

**DRAFT PLEASE DO NOT CIRCULATE**

# **Greater Manchester Disabled People's Panel**

**This document combines the following three documents**

- **Section 1: Annual Report 2020-2021**
- **Section 2: Progress Report on GM Big Disability Survey recommendations**
- **Section 3: Work Priorities for 2021-2022**

“As the world recovers from the pandemic, we must ensure that the aspirations and rights of persons with disabilities are included and accounted for in an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 world. This vision will only be achieved through active consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.”

**António Guterres - Secretary-General of the United Nations**

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## **Section 1: Annual Report 2020-2021**

### **Foreword**

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound and disproportionate impact on disabled people from the onset. Greater Manchester Disabled People's Panel recognised this immediately and captured this impact at a city region level through our [GM Big Disability Survey - Covid19](#). The work of the Panel in its second year has been dominated by our response to the pandemic. Our work has been possible thanks to the outstanding level of commitment of our Panel members, who have delivered and shaped policy well beyond the ask of time initially envisaged when the Panel was established. This is in part due to the pandemic, but also due to our successful solution-focussed approach. Particular thanks must go to the Panel's outgoing Co-Chair, John Kenny of Disability Stockport, who has provided leadership and expert guidance to the Panel in its first two years, as well as supporting its development prior to the creation of the Panel.

Thanks must also be given to the Mayor and GMCA's officers, who have supported the Panel from its inception and throughout this difficult second year.

This report contains three sections: an annual report detailing the achievements and challenges of our second year; an update on our Big Disability Survey recommendations and our priorities for 2021-2022.

The Panel have set an aspirational goal: to make Greater Manchester one of the best places in the world for disabled people to live. The challenge of that journey has been made more difficult after the events of the last year but the Panel will continue to work collectively to make progress and to actively engage with partners and disabled people in Greater Manchester.

Michele Scattergood and Sarah Cross

**Co-chairs of Greater Manchester Disabled People's Panel**

## About the Panel

The Greater Manchester Disabled People's Panel (GMDPP) is a pan-impairment Panel, made up of 13 Disabled People's Organisations and is convened by the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People. The Coalition is an individual Disabled People's Organisation which provides a secretariat function for the Panel and employs two Panel Officers who support the work of the Panel.

GMDPP was created in 2019 as an initiative between Disabled People's Organisations and the Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham. The aim of the Panel is to ensure that disabled people are involved in all aspects of running and planning for the future of the city region. An agreement was signed with [the Mayor and Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(GMCA\)](#). This details our broad remit and you can see the one page summary [here](#).

The ambition of the Panel is to influence policy, culture, and operational practices in order to remove disabling barriers and make real the full rights of disabled people. It seeks to do this at the highest level and in the earliest stage of strategic policy making. We operate from the perspective of the Social Model of Disability and the Seven Needs of Independent Living.

## Covid-19

From the outset of the pandemic, member organisations of GMDPP have been working to support disabled people, many of whom have been isolated from information, support and access to basic provisions. The structure of the Panel has facilitated a cross-GM, as well as local perspective, together with a pan-impairment and cross-barrier understanding of particular issues, and a clear picture of where the gaps in GM structures and services have been.

At the beginning of the crisis when GMDPP was raising issues and proposing solutions, it was asked for the evidence of disabled people's experiences. The Survey was commissioned to support the existing lived experience, knowledge and expertise of GMDPP members, in order to influence the necessary changes GMDPP was advocating for. Our Survey was one of the first in the country and addressed some of the early challenges faced by disabled people.

The final Survey report contained recommendations to the ten Greater Manchester local authorities, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and national Government.

The Panel also submitted its survey findings and recommendations to the UK parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights (which quoted the views of the Panel in its final report) and to the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee (which published the Panel's evidence).

Our Survey received extensive coverage, including an interview with one of the Panel officers on ITV news. Through our stakeholder engagement with elected representatives, government organisations and public bodies, we were able to secure commitments to addressing the negative impact of the pandemic on disabled people. This impact was highlighted at our Survey briefing event which was attended by more than 80 senior officers, national Government representatives, MP's and Councillors. During this engagement exercise, it became apparent that organisations were often unaware of their duties under national and international frameworks. This has led to the drafting of the GM 'Disabled People's Commitment'. The Panel has been working with the GMCA to develop this commitment under which GMCA and other public bodies will commit to realising the rights of disabled people under the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People. The recently released Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission [report](#) recommended that "a similar approach should be adopted for all panels".

During the pandemic the Panel moved swiftly to on-line full monthly meetings and weekly information catch-ups. This provided intelligence about what was happening for disabled people in Greater Manchester in relation to the pandemic on issues such as access to food and medications, employment and impacts on social care, both on a local/borough level, as well as across the region. The Panel was able to use this lived experience in its conversations with public bodies in Greater Manchester. The Panel also used its lived experience to develop position statements and guidance for local public bodies in several areas, including:

- Shielding: through its relationship with the Disability Unit in the Cabinet Office, the Panel shared its position with the Government that there was not an issue with shielding itself but the way that it

has been implemented which has led to the harmful exclusion of disabled people. Rather than being used as an essential aspect of a multifaceted strategy, it has been relied upon with other approaches sidelined.

- Accessibility of Covid Vaccination Programme. The feedback from Panel members and from Programme officers is that by working together barriers have been successfully removed.
- Exemptions for face mask wearing on public transport. The Panel's proposed language was used for Transport for Greater Manchester and the national campaign.
- The Panel has worked with Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership on its mental wellbeing programme and how to develop a more inclusive service. The Panel delivered a focus group and are commenting on the next steps of the Greater Manchester Mental Wellbeing Conversation.
- One of the co-chairs addressed supporters of the GM Good Employment Charter webinar on the theme of Disabled people, employment and Covid-19.
- The Panel worked with the Mayor, Andy Burnham, to advise the BBC on improving the accessibility of its channels of communication, especially in the light of the public health messages in relation to Covid-19.
- In response to returning to city and town centres and new lay-outs, the Panel summarised its guidance in a memo for planners to use. The Panel hosted a useful meeting on inclusive cycling with representatives from across GM and including London which contributed to improvements in design within GM and understanding of inclusion and Active Travel activities. A representative of the Panel has now joined the Cycling and Walking Commission Board to advance inclusive active travel work.

The Panel also successfully advocated for a text service for Greater Manchester Community Hubs. This has now been extended for a further six months due to its high level of use. This is a clear example of the Panel's vital contribution to identifying gaps in emergency provision and assessment of the level of need and to addressing the exclusion of a significant number of people who, by not having a text service, could not access essential supplies, support and services. The extension of this service highlights the necessity of this access provision.

## **Other Communities of Identity**

The Panel had already been working on intersectional issues, and the Black Lives Matter movement encouraged the Panel to review how it was working with other communities of identity. The Panel has been a driving force behind the Greater Manchester move away from silo working in equalities.

## **New members**

In its Survey the Panel recommended the establishment of a DPO which represented communities experiencing racial inequalities. This was welcomed by some disabled people although the Panel has also now reflected on how this cannot be the only solution, and that DPOs and the Panel need to continue to develop their intersectional approach.

In March 2021, the Panel undertook a recruitment exercise to address geographical and intersectional gaps in Panel membership, particularly looking to recruit from organisations that represent disabled people from communities that experience racial inequality. The new members will be announced in June 2021.

## **Sharing good practice**

Panel members regularly attend meetings of:

- the Hate Crime Partnership
- Greater Manchester Inequalities Board
- Greater Manchester Humanitarian Assistance Group.

The Panel structure has allowed Panel members to share good practice and expertise and provide the voice of lived experience. For example, a Panel member was approached by a local DWP Disability Employment lead to speak to their team for 'Autism Awareness' week. The Panel member did not have immediate contacts but were able to ask another Panel member, who worked in a Greater Manchester capacity, to respond to the request.

Panel officers have been supporting the development of other Disabled People's Panels in other cities who are keen to copy the Greater Manchester model. These include Brighton, Bristol, East & West Cheshire, Sheffield and with further interest shown in Liverpool.

## **Getting the most out of equality law**

In March 2021 the Panel hosted an online event with the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the University of Leeds to discuss how to use the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People to maximise the rights of disabled people at local level. This event proved very popular with national reach and positive feedback, including requests for the Panel to deliver similar events in the future.

The Panel referred an issue relating to Victoria Station and Network Rail to the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The Panel had contacted Network Rail about its failure to consider reasonable adjustments when overhauling the lifts at Victoria Station. Subsequently the Equality and Human Rights Commission has entered into a legal agreement (section 23 Equality Act 2010) with Network Rail regarding access requirements in stations in the North West region.

## **Political participation and representation**

The pandemic has further highlighted the importance of disabled people shaping their own futures. This can be partially achieved through influencing policy and monitoring its implementation. However, the decision-making process will continue to exclude disabled people until they are in a position to be part of the democratic process and make these decisions. Our work in 2020/21 has been focussed on two areas: political representation and political participation.

In March 2021 we delivered a workshop “Electing Disabled People” on political representation to discuss how to increase the number of disabled political representatives. We identified the importance of individual parties promoting political participation and representation; re-establishing a political fund for disabled people and the collation of data on representation. All parts of Government need to address the obstacles of access, resources and ableism which block the path to elected office. It is also concerning that disabled elected members on local councils are being obliged to follow the party whip and vote for cuts (to address the short-fall from the pandemic) that fall predominantly on services used by disabled people.



Reform to the process of political representation must go hand in hand with the removal of barriers to political participation. In Spring 2021 the Panel worked with the Greater Manchester councils, through the GMCA, to address barriers to the electoral process. This was a particular concern as the elections took place when many disabled people were still be effectively shielding. We are anticipating a low turn-out of disabled people in the May 2021 local elections.

## **Challenges experienced**

In what was an exceedingly difficult year for everyone, Panel members and their organisations demonstrated a strong commitment to their role and to providing a voice for disabled people in Greater Manchester. However, this presented several challenges:

- Transitioning to digital meetings and ensuring all Panel members remained included.
- Maintaining energy levels during lockdown given organisational, community and personal challenges of Covid-19 and the practical implications of shielding as well as safeguarding Panel members' mental wellbeing.
- Capacity and resources: Panel member organisations are delivering substantial amounts of work with comparatively few resources. Work between meetings is not directly funded within the existing grant agreement and Panel members dedicate a large amount of time for a small yearly recompense, particularly the co-chairs. This has been exacerbated by the increase in the Panel's profile, which has led to more requests for input.
- Holding decision-makers to account: the Panel hosts a number of leads from across the Greater Manchester system without this necessarily cleading to change in policy.
- Keeping up with the ever-changing situation on Covid-19 and prioritising key issues when there have been so many during the pandemic.
- The Panel structure evidenced the value of having a funded Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) infrastructure, however substantial time, resources and capacity were deployed to generate the evidence gathered in our Survey, which only served to reinforce the existing information, understanding and insights we had as DPOs.

## **Future Challenges**

Capacity and resources: the situation is unlikely to change for 2021-2022. Having risen to the challenges the pandemic presented the Panel has worked beyond its original remit in order to influence, challenge and help form solutions to the issues disproportionately impacting disabled people. The Panel, and GMCDP as the Panel convenor, has to now look to streamlining its priorities and approach, redress the workload of all Panel members, while maintaining strategic impact. The agreed Work Priorities for 2021-2022 can be found in the Section 3 of this report.

The Covid-19 pandemic is not over. The additional barriers and inequalities created by this public health crisis are likely to remain (return to cities; return to work; poverty and insufficient welfare protection, using public transport, implications for disabled people's mental and physical health; newly disabled people recovering from Covid-19).

The future does not look promising in the light of cuts to public services and particularly local authority reductions in the funding of social care. The Panel has a challenging time ahead. The Greater Manchester Disabled People's Commitment and the Panel will be more important than ever.

## Section 2: Progress Report on GM Big Disability Survey recommendations

### Introduction

#### [GM Big Disability Survey - Covid19.](#)

The recommendations in the GM Big Disability Survey – Covid-19 refer to domains or areas of life which have been affected by the pandemic. In Summer 2020 these domains were then further expanded in the GMDPP's submissions to the House of Commons and House of Lords Joint Committee on Human Rights inquiry into "[The Government's response to COVID-19: human rights implications](#)" and the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee report on [Unequal impact? Coronavirus, disability and access to services](#).

This section assesses progress against all our 2020 recommendations. Recognising COVID survey fatigue we have not returned to survey again but used the lived experience of Panel members in our assessments. We have included new recommendations based on progress. The assessments are an overall judgement from the Panel based on our combined knowledge of the 10 Greater Manchester Local Authorities in addition to the Panel's knowledge of the Greater Manchester infrastructures and organisations.

We have used a traffic light system to assess progress:



(Red) the Panel are not aware of any progress towards fulfilling the recommendation



(Amber) the Panel is aware of on-going discussions or concrete intention to meet the recommendation



(Green) substantial progress has been made towards the recommendation

? We do not have any additional data or intelligence since the [GM Big Disability Survey - Covid19](#) to make an assessment

## **Equality Impact Assessments of COVID response**

**2020 recommendation:** the Panel recommends that all public bodies providing services to disabled people in Greater Manchester should undertake Equality Impact Assessments of their Covid-19 responses and involve disabled people in the assessment of these. The recommendations from these assessments must then be actively put in place, to ensure the recovery phase and any future peaks do not further negatively impact on disabled people.



(Amber) the Panel are aware of good practice in undertaking Equality Impact Assessment in some of the Greater Manchester boroughs (for example, Rochdale and Wigan expressly mention working with their local Panel members in their Equality Impact Assessments. Rochdale Council even included a link to our survey to enable decision-makers to use the data we had gathered. Bury mention using the learning provided by the Panel via the Humanitarian Assistance Group and Manchester, as part of its Manchester Covid Health Equity Work, has commissioned one of the Panel members and DPO's to co-ordinate a Sounding Board of disabled people to be actively involved in COVID response work (which has included Equality Impact Assessments)).

### **Updated 2021 recommendation:**

All Greater Manchester Local Authorities should routinely involve disabled people in the development of their Equality Impact Assessments and resulting action plans and review these regularly. All authorities and public services should adopt the proposed Greater Manchester Disabled People's Commitment

## **Digital Exclusion**

**2020 recommendation:** the Panel recommends that digital exclusion is recognised as an urgent priority (56% of digitally excluded people are

disabled people (ONS 2019). Digital exclusion is severely impacting upon disabled people during this pandemic. The Panel recommends the provision of digital devices to enable digital inclusion. The Panel also recommends that the device itself will not solve digital exclusion, but that the costs of data/broadband and the technical support and training must also be included for the successful inclusion of disabled people.



(Amber) the Panel are aware of initiatives at national and Greater Manchester level to address the digital divide. This is being undertaken at a high-level and the benchmark data or targets for digitally excluded disabled people are unclear.

### **Updated 2021 recommendation:**

Greater Manchester initiatives to tackle digital exclusion should ensure that they undertake data gathering exercises to ascertain the extent of digital exclusion experienced by disabled people. The GMDPP should be involved in the development of targets.

### **Accessible Information**

**2020 recommendation:** the Panel recommends that accessible information be produced consistently. Access to information is vital to enable disabled people to make informed choices about their lives. Public health information and government guidance in particular must be concise, accessible and clear to enable disabled people to make informed choices to ensure their safety. The Panel recommends that information should be provided in an accessible format to every disabled person (as per Accessible Information Standard). Accessible formats include easy read, large print, braille, audio and BSL.



(Amber) the Panel are aware of initiatives at Greater Manchester and locality level to improve the accessibility of information: the community hubs now have a text service, more documents are now produced in easy-read versions and working in collaboration with the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership, we have tackled a number of potential accessible information barriers to the GM Covid-19 vaccination programme. Consistency of practice remains an

issue with successful outcomes dependent on individual officer commitment to removing barriers.

### **Updated 2021 recommendation:**

Greater Manchester public and private bodies should undertake system-wide audits of their public information to ensure it meets agreed standards. Greater Manchester partnerships and local authorities should jointly fund a Disabled People's Organisation to maintain an accessible information hub that can share good practice and provide expert advice on barrier-free information.

### **Involvement in decision-making and emergency planning**

**2020 recommendation:** For the recovery transition and the aftermath of this pandemic not to perpetuate the same isolation from services provision and support in the future, the Panel recommends disabled people's organisations are included in all levels of decision making. Disabled people and our organisations must be involved in the development of systems and policies from the very onset, and at local, regional and national levels. The situations faced by disabled people in Greater Manchester and nationally exposed the lack of consideration and inclusion of disabled people in national emergency planning.



(Amber) the Panel have been increasingly involved in co-design initiatives. This is particularly evident in the work the Panel has been undertaking at Greater Manchester level to improve the accessibility of information: the community hubs now have a text service, more documents are now produced in easy-read versions and working in collaboration with the ten local authorities and Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership, we have tackled a number of potential accessible information barriers to the GM Covid-19 vaccination programme. Consistency of practice remains an issue with successful outcomes dependent on individual officer commitment to removing barriers.

### **Isolation, Safety and Mental Health**

**2020 recommendation:** Prior to the pandemic, mental health services were already heavily impacted by austerity, leading to widespread shortages in mental health support services. It is critical that disabled people – and others experiencing mental health distress – are able to access support. The Panel recommends in order to combat the numerous, urgent mental health crisis many disabled people are in (including social isolation; anxiety & depression; increased risk of domestic abuse; food insecurity; access to CAMHS and addiction) that there is an urgent prioritisation of funding and resourcing of mental health support.



(Amber) Although the Panel have begun a programme of work with Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership on mental health wellbeing provision for disabled people, the scale of long-term under-provision and failure to provide adequate services is such that without significant investment, substantial progress is unlikely. Young people turning 18 and not having access to children's services seems to be a particularly acute problem post-pandemic, especially for young autistic people.

## **Independent Living**

**2020 recommendation:** Support independent living for disabled people: Long term strategies must be developed to support independent living in the community, reversing the effects austerity has had on disabled people's rights to live their lives in a place of their choosing, with access to the required support. The Panel recommends a re-prioritisation of independent living, and that this needs to be recognised as an equal, vital right, in accordance with Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.



(Red) the Panel are not aware of any progress towards fulfilling the recommendation

## **Personal Assistance / Carers:**

- 1) **2020 recommendation:** The Panel recommends that measures including clear avenues for accessing PPE; flexibility in direct payments being used to pay for alternative PAs or equipment; LA and

providers creating a “pooling mechanism” for emergency PA/carer cover; and pre-emptive permission to pay family/friends if PAs/carers have to self-isolate be put into place to prevent current crisis situations for disabled people as we move into the recovery phase, and to improve the emergency planning should there be future peaks or crisis situations.



(Amber) the Panel are aware of local authorities allowing provision of PPE through DPO's, pooling emergency care and direct payments being used to pay for alternative PAs and equipment. One of these local authorities is now working with their local DPO and Panel member to improve direct payments.

### **Care Act Easing**

- 2) **2020 recommendation:** Statutory Standards, Social Care Assessments and Health Care: The Panel recommends that the Care Act 2014 standards be kept as the minimum required standards. The Panel recommends these measures be implemented to ensure that disabled people do not continue to experience unnecessary consequences, on top of the pandemic itself.



(Green) the Government announced last month that it plans to end Care Act easing.

- 3) **2020 Recommendation to National Government:** The Government should publicise without delay its social care green paper. Its scope should cover all disabled people regardless of age. It should look to establish a professional structure and remuneration for social care staff to ensure that the work of care workers, and the people who receive this care, are valued.



(Red) despite earlier announcements the Government did not to include social care proposals in its recent Queen's Speech

**Intersectional impact on disabled people who are also more likely to encounter discrimination on the grounds of race**



**Updated recommendation:** Despite extensive cross-circulation of the survey, disabled people who are also more likely to encounter discrimination on the grounds of race were underrepresented. GMDPP commits to proactively support the involvement of disabled people who are more likely to encounter discrimination on the grounds of race and, if appropriate, support the creation of a specific disabled people's organisation in Greater Manchester.



(Amber) the Panel is trying to address intersectionality in its 2021 recruitment exercise to address geographical and communities of identity gaps.

## **Resourcing for a DPO in each of 10 GM boroughs**

1. **2020 Recommendation** The development and resourcing for a disabled people's organisation in each of the 10 Greater Manchester boroughs: The current boroughs without an established local disabled people's organisation (Bolton, Bury, Oldham and Trafford) corresponded with the lowest contributions from disabled people in these areas. In order to ensure Local Authorities are including disabled people in their decision making the Panel recommends the development, resourcing and inclusion of disabled people's organisations within each of the boroughs in which there is currently a gap. There are Panel members who can support this work.



(Amber) the Panel has proposed a GM Disabled People's Commitment which has been recommended by the Independent Inequalities Commission. The Panel has been working with individual local authorities to encourage the establishment of Disabled People's Organisations where these do not already exist. We are currently recruiting new Panel members to address geographical gaps and encouraging the local authorities in these areas to support the development of a Disabled People's Organisation.

## 2020 Recommendations to National Government:

2. The Government should require all local authorities and councils to ensure the development and resourcing of disabled people's organisations in their areas and provide adequate funding to local councils to do so;



(Red) the Panel are not aware of any progress towards fulfilling the recommendation

3. City regions, such as Greater Manchester, should establish panels with a similar remit to the Greater Manchester Disabled People's Panel;



(Green) substantial progress has been made towards the recommendation

Panel officers have been supporting the development of other Disabled People's Panels in other cities who are keen to copy the Greater Manchester model. These include Brighton, Bristol, East & West Cheshire, Sheffield and with further interest shown in Liverpool.

## Employment

- 1) **2020 Recommendation:** The Panel recommends that the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, local authorities and other key public anchor organisations in each Greater Manchester borough conduct an urgent Equality Impact Assessment as part of their COVID 'return to work' plan and engage with disabled employees to agree reasonable adjustments.



We do not have any additional data or intelligence since the [GM Big Disability Survey - Covid19](#) to make an assessment

### Updated 2021 recommendation:

The Panel calls on the Greater Manchester Work and Health Board to collate data to assess the 'state of work' for disabled people returning to the public sector and anchor institutions

- 2) **2020 Recommendation:** The Panel also recommends that the GMCA and GM Employment Charter ensure that clear guidance and standards are developed to ensure disabled employees within all Charter Supporter organisations are supported to return to work.



(Amber) the GM Charter has recently said that “Although not explicitly set out, addressing inequalities remains at the heart of the Charter’s ambition. Ensuring equality in the workplace means creating opportunity for all, and the impact of COVID has heightened many of the existing challenges especially with regards to women, disability and our Black and Minority Ethnic communities. We will focus on action in these areas – especially in terms of progression and pay differential reporting”. The Panel has been working with system leaders to develop clear targets and standards as recommended by the Independent Inequalities Commission.

**Updated 2021 recommendation:**

The Panel recommends that the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter requires its members to develop clear equality action plans.

- 3) **2020 recommendations:** the Panel also recommends that the Government, employers and public authorities monitor and publish data relating to disabled people and employment, including before and after the pandemic.



We do not have any additional data or intelligence since the [GM Big Disability Survey - Covid19](#) to make an assessment

- 4) **2020 recommendations:** The Panel recommends employers, schools and universities and service providers comply with their anticipatory duty to make reasonable adjustments to avoid the unnecessary distress of forced disclosure.



(Red) the Panel are not aware of any progress towards fulfilling the recommendation

- 5) **2020 recommendation:** The Panel recommends that the Greater Manchester Employment Charter delivers events and good practice guidance to ensure disabled employees retain work.



(Amber) the GM Good Employment Charter has published articles on the Disability Employment Gap. The Panel would like to work with the Good Employment Charter to address barriers to employment experienced by disabled people and which have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

- 6) **2020 recommendation:** The Panel recommends that work programmes are required to prioritise certain groups and ensure a certain percentage of clients are disabled people. Increased rewards could be provided to incentivise work programme providers. The Panel also recommends that Greater Manchester undertakes local positive action to enable disabled people to rise to top of the 'pile' of job applications



We do not have any additional data or intelligence since the [GM Big Disability Survey - Covid19](#) to make an assessment

#### **Updated 2021 recommendation:**

The Panel recommends that the Greater Manchester Work and Health Board assesses the extent of positive action undertaken in the activities it commissions.

- 7) **2020 Recommendation to National Government:** The Panel recommends that the Government reminds employers that the Equality Act has not been suspended during the pandemic and about their duties to avoid laying disabled people off work and

look into ways for disabled people to continue to work from home if appropriate.



(Red) the Panel are not aware of any progress towards fulfilling the recommendation

## Education

**2020 recommendation:** The Panel are concerned that children who have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are not receiving the same level of support. The Panel has been told that some children with EHCP were unable to continue attending mainstream schools, and that little or no support was provided. The Panel recommends that Greater Manchester should aspire to have a fully supported inclusive education system.



We do not have any additional data or intelligence since the [GM Big Disability Survey - Covid19](#) to make an assessment

### Updated 2021 recommendation:

The Panel recommends that local authorities measure how children with EHCPs have been supported during the pandemic and publish any action plans implemented to address identified gaps.

**2020 recommendation:** The Panel recommends the prioritisation of Adult Education funding and ring-fencing Adult Education funding for those disproportionality affected by Covid-19.




We do not have any additional data or intelligence since the [GM Big Disability Survey - Covid19](#) to make an assessment

## Face masks

**2020 recommendation:** Face masks place D/deaf individuals at a significant disadvantage, as face masks restrict lip-reading and also impair audio quality and attenuate speech. This poses significant

communication challenges for individuals with hearing difficulties. Some individuals will also be unable to wear face masks, as a result of mobility difficulties and/or neurodiversity. While these individuals are exempt from wearing face masks, there is a risk of discrimination, harassment and abuse on public transport and in public venues if sufficient information is not provided to raise awareness. Panel members have reported harassment in person and “shaming” of disabled people on social media for not wearing masks. The Panel recommends that transparent face masks should be made compulsory in public buildings and workplaces with posters/leaflets to raise awareness of issues associated with non-transparent face masks. The Panel also recommends a national communications campaign to explain reasons why someone may not be wearing a mask and identify penalties that protect disabled people from hate crime.

-  (Amber) the Panel welcomes initiatives such as TfGM’s Journey Assistance Card (Exemptions Card) but also recommends the evaluation of the effectiveness of these cards in reducing hate crime on public transport. Transparent face masks have not been routinely adopted in workplaces and public and health services. Exemptions for face mask wearing on public transport. The Panel’s proposed exemption language was used for Transport for Greater Manchester and the national campaign and the Panel influenced communication about face masks by the ten local authorities.

## Transport

**2020 recommendation:** Panel members have reported that fewer disabled people are using public transport. The Panel recommends that transport providers monitor use of their services by disabled people, engage with Disabled People’s Organisations and publish their results.



(Amber) the Panel has not been provided with local information on transport but nationally has participated in Transport Focus'

***Accessible transport: unlocking a better normal.***

## **Work Plan 2021-2022**

The Panel has recognised that its success has also brought challenges, mainly in terms of capacity of the co-chairs, Panel member organisations and the officers which support the Panel. The Panel has used its knowledge to identify key priorities for 2021-2022. The other key issues that we know are important to disabled people in Greater Manchester include education, young disabled people, Brexit implications, hate crime, welfare benefits, data collection and housing. The Panel will work with partners in Greater Manchester to find alternative ways to obtain the lived experience of disabled people with respect to these issues.

The Panel has selected the following priorities, which are not listed in order of importance, for its focus for this year.

## **Priorities**

### **1. Intersectionality and Strategic Infrastructure**

- The Panel will work with other Equality Panels to ensure it is representative of all groups experiencing inequality and oppression
- The Panel will work to encourage all local council and health service providers and businesses to sign up to the GM Disabled People's Commitment and encourage a rights-based approach to policy-making
- The Panel will increase its engagement with all ten Greater Manchester localities
- The Panel will work with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority on the refresh of the Greater Manchester Strategy

- The Panel will work with partners to implement the recommendations from the Independent Inequalities Report, with particular reference to enforcement measures
- The Panel will align its work plan to the Mayoral Manifesto

## **2. Access and the Built Environment and Transport**

- The Panel will work with the Mayor on his manifesto commitment to achieve the deadline for all rail stations in Greater Manchester to be fully accessible to all residents by 2025.
- The Panel will work with the Mayor on his manifesto commitment to ensure all new buses will have audio and visual announcements by 2024.
- The Panel will work with the Mayor on his manifesto commitment to transform our towns and make them more accessible.

## **3. Covid**

- The Panel will produce a follow-up report on the recommendations it made in its [GM Big Disability Survey - Covid19](#)
- The Panel will work with partners across Greater Manchester to ensure that the opening up of communities post-COVID is inclusive of disabled people.

## **4. Panel Governance and Development**

- The Panel will address geographical and intersectional gaps.
- The Panel will consider how to ensure Panel longevity and the sustainability of DPOs who are members or who would like to become members.
- The Panel and its officers will ensure that Panel members have the opportunity to develop their skills and expertise to strengthen the Panel and its member organisations.
- The Panel will work to raise its profile and ensure that the Panel's work is visible to individual disabled people in Greater Manchester.
- The Panel will review its governance structure.
- The Panel will expand its Associate Member network and increase its engagement with the Network.
- The Panel will look at improvements to the Panel structure and operational methods to ensure increased participation of learning-disabled people.



## **5. Social Care Charging**

- The Panel will work with the Mayor and Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership to returning to independent living after covid. We will encourage a better provision of social care and a fairer social care charging system with the ambition of implementing a no-charge policy using other Local Authorities as examples.

## **6. Employment**

- The Panel will work with Greater Manchester services and authorities to develop employment targets in relation to disabled people (pay gaps, employment, retention, and progression rates) and will assist in identifying actions to meet these targets and where possible the Panel will encourage local positive action to enable disabled people to rise to top of the 'pile' of job applications.
- The Panel will continue to encourage employers, businesses, and organisations to think about access when returning to an open society post-COVID. The Panel will work with the Greater Manchester Employment Charter to ensure that clear guidance and standards are developed on return to work for disabled employees and disabled employees are supported to return to work.
- The Panel will work with the Good Employment Charter to identify how implementation of the Charter is monitored and how this links to any enforcement measures, to also reflect the recommendations of the Independent Inequalities Commission.

## **7. Digital exclusion**

- The Panel will work with the Mayor on his manifesto commitment to help all over-75s get online alongside disabled people and under-25s.
- The Panel will work to ensure compliance with the recommendation in its [GM Big Disability Survey - Covid19](#). We recommended that digital exclusion is recognised as an urgent priority. The Panel recommended the provision of digital devices to enable digital inclusion and that the device itself will not solve digital exclusion, but that the costs of data/broadband and the

technical support and training by Disabled People's Organisations must also be included for the successful inclusion of disabled people.

- The Panel will encourage the use of Digital technology where it increases inclusion
- The Panel will promote digital inclusion as a human right

## **8. Mental Health**

- The Panel will work with GM Health and Social Care Partnership in an innovative project to Developing further intelligence on how best to improve and maintain the mental wellbeing of disabled people and to ensure that accessible community provision is a key focus.

## **9. Political inclusion**

- The Panel will work with local authorities to ensure elections are fully accessible
- The Panel will work with local authorities, political parties and national Government to address the obstacles of access, resources and ableism which block the path to elected office.

## **10. National Disability Strategy and engagement with Government**

- The Panel will continue to encourage the Government to properly engage with disabled people and their organisations when developing policy, including the National Disability Strategy.