

# The Next Level: Good Lives for All in Greater Manchester

The report of  
**The Greater Manchester  
Independent Inequalities  
Commission**



**This is the time... And this is the place**



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# Chair's Foreword

**“A good society is a society which believes that it is not good enough” Zygmunt Bauman**

During the past few months, while the world has drawn a collective breath, imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic – the Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission has seized this moment to survey the damage done and the inequalities exposed. Amid deep uncertainties, we believe this is a once in a lifetime chance to build a fairer society fit for the future; the pandemic brings opportunities as well as lessons.

At the same time that Covid-19 was laying bare the deep fractures of inequality running across our society, revealing just how unprepared we were for unexpected and unimagined challenges, the resurgence of the [Black Lives Matter](#) movement shone more light than ever on the blight of racism, discrimination and prejudice within our midst – in our institutions and in our relationships with one another.

Our Commission has set its compass by these two guiding stars: Covid-19 and Black Lives Matter have shown us the depth of the inequalities we must transcend but they have also revealed the strengths within our communities, our collective spirit, and how much we care for each other. We don't know what the future holds, but we know it can't be the same as the past. The Commission has focused on what truly matters for people in Greater Manchester, recognising that sustainable wellbeing should be the real wealth of the city-region.

This must be a time of great hope. A time for change, a time of recognition that we all want to build back better, and that we cannot let the shadows of the past dim the bright promise of a fairer future.

We applaud the openness to the Commission's work that we have encountered from everyone we've met in Greater Manchester. As we've engaged with diverse groups, we've been struck by two things. First, the wealth of good things already happening within this vibrant city-region to reduce inequalities – the Commission recognises these and hopes its recommendations will amplify them. Second, the strength of representations from the people we have met, rightly articulating the inequalities that affect them most, and sharing their ideas for change. Thank you to all who gave us your time and your truths.

I must also thank my fellow Commissioners. They are an outstanding group, bringing great expertise and experience to our work. They have brought passion, humour, integrity and tenacity to the Commission and devoted far more time to it than they could ever have anticipated at the start. All our work has been conducted remotely, with the technical and social challenges that involves, but there has been a real spirit of friendship and commitment to consensus in our meetings – so thank you, colleagues, for your work and your wisdom.

Finally, my thanks to everyone who reads this report and joins the conversation. This is a pivotal time, but we all need to pivot together. As an independent Commission our aim has been to encourage everyone in Greater Manchester – politicians, policymakers and public – to join in making the enlightened and bold changes that are needed. Those who currently have power and privilege need to come together with those most affected by interacting and intersecting inequalities and injustices to take the Commission's recommendations forward. This report is only the first step in taking Greater Manchester to the next level and creating good lives for all. We hope that reading it will give YOU hope: a vision that excites you, actions that you can take, inspiration to go further.

This must be a time of great hope. This is the time for change, a time of recognition that we all want to build back better, and that we cannot let the shadows of the past dim the bright promise of a fairer future. And this is the place.

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**Kate Pickett**



# The Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission

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The Commission thanks Christine Berry, independent writer and researcher, without whom this report would not have been possible; Beti Baraki and colleagues from the New Economics Foundation and Resolution Foundation for data, insight and research intelligence. Further acknowledgements follow our full report.

# Summary and Recommendations

## The Vision: Good Lives for All in Greater Manchester

### Imagine a city-region where:

- ▶ Everyone works towards an agreed set of wellbeing and equality targets that aim to leave no-one behind, and those targets have been agreed through inclusive conversations.
- ▶ The city-region puts people at the heart of local economic development and regeneration. All its major institutions work together to use their financial power and role as influencers to direct wealth into the local economy, promoting inclusivity and social value.
- ▶ When policymakers make big decisions or change their strategies, they do so in partnership with the people who will be most affected by those changes. Diverse communities are represented at all levels of decision making.
- ▶ In this vibrant city-region, children and young people are supported on their journey to become healthy, fulfilled and engaged adults, supported in civic and cultural activity, and are taught in outstanding schools and colleges.
- ▶ The city-region has work programmes that create good, local jobs that are open to a wide range of people, whatever their background, in the growth sectors of the future – in the green economy, the caring economy, and high-

tech. People are helped when they enter the world of adult work for the first time and also throughout their working lives and retirement as well – they can learn new skills, move into new sectors, work flexibly to fit their needs, get involved in their communities.

- ▶ If you want to start a small business in this city-region, you know where to go for advice and support, there is investment finance to help you get started, and a community hub where you can build your business alongside other local enterprises.
- ▶ Thriving communities are built around decent, affordable homes and high-quality shared spaces in the high streets and parks; and communities are connected to each other by excellent public transport that everyone can afford to use.
- ▶ Public services in the city-region are accessible and community-based agencies work together to respond to and support local needs and individual people. When problems arise in this city-region everyone works together to tackle them, with specific “missions” focused on complex challenges.



The vision we describe above is not a utopia, and it is not a pipe dream for Greater Manchester. Everything we describe is **already happening**, either somewhere within the city-region, in one of its localities or one of its institutions, or in another city or place where we have looked for inspiration. Throughout our full report we shine a light on case studies and best practice that can be emulated. Nothing we describe in this vision for the city-region is impractical or unachievable. Good things might be already happening somewhere, but they need to be happening everywhere.

The **Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission** was launched in October 2020 with a six-month mission to examine inequalities across the city-region, consider how they should be tackled and outline some specific and hard-hitting recommendations. The Commission has taken stock of existing evidence and good practice and engaged, in the short time available, with stakeholders in the business, public, voluntary and community sectors. We have asked people to tell us what change they would like to see. You can find more information on our approach and activities [here](#).

The Commission has viewed inequalities within a framework that considers how **interacting and intersecting inequalities** create barriers that stop people from living the good lives they want. We have confronted the entrenched prejudices, discrimination and injustices, including **structural racism**, that withhold power and resources from diverse communities. We describe this approach to inequalities in detail in our full report.



# Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission

## Model of Interacting Inequalities

### Demographic Inequalities

- Age
- Sex and Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Disability
- Sexual Orientation
- Religious Affiliation
- Caring Responsibility
- Language
- Migrant/  
Undocumented Status/  
Asylum Seeking
- And all other groups  
experiencing  
inequalities
- ⋮

### Entrenched and Intersecting Inequalities

### Socio-Economic Inequalities

Housing  
and Lived  
Environment



Education  
and Skills



Power,  
Voice and  
Participation



Income,  
Wealth and  
Employment



Connectivity  
(Transport/  
Digital)



Access to  
Care and  
Support



**Wellbeing and Quality of Life**  
Equal Ability to Participate in Society

### Geographic Inequalities

- International
- National
- Regional
- City/Town
- Neighbourhood
- Community
- Etc.
- ⋮



We have brought together a wealth of **evidence on inequalities** within Greater Manchester, including from previous commissions, reviews and existing strategies, and commissioned new research from the [New Economics Foundation](#) and the [Resolution Foundation](#) to give us a deep dive into the structural inequalities across the city-region. A full supplement of evidence of Covid-19-related inequalities, as well as inequalities between communities and local areas in Greater Manchester is available [here](#).

2020 was a wake-up call. The **Covid-19 pandemic** exposed the fractures running across our society and the **Black Lives Matter** movement forced us to acknowledge and confront the intractable realities of structural racism. These have been the guiding stars for the work of the Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission. We want to help bring about a city-region that works for everyone, where the economy serves the people, and everyone has a voice.

In our full report, we set out a practical programme of policies for Greater Manchester to tackle the

root causes of inequalities. And by Greater Manchester, we mean not just the [Greater Manchester Combined Authority](#), but also the local authorities of the city-region, the businesses, institutions, voluntary and community sector, and the public. The Commission believes that Greater Manchester can only build a strong **economy** by focusing on the foundations – the services and sectors that meet our basic needs; by giving local people a stake and a say in the economy; and by asking more of high-value ‘frontier’ sectors, to ensure that local people with the least opportunities benefit from the jobs and investment they create. Greater Manchester can only build excellent **public services** in partnership with those who use them, amplifying the ground-breaking ‘Greater Manchester Model’ of public service reform and taking its ambitions further. “Nothing about us without us” must be the mantra and the norm for co-designing and delivery of services across the system. Greater Manchester can only tackle **structural racism and all forms of discrimination** by empowering marginalised groups to hold decision-makers to account and to have a seat at the table.

If Covid-19 and Black Lives Matter have shone a light on inequalities within Greater Manchester, they have also, like past crises, revealed its greatest strength. The city-region has a **collective spirit** of looking after one another, and a proud tradition of radicalism, co-operation and standing up against injustice. Greater Manchester can build on this spirit of co-operation to recover and rebuild for a fairer future.

Change can be hard, and the initial costs of effort and resources can feel intimidating. But the risks of doing nothing are stark. Inequalities are deeply damaging: to people's health, wellbeing

and resilience throughout their lives; to a flourishing, productive and inclusive economy; to sustainability; and, not least, to the quality of the social fabric, to trust and the relationships between us. There are huge **costs to doing nothing**, and any challenges in implementing the Commission's recommendations need to be weighed against the serious risks and costs posed by a continuation of the status quo. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, we've seen different strategies adopted to contain the transmission of the virus, to treat infection, and to develop vaccines against the disease. Not everything worked, and usually local solutions

and partnerships and collective action worked best, but when you're trying to solve a big problem, it's OK to have some failures along the way and to need to adapt and flex policies and programmes until they do work. Fear of failure and fear of the size of the problem must be conquered.

**This is the time for bold thinking and brave action, this is the time for an essential pivot towards a new way of doing things that puts tackling inequality at its heart, this is the time to take Greater Manchester to the next level, a place with good lives for all.**



# Our Recommendations

There is a vast amount of good work being done and many areas in which Greater Manchester is leading the way and making progress. But now is the time for a step change in its delivery. Our recommendations focus on how Greater Manchester can both respond to the immediate challenges created by the pandemic, and pivot towards a new way of doing things that puts tackling inequality at its heart. We have not tried to provide a comprehensive blueprint for tackling all inequalities in Greater Manchester – that is beyond the scope of our short Commission. Instead, we have focused on some key ways in which Greater Manchester could seek to shift wealth, power and opportunity to those too often denied it.

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) can set goals and show leadership, but ultimately the vision will only be achieved by the whole system working together: GMCA, local authorities, health and the wider public sector, businesses and trade unions, the community and voluntary sector, and local residents. The Commission recognises that many of the big shifts needed to tackle inequality are outside of Greater Manchester's control and sit with national government – for instance, the urgent need to repair our social safety net by reforming Universal Credit and lifting statutory sick pay.

The double hit of the pandemic and a decade of austerity has also put local authority budgets under more pressure than ever before. This makes it all the more urgent to be creative with the powers and resources that are available – targeting resources to where they are most effective and working in partnership with communities.

The Commission hopes that our proposals will take Greater Manchester to the next level in creating a good life for all, built on the strong foundations already present in the city-region.

## An Essential Pivot

1. Put **wellbeing and equality goals** at the heart of the Greater Manchester Strategy and align budgets, portfolios and activities to these so that good lives for all is the focus of everything Greater Manchester does.
2. Convene a **GM Anchor Action Network** and use their spending, investment and soft power to drive social value, support disadvantaged groups and create good, secure, living wage<sup>1</sup> jobs.

## People Power

3. Create a **People's Taskforce** to put power into people's hands at every level of Greater Manchester and a **People's Assembly** to contribute to priority setting and work with public authorities in delivering them.
4. Give the **Equality Panels more teeth** with a stronger mandate and resources to constructively challenge public bodies.
5. Establish an **independent Anti-Discrimination body** to tackle breaches of the Equality Act.
6. Agree a joint commitment across GMCA, districts and statutory partners to **tackle inequality faced by minority groups** with a clear plan for roll out.
7. Develop a **GMCA Race Equality Strategy**, backed by a plan to increase representation of Black and Asian minorities in senior positions in GMCA and tackle race inequality in health, education, policing, work and housing.

<sup>1</sup> In this document, the term 'living wage' is used to mean the Real Living Wage calculated annually by the Resolution Foundation and overseen by the [Living Wage Commission](#)

## Good Jobs, Decent Pay

8. Set up **'GM Works'** to create good jobs, upskill and reskill people to take up these jobs and provide apprenticeships and 6-month Job Guarantees for disadvantaged groups in key sectors.
9. Set an ambitious target for every employer in Greater Manchester to **pay the living wage and offer living hours by 2030**, using the Good Employment Charter, conditions on access to public goods, services and contracts and support for businesses in low paid sectors to get there.
10. **Bridge the skills divide** with universities, colleges and training providers working jointly to improve access to training, life-long learning and in-work progression schemes for disadvantaged groups.

## Building Wealth

11. **Create a Community Wealth Hub** to support and grow co-operatives, mutuals, social and community enterprises, staffed by people from the co-operative and community sector who understand the market.
12. Set up a **Community Investment Platform** to tap into local savings, unlock community investment and build-up assets to share wealth with everyone in Greater Manchester.
13. Set up a **Land Commission** to look at ownership and control of land in Greater Manchester, its impacts on inequality and potential solutions.

## Services for a Good Life

14. Move towards **universal basic services** in which education, health, childcare, adult social care, housing, transport and digital connectivity are provided to all and lobby central government to invest and devolve funding to make this a reality.
15. Launch an **Education Challenge** to give every child an equal start in life by levelling up schools in deprived areas, supporting young people's transition at 16 and improving access to activities that build social skills, confidence and resilience.
16. Scale up **public and social sector housebuilding** to deliver affordable, decent homes, backed by a plan to acquire land, rental properties, new builds and commercial properties for social housing.
17. Amplify the **Greater Manchester Model of integrated public services in 10 pathfinder deprived neighbourhoods and pilot an income guarantee** in one or more to tackle inequality, using community-led priorities, cross-service teams, pooled budgets and participatory budgeting.

In our full report we give detail on these recommendations and encouragement for other actions, including GMCA's role as a convener of calls to action for national actions and policies.

