

## STRATEGY



## Manchester City Council

# Developing a Quality of Life Index for Manchester

**Manchester has experienced significant economic growth over the past 20 years; however, many residents are disproportionately affected by poverty and poor health. Recognising this, Manchester City Council (MCC) aims to measure residents' quality of life to develop more effective policies.**

The University of Manchester (UoM) worked with residents in North Manchester to explore what they valued most for their well-being. As a consequence of this work, MCC joined the UN-Habitat Quality of Life Initiative (QoLI). UN-Habitat, the United Nations agency responsible for promoting sustainable urban development, developed the initiative with input from a broad group of academic advisers. The framework is designed to measure well-being in urban areas. Manchester is the first UK city to participate in the programme.

The QoLI requires the collection of a set of “global indicators” across nine thematic areas, closely aligned with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The framework combines both quantitative indicators and qualitative measures to present a more comprehensive view of well-being.

Each city was also able to develop a set of local indicators relevant to its own priorities and local context. This followed a facilitated workshop that identified local priorities and how to translate them into meaningful measures. These form the city’s QoLI, which is presented visually to highlight areas of strength.



We treated this as an action-learning project to understand what worked and what was more challenging. Early on, we found that identifying meaningful city-level data was not always straightforward. We formed a small project team of data analysts, policy officers, and colleagues from UoM and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), and consulted colleagues in transport, housing, and public health.

One challenge was gathering qualitative data; we knew an online survey would under-represent certain communities. However, access to the GM Residents Survey enabled us to populate the index. Priorities such as social cohesion, economic inclusion, and community facilities were more difficult to quantify, but we decided to include them.

**We successfully presented our experience at the UN Statistical Commission, and the index was also showcased at the World Economic Forum in Davos.**

Key lessons learnt are:

- A project like this requires dedicated resources – rather than being fitted around existing work.
- The QoLI methodology was helpful but needed to be adapted to the UK context.
- Though the QoLI is useful at the city level, we also want to visualise quality of life at a more localised level.
- The short length of the project meant that we weren't able to engage many community groups or residents and would want to do that in any future work.

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