



# Big Conversation 2018 Evaluation Executive Summary



The co-operative



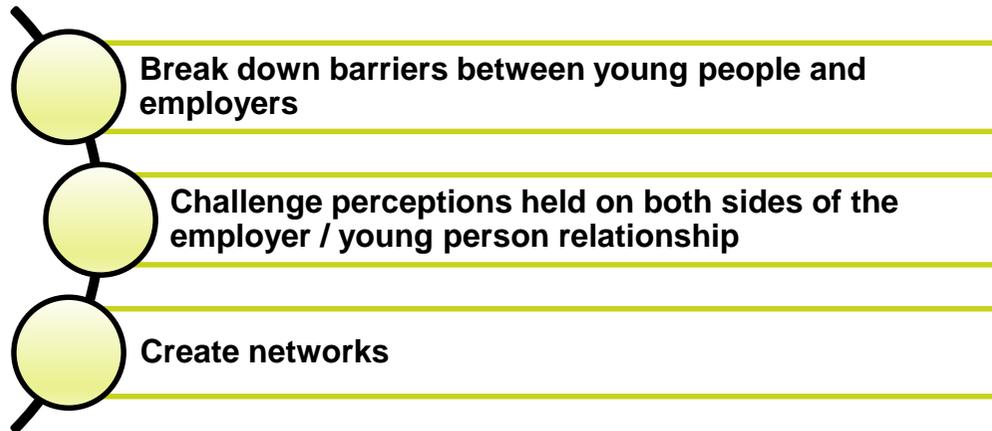
# Methodology

This report provides an evaluation of the Greater Manchester Talent Match Big Conversation event, which took place on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018. The evaluation examines whether the aims of the event were achieved, by identifying the immediate and longer term impact on attendees. This will support a wider understanding of the use and impact of such events in tackling youth unemployment.

# Context

1.3 The event, organised and delivered by the GM Talent Match project team, took place at the King's Conference Centre in Manchester city centre. The Big Conversation event was developed to provide a space for young people and employers to talk to each other about the challenges of securing employment, in an informal and encouraging setting.

Event aims:

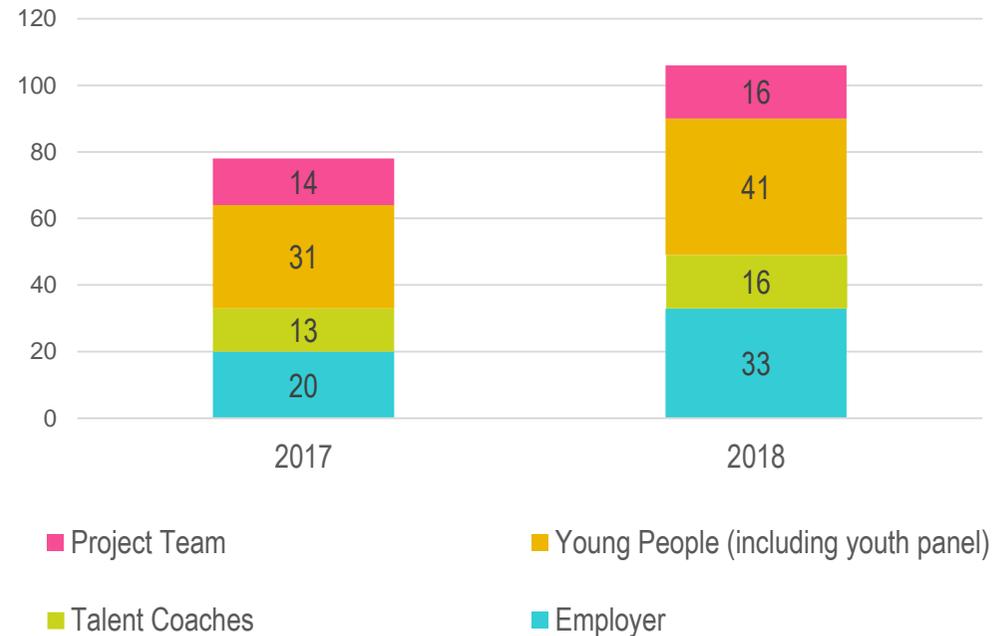


The afternoon event included a mixture of roundtable discussions, interactive activities, speeches, presentations, a raffle and a keynote speech from the Mayor for Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham.

Young people were encouraged to discuss their experiences of being unemployed and the barriers they face to employment, and employers encouraged to share their own stories and give advice and guidance to young people looking to find work.

Employers were recruited through contacts developed through previous work with Business in The Community and GM Talent Match employer workshops. The GM Chamber of Commerce and Youth Employment UK also advertised the event.

2018 Event Attendance with 2017 Comparison



The evaluation methodology included seven elements, capturing a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data.

### 1) Feedback Forms

Attendees were asked what they would take away or do differently following the event, in addition to how their experience at the event could be improved.



### 2) Tweet sheets from the 'Small Talk' Activities



Products from table discussions and activities were tweeted throughout the event. Responses indicated the level of engagement from attendees and a sense of immediate impacts.

### 3) Employer questionnaires

An online questionnaire distributed to employers after the event for more in-depth feedback.



### 4) Opportunity reviews



Young people later reviewed the event via the GM Talent Match Opportunities Hub website.

### 5) Focus group

Three youth panel members who were part of the event steering group took part in a focus group, reflecting on whether the event had met its aims and objectives.



### 6) Project team survey



Project team members provided survey responses following the event. They fed back up to 3 things which went well and up to 3 suggestions for improvement.

### 7) Follow up phone calls with talent coaches

Two months after the event, talent coaches who had attended with beneficiaries were phoned up to feed back any longer-term impact(s).



The evaluation analysis was structured around the three event aims, using both quantitative and qualitative methods.



# Outcomes Summary

## Aim 1: Break down barriers between young people and employers

Feedback suggests the event was successful in achieving this aim.

Good rapport between young people and employers featured prominently across all feedback. The programmed roundtable activities effectively engaged young people and employers in meaningful discussion about the barriers faced by young people seeking work, with employers opening up with advice and encouragement. Asked what they would be taking away from the event, eight out of 17 young person responses referred to the discussions with employers.

An increase in confidence, knowledge of the workplace and improved communications skills featured in the young person reviews of the event. Another key impact was young people leaving with a better understanding of good interview technique.

A minor criticism was that, at times, there weren't enough young people on some tables to keep all employers engaged.

The creative use of social media on the day, with learning outcomes from activities live-tweeted and key findings immediately reported back to participants in the room, helped to sustain a lively atmosphere. It was also an effective way of capturing and disseminating learning and key messages quickly.

Employer feedback indicated they gained an increased awareness of how young people perceive the world of work and a better understanding of some of the barriers they face.

In the employer questionnaires, out of the 32 planned employer actions following on from the event:

- Six related to employment-related opportunities for young people
- Seven related to changing recruitment practices
- Seven related to planned support for young people in another capacity



Unfortunately, due to limited time and capacity, it was not possible to survey employers two months after the event to see what planned actions had materialised, or what engaging with young people 'in another capacity' referred to exactly.

## Aim 2: Challenge perceptions held on both sides of the employer / young person relationship

Young people indicated leaving the event with a more positive perception of employers, and employers with a better understanding of the young person perspective and their potential barriers. In that sense, the event was successful in achieving this aim.

The approachability and friendliness of employers were recurring themes in young person feedback. Coach feedback mirrored this, praising the employers 'intention of learning' and for engaging with young people in a pro-active way.

For employers, the strongest shift in perception related to developing insight into how young people perceive themselves, potential barriers and the jobs market. Having the opportunity to develop this understanding was fed back by employers as having been particularly valuable.

### Aim 3: Create networks

Feedback indicates the event was successful in achieving this aim.

The format of rotating employers around different tables was effective in keeping conversations lively and giving both employers and young people the opportunity to network with a wide range of attendees.

As a result of networking at the event, the Talent Coach phone survey showed:

- There were job offers for two young people (9% of sample)
- One beneficiary joined the Youth Panel
- How networking with employers on the day had made a positive impact on seven beneficiaries (33% of the sample)

For employers, networking with other employers was identified as a chance to share good practice and contacts. Employer feedback acknowledged the value of developing a better understanding of GM Talent Match and meeting project team members in person.

In the employer questionnaires, out of the 32 planned employer actions following on from the event:

- Four related to networking with both young people and talent coaches met at the event
- Eight related to further GM Talent Match engagement

Although there was some negative feedback from employers about not having enough time to develop discussions with young people outside the activities, an overwhelming positive across all responses was the lively and encouraging atmosphere in which meaningful engagement took place.





## Recommendations

- ✓ Informal engagement events like this make a great contribution to the youth employment landscape in Greater Manchester. They provide networking opportunities for all, help to build confidence for young people, create employment opportunities and give employers a chance to learn more about youth unemployment.
- ✓ Prospective hosts of similar events should target employers they have not previously engaged with. It is key to educate as many employers as possible about the barriers young people face entering employment.
- ✓ Aim for the widest possible range of employment sectors in attendance, to further incentivise young person engagement.
- ✓ Giving live updates to the room - immediately feeding back learning outcomes from activities - is both engaging for participants and an effective way of disseminating key messages. The format should be considered for future events of this kind.
- ✓ Keeping a steady rotation of participants around the room is an effective networking format. It provides young people the opportunity to develop networking skills in an informal setting, and gives employers the chance to speak to a broad range of young people. This should be carefully managed to ensure an even distribution of participants throughout the event.
- ✓ Make sure there are breaks for unstructured networking to take place (in between activities and discussions).