

Our Future Oldham

A Shared Vision for 2030

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Foreword

In Oldham we've got a proud history of punching above our weight. There's the mills that remind us where we came from, and the bright young businesses that show us where we're going. The population of our borough may only account for 0.3% of the UK, but we've produced leaders in business (like Sir Jim Ratcliffe, one of the world's richest men), sport (like David Platt and Mike Atherton, who were England football and cricket captains at the same time in the 90s) and culture (like Suranne Jones, Sarah Lancashire and Nick Grimshaw).

Our population is young, diverse and optimistic. Set between an energetic 21st century city and the timeless beauty of the Peak District, Oldham is a great place to call home. If we're to achieve our potential, though, we need a clear, shared plan for the future.

That's what we've produced here. After extensive conversations with residents, businesses, community groups and organisations around the borough, we've agreed this vision: Oldham will be a place that uplifts every resident. We've set out the things we want people to know they can rely on if they live here, across education, work, our neighbourhoods and communities. Our goals are ambitious but achievable. We're reflective of the world in which we find ourselves but retain an unmistakable Oldham accent.

Now we've got a shared target, it's up to us all to work together to achieve it. We're aiming for 2030 – far enough away that real change is possible but near enough to drive action today.

Every Oldham resident deserves a rich, fulfilling life. This is how we make that possible. This is Our Future Oldham.

Our Oldham

Who We Are

Oldham is a diverse place in many senses. We're more than the stereotype of a tough, simple, Northern mill town. We're a radical place: we sent people to Peterloo and the Spanish Civil War and raised leaders of the suffragettes and the cooperative movement. We're an innovative place: from the cotton industry to the tubular bandage and the world's first test tube baby. We're a bold place: Many of our parents came here from far away with a determination to build a good life for themselves. We're a proud place, and yes, a tough place: being on high ground next to the Peaks, you won't last long if you can't handle the wind and a bit of rain.

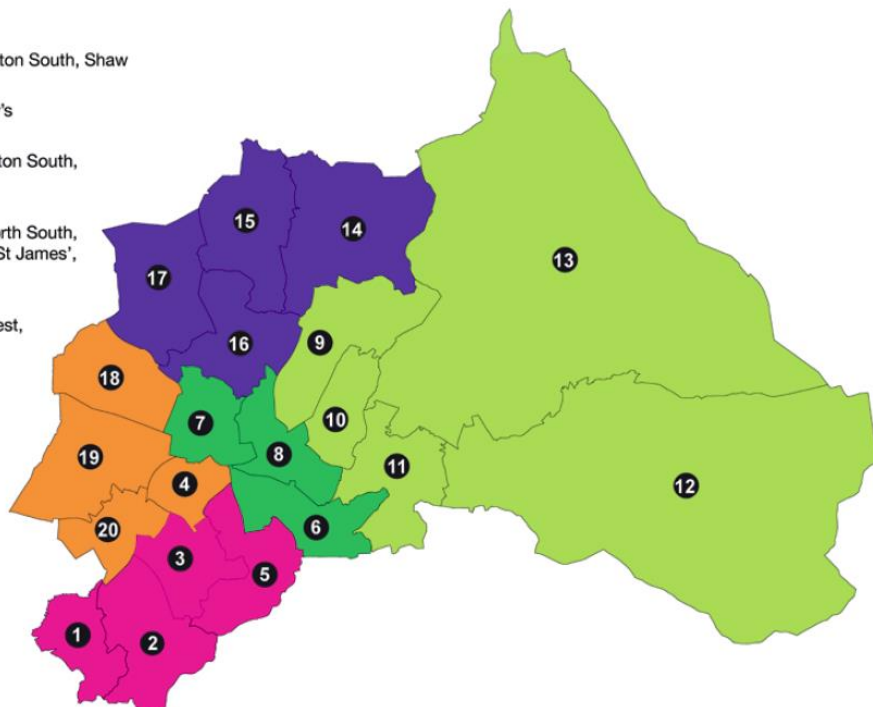
The borough is divided into five districts, with many services coordinated at a district level to address local needs. Our population is focused around Oldham town centre and the towns of Failsworth, Chadderton, Royton and Shaw, with the eastern half of the borough more rural, comprising Saddleworth and its villages. Our communities benefit from fantastic local parks, like Alexandra Park and Tandle Hill. Transport links take people easily into Manchester (via the tram and bus network) and elsewhere (via the M60 and M62).

Districts

- North District**
Crompton, Royton North, Royton South, Shaw
- Central District**
Alexandra, Coldhurst, St Mary's
- West District**
Chadderton Central, Chadderton South, Chadderton North, Werneth
- East District**
Saddleworth North, Saddleworth South, Saddleworth West and Lees, St James', Waterhead
- South District**
Failsworth East, Failsworth West, Hollinwood, Medlock Vale

Electoral Wards

- 1 Failsworth West
- 2 Failsworth East
- 3 Hollinwood
- 4 Werneth
- 5 Medlock Vale
- 6 Alexandra
- 7 Coldhurst
- 8 St. Mary's
- 9 St. James
- 10 Waterhead
- 11 Saddleworth West & Lees
- 12 Saddleworth South
- 13 Saddleworth North
- 14 Shaw
- 15 Crompton
- 16 Royton South
- 17 Royton North
- 18 Chadderton North
- 19 Chadderton Central
- 20 Chadderton South



Oldham today is younger than the national average. We're diverse, with significant numbers of residents of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage, and other emerging communities.

Oldham's Population is
242,100 with 118,400 males (49%)
and 123,700 females (51%)
making us the sixth largest borough in Greater Manchester

Between 2011 and 2021 our population increased by **7.6%**

This is a larger increase than that seen across Greater Manchester (6.9%) and England (6.6%).

According to the ONS, our population is projected to reach
261,018 by 2041
a 10% increase from the 2020 population



It is expected that the number of older people in Oldham's population will grow by 30% in the next 20 years.

Age	0 – 19	19 – 64	65+
Population	67,900	135,500	38,700
Percentage	28%	56%	16%

Oldham is a place of contrasts, with areas of very high levels of deprivation, some of the most aspirational places to live, and everything in between. Every part of the borough has things to celebrate and be proud of, but all have their own unique challenges too.

Unemployment

Unemployment in Oldham is 7.3%

The highest in Greater Manchester and higher than the England rate.

	March 22	March 21
Oldham	7.3%	9.9%
GM	5.6%	8.0%
England	4.3%	6.6%

Alexandra has the highest rate at **13.6%**

Saddleworth North has the lowest at **1.8%**

Youth unemployment in Oldham is 9.8%

The highest in GM, and significantly higher than the national rate.

	March 22	March 21
Oldham	9.8%	16.4%
GM	6.5%	10.6%
England	5.0%	9.2%

Hollinwood has the highest rate at **16.5%**

Saddleworth South has the lowest at **2.7%**

Annual Pay

The median annual gross pay for residents of Oldham is below that of GM and England.

Oldham	£27,594
Greater Manchester (Met County)	£28,960
England	£31,490



Deprivation

Oldham currently has four areas within the borough which are among the top 1% of the nation's most deprived areas.

However, **26.2%** of areas in Oldham are among the **10%** most deprived areas in England

Life expectancy 2018–20



	Oldham	England
Male	77.2	79.4
Female	80.5	83.1

Healthy life expectancy 2017–19

	Oldham	England
Male	58.3	63.2
Female	58.3	63.5

Overall levels of income, health and education are somewhat below regional and national averages. These averages mask the significant inequalities that exist within the borough, however. People in Alexandra are expected to live on average 12 years less than those in Saddleworth South. Youth unemployment across the borough is the highest in Greater Manchester at 9.8%, but in Hollinwood it reaches 16.5%. Oldham as a whole is the second happiest borough in Greater Manchester, reflecting the fact that for many it's a great place to live. But we can't hide from the reality that many of our friends and neighbours are struggling.

Like other places, the world of work has changed a lot in Oldham – the days of most people living within sight of their workplace are gone. The Oldham Independent Economic Review identified a strong “entrepreneurial culture” in the borough, with large numbers of business start-ups and small and micro businesses. Wholesale and retail, construction, and professional services contribute significant numbers of jobs, with manufacturing the largest single sector in terms of Gross Value Added (although this has declined).

Despite this, unemployment is relatively high, and the Review noted an over-reliance on the “foundational” economy – the kind of jobs that are found everywhere like retail

and the public sector that, while vitally important to the functioning of the borough, don't generate significant additional wealth.

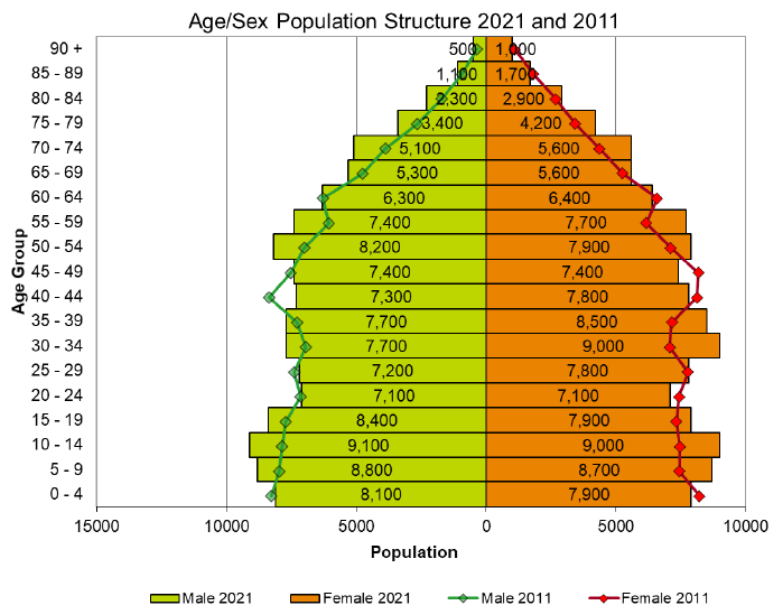
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What We Know About The Future

The Covid pandemic reminded everyone that the future is unpredictable, and inevitably any strategic vision will have to adapt to changing circumstances. But there are some things we know will happen in the years ahead that will affect our borough.

Our Population is Ageing

While Oldham today has a younger than average population, over the next decade the number of people reaching retirement age is expected to increase significantly. This will create greater pressures on our health and social care system, and on public and personal budgets. This demographic shift makes it more important than ever that we take a preventative approach to public health, supporting people to live healthy and active lives for longer.



Our Town Centres are Changing

Around the country high streets are changing as online and out-of-town retail puts pressure on local shops. Towns that succeed will do so because of the experiences they create for people, attracting visitors with the mix of shops, leisure, employment and housing.

Places like Royton and Uppermill are already doing well, drawing locals and visitors with their independent shops and options for food and drinks. There are a clear set of commitments in place to improve Oldham town centre, with work already underway. We know that by 2030 Oldham will have more places to eat and drink in the town centre, there will be thousands more people living in town, and the infrastructure will be in place for a thriving cultural scene.

Creating A Better Place

In August 2020 Oldham Council signed off plans for a town centre investment programme worth £285 million. Creating A Better Place will transform Oldham town centre, making it a great place to visit, shop, work and live. Plans include a new market, food hall, performance space, work spaces and a town centre park.

Transport Improvements

Improving public transport makes a huge difference to people's life chances, particularly if you live in more remote parts of places like Saddleworth and don't have access to a car.

The Greater Manchester Transport Strategy sets out a range of improvements that will be taking place to our network over the next two decades. For Oldham this includes increased capacity on our existing tram network, improved bus transit between Rochdale, Oldham and Ashton, and accessibility improvements that will make active travel in and around our towns easier.¹

Greater Manchester will also soon be implementing a franchised bus network, enabling democratic control over fares, routes and timetables. Historic data on the performance of franchised and non-franchised bus systems means we can expect significant growth in bus journeys in the coming years.

Changing Land Use

The Places for Everyone plan, a spatial plan for nine Greater Manchester boroughs including Oldham, is currently undergoing independent examination before being adopted by the nine authorities.² This plan indicates the parts of the borough that will be available for development as housing or employment space, if the developments also meet the requirements set out in Oldham's Local Plan, which is also under review.³

A commitment to meeting the Government's requirements for house building while retaining the maximum amount of green space means Oldham has relatively little employment space in Places for Everyone. This reduces the scope for new jobs within the borough in industries that require a substantial footprint, such as logistics. Instead, economic growth can be expected in sectors that can better make use of existing infrastructure and brownfield sites, including manufacturing, digital and professional services.

Atom Valley

Spanning Oldham, Rochdale and Bury, Atom Valley will be a new Mayoral Development Zone, which could include up to 1.6m sq m of employment space, creating 20,000 jobs and 7,000 homes to boost the region's economy.

¹ GMCA: Our Five Year Transport Deliver Plan 2021-2026 (https://downloads.ctfassets.net/nv7y93idf4jq/5Y95swfmf42WVZozNA4fE/84092928376473c507ec000098b18c35/Delivery_Plan_2021-2026_Jan_2021_Final.pdf)

² GMCA: Places for Everyone (<https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/places-for-everyone/>)

³ https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/201213/local_plan_review

Levelling Up Oldham

Regional development has been on the national government agenda in different forms for decades, with varying levels of success. While funding pots come and go, the shift towards regional devolution is likely to have more staying power. Greater Manchester has been a trailblazer on devolution in the UK, and as such Oldham's relationship with the rest of the city region should only strengthen in the coming years.

Greater Manchester Combined Authority have committed to a strategy for progress focused on three areas: economic growth, greater equality, and climate change. For Oldham this will mean working closely with the city region on issues ranging from skills and business investment, to homelessness and employment support, to democratic engagement and efforts tackle pollution.

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What Residents Want

We've been talking about the future a lot over the last couple of years, through two mass consultations on resident priorities, an ongoing sequence of "Big Oldham Conversation" events, focus groups and surveys with young people, and numerous sessions with community groups and businesses.

Just before the pandemic struck in 2020, "Let's Talk Oldham" generated 10,000 responses on social media and 1,000 direct conversations across 17 events. Residents called for cleaner streets, and a focus on job creation, and said these were the top priorities to make Oldham a better place to live:

1. Homes that fit different needs and budgets
2. Better public transport
3. Well maintained roads and pavements
4. Town centres that are well used

As we started thinking about recovery from the pandemic in 2021, 616 residents responded to a survey and once again highlighted the need for safe and decent homes for everyone and more employment opportunities. The top priority, however, was ensuring those most in need were given the support they need. The value of parks and open spaces was also emphasised.

Building on these insights, this year over 300 Oldham young people took part in focus groups and surveys where they were challenged to make hard choices about the future they wanted in the borough. Their contributions again emphasised a desire for Oldham to be a clean, green and safe place where public transport allowed them to access opportunities, where they felt part of the city region, and where there were activities for young people and communities.

Focus group sessions with voluntary and community groups demonstrated the strength of our local third sector. People who work every day to create a supportive and colourful environment in our neighbourhoods made clear that our future Oldham must be local (with services and opportunities close to home), accessible (with provision cheap or free wherever possible), and tailored to the needs of the residents nearby. Oldham people are proud, and they are leaders. Oldham in the future should be a place where residents are trusted and empowered to get on with doing what's needed for their neighbourhood. Where support from public services is necessary, the driving considerations should be: Long-term over short-term; Focused on providing for the most vulnerable; In and for local areas, rather than universal.

Uplifting Every Resident

If there's something that binds every Oldham resident together it's a pride in community and an instinct to help people up when they're struggling. What people need looks different in different parts of the borough, and there's no desire to make every part of Oldham look and feel the same. But if you live in our borough, the least you should expect are the basics of a fulfilling life, as well as some of the things that make life joyful.

These expectations are the central element of Oldham's vision for the future. Of course, as individuals our lives and expectations will go far beyond this. For some a good job might mean catching the tram across to Media City every day, while for others it will be close to home and fit around family life. For some green space means somewhere on the corner to kick a ball, for others it's climbing the hills round Dovestones. An "appropriate" home might be an accessible bungalow, a town centre flat or a four-bed for a big family.

As a group of people and organisations, and as a place, our aim is to uplift every resident so that we all have:

- **A well-rounded, enriching, life-long education**
- **The opportunity to get a decent job that pays well and offers security and flexibility**
- **Quick, cheap and easy transport to every part of the city region**
- **A home that is affordable, well-maintained and appropriate**
- **Timely access to vital services to keep people healthy and safe**
- **A clean, green and healthy environment**
- **Diverse opportunities to get together, with regular activities to boost physical and mental health and community spirit**
- **A local area that meets people's need and makes them proud**

When "anchor" organisations like the council, police, college or hospital are making strategic choices or day to day decisions, these aims will be in mind. When businesses are setting up in Oldham, they'll know that this is what we're trying to do and we'll invite them to be part of it. When someone decides they want to help their neighbourhood, this can guide their thinking about what will make the most difference.

The last few years have shown us that the future is unpredictable, and further bumps in the road may mean we don't achieve all of this for every resident by 2030. But sticking to these targets will allow us to measure progress, and remain focused on a shared set of goals.

How We'll Make It Happen

The Oldham Partnership

Our Future Oldham will only become reality if every major organisation in Oldham is focused on it. That means placing it at the heart of strategies and decision making. With the same goals in mind, we can more easily work together, and hold each other to account.

Central to that work is a refreshed and empowered Oldham Partnership. The Partnership consists of representatives from all of our major public organisations, as well as voices from the private sector, the voluntary sector and our young people. The group will initially meet quarterly to monitor progress against the Uplifting Every Resident ambitions, to celebrate successes and to agree interventions and actions to be delivered by individual organisations and our delivery boards.

Responsibility for most partnership activity will sit with three boards: the Economic Development Board, the Health and Wellbeing Board, and the Communities Board. These boards will in turn work with issue specific groups and with residents, and report back to the Partnership.

The Economic Development Board will oversee growth of jobs and prosperity in the borough. The board will focus on delivery of recommendations from the Oldham Independent Economic Review on issues ranging from skills to innovation, and link to other groups like Transport for Greater Manchester and the Education and Skills Partnership.

The Health and Wellbeing Board will continue to deliver all its statutory responsibilities, and lead on improving issues like the environment, access to health services and the safety and security people should feel when they're enjoying the place they live.

The Communities Board will focus on strengthening our neighbourhoods and ensuring Oldham is a great place for all of us to live, that we work and live in harmony and no-one falls through the cracks. The board will provide a key link to residents and tackle the challenges that stop Oldham and its organisations working effectively together.

While this partnership structure focuses on our overall approach to Oldham as a borough, in many cases decisions will be operationalised through Oldham's five districts. This operationalisation will be coordinated by District Partnerships. These District Partnerships will work with residents to identify the most effective ways to improve their neighbourhoods, and areas of priority within the structure of Our Future Oldham. Progress at the district level will then be fed back to the Oldham Partnership, to inform future work.