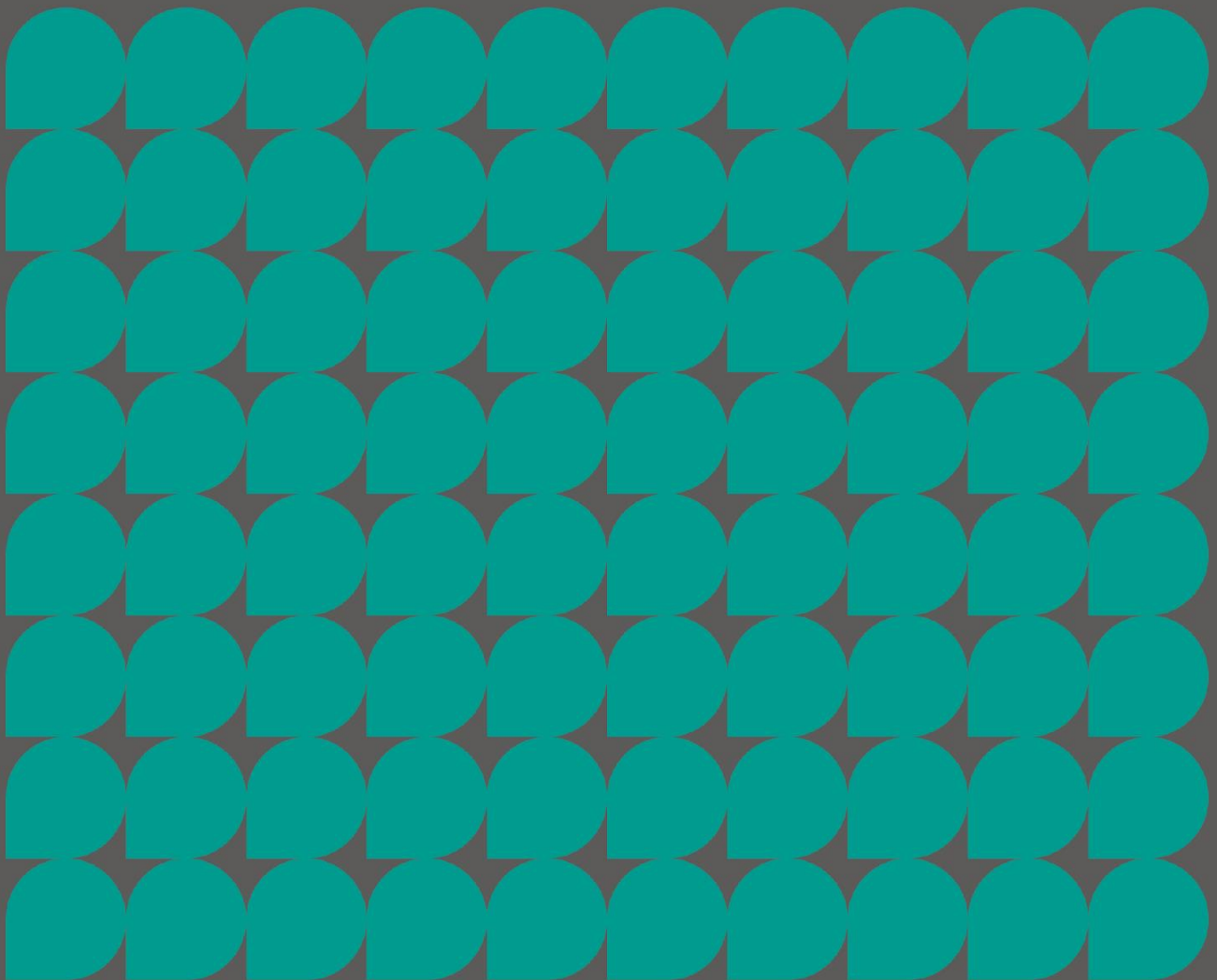


YOUTH COMBINED AUTHORITY

**DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY
FOR GREATER MANCHESTER**

Greater Manchester Youth Combined Authority Annual Report 2023-2024



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1. Introduction to the Youth Combined Authority

The Greater Manchester Youth Combined Authority (YCA) was formed in 2018. It is an integral part of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the Mayor of Greater Manchester's Office. It is one of the organisation's seven Equality Panels (a full list of the [Equality Panels](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/equalities/) can be found at <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/equalities/>)

The purpose of the YCA is to:

- Advise the Mayor of Greater Manchester and GMCA Portfolio Leaders, including the Portfolio Lead for Equalities and Communities and Portfolio Lead for Children and Young People, of the challenges and opportunities faced by young people.
- Proactively support the GMCA and its public, private, and voluntary sector partners to develop effective policy and practices for young people.
- Constructively challenge political and system leaders on progress to improve outcomes for all young people, including those that face discrimination and disadvantage because of their identity.

The term for this group of young people ran from April 2022-March 2024; this report covers the April 2023-March 2024 period. The membership has grown from previous cohorts to 52 young people representing 26 organisations from across Greater Manchester. Each organisation nominates two young people to be YCA members (with the option to nominate two deputies.)

Youth Focus North West (YFNW) is the YCA's facilitating organisation, organising the group day-to-day. YFNW supports organisations to participate in YCA activities where needed and draws together a 'community of practice' up to three times a year for the staff supporting young people from their organisation.

From April 2023- March 2024, members took part in 10 main meeting sessions, focusing on the themes outlined in their [vision document](#); The Environment, Education, Employment and Skills, Equity, Equality and Inclusion, and Transport and Active Travel, as well as additional topics such as violence reduction and the new Manchester Baccalaureate. March 2024 marked the final session for this cohort, where they held a celebration of their term, as well as launching the [2024-2026 cohort vision document](#).

2. Meetings and work highlights

Since April 2023, the YCA has met in person monthly ten times and held two Development Days, in May and September. These have enabled young people to forge relationships with each other and to understand their role and responsibilities in relation to the YCA.

2.1 Work highlights

- The YCA engaged with Transport for Greater Manchester around the Bee Network launch, including presenting their work at the Big Active Conversation in June 2023 and attending smaller focused sessions around developing the Bee Network app.
- The group engaged with the Violence Reduction Unit and Deputy Mayor Kate Green on the new '[Greater than Violence' strategy](#). Young people shared their input on the content of the strategy and their experiences, which the Violence Reduction Unit included in the new strategy. The YCA Chair also gave a keynote speech at the strategy launch, sharing the input of the YCA in this process.
- The group worked with the GMCA Education and Skills team on the new Greater Manchester Baccalaureate, creating a report of their recommendations and helping to shape the branding of the new MBacc.

2.2 Task and Finish groups

During this year, members of the YCA took part in thematic Task and Finish groups.

Environmental Working Group (EWG)

The EWG is made up of young people from the wider YCA organisational membership. It had its first meeting in January 2023 to identify key goals and tasks that the young people wanted to achieve. The group met weekly throughout September to design their workshop for the Green Summit 2023. The EWG developed a workshop exploring food waste solutions and highlighted the hidden hunger crisis.

The group did independent research as part of the process and collaborated with University of Manchester's Social Responsibility Officer and the GMCA's Waste Team to develop the workshop, which was delivered to 30 people at the Green Summit. Young people from the EWG also contributed to the North West Net Zero Youth Network conference in November 2023, identifying recommendations for Net Zero actions in the Northwest.

MBacc report group

As requested by the Mayor when he met with the YCA in December 2023, a group of YCA members worked alongside Sharon Weetman, Education, Skills and Work, GMCA, to review the emerging Greater Manchester Baccalaureate, bringing their findings together into a report on the [Greater Manchester Baccalaureate](#) (MBacc). This report was then shared with the Mayor and GMCA, as well as being designed into a social media post to share.

2.3 Development of members

Young people have given over 600 hours of voluntary time to the project, showing ongoing engagement and commitment to the YCA (aggregate contact hours at all sessions from April 2023- March 2024).

Members have also had the opportunity to develop their social, emotional and personal skills through our development days, external activities and events, and other opportunities presented to the group. In the end of term feedback, young people self-reported increased levels of confidence, leadership skills, communication and teamwork as a result of their engagement within the YCA.

Young people have rightly questioned which adults come to the YCA to ask for the YCA's input. They have implemented a process based on the [GM Children and Young People's Participation and Voice Framework](#) and Lundy Model. This process means that adults who wish to come into the YCA need to explain how doing so will enable young people to have the right conditions of space, voice, audience and influence to have their views heard and acted upon, in line with the UNCRC Rights of the Child.

“I have learnt so much that it’s hard to list one, but the main thing is the importance of having our voices heard. We made such a difference this term working on important projects and talking to many different people. I understood just how impactful a space like the YCA is and how necessary it is for improving GM for young people.” - **Feedback from a YCA representative.**

3. Case Study - YCA and Greater than Violence Strategy

The YCA worked with the Violence Reduction Unit on their new strategy, ‘Greater than Violence’. The aim of this work was to engage young people in the creation of the new strategy, by attending one of the YCA meetings (June 2023) to ask the group about their experiences of youth violence and what would need to change.

Young people were shown the influence of their work when Deputy Mayor Kate Green and VRU staff attended a follow up YCA meeting (September 2023) to share their ‘You said we did’ work. In this, they shared a summary of the previous discussions of the YCA, and what they had done with their thoughts in the formation of the new strategy.

The influence of this work is also evident in the final [Greater than Violence strategy](#), which refers to the engagement done with the YCA; at the launch event for the strategy in December 2023, the YCA Chair spoke about their involvement.

“When reading the strategy, it seemed so familiar; and I soon realised why. Our suggestions were not merely heard, but actively incorporated into the strategy. In my experience within this sector, instances where young people’s opinions are genuinely considered and acted upon are very rare; this is one of those instances”

Maisha Lorgat, Chair of the YCA, speaking at the strategy launch.

4. Future planning

The next cohort of the YCA began their term in April 2024. They will continue the work of the YCA in championing youth voice in all aspects of policy and practice in Greater Manchester. They will elect their own Leadership Team in July 2024, who will help guide the work of the panel in their two-year term.

Themes that the group will explore will be drawn from the vision document, as well as other pertinent topics identified by the members. The group will seek to work with external partners such as Our Pass, MBacc, Curriculum for Life, Bee Network and others to continue to work with the YCA on these important topic areas.

In addition, the group will work to strengthen relationships with existing structures, such as the Children's Board, to help elevate the work of the YCA. The group will also continue to engage with key decision makers such as the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Portfolio Lead for Children and Young People.

5. Thanks and further information

We would like to offer a special thank you to all our members from 2022-2024, along with their youth workers and services. In particular, we wish to highlight the incredible work of the Leadership Team members, who have worked diligently throughout their term to ensure youth voice is active and represented in all areas of policy in Greater Manchester.

Also, special thanks to Adrian and Ellie within the GMCA for their continued support to the delivery of this work.

For further information on the YCA visit the [YCA's webpage on the GMCA website.](#)
Or contact the Youth Combined Authority (Youth Focus North West) by emailing youth.gmca@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk or h.mcmullan@youthfocusnw.org.uk.