

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: 26 September 2025

Subject: Greater Manchester's Commitment to Gender Equity in Sport, Physical Activity, and Movement

Report of: Andy Burnham, Portfolio Lead for Healthy Lives and Tom Stannard, Portfolio Lead, Chief Executive for GM Moving, Hayley Lever, CEO, GM Moving.

Purpose of Report

To engage GMCA partners on Greater Manchester's commitment to collaborative leadership on gender equity in sport, physical activity, and movement by

- Sharing data, evidence and stories about gender inequality and inactivity.
- Engaging partners in a year's activity leading to the International Working Group (IWG) Conference in Birmingham in July 2026.
- Setting the strategic leadership conditions for collective leadership and action for and with women and girls in the year ahead.
- Confirming a commitment to work with Liverpool City Region on this agenda, and to engage and inspire other Mayoral Combined Authorities.

Recommendations:

The GMCA is requested to:

1. Confirm their commitment to leadership on gender inequality in active lives, and lead in their place to support movement, physical activity and sport for all women and girls.
2. Sign a commitment to the Brighton Helsinki Declaration on Women and Girls.

Contact Officers:

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

Through the Equality Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment, it is noted that the paper has a positive impact on the wholesale improvement of lives across Greater Manchester.

Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion	G	
Health	G	
Resilience and Adaptation	G	
Housing		
Economy	G	
Mobility and Connectivity	G	
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G	
Consumption and Production		
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target		It will lead to future initiatives of Active Travel, leading to GM residents using modes of transport that do not impact the planet as much.

Further Assessment(s): Equalities Impact Assessment and Carbon Assessment

G Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	A Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.	R Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.	RR 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			
Transport				
Active travel and public transport				
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access	N/A			
Access to amenities	N/A			
Vehicle procurement	N/A			
Land Use				
Land use	N/A			
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

Low risk

Legal Considerations

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public authorities to have due regard to certain equality considerations when exercising their functions. In that regard, the impact assessment referred to above measures and records compliance with the duty.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

N/A

Financial Consequences – Capital

N/A

Number of attachments to the report:

Appendix A “*Brighton plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration on Women and Sport*”

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

Uniting the Movement, Sport England

GM Moving in Action: Active Lives for All

Tracking/ Process

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

No

Exemption from the call-in

Are there any aspects in this report which mean it should be considered to be exempt from call-in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency? No.

Bee Network Committee

n/a

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

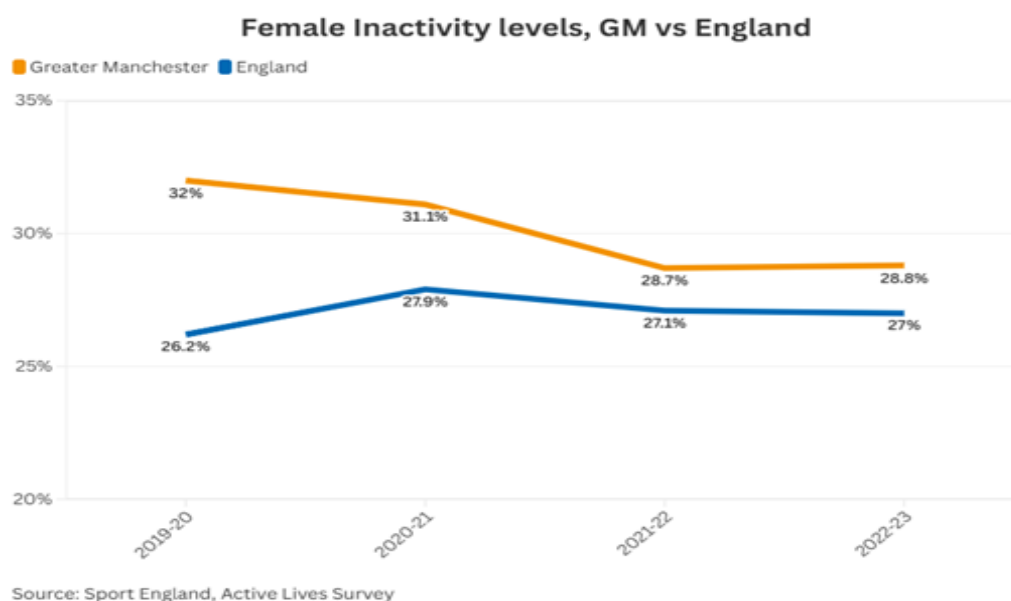
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1. Introduction/Background

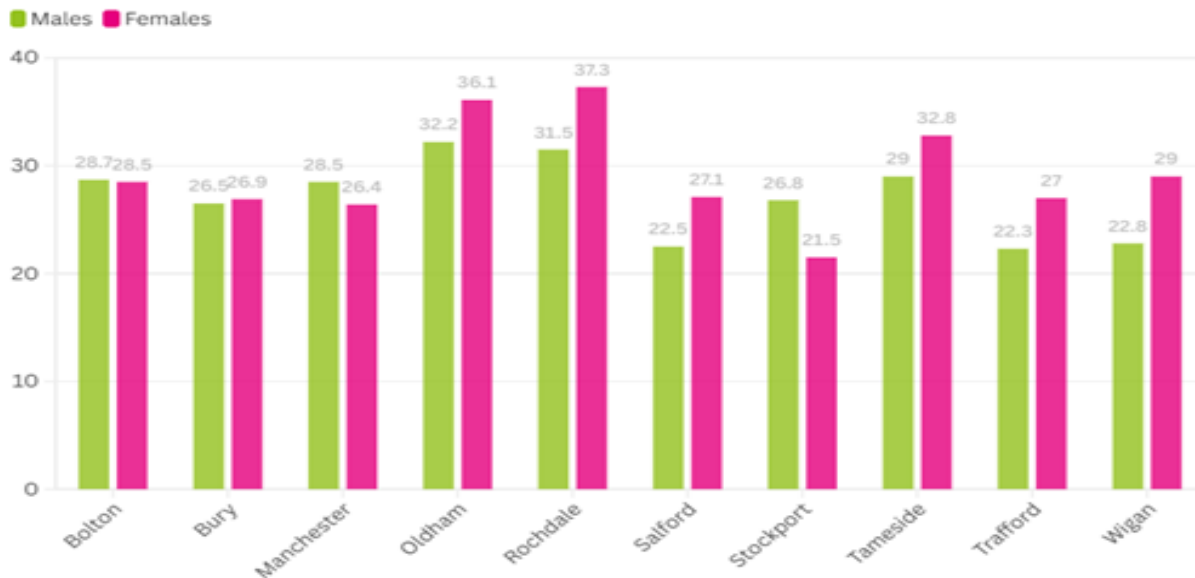
- 1.1 GM Moving is a 'movement for movement' and a collective strategy with the shared mission of enabling Active Lives for All. People and partners across Greater Manchester (GM) are aligned behind the knowledge and belief that:
- **Moving matters to us all.**
 - **Together we can design movement back into our lives.**
 - **We all have a role to play.**
- 1.2 GM Moving is how Greater Manchester plays its part in national and international leadership on inactivity and inequality. We are a city-region that leads the way with vision and ambition, towards the goals of the Global Action Plan on physical activity 2018–2030: more active people for a healthier world and towards the national strategy, Uniting the Movement.

Progress and challenge on active lives for women and girls

- 1.3 Sport England's Active Lives data shows that women and girls in Greater Manchester continue to face consistently higher levels of inactivity than men. Progress is possible. This is clear in the post-pandemic trends, but whilst the region has made greater strides than the national average in reducing female inactivity, overall levels remain higher than England's. Local disparities also persist – particularly in Rochdale and Oldham, where female inactivity levels are significantly higher than the GM average. The gender activity gap is narrowing, but systemic and structural barriers remain.



Inactivity Rate by GM Borough, 2022-23



Source: Sport England, Active Lives Survey 2022-23

- 1.4 These barriers include affordability, time constraints – often due to unpaid care work and safety concerns, especially when being active outdoors. These challenges are intensified for women from marginalised groups, highlighting the intersectional nature of inequality. Despite this, momentum is building. Community-driven efforts, cross-sector collaboration, and a focus on supporting the most inactive women and girls are helping to drive change. With targeted action and continued investment, GM is well-positioned to close the gender activity gap.
- 1.5 Greater Manchester has a history of radical and visionary leadership on gender equity and of collaborative leadership, on the issues that matter with its sister-city-region, Liverpool City Region, and many others.
- 1.6 In 2026, the UK is hosting the International Working Group on Women and Sport, and we have a renewed opportunity and responsibility to show our leadership, go further and deeper in our work, and inspire collective action on gender equity and equality for movement, physical activity and sport.
- 1.7 The International Working Group (IWG) on Women and Sport is the world's largest network dedicated to advancing equity and equality in sport and physical activity for women and girls around the world. IWG is the custodian of the Brighton Plus Helsinki Declaration (attached at Appendix A), a treaty that signifies a commitment to achieving gender equality in sport and physical activity. Nearly 600 organisations

around the world are signatories, including the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF).

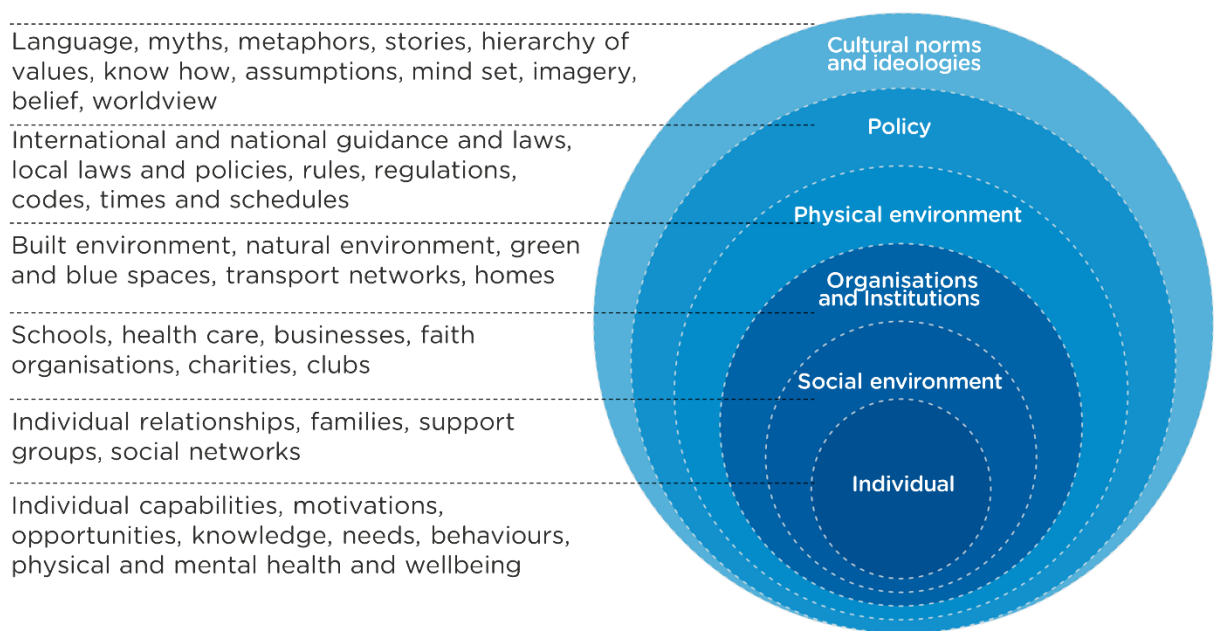
- 1.8 The IWG Global Summit is the largest global gathering on gender equity and equality in sport, welcoming senior leaders, experts, researchers, and practitioners from around the world. It takes place in Birmingham, UK, in July 2026. Fully aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, IWG advocates and runs programmes globally.
- 1.9 The IWG Global Summit is the largest global gathering on gender equity and equality in sport, welcoming senior leaders, experts, researchers, and practitioners from around the world. It takes place in Birmingham, UK, in July 2026.

2. Building on strengths: Whole system approach to gender equity and equality in sport and physical activity

- 2.1 Partners involved in the work across the GM Moving Partnership Board and beyond are leading ambitious whole-system work on this agenda- creating the conditions for active lives for all.
- 2.2 This works across all areas of GM Moving in Action Strategy.

- > **Our Mission**
 - Active lives for all
- > **Our 5 key priorities**
 - People, families and communities
 - Inclusive participation and access
 - Active places
 - Whole system integration
 - Culture change
- > **Our 7 catalysts**
 - Involving & engaging
 - Marketing & comms
 - Investment
 - Governance
 - Digital access & innovation
 - Learning, research & insight
 - Leadership & workforce





2.3 Current work includes the following examples, among other important activity.

2.4 **Girls and Young Women's Mental Health and Wellbeing:** GM Moving are a delivery partner of #BeeWell across Greater Manchester, which uses a co-created survey delivered annually in schools, to capture what affects young people's wellbeing and what can be done to improve it.

2.4.1 This year, the #Beewell youth steering group identified participation for girls as one of their key messages. This was prompted by this year's data, with girls' activity remaining significantly lower than boys, just one in four reaching one hour a day.

2.4.2 Issues such as sports offered within the PE curriculum and gendered PE kits, making it uncomfortable to engage, have been raised by young people. Also identified was a lack of free activities in the community, particularly as young girls get older. GM Moving are committed to this and is amplifying the work happening throughout communities to support girls to #FeelGoodYourWay.

2.4.3 A campaign for 11–16-year-old young women, to raise the benefits of being active can have on their wellbeing. Support is needed for more partners to advocate for moving for mental wellbeing and supporting young girls to #LiveWell across Greater Manchester.

- 2.5 **Maternity:** There is a range of resources and training available for health professionals to incorporate physical activity into their work, including: Active Pregnancy Foundation. The Active Pregnancy Foundation believes in a whole systems approach based on clear and consistent evidence-based messages shared by all professionals, so that pregnant and postnatal women feel reassured and empowered to make informed physical activity choices. They provide a range of professional resources, which include advice and top tips to support an active journey through pregnancy and beyond.
- 2.6 **Menopause:** GM Moving partners are committed to advocating for gender equality in the workplace and have representation on the national Active Partnership Menopause CoP planning group, which works collaboratively to share good practice and learning opportunities across national Active Partnership networks.
- 2.6.1 GM Moving coordinate the GM Menopause Network, which aims to help meet the aspirations of the GM Women's Health Strategy through providing a forum to share resources, local knowledge and learning around the menopause to better support women within our GM communities and actively promote the role of movement and wellbeing in helping women manage their menopause symptoms and support better health as they age.
- 2.7 **Active Wellbeing through public sector leisure:** collaborations across health and leisure.
- 2.7.1 Exercise referral programmes across GM continue to grow and, in many cases, are at capacity. With an example that the prehab 4 cancer programme continues to grow year on year, with circa 2200 referrals per annum now accessing the service. Membership continues to grow, which shows more people using physical activity in our facilities to support their mental and physical health. This is particularly prevalent in our biggest growth market of 13 – 17-year-olds.
- 2.7.2 Our exercise referral programmes and prehab are an even 50/50 of male and female participants. Our younger age group sign-ups are more dominated by boys. However, we are reestablishing a CYP group across the GM Active estate. So, we will within

this group, look for solutions to encourage more women and girls to be involved. But would like to gather insight on what the barriers and blockers might be at this stage.

2.8 Inclusive sport: Women in Greater Manchester take part in less traditional sport than their male counterparts, with an average of 78 minutes per week compared to 135 for men (Sport England Adult Active Lives Survey, 2015-16 to 2022-23). We are working alongside National Governing Bodies of Sport and other sport partners to create a more inclusive sporting system for women and girls through our Sport Connect Forum, understanding and removing barriers and reducing inequalities.

2.8.1 Regional initiatives such as the Greater Manchester Women's Football Board bring key partners together to tackle inequalities for women & girls following elite sporting success at the Women's EUROS in 2022. Greater Manchester will also play host to major sporting events such as the Women's Rugby World Cup in 2025, and Women's T20 Cricket World Cup in 2026, and vital work is needed to effectively leverage a participation legacy in communities which supports women & girls to access local opportunities to play, volunteer and get involved.

2.9 Sport Welfare: When it comes to welfare in sport, it is important that everyone feels like they belong and are welcome in every environment they want to participate in. We know often Women & Girls still don't feel like they are welcome in certain sporting environments due to several factors, which include the historic ways some sports were run and exclusive of women, individual bias as to who some people think should and shouldn't play certain sports, and even down to the sports kits that are used for many sports. We are working hard to work with NGBs, Clubs and other organisations to try and break down barriers for everyone to feel like they belong in sport and physical activity, regardless of their background or make-up.

2.10 Safer streets for women and girls: The Right to the Streets partnership and movement in Greater Manchester is leading the way to make our streets and public spaces safe, welcoming and joyful for women and girls, taking a whole-system, place-based approach to shift the dial from fear to freedom. Greater Manchester's #IsThisOk? The campaign is aimed at men and boys – challenging their behaviours to tackle sexual harassment of women and girls in public spaces.

- 2.11 **Walking and Walkability:** Walking, including wheeling (using mobility aids at walking speed) and pushing prams or buggies, is the most common way people move around.
- 2.11.1 While much work in the city region focuses on improving footpaths and features like crossings, drop kerbs, and tactile paving to make walking safer and more inclusive, supporting more walking requires a broader perspective.
- 2.11.2 We must consider *walkability* – not just the route, but the experience of place. This means designing streets and public spaces that feel welcoming, inclusive, and enjoyable. Greening, public art, seating, and strong connections between streets, buildings, and destinations all contribute to this.
- 2.11.3 Importantly, walkability also includes understanding the diverse needs of different people. There is growing recognition of a gap in how gender influences walking patterns, particularly in relation to public transport access and the safety and comfort of public spaces for women.
- 2.12 **Safe travel:** The GM TravelSafe Partnership, led by the Bee Network and Greater Manchester Police, works with transport operators and the GMCA to prevent crime, antisocial behaviour, and fare evasion on public transport. Recognising that women's safety is a complex, system-wide issue, the partnership has launched campaigns to raise awareness of gender-based violence and plans to introduce measures such as empathy training for bus drivers.
- 2.13 **Trans and non-binary work:** Activity levels amongst transgender, non-binary and gender diverse communities are lower than cisgender communities. We are working with the Proud Trust and LGBT Foundation to speak with trans people and better understand the barriers they face when trying to get and stay active in GM. We will then work together with system partners across GM to tackle these barriers and make movement more accessible.
- 2.13.1 The GM Moving Conference in May 2025 included a workshop to explore what partners need to support their work in this area.
- 2.14 **Creating the conditions:** Action within the movement, physical activity, and sport system alone will not be enough. Greater Manchester and national efforts are already

driving wider changes to improve the lives of women and girls, providing a strong foundation to build on. Cross-sector workstreams are also creating the conditions for gender equity, supporting our shared goal of tackling intersectional inequalities. Some examples include:

- Is this OK?
- GM Women's Health Strategy
- Gender-Based Violence strategies
- Co-operative Councils Policy Lab on street harassment
- Misogyny is hate, and other anti-misogyny policies
- Nighttime Charters
- Equal pay and menopause policies
- Women and Girls' Football Board priorities
- Safer Parks, Make Space for Girls, planning work, e.g. Streets for All and the Design Codes, Transport, e.g. Right to the Streets and Travel Safe
- Active bystander training – TfGM
- Lift the Curfew and This Girl Can (national)
- International Working Group work on policy

3. Vision and Ambition: GM and LCR joint leadership

3.1. It is proposed that Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region work together in this year, July 2025-26, through their respective strategies and collective leadership, by:

- Both Combined Authorities will sign the Brighton Declaration in September.
- Holding a joint event in October to start a year of engagement and participation.
- Developing a shared action plan for whole system leadership – changing culture and shifting barriers to active lives for women and girls.

4. 2025-26 A year of leadership and action

- 4.1. It is proposed that a collaborative group across the two city-regions develop a programme of work that drives culture and system change.



- 4.2. **Greater Manchester Engagement Process:** To ensure we have a shared understanding and joint ownership, we are engaging the system through the following -

- **GMCA – Boards and Panels**
 - Engagement through formal structures, including:
 - GMCA (Greater Manchester Combined Authority) boards.
 - Thematic and advisory panels that guide strategic decisions.
- **Cross-Sector Engagement**
 - Collaborative working across key sectors to align strategies and deliver integrated outcomes:
 - Education – Schools, colleges, and higher education institutions.
 - Health and Social Care – NHS, public health, integrated care systems (ICS).
 - Leisure and Parks – Local leisure trusts and facilities.
 - VCSFE – Voluntary, Community, Social Enterprise, and Faith sectors.
 - Police, Crime and Safety – Community safety partnerships.
 - Transport – TfGM, active travel, and infrastructure planning.
 - Employment – Skills development, workforce, and economic inclusion.
- **GM Moving Team and Partner Engagement**
 - Coordination through thematic areas and specialist teams:
 - Active Adults

- Children & Young People
- Place-Based Approaches
- People & Leadership
- Walking, Wheeling & Cycling
- Active Environments
- Partnership and Welfare
- Health
- Engagement mechanisms include:
 - Boards, networks, and partnership groups relevant to each theme.
 - Collaboration through Place, addressing local needs and delivery.
- Working with specific forums and networks, such as:
 - Tackling Inequalities
 - National Governing Bodies
 - School Games
 - Active Education
 - Place Partnership Forums

4.4 Designing into plans for Greater Manchester, locality and national events celebrating women and girls' participation and success in sport and physical activity, building on the recent success and profile of the national teams, including the Lionesses and the Red Roses, and local successes and activities.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. As a City Region, supporting and committing to the Brighton Helsinki Declaration is a key milestone in the shift towards gender equity and equality in sport and physical activity.
- 5.2. The GMCA is therefore recommended to:
1. Confirming their commitment to leadership on gender inequality in active lives, and leading in their place to support movement, physical activity and sport for all women and girls.
 2. Sign a commitment to the Brighton Helsinki Declaration on Women and Girls.