

# Business

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Post-Brexit  
EU worker  
status in  
spotlight

# Asian business group takes awards role

CLARITY on the future status of European workers living in the UK and mitigation on potentially higher costs on businesses are key priorities, Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce has said.

Christian Spence, the chamber's head of research and policy, has highlighted positive labour market trends but also highlights issues which needs to be addressed.

He said: "The UK labour market continues to be perhaps the greatest single success of the economy post-recession. Employment continues to rise and unemployment and inactivity continue to fall.

"The challenge for business is two-fold. Firstly, accessing skills at a time when the labour market is tight - unemployment of 4.8 per cent is perhaps as low as it may ever fall - means that there is no large willing and able pool of spare labour from which to draw. With inward migration from the EU marginally lower and likely to slow further, due to uncertainty over rights to remain in the UK, and a weak exchange rate discouraging immigration from the labour force that wishes to repatriate its earnings overseas, these will place further pressure on companies seeking to recruit and grow.

## Inflation

"Secondly, whilst pay rates are moderately strong, inflation is rising and household incomes may come under pressure during 2017 if wage increases do not keep pace with inflation. Businesses are bearing significantly increased costs through auto-enrolment, the apprenticeship levy, higher national minimum and living wage rates and increased pressure to pay additional money into pension funds.

"With the forthcoming large increase in business rates in April, many businesses will face difficult, if not impossible, challenges to deliver on the pressures of their workforces to increase wages as inflation rises, and businesses who import facing very large increases in the costs of their goods.

"Overall, the current position is positive, perhaps even remarkably so. The future success will be determined perhaps more by UK government policy than by the Brexit negotiations with the EU directly. Government must clarify the status of EU workers here as soon as is possible, and seek to mitigate, and even reverse, some of the large additional costs it has placed on business over the past few years and those that are already planned for the future."



AN Asian business networking organisation has become a sponsor for the 2017 Oldham Business Awards.

The Asian Business Leaders group is supporting this year's awards, which will be the ninth annual awards with an informal reception for all finalists planned for late March followed by the black-tie dinner and awards ceremony at Queen Elizabeth Hall on Friday, May 12.

The group was founded by Muz Khan, Akhtar Zahid and Kashif Ashraf, who is also a volunteer on the Oldham Business Awards steering group. Its activities in recent years have included organising charity dinners for Oldham mayors and networking events with business, community, council and political guests.

Members of the group



Asian Business Leaders' group is supporting the 2017 Oldham Business Awards. From left, Muz Khan (co-founder ABL), Akhtar Zahid (seated, founding father ABL), Dawn Torrington (head of sponsorship Oldham Business Awards), Karim Ahmed (DSGN UK), Kashif Ashraf (co-founder ABL), Ansar Ali (DSGN UK)

posed for a photo at the offices of Chadderton design business DSGN UK, which has taken part in the Oldham Business Awards over the past few years. Last year, DSGN UK was a finalist in the Community Engagement category while in 2015 it was a finalist in the Supporting Young People category.

Pictured, from left, is Muz Khan, Akhtar Zahid

(seated), Dawn Torrington, who is supervising sponsorship deals for the Oldham Business Awards and is also a steering group member; Karim Ahmed, of DSGN UK; Kashif Ashraf and Ansar Ali, also of DSGN UK.

This year's judging process is being enhanced with workplace visits. Judging panels of three people have been created

for each of the 11 award categories representing headline sponsor NatWest, the category sponsors and an awards steering group

volunteer.

Each panel is responsible for drawing up a shortlist of finalists for each category and then arranging workplace visits to the three finalists. The visits are intended to assist the judging but also encourage networking and sharing of information and advice between businesses, sponsors and NatWest representatives.

Once all workplace visits are complete, the judging panels will send their decisions to the Oldham Business Awards steering committee. All three finalists for all 11 categories will be invited to a reception in March at Innovative Technology, in Derker, which is another major sponsor. That reception evening will be followed by the formal awards dinner at Queen Elizabeth Hall in May when the winners will be announced.

See [oldhambusinessawards.co.uk](http://oldhambusinessawards.co.uk).

## Competition is platform for contemporary artists

GREATER Manchester Chamber of Commerce is once again holding a competition for emerging contemporary artists.

The GM Arts Prize was launched last year, thanks to a grant from Arts Council England and the business community.

Joy Sewart, head of skills development at the chamber, said: "We launched the prize to provide a platform for emerging contemporary artists in Greater Manchester to showcase their work to the business community.

"We feel passionately at the chamber that we should not work in isolation, but work alongside artists from a variety of genres that can not only enrich our businesses, but also provide opportunities for artists to be recognised on a national

and international scale."

Last year, the chamber received 220 entries for the inaugural prize. The winner was Manchester-based photographer, digital artist and film maker Andrew Brooks. Work by him and the runners-up was displayed at the chamber's offices in Manchester city centre.

This year's prize is open to practising semi-professional and professional artists working or living in one of the 10 local authorities across Greater Manchester. The winner and three runners-up will get an award at the chamber's Annual Business Dinner on May 18 at Victoria Warehouse, Old Trafford.

Artists can submit work online at [gmartsprize.co.uk](http://gmartsprize.co.uk).

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