

Explaining devolution for Greater Manchester

Q&As

The Q&A below is divided into three areas, to ensure people are clear about the new structures, know what it means at a tangible level, and have a stronger sense of how it affects them.

Q: What's changed?

Power has been brought closer to the people of Greater Manchester. A whole set of decisions about our services, the future of the area and how we help people reach their potential are now made in Greater Manchester rather than Westminster.

The ten areas that make up Greater Manchester can now act collectively through a new legal body called the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). These areas are City of Manchester, Stockport, Tameside, Oldham, Rochdale, Bury, Bolton, Wigan, City of Salford and Trafford.

There will be a new Mayor to speak up for the interests of the area as a whole – and more opportunities to work closely with local partners too, like the local NHS and other community and voluntary bodies. These freedoms mean we can better meet the needs and aspirations of people who live and work here

Q: So, is this just about a new Mayor?

The GMCA is jointly run by the ten local authority leaders and the Mayor of Greater Manchester. Once elected, this new Mayor will help our region speak with one voice, acting as ambassador and main point of contact for Greater Manchester.

But GMCA runs deeper than this, too. The Mayor and leaders are supported by a range of panels and other bodies which will look specifically at areas like transport, health and social care, planning and housing. For instance, the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership will take charge of Greater Manchester's £6bn health and social care budget – rather than it being decided in Westminster.



Q: How different is this from the old system?

At a local level, each of the individual authorities will stay the same, continuing to be in charge of the services they provide. So, if you live in Bolton and Bolton Council collects your bins, then they'll continue to do so. However, the creation of the GMCA means the ten authorities – which have a long history of working together – have many more powers and resources than before.

Previously, for example, we still had to ask national government for money to fund projects and services. But now we have control over this funding. We won't have to go and ask Westminster every time funding needs change or there's an issue that cuts across two councils. Likewise, the Mayor will be able to make other decisions without Westminster's say-so too, either independently or with the support of the GMCA councils or and other local bodies.

Q: OK... but what does this actually mean?

A whole range of decision making powers and responsibilities have been transferred to Greater Manchester from national government. The Mayor and GMCA leadership will have control over how we spend money on things like transport, health and social care, planning and housing. Rather than the ten councils individually asking the government to fund specific services and projects, we can work across the area. We can join up public services where it's needed, and think long-term about what is best for our region.

So, this isn't symbolic. It puts you closer to decisions. Your local councillor, for example, will be several steps nearer to making things happen. This will bring coherence to the area. Changes like this will create savings, help use funds more effectively and target new resources and investment in ways that directly benefit the area in visible and practical ways.

Q: What can we control now that we couldn't before?

The new areas we've now got control over are:

- Health and social care
- Business support
- Fire, police and crime
- Planning and housing
- Transport
- Low carbon
- Skills and employment
- Investment and business development

This means that on almost every major issue we can decide what happens right here in Manchester.



Q: Does this mean more money for the area?

Devolution isn't just about a big pot of money being given to us. First and foremost, it means we've got more freedom and flexibility over how the money we do get is spent. This means we can use money more effectively as we can see the opportunities to work together across Greater Manchester. For example, if there's an opportunity for Wigan and Salford to share a service, rather than having two different teams, then this creates savings we can spend elsewhere. So, indirectly it'll definitely mean more money.

On top of this we will also have access to new funds that help us grow and reform our services and infrastructure. These things really do mean additional spending. They include:

- £450m health and social care transformation fund
- £300m (over 10 years) housing investment fund
- Retention of 100% of business rates
- Access to £30m a year for 30 years to fund the region's infrastructure

Q: How will this affect my community on a day-to-day basis?

There are a number of good examples of how this process is already starting to change Greater Manchester.

- When it comes to transport and regen of town centres, Wythenshawe Interchange – the new bus interchange – has created a vibrant new hub in the centre. This has seen the number of visitors to area increase by 10,000 a week.
- On the question of housing, 'Empty to plenty' (a GMCA-funded empty homes scheme) means homeless people have been given new flats – and been re-united with children and families as a result.
- Devolution's also helping Manchester to firm up its place as a great world city. At Manchester Airport, for instance, a new direct flight route from Manchester to Beijing has created trade and tourism opportunities.
- Finally, when it comes to skills, Nu Traxx helps young people gain confidence after being out of work, and to find jobs using the Greater Manchester-wide Nu Traxx scheme. This is something that wouldn't exist without devolution.

Q: When will all this happen?

A lot of this stuff's already happened. The first devolution deal was signed in November 2014, with further agreements running through to through to July 2015. Listed below are the things that we've seen so far:

- Devolution of more than £6bn in health spending to GMCA and GM's CCGs so Greater Manchester can deliver better care for patients (April 2016)
- Allowed to retain 100% of business rates (most others only keep 50%)
- Given borrowing powers to fund growth
- Provision of an 'earn back' transport budget of £30m a year for 30 years, enabling schemes such as the £450m extension of Metrolink to Trafford Park to be brought forward
- The arrival of greater influence over skills training provision and helping long term unemployed back into permanent jobs, through the Working Well scheme (which is being extended)
- Greater influence and decision making over the European Funds (EUR413.8 million 2014-2020)
- The delivery of a 10 year £300m housing investment fund, aiming to deliver 10,000 new homes each year

Q: So is the whole devolution complete then?

No, at the moment we're about halfway through. The next big step will be the arrival of the new mayor in May 2017 – elected by you. And there are a number of other key things that are still to happen as well, as the whole process starts to bed down. These include:

- Creation of a life chances investment fund from April 2017, which will bring together funding from the Troubled Families programme, the Working Well pilot and Cabinet Office Life Chances Fund, into a single, Manchester-wide pot
- De-ringfencing of funds to allow investment in economic growth
- The merging of Manchester's Police and Crime Commissioner role with that of the new Mayor, allowing greater local flexibility, innovation and better coordination with other local services
- The devolution of adult skills to ensure the provision meets the needs of the region's economy (full devolution of funding will be achieved over the course of a three year period, starting in 2016/17)
- Identification, through the Spatial framework, of the land needed to meet housing demand and plots for business use to create 9,000 new homes each year – as well as extra jobs and more green space
- Stronger Together – strategy for Greater Manchester being refreshed and will be consulted on in 2017