



Greater Manchester Equality Alliance

GM Equality Alliance Evaluation Report

October 2022 – December 2023

Rory Campbell
March 2024

Hosted by **GMCVO**

St Thomas Centre
Ardwick Green North
Manchester M12 6FZ
www.gmcvo.org.uk/GMEqAl

 0161 277 1000
 gmcvo@gmcvo.org.uk
 @gmcvo

Contents

Contents	2
Message from the Chair	3
About GM=EqAI	4
VCSE Accord	6
GM=EqAI Activity October 2022 - December 2023	7
Internal developments	7
Inclusive Language Subgroup	7
Strategic Engagement and Networking	8
Discussions and Consultations.....	9
Age Equality.....	9
Criminal Justice	9
Digital.....	10
Disability	10
Education.....	11
Environment.....	11
Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT+) Communities	11
Health	12
Lived Experience	13
Operational	13
Race Equality.....	14
Transport	14
Women and Girls	14
Challenges	15
Next steps	15
Reflections from members	16
Project Officer’s Closing Message	17
GM=EqAI Working Group Members	18

Message from the Chair

“thank you for your time, your commitment, your expertise and your solidarity: we do better together”

- Jules Palfreyman, Chair



We last did one of these towards the end of 2022. Since then, the global Covid pandemic officially ended, the world endured the hottest year on record (again) and the Beatles released their last single (probably). Here in the UK, we crowned a new monarch and in stark contrast to the previous year, we managed to make it through the whole of 2023 on just one Prime Minister, although former PM Boris Johnson did resign his seat, triggering a by-election. Speaking of which, 2024 looks like an election year. In fact, 2024 looks like **the** election year, with national elections in 64 countries scheduled this year sending about 49% of the world's population to the polls this year. Elections in Taiwan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Syria, Ukraine and Russia, not to mention the European Union and the United States will shape the geopolitical landscape for years to come. Here in the UK, there's a real possibility of change in government and closer to home, GM mayoral elections could provide an important opportunity to gain new commitments and consolidate existing work on improving equality and equity across Greater Manchester.

GM=EqAI has already contributed to conversations around mayoral manifestos and I've no doubt we will take a keen interest, not just in what commitments are made during campaigns, but in what gets delivered once the votes are cast.

Once again, it has been a pleasure and a privilege to serve alongside such a diverse group of highly engaged, clever, decent, well-connected people. From those who have been with us from the start to those who joined us in the last year and those who will join us in 2024 - thank you for your time, your commitment, your expertise and your solidarity: we do better together.

Jules Palfreyman

About GM=EqAI

The Greater Manchester Equality Alliance (GM=EqAI) was launched in September 2020 as a successor to the smaller Greater Manchester Inclusion and Wellbeing Partnership (IWP). The Covid-19 pandemic had exposed the need for a robust pan-equalities forum to support decision makers and strengthen the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE)* equalities sector.

* When we talk about the VCSE sector in Greater Manchester, we mean voluntary organisations, community groups, the community work of faith groups, and those social enterprises where profits will be reinvested in their social purpose

Working in alliance with other VCSE, public and private sector individuals and organisations, GM=EqAI serves to connect communities to policy makers, and vice versa, to assist with strategic equality and diversity work in Greater Manchester (GM). GM=EqAI takes an intersectional approach, recognising that each individual experiences marginalisation in unique ways due to how multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage compound exclusion. By bringing together a diverse range of voices in a pan-equalities space, GM=EqAI channels multiple perspectives to develop solutions through dialogue.

The GM=EqAI Working Group comprises of 30+ VCSE equalities experts drawn from a wide range of communities of experience and identity across GM (see [Who We Are](#)). They are a diverse mix of grass roots community organisers and voluntary sector strategic operators who volunteer time each month to influencing policy at a GM level.

An elected chair (Jules Palfreyman) and small Steering Group of 7-10 members provide an executive function alongside a small staff team based at GMCVO. We are funded through the GM VSCE Accord, a joint project of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care (GM ICP), and the Greater Manchester VCSE Leadership Group.

The fortnightly GM=EqAI e-bulletin is aimed at anyone working in equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in GM. It shares local as well as national reports, resources and opportunities. If you would like to suggest something to include in the e-bulletin please send an email to equalityalliance@gmcvo.org.uk.



[Register to receive our eBulletin](#)



[Follow us on LinkedIn](#)

Our Aims

To ensure equality, diversity and inclusion are at the forefront of decision making at the highest levels in all governance structures across the Greater Manchester sub-region.

To ensure transformational change in the way that issues are considered, information collected and acted upon, and to be led by the expertise coming from communities and grassroots organisations.



Our Objectives

To work alongside Accord partners to deliver against our commitments in the Accord agreement, through co-delivery of the Accord Implementation Plan.

To contribute to policy debates, influence strategies and advise stakeholders across sectors, drawing on our collective pan-equalities expertise and direct links to communities experiencing inequality.

To complement and support the work of the GM Equality Panels, and other equalities leads and initiatives across the sub-region, by sharing information, identifying intersections and providing space for collaboration.

To flag up issues and campaign for concrete actions to address the root causes of structural inequality in the city-region.

To push for measures that will ensure leadership better reflects the diversity of the GM population in all sectors.

To encourage better data collection and monitoring of the changing demographics of the sub-region to inform policy making.

To facilitate greater collaboration between GM commissioning structures and the communities they exist to serve, underpinned by the recommendations set out in the [VCSE Commissioning Framework](#).

VCSE Accord

The GM VCSE Accord is a three-way collaboration agreement between the GMCA and the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership and the GM VCSE Sector represented by the GM VCSE Leadership Group, based in a relationship of mutual trust, working together, and sharing responsibility.

GM=EqAI is a key delivery partner in the Accord, which was signed in October 2021 and has been adopted by all ten GM local authorities. We have the following objectives under the Accord Implementation Plan, which started in April 2022.

Our Objectives under the Accord Implementation Plan

7.1 Equalities infrastructure

Working with Local Infrastructure Organisations to create spaces, networks and opportunities for VCSE organisations to engage with GM partners on strategy development.

7.2 Health and equalities

Supporting VCSE equalities sector engagement in NHS GM Integrated Care.

7.3 Intelligence and Insight

Gather intelligence and insight from the sector to produce helpful tools and guidance for Accord partners.

Our progress towards these objectives is detailed in this report. The Accord Implementation Plan requires its cross-sector stakeholders to connect to deliver the Accord across GM, whilst retaining their own identity and work streams. Although some of the work of GM=EqAI is informed by the Accord, we are free to develop other priorities and areas of work away from the Accord agenda and to secure funding to do this.

GM=EqAI Activity

October 2022 - December 2023

The following section summarises GM=EqAI activity from October 2022 to December 2023. The reporting period is longer than usual to align it with the calendar year going forward.

Internal developments

GM=EqAI welcomed a new Project Officer, Rory Campbell, who took over from Hannah Berry in August 2023.

A membership review began in September 2023 in preparation for an upcoming recruitment round in early 2024. The membership review analysed the attendance of Working Group and Steering Group members and the current mix of community and locality representation. This will allow for informed and targeted recruitment in early 2024 to ensure an active and diverse membership.

From October to December 2023, key documents were reviewed and improved. This included the Membership Pack, Terms of Reference and Ways of Working document. GM=EqAI's Communications Strategy has also been reviewed and improvements implemented. To better measure the effectiveness of consultations, a more effective and proactive tracking system was also implemented.

From September to October 2023 members were asked to respond to a Member's Survey. This survey was a useful tool for members to reflect on their experience of being part of the alliance and suggest improvements. It asked questions about how meetings are run, accessibility, accountability, impact, the GM=EqAI member role, communications, achievement against our aims, and highlights of their involvement. The results from the survey were presented at our November Working Group and consensus was garnered around suggested actions. Some examples of changes that are being implemented are: holding an annual in-person celebration event, pro-actively contacting speakers 3-months post-attendance to ask about the impact of their engagement with GM=EqAI so we can better track our influence, and being more explicit in the brief sent to speakers and in the Terms of Reference about the expectation to adopt inclusive language as set out in the inclusive language guidance.

Inclusive Language Subgroup

Our longstanding Inclusive Language Subgroup continued to meet bi-monthly to discuss new topics to explore and develop guidance that supports ourselves and others avoid inappropriate or insensitive language and ensure consistent and respectful communications. GM=EqAI is keen for other partners to engage with these documents and welcomes dialogue to keep them evolving along with our understanding. In November 2022 the subgroup reviewed the guidance on language around communities experiencing racial inequalities and uploaded a new version alongside a podcast based on their conversation. Additionally, a new guidance document on poverty was written and added in 2023. The subgroup has begun developing a new guidance document on Social Class, which we aim to publish in 2024.



All our guidance can be found on our [Inclusive Language Guidance page](#).

Strategic Engagement and Networking

GM=EqAI plays a central role in connecting the VCSE sector to other Accord partners and structures to ensure learning and insight is shared across GM.

GM=EqAI works closely with the GM Equality Panels via cross-over membership and panel chairs receiving a standing invitation to attend Working Group meetings. Representatives of [Local Infrastructure Organisations](#) (LIOs), GMCA, and the GM ICP are also invited to attend Working Group meetings.

GM=EqAI builds relationships by closely working with locality equality, diversity and inclusion staff in Local Authorities, GM Integrated Care System (ICS) and GMCA. GM=EqAI acts as an equalities reference group for Accord partners, including strategic support with engagement and consultation on behalf of the ICS. GM=EqAI also generates useful resources such as inclusive language guides and is developing a shared set of principles for any Accord partner who seek to engage or consult with experts by experience.

To increase collaboration between GM=EqAI and LIOs seeking to address systemic inequalities across the ten localities, it has been agreed that twice a year GM=EqAI members and LIO leads will hold a roundtable to discuss equality issues from a locality perspective, share information on current and planned activity, identify shared challenges, and create opportunities for collaboration and positive action. The first of these meetings was held in June 2023.

Groups, Networks and Forums

Attended by our Chair

- GM Equality Panel Chairs Group
- Tackling Inequalities Board
- Accord Commitments Delivery Group
- VCSE Leadership Group
- VCSE Leadership Group Health Influencing Subgroup
- Primary Care Blueprint Subgroup
- GM Primary Care Assembly
- ICP People & Communities Engagement Model
- VCSE Population Health Group
- VCSE Population Health Data Group
- GM Inclusion Health Working Group
- GM VCFSE Forum
- GRT+ Task & Finish Group
- GM Equality Panel Chairs & Portfolio Leads

Attended by our Project Officer

- VCSE Accord Delivery Officers meeting
- Equality Panel Officers meeting
- Equality Panel Facilitators meeting
- Locality Equality Officers meeting
- GM Public and Community Involvement and Engagement Forum (PCIE)
- GM EDI Professionals Network
- Digital Inclusion Action Network (DIAN)

Discussions and Consultations

Working Group meetings provide a central space in which GM=EqAI members connect with policy makers and use their pan-equalities expertise to contribute to policy debates, influence strategies and advise stakeholders. Future meeting topics are suggested by both GM=EqAI members and partners, with some topics being proactive and others responsive. Following meetings, the topics discussed may evolve into ongoing workstreams led by individual members or GM=EqAI staff, and some speakers may return to provide updates prior consultation or seek further input. All speakers are required to provide follow-up information three months post-attendance to inform us of the outcomes of the engagement, and any further actions required by our members.

GM=EqAI approach each discussion and consultation through an intersectional lens, however for the purpose of this report each topic can be broadly categorised by primary theme.

Age Equality

- **'Ageism: What's the Harm'** – a representative from the Centre for Ageing Better joined GM=EqAI in March 2023 to present a summary of the publication. She discussed how ageism is a distinct and under-recognised form of discrimination and how it can be institutional, interpersonal and self-directed. She highlighted the drivers, pathways and resulting harms of ageism for individuals and society. Members discussed how ageism affects their communities and gave suggestions on how we can ensure the national ageism campaign speaks for all communities. It was highlighted that intersectionality is an essential lens for any discussion on ageism due to how it is experienced differently by those experiencing multiple forms of discrimination, and how this should inform service delivery. The issue of digital exclusion was also discussed and how this can exacerbate social exclusion and limit access to services.

Criminal Justice

- **Custody Suite Conditions and Disproportionate Arrests** - in May 2023 GM=EqAI sent a letter to the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police (GMP) raising concerns about the disproportionate use of arrest and poor custody conditions. The letter made three clear asks: people experiencing mental health crises are not further traumatised by aggressive police intervention and unnecessary detainment; custody staff work to the highest standards when making decisions on removing clothes in custody and receive clear direction to make minimum utilisation of the powers available to them so that people are treated with dignity while detained and that appropriate support is available where welfare is an issue; arrest of children and young people is always treated as a last resort. In August 2023 GM=EqAI received an invitation to attend a meeting on 9th October 2023 with the Chief Constable. At our meeting in September 2023 members discussed how to approach planning the agenda for the meeting, how we can maximise the available time and who to send as representatives. Members discussed how communities are unfairly affected by police discrimination, how trust has been eroded, their disappointment due to lack of action on this issue and the need for accountability. At the meeting with the Chief Constable GM=EqAI representatives discussed key concerns in relation to the over-policing of communities experiencing racism, police interventions during mental health crises, conditions for people held in custody suites (including searches and use of force), arrests of young people and vulnerable people, and arrest rates and charging rates. GMP spoke about a race equality report due to be published, the adoption of the 'Right Care, Right Person' approach, staff training and custody audits, risk assessments and alternatives to detention, and planned improvements and investments in custody suites. GMP are keen to engage with GM=EqAI again in 2024 on their plans to improve custody conditions.

- **Greater than Violence Strategy** - in December 2023 a GM=EqAI representative attended the launch of this 10-year strategy to tackle serious violence in GM. A representative from the Violence Reduction Unit is scheduled to attend a Working Group meeting in early 2024 to engage with GM=EqAI members regarding the principles set out by the strategy and how it could be implemented.

Digital

- **GM Information Strategy (GMIS)** - in November 2022 a GMCA representative joined GM=EqAI to discuss how information is managed, shared and used under GMIS, and to consult with GM=EqAI members in the development of the delivery plan. Members discussed issues of trust and transparency, and the principles that should inform the guidance. In February 2023 a GMCA representative returned to provide an update on the GMIS delivery plan consultation. Members queried the poor response rate and lack of ethnicity breakdown of the responses and discussed how organisations and systems such as the NHS could be encouraged to adopt the strategy.
- **Algorithms and the Equality Duty** - our Project Officer led a session in February 2023 prompted by concerns raised by Steering Group members around the use of AI by public bodies such as the government, police and local councils to make decisions about people's lives, and how AI can reflect and amplify existing biases which exist in data. Members discussed how input from GM=EqAI could add pressure for GM authorities to adopt appropriate transparency standards for all automated decision processes. A representative from Open Data Manchester (ODM) explained how ODM helps communities understand data and systems and how they affect our lives. In September 2023, a representative from Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People presented an overview of the judicial review process (assisted by Foxglove) to challenge the Department for Work and Pensions for the suspected use of algorithms to disproportionately select disabled people for fraud investigations. Members engaged in a wider discussion around ethical data use, and the potential benefits and negative consequences for marginalised communities.
- **GMCA Digital Blueprint** - in September 2023 a GMCA representative joined GM=EqAI to discuss the principles of the digital blueprint which aims to prioritise responsible use of data and improving effective decision-making. Members highlighted the need to be clearer about policy and information processes.

Disability

- **GM Disabled People's Panel Cost of Living Survey** - representatives from the panel joined GM=EqAI in December 2022 to provide a summary of findings from the survey, and members were invited to share additional information and stories to expand the evidence base. Members raised the issue of the limited understanding of disability, the support systems available amongst some communities and the impact of shame and stigma. They also highlighted adverse experiences and barriers faced in accessing services, a lack of culturally appropriate services, a lack of community representation within services and inadequate resourcing of vital services.
- **Courageous Conversations on Neurodiversity, Culture and Autism** - GM=EqAI members supported the development of the GM Autism Ethnically Diverse Communities Working Group as well as connecting this group to colleagues who expressed interest in the intersectional needs of neurodivergent people. This group collectively designed and delivered a conference in October 2023 for professionals, autistic adults and family members. The conference shared insights on best practice, innovation and

intersectionality around the topic of neurodiversity, culture and autism. The working group remains in place and is currently developing a guide for GPs on the intersectional needs of neurodivergent people from ethnically diverse communities, and working alongside GMCA, the Race Equality Panel and the Faith and Belief Panel to raise awareness and understanding within African churches in GM.

Education

- **Greater Manchester's Approach to Tackling Inequalities in Education** - representatives from GMCA joined GM=EqAI in October 2023 to discuss the approach and to consult with members on the processes and pieces of work involved. She discussed poverty is a major driver of the unequal experience of education in GM, and how problems such as persistent absenteeism and rising rates of those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) were exacerbated by the pandemic. Members expressed concerns around the use of attendance data in evaluating progress, as this can often delegitimise the reason for children's absence. Members expressed how integrating schools for disabled and non-disabled children is beneficial, and that mainstream provisions need to be better resources to meet the needs of disabled children and encourage inclusion. Members discussed how the needs of children with caring responsibilities are often not met, the impact poverty can have on children's aspirations, and the impact of punitive measures taken against parents due to absenteeism and school uniforms. It was suggested that good practice should be shared and replicated across the education system.

Environment

- **Climate change and marginalised communities** – a colleague from GMCVO joined GM=EqAI in April 2023 to discuss GM initiatives around the environmental crisis, and how those who engage and benefit from them aren't those most likely to suffer the effects of the crisis. Members discussed a potential funding bid for a community-led project aiming to mitigate the risk marginalised communities face from climate change. This prompted discussion around how to remove barriers to engagement, the challenges of demystifying the issue and providing accessible information, how this work can be prioritised and resourced when many communities are facing issues perceived as more immediate.
- **VCSE Accord Environment Work** – a colleague from GMCVO joined GM=EqAI in November 2023 to provide her reflections on the Green Summit and the current 5-year Environment Plan. Concerns were raised around the lack of support for the VCSE sector, a lack of diversity in the space, and a lack of specific reference to the disproportionate impact of environmental and climate issues on marginalised communities. Members discussed their experiences of and attitudes towards environmental and climate issues, the challenges and barriers to making meaningful changes related to environment and sustainability, and what is required in order to make changes.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT+) Communities

- **Greater Manchester Police Stopping Places Policy and Procedure** – GMP underwent a review of policies and procedures for managing reports of unauthorised encampments considering new police powers (the criminalisation of trespass under the Police, Crime and Sentencing Act 2022). GM=EqAI members provided suggestions and recommendations for this updated policy, championing the progressive policy of negotiated stopping pioneered by Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange. GM=EqAI have been working alongside GMCA to have the principles of negotiated stopping adopted by all ten localities,

as well as developing a strategy of expanding the number of legal sites for nomadic communities.

- **GRT+ Task and Finish Group** – a group was formed by GMCA in November 2023 with the aim of mitigating the risk of the new policing act being discriminatory to GRT+ communities by criminalising encampments. A GM=EqAI member attends this Task and Finish group has highlighted that the absence of data around GRT+ communities is a key barrier in the provision of resources, and that rectifying this should be a key priority.

Health

- **The GM Mental Health Strategy** - we were joined by a representative from NHS GM Integrated Care in December 2022 who introduced and consulted with members on the proposed vision, outcomes and aims of the draft strategy. Members discussed how stigma affects the capture of data which leads to under-reporting of the prevalence and unmet need in certain communities. Members highlighted the need for representation of people who experience racial inequalities in the writing group, the need for culturally sensitive mental health support, the need for community delivery to be prioritised alongside mainstream NHS services.
- **GM Health and Poverty Intelligence** - a Population Health Analyst for GMCA joined GM=EqAI in January 2023 to present an overview of health inequality in GM drawing on a range of datasets to demonstrate the bi-directional relationship between poverty and ill health, prompting a discussion about gathering diversity data, the potential solutions through VCSE partnerships and the need for adequate funding for these programmes.
- **VCSE Mental Health Leadership Group Scoping Project** - a researcher on behalf of the leadership group joined GM=EqAI to present an overview of her proposed research project aiming to generate an evidence base to support holistic interventions within the clinical framework. Members were consulted around what they would like to see reflected in the survey questions and focus group. This prompted discussion around consultation fatigue, how appropriate and accessible language can be adopted in the survey, a need for understanding of the impact of intersectional disadvantage and how mental health is interconnected with other aspects of health and wellbeing. A follow-up roundtable meeting about diversity in VCSE sector was held in November 2023 looking at workforce development led by 10GM.
- **BeeWell Survey** - a representative from the #BeeWell Project Team at GMCA joined GM=EqAI in May 2023 to present findings from the first two years of data collected in 2021 and 2022 about the life satisfaction and mental well-being of young people in GM. This prompted discussion around exposure to bullying for LGBTQ+ and disabled young people, and how the experience of discrimination on the basis of faith, disability, race, sexual orientation and gender relates to levels of loneliness.
- **GM Primary Care Blueprint Consultation** - a representative from NHS GM Integrated Care joined GM=EqAI in July 2023 to discuss the development of the draft blueprint. Members gave feedback on the approach of the blueprint, what is needed to address the key challenges faced by their communities, and how the blueprint can best articulate collaboration with and resourcing of VCSE services. Members highlighted that health inequalities should be more significantly acknowledged in the blueprint, and how these inequalities are exacerbated, for example, by a lack of interpretation and translation services. They also emphasised the need for patient involvement in the drafting process, and how engagement with the VCSE sector should be articulated more comprehensively. This has led to the formation of the GM Inclusion Health Standards Working Group whose

first action will be to conduct an inclusion health locality stocktake looking at locality arrangements and connectivity with inclusion health groups.

- **Fairer Health for All Framework** - a representative from NHS GM Population Health joined GM=EqAI in October 2023 to present an overview of the framework as an approach to tackling inequalities, inequity, inclusion and sustainability. She explained how the framework aims to be co-produced through locality and community engagement. Members requested further information on the Academy Fellowship and emphasised the need to have inclusive language reflected in the framework, and for the framework to acknowledge and address all forms of inequality. Members also emphasised the need for equitable outcomes for all communities.
- **Live Well** - a representative from Live Well joined GM=EqAI in November 2023 to provide an overview of the refreshed Live Well programme which aims to build community-led health and wellbeing to tackle health inequalities in GM. Members were consulted on the proposed next steps of the programme, which highlighted the need for organisations to remove barriers to participation (such as improving the cultural competency of staff), the need to acknowledge and address the lack of trust in certain institutions, the need to develop participatory decision-making methods to provide mechanisms for shared decision-making.

Lived Experience

- **'Hearing the Voice of Lived Experience in Policy Making' Guidance** – GM=EqAI members have been leading on the development of this guidance based on shared priorities. In August 2023, members highlighted the need to emphasise the risks of co-production when it is executed poorly, especially the risk of psychological harm. They also discussed the need for shared definitions of key terms. In December 2023, GM=EqAI's meeting was set up as a collaborative roundtable conversation to evaluate the early draft and to ensure that the content reflected the views, concerns and aspirations of GM=EqAI members. Members discussed how those adopting the recommendations of the guidance could measure progress of achievement, what they hope would change as a result, if the guidance is optimised for usefulness across all Accord partners, who we need to conform/inform/ask/tell, what are the committees and structures we need to navigate, and who are allies are. The guidance is currently undergoing further consultation and we aim to publish and disseminate the final version in 2024.

Operational

- **GM VCSE Accord Evaluation Proposal** – a colleague from the VCSE Accord Implementation team at GMCA joined GM=EqAI in January 2023 to discuss the design of the evaluation frameworks, methodologies, and systems for data capture. Members were consulted on how to embed equalities considerations into the evaluation proposal. Members suggested that the evaluation adopt a shared definition of coproduction once this has been defined by the Lived Experience in Policy Making Guidance. A colleague from Voluntary Sector North West (VSNW) joined GM=EqAI in August 2023 to present a summary of the Accord evaluation, the outcomes that sit under the GM=EqAI delivery area and the existing metrics. Members discussed the challenges of evidencing our influence in relation to policy and delivery and how to better demonstrate our value. Members discussed how GM=EqAI can take a role in reviewing the overarching Equality Impact Assessment for the Accord. A facilitated learning session is being developed for Accord Partners wishing to adopt best practice GM=EqAI has championed with regards to equalities considerations, which will be delivered in March 2024.

- **VCSE Workforce Development Project** – a representative from Macc/10GM joined GM=EqAI in May 2023 to provide an overview of the project which will be implemented across the LIOs in GM. He discussed the various activity domains: recruitment; HR support; workforce wellbeing; equality, diversity and inclusion; cultivating talent; and leadership development. This prompted discussion about the GM Good Employment Charter, how a gendered lens can be applied in the development of the project and how they can enable input from diverse community leaders. Members highlighted the need to embed support for those with lived experience in career development considering the common career pathway from service user to volunteer to project worker in the VCSE sector. A session is being developed for Good Employment Week in June 2024 to discuss shared priorities for action through the lens of employment.

Race Equality

- **Race Equality in GM: An analysis of key issues** – in October 2022 representatives from the University of Manchester’s policy team and the Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE) joined GM=EqAI to introduce the findings from CoDE’s research report carried out on behalf of GMCA which demonstrates the national failure to effectively address racial inequality in education, employment, health and criminal justice. This prompted discussion around the issues and recommendations of the report and what this means for the VCSE sector, the need to capture intersectionality in data and improve data at a locality level, and the need to influence policy makers to take decisive action to address race inequality.
- **Black History Month** - in October 2022, two of our members from the Caribbean and African Health Network and Ebony and Ivory Community Organisation led a session prompted by Martin Forde KC’s keynote address at the Black History Month (BHM) launch event. Members discussed the importance of understanding the aim of BHM to highlight and celebrate the achievements of Black, African and Caribbean in history. The theme of the celebration, ‘Action not words’ was emphasised, and members discussed collective action that can be taken in areas such as the school curriculum, how we can raise the profile of BHM and how to call out racism that surrounds us.

Transport

- **Regressive Railway Modernisation** – in March 2023 GM=EqAI wrote a statement in response to plans to close railway ticket offices and remove conductors from trains. The statement emphasised that although disabled people have been spearheading the campaign against this proposal, this is an intersectional issue that will affect many people experiencing different forms of discrimination. Since then, plans to close railway station ticket offices in England have been scrapped.

Women and Girls

- **Communication Barriers: How Statutory Bodies are Failing Black, Minoritised, Migrant, Deaf and Disabled Women and Girl Victims/Survivors of Violence Against Women and Girls** – a representative from the End Violence Against Women Coalition joined GM=EqAI in April 2023 to introduce the research report which highlights the specific communication, behavioural and attitudinal barriers affecting disabled women, migrant women, women from communities experiencing racial inequalities, and women from GRT+ communities and how these prevent victims/survivors from accessing safety, support and justice. The recommendations from the report were discussed, and how GM=EqAI and the Women and Girl’s Panel can utilise established connections with GMP to influence them to adopt the recommendations.

Challenges

GM=EqAI is not immune to the challenges felt across the VCSE sector which stem from a widespread lack of sufficient resources and capacity. GM=EqAI members are all volunteers who dedicate their time to draw upon their collective expertise to influence policy and strategy development and advise stakeholders with the aim of achieving transformational change. This is no small task, and it relies on a significant time commitment from members in a climate in which grassroots organisations are already incredibly stretched. As a result, our capacity to take on additional and sustained pieces of work is unfortunately limited. Partners often have high expectations, and therefore we must judiciously manage expectations, recognising the constraints of our resources.

As a pan-equalities group, the number and variety of workstreams is vast and at times we are stretched in multiple directions. This requires careful prioritisation of workstreams, but this is a challenge due to the competing priorities of members, with each workstream deserving of our attention.

While partners frequently draw upon the expertise of GM=EqAI members, such as in the development of a policy proposal or implementation plan, challenges arise in obtaining follow-up information on progress and the impact of our input. This can hinder our ability to systematically gather evidence of our influence and value.

At times, national policy can hinder our ambitions as a group. Progress with regards to national policy can be slow, leading to frustration at a local level.

GM=EqAI meetings often feature guest speakers from the public sector to consult with members or to disseminate information. Looking ahead, we may be affected by the upcoming general election and the associated purdah period. The potential unavailability of public sector representatives due to this necessitates flexibility in our agenda planning, incorporating contingencies to accommodate these constraints.

Next steps

We anticipate the continuation of several active workstreams in the upcoming year, coupled with our responsiveness to new requests from both members and partners for undertaking additional areas of focus.

GM=EqAI is currently engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the Police and Crime team at GMCA to explore potential involvement in initiatives aimed at enhancing police custody practices and aligning policing efforts to meet the needs of marginalised communities in GM.

In collaboration with our LIO colleagues, GM=EqAI is exploring the possibility of a role in the implementation of the NHS GM People and Communities strategy. This envisioned role would centre on leveraging our members' capacity as connectors to marginalised communities, facilitating engagement in various aspects of NHS delivery and consultation.

Upon publication of the 'Hearing the Voice of Lived Experience in Policy Making' guidance, GM=EqAI is committed to disseminating the guidance and actively supporting its implementation as part of the drive to improve practice across GM.

Looking ahead, GMCA will conduct a review of its 5-Year Environment Plan, a strategic document outlining priorities for the city-region in addressing climate change and related

environmental crises. GM=EqAI, with support from GMCVO officers, aspires to be a pivotal partner in this process, ensuring that resulting strategy actions prioritises addressing inequality. Recognising that marginalised communities are disproportionately affected by environmental crises, our aim is to amplify the voices in a policy area where they are seldom heard.

Reflections from members

In our Member's Survey in 2023, members were asked to share their favourite thing about their role and the alliance. These are just some of the quotes from members.

"being able to challenge historical inequalities and having a diverse group across all localities"

"learning from other members, networking and the discussions"

"it's diversity, but shared values and principles."



"it gives me a sense of belonging and a responsibility that I can speak on behalf of my organisation, which is a great feeling"

"being able to offer my insight into parts of society I normally never would have. I'm learning so much, and using that to better the lives of people across GM. It makes me feel like a true human – someone who is helpful to both themselves and others."

Project Officer's Closing Message

“As a group working across such a broad range of communities of experience and identity, it is humbling to witness their commitment to listening, continuous learning, and amplifying each other's voices”

- Rory Campbell, Project Officer



In a time when our communities confront a myriad of challenges, often appearing insurmountable, this group serves as a constant reminder that giving up is not an option. Marginalised and minoritised communities cannot afford to turn away as oppression, discrimination and inequity pervade every aspect of our lives, demanding our attention. As a collective, GM=EqAI are working to tangibly improve the lives of our communities, firmly believing in the possibility of transformational change. The unwavering commitment demonstrated by each member stands as a testament to their values, strength and determination. As a group working across such a broad range of communities of experience and identity, it is humbling to witness their commitment to listening, continuous learning, and amplifying each other's voices. The collective achievements attained thus far are truly commendable, and despite the inevitable challenges that lie ahead I am confident that this group will persist in advocating for a more just sub-region.

I extend my sincere gratitude to every member who has generously contributed their time and expertise to GM=EqAI during this reporting period. The accomplishments detailed in this report would not have been possible without your invaluable contributions.

Lastly, I extend thanks to everyone who has generously given their time to participate in our meetings, engaging substantively with our members on crucial issues. It is heartening to see the enthusiasm displayed by policy professionals and VCSE and public sector leaders in actively involving marginalised communities and aligning their work with the objective of tackling inequality.

We look forward continuing this collaborative effort in the upcoming year as we strive to advance our shared commitment to fostering positive change for communities in Greater Manchester.

Rory Campbell

GM=EqAI Working Group Members

Aba Graham	Ebony and Ivory Community Organisation
Abdul Shakoor	Tameside, Oldham and Glossop Mind
Alyson Malach	Equality and Diversity UK Ltd
Atiha Chaudry	Manchester BME Network CIC
Ayisatu Emore	Idaraya Life CIC
Ben Andrews	Beyond Empower CIC
Bev Place	Rochdale Connections Trust
Caroline Gregory	Diversity Matters North West
Charles Kwaku-Odoi	Caribbean & African Health Network
Charlotte Vale	Advice for Renters
Chris Hamnett	Embrace Wigan and Leigh
Circle Steele	Wai Yin Society
Elena Chiviyska	Europia
Elizabeth Stanley	Wraparound Partnership
Emily Wilkins	LGBT Foundation
Farai Nhakaniso	Everything Human Rights Community Group
George Sutton	Walthew House
Helen Walton	Rochdale Parent Carers Voice Forum CIC
Ibrahim Ismail	Bolton Solidarity Community Association (BSCA)
Javed Rehman	Bridging Communities
Jonathan Yates	Citizens Advice SORT Group
Jonny Wineberg	We Stand Together
Julia Savage	Asylum Matters
Julian Palfreyman	Training and Support for Services and Exiles Cooperative (TS4SE)
Kush Chottera	Europia
Lawrence Webb	LGBT Foundation
Liz Hubberd	Manchester City of Sanctuary
Louise Mills	TuVida
Mandy Jelenje	Tili Tonse Community Arts & Training
Mari Saeki	Greater Manchester Autism Consortium Project
Mary Olanrewaju	Equal Education Chances
Mohammed Towhasir	Rochdale Dawah Centre
Nelly Kwasinwi Azinwi	Hand in Hand CIC
Nicola McDonagh	Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People
Parvin Emampour	Yaran Northwest CIC
Ricki Hewitt	Salford Pride
Rodney Adams	Bolton at Home
Rose Ssali	Mama Health and Poverty Partnership
Ruby Begum	The Reverse Mentoring Practice
Sadia Mir	Awakening Minds Practice
Sajid Hashmi MBE	Asian Development Association of Bury (ADAB)
Sally Carr	GRT+ Collaboration
Simon Grant	Binoh (The Center for Specialist Educational Assistance Ltd)
Uzma Ansari	The Pankhurst Trust