

Labour Conference 2022 Policy@Manchester Roundup

Policy@Manchester were delighted to host our Labour 2022 conference programme. Our fringe events were extremely well attended, and featured panels of experts speaking on a wide range of key policy challenges including mental health, digital safety, health inequalities and energy security.

Here is a roundup of our panel events:

Future local economies: How research and development can boost skills, jobs and security in the UK's regions (in partnership with Dods)

In this panel, Professor Richard Jones was joined by Chi Onwurah MP, Shadow Minister for Science, Research and Innovation, Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, Cllr John Merry, Chair of Key Cities and Deputy City Mayor of Salford, Matthew Fell, Chief Policy Director of CBI and Shreya Nanda, Economist, IPPR. The panel, which explored how a regional approach to innovation and investment in research and development is key to national prosperity and building strong and self-sufficient local economies was chaired by Jonn Elledge, Freelance Journalist.

Key points:

- Professor Richard Jones called for improvement in the economic performance of our big cities, stating that innovation "relies on research and development". He notes that more devolution in the UK would help local leaders make the decisions to bring together business and the public sector.
- Shadow Minister Chi Onwurah MP told us Labour's vision places R&D at the heart of "sustainable, long-term growth", adding that the UK is a world-leader in science, driven by universities - but investment in R&D and innovation doesn't reflect this.
- The mission is to turn the South East's golden triangle into a "platinum pentagon", according to Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham, with regional innovation key to providing opportunities for young people in the rest of the UK.

Covid's Children: How the pandemic has affected educational inequality, mental health and wellbeing for young people (in partnership with the Social Market Foundation)

Policy@Manchester co-ordinated this panel in collaboration with the Social Market Foundation to explore how we can deliver better mental health and wellbeing support in schools, and a fairer and more resilient education system for Britain's young people. Our expert panel comprised of James Kirkup, Director of the Social Market Foundation chairing the session, Dr Rosena Allin-Khan, Shadow Minister for Mental Health and MP for Tooting, Dr Ola Demkowicz, Lecturer in Psychology of Education, The University of Manchester and Lynn Perry MBE, Chief Executive of Barnardo's.

What is the impact of health inequalities on wellbeing and employment? (in partnership with Centre for Cities)

This joint Policy@Manchester and Centre for Cities event explored the impact of health inequalities and wellbeing on productivity, how to effectively connect areas such as housing

and education with health and employment, and what 'levelling up' health inequalities could mean for places with lower productivity. Dr Luke Munford, Senior Lecturer in Health Economics, The University of Manchester contributed to this panel which also included Professor Matthew Ashton, Director of Public Health at Liverpool City Council, Sir Stephen Houghton CBE, Leader of Barnsley Council, Alison McGovern MP, Shadow Minister for Employment and was chaired by Andrew Carter, Chief Executive at Centre for Cities.

Key points:

- Dr Luke Munford pointed out integrated health care works better when places are well-defined and can integrate services - Greater Manchester is an example of this, with preliminary evidence suggesting improved life expectancy and reduced inequalities.
- Alison McGovern MP pointed out 'You cannot have an economic plan without a health plan' highlighting how addressing health will be key part of an economic plan under Labour
- Professor Matthew Ashton highlighted the role employers can play in ill-health prevention and making sure people can stay in work

Digital Harms: Is smart tech a threat to your privacy and security?

With the Online Safety Bill encouraging debate, our expert panellists discussed how policymakers can act to mitigate the threat of dangerous online behaviour, while protecting freedom of expression and user privacy. Dr Simon Kaye, Director of Policy, Reform chaired this session which featured Professor Emma Barrett, Professor of Psychology, Security & Trust, The University of Manchester, Susie Hargreaves OBE, Chief Executive, Internet Watch Foundation and Dr Emma Stone, Director of Evidence and Engagement, Good Things Foundation. Topics of debate were emerging online risks and what the industry and policymakers can do to mitigate them.

Key points:

- Professor Emma Barrett outlined the risks of extended and virtual realities and how these platforms pose new threats. These risks include, data storage, how technology which enables targeted adverts can lead to targeted misinformation, cyber security, including haptic technology which can lead to physical harm, identity theft, and harassment including child sexual exploitation.
- Susie Hargreaves OBE welcomed the Online Safety Bill to introduce "safety by design" and described how for the IWF the challenge is keeping ahead of the technology as more people have access to smart technology.
- Dr Emma Stone spoke on how online safety is part of digital inclusion. Some of the most vulnerable to being digital excluded may also be at a greater risk of online harms.

Tackling loneliness: How can we improve access and quality of mental health care?

In this session, our group of experts and policymakers addressed a packed out audience on the impact of chronic loneliness on our health and wellbeing, the effect of place and community, and what can be done to deliver more integrated care. It was standing room only, as we asked what a future Labour Government can do to prioritise mental health provision to combat loneliness.

Professor Pamela Qualter, Professor of Education, The University of Manchester joined Dr Rosena Allin-Khan MP, Shadow Minister for Mental Health, Mayor of Greater Manchester

Andy Burnham and Sarah Thwaites, Chief Executive of Healthwatch Liverpool. The session was chaired by Zoe Abrams, Executive Director of Communications and Engagement, British Red Cross

Key points:

- Professor Pam Qualter addressed how loneliness during the pandemic was linked to social inequalities, with the North of England more affected - particularly young people.
- Rosena Allin-Khan MP argued for interventions to be put in place across the UK, which are people-focussed, not technology-led - with Labour making a commitment to recruit 8,500 more mental health specialists, and to put a counsellor in every school.
- Mayor Andy Burnham agreed with the people focussed approach. He said what is needed in order to understand the enormity of poor mental health is a paradigm shift in health services to a person-focussed approach, rather than jumping straight to medical interventions.

Energy security: Will accelerating renewables tackle the cost of living?

Our final panel of the Labour Conference explored the impact of renewables on our energy security and what measures can be taken to help the immediate challenge for households and businesses facing rising bills. Dr Nina Skorupska CBE FEI, Chief Executive, The Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology chaired this panel featuring speakers Professor Mat Paterson, Director of the Sustainable Consumption Institute, The University of Manchester, Emelia Quist, Head of Policy Research, Federation of Small Businesses, Asif Rehmanwala, CEO of Ecotricity, Adam Scorer, Chief Executive of National Energy Action and Dr Alan Whitehead MP, Shadow Energy Minister.

Key points:

- The single most important thing in the short term is energy efficiency in buildings said Professor Mat Paterson .
- Alan Whitehead MP pointed out onshore wind is now 9 times cheaper to produce electricity from than gas. Renewables are not an expensive luxury. A wholly renewable electricity system by 2030 is possible and in terms of cost of living this can make a real contribution in the medium to long term.
- Asif Rehmanwala pointed out if we reduce the proportion of gas in our energy mix we can substantially bring down prices in the long term. We can change the market mechanism for short term effect and accelerating renewables brings long term difference.

Policy@Manchester would like to thank all our panellists for their contributions and thank delegates who attended our events.

For more information, please see our website -

<https://www.policy.manchester.ac.uk/activities/party-conferences-2022/>.