

An interim evaluation of *Greater Manchester Talent Match*

Executive Summary

Introduction

Greater Manchester Talent Match (GM Talent Match) is a five year (2013-2018), Big Lottery-funded programme which brings together the private, public and voluntary sectors to support young people aged 18-24 who have not been in employment, education or training for twelve months or more and who experience significant barriers to employment.



This report presents the findings of an interim evaluation of *GM Talent Match* which aims to identify progress, to date, towards four main outcomes (as set by the Big Lottery) and set out recommendations to maximise programme effectiveness and impact in the final two years of delivery.

Delivery model

Differing from centralised employment support initiatives, *GM Talent Match* commissions (mostly community-based) organisations to host a Talent Coach who supports a small caseload of young people.

Talent Coaches provide one-to-one, holistic support to young people, to help them to overcome their, often multiple, barriers to employment. The programme is voluntary for young people, who actively present themselves for support or are recruited by Talent Coaches based in the community.

'Test and learn' is a unique and fundamental aspect of the programme which presents the opportunity to trial new approaches to reducing youth unemployment, and to develop a localised offer in response to the needs of young people in Greater Manchester.

Evaluation findings

To September 2016, 1,176 beneficiaries were engaged by the programme, 24% (278) of whom have entered employment.

A cost-benefit analysis undertaken of the programme performance, indicates on completion, the programme will deliver a cost-benefit ratio of 1.50:1, nine years following the launch of the programme. For every £1 invested in the project, £1.50 is saved in future expenditure.



This demonstrates the programme is delivering value for money for the tax payer.

As the programme is expected to continue to exceed targets, it is likely this ratio will improve across delivery.

Progress towards main outcomes and recommendations

1) Young people engage through Talent Match for at least 6 months and make positive progress towards employability



Analysis shows that over a third (37%) of young people supported by the programme have engaged for six months or more. In contrast to the number of young people engaged and the target set for this outcome, this is relatively low.

For those who maintain engagement however, statistical analysis shows that they have made significant progress towards employment. Moreover, at 12 months engagement, those closest to the labour market are more likely to enter employment.

Recommendation:

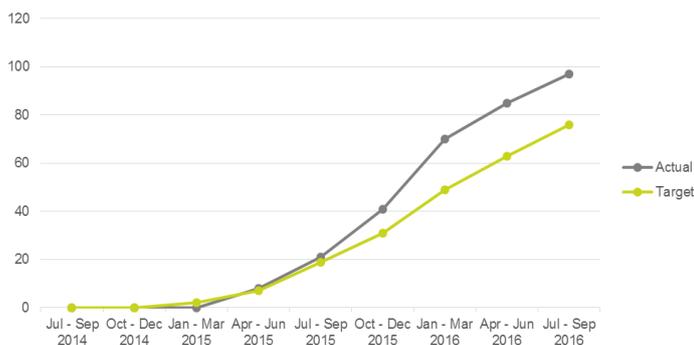
An exploratory piece of work is undertaken to understand why young people disengage from the programme prior to six months of receiving support. This will inform programme delivery in terms of how to increase engagement.

2) Young people enter sustainable employment or self-employment



To September 2016, 97 young people, with support from *GM Talent Match*, sustained employment. This is a third of those who have entered employment (36%), and 9% of the total number of young people engaged. In contrast to the target for sustained employment, the programme is over performing in this area.

Figure 1.1: The number of beneficiaries who have sustained employment/self-employment per quarter (cumulative)



Recommendation:

A detailed piece of work is undertaken to identify factors which explain why young people are sustaining employment and whether there are any commonalities among those sustaining.

3) Sustainable co-ordinated support pathways into work are created



Anecdotal evidence and qualitative data indicates that co-ordinated support pathways into work have been, and are being created, by the programme. The extent to which these pathways are sustainable however is uncertain at this stage. It is also unclear how effective these pathways are for young people from the target groups.

Recommendations:

Improved data collection mechanisms are implemented to capture information regarding the pathways which have been developed.

Increased focus is also recommended on identifying existing pathways into employment for young people in Greater Manchester, and exploring the potential for adapting this to be inclusive of the needs of the Talent Match cohort.

4) The most effective and efficient approach(es) are embedded in Greater Manchester policy



Qualitative data indicates that effective and efficient approaches to supporting young people with significant barriers to employment have been identified by *GM Talent Match*, however the programme is not using this evidence strategically.

The extent to which these approaches have been embedded, or have informed Greater Manchester policy is not clear. Difficulties have been identified in measuring attribution and evidencing this outcome. A systematic, strategic approach is required to achieve and evidence this aim. There are numerous aspects to this detailed in the recommendations below.

Recommendations:

The programme develops a suite of key messages/areas which the programme aims to influence. Each message should have a strategy sat behind it, including how this will be tailored and targeted at specific decision makers. Stakeholders should have a pivotal role in supporting and distributing the key messages.

Key timeframes for when policy/strategy decisions are made should also be explored with a view to identifying opportunities to promote relevant evidence and research findings to influence decision-making.

A place-based evaluation of the proposed strategy should be developed with a view to better measuring the outcomes and impact of this aim