

GM Faith & Belief Advisory Panel

Terms of Reference (August 2021)

Greater Manchester's Equality Panels

The Equality Panels have been established to tackle the structural and organizational prejudice and discrimination that causes inequality and injustice in society, through the advancement of equity, fairness and positive relationships in public organisations and the services they deliver.

The Panels:

- **Champion** Greater Manchester's cultural heritage and history of community inclusion and social justice
- **Advise** the Mayor of Greater Manchester and the Greater Manchester Lead for Ageing and Equalities of the opportunities and challenges faced by people linked to their identity.
- **Proactively support** the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and its public, private and voluntary sector partners to develop effective solutions that tackle inequality and increase equity.
- **Constructively challenge** political and system leaders to tackle prejudice and discrimination within their organisations and structures

Greater Manchester Faith and Belief Advisory Panel

Aims and Objectives

The Aims and Objectives of the Panel are to:

- I. Optimise the Faith and Belief contribution to The Greater Manchester Strategy
 - Sustainability and equality outcomes are achieved through collaboration on shared missions and experience, making best use of assets and resources in the community
- II. Ensure that the role of Faith and Belief in society is recognised and valued
 - Faith and Belief organisations are a respected partner, alongside the public, private and voluntary sectors, and their voice is equally heard in policy and decision making
- III. Foster good relations and dialogue between people of Faith and Belief (who share a protected characteristic) and people who do not share it.
 - Greater Manchester's cultural heritage and history of community inclusion and social justice is championed
- IV. Advance equality of opportunity and eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation (and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010 and the Public

Sector Equality Duty) between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

- Public agencies are proactive in their approaches to meet their Public Sector Equality Duty and tackle all forms of discrimination within their organisation and the structure they contribute to in relation to Faith and Belief

Further details can be found in the Faith and Belief Advisory Panel's Action Plan (*to be completed*).

Priorities

The Panel supports delivery of the Greater Manchester Strategy, as well as responding to issues impacting Faith and Belief communities.

The Panel's priorities come from the Faith and Belief networks and organisations represented (via the panel members). This ensures effective use of community voice, insight and data, to co-design impactful solutions.

In addition, the Mayor of Greater Manchester is developing a programme of Action Networks (*to be confirmed*).

- Children school ready to learn
- Young people leave school with hope and optimism
- No child should go hungry
- A living-wage city-region
- Reduce homelessness and end the need for rough sleeping
- All under -25s, Disabled People and over-75s online
- Green City-Region

The Faith and Belief Advisory Panel proactively contributes to each one of these priorities, through the structures set up to achieve them. Panel members involvement in these is as delegated representatives of the Panel, and input into discussion and activities on behalf of the Panel.

Communication

The Panel listens to communities through the Faith and Belief networks and uses that insight to 'respond' to issues affecting the communities of Greater Manchester, by collaborating and advising.

This may be advising the Mayor and Lead for Ageing and Equalities on the need to provide a public statement. This will be achieved by gaining a consensus within the Panel, and any difference within the Panel will be noted in the advice.

In addition, panel members may use the insight heard at panel meetings to encourage their own network to provide a public statement.

However, the Panel itself will not make public statements to ensure the integrity of the Panel as a space for dialogue is not compromised (unless there are exceptional circumstances and only with consensus of the Panel).

Operating principles

- The Panel strengthens the voice of people from different faiths and beliefs in shaping and influencing policy development, decisions and delivery
- The Panel works collaboratively with public service officers to design new ways of working, which
 - positively uses the assets, insights, strengths and resources in our community,
 - engages partners and local people at the earliest possible stage, and
 - ensures that policies and services have respect for human dignity
- The Panel tackles issues by promoting the collaboration of
 - People who represent faith and interfaith networks and organisations, and can contribute their insight and resources
 - people senior enough within institution(s) who can take decisions that make a difference
 - subject matter experts who have knowledge and some solutions to these issues
- The Panel takes an intersectional approach where appropriate, collaborating with other GM Equality Panels and networks
- The Panel has a work programme, with defined objectives, actions and measures to evidence their impact. The Panel prioritises its workload, focusing its efforts to maximise impact
- The Panel is aligned to the principles of an inclusive society recognising that all faiths and beliefs have full and equal rights
- The Panel is transparent, with its work open to all communities across Greater Manchester.

Accountability

The Panel acts in an advisory role and reports directly to the Portfolio Lead for Ageing and Equalities. The Panel escalates concerns and issues to the Portfolio Lead, including in relation to the support of public services and commitment to change.

The Panel does not have any decision-making authority within the constitution of the GMCA.

The Panel prepares and maintains a work programme, and reports progress, issues and key findings annually to the Portfolio Lead and GMCA.

Meeting Frequency

The Faith and Belief Advisory Panel meets bi-monthly.

In addition to full panel meetings, panel members contribute to the Greater Manchester Strategy Missions and other activity. Panel members report back progress, issues and opportunities to the bi-monthly panel meeting, for other panel members to disseminate and engage more widely through their networks.

The bi-monthly meeting also provides the Panel the opportunity to respond to new issues impacting Faith and Belief communities. Additional meetings can also be called.

Panel Membership

The Panel is an inclusive and accessible 'network of networks', bringing together representatives from each of the different faith and interfaith groups across Greater Manchester, and ensuring all faiths and beliefs are represented. As such, the membership is under constant review, and where gaps are identified there will be proactive engagement of appropriate representative networks.

In addition to Faith and Belief, and geography, the Panel's membership aims to reflect the diversity of Greater Manchester across age, gender, ethnicity and other characteristics.

Panel members sit as a representative of a defined Faith, Belief or Interfaith organisation or network. They contribute to discussion with the views of those they represent and engage those they represent in the work of the panel.

If a Panel member cannot attend a meeting, a substitute can attend to represent their network or organisation at that meeting. The Co-Chairs should be notified in advance.

Panel members do not attend as an individual and should their network or organisation put forward an alternative representative the person will no longer be a panel member.

Through dialogue, the Panel builds on different voices, opinions and experiences to achieve a 'collective good', rather than promoting the interests of one Faith or Belief over others.

Further information on Panel Members can be found in the Role Profile.

Panel Chair/s

The Co-Chairs of the Faith and Belief Advisory Panel play a key role in overseeing the work of the Panel, steering the discussion at meetings and reporting progress to the Portfolio Lead.

The Co-Chairs represent the Panel on the Tackling Inequalities Board, and if required in external communications, for example to promote the work of the Panel (following discussion with the Panel where appropriate).

The Co-Chairs are elected by current panel members and are appointed for 12 months.

Further information on the Co-Chairs can be found in the Role Profile.