

Launch of the report from the Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission

Questions and Comments from Launch event – and answers from the Panel

This document contains questions which were asked by attendees at the launch event for the report of the Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission on 26th March 2021, together with responses which have been provided by the Commission and agreed by the Chair of the Commission, Kate Pickett.

The questions are grouped according to their theme.

The questions and answers are then followed by a list of comments made in the ‘chat’ at this virtual event.

Questions and answers

Role of the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector (VCFSE)

1. How does the commission see the **economic** role of the thousands of VCSE organisations? As an anchored sector, rooted in place, developing jobs, employability and enterprise (and not just providing charitable services.)
 - a. **ANSWER:** In our report, we describe a vision which puts people at the heart of local economic development and regeneration. Greater Manchester can only build a strong economy by focusing on the foundations. Building these foundations also means giving local people a stake and a say in the economy – putting wealth and power in the hands of people in our communities, through democratic ownership, community investment and support for small local businesses of all types. We believe that the economy includes organisations of all sectors and all governance types – and all have a role to play. The recommendations that are made in the report apply to VCSE organisations as well as private businesses and the public sector.
2. As a VCFSE sector we create jobs, pay fairly, and bring a triple bottom return, tackling inequality on the front line - is there going to be an investment into the sector?
 - a. **ANSWER:** This report sets out a road map for going further and faster to reduce inequalities in Greater Manchester. As described in the response above, voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations all have a role to play in this. We would encourage these organisations to enter into conversations with other relevant stakeholders – local authorities, businesses, NHS organisations, housing providers and so on, to define their role and the resources which might be available to fulfil that role.

People power and structural racism

3. What change can we expect to see in the short term, medium and long-term? The reality is black people are not in decision making positions across the system - how are we planning to ensure that we have equality at the heart of decision-making?
 - a. **ANSWER:** Our report highlights the importance of ensuring that people from different backgrounds are empowered to be part of local decision-making processes.

Our recommendations include an ask of local authorities and their statutory partners to ensure that staff and senior leadership represent the communities the organisation is operating in. We have also recommended a Mayoral-led initiative to achieve equal representation of racial minorities in the public, private and voluntary sector could bring together mentoring and leadership programmes with stepping up action via the Good Employment Charter on recruitment practices - creating pipelines into both entry-level and senior leadership positions. GMCA should lead by example with a major push to improve racial diversity in its staff and senior leadership.

4. It would be great to hear how we could hold GM Leaders to account.
 - a. **ANSWER:** The report recommends that the Greater Manchester Equality Panels should be given more teeth with a stronger mandate and resources to constructively challenge public bodies. It goes on to talk about the creation of a Forum where representatives of each Panel can come together to discuss and take action on common issues with an intersectional approach should be created. By working together on a common agenda, they can have greater impact on the overlapping and intersecting inequalities set out in this report. However, the Commission has also stressed the importance of engaging in democratic processes such as elections, question times, meetings with elected representatives. Those democratic structures are always going to be the main means of 'holding to account', and the Commission would strongly encourage people to get involved and use opportunities offered to them. This work needs to proceed in a constructive and collaborative manner for maximum impact – with a greater level of mutual understanding of the issues than probably exists at the current time.
5. How will we ensure the intentions for Race Equality don't just stay within the Race Equality Panel and that each area recognises the need instead to deliver for race equality?
 - a. **ANSWER:** The Commission has talked about structural racism as a form of racism that is embedded as normal practice within society or an organization. It can lead to such issues as discrimination in immigration and asylum cases, in criminal justice, employment, housing, health care, political power, and education as well as the persistent ethnic inequalities in health exposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. As such, we completely agree that race equality is not just something which should be discussed at Race Equality Panel meetings – and understanding of racial disparities and unequal impacts should be part of every pillar of our recommendations, in good work and decent pay, in services, in sharing wealth and in empowering people.
6. We are already working with anchor institutions across public services on Race Equality in the Workforce and would like to continue to develop and expand this work in partnership with the Race Equality Panel. I am wondering how we can take this forward as part of the recommendations?
 - a. **ANSWER:** This work would be an important part of the roll out of any proposed workforce race equality activities. As with other areas, we are encouraging Greater Manchester to build from the excellent work which is already taking place. Please do flag up your work with the GMCA and other statutory bodies.
7. GM BAME Network welcomes the report. Can we ensure that we have a visible focus on race in every local authority area?
 - a. **ANSWER:** Recommendation 6 of our report encourages Greater Manchester to agree a joint commitment with all local authorities and their statutory partners to tackle inequalities faced by minority groups. We go on to describe some of the

elements of any commitment. The Commission feels strongly that structural racism must be a top priority for any serious agenda to tackle inequality.

8. It would be good to see more action on cohesion and work across disability, LGBT+ and other issues as well as race. We Stand Together hopes to work closely with GMCA, Local Authorities, GMP and the VCFSE sector to implement clear actions to help bring the recommendations to life.
 - a. **ANSWER:** As well as improving democratic participation generally, tackling power inequalities demands a specific focus on groups who face particular oppressions or injustices because of their identity. We completely agree that more action needs to be taken and welcome the offer of support from We Stand Together. It is important that organisations like yours play an active role in the delivery of our recommendations.
9. Please could we get an update on the race equality review set up into GMP months ago, given that there also is a recommendation around policing transparency?
 - a. **ANSWER:** The early results of the race equality review have been shared with members of the GM Race Equality Panel, which is supporting the review process in terms of seeking clarity and addressing the issues which have been raised. Further information will be published shortly.

Building local wealth

10. Ambitious plans, desirable and achievable ... proud to be listening to this launch this morning. Can we hear more about the Community Wealth Hub - credit unions are ready to take our place in bringing the benefits of this to local people?
 - a. **ANSWER:** The Commission has recommended that GM establishes a Community Wealth Hub to support and grow employee-owned, co-operative, mutual, social and community enterprises, staffed by people from the co-operative and community sector who understand the market, connecting and scaling existing efforts to grow and 'market make' the social economy from across the ten boroughs. This Hub might bring together support for communities to take over empty shops or buildings and repurpose them as community hubs or enable development of "platform co-operatives" – umbrella organisations in key sectors, such as childcare and social care, to provide the scale needed for small organisations to compete in public sector and commercial markets. It would also seek to work with Credit Unions and other finance organisations to unlock community investment.
11. How do we make sure that all our physical investments, particularly in housing, focus direct benefits to those communities experiencing poverty and inequality using investment from national government, Combined Authority, Local Authority, Housing Provider, Transport etc.
 - a. **ANSWER:** Our proposed GM Community Wealth Investment Platform would act as an online portal or 'shop front' connecting local individuals and social investors to opportunities to invest their money for community good. This should be part of a wider GM Community Wealth Investment Strategy, building on existing GM investments and partnerships to mobilise public and social investment, alongside philanthropic funding, to support a recovery based on community wealth. Furthermore, the wellbeing goals that we describe in our first recommendation should inform the organisation of budgets, portfolios, staff teams and policy impact assessment. Over time, GMCA should reorientate its resources so that tackling inequalities and supporting good lives for all is at the heart of every portfolio.

Good jobs and decent pay

12. It would be great to have equalities and especially ethnicity monitoring embedded within the Good Employment Charter – is that possible?
 - a. **ANSWER:** Although diversity and inclusion is embedded right across the 7 areas of the GM Good Employment Charter, we believe that the Charter offers specific opportunities to take enhanced action to address specific inequalities such as: using the Good Employment Charter to promote ethnic minority pay gap reporting for all companies above a certain size, stepping up action via the Good Employment Charter on recruitment practices, and increasing pressure on employers to pay the real living wage. The Commission welcomes recent efforts, in partnership with the Equality Panels, to enhance the Charter’s focus on equality and diversity, ensuring that employers implement good equalities practices.
13. Will this RLW funding be extending to our Early Years Sector as the current level of funding makes it impossible to pay the real living to our workforce even as a mutual and social enterprise
 - a. **ANSWER:** The Commission recommends that the Mayor of Greater Manchester should set an ambitious target to get every employer across Greater Manchester to pay the living wage and offer ‘living hours’ by 2030, using the Good Employment Charter, conditions on access to public goods, services and contracts, and support for businesses in low paid sectors to get there. We also believe that GMCA, districts and anchor institutions should build a living wage and guaranteed living hours requirement into their procurement and planning activities. The Commission has urged public authorities to work with employers to change pay structures and practices in sectors where low pay and poor working practices are endemic such as social care, childcare, retail and hospitality as they are reshaped after the pandemic.

Poverty

14. Our poverty levels are significantly increased over the last year. We have more food banks setting up every week. How are we going to address these levels of poverty?
 - a. **ANSWER:** This Commission is seeking to describe ways to address poverty and inequality in Greater Manchester. To do this, recommendations 1 and 2 lay the foundations for a system-wide refocus on the urgent need to tackle inequalities. The remainder of our recommendations focus on actions that can be taken now to address urgent inequalities arising from the pandemic, whilst also helping to pave the way for the longer-term system changes described above. This is not a comprehensive blueprint for tackling poverty and inequality across Greater Manchester – which is well beyond the scope of our short Commission. Rather, we have focused on interventions that could help to spread power, opportunity, good work, wealth and services more widely across the city-region – simultaneously tackling multiple sources of inequalities. We would draw your attention to the sections on good jobs, decent pay and building wealth in our report for our thoughts on how GM might address the growing levels of poverty.

Health inequality

15. How will you practically ensure that health care providers have equity and fairness at the heart of every element of their policies and practices to address the dire health outcomes

we see particularly in Black and Asian communities) across all measures of health especially in maternity care

- a. **ANSWER:** Inequalities are deeply damaging; to people's health, wellbeing and resilience throughout their lives. But ultimately the vision will only be achieved by the whole system working together. We are recommending that GMCA puts in place a Race Equality Strategy, aimed at tackling race inequality in health, education, policing, work and housing. The Commission has also urged Greater Manchester to move towards universal basic services in which education, health, childcare, adult social care, housing, transport and digital connectivity are provided to all, which we believe is key to building a more equal society.

Neighbourhood working

16. How do we focus and join up resources in the most deprived neighbourhoods which often have multiple existing services and residents experiencing the range of intersectional issues highlighted in the report, i.e. joining up resources to create long term approaches to tackle poverty in the most deprived neighbourhoods?
 - a. **ANSWER:** The Greater Manchester Model outlines how public service delivery could operate in Greater Manchester to deliver the vision contained in the Greater Manchester Strategy. It describes a fresh relationship between the public and the public sector and includes: freeing up frontline services to be more responsive to communities; devolving power; and allocating resources more effectively to meet need. The Commission believes that Greater Manchester should turbo-charge the implementation of the Model in 10 deprived neighbourhoods and pilot an income guarantee in one or more communities. This work might include creating neighbourhood teams of residents and volunteers working alongside professionals, agreeing shared goals with local communities, developing collective responsibilities for achieving outcomes, calculating total public spend in a place and developing participatory budgeting processes, areas of pooled budgeting, and joint commissioning with and for communities. Also breaking down barriers to shared data and intelligence to target support and seizing opportunities to develop and link local economic development and public service plans for communities.

Implementation

17. Some of this plan requires a lot of political buy-in from local authorities in order to prevent this simply being 'another report'. Do you think that buy-in will be there on the report's specific recommendations?
 - a. **ANSWER:** Greater Manchester needs to create a 'system' which fully collaborates around the vision of good lives for all. This requires strong and purposeful leadership from individuals and organisations, and from communities and institutions. Later the same day as this launch event, the report was endorsed by all of GM Leaders at the GMCA meeting. The Commission believes that the Greater Manchester partnership boards which focus on Growth, Reform and Tackling Inequality need to take a leading role and work together to drive forward activity against the shared objectives of people power, good jobs and decent pay, building wealth, and services for a good life.

18. Secondly, the CA is signing off £16m in loans to another large development with no affordable housing this morning - given that this is already a policy lever at your disposal now, do you think that choice fits with this report's recommendations?
- a. **ANSWER:** As stated above, the Commission believes that Greater Manchester should align its strategic thinking around wellbeing and putting people at the heart of local economic development and regeneration. With a set of wellbeing and equality goals to sit at the heart of a refreshed Greater Manchester Strategy, GM should then align budgets, portfolios and activities around these goals. This would include the process of decisions-making about investment funds, as far as is possible within the external conditions attached to those funds.
19. Thank you to all the Commissioners. Can we please bring the commissioners back in a year to see if progress is being made?
- a. **ANSWER:** Better than that, it has been agreed that GMCA should report on progress against the Commission's recommendations after six months, or on the publication of the Greater Manchester Strategy (whichever is later), including how the recommendations have been included in the refreshed strategy. A review session with the members of the Commission will be arranged for the autumn of 2021.
20. Do you know what the next steps are?
- a. **ANSWER:** The report has been published at [Independent Inequalities Commission - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/independent-inequalities-commission), and will be shared with a range of stakeholders involved in the GM Equalities Panels, with the various partnership boards and decision-making governance in the public sector, with the VCSE sector and business representatives, and with the health, housing and other thematic agencies. The aim will be to share the report with these people to discuss their role in delivering the recommendations, in order to agree just how action will be taken. But that shouldn't stop action now – the Commission encourages everyone implementing our recommendations to continue the conversations with those most affected by inequalities.

Comments received

The following additional comments were made in the chat:

- Pleased GM acknowledges structural racism. Miatta (Fahnbulleh), many VCSE colleagues would be delighted in exploring the 'rockets' we can put in place to take GM to the next level
- Important to recognise the role of voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector in this work
- Miatta (Fahnbulleh), it's great to hear you vocalise GMCA Race equality concerns and intentions for a more robust panel, please accept an open invitation to attend our Race equality panel, Elizabeth, Chair, RE Panel
- Important to recognise racial discrimination in the job market, as well as helping to create opportunities we must tackle unconscious bias
- All this is music to one's ears. Thanks for referencing Stockport, Miatta (Fahnbulleh).
- Inspirational Thank you, Simon (Woolley)
- Thanks for that inspirational speech Simon (Woolley), thanks for your and Kate (Pickett)'s two visits to our Race Equality panel, showing a real respect and regard for our views, and for today representing our passions so well and professionally
- Simon (Woolley) is an inspiration

- Very inspirational - and delighted to see the focus on driving up social housing and investing in retrofit and greener homes in the recommendations too as well as the focus on neighbourhood and community level work
- GM Housing Providers welcome this report and the further work that will flow from it.
- Pleased to be part of Tameside Inequalities Board and for Oldham
- Hello from over the border in Wales, we at the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales are delighted to see your report and recommendations, particularly the essential pivot, putting wellbeing and equality at the very heart of your ambitious and exciting plans. Now is the time to be bold, and we support you all in your journey.
- It would be great to see the Social Progress Index being used to help frame and measure these essential & exciting developments. <https://www.socialprogress.org/framework>
- Brenda (Warrington) is a star - she gets it!
- The VCFSE sector plays a vital role and citizens through mutual aid have been exemplar across GM in supporting communities over the last very challenging year. They can play a much stronger role in delivering this much needed change.
- Agree with all VCSE colleagues. Our local sector is woefully under-financed. A commitment to invest in us is vital to support our role in helping to deliver these ambitions
- Great news on bus re-regulations. Well done!
- Thank you from the GM Disabled Peoples Panel - we welcome the report and working with everyone to influence, support and deliver the objectives and play a role in holding each other to account - lived experience must be at the heart of this action plan. Bring it on!
- Yes, Andy (Burnham) especially important for young families to get into decent homes
- Agree Kate (Pickett), voluntary and community organisations are anchor organisations. We've been a constant anchor in Salford for 102 years
- Important point made that specialist community and voluntary sector organisations should not lose out in commissioning decisions to larger 'anchor' organisations
- Agree Kate (Pickett), we absolutely need an intersectional lens to address these issues
- Youth Leads UK welcomes this report and how young people are at the heart of a lot of the recommendations. It's been a pleasure to serve as a Commissioner and bring young people's voices to the table.
- superb response Kate Pickett so encouraging, thanks for all the work with the Race equality, and for giving us a sustainable way to move Race equality forward
- Thank you so much, everyone who is here today. We hope you read our report, reflect on it, and see how you can contribute to the next phase - making it happen. We have enjoyed our engagement with everyone we've met over the past few months and applaud your passion and commitment for change. And let's all use our networks to share this work as widely as possible!
- Thanks to commissioners (et al) from the GM Equality Alliance (GM=EQAL). Miatta (Fahnbulleh) presented a compelling blueprint for creating real, lasting and much needed change in GM. We'd be keen to see these recommendations adopted as a clear action plan, and fully appreciate (and support) the work needed to move this from aspiration to policy.
- Inspirational... we look forward to do everything we can to contribute to delivery... re-energized!
- Report needs to be considered by all the panels
- Big thanks to the commission, now let's turn it into action!
- Greater Manchester would be an amazing place to live and work if Andy (Burnham) and 10 leaders adopt the recommendations

- Really welcome this report, thankyou