

## Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2025

Subject: Greater Manchester Equality Panels' Annual Report

Report of: Cllr Arooj Shah, Portfolio Lead for Equalities and Communities and Lynne Ridsdale, Portfolio Lead Chief Executive for Equalities and Communities

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### Purpose of Report

This report summarises the activity and impact of the Greater Manchester Equality Panels over the last year.

### Recommendations:

The GMCA is requested to:

1. Note the activity and impact of the Equality Panels.
2. Endorse commitment of all Portfolios to proactively engage with Equality Panels on issues that impact communities-of-identity.

### Contact Officers

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# Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

## Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

1. Notes the activity and impact of the Equality Panels
2. Endorse commitment of all Portfolios to proactively engage with Equality Panels on issues that impact communities-of-identity

## Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion	G	<p>There are seven Equality Panels, focused on improving outcomes and reducing discrimination faced by people from communities-of-identity (protected characteristics); Faith, Race, Women and Girls, Older People, Young People, Disabled People, LGBTQ+ People experiencing inequality often face multiple issues, including social and economic disadvantage. The Panels focus on those communities often most disadvantaged and discriminated in society</p> <p>The Panels provide insight into the access, experience and outcomes of diverse communities. This should help public services develop more effective policies and deliver more efficient services.</p> <p>Membership of the Panels are residents with lived-experience, or representatives of voluntary organisations that support residents. Engaging the Panels in decisions and services that affect them at the earliest stage leads to better outcomes and value for money</p> <p>The Panels bring together diverse community voices, strengthening understanding and collaborating to celebrate Greater Manchester's culture of social inclusion</p>
Health	G	The Panels cover a range of topics across Health and Wellbeing, enabling communication, codesign and collaboration between public services, voluntary sector and residents. For example influencing social care, mental health and womens health.
Resilience and Adaptation	G	The Panels enable public services to communicate and enage with diverse communities. Reducing inequality in these communities builds resilience. Tackling discrimination will enable public services to become more representative of their communities, building trust and confidence.
Housing	G	The Panels contribute to the Homelessness Action Network, Places for Everyone consultation, racial inequalities in social housing, Good Landlord Charter and the Mayors commitment to Housing First
Economy	G	The Panels cover a range of topics across Economy and Employment, enabling communication, codesign and collaboration between public services, voluntary sector and residents. For example, the Panels are informing the Good Employment Charter and Workforce Equality Strategies
Mobility and Connectivity	G	There is a specific focus in the new Digital Taskforce on Older People and Disabled People. The Older Peoples Panel and Disabled Peoples Panel are directly supporting this activity, providing professional expertise and connectivity into their communities. This will ensure solutions meet the needs of target groups
Carbon, Nature and Environment		
Consumption and Production		

Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target

The Equality Panels cover a range of topics across Environment, enabling communication, codesign and collaboration between public services, voluntary sector and residents. For example, the Youth Combined Authority contribution to the Green Summit.

Further Assessment(s): Equalities Impact Assessment

<b>G</b>	Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	<b>A</b>	Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.	<b>R</b>	Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.	<b>RR</b>	Negative impacts overall.
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## Carbon Assessment

Overall Score #####

Buildings	Result	Justification/Mitigation
New Build residential	N/A	
Residential building(s) renovation/maintenance	N/A	
New build non-residential (including public) buildings	N/A	
<b>Transport</b>		
Active travel and public transport	N/A	
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access	N/A	
Access to amenities	N/A	
Vehicle procurement	N/A	
<b>Land Use</b>		
Land use	N/A	

### Transport

### Land Use

No associated carbon impacts expected.

High standard in terms of practice and awareness on carbon.

Mostly best practice with a good level of awareness on carbon.

Partially meets best practice/ awareness, significant room to improve.

Not best practice and/ or insufficient awareness of carbon impacts.

## Risk Management

This paper describes work to prevent, mitigate and manage risk relating to the impact of unequal outcomes and disproportional services for people with protected characteristics.

## Legal Considerations

As set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

## **Financial Consequences – Revenue**

An existing £392,435 annual investment enables the GMCA, the Mayor and partners to engage people experiencing inequality through the Equality Panels, facilitated by commissioned culturally appropriate organisations. Effective Equality Panels support public service resources to be invested in ways that are more targeted to those most at risk, reducing costs and achieving better outcomes. There is no additional financial ask arising from this paper.

## **Financial Consequences – Capital**

N/A

**Number of attachments to the report: 0**

## **Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

N/A

## **Background Papers**

Seven Equality Panel Annual Reports 2024-25

Disabled Peoples Panel - <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/qdmfqyef/disabled-peoples-panel-annual-report-2024-25-final.pdf>

Faith and Belief Advisory Panel - <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/flanlc1m/faith-and-belief-advisory-panel-annual-report-2024-25-final.pdf>

LGBTQ+ Equality Panel - <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/0d0fl3sw/lgbtq-equality-panel-annual-report-2024-25-final.pdf>

Older Peoples Equality Panel - <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/agrjc31t/older-people-s-equality-panel-annual-report-2024-25-final-1.pdf>

Race Equality Panel - <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/zvwixz31/race-equality-panel-annual-report-2024-25-final.pdf>

Women and Girls Equality Panel - <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/i4ifajtz/women-and-girls-equality-panel-annual-report-2024-25-final.pdf>

Youth Combined Authority - <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/gbjffm5c/gmyca-annual-report-2024-2025.pdf>

**Key Decision**

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution ?

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

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Greater Manchester Equality Panels have been established to advise, proactively support and constructively challenge political leaders and policymakers to tackle the discrimination and disadvantage that cause injustice and inequality in society, and champion Greater Manchester as an inclusive city-region.
- 1.2 They do this by working together with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), the Mayor and partners to:
  - Provide insight into diverse communities, enabling political leaders and public bodies to listen and engage in a more targeted and effective way
  - Communicate key messages to communities as trusted sources
  - Codesign policies, programmes and strategies to ensure they work effectively for communities
  - Support an asset-based approach, highlighting new opportunities (and challenges) for positive collaboration that build on the resources and strengths within communities
- 1.3 The panels are advisory bodies, informing and influencing political and policy leads through constructive dialogue. They are not part of the statutory legal governance framework and do not have any decision-making authority. Their role is to support policymaking at a Greater Manchester level, where impacts on specific people with protected characteristics are identified. This is additional to other resident insight input into the policy making process, collected for example by online consultations, or provided by locality officers using their knowledge and understanding of the communities they represent.
- 1.4 There are seven panels – Disabled People’s Panel, Faith and Belief Advisory Panel, LGBTQ+ Equality Panel, Older People’s Equality Panel, Race Equality Panel, Women and Girls Equality Panel and Youth Combined Authority. Further information on the panels can be found at <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/equalities/>
- 1.5 Membership reflects the city-region’s diversity, across different demographics, localities, sectors, skills and experiences. Recruitment is transparent, the Chairs selected by panel members and membership is publicised.

- 1.6 The Chairs of the Equality Panels meet regularly with the Portfolio Leads to explore opportunities for collaboration on intersectional issues and share common challenges to delivering impact. In addition, the Chairs are members of the Tackling Inequalities Board, ensuring a strategic link between the panels and political and organisational leaders, and with a new direct role in overseeing delivery of the Greater Manchester Strategy. These structures and connectivity enable the panels to have greater clarity of purpose; influencing the strategic agenda, mandated to work with public services (and challenge where necessary) and empowered to deliver impactful activity.
- 1.7 Each panel is facilitated by a culturally appropriate voluntary sector organisation, commissioned by GMCA using the same specification to ensure consistency of approach. This strengthens the support to panel members, creating strong foundations that enable greater flexibility within the panel to focus on the issues that are most important to their communities. Panel facilitators work in partnership with GMCA officers to ensure panels can engage policymakers effectively, and act as a bridge between public services and the wider community. The facilitators meet regularly, sharing resources and practice, to deliver greater influence and value-for-money.
- 1.8 Panel members give their time voluntarily and can often be sharing traumatic experiences of discrimination and disadvantage. As such, it is crucial their time is used effectively and for maximum impact. The responsibility is on policymakers to engage early and genuinely with the Equality Panels and take proactive action to address the inequalities they have heard.

## **2. Lived experience in policy making**

- 2.1 The refreshed Greater Manchester Strategy has a clear commitment to ensure policies and services support all diverse communities appropriately and actively target resource at the people and places facing the greatest obstacles in life. A strong message from the Independent Inequalities Commission was that a deep understanding of the issues, and the solutions to those, can only come from working in and with communities, informed and guided by their voices and experiences.
- 2.2 The panels are one mechanism for gathering lived experience, and there are many others within GMCA and public sector organisations. A new Participation Framework is being developed to strengthen approaches overall which will benefit the panels by

increasing capacity for community engagement across the system, reducing reliance on them to engage in all areas.

- 2.4 Positive representation and engagement is essential in these current times, where the most disadvantaged and discriminated in society are under attack. In a recent meeting with the Portfolio Leads on the refresh of the Greater Manchester Strategy, the Panel Chairs sought bolder language standing against national and international political division and rhetoric, leading the fight against discrimination (not just 'inequality'), in explicit support of those most marginalised, vilified and discriminated, including Trans and non-binary, Roma, Gypsy and Traveller, Migrants and Disabled People, and recognising the complex intersection between characteristics, communities and poverty. This secures sustained commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and embeds lived experience in policy and decision making.

### **3. Activity and impact**

- 3.1 The panels continue to strengthen their position and impact in the system, proactively supporting and constructively challenging leaders and officers to take action to address the stark inequalities too many people and communities face in this city-region.
- 3.2 The panels have welcomed to their meetings the Portfolio Leader and Chief Executive, Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester, Council Leaders and Chief Executives, and wide range of policy leads from across portfolios and public organisations. They have spoken at strategic events including the launches of the Police and Crime Plan and the Hate Crime Plan, the Green Summit, Live Well and MBacc events, as well as national lobbying through consultations, stakeholder groups, public statements and letters to Members of Parliament. The panels are influencing policy and practice on some of the most contentious issues in society, including welfare reform, community cohesion., and gender rights.
- 3.3 In October 2024 the panels played an active role in Good Employment Week, hosting in-person and online sessions that explored equity in the workplace, including barriers to recruitment and retention and showcasing examples of 'good employment'. The sessions were attended by over 750 people. Panel members lead the discussions, supported by speakers and interactive workshops, sharing good practice to overcome entrenched inequalities and discrimination. The findings from these sessions were brought together in a collaborative workshop on the last day of the week, identifying



common and intersectional challenges and ideas for change, which are being taken forward into the refresh of the Good Employment Charter.

- 3.4 The panels worked in partnership with the Good Employment Charter team, forging a strong relationship over sufficient time. This demonstrated a way of working that maximised their skills, assets and capacity to achieve greater impact, an approach that others can follow. Furthermore, having equity at the forefront of a high-profile campaign and initiative shows the progress being made as a city-region that values equity, diversity and inclusion.
- 3.5 *“We are extremely grateful to all the panel members and their supporters for the enthusiastic way they have engaged to help make this year’s Good Employment Week so focused on seeking solutions to some seriously persistent and intransigent issues”* Ian MacArthur, Director, Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter.
- 3.6 This value was recognised by the Mayor of Greater Manchester in his 2024 Manifesto which included, following his engagement with the panels, a range of pledges tackling issues highlighted by them, for example with the Race Equality Panel to lift trust and confidence in policing, as well as a broader commitment to engage the panels in all areas. Throughout the year the panels have become increasingly engaged in the Bee Network, MBacc, Housing First, Live Well and Safer and Stronger Communities, amongst many other strategic priorities.
- 3.7 Furthermore, the issues raised and worked on by panels are increasingly leading to significant policy and structural change. The Mayoral pledge of a Social Care Commission emerged from the Big Disability Survey and has been driven forward by the Disabled People’s Panel, ensuring a commitment to co-production with disabled people is embedded in the commission. The [Race Equity Framework](#) is driving forward improvements in leadership, accountability, data, resources and workforce, and the [Faith, Belief and Interfaith Covenant](#) is enabling greater engagement, collaboration and delivery. These initiatives and others, instigated and shaped by panels, are changing GMCA, both ‘who we are’ and ‘what we do’.

#### **4. Equality Panel summaries**

##### **4.1 Disabled People’s Panel**

- The Disabled Peoples Panel is a pan-impairment panel, made up of 16 Disabled People’s Organisations (majority or wholly led and run by disabled people as distinct

from charities) drawn from across the city region, and facilitated by the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People. The panel and members operate from the perspective of the Social Model of Disability, and hold an Easy Meeting designed for members for whom longer complex meetings are not accessible.

- Throughout the year, the panel have engaged with policymakers across a wide range of areas, highlighting barriers and inequalities for disabled people as reported in the panels two Big Disability Surveys. This includes financial resilience, transport, housing, voting, and health. The panel have delivered an innovative small grant programme to support the mental wellbeing of disabled people, which follows on for their co-produced report on the issue.
- The panel have driven forward the Greater Manchester response to two of the biggest challenges for disabled people, social care and employment. Through partnership working with GMCA and the Integrated Care Partnership, the panel have ensured the voice of disabled people will be at the heart of the Social Care Commission, and the panel are helping shape proposals for employment support integrated within the Live Well programme, changing the language used on 'economic inactivity'.
- Most recently the challenges of poverty and discrimination have come together in the Government's proposals on welfare reform, with the panel leading the rejection of these with clear information and advice to political leaders and Members of Parliament. The panel have welcomed the public support of the Mayor of Greater Manchester on this issue and will continue to fight for the rights of disabled people and the organisations which support them.

#### 4.2 Faith and Belief Advisory Panel

- The panel acts as a 'network of networks', bringing together 30 single and mixed Faith, Belief and Interfaith networks from across Greater Manchester, facilitated by Pulse Regeneration. Gender balance is important to the Panel and each network is encouraged to nominate a male and female representative. Aims of the panel are to optimise the Faith and Belief contribution to the Greater Manchester Strategy and ensure that the role of Faith and Belief in society is recognised and valued.
- Following its endorsement by GMCA in 2024, the panel has progressed opportunities to develop, implement and lead the Greater Manchester Faith, Belief and Interfaith Covenant; a set of principles and commitments that guide engagement, collaboration and delivery between the sector and GMCA. For example, collaborating on the role of

Faith and Belief in Migration and Homelessness, with two engagement events that brought together a rich diversity of groups to share and create new opportunities for supporting refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants, with more events and activity planned.

- The riots of summer 2024, motivated by Racism and Islamophobia, were an example of where Faith, Belief and Interfaith networks are called into action to provide an immediate response and support recovery and resilience. In preparation for future incidents, the Panel have developed a 'mobilisation plan', that will enable members to communicate and connect immediately, drafting and sharing consistent messages across their local Interfaith Networks and into their communities, and in collaboration with Community Safety Partnerships.
- The panel strongly believe that thriving local Interfaith Networks are crucial, and the Covenant has helped strengthen local relationships and infrastructure, including the creation of new networks in Trafford and Wigan and relaunch of Salford Interfaith Forum. The panel will be engaging all Council leaders to explore further opportunities for the development and resourcing of local interfaith networks.
- In addition, members of the panel continue to be actively involved in a range of Action Networks, including homelessness, digital inclusion, net zero, real living wage and food security. The panel are engaged in Live Well and GM Networks Connect, with new mapping of the contribution of the Faith sector in early years provision underway, and are contributing to the refresh of Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Accord through their role on the VCFSE leadership Group.

#### 4.3 LGBTQ+ Equality Panel

- The LGBTQ+ Advisory Panel is made up of LGBTQ+ residents from across Greater Manchester, committed to improving the lives of LGBTQ+ people across the city region by championing LGBTQ+ inclusion and ensuring that the needs of diverse LGBTQ+ communities are fully considered. The panel is facilitated by the LGBT Foundation.
- The panel has three primary work areas: Housing – standards, supply, and support (focus on homelessness and data collection), Education – inclusivity, anti-bullying initiatives, and curriculum improvements, and Healthcare – access to inclusive sexual and reproductive health, including gender-affirming care. The panel are working with GMCA's Housing and Homeless and Curriculum for Life/Manchester Baccalaureate

teams and Greater Manchester NHS Integrated Care Partnership. In addition, throughout the year the panel have engaged in the development of the Police and Crime Plan and Hate Crime Plan, which included producing a Hate Crime Survey specific to LGBTQ+ communities.

- The panel is represented at Pride events across Greater Manchester, speaking to residents and raising awareness of the panel, and will have a stall at Manchester Pride in August. This will support a new round of recruitment later this year.

#### 4.4 Older Peoples Equality Panel

- The Panel is comprised of older people (aged 50 and over) and organisational representatives who work with older people. The membership includes people from across Greater Manchester, works in partnership with the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub and is facilitated by Macc.
- The panel has prioritised three issues within the Age Friendly Strategy.
  - o Financial hardship for older people – contributing to the Ageing Hub submission of evidence on Pensioner Poverty to the Parliamentary Select Committee for Work and Pensions, which led to a roundtable discussion with the Select Committee attended by panel members with lived experience of pensioner poverty.
  - o Care settings – engaging with the Greater Manchester Adult Social Care Transformation Team, including representation on the Enhanced Health at Home/ Proactive Care Group, and the panel have undertaken a review of the accessibility and experience of local authority home care packages.
  - o Digitalisation – supported Easology, a software development company and part of the Greater Manchester Digital Taskforce, to develop software which improves the user experience of older people when using the Android operating system.
- Running throughout the panel is the challenge of facing everyday ageism and valuing older people's contribution to society. The campaign to create a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing for England has seen some success and is still a national priority. Panel members recognise that Greater Manchester is a trailblazer for Ageing and that appointing a commissioner; as a vital bridge between local government and older communities helping to raise and address specific issues more directly, would be another great achievement and influence the rest of the country.

#### 4.5 Race Equality Panel

- The Race Equality Panel work to promote racial equality, tackle racial discrimination and foster positive relationships between ethnically diverse communities, and embed the Public Sector Equality Duty in polices, processes, procedures, practices and people development. Over the last year, the panel has focused its efforts on Policing, Mental Health, Employment and Housing.
- Highlights of the positive impact of the panel include
  - Working closely with key stakeholders, including the Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester and senior officers within Greater Manchester Police and GMCA, to support the building of trust and confidence in policing, through positive community engagement, recruitment and retention of diverse officers, and improving cultural competency of the workforce.
  - As part of Mental Health Awareness Week 2025, the panel hosted a successful *Culture, Care and Connection – Reclaiming Mental Health Together* workshop, bringing providers, commissioners and people with lived experiences together to share what works and what needs to happen to develop accessible, person-centred, culturally competent and appropriate services.
  - Engaging with the Housing First agenda, meeting with policy makers leading the Good Landlord Charter, implementation of Awaab's Law and housing standards, and supporting the commissioning by GMCA and the Greater Manchester Housing Partnership of research into racial inequalities in housing and homelessness.
  - Supporting the development and delivery of the Civic Leadership Programme, with participants becoming panel members and panel members entering the programme to further develop their skills and confidence to take on leadership roles in society.
- The panel are proactively supporting, and constructively challenging, implementation of the Greater Manchester Race Equity Framework, and are working with the GMCA Research Team to develop a Race Equity performance dashboard. This will enable the impact of the framework on outcomes for residents and communities to be measured and visible and is aligned with the refresh of the Greater Manchester Strategy to ensure commitment and accountability.

#### 4.6 Women and Girls Equality Panel

- The Women and Girls Equality Panel is made up of a diverse group of individuals and organisations from across the 10 boroughs who are committed to ensuring that the viewpoints of women and girls from a cross-section of society are represented. The Panel is facilitated by the Pankhurst Trust and utilises its partnership with GM4Women 2028 to enable strong engagement with women and girls across the city-region, as well as data from the annual Pankhurst-Fawcett Scorecard, which highlights that over the first six years there has been hardly any sustained positive change for Women and Girls across the ten indicators.
- For this reason, a key focus for the panel this year has been the push to integrate a gendered perspective into GMCA policies and practices. As a result, GMCA policymakers and staff have undertaken training on Gender Mainstreaming to strengthen their capacity in this area and test the approach on the implementation of the MBacc.
- The panels two youngest members worked with the Greater Manchester Apprenticeship and Careers Service to write blogs on [What are my rights in the workplace](#) and [Know your rights: a guide for young people in Greater Manchester](#) for the Curriculum for Life website that provides guidance for young people.
- The panel worked with the Access for All team at Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) on the design of gender responsive and accessible rail stations, including considerations for women and girls' safety in the surrounding areas of stations, encouraging working with landowners to increase visible CCTV.
- Looking forward the panel will continue their focus on ending violence against Women and Girls and improving the quality and accessibility of information and education on women's health. In addition, the panel will support the continued development of the Good Landlord Charter, MBacc and the Live Well programme, ensuring that gender equality is embedded in the design, development and implementation of these important initiatives.

#### 4.7 Youth Combined Authority

- The Youth Combined Authority (YCA) brings together young people from 29 youth organisations across Greater Manchester, including locality Youth Parliaments and groups that support diverse young people, ensuring the membership is rich in lived experience and inclusivity. The YCA has a strategic role advising, supporting and

challenging the Children and Young Peoples Board, as well as a range of other Portfolio areas, and is facilitated by Youth Focus North West.

- The YCA has four priority areas: Employment and Skills, Equity, Equality and Inclusion, Transport and Active Travel, and the Environment, and have implemented a process based on the [GM Children and Young People's Participation and Voice Framework](#) and Lundy Model, which means that adults who wish to come into the YCA need to explain how doing so will enable young people to have the right conditions of space, voice, audience, and influence to have their views heard and acted upon.
- Impact of the YCA includes:
  - o Undertaking a review of the [Greater Manchester Baccalaureate \(MBacc\)](#), which they presented at the MBacc Summit to political leaders, school leaders and education decision makers.
  - o Contributing to the development of the new Hate Crime Plan, with members speaking at the launch about the YCA's involvement and the importance of engaging young people.
  - o Advising Transport for Greater Manchester on the ongoing rollout of the Bee Network, participating in workshops to give feedback on the Bee Network app and its development, including ideas for bus tracking and live chats.
  - o Contributing to work with the Greater Manchester Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Youth Voice Forum, sharing their thoughts on topics such as transport and travel and educational transitions and presenting findings to the SEND Board.
- In total, young people have given over 500 hours of voluntary time to the YCA, reporting increased levels of confidence, leadership skills, communication and teamwork because of their engagement within the YCA. The YCA have supported the development of the youth Civic Leadership Programme, and the positive impact of investment in the YCA will be seen for many years as members progress into leadership roles in society.