

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: 24 November 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 progress made towards a whole-system response to the Big Disability Survey carried out by the GM Disabled People's Panel in the summer of 2022. This update is one year on from the survey publication and describes progress made as well as outlining key issues emerging from this work so far.

Recommendations:

The GMCA is requested to:

1. Note progress made with the response to the 2022 Big Disability Survey and the issues which have been identified relating to its delivery.
2. Actively endorse the importance of its constituent organisations achieving a co-ordinated, multi-stakeholder, and effectively resourced GM-wide response, aimed at improving the lives of disabled people.

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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.

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: 1

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny

Committee:

N/A

Background papers:

The Big Disability Survey is published at [GM Disabled People's Panel \(gmdisabledpeoplespanel.com\)](http://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 progress made towards a whole-system response to the Big Disability Survey carried out by the Greater Manchester Disabled People's Panel in the summer of 2022. This update is one year on from the survey publication and describes progress made as well as outlining 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 are published at the [Panel's website](#) and 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. The results showed 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's most harrowing insight showed disabled people losing hope and their trust in public agencies to support them waning.

2. System Response to the Survey

2.1 In June 2023, the Combined Authority considered a report which provided an overview of the system response to the findings of the Big Disability Survey. The importance of achieving a co-ordinated, multi-stakeholder, and effectively resourced GM-wide response, aimed at improving the lives of disabled people, was noted and endorsed. It was further agreed that a report will be submitted to the GMCA in the autumn of 2023, one year on from the survey publication, to review progress, with input from the Disabled Peoples Panel. The GMCA also recorded its thanks to the Disabled People's Panel for undertaking the survey and have invited members of the Disabled People's panel to attend this Combined Authority meeting.

2.2 For the GM response to the Big Disability Survey, actions can be summarised across two areas: the GM System response, as summarised below, supplemented by the individual locality responses, as summarised in **Annex 1**. Examples of activity in response to specific recommendations within the survey across the GM system include:

- Transport: Ring and Ride service has moved in-house to TfGM and currently reviewing the processes and identifying improvements; under the Bee Network, all buses will be fitted with accessibility ramps and new buses will include hearing loops, audio-visual announcements and two wheelchair spaces and reviewing the application process for English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS).
- Work and Skills: activities include promotion of the Access to Work Scheme, ongoing work to the Health Adjustment Passport, and widening accessibility of the Working Well: Work and Health Programme launched in September 2023 jointly between GMCA, DWP and NHS Greater Manchester. GMCA aims to address the employment rate to increase for all residents and to narrow the employment rate gap experienced by a number of demographic groups which includes disability.
- Poverty and Public Services: A letter has been sent to residents identified as clinically vulnerable and uses medical devices to encourage them to apply for the Priority Service Register; the GM Text line Relay Service has been extended for 12 months to allow disabled people to contact local community support hubs; sharing of good practice 'a cash first approach' encourage localities to adopt similar practices and continuation of strategic work with big utility providers led by the Mayor of Greater Manchester and the Cost-of-Living Response Group.
- Advice and Welfare: Household Support Fund (Round 4) allows Local Authorities to spend some of their budget on Welfare Advice and mapping exercise is underway on GM Advice and Welfare Services to help identify gaps to provision of service and make improvements.
- Health and Care: A longer term consideration on sustainability and development, multiple workstreams are regular monitoring and reporting on performance on discharge, collaborated with system partners and communities to codesign a 'Fairer Health for All Framework'. The Disabled People's Panel is currently discussing a closer working relationship with NHS Greater Manchester.

- Mental Health Services: Addressing issues of negative language and terminology to improve service outcomes, contracted 'Gaddum' to support individual's with lived or living experience to participate in all service and transformation developments.
- Housing and Planning: The M4(2) Accessible Homes standard has been included in the Places for Everyone Joint Plan and coming to the final stages of the public examination, scope between systems partners a GM Healthy Homes framework to ensure consistency in home enhancements across the 10 localities with the ambition to align to the Disabled Facilities Grant criteria, Consultation on a draft Good Landlord Charter to be held in autumn 2023.
- Crime and Community: GM Partnership structured expecting a refresh in Autumn 2023 which includes GM Plan to Tackle Hate Crime and further awareness campaign in support of Hate Crime Week in October 2023.
- Strategic work to Tackling Inequality: Identify and implement measures to improve the accessibility of polling stations for disabled voters and to raise awareness about the different options for voting and the assistance available with further development for the Mayoral Election in May 2024. Ongoing work on Voter ID requirement will continue to improve accessibility.

2.3 The Disabled People's Panel has proactively contributed to many of the initiatives above, often prompted through their thematic deep dive sessions, where policy leads have engaged openly to explore the challenges and solutions. This strengthens the voice of disabled people in policy making, utilising the insight provided by the panel member organisations, and creating further opportunities to work collaboratively with Disabled Peoples Organisations across the city-region and in localities. GMCA is hugely thankful for the commitment of Panel members, and the facilitation support provided by the Greater Manchester Coalition for Disabled People.

3. Common Themes arising from this work

3.1 In addressing the needs and rights of disabled people, it is critical to understand the interconnected nature of the various themes and sectors including transport,

work and skills, housing and more. Furthermore, and as described in the work of the Independent Inequalities Commission, there is cumulative impact across disability and other identity groups, such as race and ethnicity, age, sex and gender, as well as socio-economic situation. The response needs to address the intersection of the themes and situation and respond to their combined effort on disabled people.

3.2 Each policy area has made efforts to focus on their unique expertise to enhance provisions for disabled people. For example, the transport sector has focused on making commutes to work or health / care more accessible. However, there is an increasing recognition that these policy areas cannot operate in isolation. The effectiveness of initiatives in terms of their benefit to disabled people in one sector can significantly influence and be influenced by the progress in another. This interconnectedness underscores the need for these policy areas to not only refine their individual strategies but also collaborate for a comprehensive and inclusive approach.

3.3 GMCA has brought together relevant policy leads from across GM public bodies, including health, housing and transport, to lead organisational and sector approaches, but also strengthen cross-sector activity. By reporting progress to each other, the group enables opportunities and challenges to be raised, connections to be made and collaboration to be fostered, with the primary focus on having positive impacts on disabled people, rather than driven by the needs of public services. The following key linkages have been identified through this work:

- Accessibility and Work: The accessibility of public transport has a direct impact on employment opportunities for disabled people. By not addressing the implications, inaccessible transport limits choices for work location, roles, affecting the ability to gain skills and employment. The Disabled People's Panel and GMCA officers are working closely with Transport for Greater Manchester to explore how planning of the Bee Network can address this issue.
- Support Services and Economical Equality: Lack of tailored support services can hinder the economic progression of disabled people. By not addressing the implications, disabled people may face challenges in securing well-paying

jobs which in turn extend economic disparities. GMCA has created a new officer role focused on Inclusive Employment, who is working closely with disabled people's organisations to maximise opportunities to provide support for disabled people in Greater Manchester.

- Lived Experience & Representation and Policy: Inadequate representation can lead to policies that overlook or misunderstand the specific needs of disabled people. This in turn impact the quality and relevance of policies. This issue is relevant across all policy areas as well as at a local and GM footprint. The GM Disabled People Panel works strategically at a GM footprint with the Combined Authority and GM partners, and local arrangements exist with disabled people's organisations in individual districts. However, as noted in section 4 below, the current capacity of these organisations to engage across the system is limited. Thematic engagement structures such as the Disability Design Reference Group convened by Breakthrough UK for Transport for Greater Manchester provide a valuable contribution towards service design.
- Mental Health Services and Cost of Living: The impact of the cost-of-living crisis and provision of services on disabled people could lead to negative impact on general health. By connecting the following areas, this could avoid higher admissions into the health service. This linkage is being made through the GM Cost of Living Response Group.
- Housing and Health Services: The quality of housing could directly impact an individual health. By not addressing collectively, issues raised within housing could give further lasting damage to people's health. Development of initiatives such as the Good Landlord Charter have put individuals' health front and centre.
- Planning and Health: the development of Local Plans and determination of planning applications can have a dramatic impact on the lives of disabled (and other) people, and ongoing joint discussions with Health and Care colleagues in the local planning process will be vital, including the use of population health powers in the planning system.

4. Challenges and Issues arising from the response

4.1 As noted in the report to GMCA in June 2023, 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:** 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.

4.3 The Mayor and Portfolio Leader have written to the Minister for Disabled People and Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on several occasions to highlight the disproportionate impact of government-led initiatives on disabled people.

4.4 Furthermore, [a recent report](#) submitted by The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to the United Nations (UN), following research into the implementation of recommendations made by the UN relating to the rights of disabled people in the UK, has shown similar findings to our GM Big Disability Survey. The report warns of the consequences of continuing inaction from governments in the UK in addressing problems faced by disabled people. It states that many disabled people continue to face discrimination, and the situation continues to worsen, particularly in light of current cost-of-living pressures.

4.5 In Greater Manchester, as a result of ongoing work following the Big Disability Survey, some progress is being made where this is within our power, around cumulative impact assessments (including the GMCA Co-benefits Decision Tool), prioritisation of cost-of-living support for disabled people by local authorities, accessible communication, and engagement of disabled people in service planning and design. However, the majority of the UN recommendations to which the EHRC was responding relate to issues in Government control, such as welfare benefits, legislation, employment policy, and the public budgets available for the support of disabled people. These continue to be major issues in the lives of disabled people.

4.6 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 VCFSE activities that focus on equalities. It is clear from the work thus far across the districts of the city-region (Annex 1) 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.

4.7 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. There is an opportunity for an enhanced role for local authority Equalities Officers to support policy development across a range of thematic areas.

4.8 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. GMCA will 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 consistent and genuine engagement with disabled people.

5. Next Steps

5.1 GMCA and the wider sector will continue to work collaboratively with the Disabled Peoples Panel to improve the lives of Disabled People. However, as the Independent Inequalities Commission urged when they revisited one-year on from their report, Greater Manchester needs to **further and faster, deeper and wider in tackling inequalities**. For GMCA and the wider system to achieve equitable outcomes for disabled people, overcoming the barriers set out above, will require strong leadership, with accountability to disabled people, commitment of resources for targeted interventions, informed by improved data and resident insight, and delivered by an inclusive workforce.