

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: 30th June 2023

Subject: Greater Manchester's Response to 2022 Big Disability Survey

Report of: Cllr Arooj Shah, Portfolio Lead for Equalities and Communities, and Sara Todd, Portfolio Lead Chief Executive for Equalities and Communities

Purpose of Report

This report presents an overview of the system response to the Big Disability Survey carried out by the GM Disabled People's Panel in the summer of 2022, and to flag key issues emerging from this work so far.

Recommendations:

The GMCA is requested to:

1. Endorse the response to the 2022 Big Disability Survey and the issues which have been identified relating to its delivery.
2. Endorse the importance of achieving a co-ordinated, multi-stakeholder, and effectively resourced GM-wide response aimed at improving the lives of disabled people.
3. Receive a report in October 2023, one year on from the survey publication, to review progress, with input from the Disabled Peoples Panel

Contact Officers

Anne Lythgoe, VCSE Accord Implementation Lead, GMCA
anne.lythgoe@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

Adrian Bates, Head of Equalities Strategy, GMCA
adrian.bates@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

The decision tool fully supports the following decisions: 1. Note the response to the 2022 Big Disability Survey and the issues which have been identified relating to its delivery. 2. Note the importance of achieving a co-ordinated and multi-stakeholder, GM-wide response aimed at improving the lives of disabled people.

Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion	G	This paper describes the response which is taking place across Greater Manchester to the findings and recommendations of the 2022 Big Disability Survey. There is both intersectionality with other protected characteristics, the carers and Personal Assistants of disabled people, and a clear link between socio-economic disadvantage and disability. The response to the survey is primarily focussed on improving public services.
Health	G	The response described in the report includes recommended improvements to physical and mental health services for disabled people. Accessibility of health services is a key issue for disabled people, and this report describes work to improve all aspects of communication, physical accessibility and infrastructure.
Resilience and Adaptation	G	Work to support disabled people to live happier and healthier lives will mean that they are better able to take part in society and better withstand disruption to their lives. Disability hate crime has increased in the last few years, and this work will explore ways to address this.
Housing	G	Many disabled people are at risk of being homeless, and a key aspect of this work involves the response provided by the GM Housing Providers. The provision of appropriate and accessible homes is one of the issues discussed in this report, and the evidence provided by the survey will be used to inform local authority housing planning and management and well as the planned Good Landlord Charter.
Economy	G	It is assumed that having a greater number of disabled people employed as part of the local workforce is positive in terms of economic development.
Mobility and Connectivity	G	The results of the Big Disability Survey will be used in transport planning, including the affordability and accessibility of transport services.
Carbon, Nature and Environment		
Consumption and Production		
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target		This work includes support for disabled people to access the ECO4 housing retrofit programme, which will improve the likelihood of disabled home owners reducing their carbon emissions.

G Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	A Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.	R Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.	RR Negative impacts overall.
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Carbon Assessment

Overall Score		
Buildings	Result	Justification/Mitigation
New Build residential	N/A	
Residential building(s) renovation/maintenance	TBC	
New build non-residential (including public) buildings	N/A	
Transport		
Active travel and public transport	TBC	
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access	N/A	
Access to amenities	N/A	
Vehicle procurement	N/A	
Land Use		
Land use	N/A	

No associated carbon impacts expected.	High standard in terms of practice and awareness on carbon.	Mostly best practice with a good level of awareness on carbon.	Partially meets best practice/ awareness, significant room to improve.	Not best practice and/ or insufficient awareness of carbon impacts.
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Risk Management

This paper describes work to manage risk relating to services for disabled people.

Legal Considerations

As set out in section 149 Equality Act 2010, a public authority (which includes the GMCA within its definition) must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

This legislation is more commonly known as the Public Sector Equality Duty and is informed, amongst other things, in GM, by the survey referred to in this report.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

N/A

Financial Consequences – Capital

N/A

Number of attachments to the report: 2

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

The Big Disability Survey is published at [GM Disabled People's Panel](http://gmdisabledpeoplespanel.com)
(gmdisabledpeoplespanel.com)

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution

No

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

No

GM Transport Committee

N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Introduction

1.1 This report presents an overview of the GM-wide response to the 2022 Big Disability Survey carried out by the GM Disabled People's Panel, and to flag key issues emerging from this work so far.

1.2 In the Summer of 2022, the Greater Manchester Disabled People's Panel carried out a survey of 1,495 disabled people living within Greater Manchester. Findings from this survey show the stark reality of the cumulative impact on the quality of life of disabled people from austerity, the Covid pandemic and cost of living crisis. Results show a worsening of disabled people's lives since the previous survey carried out in 2020, notably in social care, accessible housing and attitudes towards disabled people. The survey also shows disabled people are losing hope; their trust in public agencies to support them is waning.

1.3 The findings of the Survey included:

- Cost of Living - 20% of respondents said they could not afford essential items, with a further 28% saying they could afford essential items but nothing else. This means that almost half of respondents were struggling to afford anything other than the basic things they need to live. The Survey Report shows that disabled people are using food banks at three times the rate of non-disabled people, with 68% of respondents having changed the food they eat to save money. Additionally, 39% of respondents were in debt, and 33% said they could not afford to pay their bills. The cost-of-living crisis is clearly hitting disabled people extremely hard.
- Housing - 43% of respondents said their housing only partially (29%) or did not at all (14%) meet their housing needs, this compares to 37% from the first survey – an increase of 6%. The housing position for disabled people appears to be getting worse, and 64% of respondents said they were worried about their housing situation.
- Travel - Three quarters of respondents felt they could not travel everywhere they wanted to, with reasons including accessibility, cost, COVID and a lack of joined up journeys.
- Social Care - 29% of respondents felt they did not have the right care and support they needed because they could not afford it, and the majority of those employing personal assistants said it was harder to recruit and retain good quality staff.

- Mental health and wellbeing: - The biggest issue cited by respondents as negative influences on their mental health were poverty (66%), with 39% reporting that attitudes towards disabled people had worsened since the pandemic.
- Work and employment: - Half of respondents were in work, and of these, 80% felt they did not get the same career opportunities as non-disabled people. 48% said their pay was not good enough to cover their living expenses.

1.4 Following the survey, the Disabled People's Panel completed a report which made a number of recommendations based on the findings. The full report can be viewed at <https://gmdisabledpeoplespanel.com/> and contains 5 recommendations for immediate action to improve the lives of disabled people:

- An ask for the GMCA, Integrated Care Partnership and Local Authorities to look at re-profiling their 'universal' budgets to enable targeted support for disabled people.
- Advice and advocacy for disabled people should be coordinated across GM to address low capacity and inconsistency, waiting times and the cumulative worsening of disabled people's living conditions.
- Social care should be made free at the point of delivery, to uphold disabled people's right to a full and independent life.
- Disabled People's Organisations and the Panel should be funded to develop disability equity training for public sector staff, and this should be approved for roll out in local and city region wide institutions.
- GMCA and the ten local authorities should consider how to ensure the voice of the GM Disabled Peoples Panel is heard at the highest levels. Support should also be given for the Panel to engage with the private sector.

1.5 The findings of the survey were further unpacked across, and recommendations made against, 9 thematic areas:

- Money, Benefits and Energy Costs,
- Social Care and Personal Assistance,
- Housing and Neighbourhood,
- Accessibility, Transport and Lifestyle,
- Mental Health and Wellbeing,
- Health Services,
- Problem Solving and Support,
- Education,
- Employment.

1.6 The report also makes structural recommendations to the public sector, including:

- Adoption of a rights-based approach in work to support disabled people,
- Adoption of cumulative impact assessments, which include poverty alongside community of identity,
- Improved mechanisms for listening to the voice of disabled people in service planning,
- Greater representation of disabled people in democracy and decision-making.

1.7 It should be noted that whilst this is one of the largest surveys of disabled people in the country, there are some limitations to its application. Whilst nearly 1500 disabled people took part in the survey, each respondent did not have to answer all of the questions within the survey and therefore the sample size for each question varies. Around one third of respondents did not indicate where they lived. The survey collected demographic information, which showed that more women than men responded to the survey and that there was an underrepresentation of ethnic minorities within the sample as only 7% of respondents identified their ethnic group as being other than white. There are probably several reasons for this response, including the reach of the survey, what is known about gender and disability, and the strong sense of stigma attached to disability within some communities. Therefore, the data cannot be broken down by local authority because sample sizes become too small to make meaningful assumptions, although the majority of the themes that the survey explores should be considered generic or 'national' issues (e.g benefits, cost-of-living, employment) and therefore the findings are likely to be consistent across all parts of Greater Manchester.

2. Coordinating the Response

2.1 The Report of the Big Disability Survey has been shared widely with stakeholders across the disability, VCSE and public sectors. Following a discussion at the Tackling Inequalities Board in November 2022, it was proposed that there will be a light touch arrangement that maps the responses across the Public Sector to the report and provide feedback to the Disabled People's Panel enabling further engagement on the details of the response. The response will aim to act on the findings and recommendations of the Big Disability Survey report to improve public services and the lives of disabled people.

2.2 Within the proposed coordination arrangements for the Greater Manchester response, the activities are embedded within the existing system of working and business as usual, with the only new feature being a small, virtual task and finish group made up of officers from across the public sector system and the GM Coalition of Disabled People (in their role

as facilitators to the GM Disabled People's Panel). It is to be emphasised that the Greater Manchester response will focus on 'business as usual' being carried out differently and better, as opposed to running a separate and additional programme of work.

2.3 An existing partnership group will be responsible for each of the areas of work in the response, with a named Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) connected with each area. These partnerships will review relevant work that is already happening in relation to the findings and recommendations from the Big Disability Survey, identify gaps between existing activities, services and programmes, and agree where existing work could be developed to better address issues and barriers faced by disabled people or where new activities need to be instigated. The SRO will join the Task and Finish Steering Group to coordinate activities between thematic areas.

2.4 Within this work and structure, the GM Disabled People's Panel will take a check and challenge role, acting as a critical friend to the GM system. Additionally, it will provide the oversight and accountability for the work on behalf of disabled people living in Greater Manchester as it continues to engage with the response. To maintain this engagement and accountability, the Panel have scheduled a programme of thematic meetings in which constructive challenge on each of the key areas will be hosted in turn. Within these, the relevant SRO and other officers will be invited to present on the work they are doing, and to discuss any issues that may be arising. Such thematic meetings may also provide an opportunity to identify areas of joint action, where it would be helpful for the Panel and public agencies to work together. For 2023/24, the Panel has prioritised:

- Money, Benefits, and Energy Costs.
- Housing and Neighbourhoods
- Accessibility, Transport, and Lifestyle

2.5 The survey data collected by the Disabled People Panel has been integral to response coordination and service planning, allowing actions to be arranged by theme and a strong evidence base to provide an accurate understanding of need. Where survey data does not match up to that collected through the service, further engagement may be needed to build that reflective baseline.

3. System Response

3.1 This work has shown the importance of achieving a co-ordinated, multi-stakeholder, and effectively resourced GM-wide response aimed at improving the lives of disabled people. Furthermore, that it will be important that a commitment to act is embedded within

individual organisations' corporate strategies and equalities objectives (under the Public Sector Equality Duty). A principles-based approach based in the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) might include commitments to:

- eliminate disability discrimination,
- enable disabled people to live independently in the community,
- ensure an inclusive education system,
- ensure disabled people are protected from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse.

3.2 For the GM response to the Big Disability Survey, actions can be summarised across 2 areas: the GM System response, as summarised in **Annex 1**, and the individual local responses at a district level, as summarised in **Annex 2**.

3.3 Examples of the work described in Annex 1 include:

- Poverty / Public Services: Exploration of support for disabled people facing the spiralling cost of energy, for example to power life support machines in the home. Strategic work with big utility providers led by the Mayor of Greater Manchester and the Cost-of-Living Response Group, consideration of a cash first approach as part of wider work to reduce poverty, the sharing of good practice, consideration of a trial social energy tariff, and work to secure additional support from GM Welfare and Advice sector.
- Health and Care: Exploration of ideas around social care charging, hospital discharge and models of engagement, support and coproduction. Support to the establishment of co-ops for disabled people employing Personal Assistants.
- Housing and Planning: Work on referral routes for disabled people to maximise take up of ECO grants for retrofit by disabled homeowners, lobbying for a ban on evictions and linking the Survey findings with work on the Good Landlord Charter.
- Transport: Discussions on improvements to ring and ride services, exploring application and entitlement processes to concessions for those with severe autism, and conversations on how lift faults can be incorporated into online journey planning software.
- Work and Skills: promotion of Access to Work scheme, promotion of support for inclusive business ownership models within Adult Social Care as part of the GM Inclusive Ownership Platform, ongoing data analysis.

- Strategic work to Tackling Inequality: exploring the best ways for Disabled People's Organisations to engage in each district, review of how GM Equality Panels can inform work across the Integrated Care System, exploring the roll out of Social Model training for GMCA and local authority staff, rolling out an awareness campaign on how to make complaints, report crime and blow the whistle on poor employment practice.
- Crime and Community Safety: greater engagement between the Police and Crime team and the Disabled People's Panel on disability hate crime and reporting.

3.4 The Disabled People's Panel has also reported that the Survey has been used by Disabled People's Organisations to work with local and GM partners to make a number of important changes that will benefit disabled people in GM. These include:

- Panel representatives have discussed the Survey results with Ofgem, Energy suppliers, and national Government, including the Minister for Disabled People.
- The Panel submitted its findings from the Survey to the inquiry of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Poverty into the (in)adequacy of the social security in the UK.
- National and local broadcast media has been undertaken, pointing out current cost-of-living mitigation does not go far and to highlight the links to austerity.
- The Panel has met with the Mayor of Greater Manchester and Debbie Abrahams MP to discuss welfare benefits for disabled people, presenting a number of personal experiences.
- The Panel has been working with colleagues from the CA around making polling stations accessible and to promote the need for Voter ID at the recent local elections.
- An Early Day Motion on the GM Disability Survey was tabled in the House of Commons.
- The Panel submitted its Survey findings to the of UNCESCR (United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) civil society report for England and Wales and presented the findings at the national launch of the report.
- Disability Rights UK has said that the GMDPP research has been very useful at national level and colleagues at Disability Rights UK have used the findings to underline the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on Disabled people.

Further information will be included with the Annual Report of the Disabled People's Panel which will be presented to the Combined Authority at its meeting in July.

4. Issues arising from the response.

4.1 However, there are a large number of issues which have been identified from work to deliver the response which is happening across GM to the Big Disability Survey. These can be grouped around:

- Powers to act.
- Capacity to act.

4.2 **Powers to act:** As described in Annexes 1 and 2, there are a range of findings and recommendations from the Big Disability Survey which are outside of the powers of GM public sector partners, and therefore it is very difficult to make positive progress on these issues. These include the welfare benefits system, setting of public budgets and delivery frameworks for health and care, for example. It will be important that GMCA and its partners continue to work closely with the Disabled People's Panel to find effective ways to influence Government towards making changes that benefit the lives of disabled people.

4.3 In November 2022 the GM Mayor and Cllr Chadderton wrote to the Minister for Disabled People highlighting the findings of the Survey, asking the Government to take them into consideration when finalising the mid-term Budget and asking the government to also consider the cumulative impact on disabled people of further cuts to services during a cost-of-living crisis. This letter received an encouraging response from the Minister, indicating his appreciation of the Survey and commitment to supporting disabled people in the UK through creating more opportunities, protecting their rights and ensuring they fully benefit from, and can contribute to, every aspect of our society. However, it will be critically important that GM continues to work closely with government departments and select committees, providing evidence and insight from disabled people, examples of successful practice and highlighting the pivotal drivers of change.

4.4 **Capacity to act:** There are also numerous local challenges and barriers that exist within work to respond to the findings and recommendations within the Survey. Firstly, the capacity of the GM Disabled People's Panel and wider Disabled People's Organisations to engage across the system is limited, presenting a significant challenge to their inclusion within conversations and decision making, as well as their

ability to create change. It should be noted that the lack of capacity to engage is generally down to a lack of funding coming into these organisations and the general scarcity of funding for VCSE activities that focus on equalities. It is clear from the work thus far across the districts of GM (Annex 2) that where there is a strong local Disabled People's Organisation with whom the local authority is collaborating, the greater the progress that is being made.

4.5 Secondly, across the public sector, a challenge arises from a lack of policy capacity relating to key disabled people's issues. This takes the form of both officer time and knowledge, most acutely and notable around the Social Model, which encourages service planning that removes or reduces barriers faced by disabled people (rather than focusses on an individual's disability or condition). There is also a lack of capacity across individual public sector organisations to engage routinely with disabled people as part of business as usual. Resources and capacity to engage would enable better dialogue aimed at ensuring that services are meeting the needs of disabled people at this time.

4.6 Finally, the context and actions that frame this work are incredibly complex, creating difficulty in addressing the barriers faced by disabled people as so many are outside of the control of the GM system, and the resources within the system that are needed to make change are incredibly stretched.

4.7 It will be important that GM aligns its local responses to maximise impact and reduce the likelihood of a 'postcode lottery' for disabled people around key issues such as social care, housing and responses to the cost-of-living crisis, for example. Collaborative partnerships such as the GM Cost of Living Response Group, GM Housing Providers' Partnership, Directors of Adult Social Services and GM Tackling Inequalities Board, will all play a crucial role in achieving a consistent and far-reaching response.

4.8 GMCA will explore how it might use the dashboard of measures around the Greater Manchester Strategy (GMS), together with recent census data, to track progress against a range of relevant GMS indicators. It will also be important that individual districts and partner organisations continue to track the progress that they are seeing through their work so that this can be shared in future update reports as well as being used to underpin future conversations with disabled people in GM.

5. Next Steps

5.1 It is proposed that a progress report on the series of actions identified within this report and its annexes will be brought to the Combined Authority in the autumn of 2023, marking a year since the publication of the survey.

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