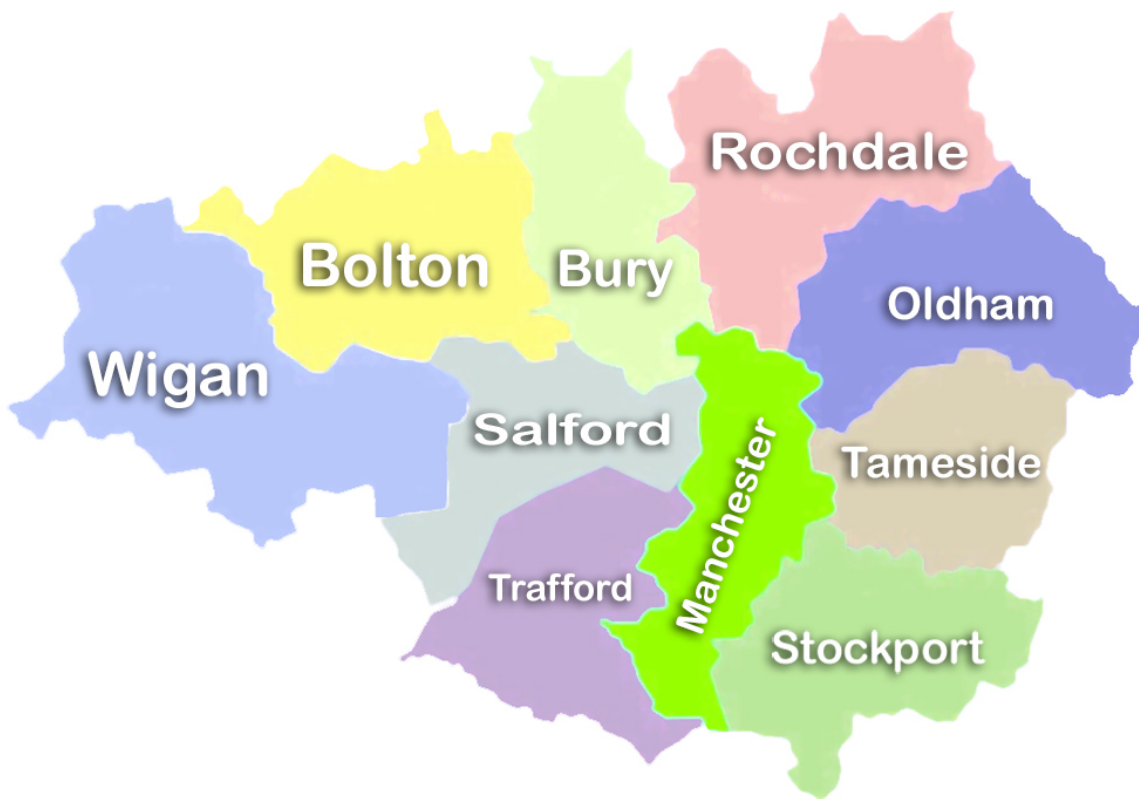


Greater Manchester Disabled People's Panel

Overview- GM Big Disability Survey: Covid-19



Executive Summary

The Greater Manchester Disabled People's Panel is a Greater Manchester wide, pan-impairment Panel, made up of 14 Disabled People's Organisations (organisations that are majority led and staffed by disabled people), and is convened by the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People. From the outset of the pandemic, member organisations of the Panel have been working to support disabled people, many of whom have been isolated from information, support and access to basic provisions. The Panel has met on a weekly basis since mid-March, sharing information, resources and inputting wherever possible the voice and experiences of disabled people. Having recognised the impact digital exclusion and isolation would have from the onset of the pandemic, the Panel sought to make the Community Hubs more accessible, known and available to disabled people. Throughout the initial crisis stage, when working to improve the situations most affecting disabled people, the Panel were asked for the evidence it had of disabled people's experiences.

To support the existing lived experience, knowledge and expertise of the Panel, two surveys were therefore commissioned to evidence the impact of the pandemic on disabled people across Greater Manchester. In order to make this gathering of information and data accessible, many Panel member organisations supported disabled people to complete the survey, including over the phone.

In addition to the Panel members widely circulating the surveys amongst their members and networks, the surveys were hosted on gmconsult.org, shared through social media, included in mainstream media press releases and circulated through partner agencies in order to hear from a wide variety of disabled people.

Once the survey was closed, GMCA provided an impartial analysis of the data. The findings of the survey confirmed the Panel's assertion that disabled people were being disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The survey confirmed that disabled people are experiencing social isolation, reduced social care support, issues relating to access to food, medicine and information, and a severe impact on mental health.

Key Findings

Two surveys were commissioned to understand the views of disabled people since the outbreak of Covid-19. 677 people took part in the full survey and 630 (93% of respondents) of these identify as disabled. An easy read version was also available and this had 259 participants, 60% of which identified that they had a learning disability.

20% of participants of the full survey received a letter from the Government to indicate that they were in the 'high risk' group for the Covid-19 outbreak. Of the 80% that did not receive this letter, 57% reported having support needs of which only 19% are getting all of their needs met.

90% of respondents said that the pandemic has had a negative impact on their mental health.

31% of respondents to the full survey were not at all aware of the community hubs.

Accessibility to the hubs varied slightly by impairment with those who identified their impairment as 'hearing' having the highest proportion of respondents that found the hub not accessible at all.

A third of disabled people believe that their local authority is not doing anything significant whilst 76% of disabled people are dissatisfied with the help provided by the government. A third of disabled people believe that the government is neglecting disabled people.

56% of respondents had experienced some difficulty sourcing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) if it was needed with those in Tameside saying that they had the most difficulty.

62% of respondents have experienced one or more health visit being stopped due to Covid-19.

A third of disabled people are worried about their housing situation and 37% said that their housing was not accessible or only partially accessible.

Disabled people are less satisfied with their care plans since the outbreak of Covid-19. Prior to the outbreak, 58% felt satisfied or very satisfied and this has reduced to 35% after Covid-19.

Recommendations

The survey and this report has explored the experiences of disabled people during the initial crisis phase. As we ease out of this phase of lockdown, disabled people are at significant risk of being further marginalised and excluded. The Panel makes the following recommendations.

Equality Impact Assessments: The Panel recommends that all public bodies providing services to disabled people in Greater Manchester should undertake Equality Impact assessments of their Covid-19 responses and involve disabled people in the assessment of these. The recommendations from these assessments must then be actively put in place, to ensure the recovery phase and any future peaks do not further negatively impact on disabled people.

Digital Inclusion: The Panel recommends that digital exclusion recognised as an urgent priority (56% of digitally excluded people are disabled people (ONS 2019)). Digital exclusion is severely impacting upon disabled people during this pandemic. The Panel recommends the provision of digital devices to enable digital inclusion. The panel also recommends that the device itself will not solve digital exclusion, but that the costs of data/broadband and the support and training must also be included for the successful inclusion of disabled people.

Accessible Information: The Panel recommends that accessible information be produced consistently. Access to information is vital to enable disabled people to make informed choices about their lives. Public health information and government guidance in particular must be concise, accessible and clear to enable disabled people to make informed choices to ensure their safety. The Panel recommends that information should be provided in an accessible format to every disabled person (as per Accessible Information Standard). Accessible formats include easy read, large print, braille, audio and BSL.

Include Disabled People in Decision Making: For the recovery transition and the aftermath of this pandemic not to perpetuate the same isolation from services provision and support in the future, the Panel recommends disabled people's organisations are included in all levels of decision making. Disabled people and our organisations must be involved in the development of systems and policies from the very onset,

and at local, regional and national levels. The situations faced by disabled people in Greater Manchester and nationally exposed the lack of consideration and inclusion of disabled people in national emergency planning.

Isolation, Safety and Mental Health: Prior to the pandemic, mental health services were already heavily impacted by austerity, leading to widespread shortages in mental health support services. It is critical that disabled people – and others experiencing mental health distress – are able to access support. The Panel recommends in order to combat the numerous, urgent mental health crisis many disabled people are in (including social isolation; anxiety & depression; increased risk of domestic abuse; food insecurity; access to CAMHS and addiction) that there is an urgent prioritisation of funding and resourcing mental health support.

Support independent living for disabled people: Long term strategy must be developed to support independent living in the community, reversing the effects austerity has had on disabled people's rights to live their lives in a place of their choosing, with access to the required support. The Panel recommends a re-prioritisation of independent living, and that this needs to be recognised as an equal, vital right, in accordance with Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.

Personal Assistance / Carers: The Panel recommends that measures including clear avenues for accessing PPE; flexibility in direct payments being used to pay for alternative PAs or equipment; LA and providers creating a "pooling mechanism" for emergency PA/carers cover; and pre-emptive permission to pay family/friends if PAs/carers have to self-isolate be put into place to prevent current crisis situations for disabled people as we move into the recovery phase, and to improve the emergency planning should there be future peaks or crisis situations.

Statutory Standards, Social Care Assessments and Health Care: The Panel recommends that the Care Act 2014 standards be kept as the minimum required standards. The Panel recommends these measures be implemented to ensure that disabled people do not continue to experience unnecessary consequences, on top of the pandemic itself.

The development of a BAME disabled people's organisation: Despite extensive cross-circulation of the survey, BAME disabled people were underrepresented. The Panel recommends the development of a BAME disabled people's organisation. Panel members offer to support the development and creation of a 'BAME' pan-impairment disabled people's organisation in Greater Manchester.

The Panel recommends the development and resourcing for a disabled people's organisation in each of the 10 boroughs: The current boroughs without an established local disabled people's organisation (Bolton, Bury, Oldham and Trafford) corresponded with the lowest contributions from disabled people in these areas. In order to ensure localities are including disabled people in their decision making the Panel recommends the development, resourcing and inclusion of disabled people's organisations within each of the boroughs in which there is currently a gap. There are Panel members who can support this work.

Employment: The Panel recommends that the GMCA, local authorities and other key public anchor organisations in each borough conduct an urgent EIA as part of their COVID 'return to work' plan and engage with disabled employees to agree reasonable adjustments. The Panel also recommends that the GMCA and GM Employment Charter ensure that clear guidance and standards are developed to ensure disabled employees within all Charter Supporter organisations are supported to return to work.

Education: The Panel are concerned that children who have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are not receiving the same level of support. The Panel has been told that some children with EHCP were unable to continue attending mainstream schools, and that little or no support was provided. The Panel recommends that Greater Manchester should aspire to have a fully supported inclusive education system.

Utilise the knowledge, insight and value of the lived experience of Disabled People's Organisations: The Panel recommends the expertise, advice and guidance that the Panel and disabled people's organisations can provide be fully utilised, in order to "build back better" with disabled people.

Web: GMDisabledPeoplesPanel.com Email: panel@gmcdp.com

Phone or Text: 07367 754 595