

Inclusion and Equalities Strategy

Annual Report for 2024

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Transport for
Greater Manchester

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1. Introduction

In 2022, we launched our Inclusion and Equalities Strategy for 2022–26, laying the groundwork for more inclusive and equitable policies, services, and employer responsibilities. Last year, we reported on the first twelve months of progress, showcasing some of our equalities initiatives and shining a spotlight on the work being undertaken to improve inclusion across the transport network, within our organisation and through our work as part of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) group and the wider Greater Manchester (GM) family.

This Annual Report marks our second year since the launch of the strategy, celebrating the milestones achieved in the last twelve months and setting the direction for the year ahead.

Why we're doing this

As part of our four-year strategy, we are committed to accountability, ensuring we deliver on our promises and demonstrate progress. It is important that we share with our communities the work being done across the transport network to promote inclusivity, improve accessibility, and ensure that our policies, strategies, and responsibilities as an employer meet the diverse needs of everyone in Greater Manchester.

As well as celebrating successes and promoting accountability, this Annual Report allows us to reflect on our strategy. It enables us to track our progress, review our objectives and actions, and ensure that we remain on course to achieve our goals.



Who is responsible for action?

It is everyone's responsibility at TfGM to take action and support delivery of our strategy. Specific oversight is embedded through our Equalities Strategy Oversight Group (ESOG) with senior officer membership from across the organisation – reflecting the breadth of our objectives.

The role of ESOG is to oversee delivery of the strategy, respond to the data and insights we're gathering in line with our objectives and set the direction as our approach evolves. Along with TfGM representation, ESOG membership includes the equalities lead from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, which makes decisions about public transport policies, strategies and funding, and a representative from Breakthrough UK, the Disabled People's Organisation that manages TfGM's Disability Design Reference Group.

We also recognise that addressing systemic challenges – such as race equity, gender inequality, and socio-economic deprivation – requires a collaborative, place-based approach that brings together a range of stakeholders to create meaningful, long-term change. Interventions responding to some barriers are likely to require a system approach and include action from outside the transport sector.



Why does inclusion matter?

Transport is more than a means of getting from A to B – it is a key driver for the economy, for social justice, and equality. A well-connected transport system helps people access jobs, education, healthcare, and essential services. It ensures that no matter where someone lives in GM (or outside of GM and travelling in), they can access the opportunities they need to succeed.

However, from evidence and insight, we know that poorly planned or inaccessible transport systems disproportionately affect those with protected characteristics, including disabled people, older adults, low-income communities, and ethnic minorities.

These groups often face barriers such as limited mobility options, longer travel times, or inaccessible routes that prevent them from fully participating in society. By investing in an inclusive and accessible transport network, we can address these inequities, removing barriers and creating a system that supports the needs of all.

Beyond transport, we also recognise our role as one of the city-region's major employers and contributors to the local economy. Through fair employment practices, social value initiatives, and an inclusive workplace culture, we aim to lead by example in promoting equality and opportunity for all.

As a public authority, we operate within a clear legal framework that guides how we work and ensures fairness, accessibility, and inclusion in everything we do.

Legal frameworks, such as the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), and other relevant strategies, shape not only our approach to planning and delivering transport services but also how we manage our responsibilities as an employer and community partner.

These frameworks guide us in meeting our legal obligations, upholding the rights of underrepresented or disadvantaged groups, and contributing to a GM where everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances, has an equal opportunity to flourish.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is a legal requirement for public bodies like ours to make sure that equality is at the heart of everything we do. Introduced through the Equality Act 2010, the PSED means that when we develop policies or make decisions, we must think about how they will affect people from different backgrounds. This includes considering how we can eliminate discrimination, promote fairness, and encourage positive relationships between different groups.

Embedding lived experience through participation into our decision-making processes is central to putting equality at the heart of everything we do. This means listening to the voices of both people who use or are impacted by our services, as well our workforce, and who have firsthand experiences of the challenges and barriers we're trying to address. Their insights influence policies and services that genuinely meet the needs of GM's diverse communities.

Protected characteristics and the things we must consider

Age	A person belonging to a particular age, for example 32 years old, or a range of ages, for example 18–30-year-olds.
Disability	A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial, long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
Gender Reassignment	Gender reassignment relates to any person who is undergoing, proposing to undergo or has undergone a process (or part of a process) of reassigning their sex/gender.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Someone who is legally married or in a civil partnership.
Pregnancy and Maternity	Pregnancy and maternity discrimination is when one is treated unfairly because you are pregnant, breastfeeding or because you have recently given birth.
Race	Race means being part of a group of people who are identified by their nationality, citizenship, colour, national or ethnic origins.
Religion or Belief	Religion or belief can mean any religion or philosophical belief.
Sex	The Act protects both men and women from discrimination on grounds of sex.
Sexual Orientation	Sexual orientation covers a person's orientation towards people of the same sex, the opposite sex or persons of the same and opposite sex.
Socio-economic duty	The socio-economic duty requires public bodies to actively consider how their decisions can reduce the inequalities experienced by people facing socio-economic disadvantage.

2. Our objectives

Our objectives reflect TfGM's responsibilities as a transport provider, anchor institution, and employer. We review our objectives annually to make sure they're accurate and reflect latest progress.

Notably, following a phased approach which began in September 2023, all bus services – totalling 577 routes, 1,600 buses and accounting for more than 160 million trips per year – are now under local control as part of the Bee Network and accountable to the people, businesses and communities of GM. The Bee Network is committed to making public transport, walking, wheeling or cycling more inclusive and accessible for everyone.

Our current objectives are set out on this page.

As a transport provider, TfGM will:

1. Fully understand GM people and places, existing inequalities and evidence-based decision making, including intersectionality, and apply that understanding in everything we do.
2. Enable diverse communities to co-design, shape and influence the GM transport system, including addressing barriers to participation.
3. Actively seek to address systemic transport inequalities and maximise the opportunity through the creation of the Bee Network to deliver an inclusive and accessible transport network.
4. Embed shared learning and maximise relationships and cross-sectoral partnership working through the GM system.

As an anchor institution, TfGM will:

5. Use all opportunities to tackle inequalities and support equality outcomes through our organisational policies and procedures, including ensuring consistent and meaningful benchmarking and monitoring.
6. Maximise our role within the GM civic institutions to enable Greater Manchester Strategy priorities.

As an employer, TfGM will:

7. Empower our workforce to have a voice and provide opportunities to inform policy.
8. Continue to improve the quality of data we hold to understand the diversity of our workforce.
9. Seek to embed an inclusive culture within the organisation that welcomes and encourages a diverse workforce from across Greater Manchester communities.

3. Data and insights

We take an evidence-based approach to prioritise action in support of our objectives and to track progress against them. Improving the quality of the data and strengthening our approach to fully understanding GM people and places remains core to our objectives.

Over the last twelve months, we have gathered data and insights to build a picture of where we currently sit against our objectives and what areas require further focus in the year ahead.

- Census data gives us a picture of all the people and households in GM.
- Acorn uses geodemographic segmentation to provide a detailed understanding of the various types of people who rely on transport and make journeys on the network.
- Data on ease of travel, affordability and safety analysed by protected characteristics, including socio-economic deprivation, is gathered through three annual surveys: the National Highways and Transportation Survey, the Network Principles Survey and the Fares and Ticketing Survey.
- Workforce data for all TfGM employees is monitored to understand the extent to which our staff profile reflects GM's diverse communities. This does not include colleagues employed by operators.
- As part of our statutory obligations, gender pay gap data is also monitored for TfGM employees.
- Additionally, customer feedback and insights through lived experience are gathered through various channels and help to bring further richness to the data.



Headline summary

An overview of the key themes coming from this collective picture of data and insights is included below. GM's population currently stands at 2.8m people, with the following demographic breakdown:

Sex – 51% of Greater Manchester residents are female, 49% are male.

Disability – 24% of GM's population have identified themselves as being disabled.

Gender identity – 0.1% of the population are trans men, 0.1% are trans women and non-binary and all other gender identities equal 0.1%.

Age – almost 15% of GM's population is aged 65 or over, and 32% is under 25.

Ethnicity – 29% of GM residents are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. At least 91 different languages were spoken as a main language in GM in 2021.

Faith/Belief – 47% of GM residents describe their religion/belief as Christian. The second largest group is Muslim, with 13%. 1% are Hindu, 1% are Jewish, and 32% identified as having no religion.

Socio-economic status – 45% of GM residents are in the 'Stretched Society' or 'Low Income Living' ACORN categories. This is a far higher share of the population than the UK as whole (33%).

Sexual orientation – Around 3% of GM residents identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual.



Gender

We know that women are more likely to 'trip chain' when taking their child or children to school – meaning that they make one larger journey, with multiple stops for different errands, rather than individual trips, impacting on their ability and willingness to walk, wheel, cycle or use public transport.

As of December 2024, in TfGM, women made up 39.4% of the workforce. In the latest gender pay gap data published (March 2023) women earned 95p for every £1 that men earned (comparing median hourly pay) and women made up 29.9% of employees in the highest paid quarter, and 38.7% of employees in the lowest paid quarter.

Security and personal safety remains a key issue for women who use public transport – something that is reflected in insight captured at both a local and a national level. Women and girls have told us that feeling safe on the transport network is a top priority with concerns about harassment, anti-social behaviour, and a perceived lack of visible security measures.

Our regular surveys show that women report feeling significantly less safe while walking compared to the overall average. While the average level of safety reported across all protected characteristics is 75%, this figure is lowered by the responses from women, 82% of whom express concerns about their safety.



Religion

Religion in GM reflects a rich diversity of faiths and beliefs. According to the 2021 Census, 'people of faith' – that is, all those who affiliated with one of the religious responses on the census – accounted for 63% of all residents, or just over 1.8 million people. Those with 'no religion' accounted for 32% (915,590 people).

Over the last decade, we have seen a changing religious profile across GM. Between 2011 and 2021, there was a decline of 19% among residents who said they were Christian whilst residents who said they were Muslim increased by 61%. Those who said they were Jewish rose by 12% and Hindus by 19%.

The region's changing religious landscape highlights the importance of understanding and responding to the evolving needs of different faith communities.



Disability

Almost a quarter of GM residents had some level of disability, or long-term limiting condition, at the time of the last census. Living with a disability is one of the biggest barriers to accessing public transport or travelling actively.

We also learnt of the barriers disabled people faced when applying for The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) passes. These included finding the evidence needed, accessing services to sign-off the application and finding the forms long and confusing.

According to national research by the National Centre for Accessible Transport, 92% of disabled people have experienced barriers on at least one mode of transport and make almost 40% fewer journeys on public transport than non-disabled people.

We also know that disabled people in GM are more likely than the GM average of 77% to report that fares are unaffordable. Although this has improved significantly, from 46% in 2022 to 69% in 2024, we know there is still more we can do to remove these barriers.

We collect ongoing insights from groups representing a range of disabilities, alongside our Disability Design Reference Group (DDRG) who are instrumental in sharing their views and experiences, helping us to better understand the barriers faced by people with disabilities.

Anti-social behaviour remains a significant concern, making many passengers feel unsafe and uncomfortable, particularly at peak travel times when the transport network is at its busiest.

Other themes have been around the need to ensure our infrastructure and fleet are accessible for all disabled people with a focus on consistency so that the layout can be learnt. Groups who are deaf or have hearing loss have also highlighted the need to ensure British Sign Language (BSL) is represented more across our customer information.

Finally, ensuring our frontline staff are adequately trained in inclusion is key to removing barriers that some disabled people feel when travelling.

As an employer we ask employees to disclose equality monitoring data, but our records do not hold a disability data for over 28% of our workforce; over the next year we will work to address these gaps. Of the information we hold, 4.8% of colleagues identified as disabled.



Ethnicity

GM is a diverse population with at least 91 different languages spoken as the main language according to the 2021 Census, with Urdu, Arabic, and Polish being the most common apart from English.

Between 2011 and 2021, all ten GM boroughs saw an increase in the number of ethnic minority residents. The 2021 Census estimated that there were 821,801 GM residents from an ethnic minority, equating to 28.7% of GM's population. However, this is not evenly distributed across GM, with some communities experiencing significantly higher concentrations of ethnic minority groups.

Within TfGM, we do not hold data about the ethnicity of over 16% of our colleagues. We will develop plans over the next year to encourage more colleagues to report their data to improve completion rates.

Within the data we hold, the percentage of Black colleagues has increased slightly to 3.2%, and 6.5% of those colleagues are Asian. However, we recognise that this is not fully reflective of the diversity within GM's communities.

People experiencing racial inequality are less likely than White British residents to agree that they are getting a fair deal for the fares they pay, however there have been some improvements over the last two years with their agreement rising from 52% in 2022 to 71% in 2024.

In comparison, in 2024 78% of White British residents felt that they were getting a fair deal for the fares they pay.

When considering whether they can afford to travel by public transport as much as they like, people experiencing racial inequality's agreement has risen from 58% in 2022 to 73% in 2024. This figure is still lower than White British people where 79% agree they can afford to travel as much as they like on public transport.

When considering travel behaviours, we know that GM residents from a Black or Black British ethnicity are disproportionately more likely to travel by bus than other ethnicities and have lower levels of car ownership. People experiencing racial inequalities report the lowest levels of ease of all protected characteristic groups when making multi modal journeys (68% vs 75% GM average).

Nationally, Department of Transport research published in February 2024 found that people from ethnic minority backgrounds were most concerned about discrimination on public transport. They were also more likely to worry about violence and harassment, with factors such as younger age and living in certain urban areas likely contributing to these concerns.



Age

The population of GM aged 75 and over is projected to increase by 50% by 2041.

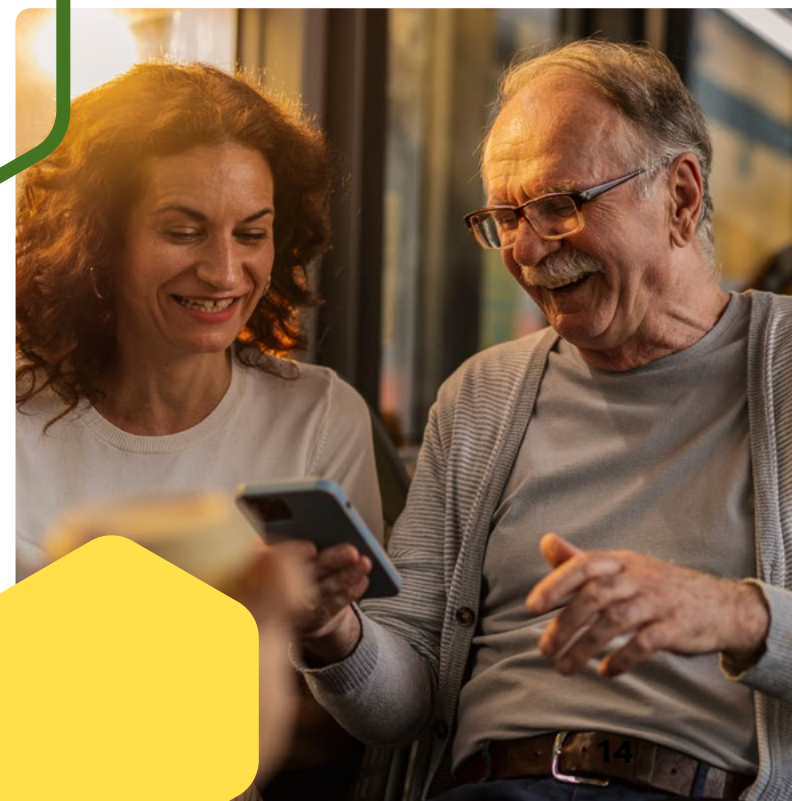
We know that across GM three out of five people aged 75 and over are digitally excluded in some way with a third having never used the internet.

In GM, around 460,000 students travel to and from more than 1,200 schools and further education institutions every day. Education-related travel makes up 15% of all trips in the region, and during peak travel times – between 8am to 9am and 3pm to 4pm – nearly half of all trips are connected to education.

From engagement with young people, safety when using public transport has been raised, particularly referencing feelings of unease when walking to and from bus stops or stations.

Public transport is a lifeline for many young people, with school and college travel representing the biggest use of buses, trams, and trains by this group. Our engagement with young people has also highlighted the importance of promoting active travel for this group alongside the use of travel concessions such as Our Pass.

Older adults in GM also face specific challenges related to transport and the built environment, being more likely to report difficulties with uneven pavements, parked cars obstructing pedestrian paths, and other hazards that can impede safe and comfortable walking. However, data shows that older adults (65+) are comfortable with multi-modal journeys, with 83% reporting ease compared to an average of 75% across GM.



Socio-economic status

In GM, residents in the 'Stretched Society' and 'Low Income Living' Acorn categories (which typically have below average household incomes), are more likely than average to be bus users.

Survey data shows that overall perceptions of fare affordability (measured by the question "do customers agree that they can afford to travel by public transport as much as they like?") have improved significantly, rising from a low of 56% in 2022 to 77% in 2024.

According to the GM Residents Quarterly Survey, published in November 2024, approximately 9 in 10 respondents (87%) reported taking steps to save money due to the rising cost of living. It also showed an increase in people choosing to cycle as a cost-saving measure and reducing non-essential journeys on public transport.

Sexuality

Within GM, the 2021 Census shows that 89.3% of the population are heterosexual, 2% are gay or lesbian, and 1.4% are bisexual.

(Source: TfGM TRADS Survey 2022)

Over 20% of our colleagues have not disclosed their sexual orientation, of those who have, Gay and Lesbian employees make up 5.5%, and 2.5% identify as bisexual.

A qualitative study conducted at the University of Manchester explored the experiences of lesbian women aged 18 – 25 using buses in the city-region. Key findings revealed that many participants feared being openly gay while on public transport, particularly when traveling with a partner, and often faced the sexualisation of lesbian couples.

(*"The L Word": Exploring how sexuality impacts experiences and mobility of lesbian women using buses in Manchester* – 2024).



4. Action over the last twelve months

Over the past twelve months, we have worked hard in line with our objectives to respond to what our data and insights tell us.

As a transport provider...

We have appointed a new Disability Advocate

The past year has seen GM's Bee Network Committee appoint its first ever Disability Advocate.

Cllr Tracey Rawlins took up the new role in October 2024 to advocate for the needs and experiences of disabled people, ensuring they are represented on the Bee Network Committee which is responsible for taking key decisions on transport and active travel in the city region.

It comes after Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, signed up to the national Accessible Transport Charter. Outlined in this charter is a commitment to the appointment of an advocate role to key decision-making bodies.

The role was developed in collaboration with representatives from Breakthrough UK, which manages TfGM's Disability Design Reference Group (DDRG), and the GM Disabled People's Panel – one of the Mayoral equality panels, ensuring it reflects the principles of the Charter while also aligning with the needs of local communities across the region.



“

I'm incredibly proud to have been appointed as the first Disability Advocate for the Bee Network. This role allows me to ensure that the voices and needs of disabled people are heard and represented at the heart of transport decision-making in Greater Manchester. I have lived experience of disability and understand firsthand the challenges faced by disabled people when using public transport.

It's essential that our transport system is accessible, inclusive, and meets the diverse needs of all of us in Greater Manchester and I am committed to working closely with Transport for Greater Manchester and our communities to make that a reality.

Cllr Tracey Rawlins – Bee Network Committee Disability Advocate

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We have co-designed the new Bee Network App with communities

Building on our work around customer information undertaken last year, we have continued to engage with equality groups and individuals to develop the Bee Network app further. We recognise its importance as a tool to support accessible travel for a wide range of customers.

Co-designing solutions with our communities and those with lived experience is a central part of the commitments outlined in our objectives. By working directly with equality groups, we have ensured that the app is able to cater to the diverse needs of all users, with particular attention to accessibility, inclusivity, and ease of use. After holding a series of engagement sessions in early 2024 focussed on the journey planner and bus tracking features, we established a group of fourteen individuals who provided feedback as part of our 'Bee Network App User Group'. This group ran across six months from July to December 2024 and participated in a monthly feedback survey as well as an engagement session to discuss feedback in more detail.

The app user group was made up of representatives from equality groups who had participated in the previous phases of engagement, spanning a range of different perspectives including people who are blind or vision impaired, deaf or hearing impaired, have cognitive or neurodivergent conditions, mobility impairments, older people, and travel trainers who support young disabled people. We also collected feedback from young people to get their unique input and ideas for improvement.

Maintaining ongoing involvement of the group throughout the process has enabled us to create a continual feedback loop through which their valuable insight has helped to inform ongoing improvements and adjustments to the app, and we have kept them informed of new developments.

The feedback so far has helped to influence aspects of the app development including:

- Delay and disruption information
- Journey planner filters
- Introduction of bus tracking and journey tracking
- Introduction of GMP live chat
- Progressing digital passes e.g. Our Pass.

This engagement, along with wider customer feedback, research, and accessibility audits, will continue to inform the ongoing evolution of the app features and functionality.



We have supported people with dementia

We have worked with Alzheimer's Society and GM dementia campaigner, Joy Watson, to raise awareness and improve accessibility for people living with dementia, ensuring they have the support they need to navigate the Bee Network with ease.

Enhanced dementia training is being rolled out for all frontline staff, including operators, drivers, and those working in transport interchanges. This training ensures that staff are equipped to recognise the signs of dementia, respond appropriately, and provide the necessary support to passengers living with dementia.

We have also donated a Bee Network bus stop and bench to Broughton House Veteran Care Village in Salford. Installed in their tranquil garden, this replica bus stop has quickly become a focal point for residents, sparking conversations and evoking positive memories in a calming outdoor space.



We have adjusted pedestrian crossings to reflect our communities

We're adapting crossing times at pedestrian signals to better meet community needs. Longer crossing times are being introduced at key locations to support older and disabled residents, ensuring safer and more comfortable journeys. In areas with larger Jewish communities, "Sabbath Crossings" have been implemented to accommodate those observing religious practices.

We have championed breastfeeding on the Bee Network

Evidence shows that access to transport can be a significant barrier to breastfeeding, and we wanted to ensure that all mothers feel supported and welcome when travelling on the Bee Network.

As part of our commitment to supporting breastfeeding mothers and promoting inclusivity across the transport network, we launched an information page during World Breastfeeding Week 2024.

The page provides clear guidance for breastfeeding mums using our transport network, reinforcing the message that it is illegal to ask a woman to stop breastfeeding in public and no woman should ever face harassment or negative comments for doing so.

We have incorporated British Sign Language into our marketing campaigns

In 2024, TfGM incorporated British Sign Language (BSL) into a marketing campaign for the first time. The 'It's Your Move' campaign shared real life stories from residents about their experiences of active travel. The campaign video featured Sameena Khan and the walking group she leads as part of Bolton's Deaf Asian Women's Group.

TfGM worked collaboratively with Bolton's Deaf Asian Women's Group to produce the video showing their active travel story and highlighted the group's efforts to promote walking as a way to improve physical, social, and mental wellbeing.

This BSL video became the best-performing content of the campaign, generating 8,000 views on social media and receiving overwhelmingly positive comments for its inclusivity and representation. Its success underscores our commitment to ensuring that diverse voices are heard and reflected in the transport system we're shaping.



We have made the concessionary passes application process easier and fairer

In August 2024, following targeted engagement in response to feedback, refreshed disability concessionary pass forms were made available on the TfGM website.

The new form was created based on regular feedback from disabled people on the difficulties they encountered when applying. Beginning in 2023, the Customer and Ticketing teams at TfGM embarked on a period of engagement with various representative groups, to understand the issues they were facing and how we could respond.

Insight and feedback told us that the old form presented a number of barriers, ranging from the challenge of gathering supporting evidence for applications and neurodiverse conditions not being specifically addressed, to the complexity and overall length of the process.

Taking this feedback as a starting point, we undertook desktop research comparing the process for concessionary passes with that of other transport authorities and the Department for Transport's guidance. The draft updated forms were then tested with user groups to further inform the design.

We specifically looked at how we could improve the application process for disabled applicants with autism, as current guidelines set by the Department for Transport prevent us from including the word "autism" in the learning disability form, as it goes against regulations.

To mitigate against this, we included neurodiversity in the "refused driving licence" form and worked to ensure that the application process was as simple and accessible as possible.

The updated form has also been drafted to include an expanded list of 'automatic qualification criteria' that would make it far simpler for disabled people who are in receipt of Personal Independence Payments from the Department of Work and Pensions and/or Blue Badge Holders to automatically qualify.

Many applicants will now also be eligible for automatic renewals, following a review of the form renewal process. Applicants with life-long conditions such as visual or hearing impairments will no longer be asked to complete a new form every 3-5 years and will instead be automatically issued a new pass.

Finally, the form has been updated to widen the pool of people who are able to sign off on an application on behalf of customers. The idea is to include charities and registered support workers, not just GPs and certain Local Authority officers.

These changes have been tested with disabled people's groups, ensuring the form design meets their needs and addresses their concerns. Further engagement will be carried out to ensure the form is working as intended, and to explore development of an online application process.

As an anchor institution...

We have worked closely with the GM Equality Panels to develop solutions to key issues

We believe in co-designing solutions with our communities whenever possible, ensuring that the voices of diverse groups are central to our policies, strategies, and decision-making.

In GM, the Mayor has commissioned equality panels for each of the nine protected characteristics to ensure that the voices of diverse communities are heard and represented in policy, strategy, and decision-making.

We maintain close relationships with these panels, actively engaging with them to gain valuable insights and feedback. These panels not only provide support but also offer constructive challenge to ensure that our services and initiatives reflect the needs of all communities.

Over the last year, the GM Equality Panels have played an integral role in shaping a range of key initiatives, including the design of major infrastructure projects and the development of our new bus fleet. They have also provided critical input into strategic documents, such as the Local Transport Plan.

Looking ahead, we are focusing on strengthening these partnerships by expanding opportunities for engagement and exploring new ways to incorporate the panels' feedback into decision-making processes.



We have supported the night-time economy with 24-hour transport

On 1 September 2024, a 24-hour bus pilot was launched on the V1 and 36 bus routes, providing accessible transport to around 135,000 GM residents. This pilot is a key part of the wider Greater Manchester Night-Time Economy Strategy and was developed in partnership with GMCA.

Targeting workers in the night-time economy, including hospitality and shift workers - often young people, women, and those on lower incomes - the pilot aims to offer an affordable and reliable alternative to expensive taxis, reducing financial pressure and improving personal safety for those who are most vulnerable. It is designed to promote greater equality by supporting those who need transport the most, enabling them to commute safely and affordably.

As a part of the pilot, the Business Stakeholder Forum was developed, which gathered key business and employer stakeholders who operate in the night-time economy, as well as the University of Salford. The Forum has been instrumental in shaping the design of the pilot, to ensure that businesses' voices were at the heart of the pilot design.

Key themes which emerged through the Forum and influenced final design of the pilot included safety and affordability. As a result of the insight gathered, several measures have been developed:

- A mobile-responsive team of TravelSafe Support and Enforcement Officers to respond to incidents
- A team of officers based at Piccadilly Gardens
- Buses with enhanced CCTV
- Promotion of Live Chat functionality for onboard and onward journeys
- A pilot with Strut Safe, offering a free phone service for those walking alone
- A commitment to maintaining price parity with daytime fares, supported by promotional materials featuring the price of tickets.

We have worked with Credit Unions to improve public transport affordability

Historically, across the UK, customers receiving the largest discounts or cheaper tickets for travelling on public transport are those who can access direct debit products or annual tickets. Customers would need either a credit check or to have the financial means to purchase a yearly ticket with a large one-off payment.

We have worked in collaboration with local Credit Unions to give those who may be more financially vulnerable the ability to access the maximum discount for bus travel in GM, removing barriers to larger discounts and making public transport more affordable for those who most need it. This follows the introduction of a new annual ticket enabled by the full roll out of the Bee Network on GM's buses.

Members of a credit union will be able to access financial services that support the customer in spreading the cost of the new annual pass throughout the year. This will save prospective passengers around £5 a week. The scheme is open for any registered Credit Union serving people living or working in GM.

Around 14 credit unions across GM have joined the scheme via a local Credit Union Consortium with the potential to benefit around 145,000 members. Credit unions have also agreed to market the scheme, attracting new members to both the Credit Unions across GM and to seeing public transport as a viable and affordable option for them.

As an employer...

We have developed our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan

The refresh of our employer EDI policy, provided an opportunity to demonstrate the commitments and principles of the policy and how they apply practically in working life.

We carried out an organisational review of employer/employee focused EDI early in 2024. This assessment, led by independent specialists, involved a survey sent to all TfGM employees, eight focus groups, and interviews with senior leadership.

The findings revealed areas of strength, such as a strong foundation of inclusivity and confidence among colleagues to express themselves and challenge discrimination. However, the review also highlighted opportunities to improve leadership support for inclusivity, ensure clear reporting processes for discrimination, and engage customer-facing teams more effectively on EDI issues. It also noted the need for better metrics to track progress.

Using this feedback, we developed an EDI Action Plan, co-designed with colleagues who volunteered as EDI Champions. The plan brings together ongoing initiatives with new commitments to create a more inclusive and diverse workplace.



We have strengthened our commitment to employee staff networks



Last year, we reported on the establishment of the new “Rainbow Network”, a staff network to celebrate and bring together LGBTQ+ colleagues, fostering a sense of community and inclusion within our organisation. Twelve months on, we’re excited to share an update on the fantastic work they’ve been doing from the network’s co-lead, Jake Dryburgh.

The Rainbow Network is the culmination of latent demand and determined focus within the organisation to make things better. It’s an honour to be able to co-lead the network through its first year, and we’ve worked hard to reach out to our wonderful LGBTQ+ colleagues who exist in all facets of TfGM. Not only this, but we’re also engaging with active allies and advocates across our broad and diverse workforce and bringing them along to understand what the LGBTQ+ communities experience both at work and in the wider world.

Colleague networks are a big part of the modern workplace, especially across our Greater Manchester partners. One of our areas of focus over the last twelve months has been developing relationships with

our partners to create a group of LGBTQ+ colleague networks across local government and the transport sector. This lets us share our wealth of knowledge, including the challenges of engaging with frontline and customer-facing colleagues.

For instance, we’ve worked with our friends at KeolisAmey Metrolink to understand how they communicate to a largely offline and lone-working driver cohort and started to incorporate this into our communications out to Facilities Operations colleagues. We’re also hoping to start engaging with our Bee Network franchised bus operators and our colleagues in the rail sector such as at Network Rail and Train Operating Companies.

We’ve also worked closely with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service (GMFRS) joint Rainbow Network. We’ve held joint socials with the GMCA’s network and are now mutually inviting one another’s members to events where we can, broadening our horizons and sharing the good times with new friends from across the region.

It’s been an honour to co-lead the Rainbow Network over the last twelve months,

along with the wonderful Eva Fonseca. Our experiences of a well-led and well organised staff network in a previous workplaces have driven us to push and promote the network wherever we can and really get to know our colleagues and members across TfGM.

In the past few months alone, my confidence in speaking to our stakeholders has improved greatly. Our experiences as co-leads have helped us, for instance, engage with and appoint senior sponsors. Our sponsors act as our voice to the wider world when we aren’t around. We value their input to the network’s activities as a critical friend, as well as a visible champion for TfGM staff to demonstrate the organisation’s commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

It’s a very exciting time for colleague networks at TfGM, and I can only look forward to seeing what networks are established by the time the next report is published!

Jake Dryburgh, Rainbow Network Co-lead shares his reflections twelve months on from the network having been established.



We have introduced a “Chat with a Leader” initiative

Following colleagues at TfGM taking part in the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) survey, which led to the creation of an EDI Action Plan, the outcomes highlighted the role of senior leaders in championing inclusivity and fostering open conversations.

To support this, TfGM launched “Chat with a Leader”, inspired by TfGM’s successful “Brewlette” scheme, where colleagues are randomly paired for informal chats. This new initiative connected senior leaders with colleagues from diverse backgrounds.

At the time, we witnessed shocking unrest and disorder across the UK. We wanted to use this as an opportunity to ensure anyone at TfGM who felt at risk due to their ethnicity or religion had a chance to share their perspectives and talk about their lived experiences with a senior leader.

Conversations between staff and leaders began in September 2024 and feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Participants said they found the chats meaningful, insightful, and personally rewarding, helping to broaden perspectives and strengthen understanding across TfGM.

The impact from this activity is that all participants wanted to have more conversations! We have had more volunteers register an interest and we aim to do another round of chats, adding more time, opportunity and topics for people to talk about with Leaders. We also want to include more leaders to make sure that TfGM is a place where everyone feels confident that they belong; and that GM is a place that is inclusive, welcoming and where hate will never be tolerated.

“It truly felt like a place where I could speak freely”

“I just think we should do it more often”

“It was refreshing to see members of the [leadership team] interested in the views of those staff that represent a minority group”

“As a result of the conversation, I feel more confident and reassured that senior leadership is actually concerned about us”

We have developed a “Speak Up” programme

As an employer, we’re committed to building an inclusive and welcoming culture where people feel listened to, wellbeing is supported and staff can bring their whole selves to work. There are policies and mechanisms in place to raise concerns about poor behaviour or bullying, however, we know there’s always more we can do to ensure our colleagues feel able to raise any concerns they may have.

Over the last twelve months, we have been working to establish a new “Speak Up” programme –a network of trusted advocates who listen to and provide support to colleagues about any concerns they might have relating to workplace behaviour.

A Speak Up advocate will support a colleague to speak up when they feel that they are unable to do so through other routes. They will listen to concerns, provide a sounding-board and offer support and guidance to remove barriers to feeling unable to speak up.

The Speak Up programme was introduced following feedback through our annual workforce survey where staff provided feedback around improving workplace culture and empowering colleagues to raise concerns about poor behaviour.

The Speak Up programme has been developed to sit alongside and complement our other well-known routes, such as our grievance or whistleblowing processes. It is part of our broader commitment to providing a safe and dignified work environment for all employees, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or religion.

We have held a series of EDI focused “Lunch and Learn” sessions

As part of our commitment to cultivating an inclusive and diverse workplace, we host regular “Lunch and Learn” sessions for colleagues. These informal events encourage learning and conversation around important equality topics, providing a platform for colleagues to engage with issues that shape our working environment and beyond.

In the past year, we have explored topics such as neurodiversity in the workforce, highlighting the unique strengths and perspectives of our neurodivergent colleagues, and offering strategies to create more supportive workspaces.

To celebrate International Women’s Day, we focused on the challenges and successes of women in senior leadership, showcasing role models and discussing pathways to equality. We also welcomed a university researcher who presented findings from a study on the experiences of lesbians using public transport, shedding light on the intersection of gender, sexuality, and public spaces.

Through these sessions, we aim to deepen understanding, break down barriers, and celebrate the diversity of our workforce.



5. Next steps

We're proud of the progress we've made over the past year, highlighted through our case studies and examples of good practice. However, we know there's still more to do.

Through ongoing development of our corporate plans and policies, further delivery and development of the Bee Network, refreshing our long-term objectives for transport, and through our GM system collaboration, we will continue to ensure evidence-based action is being taken in support of our equalities objectives.

Areas of action for the year ahead, responding to our data and insights, include:

- **Adoption of the GM People Inclusion Standards** which set out an overarching vision for workplace inclusion, and will encourage us to work together, to challenge ourselves and others, and foster a diverse and engaged workforce that is representative of the communities we serve.
- **Gender** – A continued focus on improving perceptions of safety on the transport network, particularly for women, and prioritising action to tackle violence against women and girls through maintaining TfGM's White Ribbon accreditation. Action around addressing the gender pay gap will be prioritised and a new women's colleague network embedded.
- **Sexuality** – Work with the LGBT Foundation and GM LGBTQ+ Equality Panel following their research on capturing the experiences of queer, trans and non-binary people in relation to hate crime and discrimination and whether transport is an area of concern.
- **Faith** – A focus on building stronger relationships with groups representing Faith in line with the GM Faith, Belief and Interfaith Covenant. The Covenant has been developed by the Greater Manchester Faith and Belief Advisory Panel, an advisory body made up of Faith, Belief and Interfaith organisations from across the city-region, and Greater Manchester Combined Authority. It commits to collaboration across the city-region on a range of important issues.



- **Disability** – Strengthening training for frontline staff and shaping further improvements to vehicles, infrastructure and customer channels and information in support of inclusive journeys. From an employer perspective, we will work towards reporting disability pay gap data through improving our overall level of workforce data. A new neurodiversity colleague network will be embedded and disabled colleagues will be further supported through the GM Elevate leadership development programme, for racially diverse and disabled employees.
- **Ethnicity** – Ensuring that the race equity framework is embedded in our approaches considering TfGM’s role as a transport provider, anchor institution and employer. As above, working towards reporting race pay gap data and supporting colleagues through the GM Elevate programme. A race colleague network will also be embedded.
- **Age** – Following consultation, the final School Travel Strategy will be adopted and further actions implemented to support children, young people to choose to walk, wheel, scoot, cycle or use public transport to get to school and access further education. We’ll also be working with the GM Older People’s Panel to explore options and feasibility around an extension to the GM Older Person’s Travel Pass to include added benefits (in line with Our Pass).

To enhance workplace diversity and ensure representation of younger people, we will introduce T-level placements within TfGM. These placements, designed for 16–19-year-olds, focus on vocational skills and provide a pathway into skilled employment, higher education, or apprenticeships.

- **Socio-economic** – Developing a new tool for GM to monitor Transport Related Social Exclusion (TRSE). TRSE is described as being unable to access opportunities, key services, and community life as much as needed, and facing major obstacles in everyday life through the wider impacts of having to travel to access key destinations.

Active monitoring of TRSE will provide a better understanding of the scale of the issue in GM, what the barriers are that need to be addressed, how changes to the network would impact and what interventions from outside the transport sector are needed. We’ll also be developing strategies on our approach to both Fares and Concessions to ensure these are inclusive and aligned with broader goals.

Additionally, TfGM voluntarily adopted the Socio-Economic Duty (SED) under Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 in 2022. However, the government plans to make its implementation statutory in 2026. In preparation, we will contribute to a call for evidence later in 2025 and work with GMCA and other GM partners towards a consistent approach to embedding SED across decision making.



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