



HOUSE OF COMMONS

## Work and Pensions Committee

### Oral evidence: Get Britain Working: Reforming Jobcentres, HC 653

Tuesday 1 April 2025, Greater Manchester

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 1 April 2025.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Debbie Abrahams (Chair); Johanna Baxter; Damien Egan; Gill German; Amanda Hack; and Frank McNally.

Questions 51 to 67

Witness

I: Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester.



## Examination of witness

Witness: Andy Burnham.

**Chair:** A very good morning to today's Work and Pensions Select Committee session here in Greater Manchester. Can I take a moment to thank everybody for making this peripatetic Select Committee meeting happen? For the reforming jobcentres inquiry that we are holding, we have as our first witness Mayor Andy Burnham. A very warm welcome, Andy. I think you probably know many of us already, but it really is lovely here.

**Andy Burnham:** I do. It is great to see the Committee holding this session in Greater Manchester. It is nice to see my old workplace come to my new one, and we have put on the weather for you.

Q51 **Chair:** You certainly have. I will kick off, Andy, and then we will all ask different questions. I want to understand this from you. You set up the Live Well programme. Can you tell us a bit more about that and why you decided that you needed to set that up?

**Andy Burnham:** I can tell you precisely the moment when I realised that something fundamentally different was needed. It was last year. It was in the mayoral election campaign, and I was visiting an amazing organisation in Salford called Loaves and Fishes. I do not know if they are known to you, Chair, but like many of our voluntary and community organisations, they provide—well, what would you say? It is whole-person support for people in crisis, homelessness or recovering from homelessness. It is an amazing place to be. It is a place that is packed out with activity, people providing one to one support. There is food support.

I was just chatting away with the team there and they were saying, as community or voluntary organisations will often say to you, how hard it was, the funding and how they were struggling to make it all work. The person who runs it just said to me, "It is frustrating because look over there at Jobcentre Plus. We know that people in there are coming out feeling worse than when they went in". They are often just asking, "What can I do?" and they say, "Go over the road, they may be able to help you". You had a situation where Loaves and Fishes was packed out with people getting practical, personalised support, yet the system that we all pay for seemed to be adding to people's problems as opposed to helping to solve them.

It was in that moment. I had been thinking about these issues for a long time, but it really brought over to me that I felt we needed a paradigm shift. In many ways, Loaves and Fishes should have been in the Jobcentre Plus working straight away with people. To me, it brought over the need for a paradigm shift, turning jobcentres from places that people may fear or see in quite a negative way. We needed to turn that round and make them empowering, supportive, enabling and working with the



full weight of the community and voluntary sector in any locality. They are often the organisations that make the difference. They are the organisations that people trust, and they can get through to people in a way that public services sometimes struggle with. We were beginning to talk about Live Well, but if I am honest that is when it really took off. It has now grown into quite a movement.

Q52 **Chair:** Tell us a little bit more about what it provides.

**Andy Burnham:** The idea is simply a structured system of social intervention; you could have called it social prescribing in the past. It is that, but a more sophisticated version of that. It would be help with things linked to people's health, but it is crucially about debt—the corrosive effect of debt on our residents. That is something that too many people are living with and worrying about every day, and I think that is a big barrier to people moving forward or, particularly, moving towards work.

On the housing situation, most people seeking the support of DWP will have some form of housing challenge that they might be struggling to resolve. It will be either inadequate housing or insecure housing and that again adds to the burden of worry that too many of our residents are living with day to day. I am sure that you recognise it from the constituents who come to see you in your surgeries.

That is the idea. I think that what has happened between 2010 and 2025 is that we have seen the emergence of a voluntary welfare state where we have networks of organisations now. It possibly began with food support and food banks, but it has grown into something much more sophisticated. It certainly has here in Greater Manchester. I almost feel that it has been working at the edges, picking up the pieces when the state cannot help people, in terms of the Loaves and Fishes situation that I described. I think what we must do is almost take it and put it at the heart of the system and fund it to be at the heart of the system to provide the support that makes the difference.

Whitehall sees things through the prism of its own policy priority, getting people into work, and DWP will then say that a work coach is the answer. Well, that might be part of it, but there is a whole lot more going on behind that if somebody is truly to be able to make the journey towards work. That is where Live Well comes in: debt advice, housing support, and helping with food security.

You know all the things from your constituency, Chair, that people need. It is about taking that system from the margins, putting it into the mainstream and, I would say, moving it towards a core funding proposition. DWP and other Whitehall Departments spend a huge amount of public money through corporate entities that often will operate tick-box systems. They may provide the service, and they may show that they have done what they were asked to do, but does it make a difference? It is like the test and trace system in the pandemic, isn't it, where you—



**Chair:** Oh, don't go there!

**Andy Burnham:** Well, it is a good analogy. No, maybe not. It is five years on. It was operating from call centres. It just did not connect with people. It did not find people, did it? It did not trace them. It is the difference then between that and coming at it bottom up through an infrastructure that people trust and spending the money that we are spending on employment support in a different place but routing it through the community and voluntary sector. The public benefit of doing that would multiply and create a lot of extra wins.

Q53 **Chair:** Fantastic. You must have had to have very effective partnerships working, as you say, with the community and voluntary sector and the statutory sector as well. Is there anything that you would like to share about how you made those partnerships so effective and work so well in Live Well? Is there anything that we could share and replicate as we devolve some employment support?

**Andy Burnham:** I think the strength of the Greater Manchester model is the extent to which it is a whole place model. When we have challenges, it is all sectors pulling together, public, private, academia, and then community and voluntary. At the reform board that I have chaired since I became Mayor—because I inherited a reform board attended by all public services in Greater Manchester—I have always insisted that the community and voluntary sector are there as well as an equal partner.

Going way back to that period in the middle part of the last decade, we signed a concordat with the community and voluntary sector in Greater Manchester to work differently with them. You know the way public bodies and councils can sometimes treat them. It is like they see them as poor relations: "We will decide, and you can get the crumbs off the table". We have tried to move to a very different relationship, which is a partnership based on equals, where they can do things that, as I say, the public bodies cannot do.

The critical thing for me—I will come back to it—is moving away from this world where they are always getting a bit of project funding here and a bit of one-off funding there to core funding, supporting them to deliver on an ongoing basis. That is what we are trying to cement in Live Well.

Q54 **Chair:** The final question from me, and I appreciate we only have you until 9.45 am, but thinking about the future, this inquiry is part of the "Get Britain Working" inquiry series that we are running. Thinking about the interaction of new jobcentres and employment services and the different objectives, for example, between employment and health in your model around Live Well, how do you think we can measure the effectiveness of these new integrated partnerships?

**Andy Burnham:** It would be on the DWP's measure of more people into work. We have had the Working Well programme in Greater Manchester for several years now, and that was focused on people longest out of the



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

labour market with health conditions. It did achieve a higher success rate in moving people towards work, so I would not shy away from that.

I would say that if you really are to achieve it, it is about a different approach, not too formulaic where you are saying, "If you do not do this by this date, you will be hit with a sanction for this or that". It is recognising that people's journeys are different dependent on what they have been through in their life. We have learned this with homelessness and the Housing First project we have. Recovery takes a different amount of time for different people, and you cannot put arbitrary deadlines on it. You must allow people to recover in their own time, but if you do that and if you do give them empowering support, most people will recover and want to go into work.

It is a paradigm shift from what can feel a deficit model system—a system looking for the negatives in people, looking to trip people up—and a system about empowering, supporting and building people up. We think the Department would achieve its objectives more with the latter rather than the former.

**Chair:** Fantastic.

Q55 **Amanda Hack:** Hi, Andy. It is nice to see you.

**Andy Burnham:** Good morning, Amanda.

**Amanda Hack:** We have talked about the work you are doing with Live Well and I think it is useful that we have gotten to those people the furthest away from the labour market. We often talk about those people who are the furthest away from the labour market, but what are the partnership barriers to that? What is the Department's barrier to supporting those individuals who might not have a more typical journey into work?

**Andy Burnham:** I think it is the complexity of the situation that they are often in. I was a Minister so in some ways I know how hard it is for people who work within the DWP system. It is just simply not set up to deal with that complexity. It is looking at an element of people's lives but not the whole picture.

If you go back to the homelessness example, I recommend that the Committee looks at the Greater Manchester Housing First pilot set up under the previous Government. You could argue that the people it was supporting were the furthest from the labour market. These were entrenched rough sleepers. I found it quite stunning, to be honest, when I looked at the results. For people who had been a long time out sleeping rough—we had a cohort of around 300 people supported through Housing First—the sustaining of their tenancy success rate was between 70% and 80%, which is higher than anyone thought it would be.

The thing about it was that if you do something as simple as give somebody a home with no strings and personalise support, maybe it



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

should not be that surprising, but they recover and they move forward. For me anyway, that experience was a profound thing of seeing that change happen.

The trouble is that that is not what the state is doing half the time. It is dealing with a part of people's issues, not the whole of their issues. We do not have systems that can deal with the totality of someone's situation and all the complexity of it. However, maybe we do now with combined authorities. Combined authorities are bodies that can take a bottom-up, person-centred, place-based approach to things.

It is that that makes the difference, and it is that, in my view, that the Department for Work and Pensions needs to embrace. How can the Department further its objectives by integrating what it does with combined authorities like the one I lead and many others across the country? In the end, it is about complexity and dealing with complexity, but if you do that, most people will recover and move forward.

**Q56** **Amanda Hack:** Lovely. Thank you. As part of this inquiry, we heard from a group of young people and their perceptions of jobcentres was not a positive one. How do you think local and national Government can help rebuild trust between young people and jobcentres and other agencies?

**Andy Burnham:** I am certainly encouraged by the language that the Government are using and the "Pathways to Work" Green Paper. I felt it echoed a lot of what you have heard me say this morning, but the approach Greater Manchester has been calling for for a long time is using the language of empowerment and positivity, and I support that.

I have put the argument forward about how you symbolise the paradigm shift that we are calling for. I would like Jobcentre Plus to be renamed Live Well centres. In the name it should be positive. It should say to the public, "You are going to be helped when you come in here". It is not just the name, is it? It is then what happens when you go inside. I would like to see the likes of Loaves and Fishes—but there are many other good voluntary organisations in Greater Manchester that I could mention—in there. What is the atmosphere like? How does it feel to be in there? I just think there is a huge opportunity.

The DWP estate is not, in my view, sufficiently integrated into everything else that Greater Manchester is doing. It can feel like an outlier in our communities when it needs to be part of the fabric, the place where lives are changed in a positive way. It is not seen like that at this moment in time. I do not see why it cannot be seen like that, but it does point to some fundamental changes.

**Q57** **Amanda Hack:** In your response to the inquiry, the Greater Manchester combined authority was looking for more devolution for youth provision. What would that enable?

**Andy Burnham:** With other changes beyond the benefit system, I think it would enable us to bring the rate of young people not in education,



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

employment or training right down. In fact, if you look at our rate here, although it has risen like the national figures showing a rise, proportionately we do not have as many as you would expect us to have. I think that is linked to some of the things that we do here. For instance, the free bus pass at 16 I think is a big thing that helps to change support.

Outside of London, giving people help with travel is a massive thing. As we all know, as you will all know from your constituencies, it is often quite poor—patchy, but expensive. Helping people with travel is a big thing. I would like to see a national scheme. We fund that ourselves. It is called Our Pass. It is a free bus pass for 16 to 18 year-olds. That is a massive thing when you are that age when you are wondering whether you can connect with an opportunity you really want. If you know you have your travel sorted, that makes a real difference.

I believe we could make a real difference, particularly if you go back into the education system. I know that you might think that is the work of a different Committee, but I think we have an education system in this country that is too focused on the university route. It measures schools on the English baccalaureate, which is, according to the gov.uk website, the GCSEs considered essential to degrees.

I do not think under any Government in my lifetime—maybe back to the 1970s but not beyond—have we had an education system in England based on parity between academic and technical routes. If we want to do something serious about the number of young people not in education, employment or training, I think you would change that education system to be based on a firm principle of parity between academic and technical. Then at 16 you would put in support to help people move towards an employment opportunity.

We have a plan here called the Greater Manchester baccalaureate. That is intended to balance the English baccalaureate, so the EBacc balanced by the MBacc. The MBacc at 14 starts to point young people towards the seven sectors of the Greater Manchester economy where we have most good jobs. What they can do now—using a product we have created called Beeline on the Greater Manchester Apprenticeships and Careers Service—is, if they click on those sectors, they can see real jobs being advertised right now in Greater Manchester relevant to them where they live, a realistic opportunity. It says, “If you want that job at 14 you might think about these GCSEs or courses, at 16 these T-levels”, and then onwards.

We hope to persuade the Government that they should fully back this system. Our aim is to have a T-level style work placement, a 45-day work placement, for every young person aged between 16 to 18 who wants one in Greater Manchester. I am confident that that would bring down the NEET rate in Greater Manchester.

**Chair:** We are going to have to speed up a smidgeon.



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

**Gill German:** Thank you, Andy.

**Andy Burnham:** Good morning, Gill.

Q58 **Gill German:** There is so much you have said that chimes with me about the change that we need that you are doing in Greater Manchester, so we are grateful to you for having us here today.

I would like to turn to working with employers. We have heard in previous evidence sessions that engagement with employers and jobcentres is not all that it could be.

**Andy Burnham:** No.

**Gill German:** I know that the combined authority has highlighted this as well. I wondered what your thoughts were on what a more joined-up system looks like between jobcentres and employers.

**Andy Burnham:** It is worrying how few vacancies are being advertised from jobcentres. It probably goes back to what I was saying before. I think that there is bureaucracy that employers encounter when they do seek to do that, but then there is also that perception of negativity that might mean they look elsewhere.

It goes back to what I was just saying in terms of a potential solution, and it is the Greater Manchester bacalaureate approach that we are bringing through. As part of that, we have established an employer integration board. We want the system to be an employer-led system because that is how it will work if it is working towards the needs of employers. Through that board, we are asking some big names in the city region to start co-ordinating the 45-day work placements that I mentioned.

The ambition around this is for an all-age technical education system. The gateways to the strong sectors that we have identified do not just apply to young people. For adults who we are trying to support back into good employment, it is the same opportunities that we want to pivot people towards. We want to work with employers on that, to be able to put in place the right retraining that will help somebody pivot away from a part of the economy where they do not feel they can find good employment to the growing parts of the city region.

This is the argument for routing employment support through Greater Manchester's integrated settlement. Bear in mind that has gone live today, Chair, so Greater Manchester has moved this morning to a new funding arrangement with Whitehall, which is like Wales or Scotland, not completely the same but that notion of a more flexible block of funding.

We want to use the adult education budget much more connected to people's return to work journey. In this city region, one of the most common uses of that would be digital conversion, so somebody to upgrade from a digital point of view to get a job in the tech centre, or





green conversion if they have traditional mechanic or construction skills, helping them pivot towards the green economy. It is all part of the same thinking: how do you help everybody to get on a route towards the growing parts of the Greater Manchester economy, working with our enlightened employers who are helping with the MBacc side of things but who also want to work with us on helping adults return to work, too?

**Q59 Gill German:** Related to that, it takes me on to my next question about the ambition that Greater Manchester has, the expectation on employers who want to invest and grow in the city region. I am thinking of the ambition to inspire young people, to invest in adult skills and to be inclusive employers, a social contract if you like: if you are going to come and invest in Greater Manchester, we expect you to put in. It is an ask back. I wonder if you could tell me some more about that and how you get employers to engage with that.

**Andy Burnham:** You summarised it well. That is what this place is all about. It is what makes it great, in my view. It always has been quite an entrepreneurial city, pro-business. We want people to get on and be successful here, but the Greater Manchester way is never to walk on by. We always do expect people then to give back and support the common cause as well as being individually successful. That is our approach.

Through our growth company we do back business in so many ways, but we then also have the Greater Manchester good employment charter, which is picking up the point that you are making. We encourage everyone to sign up to it, and it is something that has grown and grown since we launched it a few years ago. We are increasingly linking it to public procurement.

If I could just use the analogy, you may have noticed a few yellow buses around while you are with us. We have put buses back under public control, the first city region in England to do that. The 10 leaders and I took the decision to link the process of re-regulation to the Greater Manchester good employment charter. That meant there was a weighting under the social value procurement in the contract for businesses that had committed to be a full member of the charter. Because of the way the process played out, only one company took it seriously at first, but when it was obvious that the weighting was having an impact on the award of the contracts, they all completely signed up.

What does that mean in practice? It means every single person driving a bus around Greater Manchester today has the benefit of sick pay from day one. That was not the case in the deregulated system, and it certainly wasn't in the pandemic. That is not a good thing if people do not have access to sick pay. We are putting weight behind the Greater Manchester good employment charter, but there is also a voluntary movement of businesses joining up that think like that and want to be a full part of what the city region is about.



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

It is powerful because when we are talking about everything we have been talking about so far, helping people move towards work, we should want people to get a good job, not just any job, shouldn't we? That sustains work and it means people do not just move in and out of the labour market.

I will share very quickly that Ikea was at one of our good employment events. They stood up in a packed room not far from here and said, "Paying the real living wage and joining the Greater Manchester good employment charter saves us money". I always remember the whole room going, "What?" They were saying, "We have reduced the cost of recruitment. We are retaining more staff. Sickness levels are lower". There is a real business case for good employment.

I am pleased to see what the Government are doing with the Employment Rights Bill, but there is always a case for something that is a stretch ambition on top of that through local charters like ours. I think Steve Rotheram, Tracy Brabin and other Mayors have introduced them as well.

**Q60 Gill German:** Thank you. I am a Welsh MP, and that social partnership element is something that we have put into law in Wales. I agree with what you have said. If you can make it that it is part of the deal, employers do sign in and then see the benefits. Thank you so much. I am happy to move on, Chair. I think my questions have been covered.

**Andy Burnham:** We have learnt a lot from the Welsh Assembly Government.

**Johanna Baxter:** Good morning, Andy.

**Andy Burnham:** Good morning, Johanna.

**Q61 Johanna Baxter:** Thanks for your time for the Committee this morning. I think you have answered most of my first question, so I will progress to the second. What can the DWP learn from efforts here to support people progressing from insecure employment into good quality work?

**Andy Burnham:** The first thing I will say is we do work well with the DWP in Greater Manchester. As I said before, my criticism is often of the system, not necessarily the people working within. There are lots of good people here who are committed to what we are trying to do.

What the DWP can learn is in some ways that last point, that it is not about necessarily any job just to tick the box. If we get people into the job that is right for them and offers good employment, that is how you sustain the situation and, therefore, people's lifetime dependence on benefits will reduce. That is what I would say.

The more you personalise the support and the journey of people towards work, the more likely it is that the outcome that is achieved is a sustainable one and will bring benefits for that person and for the system



and the country overall. I go back to the Housing First example. The quality of the journey and the quality of people's recovery is linked to their ability to hold down a position once it has been achieved.

**Q62 Johanna Baxter:** What risks do you see in combining career support with jobcentre services?

**Andy Burnham:** The risk I guess would be the perception of jobcentre services and it not landing in the positive way that I know the Secretary of State wants to achieve. She brilliantly came to Loaves and Fishes at our instigation and saw what it is doing. She has, more than any Secretary of State I can recall, spoken to this need to go in a more place-based, devolved direction. I think she means it. I think she believes it, and she is right to. It is not about criticising anyone who works in the system. In fact, it is about liberating people who work within the system to work as part of a team around individuals and make more of a difference for people every day. I think Liz Kendall understands that.

At a moment when there is a national debate about benefits, eligibility and levels of support, if we just put that to one side for a moment, the nature of support becomes more and more important, it seems to me. To cut things back, as I said before, in a system that is something of a deficit model, that sees the negatives in people, is not a good place at all. Reforming a system to be truly empowering is the way to go.

The game changer is the combined authority or the emergence of the combined authority model across the country. By May next year, the north of England will have full coverage of mayoral combined authorities; maybe not all mayoral, one or two may not be, but the vast majority will be. These place-based vehicles offer the opportunity for the DWP to become much more embedded in communities, to work very differently with the community and voluntary sector. I would say that the Department should grab it with both hands because it has a Secretary of State, as far as I can see, who is asking it to go in that direction.

**Q63 Johanna Baxter:** If I can just have a very quick follow-up—I am conscious of time: when you were talking about the perception of jobcentres, and you did not say it but perhaps the Department itself, do you think that rebranding that you alluded to earlier to rename jobcentres as Living Well centres, albeit that is your term, or something else might help to change the perception and the culture within the Department?

**Andy Burnham:** Not on its own. It would have to come with what I said, the feel of the place when you walk in and the presence of the community and voluntary sector. I would crowd those places out with the community and voluntary sector. I really want to land this point with the Committee. How much do we spend as a country on employment support? It is billions of pounds, isn't it? £6 billion is the figure I have in my head. It is somewhere in that ballpark. That money, not exclusively



but a large chunk of it, is spent through organisations that do not have much of a connection to communities, large corporate entities.

If that money was rerouted from the bottom up through local community and voluntary sector organisations, it would shore them up, not just to help with back to work stuff but more broadly to help those communities. It would create more volunteering opportunities for people on the journey towards work, because let's not forget that. That is an important part of this. It is not the case that people can go straight from where they are to a job. They may need a period of volunteering, and those organisations can help with that.

I just feel that the atmosphere that that would create in a Live Well centre that was crowded out with the likes of Loaves and Fishes and other organisations like them, it is not just the look and the name above the door, it is the feel of the place when you go in. That is what would make the difference.

**Q64 Damien Egan:** I have some questions looking ahead to the future reforms by Government. The approach that you are taking here is creative and imaginative and, in the outcomes, you are changing lives. Thinking about how we replicate that on a national scale and take the learning from Manchester, what role do you see the Greater Manchester combined authority playing or how would you like it to play a role in developing the new jobs and careers service?

**Andy Burnham:** I am certainly encouraged by the direction, as I said before. The Green Paper does speak to everything that we are trying to achieve. I would personally put a bit less emphasis on the national jobs and careers service because that can quickly get back into a one-size-fits-all, top-down feel that often is the barrier to helping people connect with something and move forward. It is fine as an organising structure, but I think it should allow different approaches in different areas that feel very rooted in their communities.

My ideal would be, to try to make the point clearer to you, Damien, Live Well supported underneath as an enabling thing. The important thing we learned through devolution is that it is all about people, their connection to their place, their connection to each other. The Greater Manchester approach will often stress the more bottom up the better, the more co-produced with our communities the better. This is a point that Whitehall cannot do. It cannot do that. It is not set up to do that. Whitehall and the DWP should increasingly see themselves as more of an enabler of more localised approaches that may come through across the country.

I think that is the shift that needs to happen. You cannot order people's recovery from the top down. You cannot batter them with sanctions towards work. You can try but it is unsurprising why we are having an inquiry. It does not particularly work. From my time in Westminster—and I was probably guilty of it at the time—I think under all Governments benefits policy in this country has too much been written to create



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

headlines to please certain newspapers and not to do the job of encouraging the recovery of people back towards a better position in their life.

What happens is when you leave—I left as a shadow Minister—and you come in as a Mayor, you just do not think about, “Will this please this paper?” Honestly, it is like with the Housing First example I gave. You just see a change and you think, “Why is that happening?” It is a completely different bottom-up offer that you give to people, and when you give that offer people respond.

I hope that answers the question. It is the courage to step outside of having to have a punitive language linked to benefits. That has been the Westminster way for quite a long time. If you really want to help people, if you really want to save money and get more people into work, you must come at it in a completely different way.

**Q65** **Damien Egan:** Your observations are interesting because very few will have that Westminster experience and then be able to get into the mayoral model. In terms of the Government getting the balance right in local flexibility, then there must be an element of national accountability.

**Andy Burnham:** Yes, sure. It is a great question. I think about that a lot. I do think a lot about my previous role as Health Secretary and my role as Mayor of Greater Manchester. The way I would describe the difference is that as Health Secretary you can see numbers and statistics; as Mayor of Greater Manchester, you can have a principle of names, not numbers. That is the difference, I would say. If your starting point is names, not numbers, everything becomes possible.

We have gone to a new accountability framework with the Government, linked to the new integrated settlement. We would not shy away at all from more people into work. We are happy to be held to account on that. We have evidence that Working Well achieved a higher success rate at getting people into work. Working Well when it first came in here had a much greater emphasis on mental health than the work capability assessment and some of the work programme stuff that it was carved out from. We would want the same. In fact, we would be confident that we would get more people into work. At the end of the day, that is the figure that will matter to the public, isn't it? Are more people in work or not as a result? It is having the courage to go with that but being confident that the benefit will come.

What I am asking the Government as part of the spending review process that we are in—we are in a task and finish process with the Government now, which is very positive, a structured discussion going into the spending review—our pitch is to route everything through our integrated settlement. My call today is that all employment support should, in my view, be routed through the same integrated settlement because the logic of this gets more powerful the more you put through that route.



We will commit to a target that is more challenging than perhaps what the DWP has in terms of people into work because we will play in Live Well and everything at our disposal. Then give us an earn back from that, the saving to the state. Let us take it. Because then all of GM has an incentive to lean into that positive approach, and that is the power of Greater Manchester devolution. It was a whole place approach. It will benefit the councils as well if they can play their part and we all get a financial return from it.

To me, that is the way to do this. We will have to be held to account if we do not. I will be called out by the *Daily Mail* or something else if we do not, if it is seen as hopelessly soft. Well, no, because if people do not turn up for appointments and things, there is still a role for sanctions and whatever else. You cannot just say there is no role for anything like that. Of course, but it is a different way of using them. A different approach is needed.

Q66 **Damien Egan:** Thank you. It would be interesting to get a link to Beeline to see it.

**Andy Burnham:** Absolutely. I will make sure the team send it. I am proud of it, and I think it can have an impact on adults who are out of work as well. It is a unique thing. The way I describe Greater Manchester now is in terms of our journey. Young people growing up here—and bear in mind life is still pretty tough in many of our outlying boroughs and the success of the city is not necessarily felt everywhere—can see the skyscrapers from their bedroom window but I do not think they can yet imagine fully what is going on there and what jobs are there.

Your constituents, Debbie—and maybe you would relate to this—up on the hills in Oldham you can see the skyscrapers, but the question is: can we give them visibility of what is going on here and then a path to the jobs? That applies to adults as well. Beeline is one of the innovations that I am most proud of.

**Frank McNally:** Good morning, Andy.

**Andy Burnham:** Good morning, Frank.

Q67 **Frank McNally:** Thank you very much for hosting us and taking the time to speak to us today; we really appreciate it. A number of the areas I was going to cover have been picked up by my colleagues, but I think the running theme from your evidence today is that you have a clear, positive strategic vision led from the top but delivered with significant input from people who are rooted in communities and are delivering the critical services that the people in the greater combined authority rely on.

Based on your history in Whitehall and where you are now, how do you see that relationship and what does that relationship need to look like between Mayors and any future job and career service?



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

**Andy Burnham:** I will be making a speech on this tomorrow to the Institute for Government because I have been thinking a lot about it. I come back to this thing about the combined authority. It is a powerful vehicle. I don't mean any disrespect to the GLA, but the GLA is a layer above the councils in London, whereas here the GMCA is the councils. It is this thing about the whole place pulling in the same direction. If we agree something here, everyone does it, the GMCA, all the councils, all the public bodies, the community and voluntary sector. It is the power of a whole place facing in the same direction and then pulling in the same direction. That is what makes the difference.

I think the Greater Manchester approach is potentially something that can offer a road map to a more streamlined, sustainable state. If you route the public funding through the combined authority, you consolidate it in one place and the dots can then be joined between work support, education, transport, regeneration, the jobs with our employers. You can make everything make sense in that place-based, integrated approach in a way that you just can't if you are dealing with separate silos of thinking. That is what I would say.

Place needs to be pre-eminent going forward in the UK system of government. We spend too much time arguing with national bodies that still do not want devolution, and to me that must go. They must buy into the place-based model of integrated delivery. I think the DWP is increasingly buying in, to be fair, but others less so. It is about trust. Give us the outcomes, like I was saying to Damien. Give us the outcomes that you want and then see whether we achieve them. If we do, then go with this and carry on going forward.

It is about an enabling state, giving more agency to places, letting places determine their own path and then backing them up. I do not see how growth comes in any other way. Growth is nurtured from the bottom up. Growth does not magically appear from some top-down intervention. Growth gets nurtured in a very careful way from the bottom up, and that is what we are doing.

Before I finish, I think it is important to say to the Committee that we have 10 years now of Greater Manchester devolution. I think it was almost in this room where George Osborne signed the devolution deal with the then 10 leaders of Greater Manchester in March/April 2015. We have a 10-year period to look at what has happened here. We have had 10 years now of average annual economic growth of 3.1%.

I think the sceptics now will find it hard to say that devolution is not gingering up the situation to create economic growth, and with that growth comes more jobs, good jobs, more opportunity to get our residents into work. That is the direction we are heading into now. I do not mean any disrespect to Scotland in saying that.

I would say that some of the hoovering up of power and the loss of agency at the local level is the wrong direction. The way to go is to do the



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

opposite: give massive agency to places. I also feel it can help with the politics in quite divided times. We stick fairly true here to place first rather than party first. Everyone believes in the place; everyone loves the place. Operate on that principle and it is amazing how people then do buy in and the power of it increases over time.

You can probably pick up that we are proud of what we are doing here. We are not perfect. I am sure there is loads we can still do to improve what we do, but what is happening through Greater Manchester devolution does offer something of a route map to a more streamlined, place-based, sustainable public spending situation and a more sustainable state in the future.

**Chair:** Thank you so much, Mayor Burnham.

**Andy Burnham:** No problem. Thank you for the opportunity.

**Chair:** Thank you also to your team for helping you organise today's session. We are very grateful. Thank you.

**Andy Burnham:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the Committee as well.

**Chair:** We will have a brief recess.