

Greater Manchester Joint Health Scrutiny Committee

Date: 17 June 2025

Subject: 2024-25 Greater Manchester Joint Health Scrutiny Committee
Annual Report

Report of: Nicola Ward, Statutory Scrutiny Officer and Deputy Head of
Governance and Scrutiny, GMCA

Purpose of Report

This Annual Report provides an overview of the activities and achievements of the Greater Manchester Joint Health Scrutiny (JHS) Committee for the 2024-25 municipal year. Its purpose is to ensure transparency and accountability in the Committee's oversight of health and social care services across Greater Manchester, highlighting its contributions to improving public health outcomes and service delivery for the region's residents.

Recommendations:

The Committee requests Members:

1. provide feedback on the Annual Report content and format for future years.
2. actively communicate the role and achievements of the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee within their respective LAs.

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

N/A

Risk Management

The Committee's robust scrutiny inherently contributes to risk management by identifying and addressing challenges within the health and social care system.

Legal Considerations

The report's legal considerations primarily involve ensuring compliance with statutory health scrutiny duties, maintaining factual accuracy and transparency, and adhering to data protection and confidentiality laws.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

N/A

Financial Consequences – Capital

N/A

Number of attachments to the report: 0

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

None.

Tracking/ Process

No

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

No.

GM Transport Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Foreword from the 2024/25 Vice-Chair of the Committee

This municipal year the GM Joint Health Scrutiny Committee added monitoring NHS GM's Sustainability Plan to its statutory, thematic and population health scrutiny functions. In order to better support the health challenges across Greater Manchester and financial challenges for the NHS GM, we added in additional meetings to ensure we could successfully undertake our role alongside the pace of change and volume of proposed service variations. Members of the Committee welcomed the focus over the year on prevention and public health alongside a continued focus on elective recovery wait times as these are some of the areas that have the potential to bring about the most significant health improvement for our residents. Monitoring the engagement with communities to ensure their voice is heard with regards to any proposed changes was also a key priority for our scrutiny committee. I expect this work to continue next year in line with further proposed substantial variations and service improvements, against a backdrop of changes for NHS GM and ensuring that Government investment makes a difference in the right places at the right time.

Councillor Elizabeth Fitzgerald, Vice Chair of the GM Joint Health and Scrutiny Committee

2. Introduction

The Greater Manchester JHS Committee plays a vital role in the democratic oversight of health and social care services across the ten boroughs of Greater Manchester. Operating within the devolved health and social care landscape, the Committee ensures that the planning, provision and operation of these services are examined, challenged and responsive to the needs of the local population. This report summarises the Committee's work and impact during the 2024-25 municipal year.

3. Background

Established with delegated powers from the ten Greater Manchester Local Authorities (LAs) (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Trafford, Tameside and Wigan), the Greater Manchester JHS Committee is comprised of representative Members from each of the LAs, ensuring broad political representation.

Its core function is to undertake all necessary health scrutiny activities as mandated by the LA (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013.

The Committee's remit covers the scrutiny of:

- Strategies, policies, actions, and consultations of the Manchester Integrated Care Partnership including:
 - NHS Greater Manchester.
 - Functions carried out in Greater Manchester by NHS England under delegated authority under any devolution agreement.
 - The joint work of the Greater Manchester Provider Collaboratives.
 - Relevant public health functions including those undertaken by the UK Health Security Agency and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.
 - LAs across Greater Manchester regarding their role as providers and commissioners of social care, and as public health agencies.
 - All other cross-boundary NHS services (eg, North West Ambulance Service, Christies, Specialist Children's Services provided by the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital).
- Proposals for substantial developments or variations in health service provision within the area that are considered notifiable under Regulation 23 of the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013. A substantial variation, while not explicitly defined in guidance, typically refers to changes significantly impacting a large number of people (such as closure or downgrading of services like an Emergency Department) or having a critical impact on a specific, smaller group.
- Services provided to patients living and working across Greater Manchester.
- Specific health issues that transcend geographical boundaries within the region.

The Committee's overarching objectives are to ensure that the needs of local people are central to health service delivery and development, and to contribute to the reduction of health inequalities by ensuring services are accessible to all residents.

4. What Has Been Achieved and When

During the 2024-25 municipal year, the Greater Manchester JHS Committee actively engaged with key strategic health priorities and service developments across Greater Manchester. Through its scrutiny process, the Committee aims to influence policy, review service performance and ensure accountability.

Examples of key areas of scrutiny:

- **Annual Meeting and Strategic Planning (16 July 2024):** The municipal year commenced with the Annual Meeting, where the Committee reviewed its foundational role and began outlining strategic priorities for the year ahead.
- **Work Programme for the 2024/25 Municipal Year (Throughout 2024-25):** A significant focus in the early part of the year was establishing and reviewing the Committee's work programme to ensure it remained agile and focused on the most pressing health and social care issues facing Greater Manchester. This foundational discussion set the agenda for subsequent scrutiny.
- **Obesity Prevention (10 September 2024):** As part of its commitment to public health, the Committee reviewed initiatives and strategies aimed at preventing obesity within Greater Manchester, with a detailed report and presentation during this meeting.
- **Elective Recovery Update (15 April 2025):** The Committee received comprehensive updates on the progress of elective recovery efforts across Greater Manchester, scrutinising strategies to reduce waiting lists and improve access to planned care.
- **Greater Manchester Patient Access – Primary and Urgent Care (15 April 2025):** The Committee has had focussed discussions on improving patient access to primary care services and urgent care pathways, addressing challenges and exploring solutions to enhance timely and appropriate care.
- **Greater Manchester Major Trauma Provision (18 March 25 and 15 April 25):** The Committee scrutinised the provision of major trauma services across the region, examining their effectiveness and ensuring high-quality care for critically injured patients.
- **Dentistry Provision (Throughout 2024-25):** The Committee maintained oversight of the challenges and developments in dental services across Greater Manchester, recognising its crucial role in population health and access to primary care.
- **People Plan Implementation (Throughout 2024-25):** The Committee scrutinised progress on workforce strategies, recruitment, retention, and the wellbeing of staff within health and social care, acknowledging the critical importance of the people aspect in service delivery.

- **Addressing Health Inequalities (Throughout 2024-25):** A consistent theme across various discussions was the Committee's commitment to scrutinising how health and social care policies and services impact different communities, with a view to identifying and addressing persistent health inequalities across Greater Manchester.
- **Reconfiguration Progress Report and Forward Look (Throughout 2024-25):** The Committee regularly reviewed reports on significant service reconfigurations within the health and social care system, ensuring that any changes were well-planned, effectively communicated and beneficial to residents.

5. Operational Activity

The following information provides an insight into the operational activity and dedication of Members appointed to the Greater Manchester JHS Committee during the 2024-25 municipal year:

- **Number of scheduled meetings:** The Committee held nine scheduled meetings throughout the municipal year.
- **Estimated hours spent in meetings:** Committee Members and attending Officers collectively dedicated an estimated 14 to 21 hours in formal meeting sessions.
- **Officer Attendance:** Numerous NHS Officers from NHS Greater Manchester and other relevant bodies consistently attended Committee meetings. Their presence was crucial for providing detailed updates on service areas such as electively recovery, service reconfigurations, patient access and major trauma provision. This direct engagement facilitated robust accountability, allowing the Committee to raise questions and seek clarification on behalf of Greater Manchester residents.
- **Non-Executive Role:** All Committee Members are non-Executive/Cabinet Members from their respective LA, ensuring an independent and objective scrutiny function free from direct executive decision-making responsibilities.
- **Supported by Dedicated Team:** The Committee benefits from dedicated support provided by Officers from the GMCA's Governance and Scrutiny Team, ensuring efficient operation and effective information management.

- **Public Accessibility:** All Committee meetings are open to the public, and agendas, reports, and minutes are made publicly available online, promoting transparency and allowing residents to follow the Committee's work. Many meetings are also webcast, further enhancing public access.
- **Effective Pre-Decision Scrutiny:** Ensuring the Committee has early sight of forthcoming policies and decisions is fundamental for an effective pre-decision scrutiny approach. One of the ways that this has been further strengthened this year is through a regular report on any proposed service reconfigurations. This standing item provides the Committee with information on planned engagement or consultation and also updates them on the status of ongoing consultation which helps them to keep a watching brief on substantial variations.

In addition to this, the Committee has been provided every month with details of the work being undertaken by each GM Local Authority Health Scrutiny Committee so that they are across the wider Greater Manchester scrutiny landscape.

The Committee's regular meeting schedule, the active participation of both its Members and the collaborative engagement with NHS representatives underscore its commitment to robust and effective health scrutiny across Greater Manchester.

5. Conclusion

The 2024-25 Municipal Year has seen the Greater Manchester JHS Committee continue its work in providing oversight of health and social care services across Greater Manchester. Through consistent engagement with key strategic areas and a proactive approach to its work programme, the Committee has played an important role in ensuring the health and social care system remains accountable and responsive to the needs of its diverse population.

The active participation of Members from all ten LAs and the collaborative approach within NHS Greater Manchester and other partners have reinforced the Committee's effectiveness in driving improvements and addressing challenges within the region's health landscape.

The Committee's efforts contribute significantly to the broader objective of reducing health inequalities and fostering a healthier Greater Manchester.

6. Next Steps

Looking ahead, the Greater Manchester JHS Committee will continue to build upon the achievements of the last municipal year. Key areas for continued focus and potential future scrutiny include:

- **Sustaining Elective Recovery and Patient Access:** The Committee will continue to closely monitor efforts to reduce waiting lists for planned care and improve overall patient access to primary and urgent care services, ensuring long-term sustainability and equitable provision across Greater Manchester.
- **Addressing Health Inequalities:** A persistent theme, future scrutiny to understand how health and social care policies impact different communities, aiming to identify and advocate for interventions that reduce health disparities.
- **Strengthening Integrated Care:** The Committee will maintain its focus on the integration of health and social care services, seeking to identify best practices and areas for improvement to ensure holistic patient pathways.
- **Workforce Resilience and Development:** Scrutiny will continue on strategies for recruiting, retaining, and supporting the health and social care workforce, including the implementation of the People Plan to ensure a sustainable and capable workforce.
- **Enhancing Public and Patient Voice:** Future work will explore and implement improved methods for engaging with the public and patients, ensuring their experiences and feedback directly inform scrutiny priorities.

The Committee remains committed to working collaboratively with all stakeholders to ensure that Greater Manchester's health and social care system is effective, equitable, and delivers the best possible outcomes for all its residents.