

# NABMA

the voice of markets

## Strategic Market Partnerships: Driving Economic Growth and Community Resilience

The Greater Manchester Model



## Executive Summary

The Greater Manchester Market Partnership (GMMP) is a collaborative approach between the ten authorities of Greater Manchester and demonstrates how markets can be embedded into regional economic strategies to deliver inclusive growth, regeneration, and resilience.

Supported by the National Association of British Markets (NABMA), Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the National Market Traders Federation (NMTF). The GMMP aligns with the Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, creating a scalable governance model that integrates markets with transport, tourism, and local economic planning.

Markets are vital economic and social assets, offering low-barrier entry points for entrepreneurship and employment. The NMTF reported through a recent survey of young traders (aged 16-30) that 80% participants were female and 30% identified as neurodiverse. This highlights that markets are a conduit for inclusive employment impacting positively on the economy.

GMMP's pilot has already achieved measurable success, including a 7% uplift in footfall through transport integration initiatives with Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM). By embedding markets into local growth strategies, GMMP strengthens town centres, stimulates SME creation, and enhances community vibrancy.





## Why APPMG Support Matters

APPMG endorsement ensures markets are embedded in national policy, unlocking funding and legislative backing. Without this, opportunities for job creation, SME incubation, and town centre revitalisation risk being underutilised.

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## Economic Growth Through Inclusion

Inclusive employment strategies within Market Partnerships strengthen local economies by:

- Increasing workforce participation among underrepresented groups.
- Stimulating SME creation and innovation.
- Enhancing community resilience through diverse income streams.

By embedding these principles into governance models and aligning with national priorities such as Levelling Up and Local Growth, Market Partnerships can transform markets into engines of equitable prosperity.

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## Market Partnerships as Catalysts for Inclusive Employment and Economic Growth

Market Partnerships provide a unique platform for creating accessible employment opportunities, particularly for individuals who face barriers to traditional work environments. By leveraging the flexibility and community-driven nature of markets, these partnerships can address systemic challenges and foster inclusive economic growth.

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## Supporting Neurodiverse Individuals

Markets offer roles that emphasise creativity, entrepreneurship, and customer interaction, which can align well with the strengths of neurodiverse individuals. Through tailored support, including simplified onboarding, sensory-friendly spaces, and mentoring, Market Partnerships can create environments where neurodiverse traders and employees thrive, contributing to both personal independence and local economic vitality.

## Empowering Women Seeking Flexibility

- As of April 2025, 72 % of women aged 16–64 in Greater Manchester were employed versus 80 % of men; women’s participation lags behind the UK average of 75 %.
- Unemployment across Greater Manchester stood at 4.7 % in 2024, higher than the North West’s 4 % and the UK’s 3.8 %. This gap disproportionately affects women in boroughs with deep economic disparities.
- Within the region, borough unemployment varied significantly, for example, Oldham recorded 5.4 %, while Trafford was at 2.9 %.
- Economic inactivity among working-age women (due to caring responsibilities or long-term illness) reached approximately 28 % in areas such as Oldham and Bolton.

Women who require adaptable working arrangements, often due to caregiving responsibilities, benefit significantly from the flexible hours and self-employment opportunities markets provide. Market Partnerships can formalise this flexibility by offering shared stalls, micro-leasing options, and digital platforms for hybrid trading. These measures enable women to participate in economic activity without sacrificing family commitments, driving gender-inclusive growth.

By simplifying entry requirements, providing affordable stall options, and offering training in core business and digital skills, markets can create pathways into entrepreneurship and income generation for those with limited qualifications. This approach promotes equality by ensuring that economic participation is not restricted by educational attainment or prior experience. Through targeted support, such as mentoring, childcare-friendly trading environments, and financial literacy programs, Market Partnerships can empower women and low-skilled workers to build sustainable livelihoods. These interventions foster individual independence and strengthen local economies by diversifying the workforce and stimulating inclusive growth.

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## Engaging Younger People

- 735,000 young people were unemployed between August–October 2025, a rise of 128,000 from the previous year.
- The youth unemployment rate stands at 16.0 %, up from 14.0 % a year earlier.
- There are 3.85 million aged 16–24 in work (51.6 % employment rate) and 2.88 million classified as economically inactive (38.5 % inactivity rate).
- Approximately 946,000 16–24-year-olds were not in education, employment, or training (NEET), accounting for 12.7 % of that age group

Markets serve as incubators for youth entrepreneurship, offering low-barrier entry points for business start-ups. By integrating training programs, apprenticeships, and digital skills development into Market Partnership strategies, younger people gain practical experience and pathways into self-employment or retail careers. This approach not only reduces youth unemployment but also injects innovation and cultural vibrancy into local economies.



SALE

MELONHILL  
13

BURN'S  
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1250

RED  
10

## Key Outcomes and Opportunities

- Diversification of market formats enhances cultural vibrancy and economic resilience.
- Integrated transport and market strategies increase footfall and support town centre economies.
- Market Partnerships and devolved powers offer scalable governance models aligned with national priorities.
- APPMG and government backing unlock resources, funding and policy alignment for national replication.

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## Recommendations for APPMG

### 1. Endorse Strategic Market Partnerships Nationally

Champion the adoption of Market Partnerships as a core component of national economic and social policy. This endorsement will signal government commitment to inclusive growth, regeneration, and resilience, ensuring markets are recognised as vital engines for local economies.

### 2. Support Policy Frameworks Enabling Collaboration

Advocate for legislative and regulatory frameworks with support from NABMA that empower local authorities, market operators, and community stakeholders to collaborate effectively. This includes embedding Market Partnerships within the Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill and aligning them with national priorities such as Levelling Up, Net Zero, and Local Growth.

### 3. Consider Funding Streams or Incentives for Regional Partnerships

Introduce targeted funding mechanisms and fiscal incentives to accelerate the rollout of Market Partnerships across regions with support from NABMA. These could include:

- Dedicated grant programs for infrastructure improvements and digital transformation.
- Tax relief or business rate reductions for market-based SMEs and traders.
- Innovation funds to support inclusive employment initiatives, such as training for neurodiverse individuals, women requiring flexible work, and youth entrepreneurship.

### 4. Embed Inclusive Employment Targets into APPMG Advocacy

Ensure that funding and policy support are tied to measurable outcomes, such as:

- Increasing workforce participation among underrepresented groups.
- Creating pathways for low-skilled workers through training and mentoring.
- Delivering apprenticeships and digital skills programs for young people.

### 5. Promote Evidence-Based Policy Through Data Sharing

Encourage the development of robust data-sharing frameworks to monitor impact, track KPIs (e.g., footfall growth, SME creation, employment diversity), and inform continuous improvement of Market Partnership strategies.

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