

GM=EqAl Conference 2026: Equity by Design: Practice Through Lived Experience

Attendee Feedback Summary

Breakout 1: Trauma-Informed Response to Community Cohesion

Thank you for being in the room. Thank you for being part of the Trauma-Informed Responses to Community Cohesion session at Equity By Design. You gave us some of the most honest and important conversation of the day. Here is what we heard - and what we're going to do with it.

What the room said

You told us that asking people to repeatedly share their stories - on panels, in consultations, in funding bids - causes real harm. You named this as 'trauma-porn': extraction without care. You said this needs to stop.

You told us that short-term funding is incompatible with long-term community work. That the same conversations keep happening without change. That 'consultation exercises don't often work' - and you named why: the information doesn't feedback, and no-one is accountable for acting on it.

You asked, clearly and directly: who is getting paid? You named the gap between what community workers and people with lived experience contribute, and what they receive - compared to executives and statutory leads.

You told us that 'trauma-informed' is not a programme description. It means your hiring process. Your governance. Your data collection.

Your commissioning decisions. Not just the way a session is run.

You asked: 'Who doesn't feel safe enough to be here?' That question applies to every room, every table, every space we convene.

What GM=EqAl heard

We heard that the field is exhausted by repetition. We heard that trust is fragile and hard-won. We heard that the practical basics - food, transport, accessible spaces, the right language - matter as much as the strategic framing.

We also heard what we didn't hear. Racism and racialised community experience were not explicitly named in the notes. Given that this session was held in the context of the rise of visible racism in Greater Manchester, that absence matters. We are naming it here rather than papering over it.

What happens next

- These notes will be shared with GM=EqAl's membership and used to inform our work on the Spaces of Hope and Connection programme, particularly in the co-design phase running through to October 2026.
- The themes around remuneration and emotional labour will be taken to our steering group as a priority issue - including in relation to how we design lived experience participation within our own programmes.
- We will carry the question 'who doesn't feel safe enough to be here?' into the design of every future convening - and we will publish our answer.
- We will share a summary of the top priorities from all four breakout sessions with the full conference audience, and we will report back on what changed as a result.

GM=EqAl's Chair, Jules Palfreyman, will take these themes directly to the GMCA Cohesion Executive Group to press for action that delivers a fairer, safer Manchester.

An honest note

The absence of explicit anti-racism content in the flip chart notes - despite the session's explicit framing around visible racism in GM - is noted as a methodological gap, not an editorial choice. It should inform future facilitation design.

This was a 1-hour session with a mixed group of practitioners. We know it captured some of the field's thinking - but not all of it. The voices of young people, older adults, and people outside formal VCFSE structures were not visible in these notes. Specific racialised communities were not named. We don't think those voices were simply absent from the room - we think the structure of the session may not have reached them. We are committed to doing this differently.