EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ‘Democratic Devolution: The Future of Greater Manchester’ is a collaborative venture between Dr Andy Mycock, a youth citizenship specialist based at the University of Huddersfield who lives in south Manchester, Cllr Beth Knowles and Harriet Andrews, director of The Politics Project, a Manchester-based organisation that specialises in youth democratic education.

The Young Citizens’ Assembly was generously funded by the Political Studies Association (psa.ac.uk), the UK’s leading organization representing academics in political science as well as practitioners, policy-makers, teachers, and students in higher education. It was kindly hosted by the People’s History Museum, the national museum of democracy who seek to engage, inspire and inform diverse audiences. We are grateful for the support for the event from a wide range of regional and national stakeholders including Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Manchester City Council, the Manchester Evening News, BBC North-West, the Institute of Public Policy Research North, Youthforia, Involve, the Democratic Society, and 42nd Street.

The Democratic Devolution Young Citizens’ Assembly brought young people from across the Greater Manchester region together to learn about devolution and have their say on what is important to them in the formation of the city region and their futures as Greater Manchester citizens. The first meeting of the Young Citizens’ Assembly was hosted at the People’s History Museum in Manchester on April 25th 2016.

The young participants worked with stakeholders from across the Greater Manchester region in a series of interactive workshops and discussions aimed at generating new ideas about the future of the Greater Manchester city-region. Over the course of the inaugural Assembly, three themes emerged which appear to strongly influence the attitudes of the young people towards devolution in Greater Manchester.
Many of the young people expressed concerns about a lack of knowledge or access to information in their schools, colleges, and local communities about devolution to Greater Manchester. Many also felt unable to discuss Devo Manc with their family and friends. Although most were politically engaged and had a keen interest in current affairs, they noted that media and politics internet sites they used typically focused on national rather than local or regional news. The professed lack of knowledge amongst young people across Greater Manchester about devolution highlighted the potential risk of a future generation of ill-formed and disengaged citizens. There is a demand and urgent need for the creation of a citizenship education programme in Greater Manchester’s schools and colleges which focuses on devolution to the region. It should provide opportunities for young people to engage with politicians and policy-makers both within their schools and colleges but also though youth-representative bodies such as local authority youth councils. Such a programme will take time to develop and implement though. As such, there is an urgent need for the engagement of young people through a sustained public information campaign in the run up to the inaugural Greater Manchester ‘Metro-Mayor’ election in May 2017. This will help redress the professed lack of knowledge by Greater Manchester residents of all ages.

Policy makers need to urgently work towards developing new systems that allow young people to engage and consult with politicians and policy-makers about the co-design and delivery of local public services. These may include initiatives such as creating a Greater Manchester-wide Youth Assembly, involving representatives from local authority youth councils and other representative bodies, schools and colleges, and local communities. In addition, policy-makers should consider ways to engage with young people using social and digital media. Policy makers should also consider the merits of voting age reform for local authority and Greater Manchester metro-mayor elections. Lowering the voting age to 16 could encourage political parties and Greater Manchester metro-mayoral candidates to design youth-focused policies and engage with young voters not only at election time but on a sustained basis.
3: WHO ARE WE? BECOMING GREATER MANCUNIANS

Young people are struggling to engage with the proposition they will soon become citizens of Greater Manchester. Although the creation of a ‘metro-mayor’ may well provide a political figurehead to represent and speak for the region, the young participants were skeptical that this alone would be sufficient to bind the cities, towns, villages, and local communities of Greater Manchester. The potential challenges in imagining a new city-region identity are significant, with many young participants who live outside the city centre expressing concerns regarding the dominance of the city of Manchester.

Politicians and policy-makers need to develop political narratives that are inclusive of all Greater Manchester’s citizens but also embrace local forms of civic diversity and identity. To harness the positive aspects of local and regional cultural identities across the Greater Manchester region, and celebrate its radical history, the young Assembly participants identified the need to devolve cultural and arts-based solutions at local levels to create connections between communities to celebrate. This could take shape in more events and cultural activity outside of Manchester city centre, greater local media coverage of community events and local heritage being unearthed, reimagined and showcased by residents across Greater Manchester.

By identifying these emergent themes, we believe this report highlights how Greater Manchester’s youngest citizens can contribute to developing devolution, alongside the voluntary sector, community groups and local businesses. We encourage the stakeholders and architects of ‘DevoManc’ to take note of the desire of this generation of Greater Mancunians to be heard and take up the mantle of allowing greater consultation and collaboration before deals are signed and delivered. This may well be our greatest opportunity in decades to shape a new city – it is vital that young people from across the region are able to contribute to the future of Greater Manchester.
INTRODUCTION
The Future of Greater Manchester initiative provides a unique opportunity to draw together and articulate the views and ideas of young people about the process, purpose, and extent of devolution in Greater Manchester. The initiative has the potential to establish a consultative network for young people from all ten of the local authorities that form the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). This network will allow under 21s to learn about devolution and have their say on what is important to them in the formation of the city region and their futures as Greater Manchester citizens. As the foundations of city region devolution are still being constructed, it is vital its architects listen to the opinions of younger citizens, as the people who will take the city forward and make devolution their own.

The initiative has at least three principal objectives:

**NETWORKS AND IDEAS**

1. To develop networked opportunities for young people to discuss ‘DevoManc’ and identify their collective expectations, aspirations and concerns regarding devolution across the region.

**EDUCATION AND RESOURCES**

2. To provide educational resources and support to teachers and youth workers across Greater Manchester, offering young people opportunities to learn about and debate the key issues involved with devolution.

**EVENTS AND EXCHANGES**

3. To create a series of events where politicians, policy-makers, and a range of business, media, arts and culture and civil society stakeholders interact with young citizens and establish platforms for the exchange of ideas about devolution to Greater Manchester.

The initiative seeks to engage with young people aged 14 to 21 – an age-group overlooked in debates about devolution to Greater Manchester. While young people are often typified as being disengaged from the political process, research suggests current generations are keen to participate in democratic politics. They are however rarely consulted by politicians and policy-makers, particularly during periods of radical reform such as the one reshaping the Greater Manchester region.

The progressive devolution of powers in areas such as health and social care, education, transport, and business, and the introduction of a directly-elected mayor, has the potential to radically transform youth citizenship across the region. The initiative seeks to establish an on-going consultative forum for young people, developing knowledge about the scope and form of ‘DevoManc’ and encouraging engagement with the extensive network of political, economic, and cultural stakeholders on an equal platform.

The ultimate hope for this framework is to instigate the co-design of services in Greater Manchester with our younger population while they are curious about their place, identity and purpose in the region.
DEMOCRATIC DEVOLUTION: A YOUNG PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY
The Future of Greater Manchester initiative began with the hosting of a Young Citizens’ Assembly at the People’s History Museum in Manchester on April 25th 2016. The Assembly brought together over 100 young people and stakeholders from across the Greater Manchester region. They took part in a series of interactive workshops and discussions aimed at generating new ideas about the future of the Greater Manchester city-region.

The Assembly sought to inform young people about recent developments with regards to regional devolution and its potential impact on their lives. With this in mind, Dr Andy Mycock provided an introductory talk on the story so far regarding devolution in Greater Manchester, outlining its relevance and importance to young people. The Assembly also sought to develop debate by bringing together a true cross-section of expert speakers from across Greater Manchester to take part in the ‘DevoManc Dragon’s Den’.

Contributors, including Simone Spray (42nd Street), Sir Richard Leese (leader of Manchester City Council), and Jennifer Williams (Manchester Evening News), offered five minute ‘pitches’ offering a range of perspectives on the future of Greater Manchester after which the young participants voted for their favourite proposals.

**DEVOLVING DESIGN**

The main purpose of the Assembly was however to encourage young people to engage in debate with each other and co-design a vision for what they would like to see from devolution. These workshops flipped engagement with policy makers on its head, with the participants informing decision makers of what they would like to see and be part of, instead of ‘experts’ passing on their knowledge. A number of themed workshops were organized where the young participants worked with facilitators drawn from Greater Manchester’s politics and policy-making, business, arts and culture, media, and civil society communities. The workshops focused on five broad policy areas participants identified as important to them: education, health, transport, democracy and identity. The young people worked with their workshop facilitators to co-design policy proposals which were brought together to form a draft Democratic Devolution Manifesto.

**THE MANIFESTO**

The draft Democratic Devolution Manifesto, outlined at the end of the report, provides an opportunity to engage young people in discussions about the key issues involved in devolution. We hope for it to contribute to the development of a range of teaching and learning materials which can be distributed to schools and colleges (as part of citizenship education lessons), student unions and community youth groups in Greater Manchester.

We encourage organisations to work with young people to comment on the draft manifesto and submit further ideas.

We envisage that the the most popular of these could be converted into a final Democratic Devolution Manifesto which could be presented to each of the Greater Manchester mayoral candidates standing for election. The manifesto can also be debated by mayoral candidates at a special youth election debate and be distributed to the ten local authorities, including all elected councillors, as well as a wide range of regional and national stakeholders.
UNDERSTANDING DEMOCRATIC DEVOLUTION
The Young Citizens’ Assembly was an important first step, but sustained engagement from young people will be essential to ensuring that Greater Manchester seizes the opportunities devolution presents. During the event, we distributed a questionnaire to the young participants to gain a better understanding of their attitudes to political participation and their knowledge of ‘DevoManc’. Their responses provided a rich overview of some of the potential challenges and rewards of engaging with young people and encouraging democratic devolution across Greater Manchester.

The young participants were between 14-18 years in age and represented schools and colleges, community youth groups, University Students’ Unions, and local authority youth councils across Greater Manchester. We sought to engage with young people who could be described as politically engaged when compared to many of their peers, as we believed they provide a unique snapshot of the impact and resonance of ‘DevoManc’. Put simply, we were keen to find out what a group of highly politically-engaged young people attending the Youth Assembly knew about devolution to Greater Manchester.

It is unsurprising that just under 85% expressed a keen interest in politics, with many active within their schools, colleges, or universities as well as in their local communities. They reported that the internet and the mainstream media was key sources of political news information. Although more respondents identified the internet as their primary source of material, they believed that the media was more influential and trustworthy. Over half of the young participants read about politics in a national newspaper and nearly two-thirds watch national television news on a regular basis. It was noteworthy however that fewer young people engaged with local media or news.

The young participants identified a range of other influential sources of information about politics which supplemented the internet and media, with 70% identifying their school or college as important. However only two-thirds were aware they had citizenship education lessons – a statutory subject within the National Curriculum.
This chimes with other research which questions the consistency in the quality of citizenship education from school to school. Family was also seen as an influential source, with just over half of young people indicating that their parents provided information about politics. However only 30% respondents saw their friends as a source of information and 5% identified their community. Virtually no young person surveyed identified national or local politicians or political parties and institutions as a source of political information.

When we asked some general questions about their knowledge of politics, it was clear however that there was a relative lack of knowledge of local government and local democracy when compared to Westminster. For example, 93% of respondents knew the name of the UK Prime Minister, 83% also identified what political party was currently in government in Westminster, and 66% knew the name of their local MP. In comparison, 61% knew which political party was in power in their local council, 40% identified their local councillor, and only 28% could name their local council leader. Many of the young participants were also unsure about ‘DevoManc’. While 48% had heard of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, only 28% knew who the interim mayor for Greater Manchester was.

We were keen to find out how the young participants felt about local and national politics. For many, the overriding sense was one of dis-empowerment and exclusion from mainstream politics. A number of tensions were evident. For example, 71% agreed with the statement, ‘Young people like me have no say in what the UK government does’. This sense of civic dislocation was evident at a local level too. While the vast majority (75%) stated that they knew how local government made decisions on their behalf, only 28% believed they had influence over issues in their local community or that their ‘voice’ mattered.
Of more concern to politicians and policy-makers across the region was the lack of understanding of and engagement with ‘DevoManc’. For example, only 26% stated that they knew about devolution to Greater Manchester and 75% felt that there were not enough opportunities for young people to influence debates about devolution to Greater Manchester. The possibility that some young people were already becoming sceptical of regional devolution to Greater Manchester was also evident. Interest in ‘DevoManc’ was varied, with 45% of respondents claiming they had followed devolution of powers to Greater Manchester. 50% agreed with the statement:

“There is no point in getting involved in discussions about devolution in Greater Manchester as nobody is interested in the views of young people”

There was also evidence of a lack of engagement with the inaugural Greater Manchester mayoral election, with only half of respondents stating they knew this would be held in May 2017. More encouragingly, 74% said that they would be happy to vote in the Greater Manchester mayoral election, though this figure was lower than for national (83%) and local (79%) elections.

This relative lack of understanding of or affiliation with local and regional government when compared with national politics and institutions can be evidenced in terms of identity and citizenship. When we asked the young participants about how important different group identities were to them, their sense of British identity was the strongest, with 74% identifying it as important, very important, or extremely important. Interestingly, local identity was cited as more important (68%) than a sense of English national identity (63%). However the Greater Manchester regional identity was slightly more popular (57%) than the more politically-divisive European identity (51%).

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<th>HOW IMPORTANT IS IDENTITY?</th>
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Overall, this small pilot survey was not statistically rigorous in terms of its sample size. It does however, provide a snapshot of some of the potential issues that might affect the development of an engaged and knowledgeable generation of citizens.

The relative lack of understanding about devolution to Greater Manchester and potential to engage with institutions of governance should concern politicians and policy-makers of all hues. It is unimaginable that young people in Scotland or Wales would express a similar lack of awareness of or engagement in their future political lives.
A DEMOCRATIC DEVOLUTION MANIFESTO
The main purpose of the Assembly was to encourage young people to engage in debate with each other and co-design a vision for what they would like to see from devolution. The themed workshops organised provided opportunities for the young participants to work with representatives drawn from Greater Manchester’s politics and policy-making, business, arts and culture, media, and civil society communities. The workshops focused on five broad policy areas participants identified as important to them: education, identity, democracy, health and social care, and transport.

**EDUCATION**

Some young people raised concerns about the impact of reforms of provision across Greater Manchester, particularly the introduction of ‘Free Schools’ and Academies, and the GCSE/A-level curricula on their educational progression. Many were concerned about the fragmentation of links between local schools and the potential impact on their shared sense of educational community.

However, issues of employability and career development dominated the Education workshop. Many of the participants expressed anxieties about the quality of the careers advice at their school or college. There was intense debate about the need to enhance communication and organisational skills, including job application techniques and more and better-quality work experience.

They saw a direct link between volunteering and employability and were keen for more opportunities to get involved in their schools and local communities.

- The introduction of a ‘Curriculum for Life’ to develop employability and career-planning
- Better careers advice with more input from employers – particularly about apprenticeships
- Local authorities to consult with young people about reforms to education provision in their communities
- The development of networks between different types of schools to share resources and ideas
- The introduction of a Greater Manchester work and voluntary experience programme
We asked our young participants to identify things they associated with Greater Manchester. Pride was a consistent response, with many drawing attention to the importance of cultural and ethnic diversity in shaping both local and regional identities. They also drew attention to the friendliness of people (some compared Greater Manchester to London), sense of humour, and optimism. Some were keen to express an identification with local history, particularly Greater Manchester’s political and economic history (Peterloo and the industrial revolution). Football, shopping, nightlife, and food were also popular choices. Culture was a key element, with references made to Greater Manchester’s impact in terms of music, literature, and popular culture. Less positive views were also expressed such as drinking, homelessness, poverty, food banks, unemployment and disparities in education, affluence and democratic representation. Some argued for a need for greater integration both in terms of community cohesion and building a common identity.

However, it was clear that many struggled to disaggregate the city of Manchester from Greater Manchester. Some of those participants who do not live in Manchester were concerned about the dominant role of Manchester in shaping the new city-region’s cultural and political identity, with detrimental implications for their own local identities.

Moreover, few participants were able to frame a sense of common Greater Manchester citizenship to underpin an emergent city-region identity.

- Introduce ‘Education for Greater Manchester’ in schools and colleges providing a focus on local history
- Provide more investment in local community-based arts and cultural programmes for young people rather than Manchester city centre
- Encourage a greater focus in local media on local arts, culture, and history outside the city centre
- Develop a programme of public events celebrating Greater Manchester (and not just the city of Manchester)
- Ask politicians standing to be Greater Manchester mayor what they think is a ‘Greater Mancunian’
As we have noted, many participants under the age of 18 feel excluded from local and national politics. They also felt unsure about current arrangements for local government and how the impact of devolution will change this in terms of who has responsibility for what services. We were keen to move beyond this shared sense of political isolation and asked the young participants how they might get involved and influence the devolution debate. A range of approaches were offered, including joining the youth wing of a political party, engage in social media and blogging, lobbying the council, discussing devolution with family and friends, writing to newspapers, and meeting with mayoral candidates and local MPs/councillors. A couple of participants were however keen to adopt more direct approaches to engagement by holding protests and demonstrations.

- Local and national politicians to set up regular ‘youth constituency surgeries’ in schools and colleges to listen to the views and needs of young people and respond.

- Establishment of a Greater Manchester Youth Assembly involving local youth councils and other young people from a range of groups and backgrounds.

- The introduction of a common political education programme in schools across Greater Manchester to educate young people about local government, democracy and devolution

- Lower the voting age to 16 in Greater Manchester Mayoral and local authority elections
- Host ‘youth election hustings’ for candidates standing for Greater Manchester mayor to engage with young people across region (which should also be broadcast via the internet to schools and colleges)
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Young participants in the workshop were clearly aware of the intense political debate about the National Health Service (NHS), particularly the on-going junior doctors’ strike. They were keen to stress the importance of community involvement in the design and delivery of health and social care, and the strengthening of connections between patients and the NHS. A number expressed an awareness of the need to take care of their own health, displaying a sophisticated understanding of the need to focus more on prevention of illness as opposed to using health and social care services.

- More time allocated to physical activities within the school curriculum
- Greater support for youth mental health services in schools and colleges
- Appointed youth representation on all Greater Manchester Foundation Trust Councils of Governors
- Health education classes in schools involving healthcare practitioners
- Peer-to-peer training for young people to support friends and families in adopting preventative approaches to good health
The workshop focusing on transport provided some of the most heated discussion among the young participants. Two key themes emerged: connectivity and cost. One criticism which came up frequently was the shared belief that the poor connectivity and prohibitive cost of Greater Manchester’s transport system had a significant impact on the quality of the lives of young people, with great inequality of access across boroughs.

Some participants, particularly those not connected by the Metrolink tram system, that there was a lack of standardisation in terms of the cost of travelling similar distances across Greater Manchester. They also found the lack of integration of the different forms of transport inconvenient and expensive. Concerns were also expressed about the safety of young people using public transport and also when walking or cycling.

- Better connections between areas outside of Manchester city centre (particularly the tram system)
- Extend availability of child ticket to 18 years of age
- Equalise and integrate public transport fares across Greater Manchester
- Provide more cycle lanes for young people to travel to schools and colleges
- Place greater emphasis on safety issues at bus, train, and tram stations
EVENT FEEDBACK
The young participants were positive about the Youth Assembly. When asked to provide some feedback, they reported enjoying listening to speakers and being able to ask them questions, develop their own ideas and present them, and mix with other young people.

Many of the participants described the event as ‘informative’, ‘engaging’, ‘varied’, or ‘interesting’. One noted ‘perhaps next time we could invite non-politics students to try and engage with less-informed groups in society’.

‘Allowed a much better viewpoint on devolution than seen in class’

‘Eventful, fun, and very interesting. Gives more understanding of the issues within Greater Manchester’

‘Discussing with a variety of different people about important issues’

‘Today has been extremely beneficial in discussing some under-discussed issues that I would have been oblivious to otherwise’

‘I really enjoyed collaborating with other people from Greater Manchester and creating the manifesto’

‘I hope to do more things like this again’

‘Informative day about what is happening in my city’

‘Through the day I gained a better understanding about what DevoManc is about’

‘A fantastic event that has allowed me to learn so much, voice my opinions and engage in conversations about really important issues’

‘Do a follow up event to see progress’

‘Gained a valuable insight and knowledge into Devo Manc with invitation to make a difference – wow!’

‘I enjoyed learning new things about my identity and culture’

‘I wish this would happen more often’

‘It was an interesting and inclusive experience that actually did allow us to get involved’
THANKS
We would like to thank the staff and young people from Oldham Sixth Form College, Altrincham Girls School, Xaverian College, The Derby High School, St. Ambrose Barlow, St. Monica's RC, Prestwich Arts College, Oldham Sixth Form College, Longdendale High School, Aquinas College, Wigan Youth Council, Rochdale Youth Council, Rochdale Youth Service, Trafford Youth Cabinet NCS Youth Board, 42nd Street, Youthoria, IPPR North, Manchester Evening News, People’s Plan, BBC North West, i-Citizen, Tuna Fish Media and the Manchester BME Network. We would also like to thank Politics students of the University of Huddersfield who help organise and deliver the event, particularly Helen Gleaves, Emily Broome, Greg Billam, and Phil Buck.

We would also like to thank all the staff at the People's History Museum for their kindness and support for the event.