

What is the Greater Manchester Health Commission?

Greater Manchester suffers from some of the worst health in the country.

To counter this, the Greater Manchester Health Commission was set up in 2007 to improve the health of the two and a half million people living in Greater Manchester. The Commission is the formal partnership made up of leading representatives from Greater Manchester's Councils, NHS Trusts, and the Higher Education Sector, who are working together to put right and tackle health inequalities in the city region.

The Greater Manchester Health Commission's vision is of a Greater Manchester with improved life expectancy, health, and well-being, and reduced inequalities.

Why do we need a Greater Manchester Health Commission?

Greater Manchester is a thriving area, rich in tradition and culture. However, the city region also suffers from some of the worst life expectancy and health problems in the UK. Health inequalities show that on average a child born today in Greater Manchester is unlikely to live as long as a child born almost anywhere else in England.

There are big inequalities between different areas across Greater Manchester. For instance, alcohol is responsible for almost twice as many months of life lost for men in some areas of the city region as in others.

In Greater Manchester different organisations are increasingly working together under new city region arrangements. These aim to ensure better joined-up working, co-ordinated by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) Executive, which now oversees seven new Commissions. These look at key themes affecting the quality of life of Greater Manchester's two and a half million residents.

One of these is the Health Commission. This is responsible for providing leadership and challenge on major health issues. These include tobacco and alcohol consumption, all of which have a negative impact on the quality of life of our citizens.

The Commission asks challenging questions of organizations within Greater Manchester and beyond, such as why the public puts up with such low life expectancy figures compared with the rest of the country, and whether Greater Manchester's organisations take health seriously enough in their wider work.

The Health Commission's work includes lobbying central government for improvements on health, and making informed recommendations to key organizations in Greater Manchester. As the Commission is made up of a wide range of bodies, it is developing a shared vision on behalf of local people.

Health in Greater Manchester

The Greater Manchester conurbation still has the lowest life expectancy at birth in England for men and women. Large inequalities in health remain between Greater Manchester and England, and within Greater Manchester as a whole.

The major disease areas contributing to this gap are coronary heart disease and cancer, with an increasing proportion linked to alcohol misuse.

To improve on this and to narrow the health inequalities gap, we will need to improve the area's performance on tackling health inequalities at a level greater than that required nationally.

Greater Manchester Health Commission Priorities

The Health Commission has selected as its focus some key areas that are most likely to harm the health of its 2.5 million citizens

These are:

- **Alcohol**
- **Cancer**
- **Coronary Heart Disease**
- **Health Inequalities**
- **Unhealthy Weight**
- **Mental ill-health**
- **Tobacco**

The Commission is focusing on these areas of work, whilst also tackling wider cross-cutting areas that are having a direct effect on the quality of health, including worklessness, air quality and fuel poverty.

A lot of excellent work is already underway across Greater Manchester, and work on the key areas most likely to harm citizen's health is already underway. The Commission's work reflects the drive and focus for a healthier Greater Manchester with improved health, well-being and reduced inequalities.

Greater Manchester Health Commission Success Stories

Though there is still much work to do, the Commission has already achieved some early successes. These include

- Influencing public debate in 2009 on tobacco and formulating a series of radical proposals. These were set out within a manifesto which received positive media coverage. The Commission later successfully lobbied central government on the banning of vending machines and point of sale advertising of tobacco products.
- Influencing local organisations to adopt tackling fuel poverty as one of their key objectives. The Commission set itself a challenge to combat fuel poverty for vulnerable people, and promoted affordable warmth schemes.
- Influencing the priorities for the city region for the next 20 years via the Greater Manchester Strategy. In particular, the Commission helped make sure the impact that ill-health has on worklessness was highlighted within the plans for the city region.
- The Audit Commission undertook a review of the Health Commission's progress in September 2008. It found that the Health Commission had made an impressive start, raising the awareness of the importance of health issues among key organisations throughout Greater Manchester.
- Highlighting the issue of unit pricing for alcohol with coverage in the national, regional and local media.
- Raising the profile of the issue of child obesity with news stories and features in more than 50 national and regional newspapers and on the web.

The Facts and Figures

Some key facts

Alcohol

- Hazardous and harmful drinking estimates in Greater Manchester are higher than England and North West averages.

Tobacco

- Over 21% of people in Greater Manchester smoke. This figure is above the national average.
- Over 5,000 people die each year from a smoking-related illness in Greater Manchester.

Obesity

- Cardiovascular disease contributes to approximately one third of the difference in life expectancy between Greater Manchester and the average for England.
- One in every five people in Greater Manchester is obese.

Cancer

- From 2003-05 there were 14,538 new cases of cancer excluding non-melanoma in Greater Manchester.
- The number of people contracting and dying of cancer is higher in Greater Manchester than the average for England.

Visit www.greatermanchesterhealth.org.uk for more information