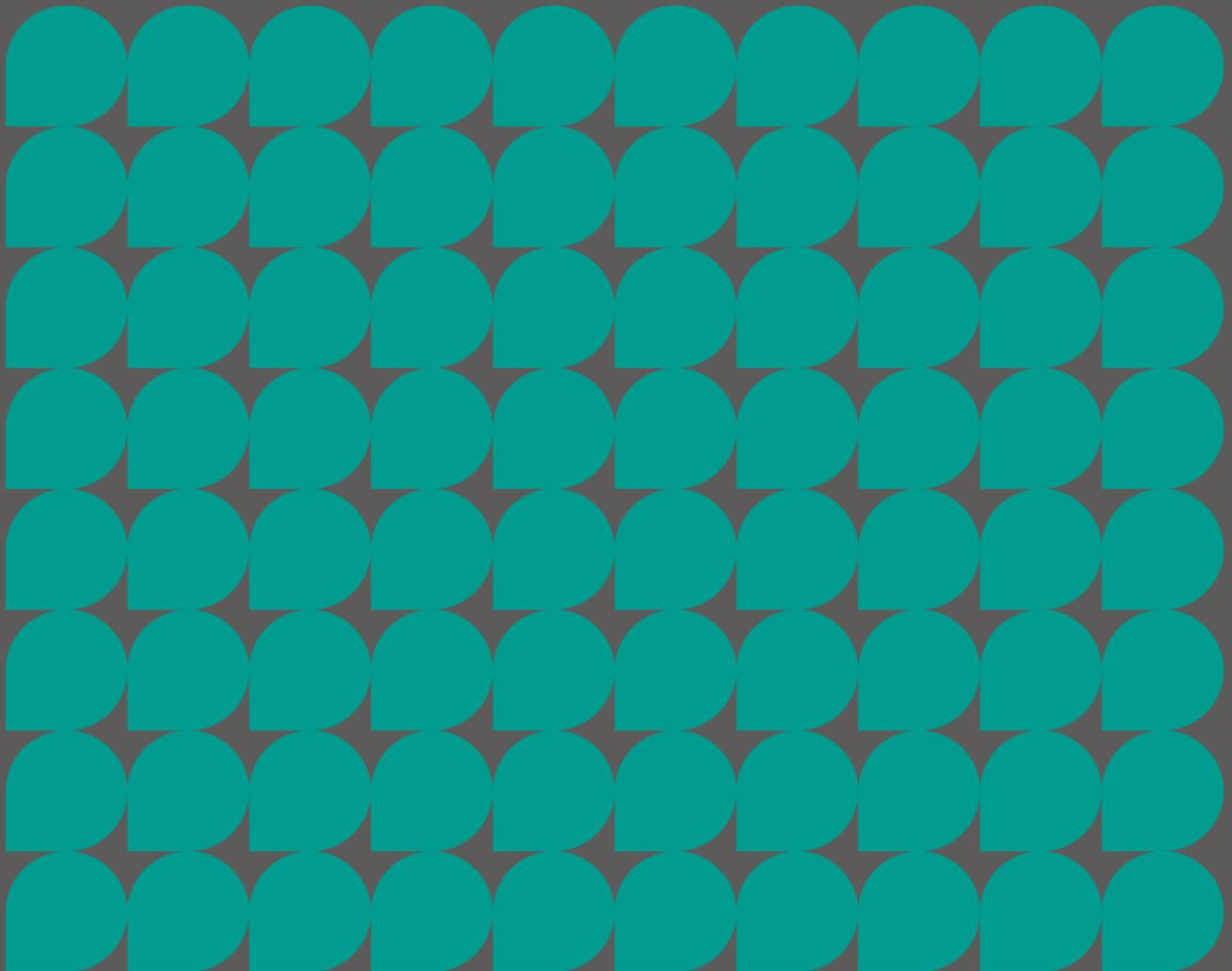


**FAITH &  
BELIEF  
ADVISORY  
PANEL**

**DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY  
FOR GREATER MANCHESTER**

**Greater Manchester Faith  
and Belief Advisory Panel  
Annual Report 2021-2022**



# 1. Message from the Co-Chairs

The Greater Manchester Faith and Belief Advisory Panel was launched in March 2021 and has had a productive first year. After meeting initially on a monthly basis and establishing the way we wanted to work and protocols, we elected two Co-Chairs, one male and one female.

We were both keen to ensure that the Panel became an effective group operating in a way to achieve its aims and objectives. These include representing the voice of faith and belief communities at a Greater Manchester level, in the work of Greater Manchester Combined Authority and within the Greater Manchester Strategy. It also includes ensuring that the concerns and key issues for people of faith and their communities are communicated to Greater Manchester leaders and structures and on a local borough level too.

We moved to bimonthly meetings because there appeared to be so many things for Panel members to become involved with, including the Action Networks, the Tackling Inequalities Board and the Equality Panel Chairs meetings, among others. The idea is for Panel members to report back to each Panel meeting on the work of these Action Networks and groups.

It has been an exciting year and we believe we have made important steps in realising the vision for the Panel. There is a long way to go but we feel that the work of Panel members and their support in a variety of areas has helped establish the importance of the Faith and Belief Advisory Panel within its first year. We look forward to building on our successes so far in the year ahead and identifying other areas that we feel we should be working in and ways of working to ensure continued success and relevance.

Our faith communities and members play such a significant role in the life of our city and we hope to establish the connections even more strongly and to ensure a true partnership in the way we live, work and share together.

**Co-Chairs, Rabbi Warren Elf MBE and Dr Jill Brennan**

## 2. About the Panel

The Faith and Belief Advisory Panel acts as a 'network of networks' bringing together representatives from the ten Greater Manchester borough Interfaith bodies with key individuals from single and mixed faith networks.

The Panel is one of seven Equality Panels established to tackle the structural and organisational 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.

The Faith and Belief Advisory Panel currently has 43 members representing 33 networks from across Greater Manchester and aims to reflect the city-region's diverse faiths and beliefs. To ensure the Panel is inclusive, membership is open to new networks. Gender balance is important to the Panel, and each network is encouraged to nominate a male and female representative.

The Panel aims to strengthen the partnership between public services, faith and belief organisations and wider society, through collaboration on shared missions, unlocking assets and resources in Greater Manchester communities and the powers available through devolution.

The Panel oversees the progress of public agencies in tackling inequality, tracking agreements to improve equity and providing insight to inform new ways of working. In addition, the Panel works collaboratively with public service officers to design new ways of working, which positively uses the assets, strengths and resources in our community, engages partners and local people at the earliest possible stage, and prioritises creating an inclusive society that recognises all Faiths and Beliefs have full and equal rights.

The Panel meets bimonthly, currently virtually, to discuss issues relating to Faith and Belief equality, and to mobilise contribution to the shared missions of the Greater Manchester Strategy and the development of policy. The Panel is supported by a Facilitating Organisation, Pulse Regeneration, which provides administrative and development support working closely with the Co-Chairs to set agendas and plan forward work priorities and actions.

## Faith and Belief Advisory Panel – Aims and Objectives

Optimise the Faith and Belief contribution to The Greater Manchester Strategy

Ensure that the role of Faith and Belief in society is recognised and valued

Foster good relations and dialogue between people of Faith and Belief (who share a protected characteristic) and people who do not share it

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

## 3. Highlights of the first year

The first year of the Panel has involved engagement with Greater Manchester Faith and Belief networks to build the Panel membership, developing and agreeing Terms of Reference, Member Role Profile and Code of Conduct, election of the Co-Chairs, and setting out initial Panel work priorities. Work has also been undertaken with Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) in developing Panel communications, including Panel branding and a background page on the [GMCA website](#).

Some key activities undertaken by the Panel include:

- Supporting the Religion Media Centre Conference
- Contributing to a workshop exploring how to strengthen citizen participation
- Collaborating with the Chairs of the other Equality Panels and Portfolio Leads
- Representing the Panel at the Tackling Inequalities Board
- Engaging with the consultation on the Greater Manchester Strategy

### 3.1 Greater Manchester Strategy 2021-2031

A key area of work has been consideration by the Panel of one of its aims to optimise the Faith and Belief contribution to the Greater Manchester Strategy. The Panel was involved in seven thematic engagement sessions to help inform policy priorities and the equalities issues that communities face. The Panel also received a facilitated workshop with GMCA colleagues in February to review the new Greater Manchester Strategy 2021-2031 and held key discussion about the recognition of faith and belief as part of the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector and in wider (and sometimes secular) society. This included a Panel Response sent to the Mayor of Greater Manchester and Portfolio holders with recommendations to ensure the unique contribution of Faith and Belief is recognised and that Interfaith is developed and supported within the boroughs.

Panel priorities, which form part of the Greater Manchester Strategy shared outcomes and commitments, are undertaken through a range of thematic Greater Manchester Action Networks. Panel members are actively engaged in the networks, which are action focused, with contribution from across different sectors and organisations. This enables collaboration rather than having separate Faith and Belief networks and is providing a real strength and impact. The Action Networks have nominated Panel Representatives who attend the network meetings, partnerships and events on behalf of the Panel to input views and provide feedback. A snapshot of the Action Networks and their activities over the last year is provided below.

## **3.2 Greater Manchester Food Security Action**

### **Network (GMFSAN)**

The GMFSAN has three Taskforce Groups – Healthy Start Vouchers; Ending Holiday Hunger; and Doing More for Those that Miss Out, the latter of which will become more challenging in the current climate. GMFSAN is developing a Greater Manchester Charter for community food organisations; collating data around Food Insecurity; and improving the distribution of food across the city region. The Network holds quarterly Full Network events. The Chair of the Network (a Faith Panel member) is engaged with The Mayor of Greater Manchester in roundtable meetings with Supermarkets and Food Manufacturers and Producers to maximise support.

## **3.3 Greater Manchester Homelessness Action**

### **Network (GMHAN)**

The GMHAN has achieved a lot over the last year including successful implementation of emergency and move-on accommodation following Covid , lobbying Government on how we can Build Back Better in relation to Housing, and contributing to the first Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan for Greater Manchester. The Network has three Task Groups; Learn, Lobby and Deliver and holds quarterly Full Network events and open space conversations on emerging issues. The Faith Sector Lead (a Faith Panel Member) serves on the Greater Manchester Homelessness Programme Board, chaired by The Mayor of Greater Manchester.

### **3.4 Greater Manchester Interfaith Climate Action Network**

The Interfaith Climate Group was formed last year to work in collaboration to engage communities in environmental and social action. The Panel helped facilitate a workshop in March where there was recognition of the interconnectedness between the environment, and areas such as social action, food poverty, and cost of living crisis. The decarbonisation of buildings is important and the role of education, messaging by 'lifestyle ambassadors; and involving young people. The Panel will be represented on the Green City Region Partnership and has now become a formal Action Network of the Panel.

### **3.5 Greater Manchester VCSE Accord Delivery Group**

The Panel has considered the VCSE Accord commitments and role of the Faith and Belief sector in these. Representatives of the Panel have met for a roundtable discussion with the VCSE Leadership Group to consider definition, data, direction and distribution of resources. The Delivery Group wants to encourage the borough local authorities to consider the involvement of Faith and Belief more broadly and to help strengthen interfaith networks.

### **3.6 Real Living Wage City-Region**

The panel is engaged in the Real Living Wage City-Region Campaign, which is a Mayoral priority highlighting the benefits of paying the real living wage and encouraging Accreditation by employers. Faith and Belief leaders are key to the success of the campaign as trusted and influential voices.

### **3.7 Greater Manchester Integrated Care System**

The Panel has been involved in Integrated Care System workshops, including the Build Back Fairer Framework, ensuring the voice and contribution of the Faith and Belief sector is included. There is a clear link between building back fairer and with health, especially around mental health and wellbeing.

### **3.8 Preventing Hate Crime**

The Panel received a presentation from GMCA which highlighted key themes for preventing hate crime and consideration was given by the Panel about how it can act as enablers. The Panel is now represented at the Greater Manchester Hate Crime Working Group.

### **3.9 Greater Manchester Digital Inclusion Action**

#### **Network**

A focus of the Network is on digital services for younger people and facilitating digital involvement for older people. These developments can be supported by Faith and Belief communities and the role of the Panel will be considered at a future meeting.

### **3.10 Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)**

The Panel met with district SACRE Chairs and Coordinators to develop relationships and provide mutual support. The Panel can help the SACRE's with their priorities and it was proposed for the SACREs to meet 6 monthly. A new Religious Education Curriculum is being introduced in the new school year in several of the SACREs with training events organised for Primary and Secondary school teachers. A recurring issue is the low level of funding in schools for Religious Education materials.

## **First Year Impact**

Development of Faith and Belief involvement and leadership in every Action Network

Increased Panel member engagement and help to strengthen involvement

Identified areas where the faith input or importance has not been recognised

Explored ways to effectively engage in all priority areas

Brought more faith voices and communities to the table (and we hope to reach and involve even more)

## **Lessons Learnt**

How to engage more effectively at a Greater Manchester level

Ways of offering support, skills and resources

How to make our offer in a way that ensures our role is appreciated and valued

It is possible to explore more ways of engaging and working more effectively

We can identify ways of bringing the F within VCSE

We have a role to play in so many areas – and we have only just started

## 4. Planning for the year ahead

The Panel has an exciting plan for the year ahead. This is driven by the Panel's aims and objectives.

The Panel will mobilise its contribution to the Greater Manchester Strategy, with the aim of optimising the Faith and Belief Sector contribution, and most effective ways to engage and contribute to its priorities. These will be aligned with the work of the Action Networks. Key actions include:

- Developing a statement about the role of Faith and Belief in Greater Manchester to be endorsed by GMCA
- Continuing dialogue between the Panel the VCSE Leadership Group to ensure the unique role and contribution of faith in society is recognised and in the VCSE Accord
- Supporting the priorities within the Greater Manchester Strategy and VCSE Accord through the Panel's work in the Action Networks
- Engaging with the ten Greater Manchester Council Leaders and VCSE groups regarding the Faith and Belief sector contributions, offers, support, investment, and challenges around infrastructure and implementation to their Portfolios.

### 4.1 Developing Interfaith within the Districts

Building on the above, the Panel will plan conversations with the portfolio holders/ Council leaders in each of the ten Greater Manchester boroughs. These will focus on how the Greater Manchester Strategy can be implemented in each of the districts and the importance of developing strong Interfaith networks and potential for investment. It is planned that the Panel Interfaith representatives will help lead these conversations.

## 5. How to Get Involved

For more information about the Greater Manchester Faith and Belief Advisory Panel please visit the [GMCA website](#).

Or to find out how you can get involved or provide support please contact the Facilitating Organisation by getting in touch with Chris Hart, Pulse Regeneration – [chris@pulseregeneration.co.uk](mailto:chris@pulseregeneration.co.uk)