

Children living in long-term workless households

Last year 1.1 million children were living in long-term workless households. The highest percentages of children were in the North of England, with 11.2% of children in the North West living in a home where no parent was working.

The impact of child poverty and deprivation can last a lifetime and its something that sadly Home-Start in Greater Manchester has witnessed for decades.

But through our network of trained parent volunteers, it is something that we are addressing at a local level.

To gain an insight into why children are still living in long-term workless households, we have to understand what the barriers are for parents not being able to work in the first place.

We all know about the lack of jobs and industry in certain parts of the country, we know about the impact that the welfare state has had on some people's attitude to work, however, there are some deeper-rooted issues as to why some parents struggle to find themselves employed.

Reasons that include low self-esteem, poor mental health, bad experiences of education which has caused a lack of confidence... there are many, many issues that can cause a person not to feel they can join the workforce.

Over the years our volunteers have offered a wealth of emotional support to parents who are struggling, and over time, empowered them in a variety of ways. We have seen examples of volunteers who have supported dads in learning to read and write, helped parents gain confidence by signposting them on to courses, worked with them in addressing their low-self esteem.

By addressing these deep-rooted issues in a confidential and non-judgemental way, we have found that parents will begin to open up to their volunteer. If we can continue to support such parents, we hope that one day we will start to see a significant reduction in our local communities of children growing up in workless households. But to do this, we need more local home-visiting volunteers so that we can reach out to more parents and children who need us.

To find out how to volunteer for one of the six Home-Starts in Greater Manchester, please visit www.gmhomestarts.org.uk

