**GREATER MANCHESTER INDEPENDENT INEQUALITIES COMMISSION: FINDINGS FROM THE ‘CALL FOR IDEAS’ SURVEY**

**Final report**

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**SUMMARY**

1. This report sets out the findings from the ‘Call for Ideas’ that was undertaken in January 2021 to provide evidence to inform the deliberations of the Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission (GM IIC).[[1]](#footnote-1) The consultation was undertaken online using the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) *GM Consult* platform, and was open from the 7th to 31st January 2021.[[2]](#footnote-2)
2. In total, 120 responses were received. The questionnaire was qualitative rather than quantitative, structured into the sections set out below. Detailed findings, along with illustrative quotes from respondents, are provided in the main body of this report, with this summary providing the headline messages.

**Economic inequality**

1. Respondents were asked two related and over-lapping questions: how material inequalities in economic outcomes based on race in Greater Manchester (GM) might be addressed, and what would need to change to make GM’s economic model prioritise inequality.
2. There was clear recognition that the **distribution of wealth** across GM needs to be improved to address inequalities in economic outcome. Two broad themes emerged in responses:

* the development of a **different economic model** that is more sympathetic to inequalities and fairer to those who find themselves marginalised under the current economic paradigm, which can embed inequality; and
* the need to address the **spatial distribution of inequality** across GM, to spread wealth more equally across the city region, invest in deprived areas and address increased gentrification. In addition to geographical variance, there was strong consensus that resources should be targeted towards the **most disadvantaged groups** in the city region – in particular, those ethnic minority communities that have suffered most from adverse economic outcomes with longer-term roots, but which have been exacerbated by austerity, Brexit and COVID-19.

1. Some of the responses set out the benefits of **empowering local residents and voluntary sector groups through ‘bottom-up’ approaches** that aim to reduce economic inequality. Respondents stressed the need to create **better and more secure employment opportunities** as part of a wider strategy to address inequalities across the city region.
2. There was broad consensus that significant culture change would be required to change the current GM economic paradigm in order to prioritise inequality. Key decision-makers need **to** **be more representative of the communities that they serve**, with stronger representation from those who have lived experience of inequalities. Alongside, a more **intangible change in mindset** is needed, bringing a more collective, inclusive approach to decision making
3. The **power and wealth held by certain individuals and businesses** was felt to be a barrier to a more equitable, community-focused economic model in GM. Although there was some agreement that a new economic model may require **new funding mechanisms**, there was a lack of consensus over a fair way for this to be implemented without a change in policy from central government.
4. Respondents felt that **better** **employment practices** could support the GM economic model to better prioritise inequalities, and that a more participatory economic system could **empower local communities and grassroots organisations** to play a key role in reducing inequalities.

**Democratic decision-making, power and voice**

1. The Call for Ideas requested suggestions for practical changes that could be made to ensure that GM’s decision-making processes give voice to the most marginalised.
2. Responses focused on the need for **greater engagement** of marginalised groups so that they have a voice in GM decision-making processes, and emphasised the value of collaborative approaches and trusting relationships. It is important that engagement is an ongoing process rather than something undertaken on a one-off basis, when it suits the powers that be. One respondent commented on the role of language, with terms such as “marginalised” and “deprived” cementing the barriers that face people who are given these labels.
3. Respondents agreed that “bottom-up”, **grassroots involvement** helps to empower marginalised groups, but currently saw little sign of true **co-production**. This will require proper investment in the voluntary and community sectors, with active community centres and community workers engaging local people in the decision-making process, especially those from under-represented groups.
4. The **lack of representation** of minority groups in our decision-making processes was felt to be holding back progress towards greater equality across GM. More diversity is required, before decisions are made, and not as ‘consultation that is more about telling people than listening to people.’

**Good employment and adult skills**

1. Respondents were asked how we might ensure that the impacts of the pandemic do not widen existing inequalities in access to good employment. There was strong support for **positive action** to ensure guaranteed employment opportunities for individuals with protected characteristics, and recruitment practices that enhanced the diversity of workplaces and the extent to which they reflect the wider community. Stress was placed on the value of **flexible working**, particularly for older people, carers and single parents. It was suggested that responsible **employers could be incentivised** through promotion and publicity for those who treated their workforce well and paid fair wages, regardless of their personal characteristics or background.
2. Many of the responses emphasised the centrality of **skills**, and the need to invest in skills development to support new jobs in the green economy. A lack of **digital skills** was identified as a key barrier for people seeking to access employment or better quality work, as was ‘**digital poverty’** in the form of unequal access to technology. More broadly, the importance of **education** was highlighted, with more investment in sixth form colleges and a wider variety of courses (including more vocational training) suggested.
3. The Call for Ideas also asked what could be done to tackle low pay and poor-quality jobs in Greater Manchester (GM). Many respondents recommended the **living wage** as the most effective mechanism to effect change, with public sector **procurement practice** identified as a key driver in incentivising payment of the living wage and encouraging employer investment in the well-being of their employees. **Zero-hour contracts** were condemned, and the **spatial distribution of employment inequalities** highlighted: residents in more affluent areas of the city-region are much more likely to have good quality, well paid jobs, and there needs to be more focus on the barriers faced by residents in more deprived areas, who are disproportionately represented in low-paid work.

**Education and young people**

1. The Call for Ideas asked respondents how we might ensure that children and young people at risk of digital exclusion are best able to take part in education, training or employment, given that more activity is online. Considerable emphasis was placed on **access to devices**, with a suggestion that gaps could be addressed by directing families to **local libraries**, where mentors could be on hand to provide assistance. Extra-curricular **youth clubs** were also suggested as a useful means to support educational, training or employment opportunities.
2. **Access to the internet** was the other main theme in responses to this question, with issues around the availability and cost of high speed internet, which could potentially be addressed by a **universal broadband access** policy.
3. Respondents were also asked to consider how GM might support young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) as we move out of the pandemic crisis. **Mental health support** came out strongly, with the need to raise awareness of available support and to provide mentoring and tailored interventions for individual young people. **Apprenticeships** were cited as an effective response, particularly if programmes could be co-designed with young people. **Technical education** was also promoted by several respondents as a way to support NEET young people, by helping them to learn a vocation.
4. **Incentives** also featured in responses to this question, with suggestions including paying young people to enrol in new courses or providing travel concessions and meal vouchers. One respondent commented that more thought should be given to **where employment opportunities are advertised**, to tap more effectively into the ways in which young people receive information.

**Democratising asset ownership**

1. Respondents were asked to consider how we might promote democratic ownership and business models that can help to reduce inequalities, and how community wealth could be built up in deprived areas and local assets reinvested into the local economy. **Empowerment of local communities** came out strongly, with the public sector promoting and investing in community ownership models, and community representatives involved in decision making and the design and delivery of programmes. **‘Buy local’ schemes** could encourage people to spend with small community businesses, and help to build a sense of democratic “ownership”.
2. **Business support** should do more to support asset ownership and wealth building in communities, by resourcing local start-ups and sharing expertise through mentoring and similar schemes. **Financial support** such as business rates relief and affordable leases could be offered to appropriate ventures. **New** **co-operatives and social enterprises** should be nurtured, although doing so would require adequate **support structures and institutions** to be put in place.
3. **Public sector procurement practice** should be redesigned to favour co-operatives and social enterprises, with the Preston Model cited as a good example. Public sector organisations should “buy local”, procuring from small businesses in GM to support communities and ensure that wealth is generated and remains in the city region. A “**GM pound**”, could encourage local spending.
4. Many of the responses referenced the importance of **communicating success stories** of businesses in alternative forms of ownership, and **engaging with people with lived experience** to co-produce solutions for communities. **Wealth redistribution** was felt to be key to ensuring democratisation of asset ownership and building wealth in communities, through local businesses supporting community-based activity, wealthier individuals giving charitable donations, and/or directing taxation receipts to support community ventures.

**Health inequality**

1. The Call for Ideas asked respondents to suggest what should change to place the need to tackle health inequality at the heart of Greater Manchester’s health and social care system. Ensuring **equal access to quality health and care services** was a strong theme, with more support needed for people to understand the services they need and to enable them to navigate the system effectively so they receive the best quality care available; this includes ensuring better information and provision for people for whom English is not their first language. On a related note, **delivery of services should be targeted and localised in the community**, with outreach directed towards specific groups and communities, and people placed at the centre of service provision.
2. Several respondents stressed the importance of **representation within the health and care system**, stating that entry into health service jobs by people from underrepresented backgrounds should be encouraged. Chiming with responses elsewhere in the survey, it was also suggested that people with lived experience should be involved in designing health and care services.
3. Investment in **preventative services** and making **lifestyle and behaviour change** easier for residents were also identified as important in addressing health inequalities. There is a clear need to address the wider **social determinants of health**, such as: poverty; poor housing; unemployment; education; and discrimination in society. Building on the above, more investment into **mental health services** would have a positive impact on physical health outcomes, and in turn benefit the economy through increased employment.

**Universal basic services**

1. Respondents were asked what practical steps they would you like to see taken to help ensure that all Greater Manchester residents have access to critical public goods, such as affordable housing, childcare, transport and digital connectivity.
2. As suggested in the question, building more **new affordable housing** was highlighted as a priority, with a mix of provision advocated including social or council housing and shared ownership. The economic impact associated with the pandemic is increasing the potential for **disused offices and other commercial property to be repurposed** for housing provision. Respondents also suggested that action should be taken against **disreputable private landlords** that are providing unaffordable and/or sub-standard housing.
3. The **affordability of childcare** was another concern, which might be addressed through free or subsidised provision for parents on low incomes. Childcare was highlighted as a barrier to work, and is a clearly gendered issue that disadvantages women in the labour market: the cost of childcare can result in difficult trade-offs between parenting responsibilities and employment; and a lack of childcare during lockdown has raised significant challenges for women struggling to combine working from home and caring for (and home schooling) their children.
4. Affordability was also a concern in respect of **public transport**, particularly given the importance of transport to widening access to opportunities. Bus (and tram) fares could be free or subsidised for those on low incomes, and bus regulation might be a key tool in improving provision for communities in areas of GM that are not currently well-served. Linking to GM’s green agenda, the value of promoting walking and cycling and discouraging car use was highlighted, particularly for short journeys.
5. Many respondents suggested that **access to free broadband / Wi-Fi and devices** is central to addressing inequality, particularly in the current context when there is so much reliance on digital connectivity. Free internet access could be available in public places such as community hubs or libraries, and potentially a free or subsidised “GM peoples Wi-Fi”.
6. **Setting up co-operatives and co-designing services** at all levels could help to ensure access to critical public goods, as would **focusing efforts at a local (sub-district) level**. Services could be delivered from local community hubs, with the direct involvement of local residents, with **investment and decision making decentralised to neighbourhoods and community-run groups** delivering services such as childcare.

**Structural racism**

1. The Call for Ideas asked how material inequalities in economic outcomes based on race in GM might be addressed, and how representation of ethnic minorities in decision-making processes might be improved. On both questions, there was a strong focus on the need for **institutional reform** to ensure better representation in public sector leadership roles. Policies should be tested for their potential impact on ethnic minority communities before implementation, and policy outcomes subsequently analysed to monitor how they played out in practice.
2. There were mixed views about the value of **positive action**. Some respondents thought that quotas to reflect local demographics should be introduced, to be reached over time. Conversely, others preferred a policy of non-differential treatment, with one respondent stating that quotas were an awful way of incentivising people and represented the ‘bigotry of low expectations.’ The intersection between class and race was discussed, with a respondent commenting that we need to ‘highlight the class element more – this is not just about race, it is about how poorer people (which more BAME people are, due to racism) are treated and not [given] access to basic things like decent housing and food.’
3. **Mentoring** was seen as a useful vehicle to increase the **visibility** of people from ethnic minority backgrounds, which was felt to be lacking. ‘Reverse mentoring’ could be helpful, where a person of colour might mentor a senior leader to help them understand the perspective of their community and use this new understanding to inform their decision making. Respondents stressed the importance of not only employing and promoting more people from ethnic minorities, but also ensuring that staff are supported in their roles and valued for their skills, experience and knowledge.
4. **Housing provision** is a key determinant of economic inequalities based on race, and requires policy solutions such as ensuring private rented and social housing is up to a minimum standard, tackling densely occupied housing (particularly in the context of the pandemic) and being stricter on so-called “slum landlords.” Ethnic minority communities are often **segregated from others and are “trapped” in specific areas and types of housing**.
5. Many respondents emphasised the **importance of language** in bridging divides, and the need to ensure that public information is accessible in all relevant locally-spoken languages. Everyone should be **supported** **to access services and mechanisms through which they can make their voices heard**.
6. There was some focus on **the role of community institutions** in addressing inequalities in economic outcomes based on race. Respondents were keen to see investment targeted towards local community groups that represented ethnic minority communities.
7. Responses also stressed the importance of **meaningful engagement** with ethnic minority communities. Outreach into these communities is needed, particularly to engage with a variety of people rather than just the “usual suspects”, ensuring that the **lived experience** of all members of the community can be heard. Beyond hearing this lived experience, the public sector needs to act on what it hears, and be open to real challenge and champion culture change.

**Priority actions to tackle inequality in GM, and key barriers**

1. Respondents were asked to identify one thing that they would change to tackle inequality in GM, and to comment on the key barriers to building a more equal city-region.
2. With regard to **key actions to tackle inequality**, and linking to findings reported above, the main suggestions focused on addressing the **lack of secure and high quality employment for young adults and women**; to support women, action in relation to childcare provision and responsibilities was felt to be very important.
3. An inclusive and comprehensive approach to **educating young people about racism** would be beneficial in tackling inequality across GM over the longer-term. More **equitable distribution of education funding** was a priority for some respondents, with under-resourced schools not able to invest sufficiently in the well-being and educational attainment of their pupils.
4. In relation to income equalities, respondents were keen to trial a fair **universal basic income** in GM, or adopt the **Real Living Wage**.
5. Investment in **social and affordable housing** was seen as a means for reducing inequalities, along with action to improve quality, choice and security in the **rental sector** and to address **homelessness and rough sleeping**.
6. Another theme emerging was the need for **greater engagement** with communities located in different parts of GM – both improving the ability for those in power to reach out and engage with disadvantaged communities, but also, for residents to reciprocate and contact those in power.
7. There is clear recognition that workforces and in particular leadership roles are not **representative of GM’s diverse communities**. This is especially pertinent in relation to ethnicity, and serves to reinforce inequalities across the city region. There is similar recognition of a lack of representation of disabled people and younger residents, with clear intersections between inequalities in employment and decision-making.
8. In terms of the **key barriers to building a more equal** GM, respondents highlighted the deeply embedded and systemic nature of many of the inequalities facing residents in particular places / population groups. These inequalities have been exacerbated by the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent austerity period, and most recently by the COVID-19 pandemic; they have endured, sometimes for generations, and in some cases are now largely accepted as part of the GM socio-economic and demographic norm.
9. Another theme which came through strongly as a barrier to building a more equal Greater Manchester was the question of **funding** and its impact on inequalities across GM. Underfunding and austerity-linked cuts have left communities vulnerable, and limited the ability of the public sector to support them. Areas with resources have ploughed ahead and gentrified, with those without resources moving in the other direction, towards ghettoisation.
10. One of the other barriers cited by respondents was the impact that **paternalism** has had on equality in GM – how those in positions of power can appear condescending to minority groups, and prevent them from taking responsibility for their own lives.
11. Another barrier mentioned by a number of respondents was **accessibility** – specifically, how a lack of access to services has proved to be a barrier to greater equality across GM. A range of dimensions were highlighted, including access to a broad range of services, and more specifically financial support and access to nature and the environment. There were particular issues for disabled people in terms of **physical accessibility**.
12. **Education** was identified by a large number of respondents as the ‘one thing that you would change’ to tackle inequality in GM, and was also highlighted in responses to this question on the key barriers to addressing inequality. **Employment** was viewed similarly – in part, this is simply about employment vs. unemployment, but that is too partial and binary; the poor quality and lack of security associated with many jobs in the city region was a concern to many respondents.
13. A lack of **engagement** was also alluded to as an important barrier that militated against achievement of equality ambitions in GM, as was **housing**. In particular, affordable housing was highlighted once again.
14. **Race** was identified as a key and deeply engrained barrier to equality in GM, and one that will be highly challenging to overcome. However, the time has come for action, particularly in light of the Black Lives Matter movement and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on ethnic minority communities.
15. Another barrier identified by participants related to the **unequal distribution of wealth** across GM. As a result of the pandemic, wealth and asset inequalities have widened, exacerbating polarisation between affluent residents and those with few if any assets.
16. **INTRODUCTION**
    1. This report sets out the key findings from the ‘Call for Ideas’ that was undertaken in January 2021 to provide evidence to inform the deliberations of the Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission (GM IIC).[[3]](#footnote-3) The consultation was undertaken online using the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) *GM Consult* platform, and was open from the 7th to 31st January 2021.[[4]](#footnote-4) It was promoted via social media channels and dialogue with partner organisations, including voluntary and community sector organisations with an interest in issues of inequality, and members of the various equality panels that input into policy development in Greater Manchester (GM).[[5]](#footnote-5)
    2. GM IIC was set up in October 2020 to explore the causes of inequality and offer solutions to tackle these issues. It has been reviewing evidence from academic research and local equality programmes, and gathering insight from the business, public, voluntary and community sectors, to underpin forthcoming recommendations on recommend new policy, activity and ways of working in GM. Commissioners are keen to identify practical solutions and concrete actions that will help to build a more equal GM, and that can support mitigation of the unequal impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Commissioners will report to the Mayor of Greater Manchester and leaders of the ten GM local authorities in March 2021.
    3. The Call for Ideas was designed to capture views from people with an interest in making GM a more equal city region, particularly for those with experience of intersecting inequalities based on their gender; race; class; disability; age; sexuality, or migration status. In addition to responses from individuals with lived experience of inequalities, responses from organisations and individuals working with marginalised groups were welcomed.
    4. Whilst COVID-19 has highlighted and widened inequalities, we know that many of these inequalities are not new, and are deep-seated and often generational in origin. Respondents were invited to describe these longstanding inequalities, and to suggest how local resources might be deployed to help redress them.
    5. In total, 120 responses were received. The large majority (111, or 93%) were received from individuals, with nine organisational responses (eight of which were based in GM, and one national). Note that, as a voluntary consultation, respondents were self-selecting, and the intention was not necessarily to obtain views from a representative sample of the GM resident population. In practice, the individual respondents reflected wider GM demographics reasonably well; the main areas where there was divergence were: age (both younger and older people were under-represented amongst Call for Ideas respondents, compared to the wider GM population); disability (a higher proportion of respondents with a disability); gender (a higher proportion of women respondents); religion / belief (a higher proportion of respondents did not have a religion, and a lower proportion were Christian); and sexual orientation (a higher proportion of respondents were LGBTQ+, and a commensurately lower proportion were heterosexual).
    6. The analysis also incorporated key messages from the 165 social media comments that were received on GM channels.[[6]](#footnote-6)
    7. The questionnaire was qualitative rather than quantitative, and analysis was based on coding of responses into different themes and sub-themes. The findings are structured into sections that align with the main question headings from the surveys,[[7]](#footnote-7) with the constituent themes and sub-themes informing the headings that divide each of these sections. The findings identify the specific experiences and views of respondents, pulling out areas of both commonality and difference. Whilst most of the questions focus on different aspects of socio-economic, resource and power inequality and exclusion, differences according to the demographic background of the respondent are identified where appropriate. Section 9 focuses explicitly on structural racism, given the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on our ethnic minority communities, and the way in which the pandemic has highlighted the racial inequalities that exist in our society.
    8. The report is structured as follows:

* Section 2: Economic inequality
* Section 3: Democratic decision-making, power and voice
* Section 4: Good employment and adult skills
* Section 5: Education and young people
* Section 6: Democratising asset ownership
* Section 7: Health inequality
* Section 8: Universal basic services
* Section 9: Structural racism
* Section 10: Key actions to tackle inequality in Greater Manchester
* Section 11: Key barriers to building a more equal Greater Manchester.
  1. In addition, there are two annexes: the Call for Ideas questionnaire; and demographic information on the range of individuals and organisations that submitted responses.
  2. Quotes from the Call for Ideas responses and social media comments are provided where these help to clarify and illuminate the sentiments expressed. These are quoted verbatim, unless square brackets have been inserted to indicate changes or additions, or ellipses to show where content has been omitted. However, punctuation has been added to quotes where this assists legibility and accuracy.

1. **ECONOMIC INEQUALITY**

**Introduction**

* 1. The Call for Ideas set out how COVID-19 has stimulated questions over how our economies should be run and what really matters to residents. The pandemic has led to changes in how people live, work and shop, bringing challenges for GM, but offering potential opportunities to regenerate local economies in a new way so that the benefits of growth are spread more evenly. The questionnaire referenced the ambition in the 2017 Greater Manchester Strategy (GMS) to ensure ‘that the people of Greater Manchester can all benefit from economic growth and the opportunities it brings,’ [[8]](#footnote-8) and the focus in the recent (2020) Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership's Economic Vision, which highlights the need to tackle inequalities.[[9]](#footnote-9)
  2. Respondents were asked two related and over-lapping questions:
* How can we address the material inequalities in economic outcomes based on race in Greater Manchester?[[10]](#footnote-10)
* What would need to change to make Greater Manchester’s economic model prioritise inequality?

**Inequalities in economic outcomes**

* 1. There was clear recognition that the **distribution of wealth** across GM needs to be improved to address inequalities in economic outcome based on race. Two broad themes emerged in responses: developing a fairer economic model; and reducing the spatial distribution of inequalities.
  2. The responses demonstrate a real appetite for a **different economic model** to be developed that is more sympathetic to inequalities and fairer to those who find themselves marginalised under capitalism. There was some consensus that the current economic model only serves to reinforce inequalities based on race and other demographic characteristics, and an alternative is needed:

‘ … the current global system does not value equality; by its nature, [the] financial system is unequal because pay inequality is so obscene and wealth inequality is nauseating.’

‘there are some big differences across Greater Manchester, so trying to tackle inequality would transform how decisions are made and the economic model would need to be more egalitarian.’

‘look at inclusive economy to keep more money circulating in GM. There are too many [multinationals] sucking out money from GM.’

‘homelessness and poverty and equality should be dealt with via socialist measures not capitalism. Stop focusing on which road a homeless person is sleeping on and help them.’

* 1. Alternative approaches such as doughnut economics and the circular economy were referenced by respondents, along with issues covered elsewhere in the Call for Ideas such as the need for secure employment, better education and quality housing.
  2. With regard to the **spatial distribution of inequality** across GM, there was recognition that wealth needs to be spread more equally across the ten GM localities, rather than being concentrated in particular areas within certain boroughs. The range of responses on a similar theme is telling:

‘too much emphasis [has been] placed on attracting people with money into the city, i.e., proliferation of “luxury” apartments, and more [emphasis needs to be placed] on affordable housing for local people. It is debatable whether all the people of GM do benefit from economic growth.’

‘invest in deprived areas, address the increasing gentrification of Greater Manchester, which is pricing out local people. Look at places like Sweden and Denmark for their approaches.’

‘be less Manchester-centric and consider the boroughs of GM, focus on education, training [and] digital inclusion in the most deprived areas.’

‘focus (even) more on ways in which the wealth generated by the wonderful city region could benefit those who are on the margins.’

‘distribute businesses across Greater Manchester instead of having focal points like city centres. This pandemic has highlighted the inequality of amenities just focusing on one central area or region.’

‘more geographically targeted interventions. More support for those that have both economic need and opportunities. Halt the north-south divide in GM.’

‘minorities can help build a better future for all. As the world is not all White. When you have people working together there is an explosion of economic benefits for all. Everyone benefits.’

* 1. Social media comments gathered whilst the Call for Ideas was open confirm the geographical polarisation described above, and particular the variation in employment, educational and health outcomes between the more deprived north and more affluent south of the City Region. Transport is also identified as a factor here:

‘transport for north Manchester. Middleton is isolated with no trams/trains.’

* 1. In addition to geographical variance, unacceptable inequality in economic outcomes was also identified for particular communities across Greater Manchester. There was a strong degree of consensus that resources should be targeted towards the **most disadvantaged groups** in the city region, and particularly those ethnic minority communities that have suffered most from adverse economic outcomes that have longer-term roots, but which have been exacerbated by austerity, Brexit and COVID-19.

‘The [new economic] model would focus on those in most need; those who are unable to stay at home during the pandemic and those young people who were NEET [not in education, employment or training] before the pandemic and have now been firmly thrown on the scrap heap. Black and Asian and minority ethnic people who due to racism have the lowest paying frontline jobs should be the focus and the priority. If you can get it right for this cohort of people, you get it right for everyone. … They are a lost generation and have been totally overlooked. Their talents are going to waste and they feel that no-one cares about their futures.’

‘It would focus attention on providing opportunities for poor people to access vocational and literacy training plus digital inclusion. I live in a social housing tower block and have been involved in many local community enterprises and the level of white working class semi literacy is truly shocking.’

* 1. Some of the responses set out the benefits of **empowering local residents and voluntary sector groups through ‘bottom-up’ approaches** that aim to reduce economic inequality. Local residents could be provided with resources and empowered to develop solutions that are rooted in their specific communities.

‘There would be a stronger focus on community wealth building, i.e. investment in key public sector institutions and a commitment to local procurement, allied with investment in local economic development, training and social enterprise business support.’

‘Put … funds in the hands of the community for them to decide how it could be best [spent], rather than rich people in city offices making the decision.’

‘A refocused Greater Manchester economy would be a place where every citizen has the opportunity to participate and feel empowered to make a difference through their communities, workplaces, and local democratic institutions.’

‘The Local Enterprise Partnership would have a representative from the Poverty Truth Commission sat around the table and have that hard-wired into their governance.’

‘… There might be access to low cost workshops, studios, creative spaces, etc., so that people with business ideas can try them out without incurring a lot of risk … .’

* 1. Many respondents highlighted employment as the key area where material inequalities in GM came to the fore. They stressed the need to create **better and more secure employment opportunities** as part of a wider strategy to address inequalities across the city region.

‘The focus for investment and growth would be on creating quality jobs that as a minimum paid the Living Wage and offered wage and career progression.’

‘The new economic model would have routes for people to come into certain work opportunities. The ability to start somewhere but know that it can grow and develop into something else with training, qualifications and personal development.’

**Changing the GM economic model to prioritise inequality**

* 1. There was broad consensus that significant culture change would be required to change the current GM economic paradigm in order to prioritise inequality. The responses focused around two areas: the first relating to a tangible change in governance and leadership practices; and the second relating to a more intangible change in mindset.
  2. A change in the culture of appointing powerful elites to key positions in GM was felt necessary, so that **key decision-makers are more representative of the communities that they serve**. Alongside, elected officials and officers need to place greater priority on economic inequality and the urgency required to address it. A further change is required in terms of the approaches adopted to measure performance and define what ‘success’ looks like, so that inequality is positioned much more centrally.

‘Change the advisory partners from the public and private organisations that GM [keeps] referring back to and recognise that the way they think does not work for the marginalised, which are the majority of people.’

‘More social value and community wealth built into contracts and deals. More explicitly, deeper impact, led by people who can see through some of the nonsense. I'm not saying that the system is deliberately unfair in GM like it is nationally, but I think there are too many deals and agreements made in ivory towers away from the real experience of disadvantage. If people with lived experience of multiple disadvantage were involved in planning and decision making, we'd all benefit – things would start to change, our understanding of how to do this better would increase and everyone would feel GREAT.’

‘The introduction of new, key metrics into the way local economic development is measured – the replacement of GDP and GVA with measures that reflect social, environmental and economic development.’

* 1. A number of responses focused on the value that a more **intangible change in mindset** might bring in positioning inequalities more centrally within GM’s economic model. A more collective, inclusive approach is needed:

‘cross-party working, collaboration, agreement with action engaging those with privilege and community wealth to give / share not only in crisis, one-off or short term; intentional inclusion at every stage; acknowledging the complexity of poverty (individuals & families); it would need a legacy mindset.’

‘I don’t think it should be a written priority. It should be part of normal working practices.’

‘give out opportunities, ensure big companies are proving opportunity.’

* 1. There is clear recognition that if GM’s economic model is to give greater priority to inequality that there has to be **stronger representation** – greater involvement of those that have experienced inequalities within the decision-making process, including disabled people, residents from ethnic minority communities, women and young people. At minimum, this should involve consultation and representation in appropriate groups and processes that shape economic outcomes; but, beyond this, people with lived experience should be empowered in leadership roles.

‘Very simply, more people who suffer inequalities to get involved in changing inequalities, BUT those within power MUST listen and take action upon the advice they are given.’

‘Ensure that qualified minorities suitably occupy positions of influence. Create greater opportunities for members of the BAME community by way of training and development; a deliberate and conscious move to balance representation of all groups in all directorates.’

‘Swap out “powerful decision makers” with “real humans” who experience a real world that isn't made of shiny gold things. At [the] very least, if you're too scared to … have 100% real people making all the decisions, try a bit of coproduction – 50% people with lived experience of marginalisation at ALL levels of power / budget decisions.’

‘[We] need to have leadership which is modern, young, on-trend and has [its] finger on the pulse. Much of the leadership across the combined authorities is run by politicians from a previous era, the inequality is inherited through their actions. A non-political leadership is important – representative of modern day commerce, young entrepreneurs, leading business brains, etc., to lead us and show us how inequalities can be eradicated.’

* 1. Respondents stressed the need for a new economic model that will **help the most disadvantaged** across GM. The most disadvantaged groups need to receive targeted support under a rebooted economic strategy for the city region.

‘[The new economic model] would offer more support and opportunities to those having experienced and still experiencing disadvantage. More importantly, it would involve these people in deciding what support and opportunities are needed, and then in offering/running services.’

‘There needs to be a focus on improving the position of the most vulnerable / marginalised groups and the most deprived areas.’

‘Persons in authority and in charge of the public purse need to recognise areas of inequality and fund initiatives to enable a fair chance for all.’

* 1. Responses to the Call for Ideas coalesce around two ways in which the distribution of wealth across GM would need to change to allow a new economic model to prioritise inequalities: the first relates to wealthy individuals and businesses and how their behaviour should evolve; the second relates to funding mechanisms and their relationship to inequalities.
  2. There is broad consensus that the **power and wealth held by certain individuals and businesses** is a barrier to a more equitable, community-focused economic model in GM.

‘Power is in the hands of a small number of individuals and big businesses, so this would need to be totally rethought.’

‘More geographical targeting of resources to meet economic need and opportunity. Improve public transport, cut the cost for those in the north of GM who currently pay more for bus travel than the south of GM. Make better use of social value from GM commissioning which currently is not as good as it could be. Large companies are paying lip service to social value.’

‘Movement of financial resources; reframing away from a growth narrative; an understanding that there are different ways to measure economic success.’

* 1. Whilst there was some agreement that a new economic model for GM may require new **funding mechanisms**, there was a lack of consensus over a fair way for this to be implemented without a change in policy from central government.

‘A wealth tax would be the most obvious way, but that might be out of GM's remit.’

‘Restructuring council tax might come close. Create more council tax bands so that very high value properties [pay] more in tax but there is not a steep step up in bands that hurts middle-income earners as they advance or their family grows. Likewise, business rates should step up gradually so that very small businesses are not overwhelmed by tax burdens, while very large businesses skate.’

‘To achieve such an economy, one that is inclusive, environmentally sustainable and benefits local people, the Greater Manchester city region can’t rely on the market alone. Instead, a new approach is needed to rebalance the economy and deliver more equitable outcomes for all local people.’

* 1. Respondents felt that **better** **employment practices** could support the GM economic model to better prioritise inequalities.

‘If GM could incentivise business of all sizes to implement a proportional maximum and minimum on the full-time salaries of every employee, and ensure that all employees within an organisation are salaried, this would begin to reverse the staggering wage inequalities suffered across an organisation, which invariably affect women and minorities negatively.’

* 1. A more participatory economic system could **empower local communities and grassroots organisations** to play a key role in reducing inequalities.

‘Less [centralisation] (even at GM level) of services. Avoid big contracts that make the same mistakes as government ones make. Invest more in local and small charities and in local goods and services.’

‘People would have access to community groups and centres in every area, … run for and by the people. We don't need more fancy buildings and posh people moving into the city – we need to build on the people we \*have\* and who we \*are\* as a community. Invest in people, not companies. Stop making it attractive to middle and upper class people and make it a haven for working people and those who can't work. If we feel proud of our communities, more of us will work for it, we will become a self-sufficient city. That would be the dream.’

‘A genuine commitment to an economy based on public benefit rather than relentless growth. A genuine commitment to the development of a diverse economic landscape where small, local enterprises are supported at least as much as large companies. A commitment (backed by action) to use local businesses and social enterprises, keeping money in the regional economy rather than benefiting shareholders. A change in the education system to encourage young people (particularly those from deprived areas) to have the confidence and skills (both vocational and 'soft') to access meaningful careers rather than low-paid jobs. Give equal value to the strategies that benefit large numbers of people rather than niche, high-cost, over-specialist vanity projects. A change in mindset that part-time and flexible does not mean low-paid and low-skilled. A commitment coupled with robust action to ensure that women are not paid less and excluded from senior roles because of their sex.’

‘Greater Manchester’s economic model needs to focus on developing both high-skill growth sectors, and sectors with more mixed skills profiles able to offer employment and progression opportunities to a wide range of workers. This could include aspects of the Foundational Economy. Additionally, sectors which currently are characterised by relatively low productivity, low pay and low quality work should be included in economic strategies. … relying on the Employment Charter alone to drive up the quality of employment and productivity in these sectors is unlikely to succeed by itself.’

1. **DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING, POWER AND VOICE**

**Introduction**

* 1. In recognition that a lack of decision-making, power and voice underpin many types of inequality, the Call for Ideas posed the following question:
* What practical changes can be made to ensure that decision-making processes in Greater Manchester give voice to the most marginalised?

**Greater engagement**

* 1. Responses focused on the need for **greater engagement** of marginalised groups so that they have a voice in GM decision making processes.

‘Invite them in! It needs to be a collaborative approach – listen to their voices and experiences, sometimes they are the ones with the answers not you. It’s not always the leaders, decision makers who know what is best for people, often they know themselves. but this takes time and trusting relationships.’

‘… invite mums and dads from every primary school in Manchester to ask what they want their city to give their kids … then continue to ask them at all stages of making what they want happen. You need to ask 50-70 year olds what do they do in spare time and why they would or wouldn’t visit our city. .... Keep asking, ask them what you can do to make them feel safe in community and what recreation there is for their age.’

‘Have scrutiny panels where you put the current people in power against people who feel their voice isn't spoken and have a neutral jury who can decide who has the more sensible decision making.’

‘People in Manchester are apathetic as to politics and decision making even at local level, because they feel out of society and that their voice is not heard. Further promotion of local representation on social media such as advertising on games consoles, i.e. Xbox live screen, PlayStation hub; and inside beauty salons, tanning shops, nail bars. This will access people in the community where they would otherwise be overlooked.’

* 1. A disabled respondent stated that

‘As one of the marginalised so-called, I believe that language is a barrier, so if you say you … live in a deprived area you’re already putting up a barrier. We need to think differently about engagement … what’s important to people [who] live in Greater Manchester and not what local government thinks should be important.’

**Grassroots involvement**

* 1. Another central theme in responses was the need for more “bottom-up”, **grassroots involvement** to empower marginalised groups and give them a voice.

‘I see little substantive effort to work in true co-production at the moment. That has to change. Voices must be sought, not from the handsomely funded organisations but from small-scale community activities firmly embedded within the communities they serve. I know the popular view is devolved power, but if it still ends up in the hands of a largely male, largely middle-class minority, you might as well be Westminster.’

‘First, by investing more in the voluntary and community sectors. Second, by supporting and offering incentives to marginalised groups to start their own businesses or pursue their other dreams and ambitions. Third, by employing and promoting local people (especially from under-represented groups) to decision making positions.’

‘We need community centres that are fully funded and run by and for the people and properly trained, empowering community workers … . We really need to … listen to grassroots group and other individuals, families, and groups. This would be possible if everybody had access to community centres which each had a voice, including women's centres.’

‘Introduce deliberate democracy on a local level. Multi-lingual, hyper-local, led by people who represent their communities.’

**Representation**

* 1. The **lack of representation** of minority groups in our decision-making processes was felt to be holding back progress towards greater equality across GM.

‘More diversity in the decision making organisations, as well as a real opportunity for people to get involved. A diversity of voices must be included before decisions are made and not afterwards, or as consultation that is more about telling people than listening to people.’

‘Black and Asian people on the Boards and in decision making roles in this city. The one-size fits Whites model is not working and has never worked. … it only works for educated, middle class Whites, never mind working class Whites and it certainly does not work for what is fast becoming the majority – Black and Asian and other ethnic minorities.’

‘Have quotas of neurodiverse people on decision making bodies and not just for SEND work. We are more than a diagnosis.’

‘Appointments based on integrity, compassion and regard for human life. Leadership looks like Jacinda Ardern (New Zealand prime minister).’

1. **GOOD EMPLOYMENT AND ADULT SKILLS**

**Introduction**

* 1. COVID-19 is creating a jobs crisis that is likely to widen existing inequalities in access to ‘good jobs’ and employment itself. The Call for Ideas asked respondents to consider what might be done to maintain and improve access to good employment in the wake of the pandemic, and to help ensure that it does not exacerbate pre-existing inequalities. Two questions were posed, and are addressed in the content that follows:
* How can we ensure that the impacts of the pandemic do not widen existing inequalities in access to good employment?
* What could be done to tackle low pay and poor-quality jobs in Greater Manchester?

**Access to good employment**

* 1. The idea of **positive action** – methods to ensure equal opportunity for individuals with protected characteristics – was strongly supported in relation to access to employment. Respondents stated that employers should adopt recruitment practices that enhanced the diversity of workplaces and the extent to which they reflect the wider community. It was suggested that specific investment should be dedicated to providing guaranteed paid work opportunities for disadvantaged groups, and that a quota system be adopted under which a certain percentage of jobs in a private or public company should come from less privileged backgrounds.
  2. **Flexible working** has been one of the most visible outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic and this also manifested itself in the Call for Ideas responses. One respondent commented that flexible working would allow employers to become more age-friendly, whilst another stated that it would allow carers and single parents easier access to employment opportunities. Support for businesses that encourage working from home for new and existing posts was also suggested.
  3. **Incentivising responsible employers** received some support. Suggestions included working in partnership with employers to create a culture of co-operative behaviour across the city, and promotion and publicity for employers who acted responsibly and paid fair wages to all their employees.

‘Companies to commit to paying people the salary that fits the job role, training and education, regardless of gender, background or age.’

* 1. There was a clear emphasis on **skills** in many of the responses. Several respondents suggested that generating green jobs and developing green skills would be a useful mechanism both to create good employment and to have a positive impact on our environment. Specific ways this might be achieved were suggested by one respondent, and including new energy schemes and retrofitting GM houses and businesses:

‘Create green jobs and help people gain skills to work in these jobs. City farms with good working conditions and building organic farming skills. Making food available very locally and giving people jobs. Alternative energy development / making houses and businesses eco-friendly, and creating jobs that way. Jobs creating for combatting loneliness e.g. community centres.’

* 1. More specifically, **digital skills** came out strongly in the responses, including investment in digital and computer skills training, social media education and free e-learning. ‘Digital poverty’ was flagged as a potential barrier, however, in terms of unequal access to technology and affordability concerns. **Universal broadband** was muted as a potential solution, as it was for many responses to the education and employment questions. The need to attract higher specification companies, tech jobs and innovation to the city-region was highlighted by one respondent.

‘Roll out free super-fast broadband / Wi-Fi across GM so that people can have digital access if and when they need it … . Provide pathways for ordinary people especially disadvantaged people to come forward to be included in the workforce, remove barriers so people can work remotely successfully and [can] set up their own businesses, perhaps in one of the many empty units on the high streets.’

* 1. The importance of **education** was also highlighted. One respondent noted that we should ensure education providers teach financial literacy, interpersonal and digital skills. More investment in sixth form colleges and a wider variety of courses was suggested by another. A new, state-of-the-art, post-16 technical college for teaching vocational skills such as plumbing, building and electricals was also proposed, as was lobbying central government for increased educational funding.

**Tackling low pay and poor-quality jobs**

* 1. The **living wage** was supported by many of the respondents as an effective financial mechanism to tackle low pay and poor-quality jobs in GM. Suggested ways in which we might encourage take-up of the living wage included:
* aiming to be the first living wage city-region, with a majority of employees being paid the living wage, and setting a target (2022 was proposed) for all GM public organisations to become accredited living wage employers
* working with employers and trade unions to ensure all are paying a living wage
* requiring all profitable companies to pay the living wage.
  1. Another respondent suggested supplementing low wages with financial, social and health benefits such as tax relief, housing and living grants, and leisure discounts.
  2. **Employer incentives** also featured in responses to this question. Loyalty rewards could be paid to employers who improved conditions and invested in their workers; employers could also be incentivised to upskill staff, or to retain apprentices after they had qualified. Conversely, public money such as grants and loans could be withdrawn from organisations that offered poor employment and low wage jobs. Strategies to attract organisations providing good quality, well paid jobs to re-locate to GM were also advocated.
  3. **Incentives for employees** were also discussed, including ideas such as free bus passes, discounted food provision and punctuality bonuses.
  4. The **procurement practice** of GMCA and partner organisations could also be a mechanism to incentivise payment of the living wage and better quality jobs – insisting on social value as a key element of any tender would support culture change. For example, only licensing businesses that paid at least the Living Wage was suggested. Another respondent proposed that the GMCA should lead with a procurement policy that prioritised protected characteristics groups, and that avoided ‘box-ticking’ by demanding proof of the specific measures that organisations were taking to be ‘equality-centred employers.’
  5. A number of respondents condemned **zero-hour contracts** and called for them to be banned or for organisations that utilise them to be penalised. In particular, social media comments like the one below highlighted these sentiments:

‘Ban Zero hours contracts. Limit the number of 'self-employed' staff a company may use. This practice is also depriving the exchequer of employers’ national insurance. With no security of employment, no sick pay, no holiday pay, etc., people are under the thumb and at the mercy of business owners. I'm speaking as a Conservative Voter and I'm not a “leftie”.’

* 1. One contributor highlighted the spatial distribution of employment inequalities across GM:

‘GMCA should conduct a review of spatial inequalities in employment and skills across Greater Manchester, to better understand why, for instance, only 37 per cent of workers living in Oldham and Tameside are employed in managerial, professional and associate-professional occupations, while in Stockport 53 per cent of workers, and in Trafford 60 per cent of workers, are employed in these occupations. Differential access to high-skilled employment via public and private transport will be a part of the explanation, but by no means all of the explanation, given that Manchester also has large shares of workers in relatively low-paid, low-skilled employment … . A better understanding of the barriers residents face in entering and succeeding in higher-skilled occupations and growth sectors will aid in developing effective approaches to addressing skills gaps and spatial inequalities across Greater Manchester. This should be supported by monitoring the effectiveness of initiatives like Skills for Growth across demographic groups and across different spatial areas.’

1. **EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**Introduction**

* 1. The Call for Ideas questionnaire introduced the section on education by highlighting local concerns over educational attainment and aspirations amongst young people. In particular, the pandemic has exacerbated inequalities due to the reliance on digital technology for teaching and learning. The questions put to respondents asked how digital exclusion might be addressed to support children and young people’s learning and level the playing field, and how we might support young people who have become disengaged during the crisis:
* How do we ensure that children and young people at risk of digital exclusion are able to take part in education, training or employment as more activity is online?
* How can Greater Manchester support young people who are not in education, employment or training as we move out of the pandemic crisis?

**Addressing digital exclusion barriers to education, training and employment**

* 1. Respondents placed considerable emphasis on ensuring adequate **access to devices** that children and young people could use for education, training or employment. Schools were considered good vehicles to address this, both by providing devices owned by the school, and training teachers so they had the skills to support pupils in setting up the required technology. It was suggested that we could identify needs by drawing more proactively on the understanding schools have of their students:

‘… use the information that schools are gathering when they check out what equipment our students have access to. Do they have enough wi-fi capacity in their family to undertake their online learning? Put together shared packages of data that people can buy into. Develop a network of not-for-profit organisations that can repurpose, recycle and reuse technology for those that don't have it.’

* 1. One method of ensuring access to devices which had significant support was utilising **local libraries**. School visits to a library, with help given to sign up as a member, could be prioritised as one of the first outings in the school year. Mentors could be on hand in libraries to assist children and young people, and families without access to devices directed to their local library. However, the range and quality of available IT equipment would need to be expanded, and limited opening hours might represent a significant barrier.
  2. Extra-curricular **youth clubs** were also suggested as a useful means to support educational, training or employment opportunities. Letters could be distributed by local authorities through youth clubs, with questionnaires to ascertain whether families have the services, environments and devices needed for their children to learn. Youth clubs could also be used to promote safety messages regarding technology, and to provide practical support, potentially including IT lessons.

‘Ensure that all children and young people have a … suitable place to work. This requires work on the "hidden homelessness" problem, when families end up in unsuitable houses, overcrowded households, households that have to choose between heating / electricity / food / internet / etc. Children will NOT prioritise education if their environment is full of insecurity, noise, overcrowding, fear, hunger, cold, etc.’

* 1. **Access to the internet** was the other main theme in responses to this question. There was significant support for government intervention to provide high speed internet access to all GM households, either through subsidies or by ensuring that internet providers take the necessary action.
  2. Several respondents suggested a policy of **universal broadband access** across all households in the city-region. The levers for taking this forward were not set out, beyond one suggestion that the GMCA might have the necessary powers to control local internet access, and could means-test provision to provide free access for lower income households.

**Supporting young people who are not in education, employment or training as we move out of the pandemic**

* 1. Providing **mental health support** for young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) was one of the main themes in responses to this question. Raising awareness of available mental health support was deemed important, and the value of mentoring and direct support was stressed. A suggested ‘blended’ approach to mentoring could provide a dedicated work coach who also offered mental health support and help with issues such as childcare. The provision of joint support groups with adult jobseekers was proposed, as was employment-focused mentoring tailored to specific sectors. A commitment from public, private and voluntary and community sector organisations in GM to take on NEET employees would also be beneficial, potentially as one of the component elements of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter.[[11]](#footnote-11)
  2. **Apprenticeships** were cited by respondents as one of most effective ways to support NEET young people as we emerge from the current crisis. Apprenticeship programmes could be co-designed with young people, and local businesses encouraged and supported to offer apprenticeship opportunities. Accessible, technology-based apprenticeships were suggested as a way of disregarding traditional subjects that may not hold much appeal for young people. The need for a direct route from apprenticeship to paid employment was emphasised by one respondent, with another suggesting that the exploitation of apprentices that is sometimes seen needs to be addressed through better management practices.
  3. **Technical education** was also promoted by several respondents as a way to support NEET young people, by helping them to learn a vocation. More generally, training programmes were suggested, but without specific detail on the areas they might focus upon.
  4. A young male respondent suggested that more thought could be given to **where employment opportunities are advertised**, to tap into the ways in which young people receive information:

‘allow jobs to be posted where young people could find them, like social media, youth groups, gaming sites.’

* 1. As in the employment and skills section, **incentives** featured in the responses to this question. Suggestions included offering payment for young people to enrol in new courses, training allowances, travel concessions and meal vouchers. The GMCA’s *Our Pass* initiative was referenced as an example of an incentive that was a ‘solid investment.’[[12]](#footnote-12)

1. **DEMOCRATISING ASSET OWNERSHIP**

**Introduction**

* 1. The pandemic is widening inequalities between those who own assets, like housing and savings, and those who do not: whilst many small businesses and community institutions are in crisis, many more affluent households have increased their savings. However, this may also present an opportunity, if some of these more affluent households choose (or are persuaded) to invest in supporting assets in their local communities and high streets.
  2. The Call for Ideas sought to explore how local resources might be reinvested in local economies to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic, whilst also boosting community wealth and the ‘social economy.’ It asked two specific questions, set out below; however, as the responses explored similar areas, the findings have been brought together and grouped by theme, rather than reported question by question.
* What could be done at Greater Manchester level to promote democratic ownership and business models that can help to reduce inequalities?
* How can we build community wealth in deprived areas and encourage reinvestment of local assets into local economies?

**Community empowerment**

* 1. The most commonly suggested way to democratise asset ownership was for GM to **empower local communities** to deliver initiatives to reduce inequalities. Ways of doing so could include the promotion of community ownership models, and GM investment in locally-delivered programmes to reduce inequalities. The public sector could support communities to make the best use of community assets that already exist, and we could ensure that community representatives are involved in decision making and the design and delivery of programmes, perhaps through partnerships between local communities, voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector organisations and local businesses:

‘representatives [from] the community to be involved in designing a new approach to attract new ideas to boost the local economy with [an] achievable goal.’

‘… [we could promote] social leases for businesses, requiring them to put back into community (Pop Brixton is a great example).’

‘letting community and charitable organisations use local authority-owned and unused buildings and create a network so that the community can know about the help available.’

‘where appropriate, direct local authority investment is required, i.e. the expansion of council housing. In this context, more needs to be done to engage local people in the decision making and governance structures that sit along these developments, i.e. the creation of municipal bodies with local authority and citizen representation.’

* 1. Many respondents suggested that **‘buy local’ schemes** to encourage people to spend with small community businesses would help to build a sense of democratic ‘ownership.’ Other specific community initiatives that were suggested included community food growing, credit unions and community banks.

**Business support**

* 1. **Business support** could do more to support asset ownership and wealth building in communities. This could be done by encouraging and resourcing start-ups, promoting success stories of social businesses, sharing expertise through mentoring and similar schemes, and providing **financial support** such as business rates relief and affordable leases.

‘Ask local people [their] opinions about what they need to boost their neighbourhood, [then] approach businesses with a financial package over a period of time.’

‘Use trusted intermediaries in … communities to encourage local people to build their own businesses.’

‘Many people have the propensity to become great socially conscious entrepreneurs, but can find it difficult to understand and engage with the full range of options available to them when setting up a new enterprise.’

**Co-operatives and social enterprises**

* 1. Many respondents suggested that a way to encourage the democratisation of asset ownership would be to **promote and support new co-operatives and social enterprises** across GM. It was suggested that these organisations could deliver a range of services such as growing food, providing childcare and community housing projects.

‘Cooperatives! More and more of them – the more "normal" it becomes to be part of a local cooperative, the more people will be emboldened to set them up. Things like childcare, social care, food, support … there should be cooperatives for these things everywhere.’

‘Promote and offer different business models, e.g. social enterprises and coops, through business units and marketing. … [We] need to be more engaging and creative in the approach to getting the message across.’

* 1. Respondents commented that the promotion of new, community-focused businesses will require adequate **supporting infrastructure**:

‘there needs to be a sustained push towards the development of institutions that enable the collective ownership of assets, including community housing and enterprise. As part of this there should be a focus on the support structures and institutions that enable this, for example co-operative and social enterprise business support.’

**Procurement**

* 1. **Public sector procurement practice** might need to change to support the democratisation of assets in communities. Some respondents suggested that public sector procurement could favour social businesses such as co-operatives and social enterprises, with the Preston Model cited as a good example. Public sector organisations should ‘buy local’, procuring from small businesses in GM to support communities and ensure that wealth is generated and remains in the city region. One respondent suggested a **‘GM pound’**, similar to the Bristol pound, which is a community currency that encourages local spending.

‘There has to be a complete redesign of procurement to favour local, co-operative businesses and social enterprises. Support CICs [Community Interest Companies] to develop to do this work.’

‘There should be a commitment from local authorities to transfer assets into community and co-operative institutions, and to procure from co-operative and social enterprise businesses.’

**Communications and engagement**

* 1. Many of the responses referenced the importance of **communication**. Sharing success stories of businesses in alternative forms of ownership was felt to be important, as well as highlighting successful community projects and raising awareness of how to form a co-operative or community-based social enterprise. It was also suggested that public services should **share information on local assets** and how to access them. Some respondents commented that **engaging with people with lived experience** would lead to co-produced and better solutions for communities.

‘Communicate with those who experience poverty, they will lead to the solutions because contrary to myths not all low paid people [are] lacking in ideas to change their circumstances of poverty.’

**Wealth redistribution**

* 1. Some respondents suggested that **wealth redistribution** was key to ensuring democratisation of asset ownership and building wealth in communities. It was suggested that this could take various forms, including businesses engaging in charitable activity to increase their social value, or providing ‘in-kind’ support and expertise to other local businesses and community groups. It was also suggested that wealthier individuals should give charitable donations to organisations within the community, or that greater taxation of wealthier individuals and corporations could achieve this.

‘Look at success stories like "Unicorn" [in] Chorlton, or volunteer groups like bike delivery services – then encourage investment from philanthropists. These could be non-profit organisations with charity status.’

‘The real problem is that too many people have inadequate money to live on, and that can only be solved by increasing taxes.’

1. **HEALTH INEQUALITY**

**Introduction**

* 1. In recognition of the impact that the socio-economic drivers of inequalities have on health outcomes, and which have been exacerbated particularly starkly by the pandemic, the Call for Ideas asked the following question:
* What would change if tackling health inequality was at the heart of Greater Manchester’s health and social care system?

**Access to services**

* 1. Respondents were clear that **equal access to quality health and care services** is central to tackling health inequalities. The health and social care system is complex, and people need more support to understand the services they need and to navigate the system effectively so they receive the best quality care available. Services should be accessible to those for whom English is not their first language, requiring easy access to translators.

‘Everybody would have [a] basic right to healthcare and would be able to easily access it without being judged or marginalised or told they should suffer in some way in order to get access. Quality should be across the board, regardless of area.’

**Delivery of health and care services in the community**

* 1. Linked to access to services, it was suggested that **delivery of services should be targeted and localised in the community**, putting people at the centre of service delivery. Targeted outreach programmes to specific groups and communities would help health and care professionals to tailor services to individuals’ needs, and also address other factors that may be contributing to ill health.

‘[The health and care system] would be driven by an assertive model that looks for need and doesn't "assess" it into service driven boxes. That would mean a workforce who are out there actively looking for people who need help and finding out about ALL their needs, not just their health and care ones.’

‘The Partnership would be focused on people rather than which of their targets was red.’

**Representation**

* 1. Several respondents stressed the importance of **representation within the health and care system**, stating that entry into health service jobs by people from underrepresented backgrounds should be encouraged, and would help to build trust and understanding in their respective communities. Chiming with responses elsewhere in the survey, it was also suggested that people with lived experience should be involved in designing health and care services. A Black respondent commented that we need:

‘Black consultants and decision makers at every level. Black GPs and primary care nurses and office managers to gain the trust of Black communities.’

**Preventative services and behavioural change**

* 1. Investment in **preventative services** and making **lifestyle and behaviour change** easier for residents were further factors identified as important in addressing health inequalities. Practical suggestions for support that might be implemented included encouraging better diets by pricing healthy food more competitively, supporting take up of exercise by ensuring access to outdoor space or offering free gym memberships, and undertaking communications campaigns to promote healthier lifestyles.

‘Prevention support is the way forward, backed with better access to information.’

‘Keep Fit for All in local parks – encourage personal trainers to volunteer a couple of hours a week to do exercise classes.’

**Wider determinants of health**

* 1. Respondents were clear that if we are serious about positioning health inequality as a central priority for the GM health and social care system, then we need to address the wider **social determinants of health**. A number of issues were considered to be exacerbating health inequalities in GM, including: poverty; housing (overcrowding and poor property condition); unemployment; education; and discrimination in society (e.g. sexism and classism). It was suggested that we will only achieve a positive impact on health inequalities if we adopt a holistic, whole system approach to improve such wider social outcomes.

‘Poverty has a direct effect on not only … physical health but … mental health too, and [they] both run parallel … . If we tackle them alongside each other, then the outcomes will greatly improve inequalities altogether.’

‘Evidence shows that being in work is one of the greatest benefits to improved mental and physical health … . Someone who has been unemployed for most of their adult life will not be ready to work [in] six months. Long-term intensive personal plans focused on the individual, not a contract outcome, are required.’

‘The city region's poor housing is intrinsically linked to poor and chronic health outcomes.’

**Mental health**

* 1. Building on the above, **mental health services** were considered of vital importance to tackling health inequalities in GM. Respondents suggested that investment in mental health services would have a positive impact on physical health outcomes, and in turn benefit the economy through increased employment. A woman who self-reported as having a mental health issue commented that:

‘mental health, mental health, mental health – strategies and expert support, not endless signposting.’

1. **UNIVERSAL BASIC SERVICES**

**Introduction**

* 1. Covid-19 has shone a spotlight on longstanding inequalities in access to basic services – including digital connectivity, affordable childcare, affordable and secure housing, and access to transport. Respondents were asked for their ideas on what GM could do reduce inequalities in access to the basic shared services that underpin a good life:
* What practical steps would you like to see taken to help ensure that all Greater Manchester residents have access to critical public goods, such as affordable housing, childcare, transport and digital connectivity?

**Affordable housing**

* 1. Reflecting the question that was posed, there was a strong focus on the importance of **affordable housing**, and particularly that building more new affordable housing should be a funding priority. A number of respondents suggested an increase in **social or council housing provision**, while others thought that this should be progressed through developments that provided a mix of affordable housing types, including **shared ownership**. Developers should be required to deliver affordable housing as part of new schemes, although opinions were mixed over whether building on the green belt to provide more affordable housing was acceptable. The economic impact associated with the pandemic is increasing the potential for **disused offices and other commercial property to be repurposed** for housing provision. Respondents also suggested that action should be taken against **disreputable private landlords** that are providing unaffordable and/or sub-standard housing. A clear theme running through these responses was that housing must be truly affordable to those on low incomes, not just those with already secure incomes.

‘Although social housing has improved in recent years, there is still very [little] adequate affordable housing. Private landlords are a lottery for those who need secure housing. Shared payment housing is a successful idea [for] securing good accommodation that low income families can rent until they are financially secure [enough] to buy their own home … .’

**Childcare**

* 1. Many responses highlighted that **childcare is practically unaffordable** for many families, and suggested that it should be free or subsidised for those on low incomes. Free nurseries could be attached to local primary schools to improve provision and make the best use of existing assets. Childcare was presented as a barrier to work and a clearly gendered issue that disadvantaged women in the labour market. One respondent suggested that larger employers should be encouraged to provide creche facilities for their employees.

‘Although governments have tried to help with childcare costs, the reality is [that] … high childcare costs on low pay just drives families into poverty. Children should be a priority and [childcare] should be free for those on a limited wage.’

‘Maintaining and developing an affordable childcare infrastructure is also absolutely essential, and even more so in the current context when childcare providers are at risk of financial failure. It is important for policymakers to recognise that the current approach in lockdown that assumes that parents can both work from home and provide childcare is not only a recipe for burnout, but also for damaging women’s prospects in the labour market.’

**Transport**

* 1. **Access to affordable public transport** was felt to be important in reducing inequalities and widening access to opportunities. Many respondents suggested that bus fares (and to a lesser extent tram fares) should be free or subsidised for those on low incomes, with some advocating free public transport for all. There were also suggestions that simpler ticketing, such as smart tickets or Oyster-style systems would improve access to public transport. Two respondents thought that bus regulation could be a key tool in improving public transport provision, particularly for communities in areas of GM that are not currently well-served. The value of promoting walking and cycling and discouraging car use was highlighted, particularly for short journeys, with one respondent proposing an affordable bikes and cycle maintenance scheme.

‘Better transport – one bus company or fare rates and a ticket system across GM. More buses that go across and connect the areas of GM together and don't stop at [the] City Centre etc., but go across to other areas. Widening opportunities for work / education.’

‘Access to mental health services, medical services, places to exercise are harder when you cannot afford a car or cannot drive. The [cost] of public transport is a barrier to those on a low income, again limiting opportunity.’

**Digital connectivity**

* 1. Many respondents suggested that **access to free broadband / Wi-Fi and devices** is central to addressing inequality, and particularly so in the current context when there is so much reliance on digital connectivity. Free internet access could be provided in easily accessible public places, community hubs or libraries. More universally, connectivity (presumably to all GM households) could be free or subsidised, although this might not be feasible due to the financial implications. A few respondents suggested that broadband and Wi-Fi should be provided in new housing developments as a standard utility. Similarly, libraries and communities should have a supply of decent computers to enable digital connectivity, and there could be value in establishing a ‘tech library’ from which digital kit could be borrowed. A student respondent felt that:

‘quicker roll out of fast Wi-Fi is essential. More good quality and new computers at public libraries.’

* 1. One of the organisational respondents posed a challenge:

‘is it too ambitious to have a GM people’s Wi-Fi which is strong, reliable and free to access?’

**Cross-cutting responses**

* 1. There were a number of cross-cutting responses to this section of the Call for Ideas questionnaire. Some respondents thought that **setting up co-operatives and co-designing services** at all levels could help to ensure access to critical public goods. It was suggested that the public sector could encourage this in order to support local delivery of these services.

‘Employing people in communities and engaging the support of the wider community to make things fair.’

‘Coproduction and cooperative models at all levels – including the most “powerful” seats at the most “powerful” tables. Your power is meaningless at best … when it only serves yourself.’

* 1. Many respondents suggested that the way to ensure fair access to public goods is to **focus efforts at a local level**. Services could be delivered from local community hubs, with the direct involvement of local residents, to best provide what is needed in the local area. It was suggested that **investment should be made at the local level, decentralising decision making** from central government to local authorities and down to neighbourhoods. Investing in infrastructure such as libraries, community centres and Sure Start centres would help ensure access to universal services, as would support from GM or local authorities for community groups delivering services such as childcare.

‘Targeted services and universal services need to co-ordinated together and driven at the local level. Tackling stuff like this from the centre will fail … Greater Manchester is not homogenous, neither is its population one homogenous group.’

‘Devolve funding to local authorities for neighbourhood level interventions. What works in Trafford may not work in Oldham and vice versa.’

1. **STRUCTURAL RACISM**

**Introduction**

* 1. One of the starkest impacts of COVID-19 has been the way that it has laid bare the deep racial inequalities that exist in our society. Ethnic minority communities have experienced disproportionate negative impacts, due to a number of intersecting factors, but driven by economic inequality including low-paid, insecure work that is often in the front-line and therefore requiring employees to go out to work and expose themselves to risk. These communities often live in poor-quality housing, where there is little room for self-isolation away from other household members, and where the environment may not be conducive to effective home schooling. Residents may have no choice but to use public transport, and are more likely to live in deprived, densely populated areas where the virus typically spreads more easily and quickly. Furthermore, ethnic minority communities are under-represented in health care decision-making and service design, and the ‘hostile environment’ is particularly discriminatory against migrants.
  2. In light of this context, the Call for Ideas posed two questions:
* How can we address the material inequalities in economic outcomes based on race in Greater Manchester?
* How can we improve representation of ethnic minorities in decision-making processes in Greater Manchester?

**Inequalities in economic outcomes based on race**

* 1. A strong focus of responses to this question was **the role of institutions and how they could be reformed** to improve outcomes for ethnic minority communities across GM. Cross-cutting with the second question, **ensuring better representation in public sector leadership roles** would lead to decision-making that better represents the views and needs of residents from ethnic minority backgrounds. One respondent suggested taking disciplinary action against management teams that fail to redress employment inequality. Another proposed that individuals who had worked throughout the pandemic to help their communities could be given decision-making responsibilities appropriate to their area of expertise, enabling them to represent and advocate for the interests of these communities.
  2. **Policymaking within institutions** was another area needing reform. It was suggested that all policies should be specifically tested for their potential impact on ethnic minority communities before implementation, with policy outcomes subsequently analysed to monitor how they played out in practice. Procurement could help to address material inequalities by making policies on racial equality a criterion included in social value procurement.
  3. **Positive action** – putting systems in place to ensure ethnic minority representation within the workplace – featured across the responses, but there were mixed views on its contribution to addressing material inequalities in economic outcomes. Some respondents thought that positive action would provide aspiration for those moving up the ladder, and that quotas that reflected local demographics could be introduced, to be reached over time. Positive action was also viewed as having significant potential for application within GM-commissioned activity focused on education, training and employment. A Black respondent commented that:

‘Black people need to have power in this region – employment at decision making levels. The equal opps question on person specs has proved to be a waste of time. Everyone answers in the positive, if the question is asked at all, however racism still exists. We have White workers who know nothing about Black communities – why is that? Racism and White privilege, that's why.’

* 1. Conversely, some respondents preferred a policy of non-differential treatment, with one stating that quotas were an awful way of incentivising people and represented the ‘bigotry of low expectations.’ It was pointed out that White people also live in tower blocks and survive on Universal Credit, and share similar challenges in terms of their socio-economic circumstances:

‘recognise how class intersects with race here, and tackle classism and economic inequality as a top priority. Highlight the class element more – this is not just about race, it is about how poorer people (which more BAME people are, due to racism) are treated and not [given] access to basic things like decent housing and food.’

* 1. Whether it be through the promotion of individuals from ethnic minority communities to senior management positions or an increased role for them in the day-to-day operations of an organisation, **visibility** was a key theme in responses to this question. Specifically, the absence of visible ethnic minority leadership within GMCA and its constituent parts was noted by one respondent.

‘Get more visibility of successful BAME people. Encourage a system that might sponsor someone to do things they wouldn't or couldn't think they would do.’

* 1. **Mentoring** was seen as a useful vehicle to increase the visibility of people from ethnic minority backgrounds. A system of ‘reverse mentoring’ was suggested, where a person of colour might mentor a senior leader in an organisation to help them understand the perspective of their community and use this new understanding to inform their decision making. Variants of this idea were proposed, including a mentoring programme and accompanying high profile media campaign to assist the progression of people from ethnic minority backgrounds into all areas of the public sector, business and civil society.

‘Upward mentors for individual leaders in business / statutory / education settings – CEOs / senior leaders being mentored by people from BME / minority groups to learn / understand how / where their organisations might not be supporting all groups inclusively. They need to speak to people within their own organisations to uncover internal barriers and culture change.’

* 1. The importance of **housing provision** in addressing material inequalities in economic outcomes based in race was highlighted by several respondents. They highlighted potential policy responses including ensuring private rented and social housing is up to a minimum standard, tackling densely occupied housing (particularly in the context of the pandemic) and being stricter on so-called ‘slum landlords.’
  2. The idea that ethnic minority communities were often **segregated from others and are ‘trapped’ in specific areas and types of housing** was discussed by several respondents. A lack of larger affordable homes and the benefits cap were highlighted as factors that exacerbate the issue. Amongst solutions suggested, rent caps could be applied in wealthier areas to allow more diverse communities to develop. A GM language and culture centre tasked with enabling different communities to integrate was another suggestion. Many respondents emphasised the **importance of language** in bridging divides, and the need to ensure that public information is accessible in all relevant locally spoken languages (indeed, the lack of translated versions of the Call for Ideas survey was highlighted). However, there were some dissenting voices:

‘Posters in different languages cause resentment at the cost and implications that more money is spent on people who do not speak English. … Get everyone speaking a common language and you will be 99% of the way towards solving any race unhappiness around Greater Manchester.’

* 1. There was some focus on **the role of community institutions** in addressing inequalities in economic outcomes based on race. Respondents were keen to see investment targeted towards local community groups. For example, one respondent suggested funded community centres that were run by local people, and giving extra investment to ethnic minority communities to implement activities and strategies.

**Representation of ethnic minorities in decision-making processes**

* 1. Mirroring responses reported previously, the need to **increase the visibility of people from ethnic minority communities** in decision-making bodies was highlighted. A simple way to do this would be for public sector organisations to employ more people from ethnic minority communities, ensuring representation across all levels of the organisation. Local authorities were singled out as being particularly important institutions in this regard, with ethnic minority leadership badly needed to improve the representativeness of decision making processes. Respondents stressed the importance of not only employing and promoting more people from ethnic minorities, but also ensuring that staff are supported in their roles and valued for their skills, experience and knowledge.

‘Employ ethnic minorities at EVERY LEVEL. Have faith in them to do the job. Give them the support and development you give to yourselves to succeed.’

‘Offer development programmes for people to be mentored, learn skills and shadow on the job. Many decision making platforms are unpaid positions which makes them a barrier to lower economic households – perhaps they shouldn't be, or should be compensated in another way.’

* 1. Responses also stressed the importance of **meaningful engagement** with ethnic minority communities. This could include tapping into already existing community groups and networks, and working with community leaders to engage with residents from ethnic minority backgrounds. Outreach into these communities is needed, and open invitations for members of the community to get involved in making decisions that matter to them. Some respondents highlighted the importance of talking to a wide variety of people in ethnic minority communities, rather than just the ‘usual suspects’, ensuring that the lived experience of all members of the community can be heard.
  2. In order to properly represent people from ethnic minority communities in decision-making roles, respondents highlighted the importance of listening to the **lived experience** of peoplefrom these communities. However, in addition to listening to a wider variety of perspectives, the public sector needs to act on what it hears, so that people can see tangible changes as a result of their contribution. Public sector bodies should be open to real challenge and champion culture change in this area. An Asian contributor commented:

‘Why [are] you making it difficult? [It’s] simple, give them a seat at the table, and then even more importantly, listen to them and actually implement it.’

* 1. Respondents suggested that in order to improve representation in decision making, everyone should be **supported** **to access services and mechanisms through which they can make their voices heard**. This includes ensuring that people are communicated to in their chosen language and can access services in languages other than English, and having translation services available so that all members of the community can make their voices heard during consultation or listening exercises.

‘All people have equal physical and digital access to services and are better supported to understand what services they are entitled to, what is available, and how to access them.’

1. **PRIORITY ACTIONS TO TACKLE INEQUALITY IN GREATER MANCHESTER, AND KEY BARRIERS**

**Introduction**

* 1. The Call for Ideas questionnaire opened by asking respondents the following questions. Although these were the first questions posed, they are reported at the end of this document, given their summary nature in drawing respondents’ thoughts together.
* What’s the one thing you would change to tackle inequality in Greater Manchester?
* What are the key barriers to building a more equal Greater Manchester?

**Priority actions**

* 1. One of the overarching themes featured across the responses to the Call for Ideas questionnaire relates to the way that inequalities are manifest in employment practices and trends in GM. Given the context of the pandemic, this was seen by many respondents as particularly relevant to young adults and women, with both groups requiring an assertive and urgent response.
  2. COVID-19 is exacerbating the **lack of secure and high-quality employment for young adults** in GM and further afield. Respondents commented on the intersection between inequality in employment and wider inequalities such as health and housing, and therefore the need for a more systemic approach to address these inequalities in the round. Given one thing to change to address inequality in the city region, several participants wanted to provide more job opportunities for young people:

‘Develop real job prospects and fund education and retraining. Increase inclusion in communities and develop youth centres, sports facilities and out of the home activities to provide positive occupation for youths who are outside the system, with limited opportunities to keep them in society and off Universal Credit.’

* 1. Inequality in relation to the **employment opportunities for women** was also prominent in the responses, particularly in relation to childcare provision and responsibilities, which many felt put women at a disadvantage. Respondents were keen to change:

‘the way [that] women are side-lined and demonised after having a child. And then the government bang on about a skills shortage when there is a massive pool of talent out there and they are called “Mothers”. ‘

‘sexism. This links to lack of parent responsibility leaving mostly women to have no access to education or employment opportunities and because of lack of equal financial contributions to children, often leaves women in poverty too.’

* 1. The role of education in addressing racism was also highlighted. An inclusive and comprehensive approach to **educating young people about racism** would be beneficial in tackling inequality across GM over the longer-term. This would be especially useful if it focused on different cultures and how they inter-relate with varying aspects of inequality including sexual orientation. A respondent commented that they:

‘would change the education [system] to help tackle inequality because if people [outside] of the BAME community have a strong sense of understanding when it comes learning about other cultures it is possible that people could be more sensitive to history and [people of colour] over time.’

* 1. An Instagram post suggested including ‘Black British history within the curriculum.’
  2. The **distribution of education funding** also came up as something that a number of respondents would change. A general lack of funding and uneven distribution across GM schools is felt to be contributing to wider inequalities, with properly resourced schools better able to invest in the well-being and educational attainment of their pupils. One respondent commented on the position in her borough:

‘I would ensure that funding for schools was spread more evenly – schools in Stockport, for example, receive significantly less funding per head than schools in Manchester, and capital expenditure on schools in this area is woefully inadequate. All students in Greater Manchester deserve to be educated in schools that are adequately resourced and fit for purpose.’

* 1. This was echoed by an Instagram user who stated that ‘population dense areas (such as Higher Openshaw / Abbey Hey) [do not have] enough school places. Another wanted more funding to be provided for support staff in schools in predominantly disadvantaged areas. One respondent linked funding issues to racism and other inequalities issues, by asserting that:

‘statutory reporting needs to include all forms of bigotry that occur in schools, across the protected characteristics. Local authorities then need a proper budget and staffing with the sole purpose of analysing trends in local bigotries and intervening in schools using programmes that do not cost those schools extra money.’

* 1. In relation to income equalities, respondents were keen to trial a fair **universal basic income** in GM, or adopt the **Real Living Wage**. One argued for:

‘a specific Greater Manchester living wage, set well above [the] minimum wage that all businesses in GM are incentivised / obligated to adhere to.’

* 1. Some of the Instagram posts concurred with this view, with one user advocating:

‘[a] universal basic income, and educating people and MPs that borrowing isn't bad, a deficit isn't bad, taxation isn't required in order to spend.’

* 1. Investment in **social and affordable housing** was seen as a means for reducing inequalities. This was evident in both the Call for Ideas responses and related social media posts, which responded to the question, ‘What would you change to make Greater Manchester a more equal place?’. In addition to prioritising social and affordable housing, suggestions were made in respect to the rental market and homelessness and rough sleeping. One respondent commented bluntly on the intersection between housing quality and ill-health:

‘bad housing makes you sick.’

* 1. Another theme emerging was the need for **greater engagement** with communities located in different parts of GM. This was expressed in two ways – firstly, the need for those in power to reach out and engage with disadvantaged communities; but secondly, the need for residents to be able to reciprocate and contact those in power. A change in culture will be required to engage harder-to-reach communities across GM:

‘engaging those who face inequality, too often people feel done to! We know the problems, don't waste time & money on consultation, start with a SOLUTION FOCUSED approach.’

* 1. There is clear recognition that workforces and in particular leadership roles are not **representative of GM’s diverse communities**. This is especially pertinent in relation to ethnicity, and serves to reinforce inequalities across the city region.

‘Build an understanding of the implications of decision making on communities – through a more diverse workforce at senior levels in key institutions, and involving the community properly before decisions are made to consider the implications. This pandemic response has shown how it can go wrong with decisions being made about the response that increase inequality without any mitigation.’

‘Equal representation of BAME in all levels of management to proportion of local population.’

* 1. There is similar recognition of a **lack of representation of disabled and young people**, with clear intersections to inequality in employment and decision-making.

**Key barriers**

* 1. In terms of the key barriers to building a more equal GM, respondents highlighted the **deeply embedded and systemic nature of many of the inequalities** facing residents in particular places / population groups. These inequalities have been exacerbated by the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent austerity period, and most recently by the COVID-19 pandemic; they have endured, sometimes for generations, and in some cases are now largely accepted as part of the GM socio-economic and demographic norm.

‘250 years of inequality is the issue.’

‘It’s historical really. Again lockdowns & COVID have created divides in people with “protected characteristics” & not protected. I am an educationalist and challenge the idea of labelling. Special ed needs, could be specific educational needs. Less emotive language.’

‘One of the biggest challenges is that people are comfortable with the status quo and there is no diversity of voices. Even when there is an attempt to introduce this, it is at the edges rather than really giving people an opportunity to get involved and change things in a positive way.’

‘There are still too many white men in positions of power who maintain the status quo and too many women have been brought in who act exactly like the men.’

* 1. Another theme which came through strongly as a barrier to building a more equal Greater Manchester was the question of **funding** and its impact on inequalities across GM. This relates to decisions made both at a national and regional level, some of which have had a disproportionate impact on the lives of certain groups of residents in the city-region. Two of the key responses relating to this point were submitted by GM-based organisations:

‘many years of underfunding and local authority and public sector cuts (known as austerity) … has left the public sector unable to help the most vulnerable in society, in particular in the areas of education, benefit support and housing.’

‘low investment in transport infrastructure to connect us with other cities and half-hearted devolution is a factor in holding back our local economies and our deeper self-confidence as a maturing city.’

* 1. This was a sentiment also shared by individual respondents:

‘Great differentiation in areas regarding resources available and quality of these that has let to elitism and ghettoisation of areas instead of diverse communities.’

‘This is a tough one. I can only say that the barriers that affect my area of GM are lack of resources.’

‘Money, the … government, and how they look down on us up north.’

‘Funding and priorities. Greater Manchester seems to invest in business rather than the population, there [are] no quick solutions or fixes, but it’s [definitely] not one size fits all.’

‘Levering sufficient and proportionate public investment to the region.’

* 1. Many of the responses attribute the lack of funding to central government, but others are directed at city-region leadership, particularly a fixation on investing in businesses. At the locality level, there is some criticism about a lack of funding for local services, although there is a connection to funding from central government that filters through to local authorities and the communities they serve, and into resourcing of the VCSE sector who deliver a significant proportion of community-based provision. One of the organisational responses commented that the most marginalised communities can be disadvantaged from the outset when it comes to accessing finance:

‘Communities who need the most support are least likely to have social capital to bid for resources, and are least likely to have experience of traditional forms of funding collection – such as grants.’

* 1. A number of the social media comments also focused on funding, and had more of an anti-central government tone than the core Call for Ideas responses:

‘fight for funding on [a] par with the SE / London.’

‘Northern Powerhouse is the only way forward, because as long as central government got control of you, Manchester will always come second.’

* 1. Some responses made specific suggestions for how funding might be deployed:

‘funding development of local high streets, rather than [becoming] post-COVID wastelands.’

‘reinvest in Sure Start, women’s [services], healthcare and children / education. This is how societies reduce poverty.’

* 1. One of the other barriers cited by respondents was the impact that **paternalism** has had on equality in GM – namely, how those in positions of power can appear condescending to minority groups, and prevent them from taking responsibility for their own lives. This points to a lack of trust between those who experience inequalities (the ‘have nots’) and those who do not (the ‘haves’).

‘White middle-class people thinking they are doing good by patronising communities of identity and artificially trying to give them a “leg up”. It's causing more resentment, discrimination and division.’

‘Policy makers do not understand how identity culture is pitting a multitude of identities against each other. This is a problem because this novelty train has no brakes.’

‘A lot of places have fixed ideas on what being a minority means. They see a gay pride flag and go ‘oh, not this again.’ They’re never seeing the actual real people and seeing that everybody is equal.’

‘Creating conversations whose primary aim is just that – discussion. People don’t want to be educated – it feels condescending.’

‘People are rude and think that they are better for some reason. Sometimes it is a fair reason like authority, but sometimes it's not, like skin colour.’

‘Culture change is necessary – this is across the conurbation and in all areas … we know it’s a problem so let’s draw up [an] action plan. But in my view, action plans do not change the world, people do! People need to support people.’

* 1. Another barrier mentioned by a number of participants was **accessibility** – specifically, how a lack of access to services has proved to be a barrier to greater equality across GM.

‘Structural issues relating to some people's ability to access basic, public services and their basic rights.’

‘Access to financial support and access to any support for the most disadvantaged.’

‘Accessibility to key employment centres for those on low wages.’

* 1. **Access to nature and the environment** was highlighted in the social media responses as a barrier to addressing inequality:

‘tackle access to nature – those most in need of green spaces (including allotments) should have access. This brings nature back into cities too.’

‘more access to high quality parks for all children. Some are dire.’

* 1. **For disabled people, physical accessibility** was considered a key barrier:

‘More disabled access to places, i.e. bars and restaurants.’

‘The postcode lottery for access to services, particularly in terms of disability.’

‘Hire disabled [people] to make planning decisions for disabled [people]. Such an inaccessible city.’

* 1. **Education** was identified by a large number of respondents as a key focus for the ‘one thing that you would change’ to tackle inequality in GM, and is also highlighted in responses to this question on the key barriers to addressing inequality. In terms of those barriers, respondents identified a number of areas:

‘Money for … social support services for struggling families. An acceptance that schools are key pieces where communities’ interests cube together, but an understanding that schools’ purpose is academic education and interventions via schools cannot be performed by existing staff.’

‘Education & opportunity for career internships.’

* 1. As with education, **employment** was one of the central areas where respondents wanted to see change in order to reduce inequalities in GM, but was also reported as a barrier preventing greater equality in the city-region. In part this is about employment vs. unemployment, but that is too partial and binary – the poor quality and lack of security associated with many jobs in the city region was a concern to many respondents:

‘Quality of jobs – too many are insecure and pay below the Living Wage.’

* 1. In light of COVID-19, one respondent highlighted the tension between short-term activity to support people to stay in or move into work, and medium to longer-term ambitions to overcome barriers associated with employment and contribute to reducing inequality across GM:

‘In the current context, a short-term focus on protecting jobs and dealing with rising unemployment might detract from a longer-term focus on equality and decent work. After 2008-09, the global financial crisis policy focus was on de-regulation and labour market flexibility in order to get people back into any kind of work (the supposed “jobs miracle”), which effectively baked-in precarious work for the next decade (e.g. low-paid, contingent work, self-employment).’

* 1. A **lack of engagement** was also alluded to as an important barrier that militated against achievement of equality ambitions in GM (and as with education and employment, engagement was also mentioned as one thing participants wanted to change to tackle inequality). There was some focus on trying to achieve deeper engagement and understanding of under-represented groups at the grassroots, community level:

‘Getting to know the different parts of the community, and understanding the support that they need.’

‘Campaigns are run by [bureaucrats], not by the people affected. E.g. if you did proper community work in local areas and with affected groups, and supported people to do their own campaigns, things would be better.’

* 1. Similarly, to the aforementioned three themes, housing was also frequently referenced as the one thing that should be changed to tackle inequality in Greater Manchester, especially in the social media comments. In terms of barriers to greater equality, **affordable housing** was highlighted again:

‘the Council's obsession with taking penalty payments from developers so they don't have to include affordable accommodation. There is NO affordable [accommodation] in [Manchester], none, yet all these posh new flats lie empty and the streets (and shelters and sofas and and and) are full of homeless people with “nowhere to go”. There are plenty of places to go, you just keep preventing access by DESIGN.’

‘lack of decent affordable housing and the disparity of access across GM. Wealth and jobs are in certain areas, cheap and poor quality homes in others.’

* 1. **Race** was identified as a key and deeply engrained barrier to equality in GM, and one that will be challenging to overcome. However, the time has come for action, particularly in light of the Black Lives Matter movement:

‘racism and power. Too many of the wrong people have the power and they are utilising it for their own interests and not for the interests of residents who have varied and differing needs. We get a one size fits White's model and that is not working.’

‘If Black people are good enough to fill in the gaps, they are good enough to take command of this city in leadership and decision making roles.’

* 1. One respondent highlighted “institutional racism” as a key barrier. Another noted that:

‘the people currently in charge [deny] the existence of institutional racism, homophobia, etc. in authoritative systems.’

* 1. Another barrier identified by participants related to the **unequal distribution of wealth** across GM. As a result of the pandemic, wealth and asset inequalities have widened, creating a polarised picture between affluent residents and those with few if any assets.

‘Economic inequalities (the gap between who has and who has not) are so entrenched across all the other equalities strands. You have less because of your background or circumstance – and also – having less means you get less. If there were ways of rebalancing that it would help. Like a universal basic income, for a start. With extras for those as have been left behind for the last 12 years.’

**ANNEX 1: ‘CALL FOR IDEAS’ QUESTIONNAIRE**

**How can we tackle inequality in Greater Manchester?**

Overview

The Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission was set up in October 2020 to explore the causes of inequality and offer solutions to tackle these issues.

The Commission has been reviewing evidence from academic research, local equality programmes and insight from the business, public, voluntary and community sectors to recommend new policy, activity and ways of working.

Now, the Commission wants to hear from people who have an interest in making Greater Manchester more equal, particularly those with experience of intersecting inequalities based on their gender, race, class, disability, age, sexuality, migration status, or those working with marginalised groups.

The Commission is looking for practical solutions and concrete actions that can be taken to build a more equal Greater Manchester and to mitigate the unequal impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This will inform the Commission’s recommendations for action, which will be reported to the Mayor of Greater Manchester and leaders of the 10 local authorities in March 2021.

You can find out more about the [Independent Inequalities Commission on the GMCA website.](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/equalities/independent-inequalities-commission/)

Tackling inequality in Greater Manchester

Covid-19 has widened inequalities and put a spotlight on particular issues, but we know that most of these issues are not new.

So, the Greater Manchester Independent Inequality Commission want to hear your views on how we can tackle the longstanding inequalities in Greater Manchester, and find out about the untapped resources available locally to help redress these inequalities.

**1: What’s the one thing you would change to tackle inequality in Greater Manchester?**

**2: What are the key barriers to building a more equal Greater Manchester?**

Key areas of focus

The questions on this page are focused on Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission's key areas of focus. These are optional so please answer where you can, thinking about the inequalities that exist in Greater Manchester.

**1: Economic inequality**

Covid-19 has reopened big questions about how our economies should be run and about what really matters. The pandemic also changing how people live, work and shop. This brings challenges for our city-region but it may also offer opportunities to regenerate local economies so the benefits of growth are spread more evenly.

These questions build on Greater Manchester Strategy's ambition to ensure that the people of Greater Manchester can all benefit from economic growth and the opportunities it brings, and the Local Enterprise Partnership's Economic Vision, which highlights the need to tackle inequalities.

**How can we address the material inequalities in economic outcomes based on race in Greater Manchester?**

**What would need to change to make Greater Manchester’s economic model prioritise inequality?**

**2: Democratic decision-making, power and voice**

A lack of decision-making, power and voice are issues that underpin many types of inequality.

The Commission wants to know how this could be improved in Greater Manchester.

**What practical changes can be made to ensure that decision-making processes in Greater Manchester give voice to the most marginalised?**

**3: Good employment and adult skills**

Covid-19 is creating a jobs crisis which is likely to widen existing inequalities in access to good jobs.

The Commission wants to know what needs to be done to maintain and improve access to good employment in the wake of the pandemic and to help ensure that it does not widen inequalities.

**How can we ensure that the impacts of the pandemic do not widen existing inequalities in access to good employment?**

**What could be done to tackle low pay and poor-quality jobs in Greater Manchester?**

**4: Education and young people**

Educational attainment and aspirations for young people is of particular concern among communities in Greater Manchester.

The reliance on digital technology for teaching and learning during the pandemic has added a further barrier to an already unequal picture.

The Commission is interested to hear how digital exclusion can be addressed so that children and young people’s learning does not suffer and suffer unequally.

**How do we ensure that children and young people at risk of digital exclusion are able to take part in education, training or employment as more activity is online?**

**How can Greater Manchester support young people who are not in education, employment or training as we move out of the pandemic crisis?**

**5: Democratising asset ownership**

The pandemic is widening inequalities between those who own assets, like housing and savings, and those who do not.

Covid-19 and the recession are putting many small businesses and community assets at risk. At the same time, many affluent households are adding to their savings and so may want to support their local communities and high streets.

The Commission is interested in how local resources can be reinvested in local economies to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic, while also boosting community wealth and the ‘social economy.’

**What could be done at Greater Manchester level to promote democratic ownership and business models that can help to reduce inequalities?**

**How can we build community wealth in deprived areas and encourage reinvestment of local assets into local economies?**

**6: Health inequality**

The Commission is interested in how the socio-economic drivers of inequalities impact on health outcomes, which is very important during the pandemic.

**What would change if tackling health inequality was at the heart of Greater Manchester’s health and social care system?**

**7: Universal basic services**

Covid-19 has put a spotlight on longstanding inequalities in access to basic services - including digital connectivity, affordable childcare, affordable and secure housing, and access to transport.

The Commission is interested in hearing ideas on what can be done at a Greater Manchester level to reduce inequalities in access to the basic shared services that underpin a good life.

**What practical steps would you like to see taken to help ensure that all Greater Manchester residents have access to critical public goods, such as affordable housing, childcare, transport and digital connectivity?**

**8: Structural racism**

The pandemic has highlighted the deep racial inequalities that exist in our society, with ethnic minority communities disproportionately impacted by Covid-19.

This is due to:

* economic inequality, such as low-paid, insecure work, lack of savings, or poor housing
* the design of healthcare services, which lack ethnic minority representation in decision making processes and the 'hostile environment' for migrants

**How can we address the material inequalities in economic outcomes based on race in Greater Manchester?**

**How can we improve representation of ethnic minorities in decision-making processes in Greater Manchester?**

**ANNEX 2: RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**

**Introduction**

1. 120 responses were received to the Call for Ideas. The large majority (111, or 93%) were received from individuals, with a small number (9, or 7%) received from organisations.
2. This annex reports on the demographic breakdown of respondents, and compares this to the most recent data for GM to give a broad indication of representativeness. However, it should be noted that, as a voluntary consultation, respondents were self-selecting, and the intention was not necessarily to obtain views from a representative sample of the GM resident population.
3. The annex reports on the following demographic dimensions:

* Place of residence
* Age
* Disability
* Gender
* Race
* Religion / belief
* Sexual orientation
* Employment status
* Organisational respondents.

**Place of residence**

1. Just over one in four respondents (26.9%) who reported their place of residence lived in Manchester. The next largest group were Stockport residents (16.3%), and the smallest groups those from Bury and Trafford (2.9% and 3.8% respectively). In comparison to the distribution of GM residents by locality (represented in the grey bars), the residence base of respondents (represented in the blue bars) was broadly similar, albeit with Manchester and Stockport somewhat over-represented and Bury and Trafford under-represented.

Figure 1: Call for Ideas respondents by place of residence *(n = 104)*

A chart showing the breakdown of survey respondents by place of residence (Greater Manchester district).

*Source:* GMCA Call for Ideas survey responses, January 2021; GM data from ONS *Mid-Year Population Estimates*, 2019

**Age**

1. The majority of respondents who identified their age in the Call for Ideas return were aged between 35 and 64, with these age bands accounting for more than two thirds (71.8%) of all respondents. Both younger and older people were less well represented (3.9% of respondents were aged 18-24, and 7.8% over 65). This is clear when comparing to the age profile for GM as a whole: in 2019, 9.2% of the GM population were aged 18-24, and 15.9% over 65, whereas the proportion of survey respondents was less than half of both these figures.

Figure 2: Call for Ideas respondents by age *(n = 103)*

A chart showing the breakdown of survey respondents by age.

*Source:* GMCA Call for Ideas survey responses, January 2021; GM data from ONS *Mid-Year Population Estimates*, 2019

**Disability**

1. Six out of ten respondents (60.4%) for whom we have data stated that they didn’t have a disability; a third (34.0%) had at least one type of disability (mobility, learning, sensory, other, multiple). A small number of respondents (6, or 5.7%) stated that they had a mental illness; aggregated with the disability category, 39.6% of all respondents reported either a disability or a mental illness.
2. GM population data on disability are only available from the Census 2011, and are not directly comparable, as they report on people with a long-term health problem or disability. However, they show that in 2011, 19.4% of the GM (all-age) population had a health problem or disability that limited their day-to-day activity. It would appear, therefore, that the respondent base for the Call for Ideas had a considerably higher proportion of disabled people than the wider GM population.

Figure 3: Call for Ideas respondents by disability *(n = 106)*

A chart showing the breakdown of survey respondents by disability.

*Source:* GMCA Call for Ideas survey responses, January 2021

**Gender**

1. Two thirds (66.3%) of respondents who reported their gender in the survey return identified as a woman (including trans woman) and just over a quarter (25.7%) identified as a man (including trans man); 8.0% identified either as “in another way” or “non-binary”. When respondents were asked whether they were transgender, three out of the 101 positive responses to the question stated that they were transgender or “in some ways” at least.
2. Local data are not available on the GM population cut by gender, so comparator data have not been charted. However, in terms of sex, it is apparent that women respondents were considerably over-represented relative to men.

Figure 4: Call for Ideas respondents by gender *(n = 101)*

A chart showing the breakdown of survey respondents by gender.

*Source:* GMCA Call for Ideas survey responses, January 2021

**Race**

1. Just over four-fifths (81.2%) of the respondents who identified their race / ethnicity were from a White ethnic background. The remaining respondents (18.8%) were from an ethnic minority background, with the majority (7.9%) being Asian. Although there was slight under-representation of Asian respondents, and slight over-representation of Black respondents and those from mixed ethnic groups, the overall proportion of respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds (18.8%) was largely the same as in the GM population as a whole (18.4%).

Figure 5: Call for Ideas respondents by race *(n = 101)*

A chart showing the breakdown of survey respondents by race (ethnicity).

*Source:* GMCA Call for Ideas survey responses, January 2021; GM data from ONS *Population denominators by broad ethnic group and for White British*, local authorities in England and Wales, 2019

**Religion or belief**

1. Nearly half (46.9%) of respondents who provided information on their religion or belief stated that they did not have a religion; just over a third (37.8%) were Christian. There was some divergence between the religious affiliation of respondents and that of the GM population as a whole: a higher proportion of respondents did not have a religion, and a lower proportion were Christian.

Figure 6: Call for Ideas respondents by religion / belief *(n = 98)*

A chart showing the breakdown of survey respondents by religion.

*Source:* GMCA Call for Ideas survey responses, January 2021; GM data from *ONS Religion by Local Authority* (Annual Population Survey), 2018

**Sexual orientation**

1. Three quarters (74.5%) of respondents who indicated their sexual orientation stated that they were heterosexual, and nearly one in seven (14.9%) that they were a gay man, gay woman or lesbian. The comparator data indicate that the proportion of Call for Ideas respondents who were LGBTQ+ is significantly higher than in GM as a whole, and the proportion of respondents who were heterosexual commensurately lower.

Figure 7: Call for Ideas respondents by sexual orientation *(n = 94)*

A chart showing the breakdown of survey respondents by sexual orientation.

*Source:* GMCA Call for Ideas survey responses, January 2021; GM data from ONS *Subnational sexual identity estimates*, 2018, quoting aggregate data for the 2013-15 period (note that the GM percentages draw on data for just six of the ten GM localities, as data for the remainder are not available due to small sample sizes).

**Employment status**

1. Around half (52.4%) of the 103 respondents who indicated their current employment status reported that they were employed, with most employed full-time. The proportion of respondents in employment was broadly similar to that for the GM adult population as a whole, but there was more divergence on two of the categories charted: confirming the demographic cuts reported earlier for older people, there was a considerably smaller proportion of retired respondents compared to the wider GM population profile; however, there was nearly double the proportion of self-employed respondents in comparison to the GM resident base.

Figure 8: Call for Ideas respondents by employment status *(n = 103)*

A chart showing the breakdown of survey respondents by employment status.

*Source:* GMCA Call for Ideas survey responses, January 2021; GM data from *Annual Population Survey*, data for the year to September 2020

**Organisational respondents**

1. In addition to the individual responses, nine organisations responded to the survey. One of these was a national charity that is based locally, but the others were all Greater Manchester organisations. The responding charities had the following thematic foci and client groups:

* supporting and educating children
* supporting young LGBTQ+ communities
* providing banking services and loans to disadvantaged people
* supporting older people
* an environment-oriented co-operative
* a black-led health inequalities organisation.

1. <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/equalities/independent-inequalities-commission/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.gmconsult.org/young-people/how-can-we-tackle-inequality-in-greater-manchester/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/equalities/independent-inequalities-commission/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.gmconsult.org/young-people/how-can-we-tackle-inequality-in-greater-manchester/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For details of the equality panels that inform the work of the GMCA, see <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/equalities> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Mayor of GM: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter; Deputy Mayor: Twitter; GMCA: Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Although note that the order has been changed: the final two sections of the report draw on questions that were posed at the start of the Call for Ideas questionnaire. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1084/greater_manchester_summary___full_version.pdf>, p.7 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <http://gmlep.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GM-LEP-Economic-Vision.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Note that this question overlaps with that asked under the structural racism element of the Call for Ideas questionnaire, reported in Section 9 of this report. However, most respondents treated it more broadly, reflected in the reporting here; Section 9 deals more directly with the racial dimension. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. <https://www.gmgoodemploymentcharter.co.uk/> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. <https://ourpass.co.uk/> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)