

OLDER PEOPLE'S EQUALITY PANEL

**DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY
FOR GREATER MANCHESTER**

ANNUAL REPORT

2023 - 2024

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1. Co-chair's Introduction

Over the last 12 months the Greater Manchester Older People's Equality Panel has continued to be involved in the work being done to transform how services work across Greater Manchester. It contributed to the review of the GM Age Friendly Strategy and in February I was proud to attend the GMCA full committee to recommend the updated version.

As our older population grows and becomes more diverse, it is essential that this strategy addresses ageing in a complete way. The new strategy recognises that the way we live in later life is changing and has put the many voices of older people at its heart.

We are keen to focus on the big issues older people are facing and will do this by collaborating with existing networks at neighbourhood, borough and GM level; listening and learning from people who feel at risk of being left behind and attempting to influence how change happens.

In October we partnered with the GM Older People's Network to organise an event "Living it up in Later Life". It was an opportunity for older people from across Greater Manchester to come together in person and talk about what they had achieved, what they wanted to achieve, what challenges existed and what was needed to overcome barriers.

We will be informed by the priorities identified and attempt to reflect the diverse lives, experiences, and needs of older people.

Greater Manchester already leads the way on age-friendly initiatives. Let's continue working together to make our city-region a great place for everyone to grow older.

Nakib Narat (Co-chair)

2. Membership and objectives

The Panel is comprised of older people (aged 50 and over) and organisational representatives who have an interest in or focus on working with older people. The membership includes people from across Greater Manchester and aims to be a representative voice for older people in the city region.

Over this year membership has solidified and currently stands at 18 members representing 9 of the 10 boroughs.

The current members are:

Jan Kitching (Stockport) Co-Chair	Lucette Tucker (Bury)
Nakib Narat (Manchester) Co- Chair	Damy Patel (Tameside)
Erica Woods (Salford)	Steve Sherry (Bolton)
Samantha Days (Manchester)	Amy Muthra Shah (Manchester)
Dorretta Maynard (Trafford)	Gita Conn (Manchester)
Elizabeth Lynskey (Rochdale)	Joy Watson (Salford)
Jackie Corr (Manchester)	John Armstrong (Manchester)
Yuen Megson (Stockport)	Bernadette Ashcroft (Bury)
Hazel Roy (Manchester)	Anna Hughes (Oldham)

The panel will continue to have two co-chairs and will elect new co-chairs in July.

The Equality Panels have been established to advise, support and challenge Greater Manchester's political leaders and policy makers to tackle the discrimination and disadvantage that cause injustice and inequality in society, and champion Greater Manchester as an inclusive city-region.

The Older People's Equality Panel do this by working together with the GMCA and partners to:

- Ensure that Greater Manchester's political leaders and public bodies are more informed about how their decision making impacts older people in different communities or circumstances, allowing for more effective policy and services.
- Build positive relationships with communities and neighbourhood groups in each borough to identify strengths, listen to older people and share key messages.
- Make key contributions to the development of GM wide policies, programmes and services so that they can work successfully for older people within different communities.

Objectives:

- To identify and consider the diverse issues of concern to older people within Greater Manchester.
- To engage with Greater Manchester strategies, so that older people can influence policies that support the creation of age-friendly neighbourhoods.
- To provide the opportunity for older people to promote and share a positive perspective on ageing in Greater Manchester.

3. Addressing priorities

The panel agreed the existing three priorities should continue to be the main focus

- Financial Hardship for Older People
- Care settings
- Digitalisation

The three subgroups will continue, building on the work completed over the previous 12 months.

Care settings

There is a recognition that this theme is wide ranging and it difficult to prioritise. Provision and quality of care continues to be varied across the city region.

Input to the GM Adult Social Care Transformation process continues with the panel attending two governance groups: Enhanced Health at Home/ Proactive Care and Carers Programme Delivery.

The subgroup are liaising with the programme lead for Urgent and Emergency Care – aiming to influence how the hospital discharge experience can be improved for older people. This work will be part of the panel's collaboration work with the GMOPN Health & Social Care Working Group.

Over the previous year the most common issue discussed in meetings, communities etc. was access to a GP or dentist. In August there was an opportunity for panel members to hear how the situation might be improved when Rob Bellingham (ICP lead on Primary Care) presented ICP's blueprint for their Primary Care plan for the next 5 years. This will

be an ongoing dialogue with the panel hoping to see positive changes and a continuing flexible approach.

Digital participation

The move to create a digital city region is key to the Greater Manchester Strategy and, key to achieving this, is ensuring that action is taken to minimise impact on groups at risk of exclusion and isolation.

Working with GM Ageing Hub and GM Digital, the panel recruited a test team to conduct an age friendly audit of the websites of each borough. The subsequent report (available [here](#)) made a series of recommendations

- Recognition of the need not to discourage older people who want to participate.
- Recognition that some people do not want to participate and will require non-digital means of access services and information easily.
- Information needs to be concise and a balance struck between quantity and clarity.
- More engagement with user groups – especially if changes are to be made eg use a greater use of AI.

The response from the GM Digital locality leads was positive and it is hoped there can be a continued dialogue with more boroughs. Currently 3 boroughs are in discussion.

The panel will seek to promote greater awareness of the digital switchover and focus on the impact of how digital solutions intended to reduce barriers can introduce more barriers – an obvious example being the proliferation of apps needed to access primary and secondary care.

Financial Hardship and its impact on Older People.

The panel recognises that financial hardship and deprivation is the common thread though all the panels and any tackling inequality initiatives.

The subgroup has highlighted the extreme pressure on advice services which is common across all boroughs. It welcomed the commitment to develop services as part of the Live Well initiative and to attempt to create a less hostile environment.

The panel supports the work of the Financial Hardship and Older People Steering Group.

Other issues which have been a focus for the subgroup are older people in the work place and an increasing housing crisis.

Other themes which need to be addressed

The GMOPN event “Living it up in Later Life highlighted some other issues for the panel to consider

Challenging ageism in a positive way:

“As a network we are committed to being Age-Proud and positive about ageing. Our members recognise what a good later life looks like for them and the potential challenges. We will continue to find and create opportunities to show that a fulfilling later life is a realistic expectation that we should all share. We know this looks different for different people and will share diverse perspectives in relatable ways.”

We will provide and share opportunities for people to become involved in engaging and creative activities that challenge stereotypical ideas about “older people’s activities”.

We will look for opportunities to bring older and younger people together, where we can learn from each other and explore issues from different points of view.

Creating a level playing field across the city region:

The issue of access to physical activity for older people needs to be addressed. Free or subsidised access to leisure centres is available in some boroughs. Some level of access should be available across all boroughs.

4. Collaborations

The panel has work alongside the Greater Manchester Older People’s Network (GMOPN) which brings together over 450 members to campaign for better outcomes for older residents.

Four panel members are also members of the GMOPN steering group and report back to the panel as required. Similarly, there is a regular update from the panel to the steering group.

This allows both bodies to work effectively together and avoid duplication.

We have worked with GM Ageing Hub in a range of ways and to support the work being done to update the GM Age Friendly Strategy.

All panel members representing a particular borough are encouraged to develop a good working relationship with the relevant locality lead for ageing.

Elizabeth Lynskey is a member of the Financial Hardship and Older People Steering Group,

Sam Days is the panel rep on the GM=EqAI working group

Gita Conn is the panel rep on the GM Hate Crime Working Group.

The panel has been involved in a series of initiatives, studies and consultations with University of Manchester, Easology, GM Integrated Care Partnership, TfGM, Manchester Metropolitan University & GMCVO, ProAge, Ageing Better, Dementia United, Macmillan & GM Healthwatch.

5. Challenges

The panel currently has 18 members and each member is supported to ensure that they are able to continue and feel confident to contribute to the panel and present as a panel member within their own networks. All of the panel members' work is voluntary and can sometimes prove difficult. Many panel members are already involved in other voluntary work which is also time consuming. Some members juggle their time with a paid job.

All of this can be a challenge and panel members are encouraged to speak to the facilitator about any issues of time commitment or any other difficulty.

Over the lifetime of the panel several members have had to withdraw due to a change in circumstances. This can require fresh recruitment if it leaves one borough without a representative.

Macc has a policy on participation and reward – how the work contributed by people involved in co-production work, focus groups, research studies and advisory panels can be valued in an appropriate way. Panel members are able to participate in a range of projects run by partners who are encouraged to reimburse appropriately.

6. Support and Training

Macc is the facilitating organisation for the panel. John Mulvenna is the panel facilitator and is part of a team of 5 people.

All panel members are offered one to one support as required. This is an opportunity to discuss any issues or identify a training need.

Subgroup meetings are bi-monthly, though sometimes they can be more frequent.

Panel meetings are bi-monthly; the theme of the meeting is rotated to match the work of each subgroup unless there is a specific issue to be addressed.

7. Forward planning

7.1. Action plan 2024 – 2025

The panel will be meeting in July to agree an action plan for the next 12 months.

7.2. Chairs and recruitment

Election of the co-chairs will take place in July 24 – at this time there will also be a review of membership and possible further recruitment.

7.3. Engage at local levels – build new networks.

The panel will support GMOPN to link in with existing older people's networks and appropriate community group. Supported by Macc, the panel will continue to conduct outreach work and identify marginalised groups to engage with across the city region, to ensure their overall voice is representative, inclusive and include the perspectives of those who are marginalised.

Building good working relationships with community groups, GMCA partners, Locality Leads and local older people's networks is a key part of the panel's work. Panel members are supported to attend appropriate events and build on their existing networks.

7.4. Collaborating with other panels

The Panel will seek opportunities to work with the other GM equality panels.

7.5. Events

The panel and the network are planning an event for the autumn during Good Employment Week – looking at how the workplace can be made more age inclusive and how flexible working is changing.

If you want to find out more or speak to someone about the panel on any issue please contact John Mulvenna.

John Mulvenna

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