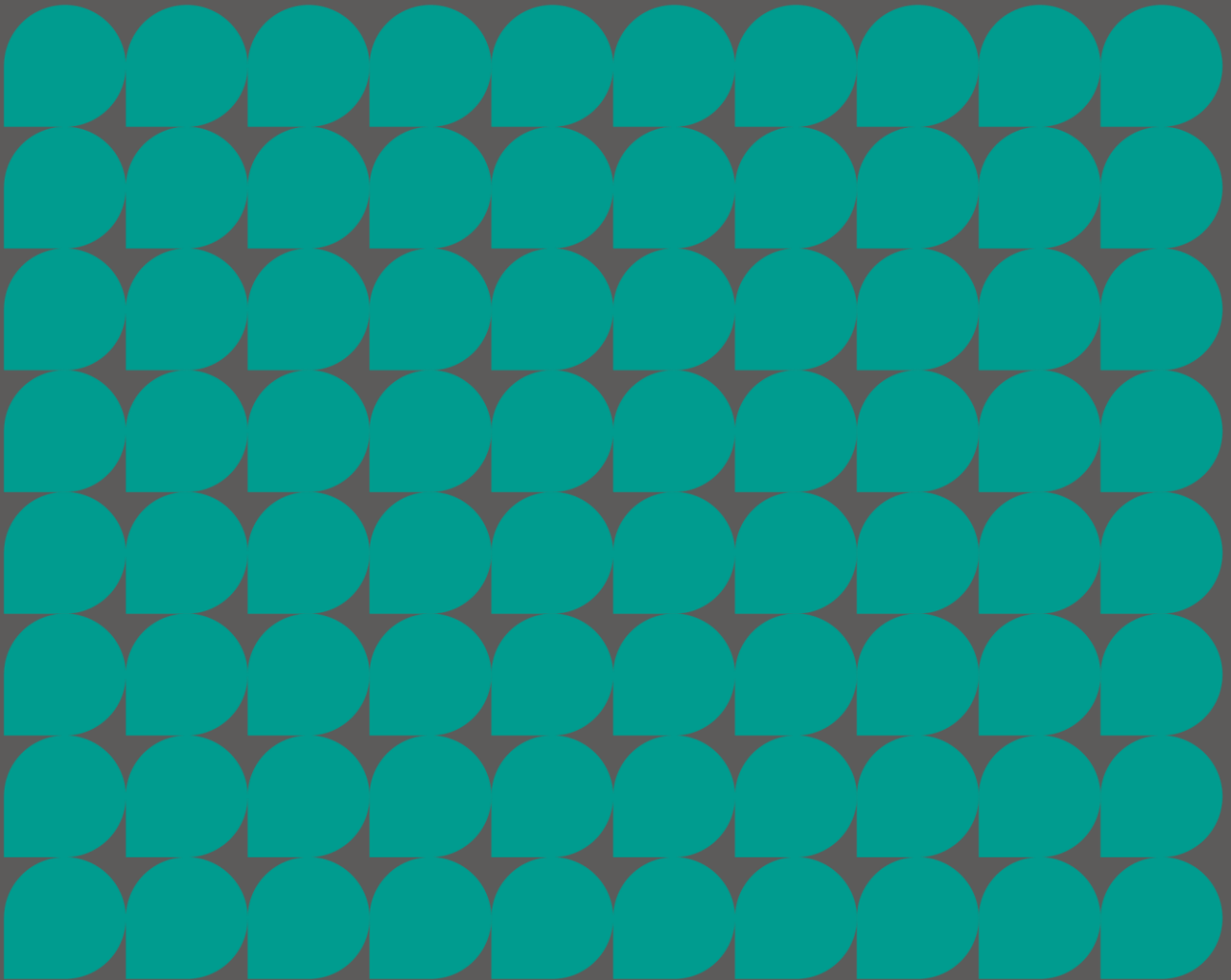


**WOMEN
& GIRLS
EQUALITY
PANEL**

**DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY
FOR GREATER MANCHESTER**

Greater Manchester Women and Girls Equality Panel

Annual Report 2023-2024



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1. Message from the Chairs

It has been an honour during our first year to serve as co-chairs for the Greater Manchester Women and Girls Equality Panel. We recognise that globally and locally, in Greater Manchester, the lives of girls and women are impacted daily through violence, poverty, and discrimination, and our panel of incredible volunteers and community representatives ensure that these voices are integral to our discussions and decision making.

We recognised that we needed to represent all ages across the life course, and in preparation for this, we have enabled all Panel members to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service for safeguarding compliance to enable younger women to join the panel. This is important, as younger voices bring a lived experience of the realities of being a girl or young woman in Greater Manchester today and the joys and challenges this brings that can better inform our decision-making for the future. We are delighted to report that we recruited an under-18 member, and we will seek to advance this over the coming year. We have centred a trauma-informed approach in our work because we are all human, and the ‘felt’ experiences of oppression are as important as the quantitative metrics and case studies we use to inform our decisions. To support this, we have adopted the Prof. Laura Lundy Model of participation. Using this model enables us to consciously make space for intersectional voices and views and identify the relevant audience to listen. This supports the strategic and policy decision-makers to consider experiences and specific needs; and feed back to the Panel on the outcome and impact our collective voices have made to improve the lives of girls, young women, and women in Greater Manchester.

Gender mainstreaming as an approach to our work is a key feature of our future planning. We support the need to educate boys, young men, and men as allies in supporting tackling misogyny, alongside enabling girls, young women and women to raise their voices, access opportunities and participate in public and political life.

This has been the case regarding the Women’s Health Strategy, Transport for Greater Manchester’s (TfGM) Local Transport Strategy, the Greater Than Violence Strategy and the Good Employment Charter, where we have infused a Gender Mainstreaming approach in our responses.

We are grateful to our Panel members for the time and energy they give, often in the context of adversity within their own lives.

We give thanks to our panel members who have stepped down over the last 12 months: Halyma Begum, Sharon Maginn, Lynne Stafford, Brenda Warrington, and Neha Sareen.

Emma Persand RGN QN and Sally Carr MBE, Panel Co-Chairs

2. Welcome to the Panel

The Women and Girls' Equality Panel was established in December 2020 to address gender inequality in Greater Manchester. The role of the Panel is to constructively challenge political and system leaders, namely the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), to tackle prejudice and discrimination against women and girls. The Panel works alongside GMCA and the wider Greater Manchester (GM) system to ensure that equality, as well as the unique needs and risks of women and girls is actively considered in decision making to help make the city a better place for women and girls to live, work and study and do business.

The Panel is convened by the Pankhurst Trust (Incorporating Manchester Women's Aid), in partnership with GM4Women2028, a charity focused on promoting equality and diversity for the benefit of the community in Greater Manchester. The Panel meets every two months. It has four main priority areas: Employment, ending Violence Against Women and Girls, Health, and Gender Mainstreaming.

The Panel is made up of a diverse group of individuals and organisations from a range of sectors and backgrounds who are committed to ensuring that the viewpoints of women and girls from a cross-section of society are represented. It also benefits from the support of an Allies' Network, who promote the Panel's work, share the Panel's mission, and stand in solidarity with women and girls.

This year has been a period of significant growth and development for our panel. We are delighted to welcome 18 new members, as well as appointing our new Co Chairs Sally Carr MBE and Emma Persand RGN QN. This year the Panel has made concerted efforts to be more reflective of the views of young women and through our partnership with RECLAIM we welcomed our first under-18 Panel member. Our diverse and dynamic team brings a wealth of experience and fresh perspectives to our mission. To find out more about the Panel and its members, please visit: <https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/equalities/women-and-girls-equality-panel/>

“I put myself forward to join the Panel’s meeting with Andy Burnham last year, not knowing what to expect. I assumed it would be similar council meetings I’ve attended, which I’ve found quite boring! However, the amazing women on the panel created such a lovely and comfortable environment, and as a young person, it was refreshing to be taken seriously and see my input valued and acted upon.

My favourite experience since becoming a Panel member was receiving training on Theatre of Oppressed which gave me insight into creatively solving social problems. Being on the panel, I’ve met strong, inspiring women who continually fight against patriarchy while uplifting others, ensuring that future generations won’t endure the same struggles.

To any young girl reading this, especially if you feel lost or controlled by fear, this is for you. Join us—strong, passionate women—and contribute to making a positive change. Together, we can create a better tomorrow for everyone.”

Binish Syed Qureshi – our youngest Panel member

2.1 GM4Women2028

The Panel continued to work with GM4Women2028 this last year. Panel members ran a listening workshop at the Dialogue, Deeds and Determination event held in Oldham to learn about local women’s barriers to good health. This insight fed into the development of the GM Integrated Care Partnership Health Strategy. Many of the newly recruited members learned about the GMCA Women and Girls’ Panel through attending the GM4Women events and hearing about the work the Panel does. Similarly, the Panel gets many expressions of interest throughout the year and channels this towards GM4Women membership and participation in their five working groups on Employment, Safety, Participation, Education, and Culture & Active Lives.

2.2 Creating an ecosystem

GM4Women has become an umbrella organisation who membership now stands at over 500 representing a broad range of activists including academics and activists, policy makers and community organisations, and charities and businesses. Their activities across the ten boroughs are helping to bring women’s organisations and male allies together to challenge and tackle the persistent inequalities reflected across all thematic areas. By July 2024, they had run events in six of the ten GM boroughs (Manchester, Trafford, Wigan, Oldham, Salford and Tameside). Stockport, Bolton, Bury, and Rochdale will be next. Through the Dialogue, Deeds and Determination events alone they have delivered 20 workshops reaching over 200 participants.

2.3 Data and insight

GM4Women2028 has a strong focus on data and produces an annual Pankhurst-Fawcett Scorecard which monitors progress (or lack thereof) on gender equality across the ten boroughs according to metrics that cover their five subgroups. As a Panel we utilise this data to inform our own priorities and encourage policy makers to recognise and address problem areas in their decision making, such as where the least progress is being made.

Key Insights from the latest Gender Scorecard:

- It continues to be very difficult to find data at GM level and even harder to find data showing differences within GM boroughs and neighbourhoods. It is also difficult to get intersectional data.
- In one case, regionally disaggregated data is not available without charge at the time of publication.
- The indicators measuring women's safety and physical activity show a worsening situation, and the gender pay between men and women is increasing.
- Over the first five years there has hardly been any sustained positive change across the 10 indicators.

As a coalition, GM4Women and the Panel has also begun to support primary research, for example, into the impact of the pandemic on women, including identifying further inequalities amongst women experiencing racial inequalities. With the University of Manchester, Rosalind Shorrocks and Anna Sanders, conducted primary data generation to see 'What Women Want' in the current socioeconomic landscape. Their study is a representative survey of 1500 women in Greater Manchester which explored GM4Women's 5 thematic areas: Employment, Transport and Active Travel, Safety, and Participation, as well as Care. The Panel has promoted these findings for consideration in meetings with key policy leads across GMCA. Some examples key findings are summarised below:

- A plurality of women in Greater Manchester do not feel their pay reflects their skill level, experience, and qualifications. Overall, 34% of women in Greater Manchester agreed that they were paid appropriately, while 46% disagreed.
- On the topic of public transport and active travel, the main barrier women gave when asked what stopped them walking more was that common distances they needed to travel to were too far (49%). However, a sizeable proportion of women (28%) said safety concerns were a barrier to walking more, with poor lighting and poor-quality pavements standing out as key issues.

This study has been valuable to the Panel's advocacy for women and girls and in showing the gendered aspect to all areas of life which needs to be considered by policymakers.

3. Internal developments

We held our first Strategy Day in February 2023 at the Alliance Manchester Business School to plan our work programme for 2024 and beyond. We welcomed our new Panel members, heard the latest gender equality data from GM4Women2028, and hosted representatives from the Violence Reduction Unit, TfGM, GMCA, the Good Employment Charter, GMP, and the Women's Health Strategy. Two Pankhurst Trust Manchester Women's Aid (PTMWA) volunteers supported us on the day

"Volunteering for the Women and Girls' Equality Panel has been a fulfilling journey, allowing me to engage with diverse perspectives and delve into the pressing issues affecting women in Manchester. Through constructive dialogue, we brainstormed actionable steps towards empowerment, touching upon various sectors, including my personal interest in healthcare. Interacting with passionate and knowledgeable women has been enriching, fostering personal growth and learning. Beyond the discussions, the experience has provided networking opportunities and a sense of community. I am eager to continue contributing to the Panel's mission and further fortify our organisation's impact." *Afia Javed PTMWA volunteer*

"Volunteering at the Women and Girls' Equality panel was a very insightful and inspiring experience. Not only did we get to listen in on the talks, we were also encouraged and welcomed to participate in discussions and share our experiences/opinions which was very exciting. Though some of the topics and statistics discussed were disheartening at times, the workshop didn't dwell on this and instead it focused on coming together and discussing what plans and strategies we can put in place in order to tackle the most pressing challenges women and girls face in Greater Manchester. It was very encouraging to be surrounded by such driven and determined women and it was a very enriching experience as a new volunteer." – *Lucy Kelly PTMWA volunteer*

3.1 Communication and information sharing

We have improved our internal communication systems by utilising Basecamp to store minutes, research, and other documents which members can access for themselves at any time and allows time for processing and feedback after the meeting. We also use this platform to share with our Allies Network news and research, as well as upcoming events and opportunities in the equalities sphere in Greater Manchester and beyond. We also now have Panel member bios on our website for our Panel members and we continue to post regularly on social media about Panel meetings and activities.

3.2 Strengthening internal governance

We have worked hard to strengthen our internal governance including by updating our Terms of Reference to reflect our mission and purpose, developing a Code of Conduct, providing DBS checks for members, and providing all members with a formal induction.

We have also written meeting guidelines with an emphasis on inclusivity, accessibility and maximising engagement, enabling our members to contribute effectively, whilst considering that they are giving us their valuable time and have other responsibilities to balance.

3.3 Training

One of our Co-Chairs is completing a Certificate Course on Gender Mainstreaming from Human Rights and Justice Group International. This will be a powerful asset for the Panel as we focus on bringing an intersectional gendered lens into policymaking in our city-region. In April 2024 Panel members and facilitators attended a Theatre of the Oppressed workshop ran by Julian Boal of Escola de Teatro Popular (ETP). Thank you to all 44 people who joined us, and to Odd Arts for co-hosting. It was a great opportunity to bring together activists from various groups (Reclaim, HOME, GMCA Women and Girls Equality Panel) interested in integrating Theatre of the Oppressed into their work. Julian emphasised the importance of shifting the traditional forum theatre storyline from 'good vs evil' to a focus on community organising and strategic alliances. As we strive to be more trauma informed, this type of approach enables a deeper understanding of the lived experience of women and girls and is a way to really value of voice and the felt experiences of women.

We are excited to have upcoming training on Neurodiversity delivered by Autism Uncovered this summer and continue to provide our members with valuable development opportunities that align with the Panel's work of empowering women and girls in all their diversity.

Our Co-Chair Emma Persand has completed the Health Inequalities Education Programme course as part of the Greater Manchester Equalities Education Advancement Programme, in partnership with Salford University. Her project focused on using a gender mainstreaming framework to identify specific health needs of women and girls to develop interventions.

4. Influencing Policymakers: The Past Year's Highlights

In November 2023, we held our annual in-person meeting with Andy Burnham where we reiterated our strong desire to be more deeply integrated into GMCA's decision-making processes and to support gender mainstreaming initiatives. We discussed our concerns with regards to childcare, women's health and employment, and access to business support for female entrepreneurs. Significant outcomes from this meeting include stronger links with TfGM, the #IsThisOkay Campaign, and securing support for a refresh of the Good Employment Charter. We also gained backing for a survey of female business owners to help determine what is preventing growth at crucial stages so that we can then implement focused change.

4.1 Health

Our Panel was actively involved in the development of the Greater Manchester's Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) Strategy, providing insight on the key concerns facing women's health from lived and professional experience. We provided written submissions, held a Panel meeting and organised a 'Barriers to Women's Health' outreach workshop to ensure a wide spread of women's voices were considered. Panel members advocated for removing barriers that women and girls often face in accessing healthcare, to avoid worsening outcomes and more advanced (and costly) care in the future. Our members also highlighted the importance of trauma informed practice and pointed to a lack of this being a contributor to women and girls disengaging from services.

As a result of our engagement, the Strategy makes explicit mention of the unequal distribution of unpaid labour, the impact of women's health and employment, and the differentiated needs and barriers to good health of women and girls. We have subsequently established a feedback-accountability loop with the GM Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) with regular meeting and updates to review how the concerns we raised are being addressed in the delivery of the Strategy. In addition to this, Panel member Gail Heath is the co-chair of GM Women's Health Strategy Steering Group, ensuring the active input of lived experience. An early win for the Strategy has been securing funding to develop Women's health hub services in GM.

In October 2023, Co-Chair Emma Persand attended a pivotal GM Women's Health Strategy Workshop which set out a collective vision and organisation of the group and established the key issues. Emma advocated for collaborative working amongst the attendees and their organisations, emphasising how vital the voice of the VCFSE sector is in advocating for a holistic and intersectional approach to women and girls' health.

4.2 Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

The VAWG group met frequently, exploring important topics such as the Domestic Abuse, Stalking, and Honour-Based Abuse (DASH) risk assessment tool, and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's report on the family court's treatment of domestic abuse victims. In addition, an important focus for the VAWG group over the last year has been to strengthen relationships with GMP's lead on VAWG, the Gender Based Violence Board (GBV Board), GMCA's Victims and Vulnerability Principal, and the Deputy Mayor for Policing, Crime, Criminal Justice and Fire, recognising the important roles these play in ending VAWG. There have since been several positive developments including:

- We continued to provide feedback and guidance to GMCA on #IsThisOkay Campaign, which aims to raise awareness about inappropriate and harmful behaviour towards women and girls and encourage bystander intervention. We have reviewed campaign outputs and gave suggestions for the focus of its second phase.
- We provided key feedback on GMCA's response to the National Public Consultation on the Police Code of Ethics which provides a framework for understanding expectations of professional and ethical behaviour and ensuring that the police service provides an ethical environment in the workplace.
- Our members participated in the Baird Enquiry as representatives of women's organisations with direct experience of working with women who have experience of custody. This independent inquiry into their experience of being arrested and taken into custody by Greater Manchester Police led by Dame Vera Baird.
- We have called for mandatory, sufficiently funded domestic abuse training for all officers, delivered by an external expert organisation with GMP resources.

“It has been quite the year for the Panel's VAWG working group as the world continues to be an unsafe place for women and girls. With the national domestic abuse numbers being at their highest recorded by Women's Aid, misogyny continuing to have impacts on and offline for our children and young people, shocking birth trauma report findings, and no improvement for women and girls trying to access the justice system, our group is passionate about making changes for the women and girls of Greater Manchester. The working group has grown in the last year with new members joining it. A wide range of women working on the front line, who have diverse experiences and skills to bring to our work are advocating for the women and girls of Greater Manchester with institutions, professionals, and public figures. This year the GMCA VAWG working group will be working on campaigning for sufficient, long-term funding for the VAWG sector, because we know the safety of our women and girls is worth investing in.”

Gemma Aitchison, Chair of the VAWG working group

4.3 Transport

In 2023, we continued to strengthen our relationships with key stakeholders in the transport sector, contributing to the Greater Manchester (GM) Bus Strategy and TfGM's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Digital Campaign. We also held an engagement session with TfGM to provide input into Phase 1 of the Local Transport Plan update. During this session, our members identified areas where high-level language could be revised to better acknowledge the real dangers that women and girls face in public spaces, emphasising the importance of public transport reliability for enhancing safety, particularly by minimising wait times at bus or tram stops, which can be critical in unfamiliar areas at night.

Over the next 12 months, we will continue to support TfGM with Phase 2 of the Local Transport Plan.

“As the Bee Network rolls out, we are committed to enabling Greater Manchester’s diverse communities to influence and shape the transport system. Our work with the Women and Girls’ Equality Panel is an important part of that. Over the last 12 months we’ve heard from members about their experiences travelling on buses in Greater Manchester (GM) which has informed the development of the GM Bus Strategy. We’ve also engaged with the Panel about the refresh of GM’s Local Transport Plan (LTP). The LTP sets the strategic direction for transport in GM and provides the foundation for policies that will help get us there. Ensuring that insights from the panel are being heard as the LTP is updated over the coming months is key.

Safety has been a key theme coming out of our work with the panel over the last year. As well as strategy and policy discussions, the Panel’s feedback has also been central to shaping campaign activity targeting unacceptable behaviours on the transport network.

We were also delighted to join the Panel’s recent Strategy Day where we met with members and heard about their priorities for transport in GM.

We’re delighted to have strengthened our working relationship with the Panel this year and are excited to continue our joint working in support of the Bee Network and the women and girls who rely on it.”

Emma Flinn, Head of Partnerships, Engagement and Inclusion, TfGM

4.4 Education, Skills and Employment

We would like to thank Panel members for their work on the Education, Skills and Employment working group. This task and finish group has come to a natural full term and after three years the time has come to broaden and shift our priorities. The Panel has taken forward topics from the group into 2023/24 such as refreshing the Good Employment Charter and integrating Gender Mainstreaming into GMCA policy development.

Since its inception, the Panel has been working with the Good Employment Charter. This year we pushed for a gender and sex lens on employment, to consider the specific experiences of women and girls in the workplace such as the impact of childcare, menopause, and sexual health (amongst many other issues) and how employers can mitigate these experiences. The Panel simultaneously acknowledges the limitations of ‘employment’ and the importance of also advocating for self-employed women and women who undertake unpaid work, and that many women will carry out a combination of these different forms of work.

We also continue to work with the Greater Manchester Apprenticeship & Careers Service (GMACS) and Curriculum for Life to support the development of content around confidence levels for teenage girls and women in STEM, as well as digital skills for women and girls.

We are keen for the GMACS to assess and respond to the structural barriers that prevent girls and women's participation in employment and work together in the future to address these inequalities through a trauma informed lens.

4.5 Doing strategic engagement better

A key focus for this year has been the need for more systematic consultation with not just the Women and Girls' Equality Panel but all the GMCA Equality Panels. We led the collective design of a framework for engagement which aims to ensure that intersectional perspectives are integrated from the initial stages of policy development. The framework requires speakers to outline the data they are using in designing their policies or projects, as well as a commitment to feeding back on how our input is being taken on board.

Additionally, it raises awareness of the Panels' existing data collection capabilities and the opportunity to gain further insights through case studies or direct engagement. We warmly thank the Youth Combined Authority for their practice and our use of the Lundy Model in this form, to ensure more meaningful inputs and participation in our meetings.

5. Community Engagement

This year, our panel has actively engaged in numerous collaborative initiatives and advocacy efforts to enhance community well-being and support various causes. Our work included issuing a joint statement with the LGBTQ+ and Disabled People's Panels on central government's proposal to close 1000 ticket offices and supporting the National Autistic Society in creating resources for autistic teenage girls by connecting them with Women's Aid, the Violence Reduction Unit, and GMCA.

Our members provided valuable case studies and contacts to the Disabled People's Panel to advocate for an improved benefits framework. We also collaborated with Manchester City Council to promote anonymous voting access for domestic abuse victims through training sessions and social media promotion for both the local and mayoral, and general elections.

In September, we formed part of the policy team for the innovative Right to the Streets' Legislative Theatre event, alongside Trafford Council, TfGM, and Greater Manchester Police. Additionally, we proudly participated in the International Women's Day walk alongside Pankhurst Trust Manchester Women's Aid staff and volunteers.

Looking ahead, our Panel members will be running two public workshops at GM4Women2028's public Dialogues, Deeds and Determination July event, focusing on capacity building for girls and young women in politics, advocacy, and campaigning, and moving from ideas into action.

6. Looking forward

The GMCA Women and Girls' Equality Panel remains dedicated to reducing gender inequality in Greater Manchester through strategic initiatives, public engagement, policy advocacy, and collaborative efforts. Our work is driven by a commitment to real change and the pursuit of equality for all women and girls in the city-region and beyond. We are establishing stronger connections across the 10 boroughs and are being increasingly recognised as an important fountain of data and insight, **funnelling experiences and voices from communities to policy makers.**

In the next 12 months we will continue to develop our profile as a key stakeholder in GM decision making. A key focus will be firming up the framework for engagement across the equality panels to make participatory and evidence-based policy making the standard across GMCA. We will pilot this framework with panel wide engagement on the Greater Manchester Police and Crime Plan Refresh.

The panel is also dedicated to furthering our collaboration with our fellow GMCA equality panels, ensuring that the intersectionality of women and girls' lives is embedded in our work, as well as voicing our solidarity with other marginalised communities. We are particularly keen to ensure the work of the equality panels influence a more gender-conscious distribution of GMCA resources under the 2025 Single Settlement, and would warmly welcome an additional strand to this investment that addresses multiple deprivation, and inequalities specifically.

As part of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Week in October 2024, we are organising an innovative event with employers, employees, trade unions, advocates, and policymakers focusing on practical solutions to improve the experiences of women and girls in the workplace. Taking common workplace challenges that women face as a starting point, we will use dynamic and interactive forum theatre tools to explore solutions in real-time. Together, we will come up with actionable recommendations for the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter.

We will continue to collaborate with GM4Women to advance gender equality in Manchester by 2028. This partnership includes building our Allies' Network, gathering data on women's needs, and participating in engagement workshops such as Dialogue, Deeds, and Determination events.

In November 2024, we will meet again with Andy Burnham to influence, advise, and challenge his manifesto commitments. We will use our position of influence to ensure that the implementation of the Greater Manchester Strategy Refresh provides further opportunities for advancing gender equality.

Going forward, the VAWG working group will continue to function as a 'critical friend' to GMP and will serve as an accountability function for the improved treatment of all victims and survivors, as well as promoting the implementation of the Baird inquiry's recommendations.

Using our members and their networks' expertise, we will be inputting into the combined authority's Gender Based Violence Strategy Delivery Plan 24-26 as it is implemented, ensuring that the voices of lived experience are embedded in the plan's priorities.

We are also looking into campaigning for more maternity and hospital based Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs), as the panel has identified this as a significant gap in provision.

We will be advocating for sustained long term investment into the VAWG sector, which has been underfunded and undervalued for years, so that specialist organisations can continue to support victims and survivors, work with perpetrators, as well as conducting vital wider prevention work, campaigning, and training statutory services.

7. Further information

More information on the Women and Girl's Equality Panel can be found here

www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/equalities/women-and-girls-equality-panel/

If you would like to keep up to date on the work of the Panel and subgroups, you can join our Allies Network. Just email womenandgirls@pankhursttrust.org and ask to sign up to our Basecamp. Through Basecamp we will share useful information about topics that affect women and girls in Manchester and ask you for your input.

You can also keep up to date and get involved with the Women and Girl's Equality Panel by following GM 4 Women 2028 www.gm4women2028.org or on

www.twitter.com/GM4Women2028

The Women and Girls Panel is facilitated by The Pankhurst Trust

www.manchesterwomensaid.org/