	3,127	38,232	314,249
Private rented; other (households)	%	1.1	1.5	1.3	1.4
Living rent free (households)	Count	83.0	3,241	38,818	295,110
Living rent free (households)	%	1.4	1.6	1.3	1.3

Source: Office of National Statistics 2011 Census

The geographical spread of this housing mix shows significant concentrations of social housing in three main estates in the ward. Webster argues that white council estates are stigmatised “as places of political and physical neglect, low incomes, high welfare dependency, poor job prospects and low educational attainment.”<sup>155</sup>

**FIGURE 25. HOUSING TENURE IN HIGHER BLACKLEY, 2010**



**Source:** Higher Blackley ward profile 2011/12, from Housing Information Unit and Council Tax data

The stigmatisation of white council estates often results in policy that aims to break up “concentrated poverty”, increase home ownership and reduce the availability of social housing in a particular area.<sup>156</sup> Such analyses characterise estates as places that produce marginalisation, but they do not problematise the inequality that creates such places in the first place.<sup>157</sup> There are certainly more risk factors that affect people living in such areas, including a difficult labour market, the lack of a basic income, the police force that may stigmatise residents, increased crime and worse health outcomes, as well as less accessible social amenities. However, it could be argued that these are not created by the estate, but rather by structural factors in the economy and the concentration of people on low incomes within particular areas. A concentration of social housing is often seen as the problem—the Higher Blackley East Regeneration

155 C. Webster, “Marginalised white ethnicity and crime”, *Theoretical Criminology* 12(3) (2008), p. 304.

156 T. Slater, “The eviction of critical perspectives”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 30(4) (2006), p. 749.

157 Theodore, “Urban underclass”, p. 169.

plan identified “high levels of social housing tenure” as a weakness in an analysis of the area.<sup>158</sup>

This undermines the benefits created by the provision of social housing.<sup>159</sup> There can be a policy assumption that most people want to leave these areas, although this is not the case in Higher Blackley—a factor that is recognised by Northwards Housing. While some policymakers assume too much social housing in an area is problematic, many of the residents who participated in this research think otherwise.

It was felt by several participants that local contexts and the experiences of people living on the estates are often neglected, and this is supported by research by Steve Garner on white working-class neighbourhoods.<sup>160</sup> Residents’ attachment to Higher Blackley was strong, as has been detailed above. Therefore, when people’s most accessible means of being able to reside in the area is social housing, it is not surprising that the allocation of social housing was a highly prominent issue of discussion. A major issue was around the reduced availability of social housing for families that had grown up in the area. The way that this was allocated was felt to be breaking up families and important community bonds, which as we highlighted above are so important to people’s lives.

*Sometimes you might need your family around you and you might need to be in a certain area. (Man, 27)*

There was a sense from some participants that a situation has been created in which people are not able to live in the area that they choose, and which can provide the community-based social security that is needed by many people.

*The housing [authorities] won’t try and get you a place somewhere you know. They will literally just put you wherever they want to put you. (Woman, aged 32)*

It has been argued that with the demands placed on social housing, there cannot be an expectation from applicants to live close to their relatives.<sup>161</sup> This could be interpreted as suggesting that only those who can afford a mortgage have the choice to be close to their families, although this is entirely dependent on affordable market prices, and so the economic marginalisation of working-class communities can create a situation in which this affects their ability to be able to live in their neighbourhood of choice. Indeed, there is evidence which shows that proximity is an essential mechanism to survival. Moving people away from the area in which they have connections erodes the

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158 Manchester City Council, North Manchester Strategic Regeneration Framework, Higher Blackley East Local Plan Executive Summary, p. 9.

159 Slater, “Your life chances”.

160 Garner, *White Working-class Neighbourhoods*, p. 14.

161 R. Porter, “Social housing needs to be more social”, *Spectator* online, 2013, at <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/coffeehouse/2013/08/social-housing-needs-to-rediscover-society>.



“extensiveness of mutual cooperation in household activities”<sup>162</sup> and can cause a real sense of loss and grief for people who have been displaced from the area where they have long-standing connections.

As noted in *chapter 4*, community-based networks of social security are absolutely central to being able to improve the protective characteristics of individuals, their families and ultimately whole communities. The majority of social landlord lets (up to 85 per cent) are made to households in greatest need. However, there have been reforms to housing allocation in Manchester, and despite the perceptions of the community, the Council's Housing Allocation Policy does attempt to provide solutions to the issues that are raised in a situation in which there is little room for manoeuvre.

Manchester City Council's housing allocations policy underwent significant change less than three years ago, following an extensive consultation exercise. The policy is open and transparent and also relatively simple and easy to understand, something that the Manchester Move site aims to improve upon further. The rules are designed to help people who need housing most, and recognise those who make a positive contribution to their community, reflecting the demand for housing in Manchester and the law on who should get priority for homes.<sup>163</sup>

Mike Stevens, Director of Neighbourhood Services at Northwards Housing, said that:

*Higher Blackley has always been and still is a relatively popular and “in demand” area in which the number of people wanting homes (especially family homes) is greater than the number of homes available. Housing allocations is one of those areas where to a greater or lesser extent some people will always see a degree of unfairness. This is an almost universal experience for housing providers, and is I think inevitable in a system where demand usually far outstrips supply and in which eligibility criteria, priority assessments and waiting lists need to be applied in order to decide who gets what, where and how quickly.*

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162 M. Freid, “Grieving for a lost home”, in J. Wilson, ed., *Urban Renewal: The Record and the Controversy*. Boston. MIT Press, 1963.

163 Manchester City Council, “Part VI Allocations Scheme”, 2011, at [http://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/download/5312/our\\_rehousing\\_rules\\_the\\_allocations\\_scheme](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/download/5312/our_rehousing_rules_the_allocations_scheme).

Indeed, despite perceptions to the contrary that emerged through the research, the allocation scheme in operation does in fact recognise “local connection”.<sup>164</sup>

The allocation of social housing is a choice-based lettings system, as expressed through the Council’s Housing Allocation Policy:

*The vast majority of the housing that we allocate under this Allocations Scheme is through a choice-based lettings system which allows applicants to view available properties and express interest by making bids. The system will be supported by a housing options calculator giving applicants realistic prospects advice and promoting other housing options, such as low-cost home ownership options and private sector renting. It will also link to complementary services, such as subregional choice-based lettings service supporting applicant mobility by facilitating moves across Greater Manchester.*

Another issue that emerged, which is strongly connected to this, was the hyper-local nature of people’s conceptions of place. When participants were asked where they were from and if they had always lived in the area since birth, some said “no, I used to live in Monsall, or Harpurhey, or Langley”. These are all places within a few miles of Higher Blackley and mainly still in the Northwards’ Housing catchment area, but are seen by participants as practically worlds away in terms of access to their social and family networks of support. As the analysis on identity and belonging in chapter 4 has shown, the perceived problem becomes much more emotive when existing support structures provided through family and social connections are seen to be undermined by the outcomes of a policy that does not reflect the importance of these bonds for the community. A consequence of this is that housing becomes a more keenly felt source of tension between communities.

*Female participant: They’ve not got houses here, their family’s gonna go. My daughter’s got five children, where are they going to go?*

*Researcher: Would they want to stay round here?*

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164 Local connection is recognised in two ways:

(a) There is a “Manchester connection” test—if a resident is living in the city or has a connection to it according to criteria set out in the policy.

(b) Community contribution award—residents will pass the community contribution test if they, or anyone moving with them: has lived as an adult (18 and over) in one of the re-housing areas for three years continuously—now or in the past; or does voluntary work for at least 10 hours per month in a re-housing area, and has done so for at least six months continuously. Unlike the working household priority, this does not apply across the city; it applies instead to a particular re-housing area and surrounding re-housing areas—called a “re-housing area cluster”. This enables the housing provider to give a “leg up” to someone on account of their own residence as an adult in a particular area—which is designed to support people who are living in the area where they grew up and in which they want to stay.

*Female participant: Course, we all live round here ... it's important. She's got five kids there; she lives across the road from me. One lives behind me, one lives ... we all live together.*

The inability for social housing supply to meet demand causes particular problems in an area like Higher Blackley where the sense of community identity is particularly strong and people rely on their social networks for support in everyday survival. This also brings with it potential for resentment directed at outsiders coming into the area at the perceived expense of those who cannot get social housing within the area. Local people shared a feeling of being displaced from their chosen place of residence by people whom they see as having no connection with the area.

*Next door to me, man and wife, six children, just been evicted ... They've lived there 15 years. Got in a bit of trouble with the council tax, they've evicted them and put Muslims or something in that didn't have a house ... (Woman, aged 62)*

This feeds into a general sense that immigrants moving into the area are receiving preferential treatment, which is changing the demographic nature of Higher Blackley and altering the identity that exists:

*You don't have to be a magician to walk around here and see what's happening to the council houses round here. (Man, 50 years old, living in sheltered accommodation)*

A small handful of participants believed that this was part of a deliberate council policy aimed at social engineering in order to create more multicultural areas within Manchester.

*I think they're just frightened of having predominantly white areas, because they think we're all going to turn into mass pitchfork-waving racists. (Woman, 32 years)*

This is a delicate situation for housing providers; for if there is an attempt to change cultures and ensure more mixed communities, they can come against a situation in which people react negatively as a result. Indeed, they can come up against these reactions even if they do not.

The sense that housing allocation was actually positively unfair against white working-class communities was an issue mentioned by several participants.

A female participant, aged 60, highlights this, and the perceived power of "political correctness", which BME families might use strategically in order to receive preferential treatment.

*I think everything's so politically correct that they're frightened. I think they're frightened to do anything which isn't politically correct. So you've got a white family*

*here and a black family here, they're going to go for the black family. And that's 99.9 per cent certain they're gonna do that. Only because, a lot of blacks, a lot of Asians will turn round and say they've been racially abused to get their own way.*

This shows the levels of competition that exist around housing, and how the perceived unfair outcomes of decisions can create tensions around immigration, as white working-class communities can feel that they have become quite literally “dispossessed”. Law and colleagues argue that as a result, the anger associated with poverty and disempowerment may be channelled into racism and hostility towards immigrants.<sup>165</sup> However, throughout this research the context was often found to be more nuanced than this. The participants in the housing focus group had sympathies with immigrants moving in, but cautioned that unfair allocation of social housing might cause racism as a result of increasing resentment.

*Male participant: If you give it to someone else, rather than someone who's grown up in the area.*

*Female participant: It will make you bitter.*

*Male participant: It will. It will make you spiteful.*

*Female participant: and these people now, they're not blaming the council, they're blaming the people.*

*Male participant: Exactly, and that's how divides start.*

Research by Ipsos Mori in 2010 conducted on the Riverdale Estate found that “the forms of discrimination most mentioned are the unfair priority given to foreigners in housing allocation and by other public services. Many participants believe that the council and Northwards Housing have different allocation policies for existing and new residents and these views may prove hard to shift.”<sup>166</sup> The Open Society research shows that this feeling has clearly continued to persist within Higher Blackley, and the perception of unfair allocation of housing towards immigrants remains a powerful issue within the community, which can create resentment in a manner that has considerable impact on social cohesion. When pressed for evidence of this unfair allocation, several participants did mention anecdotes, but it is was very difficult to assess the validity of such claims.

The participants in the focus group on housing said that they felt hesitant about commenting on this publically for fear of being accused of racism, although within focus groups they were quite open about the issue. An important element fuelling this resentment is an apparent lack of communication—a lack of knowledge about

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165 I. Law, J. Davies, M. Harrison and D. Phillips, “Equity and difference, racial and ethnic inequalities in housing needs and housing investment in Leeds”, Leeds, RAPP, University of Leeds, 1996, p. 6.

166 Ipsos Mori, “North Manchester investigation”, p. 4.

the allocation can create issues, and as a result powerful myths are emerging and spreading through the community via everyday interactions between people from the white working-class communities with few meaningful interactions with new arrivals that may provide more balance. As one participant noted: “We can only speculate on that ... And it’s that sort of speculation that causes tension.”

In terms of communication, Mike Stevens, the Director of Neighbourhood Services for Northwards Housing, stated that all the information is put on Northwards website and tenants have access to their allocation at all times. Furthermore, Northwards Housing is based in the area and has connections with tenants, in particular through tenant and resident groups and area panels, and they also have tenants on their Board. In this respect, there is frequent dialogue with local people, including about allocations. This is part of a system that aims for transparency. In addition to this, there are locally based staff who know their patches and are engaged in continuous dialogue with local people. While this does not mean that everyone is involved in every conversation, the avenues are there for people to raise issues, and conversations with Northwards Housing suggest these issues are raised and discussed (although possibly less so than anti-social behaviour, litter, etc.).

## 7.1 | IMPACT OF WELFARE REFORM ON HOUSING

One aspect of significant recent welfare reform that was highlighted in discussion is the impact of the housing benefits reform, exclusively referred to by participants as the “bedroom tax”. Prior to the reform, tenants in social housing who qualified for housing benefit would receive an amount that would cover their rent. However, under the reforms, if a claimant is in social housing and is deemed to have “extra” bedrooms, they will have their housing benefit reduced by 14 per cent for one bedroom and by 25 per cent for two or more. There are high levels of social housing in Higher Blackley and a high number of families who are under-occupying their properties and so will be liable for the “bedroom tax”. Data from April 2013 obtained through the Freedom of Information Act<sup>167</sup> showed that Higher Blackley residents are affected in the following ways:

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167 Freedom of Information Request made by Gary Tumulty, 2013, at [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/bedroom\\_tax\\_13](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/bedroom_tax_13).

**TABLE 11. HOUSEHOLDS IN HIGHER BLACKLEY AFFECTED BY “BEDROOM TAX”**

Data	14%	25%	All	% of cases
Cases	496	90	586	4.5%
Average loss per week	£10.47	£19.57	£11.87	
Total loss per week	£5,193.86	£1,761.47	£6,955.33	3.9%

Source: Freedom of Information Request made by Gary Tumulty, 2013, at [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/bedroom\\_tax\\_13](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/bedroom_tax_13)

As there are not the properties to move into, nor the keenness to move away from the area, this results in further pressure that contributes to heightened social insecurity and makes life more difficult for people, who are under considerable financial pressure and now find their weekly budgets squeezed even further, as Rachel, who is 50 years old, said:

*I mean Blackley is quite ... we live in poverty, we've got to be honest. I mean there's some of us that might not, but there's quite a lot of us who do live in poverty. And now they've put all this bedroom tax and it's going to make it even worse for these families. They're not going to be able to manage ... They're just going to be scrambled. (Rachel, 50 years old)*

Alison Stenning criticises the so-called bedroom tax, as

*it fails to value the place of embedded, long-term, local relationships and their contribution to people's well-being ... Relationships, with friends or neighbours or local shops and services might be offering all kinds of support: community, conversation and friendship, childcare, loans of money, food, equipment, a watchful eye on each other's homes, to name a few. In short, these kinds of relationships are invaluable.<sup>168</sup>*

In the case discussed below, a research participant, aged 34, had received the flat 10 years ago when he was homeless and informed he would have to accept it or be removed from the housing allocations list. However, he was now liable to lose money from his housing benefit, and was restricted in his ability to move due to the disability of his partner, who was 32.

<sup>168</sup> A. Stenning, “Geography, relationships and the ‘bedroom tax’”, 2013, at <https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/alisonstenning/geography-relationships-and-the-bedroom-tax>.

*Man: Now the area's got a lot better. There's no more burnt out cars in front of your house. There's no more robberies going on, because it's toned down. They implement the bedroom tax and now I have to pay an extra £20 a week out of money which you don't get a lot of anyway. So they're forcing your hand to move out. We've been on the housing list for 12 months to move. All we're getting offered is flats, flats.*

*Woman: We have a medical sort of exemption to say we can't live in a flat.*

*Man: But they won't budge.*

*Woman: They won't allocate us anything else.*

*Man: A one-bedroomed flat. So you're stuck. And this is what's happening.*

The loss of household income due to people making up the shortfall from their existing income concerned many residents, who noted that it would be other areas of the budget that would have to be drawn upon.

*Female participant 1: Yeah, they're going to have to take money from something else to put into that.*

*Female participant 2: Yes, from food or whatever, because they can't afford it. Or the heating.*

*Female participant 3: Most people are poor—we're all in the same boat now. Most people have arrears of some sort ... So if you're struggling ... anyways and now you're supposed to pay up for this, how the hell are you going to find another 8 or 10 pound on top to pay for this bedroom tax?*

Another key reform to welfare that is likely to impact on housing is the move to “Universal Credit”. Universal Credit is designed to make the benefits system more simple, to make work pay and to reduce dependency. However, concerns have been expressed about the impact that the roll-out of Universal Credit will have on individuals, families and communities. The direct payments element of the Universal Credit, which gives money including housing benefit directly to tenants, is likely to increase the pressure on already hard-pressed people, many of whom will feel ill equipped to deal with this change and additional responsibility in their monthly budget. Although the vast majority of recipients will not be on Universal Credit until 2016 at the earliest, there is considerable tension that this may lead to increased rent arrears and other debt.

A JRF report showed that Universal Credit could trap people in poverty unless major flaws are ironed out.<sup>169</sup> The idea the government is initiating through direct monthly payments is to “nudge” people to make them more responsible and to get better at managing personal budgets. However, many people on low incomes manage budgets with considerable success, but managing such small budgets is difficult. As a woman, aged 21 and in receipt of benefits, said:

*They're just trying to give you everything in one go, your rent, your housing benefit ... what are people going to do if you've got no money that week and they've broken into it and they've got no money so get kicked out because they can't pay the rent.*

There have also been changes to the Social Fund, which provided emergency support for vulnerable people—for instance if benefits had not been paid on time. This is now administered by local authorities, with a reduced budget. As the National Housing Federation note, the demand for support from the new localised schemes of administering the Social Fund is also likely to be higher in light of the current levels of unemployment, rising costs of living and other welfare changes, which will restrict the amount of benefit many people will be able to claim.<sup>170</sup> This will inevitably mean less availability for something that had never been easy under the previous system, as indicated by a lone mother, aged 23, and, who said:

*You have to beg them on the phone if you run out of money, you know. You've got to beg them on the phone.*

Whether or not there will be an increase in evictions as a result of the introduction of Universal Credit is currently untested. However, evidence suggests that it will lead to an increase in arrears and a reduction in finance for housing providers, as well as—crucially—instability in terms of their revenue. Key policymakers in this area fear that it will affect frontline services such as housing officers, who are crucial for communicating with local residents, a factor that is essential in creating more cohesive communities. The loss of revenues for housing providers will also affect the capability to build new properties. Therefore, the insecurity that affects residents will also affect the organisations that deliver services in those communities.

Another perceived factor undermining the traditional security that has historically been provided through living in social housing is the fact that tenancies are no longer secure:

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169 A. Tarr and D. Finn, “Implementing Universal Credit: Will the reforms improve the service for users?”, 2012, at <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/implementing-universal-credit>.

170 National Housing Federation, “Briefing Social Fund localisation”, 2012, at <http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/pub.housing.org.uk/Social%20Fund%20localisation.pdf>.



*Well, it's not a safety net any more, cos they can take that off you as well ... You used to have an assured tenancy, which is something they're taking away now, which is once you've been in a house for so long, that house is basically yours for life. Whereas now, they've changed the whole system—they're allowed to give you a six-month contract if they want.*

At a national level, the notion of social housing providing security of tenure for life has been undermined. As the Centre Forum has argued, restricting security of tenure transforms the understanding “which has historically been at the heart of social housing, forcing families to move out of their homes and removing tenants who often serve as the ‘social glue’ which helps bind communities together.”<sup>171</sup> Manchester City Council decided to maintain assured tenancies, again providing an instance of where insecurity and public anxieties do not match the policy context. However, it remains to recognise important that people have these perceptions, which mirror the general sense of social insecurity that many people felt, and which contributed to the sense of marginalisation and powerlessness.

## 7.2 | HOME OWNERSHIP

Home ownership as something that could increase people's sense of security seemed to be inaccessible for some participants in the focus group. The Resolution Foundation show how the “triple-hit” of falling incomes, high prices and limited access to credit has combined to put home ownership beyond the reach of much of Britain's working population.<sup>172</sup> For the average low to middle-income household saving 5 per cent of their income, it would take 24 years to accrue the typical first-time buyer deposit in today's conditions.

Participants expressed concerns about buying their own homes because of the cost and the long-term debt that was involved, as local businessman said:

*We're frightened to death of buying ours.*

When people are feeling less secure in terms of their income, people are less likely to make a lifetime commitment to something that involves sustainable and regular payments.

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171 T. Gibson and C. Nicolson, “Safe as houses? Security of tenure for social housing tenants in England”, 2010, at <http://www.centreforum.org/assets/pubs/safe-as-houses.pdf>.

172 Resolution Foundation, “The state of living standards”, The Resolution Foundation's annual audit of living standards in Britain, 2014, p. 42, at <http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/media/media/downloads/The-State-of-Living-Standards-ResolutionFoundation-Audit2014.pdf>.

*Two of my sisters got their houses repossessed in the last recession, because the husbands were made redundant, and don't get me wrong, they weren't stay-at-home mums, like a lot of them round here are not, they all go out to work and do some sort of work, even if it's only 20 hours a week or whatever, they work. But they just couldn't afford to keep up with payments on the mortgage ... (Woman, 65)*

The aspiration of working-class families to own their own homes following the introduction of the Right to Buy by the Thatcher government in 1980<sup>173</sup> has become undermined due to the widespread insecurity in terms of jobs:

*You don't know if you're going to be in work one day to the next, you don't know if you're going to have enough money to sustain a mortgage. (Man, 42)*

It is not only the levels of income required by working people to find a deposit for a mortgage that is presenting barriers, but also the insecurity of work and wages that appears to be having an important impact on people's ability to buy their own home.

### 7.3 | PRIVATE SECTOR

In Manchester alone there are over 10,000 private sector landlords, a figure that is rising because of difficulties for first-time buyers to raise finance, and the fact that pressure on social housing in the city is becoming more intense as demand far exceeds supply.<sup>174</sup> As many of the owner-occupied homes in Higher Blackley are owned by more elderly residents, it is difficult to predict what will happen when they pass away and whether this will change the composition of housing in the ward over the next five to 10 years.

This means that private sector housing will play an increasingly important role in providing affordable housing for people on low income in the city. However, at the same time, with significantly reduced budgets there are fewer resources to be able to regulate and enforce standards. This can be problematic for people, as a woman, aged 33, said: "you're really lucky to get a good landlord. There's a housing problem and they'll just exploit that."

A female participant, who had two children and had moved out of social housing into private rented accommodation due to the build-up of arrears, told us about her landlord, who lived in London, and whom she had never met in person:

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173 Right to Buy gives secure tenants of councils and some housing associations the legal right to buy, at a large discount, the home they are living in.

174 Interview with Mike Stevens, Director of Neighbourhood Services, Northwards Housing, Manchester.

*The landlord ... didn't do any repairs. We went on for almost a year without a boiler, he just wouldn't do nothing about it ... we had to go through all the winter and the snow and that with no heating. We had to get electric heaters and sometimes we had to all sleep in the living room because it was that cold.*

## 7.4 | CONCLUSIONS

The security previously provided by social housing is being undermined, and consistent with national and long-standing trends there are high levels of competition for accommodation in the context of decades of a dearth of house-building programmes, as well as an uncapped private rented housing market. The research showed that the perception of unfair housing allocation is a major source of tension and, despite robust city policies being in place, at times is seen to be undermining community stability and affecting people's networks of support that they have come to rely upon. Evidence suggests that welfare reforms (such as the changes to housing benefit) will create further insecurity, both for residents and housing providers. The private rented sector is failing to provide the cost-effective, good-quality housing that is required, and people are severely limited in the ability to buy their own properties, as well as having less confidence to take on a long-term debt.



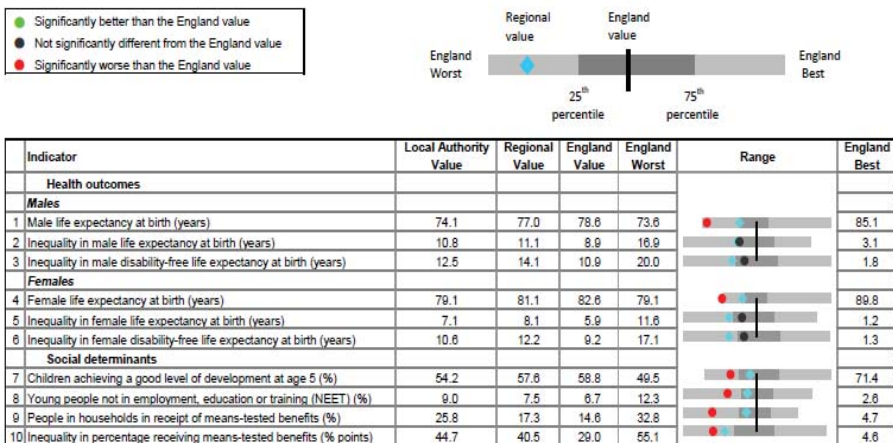
**HEALTH**

The connections between poor health outcomes and economic marginalisation have been much discussed following Marmot's review of health inequalities. This chapter shows how there is evidence of this in Higher Blackley, especially in terms of mental health and people who are not well enough to work. There is also a clear connection between financial strains and insecurity affecting health in a range of ways—for instance through increased food poverty. The findings suggest a need for existing health structures to recognise this, and be more proactive in their role in tackling wider social determinants of health.

## 8.1 | DATA ON HEALTH STATUS

Figure 26 shows that Manchester is significantly worse than the whole England values for all key indicators of the social determinants of health, health outcomes and social inequality.

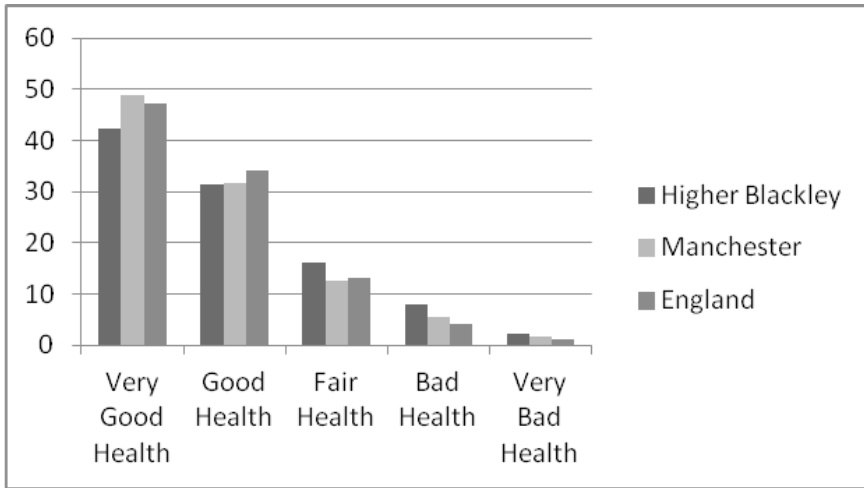
**FIGURE 26. MARMOT INDICATORS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND**



**Source:** Marmot Indicators for Local Authorities in England, “2012—Manchester”, 2012, at [http://www.lho.org.uk/LHO\\_Topics/national\\_lead\\_areas/marmot/Documents/2012\\_PDF\\_LA\\_00BN.pdf](http://www.lho.org.uk/LHO_Topics/national_lead_areas/marmot/Documents/2012_PDF_LA_00BN.pdf)

Data from the 2011 Census reveal Higher Blackley residents to have worse health than the population for Manchester as a whole, and for the rest of England.

**FIGURE 27. HEALTH IN HIGHER BLACKLEY**



Source: Office of National Statistics, 2011 Census

## 8.2 | HEALTH AND WELL-BEING BOARD

As part of government changes to the NHS, Manchester City Council established a Health and Well-being Board in April 2013. Health and Well-being Boards are a key part of the Health and Social Care Act (2012), and the Board is the main forum for key leaders from the Manchester health, care and community sectors to work together to improve the health and well-being of the local population and reduce health inequalities. Board members are tasked with collaborating to understand their local community’s needs, agree priorities and encourage commissioners to work in a more joined-up way.

Manchester’s Health and Well-being Board develops the Manchester vision and strategy for health and well-being in the city, and it provides strategic leadership and drives delivery. As part of its strategic vision, it has set eight major priorities across the city.<sup>175</sup>

175

1. Getting the youngest people in communities off to the best start.
2. Educating, informing and involving the community in improving their own health and well-being.
3. Moving more health provision into the community.
4. Providing the best treatment we can to people in the right place at the right time.
5. Turning around the lives of troubled families.
6. Improving people’s mental health and well-being.
7. Bringing people into employment and leading productive lives.
8. Enabling older people to keep well and live independently in their community.

### 8.3 | NORTH MANCHESTER CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP (CCG)

North Manchester CCG, which covers Higher Blackley, is responsible for commissioning health services for patients registered with GP practices in the area, as well as patients who live in the area and are not registered with a GP or who need access to urgent care. There is an annual budget of £250 million, which is used to purchase all health care services for the covered population of 187,000. The CCG has developed three key aims, which are set out in the Commissioning Strategy for 2012,<sup>176</sup> as follows:

1. Commissioning safe, high-quality services.
2. Putting primary and secondary prevention at the heart of what we do to reduce morbidity and mortality.
3. Improving the management of people with long-term conditions and optimising self-management to reduce exacerbation of conditions and the need to use emergency care services.

### 8.4 | MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health problems affect a great many people in Manchester; around two-thirds of GP consultations have the patient's mental health as an important component.<sup>177</sup> This is one of the major issues picked up in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment<sup>178</sup> and is an area also targeted by the North Manchester Clinical Commissioning Group as a key strategic priority.

Evidence shows that the poorest fifth of adults are significantly more at risk of developing a mental illness than those on average incomes, with women more susceptible being than men.<sup>179</sup>

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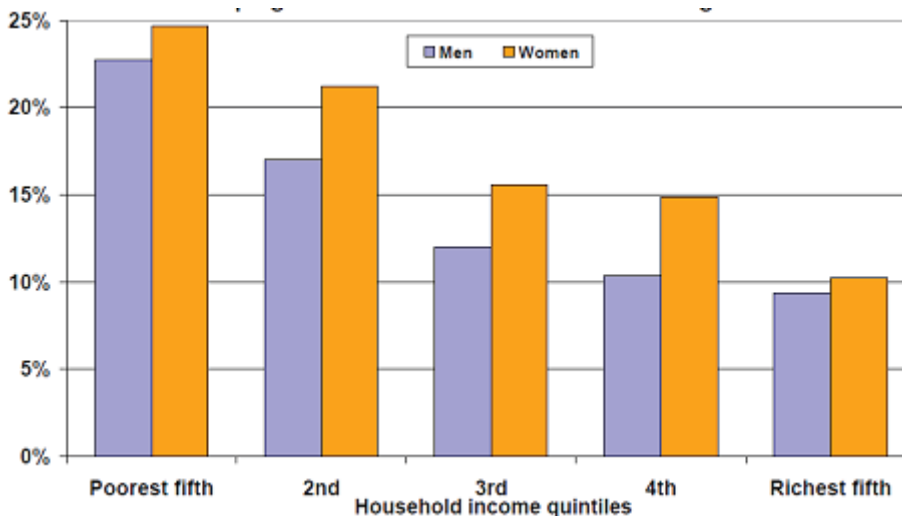
<sup>176</sup> North Manchester Clinical Commissioning Group, "Patient Prospectus 2013/14", [2013] at [http://www.manchester.nhs.uk/document\\_uploads/north-ccg/North%20Manchester%20Prospectus%202013-14%20v2.pdf](http://www.manchester.nhs.uk/document_uploads/north-ccg/North%20Manchester%20Prospectus%202013-14%20v2.pdf)

<sup>177</sup> Central, North and South Manchester Clinical Commissioning Groups, "Commissioning intentions for mental health services", 2013 p. 7, at [http://www.manchester.nhs.uk/document\\_uploads/mental\\_health/MH%20Commissioning%20Intentions%202013-15.pdf](http://www.manchester.nhs.uk/document_uploads/mental_health/MH%20Commissioning%20Intentions%202013-15.pdf)

<sup>178</sup> The Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) analyse the health needs of populations to inform and guide the commissioning of health, well-being and social care services within local authority areas. The JSNA underpins the health and well-being strategies.

<sup>179</sup> Department of Health, "Health survey for England". (DH; the data is the average for 2008 and 2009; England; updated March 2011), 2011, at <http://www.poverty.org.uk/62/b.pdf> (hereafter, DH, "Health Survey for England").

**FIGURE 28. RISK OF MENTAL ILLNESS BY INCOME**



Source: Health Survey for England. DH: the data is the average for 2008 and 2009; England: updated March 2011

Health professionals working in Higher Blackley interviewed as part of this Open Society Foundations research made a connection between unemployment, low pay, poverty (the kinds of insecurity picked up in other parts of this report) and mental health:

*The thing is that depression is never really that mild. And a lot of it is linked to their status in life. People who do well don't tend to get depressed. Or they do sometimes but not as often.*

Furthermore, people who experience serious and enduring mental health problems are more at risk of long-term physical health problems, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes, in part as a result of poverty, or of less healthy lifestyles, but in part also as a result of the effects of their medication, or of difficulties in accessing the relevant health services.<sup>180</sup>

Mental health clearly affects people's well-being in a profound way:

*I mean, you can have great days. Brilliant days sometimes. But it's when you get the dark days. It's like that hole just doesn't open. Whatever you do, it just sort of is a black cloud and you can't focus on anything and you just let everything go. And I did that for quite some time, I just let everything go. (Woman, 45)*

<sup>180</sup> DH, "Health Survey for England", p. 16.



Any public and media debate that writes such people off as “scroungers” who do not want to work due to an inherent laziness in their character often neglects the role of poor mental health. A total of 13.6 per cent of the working-age population in Higher Blackley receive Employment Support Allowance and incapacity benefit, a rate than is higher than the city average and almost double the rate of Great Britain.<sup>181</sup>

There has been a significant increase in mental health issues being the major factor behind incapacity benefit across the United Kingdom. Mental health accounts for half of incapacity benefit claimants in Manchester and Higher Blackley.<sup>182</sup> A local GP interviewed for this report noted this as a major issue within the community:

*The majority is struggling with lack of motivation and low mood and low self-esteem and depression.*

There has been a significant increase in incapacity benefits,<sup>183</sup> which coincides with the era of de-industrialisation. Beatty and co-workers suggest that the evidence strongly points to “the role of the labour market, and more specifically a deficient demand for labour, as lying at the root of the UK’s high incapacity claimant numbers.”<sup>184</sup> Indeed, a disproportionate number of incapacity benefit claimants have strikingly low levels of qualifications, with a survey from 2008 suggesting a figure as high as 60 per cent having low skills.<sup>185</sup>

Health professionals interviewed for this research argued that in order to understand health outcomes, it is important to understand the dynamics of a particular community beyond the clinical issues that are presented when patients go to see a doctor to be able to best tackle the endemic levels of poor mental health in the city:

*It used to be older men that commit suicide, whereas now it’s younger men who have fallen into passivity. It’s all about self-esteem, having a purpose in life and being valued. Many men are difficult to employ because a lot of the jobs they used to do are disappearing post-manufacturing. A lot of people don’t have IT skills ... They need to be put into work and given a living wage. In a way, people have been left into their own devices, whereas we should give them something to do.*

This Open Society research shows the impact of social insecurity on mental health specifically, and public health more broadly. It supports existing research that

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181 See <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/ward/1308629575/report.aspx#wab>.

182 DWP, “Working age claimants at November 2012”, at <http://tabulation-tool.dwp.gov.uk/NESS/WACG/wacg.htm>.

183 Incapacity benefits were for people who were unable to work due to illness or disability, and have now been replaced by the Employment and Support Allowance.

184 C. Beatty and S. Fothergill, “Incapacity benefits in the UK: An issue of health or jobs?” p. 3, at <http://www.social-policy.org.uk/lincoln/Beatty.pdf> (hereafter, Beatty and Fothergill, “Incapacity benefits”).

185 Beatty and Fothergill, “Incapacity benefits”, p. 10.

evidences the value of work in terms of public health and its importance for physical and mental well-being.<sup>186</sup> As Elizabeth Cotton argues,

*De-regulation of working life is directly linked to a de-regulation of our internal lives. With the loss of work security, we are likely to experience an internal insecurity, and along with it fear, anger and a recurring sense of uselessness. This is hard to manage at the best of times, but in the face of unemployment it is hard to self-regulate. Under enough pressure we lose our perspective and capacity to think past these overwhelming feelings.*<sup>187</sup>

The connection between unemployment and mental health was discussed by participants in our focus group on health.

*Well obviously when you're unemployed, there's depression and all that.*  
(Woman, 45 years old)

*You're not being sociable any more when you're unemployed. [You] just shut down.*  
(Woman, 60 years old)

This then makes it more difficult for people to be able to find work. There are extensive studies which show that unemployment is strongly associated with adverse health indicators including higher mortality, more psychological problems and less healthy lifestyles.<sup>188</sup> However, studies that show the consequences of a “flexible” labour market are more scarce. Insecure work can affect nutrition, accommodation, healthcare and domestic relations.<sup>189</sup>

Research shows how job insecurity can create chronic anxiety that affects the whole family.<sup>190</sup> The research highlights the need to understand the impact of the flexible labour market and the low-pay, no-pay cycle on the health of both individuals and the wider community. There are many factors that contribute to depression, and there are clear medical factors involved which go beyond a purely social context, but many can be connected in some way to the wider sense of marginalisation in the community:

186 Shildrick et al., *Poverty and Insecurity*, p. 96.

187 E. Cotton, “We need to accept that work and society make a huge difference to our mental health. Improvements to social policy and workplaces can make real and profound improvements to people’s external and internal lives” 2013, at <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/archives/14807>.

188 FG Benavides et al., “How do types of employment relate to health indicators?”, *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 54 (2000), pp. 494–501.

189 M Quinlan et al., “The global expansion of precarious employment”, *International Journal of Health Services* 31(3) (2001).

190 J Benach et al., “The consequences of flexible work for health: Are we looking at the right place?”, *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 56 (2002), pp. 405–406 (hereafter, Benach et al., “The consequences of flexible work”).

*It makes you depressed, doesn't it? It's the whole community, there's nothing going on. I mean, my kids are grown up but I would not want to be with small kids now because there's nothing here. So your kid is doing nothing makes you depressed because you've got nothing to give to your kid. (Woman, aged 60)*

The length of times that patients have to wait for support is a pressing problem, as a local GP reported:

*One of the problems we have in Manchester is that we have a very weak and under-resourced mental health community. We talk about mild and serious depression but the services available for it are very stretched. They're often trying to keep people out rather than let them in so they can protect the capacity.*

The impacts of these waiting times have a significant effect on people's lives and can make the condition more severe:

*For depression, obviously everyone thinks go to your doctor, they'll refer you, they'll know what to do. But I know somebody who does counselling, she said there's a waiting list. But you're depressed and you need it now. So waiting can only make your situation worse. So what do you do? (Woman, 45 years old)*

The Clinical Commissioning Groups for Manchester recognise that there is an issue around services for adults of working age experiencing severe mental health crises, and that there are too many people who have to wait too long to be able to access the services they require.<sup>191</sup>

*I was referred from my doctor to mental health because of severe depression. So the mental health team phoned me and said right we've got your information and everything, we'll get in touch with you as soon as possible. This was over six months ago. (Woman, aged 60)*

In terms of providing support to be able to address mental health issues, the strength of the community-based social security networks were highlighted by participants, but there was a feeling that these strengths and protective characteristics were not being supported sufficiently:

*I think the way they look at it is that Higher Blackley is a very close-knit community and you find that a lot of families also live in the same area and sort of support each other ... So I think the attitude is well they're doing it themselves so why should we bother. (Woman, 39 years old)*

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191 Benach et al., "The consequences of flexible work".

The Manchester Mental Health and Well-being Commissioning Strategy (2009–2014) includes the following aims:

- To develop a mental health needs assessment model that will forecast future demand and assess the needs of Manchester’s residents including the impact of health inequalities. This will also assess the likely benefits of future initiatives within the city in terms of its citizen’s mental health and well-being.
- To jointly develop and commission preventative services which improve resilience and well-being and have a strong focus on self-care, maintenance and recovery.
- To actively engage with sectors of the population who may be under or over-represented in mental health services and seek to develop actions to address identified issues.<sup>192</sup>

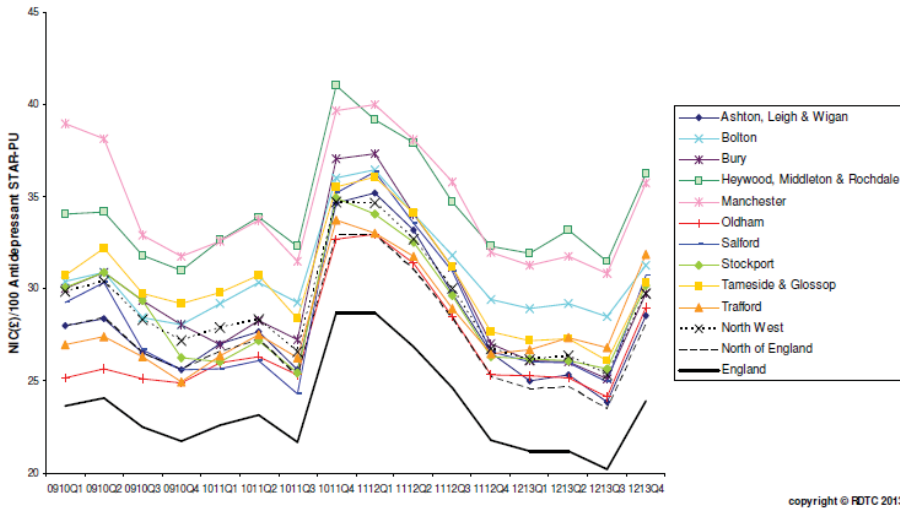
A former Sure Start worker supporting lone parents, recalled that she

*worked with three teenage mums who went to the GPs and were offered anti-depressants, but they said no—they just wanted to talk their situations through with someone.*

Provision of mental health community support in Manchester is perhaps an area that should be reconsidered. As the GP interviewed told us: “The amount we spend on community mental health services is 3.2 per cent [of the mental health budget.] As community-based mental health provision is becoming more strained, it is no surprise that the use of drugs are being increased.”

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<sup>192</sup> Manchester City Council, “The Manchester Mental Health and Well-being Commissioning Strategy (2009–14)”, 2009, at [http://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/file/13090/mental\\_health\\_commissioning\\_strategy\\_2009-2014](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/file/13090/mental_health_commissioning_strategy_2009-2014).

**FIGURE 29. GREATER MANCHESTER PRESCRIBING FREQUENCY:  
ANTIDEPRESSANTS APRIL 2009–MARCH 2013**

**Source:** NHS Manchester, Prescribing (Financial Position), 2013, at [http://www.manchester.nhs.uk/document\\_uploads/south-ccg/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20SMCCG%20Medicines%20Management%20Update%20Board%20Oct13.pdf](http://www.manchester.nhs.uk/document_uploads/south-ccg/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20SMCCG%20Medicines%20Management%20Update%20Board%20Oct13.pdf)

Figure 29 shows the rising levels of anti-depressant prescribing frequency in Greater Manchester. Primary care trusts in Greater Manchester spent £14,600,114 prescribing anti-depressant medication between July 2010 and June 2011; doctors in Manchester prescribed the highest amount of the drugs in England—£2,838,626 worth.<sup>193</sup>

However, the GP interviewed for the research argued that it is not simply a case of clinical commissioning favouring such approaches:

*There are services and we have charities like self-help services that we commission services from, but the difficulty is getting people to engage with them. I often print things out to people and say to them ring this number and they don't. Maybe we need to be more assertive with some people and say if you want to keep receiving your health benefit you need to be more active and play ball. People seem to have this passivity about health services.*

However, as noted above, the motivation for people who are depressed and their ability to be active is severely limited. This would suggest that there potentially need to be more supportive structures, from within the community and people

<sup>193</sup> *Manchester Evening News*, "Fears over household finances take their toll as NHS bill anti-depressants leap to £14m in Greater Manchester", 2011, at <http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/fears-over-household-finances-take-871520>.

who understand local lives, which could provide assistance and encouragement for people to engage. The relationship between the GP and patient appears to be one that displays a clear distinction between the professional and the patient, with the GP interviewed stating that: “I constantly get people coming here saying fix me. But they don’t expect to help me in that.”

An additional layer of support from within the community could begin to change behaviours in a positive manner which builds upon strengths that already exist within the area.

## 8.5 | HEALTHY EATING

There are other ways in which social changes impact on public health. A range of experts have warned in the *British Medical Journal* (December 2013) that UK food poverty “has all the signs of a public health emergency that could go unrecognised until it is too late to take preventive action.”<sup>194</sup> The issue of food poverty in fact goes much deeper than a lack of food for people in crisis, as manifested through food banks, and is in fact connected to poor nutrition for people with low incomes—as Julia Unwin of the JRF correctly points out, “poor nutrition is rightly described as the new malnutrition of our times.”<sup>195</sup>

Manchester City Council’s Family Poverty Strategy notes that,

*whilst there is a downward trend in fruit and vegetable consumption across the whole population, this decrease is greater in households in the lowest income decile. Further evidence on food fairness highlights that calculation of benefit levels and minimum wage focuses on least cost diets that do not reflect the reality of what people eat or access to shops. People on low incomes tend to base their diets on fatty, sugary foods as they are the most filling and often cheaper with many supermarkets offering special deals for multiple purchases—further increasing the rising risk of obesity amongst deprived populations.*<sup>196</sup>

Healthy eating came up as a major issue in the focus group on health. This would suggest that the public health message has got through to communities. However, there were financial barriers that existed for residents:

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194 C. Cooper, “Food poverty in UK has reached level of ‘public health emergency’, warn experts”, *Independent* online, 2013, at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/food-poverty-in-uk-has-reached-level-of-public-health-emergency-warn-experts-8981051.html>.

195 J. Unwin, “Our food supply chain is failing poorer people, as consumers and as workers”, 2013, at <http://www.jrf.org.uk/blog/2013/02/poverty-food-supply-chain>.

196 Manchester Partnership, “Manchester Family Poverty Strategy”.

*You're not buying your fruit and veg, because it's too expensive, so you're buying the cheapest of everything and you're not really getting the nourishment.*  
(Woman, 45 years old)

It was agreed in the focus group that the rising cost of living made it harder to maintain a healthy diet, a 60 years old and unemployed female participant said:

*Inflation has just gone through the roof. I mean there's only an x amount of pounds that you get and you need to pay for all the things from that. And say you buy a tin of cheap beans; it used to cost you 15 pence. A tin of beans is now like 30, 35 pence.*

It is estimated that the poorest 10 per cent of households in the United Kingdom spent nearly a quarter (23.8 per cent) of their gross income on food and non-alcoholic beverages in 2012.<sup>197</sup> Food is a “flexible” budget item, and so as people struggle with the costs of living they cut back wherever they possibly can, meaning that many are driven into food poverty. This is when an individual or household is not able to obtain healthy, nutritious food, or cannot access the food they would like to eat.

This difficulty results in a few cases reported through our research of “people going into shops robbing food because they’re hungry”.

One in 10 people in Greater Manchester skip meals so family members can eat, and one in five cut down on the amount of fruit and vegetables they buy.<sup>198</sup> This is a figure that is likely to be higher in Higher Blackley due to lower than average incomes. This can often lead to higher cholesterol, heart problems and diabetes.

A lack of healthy food can also have a long-term impact on children and their ability to do well at school. Research shows that nutritional deficiencies prior to school entry have the potential to impact on cognitive outcomes in school-aged and adolescent children. For instance, clinical research has found an association between early life vitamin B12 deficiency and reduced scores on cognitive tests in adolescence.<sup>199</sup> Reflecting back on chapter 5 on education, in which the research highlighted children going to school hungry, this has long-term implications.

There can be feelings of inadequacy when patients visit the doctor suffering from these kinds of complaints, but are faced with doctors who it was felt do not fully comprehend the struggles that people are facing:

197 Kelloggs, “Hard to swallow the facts about food poverty”, 2013, at <http://www.manchesterfoodpoverty.co.uk/sites/default/files/Facts%20About%20Food%20Poverty%20Report.pdf> (hereafter, Kelloggs, “Hard to swallow the facts”).

198 Kelloggs, “Hard to swallow the facts”, p. 16.

199 A. Sorhaindo and L. Feinstein, “What is the relationship between child nutrition and school outcomes?”, 2006, at [webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/OrderingDownload/WBL18.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/OrderingDownload/WBL18.pdf).

*They say oh well, you should be eating healthily. But how can you when you just can't afford it? (Unemployed woman, aged 56)*

Despite there being two major supermarkets at either end of the ward, the issue of access was raised in the focus group discussion on health:

*It's going to sound really silly this, but when I go to Spar or Co-op, Spar sells things for a pound that's 50 pence elsewhere. And that's a lot of money. (Unemployed woman, aged 56)*

*Yes, you've got to look for the things you can afford. (Unemployed woman, aged 36)*

*Spar is only good if they've got offers. And Tesco is the same and Co-op. But the most expensive shop is the Co-op. It is extortion. (Woman, 60 years old)*

*Yes, and if you've not got any transport to go to the supermarket you've got to go there. (Woman, 81 years old)*

*Well it's cheaper to walk down to Tesco rather than going to Co-op. (Woman)*

Healthy eating does require behaviour change at the personal level, in order to increase people's knowledge of different food and healthier patterns of food preparation in households.

As one local GP, who has had a practice in Higher Blackley for over 25 years, said:

*It's kind of like having high cholesterol and I say you need to eat less saturated fat. But they want the statins so they can keep eating the way they do. So it's a bit like involving people in their care, they need to be more active because it is a partnership. I can give you medication but you need to take it. And I want you to do some exercise, stop eating sugars and try and stop smoking. But people don't do that and there is a high reluctance to people not wanting to do that.*

However, this cannot be viewed apart from the wider issue of rising costs of living and the impacts of welfare reform that are reducing many household budgets. This shows the interconnected nature of public health and social insecurity, which was evident throughout the discussions on mental well-being.

Furthermore, while the public health message on the need to eat fruit and vegetables has been well transmitted, there are access issues that came up in terms of information on healthy eating and how people can best use the food in meals:

*And that's another thing about healthy eating. They should say in the telly you know, they should advertise healthy eating but they just say go to this website.*



*Yes and then we don't even have a computer.*

*There's no alternative.*

While the health benefits of healthy eating appear to have been communicated well to the public, the Open Society Foundations' research suggests that initiatives based on changing individual and interpersonal behaviours are being undermined by wider factors and a lack of access to healthy food and knowledge of healthier food cultures, and what to be able to do with different types of food.

## 8.6 | THE NHS

There was a sense within the focus group on health that there was increasing pressure on NHS resources:

*I'd say the NHS has gone right down the hill because of the simple reason that it has been too widely available for too many people ... too many immigrants.*

*Outsiders. The NHS basically should be for the country, not to get other people over here having operations and everything ... they just give it to everyone and that's why it's gone right down the hill. There isn't one any more, it's been bled dry.*

*It's the do-gooders that let everybody come and use the NHS.*

The GP interviewed revealed how this can play out at the local surgery:

*In terms of patient consultations, because of the language barrier there might be more people to be seen and it takes longer. If we're running behind because of that, there's some palpable hostility in the waiting rooms sometimes ...*

Again, this reveals how anxieties can contribute towards a feeling that scarce resources are being stretched due to the rising number of immigrants coming into the area.

## 8.7 | CONCLUSIONS

The connections between poor health outcomes and economic marginalisation have been long known and discussed. The research has found strong qualitative evidence to support this, especially in terms of mental health, unemployment, substandard housing and food poverty. Existing health structures must further recognise this, and be more proactive in their role in tackling wider social determinants of health in order to address health inequalities. Higher Blackley has the largest municipal park in Europe, as well as other green spaces in the locality and supportive community

networks, and there is more scope to realise the potential that this provides. The research showed a lack of understanding on the part of officials, particularly in relation to seeking work and the impact of mental health on an individual or family. There was an understanding demonstrated by the residents of the need to eat healthily and look after one's mental and physical well-being. However, much of this was negatively affected by the impact of low wages, insecure work and long waiting lists for counselling. A number of residents spoke about the increased demands on local GP services and the length of time one had to wait for appointments, which was often tied to concerns over immigration.

In order to be able to improve public health, it is important to understand the dynamics of the community and the wider social determinants that have an impact. The effects of social insecurity on health are manifold: unemployment, mental health issues, food poverty as a result of rising costs and stagnant wages, increased caring responsibilities and poor housing, all of which contribute towards poorer health outcomes.

Mental health must be connected with wider social insecurity. Therefore, when designing and commissioning services, an integrated approach should be considered that builds on the strengths that support the community, while also addressing the wider causes of social insecurity such as the low-pay, no pay cycle that characterises the labour market.

## 9

**POLICE AND  
SECURITY**

*"Just listen, they need to just listen to people."*  
(Male, focus group participant, 43 years old)

This chapter shows the disconnection between communities in Higher Blackley and the police. There was a cultural reluctance to engage with the police for fear of being seen as a “grasser” that extended across generations. There was a sense of white working-class communities being overpoliced and underprotected. As with other themes, community-based security was important, as the focus group revealed that people would often rather rely on their family, friends and neighbours than on the police.

The crime figures for Manchester from the annual State of the City Report show a reduction in most crimes across the city, and there has been a reduction in so-called victim-based crime by almost 9 per cent over the past year, and by over 18 per cent since 2010/2011, although sexual offences have risen.

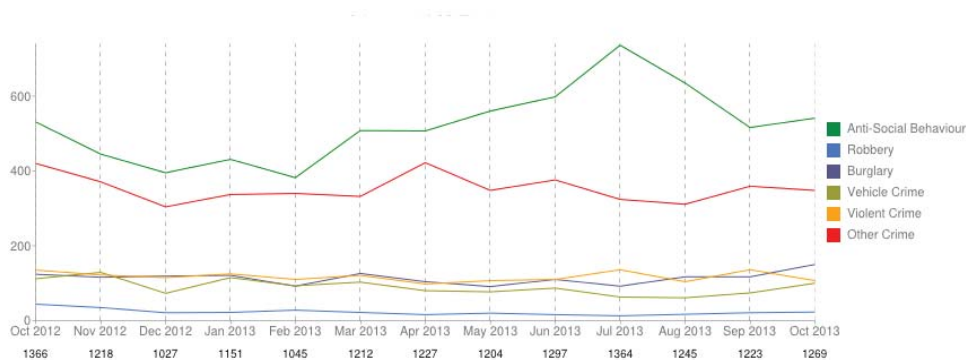
**TABLE 12. CRIME TYPE AND FREQUENCY**

Crime type	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	%change between 2011/12 and 2012/12	% change between 2010/11 and 2012/13
Violence against the person	8,436	8,391	7,332	-12,6	-13,1
Sexual offences	807	818	855	4,5	5,9
Stealing	36,869	31,957	30,223	-5,4	-18,0
Criminal damage	8,619	7,569	6,135	-18,9	-28,8
Victim-based crime TOTAL	54,731	48,735	44,545	-8,6	-18,6

**Source:** Manchester Partnership, State of the City Report

Crime figures for north Manchester show that over the last year anti-social behaviour has remained the most significant issue within the city.

**FIGURE 30. CRIME AND ASB TOTALS**



Source: Manchester Partnership, State of the City Report

According to the Police and Crime Survey, total crimes were down by 13 per cent from 2011–2012 in north Manchester. This is consistent with wider crime figures for north Manchester over recent times, which has seen Serious Acquisitive Crime-Incidents (e.g. burglary) reduced by 34 per cent between 2005/2006 and 2010/2011.<sup>200</sup>

The Greater Manchester Police and Crime Plan states that neighbourhood policing is at the very heart of what the police do in Greater Manchester, and that they are “working with—and responding to—the concerns of local communities.”<sup>201</sup> Indeed, the north Manchester division identifies priorities and crime hotspots to focus on following consultations with the local community, which are available on a public website, together with data on crime reports in particular areas, although this is not particularly accessible.<sup>202</sup>

During 2012/2013 the Community Safety Partnership has supported an integrated neighbourhood team approach to reducing crime across Manchester. This has been led by Manchester City Council and Greater Manchester Police, “creating co-located and coterminous teams within many parts of the city. The establishment of Neighbourhood Delivery Teams has seen an increase in neighbourhood focus, which is intended to allow a more effective use of resources at the neighbourhood level and ensure that effective services are provided for residents, businesses and visitors.”<sup>203</sup> This provides an important basis upon which to build further engagement with communities.

200 Manchester City Council, “North Manchester SRF”, p. 13.

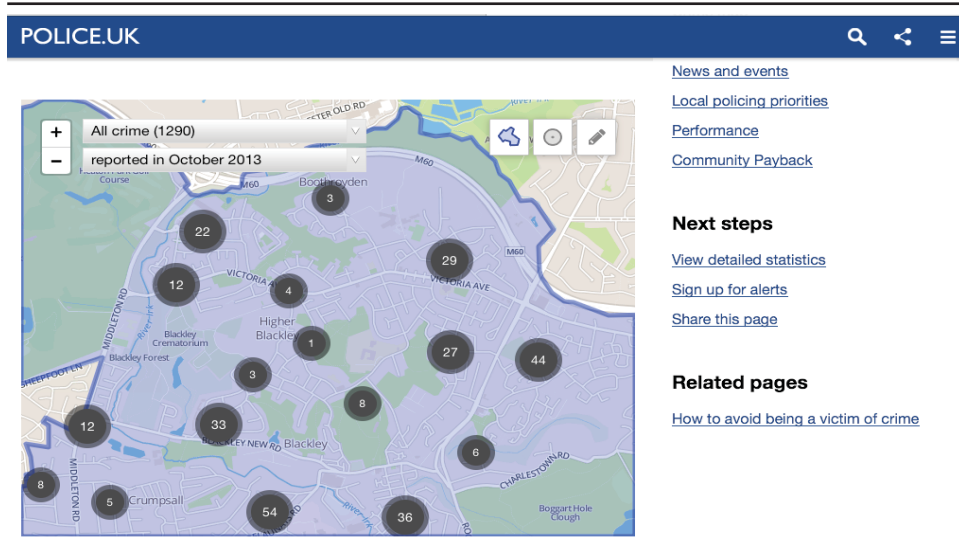
201 Greater Manchester Police, “Greater Manchester Police and Crime Plan 2012–13,” at [http://www.gmpcc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/WEB\\_PoliceAndCrimePlanNov2013.pdf](http://www.gmpcc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/WEB_PoliceAndCrimePlanNov2013.pdf).

202 “Local policing priorities for Manchester North”, at <http://www.police.uk/greater-manchester/A2/priorities>. [Author? Date?]

203 Manchester Partnership, “State of the City Report”.

Furthermore, in terms of data that are open to the public, the Police UK website has area-based maps which allow citizens to access and see where the recorded crime hotspots are.

**FIGURE 31. CRIME HOTSPOTS IN HIGHER BLACKLEY**



**Source:** police.uk website, at <http://www.police.uk/greater-manchester/A2/crime/>

One way the police aim to improve neighbourhood policing is through Key Individual Networks (KINS), which are made up of people who have an interest in their local area and want to make it safer. KINS are designed to help the police understand their local communities and respond effectively to the needs and expectations of local people.

Engagement with a broad cross-section of the community is difficult, as there are entrenched attitudes towards the police. Focus group participants felt that the police were often unresponsive and sometimes overly harsh in their treatment of individuals, with some residents reporting that they would rather rely on their social networks to provide the security that was meant to be provided by the police, while at the same time feeling there needed to be more police on the street and better communication.

Participants repeatedly mentioned that they felt that the police often took a long time to respond to incidents. A woman, aged 27 and who had worked in pubs, recalled a particularly shocking incident of a pub where she worked that was burgled and the perpetrators “had [me] upstairs on the bed holding a machete [to me] while they were robbing the pub—emptied the machines and all that.” The response time from the police to this incident was reported as being “about three hours later and I was three months pregnant and had a knife on my throat.” This incident didn’t happen in Higher

Blackley, but it did entrench negative views of the police among the woman and her relatives and friends.

Evidence suggests that an ineffective response to people's individual situations has a major impact on public confidence.<sup>204</sup> This incident was not the only report in the focus group of perceived poor responses from the police. Such incidences also have a rippling effect through the community to fundamentally undermine the esteem in which the police are held, and the extent to which they can be relied upon to provide the security that is necessary. The importance of crime resolution for public confidence in policing is high.

The murder of David Lees in 2006 leaves a tragic legacy for Higher Blackley. David Lees, who was only 23, was hit by a car that was deliberately driven at him as he stood outside a petrol station following an altercation with a group of Asian youths from a different nearby area. This killing still has an impact on the community as the perpetrator has never been caught, despite it being reported that murder squad detectives believe they know who was behind the wheel.<sup>205</sup> This case was discussed by participants at the focus group on policing and security, and also in informal discussions held by the researchers in the pub on a Friday night with some of David's friends. A few respondents said that they felt that failure to prosecute or bring charges against anyone was related to race.

*It was all the racist card ... because the lad was Asian that knocked him over and when they caught him his family was saying you're all racists. (Man, 30 years old)*

The discussion in the focus group highlights how such incidences live within the collective community memory and can have a damaging effect on police–community relations. Another case referred to in the public discussions was the killing of Anthony Granger by a Greater Manchester police officer in Cheshire on the evening of 3 March 2012.

*The police murdered Anthony Granger for nothing. For sitting in a car and they got away with it. (Woman, 24 years)*

This case has been the subject of an Independent Police Complaints Commission investigation, which found that Anthony Granger was killed with a single gunshot fired by a police officer, and that no firearms were found in his car. Since the fieldwork, the public prosecution department has decided not to charge the police officer involved.

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204 T. Lowe and M. Innes, "Can we speak in confidence? Community intelligence and neighbourhood policing v2.0", *Policing and Society* 22(3) (2012), p. 309 (hereafter, Lowe and Innes, "Can we speak in confidence?").

205 *Manchester Evening News*, "Police 'know' who was driving when David Lees was mown down four years ago," 2010, at <http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/local-news/police-know-who-was-driving-when-david-901792>

It is not just particularly memorable cases that people are aware of, but their own direct experiences which have created divisions. The notion of democratic policing articulated by Manning suggests that the police should use an equal amount of coercion regardless of where they are enforcing the law. However, the sense that the police were heavy-handed with the community in Higher Blackley was stark, as was the feeling that was shared amongst the group that:

*The police are the biggest organised gang in the whole bloody universe. (Woman, 24 years old)*

*Some of them are just gangsters in uniform and some of them are just horrible. (Woman, 30 years old)*

One male participant, aged 40, had direct experience of police abuse:

*It has happened on a couple of occasions and people just don't see it. You don't have a leg to stand on because there are no witnesses. I've been thrown into the back of a van and been beaten up by four police officers ... a few years ago. But when I got to the police station it's my word against theirs, and it's four officers of law. I don't have a leg to stand on.*

It is important to note that clear distinctions were made about different police officers and not all were criticised. The woman, who had told us about her anger at the Anthony Granger shooting and had said that the police were an organised gang, said that:

*It all depends on which police officer you get. I know of police going to people's houses for no reason and just kicking the hell out of them and ripping their house apart but then there's other police that are dead nice. It just depends on which one you get because some are horrible. But then some of us are horrible too.*

In his description of the “new government of insecurity”, Loic Wacquant notes how the reduction in the welfare state is accompanied by an increasingly punitive criminal justice system, which penalises the more marginalised members of society.<sup>206</sup> This dynamic was touched on by a couple of participants in the focus group, who felt that there was unfair treatment by a cynical police force, which makes judgements based on people's socio-economic class.

*When I got robbed a few months ago before I moved house they came within like half an hour but then I got put into the car and they questioned me. The woman was all right but the man was, like, I know you're lying ... he was just dead arrogant, just walking around and I thought I won't do it again, I won't phone them again ...*



*because obviously I'm a young girl and I was in Salford in my own house and they don't like that. They'll just say you're scum. (Young woman, aged 23)*

A similar experience was recounted by another participant, who felt that:

*If you're posh and you've got loads of money they treat you differently, but because we're from Blackley they just think, suck it.*

These women clearly felt that working-class communities were treated in a manner that was different than if they had been middle class. The general sentiment within the focus group of the police failing to provide the security and justice that people required, alongside direct experience of police heavy-handedness, is a potent mix that has created a deep divide, which could be identified as cultural, between communities and the police. For many participants, it was felt that it was better to address issues without the involvement of the police.

An unemployed participant, aged 42, living on the Riverdale estate, was very clear in his dislike for the police and in his opinions and wanting to keep any involvement with the police to a minimum, said, "I don't need them; that's what my mates are for."

A similar view was expressed by another man, aged 43:

*To be honest I would phone my friends and my family to come and help me before I'd phone the police. Because I know they'll be there quicker and they're there to help me. And if I phone the police they won't be here until maybe the next day.*

While revealing a deep sense of mistrust and lack of confidence in the police to provide the security that is required, this also shines further light on the nature of the strong levels of social bonds within the Higher Blackley community. Again, the community networks provide the security that is seen as lacking from the state. As people feel less secure about the traditional security that has historically been delivered through public institutions, there is a withdrawal into the security that is provided by friends and neighbours. With regards to the police, this is certainly not a new phenomenon and appears to be an entrenched cultural practice.

There is deeply held reluctance about involving the police for many people within the community. Also mentioned amongst participants was the fear that those who contacted the police would face repercussions within their community, as they would be seen as grasses. As one conversation about crime happening outside participants' houses reveals:

*I just close my curtains. I do ... that's all you need to do. (Woman, 69 years old)*

*I wouldn't actually call the police because then you get called the grasser and then there's that taken out on you and they start vandalising you like throwing shit through your window and getting abuse when you step out of the door. So it's a bit tricky that. Because if you phone the police and they find out you phoned the police on them that's it then, you're their target ... if you lived next door to a person who was selling drugs you'd just keep your nose out of it. I'd do that. If you want to do that you can, but just keep me out of it. (Woman, 30 years old)*

A reluctance to engage with the police is a learned experience and one that cascades through generations, as the focus group with young people indicated:

*Woman 1: Yeah, but if people find out you're the grasser then they'll be after you and the police won't do nothing. If you grassed on somebody and the person you grassed on will be after you and the police won't do anything about that.*

*Woman 2: Because it's your fault.*

*Woman 3: Yeah. Because you grassed. So why would you help the police so you can get battered yourself?*

The perception of the focus group that many people in Higher Blackley would not call the police meant that there was some scepticism regarding the police and crime figures:

*The thing is that people don't report the crimes. So if people don't report things, of course it looks like a low crime area. (Man, 36 years old)*

The reluctance to connect with the police did not seem to be the case for several of the older residents who participated in the research and who were on tenants' groups, and who often spoke in glowing terms of their relationship with the police and provided examples of successful police work in moving drug dealing and anti-social behaviour away from their streets. As a woman, aged 82, said:

*We are constantly in touch with the police and giving them information and working alongside them, and just helping them to do their job really.*

While the mistrust of the police and the reluctance to be seen as a "grass" were strong within the focus group, there did seem a general, although not uniform, desire for the police to be more engaging.

*What you need is a local bobby back in the streets. Someone just patrolling the area that knows people by their names and can speak to people and then people would have more confidence to say I've got a problem on down the road there is a problem but I don't want to talk about it—someone that knows the area and*

*knows the people. Our local police now drives around in a little squared box van and he never talks to anyone. (Man, 55 years old)*

## 9.1 | NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

Despite bad relations with the police experienced by some participants, and a widespread distrust of the police amongst the focus group, the majority all felt that more local and visible police officers would be very welcome. Neighbourhood policing was designed to make the police more responsive to community needs. However, on the whole it was felt that the police do not communicate with the wider community any more and are rarely seen in the community. The visibility and communication of the police is important.

*You don't see them doing patrols. There used to be a lot of that. The only time you see them now is flying down the avenue going somewhere. They don't communicate any more. They don't walk down the street and say hello. (Man, 40 years old)*

The issue of who the police engage with is of critical importance. At the moment, it appears that this is largely delivered through residents' associations and neighbourhood watch. Inspector Chris Hadfield of the Greater Manchester Police (GMP) stated that:

*You see a lot of people going into those meetings and they will hopefully say that they have a good interaction with the police and it's those people that don't involve themselves with the community that say they don't see the police.*

In light of the deeply held cultural attitudes towards the police, it is difficult for the GMP to be able to develop systematic, proactive and integrated engagement in the very fabric of the police force.<sup>207</sup> In Higher Blackley, there are certainly important sections of the community who choose not to have a relationship with the police. However, by relying on the people who are most keen to become engaged and who attend public meetings, the police are missing huge swathes of potential community-led information. As Lowe and Innes point out:

*The methods, via which the concerns of the public are identified, understood and responded to have been slow to develop. A variety of engagement methods have been utilised across the country, from public meetings to street briefings to quantitative satisfaction surveys. Whilst these have improved the knowledge base*

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207 Lowe and Innes, "Can we speak in confidence?"

*of local forces to varying degrees, they have rarely afforded the sophisticated level of detail needed to truly understand the drivers of public insecurity.*<sup>208</sup>

While this criticism may be fair, there perhaps needs to be more consideration given to engaging a wider range of community members, and in different ways. Karn argues that if “policing” and local governance are to be perceived as inclusive by those whose experience has been one of exclusion and neglect, there must be a negotiation of legitimacy, rather than simply demonstrating its extent.<sup>209</sup> This legitimacy can be gained through well-informed community engagement, and there is evidence of the GMP exploring different methods in which to do this. In an interview with Assistant Chief Constable Garry Shewan, he notes that: “Community engagement allows us to listen to more voices ... it allows us to look at problems from a different perspective ... to get greater involvement from the communities themselves.”<sup>210</sup>

The Police Foundation argues that a prime way of impacting on public feelings of security is for policing to be brought closer to the public and to be more visible.<sup>211</sup> This would bring many benefits. Evidence suggests that by acting on community intelligence, police are more “able to ‘tune’ their interventions towards those problems generating most social harm”, which in turn improves public confidence and well-being.<sup>212</sup>

More police engagement would certainly strengthen their links with the wider community. Indeed, it is a declared aspiration for the police to have more community policing:

*What we aspire is for the community to police itself. If we can build enough contacts and community feeling to have them looking after their own patch that would be easier. Because every area has less and less while the area is massive.*  
(Chris Hadfield)

A research participant, aged 40, noted the potential impact that this could have:

208 Lowe and Innes, “Can we speak in confidence?”, p. 296.

209 J. Karn, “Over-policed, under-protected and tarred with the same brush: Exclusion and the desire for security during regeneration”, 2005. Conference: Securing the Renaissance: Policing, community and disorder 16th-17th June 2005 at [http://www.academia.edu/488411/Over-policed\\_under-protected\\_and\\_tarred\\_with\\_the\\_same\\_brush\\_exclusion\\_and\\_the\\_desire\\_for\\_security\\_during\\_regeneration](http://www.academia.edu/488411/Over-policed_under-protected_and_tarred_with_the_same_brush_exclusion_and_the_desire_for_security_during_regeneration)

210 Interview with ACC Garry Shewan, GMP, on the Mutual Gain website, at <http://www.mutualgain.org/#/gmp-video/4578327849>.

211 N. Fielding, “Getting the best out of community policing”, 2009, p. 8, at [http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/uploads/catalogerfiles/getting-the-best-out-of-community-policing/ideas\\_community\\_policing.pdf](http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/uploads/catalogerfiles/getting-the-best-out-of-community-policing/ideas_community_policing.pdf).

212 Lowe and Innes, “Can we speak in confidence?”

*I think it would make them seem stronger. If they listened to what people were saying, I would feel stronger towards them because they're taking time out to listen and then they take it to the law.*

Despite cultural attitudes and experiences that have created a suspicion of the police and a reliance on community networks to provide security, there was a desire for a more connected relationship with the police. Greater Manchester Police also clearly recognise at a strategic level that this is necessary and will deliver practical results. This will require alternative means of engaging than have been employed historically.

## 9.2 | ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

It is essential that the police identify the issues that affect the perception of security amongst local residents. Through our focus group, there was a sense that a small section of young people were causing concerns and problems within the community.

*They're not violent or anything. It's throwing bottles and intimidating people and wearing hoodies tightened around their faces. (Woman, 30 years old)*

*Yes, they cover their faces so you can't tell who they are and they cover their hands so you don't know what they're holding. (Man, 36 years old)*

This is intimidating and it was felt that the police did not deal particularly well with the anti-social behaviour of some young people—and people believed that the police turn a blind eye because of the paperwork involved.

As Manchester's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment picked up on, the fear of crime can alter people's lifestyles and may affect them in ways that lessen their quality of life and impact on their physical and psychological health.<sup>213</sup>

A man, aged 40, who provided many fascinating and on first glance often conflicting opinions, suggested that the police should:

*Grab these kids and drag them off the street corners and take them to their mothers and fathers. They don't do that these days. They can't go dragging people about, that's assault. They can't do that now so they just turn a blind eye, they don't want the paperwork ... they'd just rather drive past and ignore it rather than go and spend an hour, taking the youth to their parents' house and then spending an hour at the police station doing the paperwork.*

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<sup>213</sup> Manchester City Council, "Joint Strategic Needs Assessment", at [http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/500230/joint\\_strategic\\_needs\\_assessment/5669/north\\_manchester\\_living\\_in\\_the\\_area/3](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/500230/joint_strategic_needs_assessment/5669/north_manchester_living_in_the_area/3).

Inspector Chris Hadfield reported otherwise, suggesting more intensive early-intervention work with young people:

*We've done a lot of the kids stuff so that it never really escalates into that because it doesn't need to. We do warning interviews particularly with large amount of the people who we need to interact with live in housing association properties. Some of the work we've done in Northwards, it scares them a hell of a lot more when you get them in with a parent and a police officer in Northwards and say to them, stop it now, your mum's tenancy is on the line. There is more integration between services doing this: I think that could be a game changer in a lot of things. Having everyone here. We still need to integrate more ...*

There was a sense that the police choose which incidents to turn up to, and if it is too threatening, they will not come to intervene:

*They came to sort out 11–12-year-old kids who were giving an elderly person some abuse, but if you ring them and say there's 10 lads here with baseball bats they won't turn up ... when it's with kids they show up because then they can show their authority and show their uniform and push young kids about. But if you phone up and say there's a fight going on with three or four lads, you will sit there for an hour and film it and sit there and watch it for an hour before a police officer turns up. (Man, 43 years old)*

Despite all these concerns, people said they valued having a police force. The lack of visible policing was seen to be important and that they were facing difficult circumstances.

*Man 1: Before I phone the police I'll phone my sons or something because I know they'll be there before the police come. But the police try to do a good job and without the police this country wouldn't be here. But the police's priority is completely different now.*

*Man 2: And the things with the police is that they too have limited funds now.*

There was also recognition that the police were being affected by the cuts in their budgets:

*I hate myself for saying it but I have to defend them, the police, to a certain stand because it is the government that's stopping them from taking action, cutting down on the police. (Man, 40 years old)*

In October 2010, the government announced that the central funding provided to the police service would reduce by 20 per cent in the four years between March 2011

and March 2015, which is a saving of £135 million.<sup>214</sup> A review of the impacts of the austerity measures in 2012 stated that Greater Manchester Police have “balanced the books and largely maintained the service they provided to the public in the first year, while their plans show that ... they are working to protect, although not preserve, frontline services.”<sup>215</sup>

However, as austerity has begun to bite, announcements of reductions in frontline police officers have followed, with 290 officers being cut across Greater Manchester, and 45 in north Manchester.<sup>216</sup> This undoubtedly means that many of the issues identified as important by the community, such as more visibility and quicker response times, will be much more difficult for the police to deliver. However, such issues could be crucial for fostering more engagement with the police in communities that are suspicious of them, and for moving closer to the aims of neighbourhood policing, ultimately delivering more intelligent and efficient policing.

There is potential for more community-driven priorities to form a more integrated element of policing in local neighbourhoods. As Chris Hadfield noted,

*The new priorities by Tony Lloyd [the Police and Crime Commissioner] are to reduce crime. How's that for a figure ...*

The shift away from more target-driven approaches means that the police can spend more time identifying and responding to the local drivers of insecurity in order to make people feel more safe. This provides more opportunities to find out what the specific local problems are and which particular locations are generating feelings of insecurity for the public.

The police can best make communities feel more secure by working more closely with a broad range of residents to identify and respond to the concerns of the public. In order to make this effective, engagement must be proactive, systematic and integrated into daily routines. This appears to be recognised at a strategic level by Greater Manchester Police.

The challenge is for this to filter down to an operational level where interactions take place, and to begin the long-term transformation necessary to engage a wider cross-section of the community that feel little attachment to the police.

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214 HMIC, “Policing in austerity”, 2012, at <http://www.hmic.gov.uk/media/greater-manchester-policing-in-austerity-one-year-on.pdf> (hereafter, HMIC, “Policing in austerity”).

215 HMIC, “Policing in austerity”.

216 Scheerhout, J. “Fears over rise in crime as Greater Manchester Police axes 290 frontline officers”, [2012] at <http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/fears-over-rise-in-crime-as-greater-1218200>

## 9.3 | CONCLUSIONS

The research has found a deep cultural divide that exists between the community and the police. Creative approaches need to be fostered to develop a range of different mechanisms to be able to achieve this. Indeed, it is essential to deliver to the public a greater sense of security in their local areas. This will require change from both the community and the police and will not be easy as cultural behaviours and attitudes run deep. In a time of significant cuts to the police budget, this is of critical importance.

The research found residents' perceived crime rate was higher than the figures suggest, with the evidence showing that Higher Blackley is a relatively low-crime area. There was a strong feeling that there needed to be more police on the street, with a keenness for the "old bobby on the beat", and the notion that increased investment in community policing with better communication could be a real positive for the area. However, in line with other public sector agencies, Greater Manchester Police have had their budgets drastically reduced, and the redeployment of resources could undermine their immediate ability to achieve this. People felt that the police were often unresponsive and sometimes overly harsh in their treatment of individuals, with some residents reporting that they would rather rely on their social networks to provide the security that was meant to be provided by the police.



10

**CIVIC AND POLITICAL  
PARTICIPATION**

The research by the Open Society Foundations suggests a strong marginalisation from politics and key institutions among many focus group participants, in line with national trends of a steady decline in democratic engagement. The research uncovered residents who cited various reasons: apathy, lack of knowledge of a complex system, a growing disillusionment and frustration with the powers-that-be to listen or address local concerns, especially when there were wider and/or competing influences. The discussions and interviews reveal a cultural divide between the socially liberal world of politics—termed the “do-gooders”—and many people in white working-class communities.

This creates a significant dislocation from mainstream political parties, and potentially opens the door for more populist parties to enter with more simple messages that resonate with certain issues, which could inflame further tensions in the community or cause an entrenchment of disengagement with the democratic process. This in itself could become a significant issue if elected representatives are returned to a position of power and influence with a decreasing electoral mandate. While even if 10 per cent of the population return a majority for a candidate there is some democratic legitimacy, the issue of isolation and disengagement nevertheless are further compounded by this withdrawal from civic society.

Higher Blackley has several tenants and residents' associations, who get involved in local community issues and are connected with the local councillors. Examples include the excellent local community garden in Plant Hill and the close working between Liverton Court and the police in tackling anti-social behaviour. On the whole, these tend to be run by older residents, who can struggle in getting more local people involved, as this discussion below highlights:

*Man: When they got the allotment, there was about 10 of us. The next day, there was just me. (65 years old, the chair of a local tenants' and residents' group)*

*Woman: I don't think people want to get their hands dirty or do anything. They want to come to the events ... they don't want to be involved in setting them up. (60 years old)*

*Man: It is laziness because they just don't want to bother. You'll put leaflets through the door and you can guarantee within five minutes it'll be in the bin.*

There are also several informal and small community organisations, sports clubs and activity-driven groups, and an annual memorial event in the memory of David Lees, which brings together a large number of people from the community.

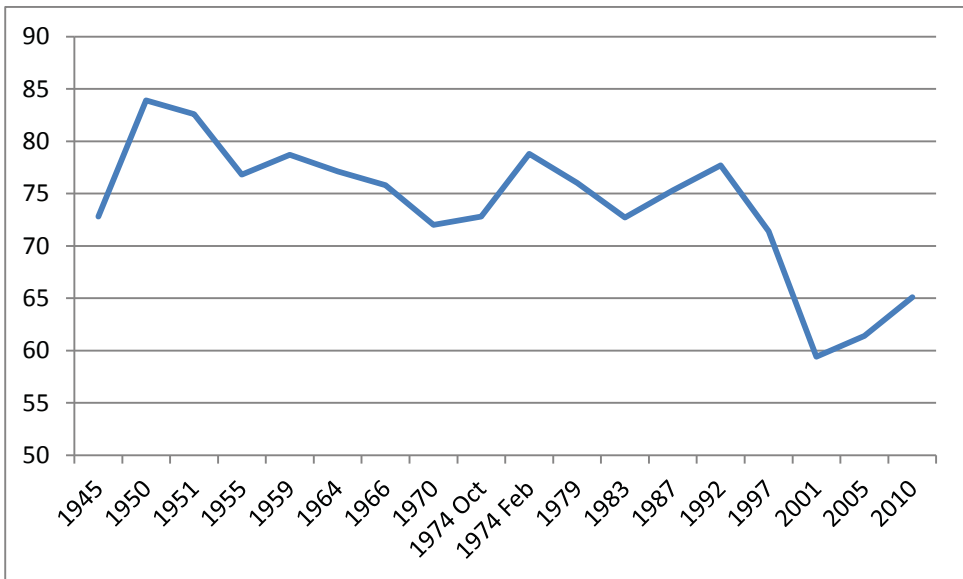
Higher Blackley is rather unusual for Manchester, as there are very few voluntary sector organisations that operate in the area. There is a community centre on the main road through Higher Blackley, although this varies in its usage and is run by a board of

dedicated members, rather than being an organisation and a hub of local activity. This changed as the research process went on and more recently it has seen an increase in activity and there are signs that the community centre is becoming a more valuable community asset.

## 10.1 | GENERAL ELECTIONS

Evidence shows that there has been a national downward trend in people participating in elections in the UK. There is higher average turnout in general elections than local council elections (the average national turnout for local elections in 2012 was 31.3%<sup>217</sup>), but from a post-war peak in 1950 of 83.9%, the turnout for general elections had dropped to 65.1% in 2010.

**FIGURE 32. GENERAL ELECTION TURNOUTS SINCE 1945**



**Source:** General election turnout 1945 – 2010 at <http://www.ukpolitical.info/Turnout45.htm>

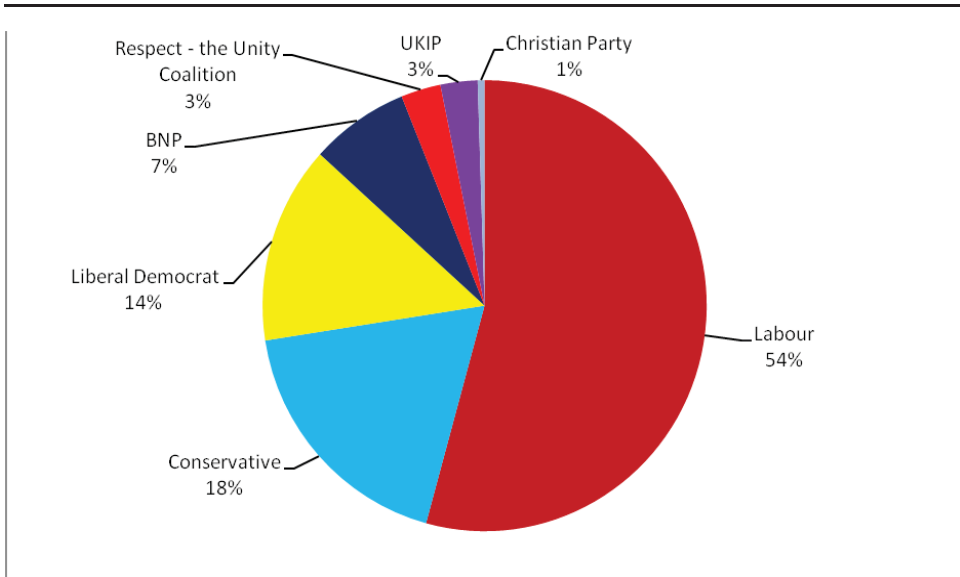
There was a general sense of people being isolated and frustrated with the decision-making processes, both in terms of formal politics and more community-orientated approaches led by stakeholders.

Graham Stringer has been the Member of Parliament since 1997, although he has had a decreasing share of the vote, he has retained a healthy majority. The research showed

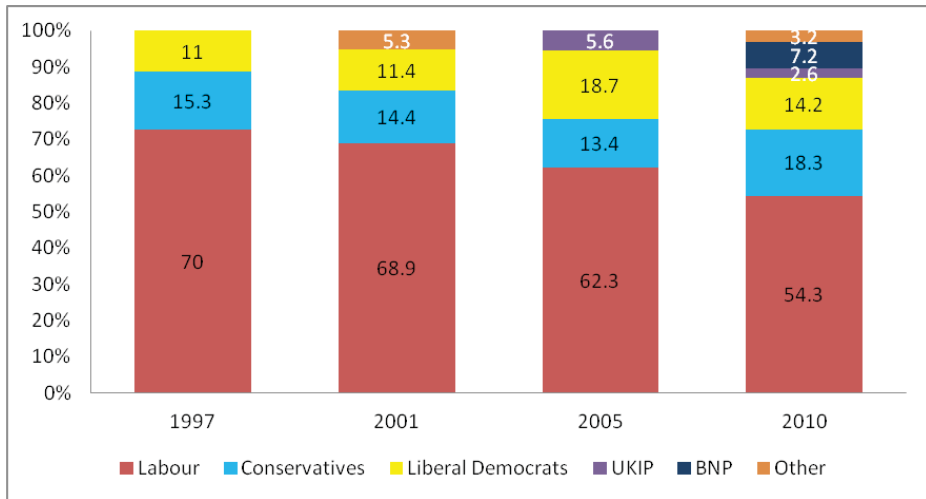
217 Guardian online: UK election historic turnouts since 1918. Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/nov/16/uk-election-turnouts-historic>

that even when residents were frustrated at the system, they still overwhelmingly voted for the incumbent MP, who will have represented the constituency for 18 years by the time the 2015 general election is upon us. This is with the boundary changes in 2010 election, which saw a redrawn constituency that combines the old Blackley constituency with two wards in Salford, Broughton and Kersal. The most recent election in 2010 had a turnout of 50.9 per cent, below the national average of 65.1 per cent. Labour held a significant majority of 12,303 in this election. So if a threat from an opposition party were to be realised, there would have to be a major surge in participation and a significant swing against Graham Stringer. This is of course a possibility but a very unlikely probability in the context of the area’s political leanings.

**FIGURE 33. GENERAL ELECTION IN BLACKLEY AND BROUGHTON CONSTITUENCY, 2010**



**Source:** Guardian online, “Blackley and Broughton”,  
at <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/constituency/1476/blackley-and-broughton>

**FIGURE 34. GENERAL ELECTION RESULTS IN BLACKLEY**

Source: Manchester City Council

## 10.2 | LOCAL ELECTIONS

In contrast, local election participation and average turnouts have been shrinking, locally as well as nationally. In 1990, a particularly high number of the population participated in the local elections, with 47 per cent recorded as the national average that year. This is high compared to the dismal results, just eight years later in 1998, when engagement in democratic processes hit an all-time low at just 28.5 per cent turning out to vote in local elections.

The electoral process in Manchester is viewed as a major component of civic and political participation, in which there are clear responsibilities for all councillors, who are expected to maintain a connection with the public and whose election provides a regular opportunity for the public to comment.<sup>218</sup> Manchester is very much dominated by the Labour party, especially in the north of the city, where all but one of the local councillors are drawn from the party. Out of 96 councillors on the city council, 85 are currently Labour, one is an independent who was formally Labour<sup>219</sup> and there are eight Liberal Democrats. Like many northern cities, there are no Conservatives represented on the council.

<sup>218</sup> Manchester City Council, Overview and Scrutiny Governance Subgroup—23 June 2011. Subject: “The Annual Governance Statement”, 2011, p. 12, at [http://www.manchester.gov.uk/egov\\_downloads/Item\\_2\\_-\\_Annual\\_Governance\\_Statement.pdf](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/egov_downloads/Item_2_-_Annual_Governance_Statement.pdf) (accessed 14 August 2012).

<sup>219</sup> The sole independent councillor left the Labour party due to a local issue where he disagreed with the council decisions.

However, there is a worrying trend, which although not exclusive to Manchester or Higher Blackley is nonetheless a significant issue. The results in Table 13 show the consistently low turnout across Manchester and Higher Blackley since 2006 in the local elections. The lowest turnout in this period was in 2012 at just 24.6 per cent, with the highest in 2008 at 30.3 per cent if we discount the general election year. Higher Blackley consistently has turnouts at just above or just below the city average.

**TABLE 13. VOTER TURNOUT IN HIGHER BLACKLEY**

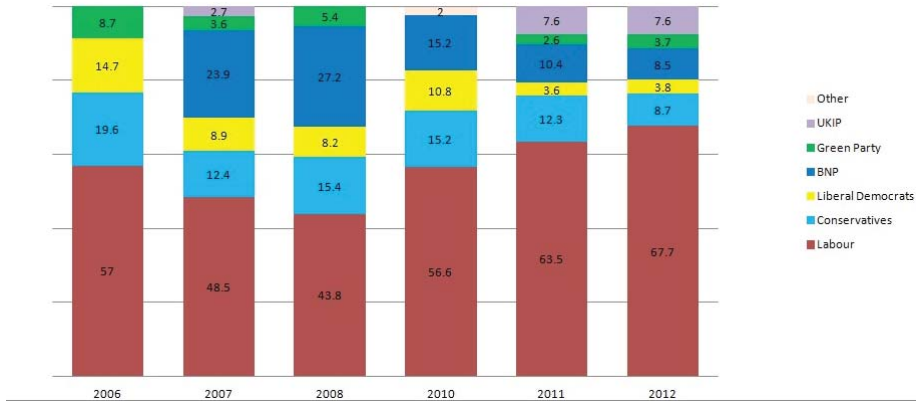
Year	Higher Blackley turnout (%)	Average turnout across Manchester (%)
2006	26.5	29.0
2007	29.7	28.3
2008	30.3	27.0
2010 (general election year)	51.9	50.9
2011	29.8	31.5
2012	24.6	25.3
2014	34.6	37.0

**Note:** 2009 and 2013 are fallow years where no elections are held

**Source:** Manchester City Council, "Councillors by name", 2012, at <http://www.manchester.gov.uk/councillors/name>

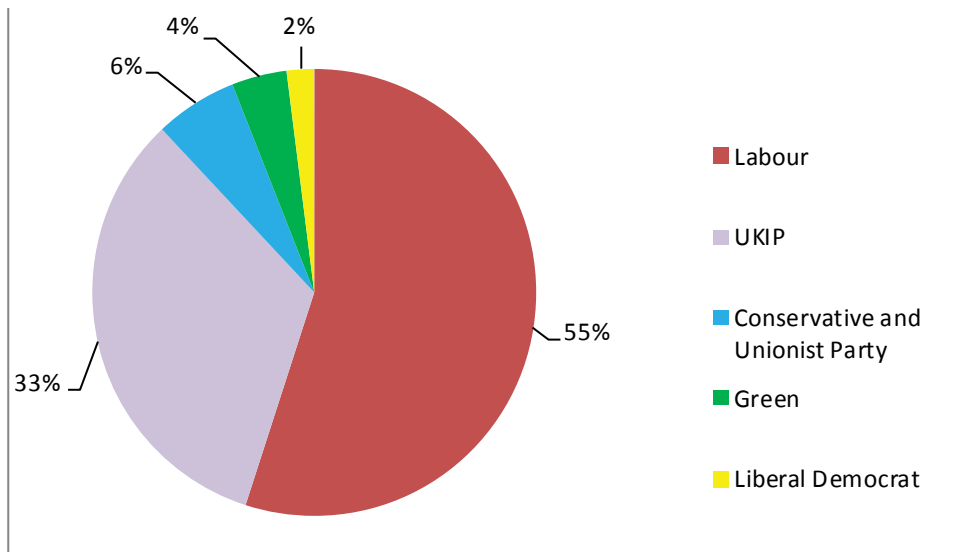
Local election results in Higher Blackley since 2006 reveal an interesting picture. The Labour party have dominated local election results, and in 2012 election won nearly two-thirds of all votes from a low voter turnout that averages 28 per cent in the years in which there was no general election. However, the picture is complex—local support for anti-immigration and far-right parties has been significant in past years, and in the most recent elections in May 2014, UKIP increased their share of the vote significantly to 33% (from 7.6% in 2012).

**FIGURE 35. LOCAL ELECTION RESULTS IN HIGHER BLACKLEY 2006-12, PERCENTAGES AS A SHARE OF THE VOTE**



Source: Manchester City Council

**FIGURE 36. 2014 HIGHER BLACKLEY LOCAL ELECTION RESULTS**



Source: Manchester City Council

The recent local election in Higher Blackley saw an increased turnout of 34.8%, and UKIP increase their percentage of the vote by 25.4% from 2012 to reach a third of the vote.

## 10.3 | ANTI-IMMIGRATION PARTIES

Former pub landlord Derek Adams, described as the “Manchester British National Party’s super activist”, has repeatedly stood for election in Higher Blackley and also in other areas. In a video on the BNP’s website, Adams declares that:

*Anyone since [Enoch Powell] who has ever dared to mention immigration has been condemned as “racist”. Of course, no-one who spoke out about immigration has been racist, they have been merely concerned about our own future generations ... we are now being told that we must work until we drop ... merely because our greedy governors have allowed people in who should never have been here, to sponge off our welfare state.<sup>220</sup>*

This rhetoric clearly parallels some of the anxieties that were shared by participants throughout the Open Society research, and they echo the perception that the public are not permitted to talk openly about immigration. The BNP vote reached its peak of over 25 per cent in 2007 and 2008, around the same time as the killing of David Lees, which they attempted to use as political capital.

*They had the British National Party knocking on the door of his mum, trying to get her on board and stuff. Whatever way you want to go politically you can understand the vulnerabilities that are there and then people are taking on idealistic views of what they think that represents without fully comprehending what it means. They’re acting on emotions rather than on policies and things like that. (Man, 32 years old)*

The attempts by the BNP to politicise a local family’s tragedy was explained by Anne Lees, David’s mother:

*At the time this was going on it was a case of give us your votes and we’ll stop all this immigration ... we’d gone down to where it had happened and there was flowers off the BNP on the lamp post. I left the flowers on but I took the card off ... we didn’t want to be associated with something that has nothing to do with my son’s case. Whatever they do, they do. But do not bring my son into it.*

This is part of a pattern that has taken place over recent years, as the BNP have targeted white working-class communities that have felt abandoned by Labour and sought to capitalise on local events that might serve to heighten public anxieties. Indeed, as the election results above show, in the two years that the BNP received over a quarter of the vote, the Labour share had dropped significantly, although this was

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220 BNP (online), Manchester BNP’s Derek Adams: “Losing our islands”, at <http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/manchester-bnp%E2%80%99s-derek-adams-%E2%80%99Closing-our-islands%E2%80%99D>.



also the time of David Lees' death. In an interview published in *Red Pepper Magazine* in 2009, a Blackley resident said that:

*What really incensed me was that not one of our local councillors even bothered to come round ... Whatever I think of the BNP, they were out there speaking to people. People here feel hard done by and not listened to, and the Labour government doesn't seem to care.*<sup>221</sup>

In 2010 the general and local elections were held simultaneously. With turnout double the usual rates, Adams received 813 votes, which was a total of 15 per cent. In the most recent elections in 2012, the BNP share of the vote collapsed from its peak of 27.3 per cent in 2008 to just 8.5 per cent of the votes, consistent with the national crisis experienced by the BNP. However, this decline in votes for the far right does not mean that the issues have dissipated. As Wilks-Heeg argues, the BNP's breakthrough in English local elections should be seen as a warning about the state of local democracy in England and, in particular, "an indicator of the advanced decay of local political parties."<sup>222</sup>

Kellner's analysis of polling data<sup>223</sup> reinforces the evidence that the Conservative party are currently unelectable in large parts of the north and certainly in Manchester. The Open Society Foundations research suggests that in the recent past there was space and some sympathy for a party (the BNP) that is seen to be in touch more with white working-class communities, although this did not translate into electoral success. However, the support for UKIP as an alternative legitimate voice in particular for white working-class communities is growing. In the May 2014 local elections the BNP did not put up a candidate.

Since 2011, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), a right-wing populist party, has entered local politics in Higher Blackley, receiving over 7 per cent of the votes in each year and registering 33% vote in May 2014, although north Manchester does not appear to be an area that is particularly targeted by the party. It is also not clear in Higher Blackley where these UKIP votes have come from, as Conservative, BNP and Liberal Democrat votes have all been significantly reduced, while Labour has increased its votes following the low point in 2008. As Ford et al. show, there is a distinction between "strategic defectors" from the Conservative party who vote to register their Euro-scepticism and more economically marginal and politically

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221 A. Bowman, "Holding back the BNP", 2012, at <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/Holding-back-the-BNP>.

222 S. Weeks-Heeg, "The canary in a coalmine? Explaining the emergence of the British National Party in English local politics", *Parliamentary Affairs* 62(3) (2009), pp. 377–398.

223 P. Kellner, "Why northerners don't vote Tory", 2013, at <http://yougov.co.uk/news/2013/10/21/why-northerners-dont-vote-tory>.

disaffected voters who are drawn to UKIP because of its anti-immigration rhetoric and populist anti-establishment stance.<sup>224</sup>

While there still remains a strong Labour share of the vote, with the candidate receiving 55 per cent of the vote at the local elections, Higher Blackley also has the highest levels of support in the city for the BNP over the last 8 years, and now has seen a significant increase in the vote for UKIP.

The elections must be viewed in light of the fact that two-thirds of eligible voters did not vote at the most recent local elections, and it is those people who provide future unpredictability and display a deep sense of marginalisation from the political process at a local level. The potential for far-right and populist parties to cause an electoral shock remains. Bernard Priest, the Manchester Council executive member for neighbourhoods said:

*It's not that we haven't done enough for north Manchester because we have, it's that we haven't linked the good things we've done to our image, and therefore people when they're dissatisfied, they don't come to their advice bureau, they don't come to a party meeting, they don't ring their councillor or MP up, they look for an alternative. And there isn't one really, to be perfectly honest. If you're white working class and what you're concerned about is employment opportunities, what you believe are levels of crime and disorder, litter, closure of your library, all sorts of things. If you're unhappy, you can't vote for Tory, for all sorts of reasons you can't vote Tory. The BNP is a very unattractive alternative, but therein lies the attraction. If you are voting BNP, you are saying to the Labour party, look what you've driven us to.*

## 10.4 | DISILLUSIONMENT WITH TRADITIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES

However, the Open Society research would suggest that there is a possibility that these are more than just protest votes. There is a considerable sense of dislocation from policymaking, as many participants felt marginalised from the process at all levels and felt their ability to influence it was very limited, if there at all.

This took different forms, from those who had always voted but felt disillusioned, people who were apathetic and saw little point in voting and those who simply had no knowledge of the political process.

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224 R. Ford, M. Goodwin and D. Cutts, "Strategic Eurosceptics and polite xenophobes: Support for the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in the 2009 European Parliament elections", *European Journal of Political Research* 51 (2) (2009), pp. 204–234.

Older people tend to vote even when they are dissatisfied with the system:

*I've always been extremely interested in politics and the way the world works. I'm disappointed, disillusioned and I don't think we can do anything at all about it.*

Diverse reasons given for such disillusionment included a lack of jobs available and the feeling that immigration had got out of control. Such people are still voting out of a sense of duty, but these people are more likely to be drawn from the older generation.

If significant sections of the electorate are disengaged and mainstream political parties are perceived to be neglecting what are seen as legitimate concerns and failing to understand the deep-rooted fears that exist within communities, then there is a vacuum in which more populist or extremist voices can begin to take hold within the community.

While parties such as the BNP are largely rejected by the majority, this does not mean that the danger of extremism has disappeared. More subtle approaches in which grievances are tied in more implicitly with anti-immigrant sentiments remain potentially powerful, especially as the Labour party currently remains apparently dominant. As one participant said, "I feel taken for granted by the local Labour party ... they are too complacent." Dr Rob Ford noted that in such areas of one-party dominance, the "tree might appear strong, but the roots are weak, and one day the tree might fall down."<sup>225</sup>

The historical voting pattern in Manchester shows that Labour has remained steadfast as the majority ruling party. This is partly because of the tribal loyalty to Labour in the North, the lack of a credible robust opposition and an increasing detachment from engagement in democratic politics. The average turnouts show a worrying and steady decline in the local community participating in the local elections. Even if UKIP or another party fills some of the space, it could take years for them to be a serious challenge.

The area requires all mainstream political parties to undertake some serious and robust community and voter engagement with a view to increasing participation in the democratic process.

Apathy, disinterest and failure even to register to vote among young people is a growing concern across the political spectrum,<sup>226</sup> as it creates a volatile situation in which there will be a large element of the electorate not used to voting or who have

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225 Open Society Foundations Interview with Dr Rob Ford, Manchester University, 2013.

226 Cabinet Office, "Electoral registration: Factors in England and Wales", 2013, at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/electoral-registration-factors-in-england-and-wales>.

become so marginalised from the political process that they simply do not engage. There was a sense from several research participants that there have been too many failed promises and little had really changed:

*I think they promise you the world and then drop you on your arse. (Man, 32 years old)*

*When they win, they shit on you. (Man, 32 years old)*

This was backed up by a belief that whoever was elected, “the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer.” In terms of wider structural change and the impacts that this has on white working-class communities, it is difficult to challenge this assumption. For the last 30 years, the white working class has largely had decreasing wages, reduced employment opportunities—especially in skilled work—and now there is less chance of their children being able to do better than they have.

There is a sense across a broad range of participants that things have become palpably worse for working-class communities in recent years due to the impacts of government welfare reforms (especially the so-called bedroom tax) and rising costs of living.

Some participants were clear in placing responsibility for their deteriorating circumstances on the coalition government. A single mother on benefits, said that:

*It's that Cameron when it's gotten worse. I can't wait till they get out.*

Such a voter is probably not part of the targeted demographic of the Conservative party. It is not clear, however, whether such anger towards a particular political party will translate into political action through voting.

The third major factor behind a lack of engagement with the formal political process was a lack of knowledge. This was quite prevalent throughout several focus groups and is clear through this dialogue between two women:

*I just never understood it so I never saw the point in it. If it was someone I could understand then maybe. (27 years old)*

*I'm the same, I don't understand it so I don't really know who to vote for. (30 years old)*

What is striking is that these women spoke at considerable length about social issues that were affecting their families and friends, and they had some strong opinions about a wide range of issues. However, their lack of knowledge meant that the route of formal politics was not one that they had used.

## 10.5 | THE “DO-GOODERS”

Beyond formal politics and politicians, the research participants referred to the “do-gooders”. These people are bureaucrats and policymakers who were seen as devising rules without having any sense of what happens in working-class communities like Higher Blackley. The discussion below reveals the low esteem that these people are held in:

*I don't think they live in the real world, the do-gooders. They must live in somewhere very secluded, where nothing ever happens ... (Woman, 82 years old)*

*It's the anonymity, isn't it, of these people, who one way or other influence the way we've got to live. You don't know who they are. And this is what annoys me, because you don't know who to approach about it. You don't know who to challenge. It's frustrating sometimes. (Woman, 77 years old)*

This reveals a deep sense among people who already feel disaffected that they have little influence over decisions that directly affect their lives. This can be very powerful at fuelling the flames of discontent. One particularly divisive area is the tension between state involvement and individual liberty, for instance through examples such as the smoking ban, or the right to be able to smack children.

It is also part of a deeper malaise which sees cultural dislocation between white working-class communities and policymakers. All of the mainstream national political parties in the near past have tended to concentrate their appeal on educated middle classes, as this is the key to their success, and it is also the social group that the political class is increasingly drawn from.

The professionalisation of politics as well as other sectors has squeezed the traditional pathways that working-class people would ordinarily use to get ahead. Allen argues that this has made democracy less representative and accessible.<sup>227</sup>

This creates a cultural divide between the socially liberal world of politics and those who are less well educated, more socially conservative and more nationalistic. The issue of immigration was brought up by a large number of participants, as was the idea that people were not able to talk about it freely within wider public discussions. Research suggests that the levels of dissatisfaction with government handling of immigration are very high, and indeed perceived as significantly worse than their handling of the economy, even throughout the financial crisis.<sup>228</sup> However, many

227 P. Allen (2013), “The professionalisation of politics makes our democracy less representative and less accessible”, 2013, at [democraticaudit.com/?p=1382&utm\\_content=buffera2c5f&utm\\_source=buffer&utm\\_medium=twitter&utm\\_campaign=Buffer](http://democraticaudit.com/?p=1382&utm_content=buffera2c5f&utm_source=buffer&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=Buffer).

228 G. Evans and K. Chzen, “Explaining voters' defection from Labour over the 2005–10 electoral cycle: Leadership, economics and the rising importance of immigration”, *Political Studies* 61(Suppl. S1) (2013), p. 142.

people in the community felt that they were not able to talk freely about immigration (although they had few problems being open in our focus groups).

Kenny identifies ways in which concerns raised by white working class communities about their worsening position and neglect by the political system have been “silenced by the tendency of liberals to dismiss the articulation of grievances as motivated by narrow-minded prejudice and ethnically charged nationalism.”<sup>229</sup> This was confirmed in the Open Society Foundations research, with one person capturing the wider sense that:

*Just cos your opinions differ from the mainstream doesn't mean you're a racist. We're just very, very worried.* (Man, 50 years old)

This reveals a deep sense of disconnect between white working-class communities and the political class, which has several important implications.

## 10.6 | THE IMPLICATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE POLICYMAKING

Another fundamental implication of people feeling dislocated from mainstream politics is that it is simply less democratic, and furthermore leads to less effective decision-making, which means that ultimately policy will fail to provide the answers to questions that communities are asking. The damaging disconnection between policymakers and communities runs deeper than electoral politics and includes the very way that policy is designed and delivered.

Involvement in formal democratic decision-making is essential if people are to have influence. But there is also significant room for local people to become more involved in how local public services are run.

Furthermore, such involvement in tangible local issues and services can be more appealing to many people, who may be disillusioned with politics but still have a passion to make a difference in their local area.

Many policies often lack an evidence-based link between policy aims and implementation. This is because they reflect centrally designed policies that neglect the perspectives of people in communities, and so therefore often fail to address the complexity of the interventions that are required.

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229 M. Kenny (2011), “The political theory of recognition: The case of the ‘white working class’”, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 14(1) (2011), p. 25.

This is failing to take advantage of a more co-produced approach to public service delivery. Co-production essentially describes a relationship between service provider and citizen, which brings together the experiences and knowledge of both, drawing upon their shared abilities, resources and assets. This changes the balance of power and potentially can mean people are less dependent on public services, more empowered and are able to shape public services to make them more cost-effective and ultimately more successful.

The New Economics Foundation provides the following definition: “Co production means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are co produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change”.

Co-production is based on the recognition that public services are a collaborative project between citizens and the state. Using co-production to create policy increases the capacity for learning about complex issues and supports a broader range of perspectives, creating public services that have enhanced knowledge about the interventions that are being delivered.

Increased adoption of co-produced knowledge within the policymaking process has significant potential to address issues in communities by bringing both experiential expertise and local knowledge into the policymaking process and into the way that public services are both designed and delivered. However, this seems a long way off in Higher Blackley, despite many participants throughout our research declaring a clear motivation to get involved in decisions if they could see the direct impacts of such involvement.

For instance, in the focus group with young people there was a real desire among all the young people to have more of a say in local decisions:

*I want a big debate with them saying that's our money and we've deserved that money. (Boy, 15 years old)*

*We know what we want so we should have a say in how they spend it. (Boy, 15 years old)*

A final implication is that research shows that social cohesion is lessening and that this is due in large part to a lack of trust in public institutions. The sense that such institutions were favouring immigrants over the majority population often stemmed from a lack of transparency in the decision-making process. Also, in some cases where people feel that public institutions are not representing them or their needs, they are more likely to believe things that they hear through public conversation, regardless

of whether they are substantiated or not. This means that it becomes very difficult to create conditions for social cohesion in the long term.

## 10.7 | CONCLUSIONS

There has been a marked and steady decline in democratic engagement and participation over the last 40 years, with an increased sense of isolation from mainstream politics. The research uncovered a deep-rooted frustration about formal politics and powerful institutions, even though many of the older residents participated in democratic processes. For some residents, this is borne out of a lack of knowledge about the political process, which was seen to be complex, and a growing sense of apathy and disillusionment. What is also clear is the cultural divide between the socially liberal world of individuals and institutions in positions of power—termed the “do-gooders”—and many people in white working-class communities. This contributes to a significant dislocation from mainstream political parties and the ability to influence key institutions, for example the police, registered social landlords and the local authority. This could potentially widen the opportunities for more populist parties to enter the debate with simpler messages that resonate with certain issues and anxieties, thereby creating further tensions in the community.



11

MEDIA

The main newspaper in the city is the *Manchester Evening News*. The group that owns this also circulates several local newspapers, although the one that specifically covered the area of Higher Blackley and north Manchester has been taken out of circulation. As with most local areas in Manchester, stories about Blackley are featured, although there are now fewer local reporters available due to budget cuts at the *Evening News*. The BBC has recently relocated to Media City in Salford, and it also runs BBC Radio Manchester and BBC North West news on the television. In terms of social media, there are a couple of small-scale community pages on both Twitter and Facebook.

The council is piloting an approach on Twitter in which each local ward has a Twitter account—the Higher Blackley account currently has 217 followers. There was a strong feeling throughout the research that the media do not represent working-class communities accurately or fairly. This can have a damaging effect on communities and how they are perceived. The white working-class communities we spoke to felt a distance from the media, which reflects their lack of faith in institutions.

Nancy Fraser's concept of misrecognition is particularly pertinent when exploring the concept of media representation of white working-class communities. She identifies misrecognition as cultural/symbolic injustice that is rooted in social patterns of representation, cultural domination and non-recognition.<sup>230</sup> In other words, the media's misrepresentation of the white working classes is not simply poor journalism that does not reflect communities accurately, but rather it is all part of the unequal society in which we live and both reflects this inequality, but also reproduces it through the effects that it creates by strengthening the perception of people living in poverty and struggling on low incomes as in some sense deserving of it due to their own individual character flaws.

At the time of the Open Society Foundations' fieldwork, the BBC3 programme "*People Like Us*" was a topical point of discussion. It was advertised as depicting "real" life in Harpurhey in north Manchester; however, it received strong criticism from local residents, one of whom, Richard Searle, has described it as "Jeremy Kyle-style, laugh-at-the-chavs type of television."<sup>231</sup>

*They've done good for ratings. They'll go to the extremes or make it up ... If everyone in Harpurhey acted like that they'd all be put down. (Man, 32)*

Participants in our research felt the programme deliberately focused on negative aspects of the community and was far from being a fair portrayal:

230 N. Fraser and A. Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition*. London, Verso, 2003, p. 36.

231 S. Hills, "It's Jeremy Kyle-style, laugh-at-the-chavs TV: Stars of BBC's '*People Like Us*' claim it is faked to make them appear drunk, fat and lazy", *Mail* online, 2013, at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2282189/BBC-People-Like-Us-faked-make-appear-drunk-fat-lazy-Jeremy-Kyle-style-laugh-chavs-TV.html>. Note: "*The Jeremy Kyle Show*" is a popular TV programme, which is often criticised for its sensational and confrontational approach; "chav" is a derogatory term to describe a person from white working-class communities who dresses in a particular way.

*It's nothing like us round here. I don't know anyone like that to be honest with you. So in that way the media is a bad thing because it's made to look as if nobody in Blackley wants to work and they get drunk all day.* (Woman, 29 years old)

Channel 4's documentary of a street in Birmingham entitled "*Benefits Street*" is another recent example of what is becoming an increasing trend in the UK media to accentuate negative stereotypes of people who rely on social security or survive in low-paid work. These stereotypes include welfare dependency, criminal and anti-social behaviour, a lack of morals and laziness of people who would rather rely on benefits than work hard. Newspapers picked up on this, and headlines such as the following one from the *Daily Express* were common: "Broken Britain's reliance on welfare is exposed tonight in a series about a street where nine out of 10 people live on benefits."<sup>232</sup>

The stereotypes of one particular street are even extended to provide "evidence" of a problem across the country, as Christian Guy from the Centre for Social Justice wrote: "Far from a one-off, clusters of social breakdown blight thousands of similar streets across Britain."<sup>233</sup>

Declan Gaffney showed that James Turner Street, which was the focus of the programme, actually had 30 per cent of people in receipt of out-of-work benefit rather than the 90 per cent of myth.<sup>234</sup> However, the media and myths are more powerful than social scientists, and it is the headlines and programmes that can shape people's attitudes on working-class neighbourhoods.

This reinforces views by commentators who use cultural explanations of poverty. For example, Charles Murray, identifies the underclass as people who are not "merely poor, but often at the margins of society, unsocialised and often violent."<sup>235</sup> Socio-economic marginalisation is individualised. Such an explanation identifies moral standards and not inequality as the major issue. By focusing on such stereotypes, the media support the explanation of poverty as a factor caused by the behaviour of people who live in poverty, which in turn devalues a more sociological point of view that seeks explanations in wider structural issues. As Reay argues, conceptualising social difference in terms of lifestyle rather than social inequality means that class relations are increasingly shifted away from economic issues of production, and more towards consumption.<sup>236</sup>

232 C. Sheldrick, "Benefits Street exposed: The street where 9 out of 10 households are on welfare", *Daily Express* online, 2014, at <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/452213/Benefits-Street-The-show-exposing-area-where-9-out-of-10-households-are-on-welfare>.

233 C. Guy, "Don't pretend Benefits Street is fiction", Huffington Post online, 2014, at [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/christian-guy-/benefits-street\\_b\\_4674070.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/christian-guy-/benefits-street_b_4674070.html).

234 D. Gaffney, "James Turner Street exists: Benefits Street doesn't", *Left Foot Forward* online, 2014, at <http://www.leftfootforward.org/2014/01/james-turner-street-exists-benefits-street-doesnt>.

235 Murray and Phillips, *Underclass + 10*, p. 2.

236 D. Reay, "Rethinking social class: Qualitative perspectives on class and fender", *Sociology* 32, (2), (1998), p. 262.

This was evident in the case of the television celebrity cook Jamie Oliver's famous outburst, in which he said that poorer Britons choose to eat "chips and cheese out of Styrofoam containers" while sitting in a room with a "massive fucking TV."<sup>237</sup> This is just one high-profile example, but it is continually reinforced by the televisual media through different programmes as well as in the print media.

This stereotyping of working-class communities throughout the media supports the dominant political narrative of people's behaviour being to blame for poverty. In terms of the food poverty that Jamie Oliver alluded to, the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, stated that pressures faced by families are "are often the result of decisions that they have taken, which mean they are not best able to manage their finances."<sup>238</sup>

This then connects to public policies in which interventions are designed to correct deficits within communities, for instance their poor choice of diet and bad financial decisions, rather than addressing deep-rooted structural factors that have an impact and have been described in this report.

Iain Duncan Smith, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, claimed that "Benefits *Street*" justified his programme of welfare reform, likening it to the campaign to abolish slavery and noted that "the middle-class majority were largely unaware of the true nature of life on some of our estates ... for the most part, they remain out of sight—meaning people are shocked if and when they are confronted with the reality."<sup>239</sup>

This constructs myths and dominant stereotypes as reality. There is little opportunity for white working-class communities to be able to challenge these stereotypes. Steph Lawler argues that the marginalised groups in society are "denied the right to *claim* an identity as distinct from an ascribed and enforced classification."<sup>240</sup> As a female participant, aged 29, said about "*People Like Us*":

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237 J. Deans, "Jamie Oliver bemoans chips, cheese and giant TVs of modern-day poverty", *Guardian* online, 2013, at <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2013/aug/27/jamie-oliver-chips-cheese-modern-day-poverty>.

238 M. Chorley, "Poor forced to use food banks? They've only got themselves to blame for making bad decisions, says Michael Gove", *Mail* online, 2013, at 96. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2416737/Poor-forced-use-food-banks-Theyve-got-blame-says-Michael-Gove.html>.

M. Chorley, "Cutting benefits is a moral mission like ending slavery, Iain Duncan Smith claims in vow to end Britain's welfare 'ghettos'", *Mail* online, 2014, at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2544276/Benefits-Street-proves-reforms-right-says-Iain-Duncan-Smith-Work-Pensions-Secretary-says-middle-class-families-shocked-welfare-ghettos.html>.

239 S. Lawler, "White like them: Whiteness and anachronistic space in representations of the English working class", *Ethnicities* (2012) 12 (4), p. 410.

240 Shildrick and MacDonald, "Poverty talk", p. 2.

*They didn't show ... their community side of it, because where they live, they've got a good community, everyone looks after each other, they didn't show any of that, they showed all the bad stuff.*

The means of representing white working-class communities are almost exclusively in the hands of people who are not drawn from those communities. This was something that was noted by focus group participants, especially in terms of the print media, who felt that journalists

*have been born with a silver spoon in their mouth. I couldn't get a job at a newspaper ... because they all come from the same platform. (Man, 84 years old)*

This was supported by Jen Williams, a reporter for the local Manchester Evening News, who explained that, "the reality is that the profession is more likely to draw off the middle classes and also ... this idea really that you have to work for free for a considerable time now before you get a job, means you have to have a bit of money behind you."

Therefore, the means of producing the images of white working-class communities are almost exclusively outside the control of white working-class people. The journalists who write stories about white working-class communities are distanced from the people they are writing about.

This means that there are very few popular portrayals of working-class communities emanating from the national media. This clearly has implications: "This popular media invisibility and/or distortion of the realities of poverty feeds the widespread belief that, where poverty does exist, it must be self-imposed."<sup>241</sup>

Furthermore, Jen Williams noted that these communities were less proactive in terms of getting things into the media:

*Middle class communities are much better at ringing up the paper, they have a much stronger voice, they're much more articulate, and they will tell you that they are doing something and you will then report it, where other communities perhaps, it wouldn't occur to them, they get on with it, they do it, and it doesn't occur to them to publicise it, so it might get a bit lost."*

In order to overcome this, it is important to have reporters who go out into neighbourhoods to engage with more marginalised communities; however, the resources of the print media are limited, especially in terms of northern correspondents for the national institutions. Indeed, one person stated in the focus group that, as much of the print media is based in London, stereotypes are relied upon

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241 Shildrick and MacDonald, "Poverty talk", p. 2.

and reinforced within the media: “North of the Watford Gap, we’re all idiots. We dress like tramps, we’re this, we’re this or that ...”

The idea that “they”re looking at it from the outside in” was mentioned. This had an impact on how the media viewed working-class communities, which one participant described as: “the working class, and the disadvantaged ... we’re just fodder to them.” There is an unhealthy disparity between knowledge and power in our society. The ability of working-class communities to influence the media, and therefore public knowledge about social reality, is extremely limited. This is recognised by communities, as one participant said:

*Newspapers have far too much influence in society, far too much influence. They represent groups, mainly rich. Owned, mainly by the rich. There’s no socialism in newspapers, because they haven’t got the money. Newspapers and the media are all owned by millionaires. So they don’t reflect society. These people don’t know how we live. (Man, 78 years old)*

As the Open Society Foundations’ research has shown, dominant conceptions of white working-class communities that are based on purely behavioural issues serve to hide the deeper structural issues that contribute towards their marginalisation. This is perpetuated by a broad range of actors, but the media form a critical component in the public perception of such stereotypes. Often, the media will focus on the worst elements of the community, and sensationalise these to paint the picture as though this is representative of the whole area and the people who live in it.

## 11.1 | CONCLUSIONS

As in many sectors, there have been changes within the profession, with the days of people working their way up from being runners to reporters becoming increasingly scarce. The media have become increasingly professionalised, with journalist graduates often filling vacancies and the narrowing of any other pathways into the profession. The media have not been immune to the austerity measures, with national and local print media cutting reporters and increasingly relying on established networks. This is all within the context of print media competing with broadcast and online media, a declining readership base and an extremely competitive environment with regard to getting the “best” story. There was a strong feeling throughout the research that the media do not represent working-class communities accurately or fairly. This feeling was concentrated on the national broadcast and print media in particular. This leads to a misrecognition of the realities of people’s lives and can have a damaging effect on communities and how they are collectively perceived. The local media were perceived as being more relevant in reporting local issues, although there was still little recognition of how working-class communities could influence or shape stories.

# 12

## CONCLUSIONS

The Open Society Foundations' research has found that Higher Blackley has clusters of strong white working class communities, which serve as networks of support and provide a safety net for people. In times of cultural, demographic and economic change these support circles are increasingly relied upon. Far from being broken, these communities are often surviving in extremely difficult circumstances and have a strong work ethic.

White working class communities in Higher Blackley are experiencing social insecurity that impacts on people's lives, their families and the wider community in a range of different but cumulative ways. This insecurity and erosion in the sense of belonging has roots in de-industrialisation and the replacement of traditional jobs in manufacturing with low-skilled and low paid jobs in the service sector. Endemic low pay coupled with the increases in costs of living is making life increasingly difficult. The scale and pace of change at a local level hasn't be in line with the expectations or understanding for many of the longer-term residents in Higher Blackley, which in turn has fuelled negative perceptions about change that is not always reflective of realities.

The traditional social security net is being eroded, and the stability previously provided by social housing is being steadily reduced through a nationwide lack of available and affordable housing that translates locally into difficulties for families to stay together in the areas in which they have social bonds. The effects of welfare reform are creating further strain on people who are already feeling under pressure and the impacts are likely to become worse before any significant improvements are felt in individual lives. At the same time, the security provided for by the police is felt by some to be at best, neglecting working class communities, and at worse as being overly punitive.

The results of this social insecurity can be seen in terms of poorer outcomes in education for white working class communities and much worse health, especially in terms of mental health. This all contributes to a cycle of insecurity that affects people across their whole lives and further compounds their sense of isolation and marginality. What this report has shown is the interconnected nature of different social and cultural issues and further strengthens the debate that public policy cannot be understood in isolation—each affects the other in cumulative and intersecting ways.

All these issues are largely ignored by a hostile and divisive mainstream media, which is part of a wider political narrative at a national level that focuses predominantly on the need for individual behavioural change, while failing to address the deeper roots of marginalisation.

This failure to deal with fundamental issues has created a condition in which people do not believe in the promises of politicians and feel disempowered by the edicts of the 'do-gooders.'



As people feel insecure, social cohesion suffers. One really striking comment through the research was that: 'we're not racist, just resentful.' Even when this perception is in contrast to people's actualisation of their behaviours, it is such perceptions which must be addressed alongside the engagement of concerted action to address systemic marginalisation.

This can all contribute towards a rise in anti-immigration sentiments. As people see their traditional networks of social security being removed or eroded, they have seen significant immigration and changing demographics bringing new arrivals into their area. This interacts with deeply rooted cultural anxieties, resulting in a situation in which immigration is often blamed for many of the problems that people identify. Even when these fears of the 'other' does not match the reality of numbers of immigrants on the ground, the prevailing sense of their local communities changing before their eyes is a fear that resonates strongly with many and one that must be fully addressed.

# 13

## KEY FINDINGS

This chapter is designed to provide some key findings with a view to finding long-term solutions to the issues identified throughout the research, while at the same time building upon the strengths and capabilities that exist within the community.

### 13.1 | HEALTHY EATING PROGRAMME IN SCHOOLS

Raising educational achievement for all pupils, including those from families where parents may themselves lack education and skills, is a high priority in reducing marginalisation. The key to the success of schools such as Crab Lane Primary is a holistic approach that tackles multiple factors by using data to identify pupils' needs and provide appropriate support, engaging parents, promoting healthier eating, etc. This could be strengthened by involving more parents and the wider community in school-based activities, GPs in identifying pupils with health risks, and housing providers in sharing information on issues around debt and poor housing conditions.

The success of Crab Lane School in providing cooking lessons for parents could be extended to the entire community as part of efforts to make schools into assets that are shared and used by more members of the community. This could be explored around a healthy eating project to share more knowledge on how to cook using fresh food, while at the same time providing fruit and vegetables for the community.

### 13.2 | POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Manchester City Council could consider working with schools and youth organisations to develop more effective ways of engaging with young people regarding democratic participation. Greater Manchester has a strong democratic tradition through the Peterloo Massacre, the birth of the cooperative movement and the Suffragettes. It also has the People's History Museum, the Working Class Movement Library and the Rochdale Pioneers Museum, which are assets that can be drawn upon. Through this, there could be a connection with the wider community as young people's work could be showcased in different and innovative ways as part of a programme that increases knowledge about the democratic process. To incentivize participation, the local Cash Grants scheme, which currently provides £30,000 of community grants for each ward, could potentially ringfence a proportion of its spend for young people to design and deliver local projects of their own choosing that would make a difference to problem issues that they have identified in their local area. This would give young people direct experience of decision-making that has a tangible outcome and could lead to engagement in local politics and potential pathways for more formal involvement. This could involve working with local councillors and public service providers to co-design local activities and projects.

### 13.3 | SHARED SPACE DEVELOPMENT

A project to develop shared spaces, where people can come together to talk about the public places that they share, could help to achieve better social cohesion and increase the sense of belonging to the area. Engaging interested residents from across the ward to devise activities would allow for a starting point to build a relationship based on a shared community place, which means that projects would go beyond issues of identity and difference, and focus more on shared community connections, spaces and assets. It would provide more local activities that engage the community in different ways, and could potentially provide the basis of a new business model for the community centre to be more financially sustainable in the future.

### 13.4 | HOUSING: UPDATED PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING CONDITION SURVEY

An updated private sector housing survey would provide more information on the changes in housing conditions in the private sector since the last survey in 2006. A review of the findings will help the council to make evidence-based decisions regarding the future development of private sector housing strategies, the targeting of resources and the fulfilment of the statutory obligations set out in the 2004 Housing Act. The results might identify the need to introduce measures such as landlord licensing (already being used by some councils), codes of practice for letting agencies on providing information for both landlords and tenants, targeting problem landlords or reviewing mechanisms by which schools, health visitors, care givers, the fire brigade and other services can report housing quality issues they may identify in the course of their work, which would provide a more cost-effective and ongoing means of gathering information than regular surveys.

### 13.5 | CONNECTING COMMUNITIES WITH THE LOCAL MEDIA

The media have an important role to play in terms of influencing people's perceptions of society, and in creating the ways in which working-class communities are viewed. Although it is important to consistently challenge negative portrayals of underrepresented communities, there are limitations in terms of influencing national media narratives. At a local level, the media are keen to have more connection with communities and could develop schemes where they work with schools/sixth-form colleges, focusing on working-class communities, to build up a work experience programme. This would provide the basis for facilitating a long-term relationship between the media and young people within working-class communities, who would be able to provide the connection with their local area. This could lead to the

development of a network on the ground that can act as a conduit to feed in stories from local areas/communities as well as be a link within those communities.

### 13.6 | SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY NETWORKS

The issues caused by low-level mental health problems are widespread in Higher Blackley. This creates a significant potential role for informal support groups for people to come together and talk through issues, make connections in the community and improve mental health and well-being at a cost-effective price. There are existing play groups at two of the local churches and the Sure Start initiative, which could be supported to increase their capacity and engagement to be able to run outreach sessions once a week in those areas to support those communities and start building up an informal parent network. Where there are gaps, these playgroups and parent networks could be considered as part of public health initiatives or preventive measures commissioned by CCGs. This could bring in other agencies to consider parental engagement with schools, peer initiatives to increase take-up of early years provision, communication with the council and police, better information about key issues such as housing, electoral registration and opportunities to participate in local consultations.

### 13.7 | HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Manchester is currently promoting a health trainer system. This is designed to tackle health inequalities in order to support people to be more personally resilient and to improve their health-related behaviours. Within this new model, a social prescription model could be built which supports and directs patients towards community activities or groups instead of the prescription of drugs or other health interventions. Furthermore, the recruitment of health trainers could potentially be done from voluntary sector organisations. There are already individuals in working-class communities providing informal support, advice and interventions who can be supported to use their personal resilience and knowledge of their communities (and the people in them) to help more complex families and act as a conduit to engage with appropriate services that can assist. By working with voluntary sector agencies who are connected with such individuals, and who can provide risk assessment and safeguarding as part of more formal mechanisms, the community's supportive and resilient people can engage with the most complex families in a more positive and sustainable way than by the use of state enforced and punitive sanctions.

## 13.8 | MAKING BAD JOBS BETTER

The impact of insecure work and low pay has a significant impact on working-class communities in Manchester. Public sector bodies, voluntary sector organisations and private businesses should consider putting into practice the following objectives:

- Paying the living wage to all workers.
- Flexible working arrangements that suit the needs of the workers and the organisation.
- Job security and the reduction of zero-hours contracts.
- Supporting residents to improve their skills, even when in employment.

Organisations with different levers of influence, such as the council, unions and other stakeholders, could work with private sector organisations across the city to deliver these objectives.

## 13.9 | DEVELOPING A GREATER MANCHESTER CHILDCARE PILOT

Provision of affordable and high-quality childcare is a necessary means of tackling low pay in communities, especially for women and lone parents. Greater Manchester could establish an action group that investigates potentially innovative approaches that can deliver increased access to affordable childcare across the city region as a key element of the City Deal agenda. This would have to consider how demand could be stimulated, how skills within the childcare sector could be improved as a key social objective, and how it might be resourced in a way that makes it financially viable for parents. It is essential that low-income families benefit from this, and so as part of any action group it would be essential that participants from these families are engaged in a meaningful way to co-design the pilot.

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# Annex 2. List of Stakeholders Interviewed

Ann Lees	Local resident
Colin Cox	Public Health, Manchester City Council
Councillor Afzal Khan	Former Executive Member for Children's Services, MEP for Northwest England
Councillor Anna Trotman	Manchester City Council
Councillor Bernard Priest Manchester City Council	Executive Member for Neighbourhoods,
Councillor Harry Lyons	Manchester City Council
Councillor Shelley Lanchbury	Manchester City Council
Councillor Sue Murphy	Deputy Leader of Manchester City Council
David Regan	Director of Public Health, Manchester City Council
Diane Curry	OBE, CEO Partners of Prisoners
Dr Rob Ford	University of Manchester
Higher Blackley	General Practitioner, Manchester
Inspector Chris Hadfield	Greater Manchester Police
Jacob Botham	Head of Troubled Families, Manchester City Council
Jennifer Williams	Manchester Evening News
Kathy Leaver	Principal of Coop Academy, Higher Blackley
Mike Stevens	Director of Neighbourhood Services, Northwards Housing, Manchester
Pat Adams	Head of Crab Lane Primary School, Higher Blackley
Peter O'Reilly	Director of Prevention and Protection, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service
Reverend Ian Fellows	St Andrew's Church, Higher Blackley
Sir Richard Leese	Leader of Manchester City Council
Teaching Assistant	Local primary school, Higher Blackley
Troubled Families Coordinator	Manchester City Council



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