

Greater Manchester Disabled People's Panel Annual Report 2024 - 2025

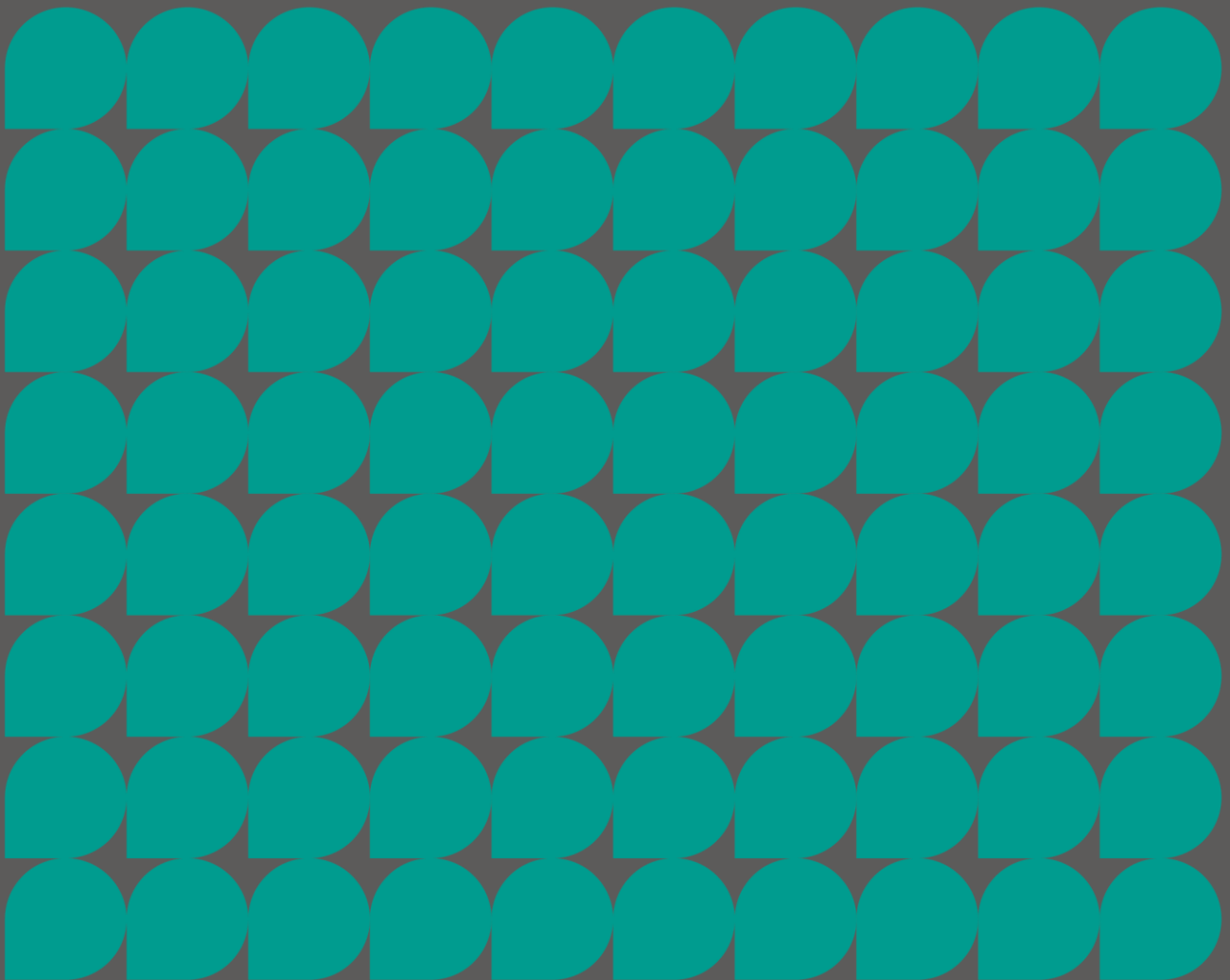


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1. Executive Summary

Year 6 of the Panel ran from April 2024 to March 2025, our priorities were: Disabled people and work, Poverty & Social Security, Social care, and Strengthening the Panel. We additionally worked on Democracy, Transport, and Housing.

We ran events for GM Good Employment week, supported lived experience panel in Work Well, raised issues with Access to Work both regionally and nationally. Worked with Tackling Inequalities Board and the GM Live Well Financial Resilience Group and GM NHS poverty group, We contributed to work on Social Security by Just Fair and Amnesty International, and inputted on the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and worked on the Food at Home report and briefings on poverty and Social care charges. The Mayor worked with us and included the pledge for a Social Care commission in his policy platform, which is now developing to start work to maximise our City Region's devolution and innovation to improve social care for everyone. We refreshed the Panel and our governance through structured interviews with member organisations, discussion, and debate, strengthening our decision making, leadership and membership. We elected new Co-Chairs.

We held special meetings on transport and access, including social issues and safety for disabled transport users. We progressed our recommendation for M4(2) standards and 10% M4(3) standard housing to both GM and district local plans. We worked with GM election teams to ensure access and voting rights under new ID laws. We supported both a national Election hustings and GM Mayoral election hustings.

Through wider partnership networks we inputted on national work with the Disabled People's Organisation England Forum and met with ministers and civil servants.

We developed an innovative small grant program with the NHS to support the mental wellbeing of disabled people based on our earlier co-produced report.

We continue to address emerging issues around the Pathways to Work Green Paper which creates many risks for greater poverty for disabled people.

2. Co-Chair's Foreword

This has been a year of change for the Panel. We said farewell Co-Chairs – Chris Hamnett from Embrace Wigand and Leigh, Sara Crookdake from Disability Stockport and Melvin Bradley from Mental Health Independent Support Team. I'd like to extend a thank you to them on behalf of all Panel members, and a personal thank you for their guidance and support in my Co-Chair role. I am now proud to be working with two new Co Chairs – Ben Andrews from Beyond Empower and Pete Marshall from GM Autism Consortium Advisory Committee who I know will work together as a strong leadership team to take the Panel forward in this coming year.

I'm very proud and pleased to be able to highlight some key achievements the panel has made over the past year:

- Following the re-election of Andy Burnham as Mayor of Greater Manchester, working closely with him and system leaders to move forward on The GM Social Care Commission – collaborative

working across to system to co-design a change pathway for social care across Greater Manchester.

- Supporting the system to ensure that the elections process for the Mayoral candidates was accessible and enabled many more disabled people to exercise their right to vote.
- We delivered a very successful event as part of Good Employment Week 2024 to highlight good practice and a better understanding of disabling barriers in the workplace.
- Our work with the GM Work Well team has led to the setting up of a national lived experience Panel
- The launch of mental well-being grants for grass-roots organisations with funding from the NHS with an application process designed by disabled people.
- Reviewing and strengthening our governance

Perhaps our biggest challenge has been the range and volume of strategic national and regional pieces of work that the panel has inputted to, which is a significant collective achievement.

I am very much looking forward to what the next year will bring.

Michelle de Oude.

3. About the Panel

The Panel is convened by the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People (GMCDP) in partnership with GM Mayor Andy Burnham and facilitated through a contract with the GM Combined Authority (GMCA). There are 16 Disabled People's Organisations (majority or wholly led and run by disabled people as distinct from charities) on the Panel drawn from across the city region, they are:

Beyond Empower • Breakthrough UK • Bury People First • Disability Stockport • Embrace Wigan & Leigh • GM Autism Consortium Advisory Committee • GM Coalition of Disabled People (Convenor) • George House Trust • Manchester Deaf Centre • Manchester Disabled People's Access Group • Manchester Disabled People Against Cuts • Manchester People First • Mental Health Independent Support Team • People First Tameside • Rochdale And District Disability Action Group • Salford Disability Forum



In 2024-2025 we refreshed our Panel, including our Co-Chairs. Our three new Co-Chairs are: Michelle de Oude (Embrace Wigan & Leigh), Ben Andrews (Beyond Empower, and Pete Marshall (GM Autism Consortium Advisory Committee). With enormous thanks to our departing Co-Chairs: Sara Crookdake (Disability Stockport), Chris Hamnett (Embrace Wigan & Leigh), and Melvin Bradley (Mental Health Independent Support Team). The Panel holds dual monthly meetings; an Easy Meeting that is an hour long and is designed for members for whom longer complex meetings are not accessible, and a Standard Meeting lasting 2.5 hours. In between, the Panel steering group comprised of the Co-Chairs, Panel Officers, facilitator GMCDP, and our GMCA liaison, meets weekly to progress work. In between this established pattern of meetings officers work to progress Panel work, the Co-Chairs attend additional meetings, and Panel member organisations take part in additional engagements and task groups which are within their areas of interest where capacity allows.

We pay each member organisation £800 per year to help cover their costs for the extra work they do plus we cover any access needs members have, as well as providing information in accessible formats such as Easy Read and British Sign Language. The Co-chairs receive an additional £500 annually as a reflection of the extra work they do. This is how we operate ethically in line with the disabled people's movement principles and valuing disabled people's lived expertise and labour.

We also have a wider associate network of interested stakeholders, who do not attend meetings, but with whom we share information. The Panel and members operate from the perspective of the Social Model of Disability. This is the model developed by disabled people since the 1970's and holds that while we individually have impairments or

conditions, it is the barriers in society, be they physical, ideological, or social, that collectively disabled us and exclude us from society.

4. Activities and Highlights of Year 6

The Panel's sixth year ran from April 2024 to March 2025. Our priorities were: disabled people and work, poverty, social care and strengthening the Panel. It was a year of enormous change both internally and externally, we refreshed our Panel, elected new Co-Chairs, and strengthened and enhanced our governance. We supported through our work with the Disabled Peoples Organisations Forum England, the first ever national General Election hustings organised and ran by disabled people, with an all-disabled panel of candidates, held online and in-person at the People's History Museum. We supported an online Mayoral election hustling for Greater Manchester. We also worked on the right to vote, to ensure disabled people had continued access to their democratic rights as new restrictions were enacted by government. We ran a GM Good Employment event, a video from which went viral, and supported further three events for the Charter. We developed the idea for a Social Care Commission, which was supported by Mayor Andy Burnham and has now developed considerably since his re-election. We hope the innovative ethos of our City Region and the freedom of greater devolution will allow us to transform and improve social care for everyone.

Across the year we continued to work on issues around poverty and social security, officers attend GM NHS Tackling Poverty Group, the

Tackling Inequalities Board, and the GM Live Well Financial Resilience Group. Our work with the British Gas Energy Trust has identified key needs for advice and training for disabled people. With National policy direction that risks worsening disabled people's poverty these will be important areas for our continued work. We have been pleased with the Mayor's continued support for a different approach and in devolving more social security and employment support to GM. We have pursued equality impact assessments from central Government and worked with the GM Women and Girl's Panel on the impact of cuts to the Winter Fuel Payment.

We worked with Just Fair on submission to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and with Amnesty International on their report on adequacy of Social Security. On Social Care debt we continue to work with many partners along with the older People's Panel. It will also be covered in the forthcoming Social Care commission work.

On International Day of Disabled People on the 3rd of December we held a hybrid event at the International Anthony Burgess Foundation attended by Mayor Andy Burnham. There was agreement to work together on the Government's Green Paper on Disability Benefits, issues around Access to Work, developing the GM Social Care Commission and Live Well in GM. We supported the launch of the Live Well approach that moves away from punitive and failed approaches, and we supported the living income campaign, we also met with universal basic income planners about possible work in GM on a pilot.

In strengthening the Panel, we held meetings with all member organisations with a structured interview to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and from this we democratically formalised policy and governance around decision making, media,

membership, and code of conduct. This was to ensure the Panel reflects disabled people and our organisations current and future needs, objectives and fully embody our principles moving forward with the Social Model of Disability.

We developed the Mental Wellbeing Grants program, this had emerged from a coproduced report we published in 2022. It led to a series of strategic grant giving, but we identified that smaller groups were consistently excluded from the standard funding culture and bureaucracy. So, we developed a new grant program for small grants for disabled people led activity that would reach communities often not reached by existing systems. GM NHS and the (late) GMCVO were great helps in this, and we coproduced with Panel members the specifications for the grants with a pot of up to £50,000 which will go live in the spring.

While we have our priority areas, we also take on issues that emerge that are of significant impact to our community, this also means we are always active on issues around housing and transport. On Housing we are augmented by GMCDP's housing group who share some members with Panel membership, and this creates some extra capacity for work on housing issue. In Year 6 we pursued local housing plans and the need for M4 (2) & M4 (3) standards across GM. While they have not been specified on the GM strategy, we have sought to influence local plans in the districts to include at least 10% of houses be built to the M4 (3) standard, while all should meet the M4 (2) standard. This would put us in line with both London and Liverpool City region but also be leading them on implementation.

On Transport we collected testimony on disabled people's experience using trains, trams, buses, taxis and negotiating transport infrastructure.

We identified persistent issues of anti-social behaviour on buses, particularly directed at learning disabled people by school and college age passengers. We facilitated a meeting with TfGM with Panels member organisations to progress work on this, and concessionary passes and access at stations. We regularly meet with TfGM and with the facilitator of the disability design reference group at Breakthrough UK.

Throughout the year we engage with and progress work to improve disabled people's lives, in year 6 this has included:

- Equality Human rights Commission on mental health, digital exclusion, UN convention rights, Government Green paper, investigation of DWP.
- Advised Trailblazer group for developing and delivering Level 4 Revenue and Benefits Practitioner Apprenticeship
- Shared learning on our Panel with North Yorkshire Disability Forum and North Yorkshire Council who may wish to establish something similar.
- Meetings Disabled peoples panel/Inclusive Public Services project, which started in Bury and Rochdale and is now expanding across Greater Manchester.
- Meeting with National Centre for Social Research/Office for National Statistics (ONS) about their work on statistics on disability and unpaid care.
- Working with Victims & Vulnerability Team on ensuring provision of Independent Domestic Violence Advisers for Deaf and Disabled people.

- We contributed to- Food at home: A knowledge exchange project exploring disabled and older people's access to food in their own homes
- TfGM made several changes to the Disability Advocate role based on our feedback including changing the name, social model based, advocate for all physical and mental impairments
- Shared concerns on ADHD consultation plans with GM NHS.
- Our advice helped change and shape the Good Landlord Charter.
- Shaped and GM residents survey and subsequent data used to show issues of poverty and social care debt.
- Work with resolve poverty, including, article for their conference and ongoing activity to start a Disabled people's Organisation in Oldham which lacks one.
- Progress on our survey recommendations meeting with Arooj Shah and championing diversity and our work to wider audiences.
- Meetings with Minister and DWP over Social Security changes, and how to better engage with disabled people and our organisations.
- Ongoing work with GM Law Centre and wider GM advice network on how to meet the huge need for advice and support across the City Region.

5. Thanks and further Information

We are immensely proud of the Panel and the pioneering work that we do, none of it would be possible without supporters, allies, and the goodwill of many partners. Our special thanks to:

Our member organisations and Co-Chairs who all go above and beyond. The Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham. Our GMCA partners: Eve Holt, Mahmuda Khanom, Adrian Bates, Elaine Morgan, Rachel Harley. Our fellow facilitators and Panels in GM. Our colleagues in DPO's across the UK and the DPO Forum.

Nothing About Us Without Us!

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