



Youth Panel Peer Evaluations Report

March 2021





Contents

Introduction	3
Methodology.....	4
Question One – Working with the Talent Coach	5
Question Two – Personal Reflection	7
Question 3- Rating scales	8
Question 4 - Peer Recommendations	9
Question 5- Impact of the pandemic	12
Conclusion	14
Moving Forward	15
Acknowledgement.....	15



Introduction

Greater Manchester's Hidden Talent (GMHT) is a voluntary youth employment programme co-funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and Greater Manchester Combined Authority, and managed by GMCVO.

Building on learning from the *Greater Manchester Talent Match* programme, it is a two-year investment creating greater cohesion within communities by helping hidden young people aged 18-25 progress towards employment and improve their self-esteem and wellbeing. The programme is due to finish in March 2021.

Hidden young people are not in employment, education or training and not claiming any benefits.

The Youth Panel

The Greater Manchester's Hidden Talent Youth Panel sits at the heart of the programme. Hosted by Greater Manchester Youth Network (GMYN), the Youth Panel are valued participants in the planning, design and evaluation of our work.

Members are aged 18-25 and have at some point experienced barriers to employment. As such, they keep the programme accountable to the needs and viewpoints of our target groups. From listening to and working with our Youth Panel we have a better understanding of the diverse needs of marginalised and vulnerable young people and the barriers to employment that they face.

As part of the GMHT programme, the Youth Panel conducted peer evaluations with nine Delivery Partners: organisations in each of the local authorities of Greater Manchester that deliver the programme on behalf of GMCVO. These evaluations were an opportunity for young people engaging with GMHT to have their say on the support they receive, which will not only contribute to the evaluation of this programme but to the development of future youth employment programmes at GMCVO.

These evaluations were originally designed at the end of the first year of the programme. However, they have been adapted to take into account the circumstances

Our Delivery Partners for Greater Manchester's Hidden Talent are:

Bolton: Bolton Lads and Girls Club and Bolton Solidarity Community Association

Bury: Streetwise @ Early Break

Manchester: Manchester Young Lives

Oldham: Upturn Enterprise

Rochdale: Upturn Enterprise

Salford: The Broughton Trust

Stockport: Stockport Homes Group

Tameside: Reform Radio

Trafford: G-Force

Wigan: Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire, Merseyside

Greater Manchester: 42nd Street and Greater Manchester Youth Network



under which the second year of the programme has been delivered and extended to include 42nd Street, who provided a specialist mental health service for young people supported by the GMHT programme.

This report

This report summarises the responses to the five main questions the Youth Panel asked Hidden Talent beneficiaries. It highlights patterns and key learning points. Each Delivery Partner has received an individual report based on the feedback of their beneficiaries, with the exception of those organisations where only one beneficiary took part as their comments would not be anonymous.

Methodology

Designing the questions

The Youth Panel decided to use mostly the same questions that were used in the Year 1 evaluation conversations, with the addition of a question relating specifically to beneficiaries' experience of the programme during lockdown and subsequent tiered restrictions.

The Hidden Talent team supported the Panel to adapt these questions to make them suitable for 42nd Street.

Changes to the format

The Panel began the process of planning the evaluations in August 2020. They were aware that there were different tiered restrictions in the different boroughs at this time that would affect young people's ability to attend physical meetings. As such, the Panel devised three different ways in which the conversations with beneficiaries could happen.

- I. Online: The Panel could invite beneficiaries to a Zoom meeting in order to make the most of interactive features such as whiteboards so that conversations could still have an interactive element that was a feature of the physical conversations in Year 1. Beneficiaries would have the option of turning their camera off if they preferred.
- II. Telephone: A Panel member would ask the questions over the phone with the call on speaker phone to allow other Panel members to support and so that the call could be recorded to help with transcription
- III. In person: These sessions would take place at GMYN's office in Manchester City Centre. There would be two Youth Panel members (one taking notes and one asking questions) and the beneficiary would have the option of the discussion being recorded. These sessions would be carried out in accordance with GMYN's Covid-19 risk assessment.



Almost all the beneficiaries that took part chose to do so via a telephone conversation. One young person initially chose a face to face meeting but by the time of her appointment the Covid-19 restrictions had tightened so this was no longer possible. This person agreed to have a telephone call instead.

Question One – Working with the Talent Coach

Beneficiaries were asked how their time on the programme with their Talent Coach has been. Many described the **qualities** of their Coach, often describing how understanding and supportive they find them. This includes understanding young peoples' wider needs such as physical and mental health in the context of their ability to progress towards employment. It also includes understanding the emotional impact of applying for work and dealing with rejection in this context:

“...It’s kind of nice to have someone that understands ...what you’re going through because ...I’ve been applying for jobs and getting knockbacks and stuff so it’s been really nice to have someone that provides that emotional support as well as helping me look for jobs and helping me with my applications... So it’s kind of nice to not be on your own with it because it is a lonely process.”

The non-judgemental nature of support was also seen as a positive factor in relationships with Talent Coaches:

“She’s supportive, I’ve gone through a drastic change in what I want to do and she’s just supported it, she’s not questioned it, she’s just helped me out...”

Beneficiaries receiving support from 42nd Street also commented on how understanding their mental health practitioners are, and non-judgemental when an approach hasn’t worked for the young person:

“So XXXX would be like, “Did you find this helpful? Did you not find this helpful?” and I could be honest. I didn’t feel awkward if something didn’t work because XXXX always had something else that was possible for me to try, so yeah, that was good.”



Beneficiaries also commented on their Coaches' ability to communicate well with them; either because they appreciated the feeling of being properly listened to or because they appreciated the efforts that their Coaches have gone to to stay in touch with them when physical meetings have not been possible:

“I have enjoyed the dedication of XXX and how she dedicated her time to actually listening to what we needed help with instead of just throwing us at the wall of "you must work now.”

Young people have appreciated the collaborative approach taken by their Talent Coaches and Mental Health Practitioners, often referring to a team or family-like structure in which plans are created together for the young person.

Emotional and wellbeing support were often referred to, but there were also examples of Coaches referring young people to specialist support such as bereavement counselling. One young person mentioned financial support, including a referral to a foodbank. Another noted the fact that their Coach had not only helped them, but their family and others in their local community.

Naturally, many beneficiaries described the **employability support** that they have received whilst working with their Coach. This has included support with job searching, and proactive ways to do this: support with CVs and applications; support to find placements and apprenticeships; and support to learn new skills, including being referred to specific programmes at The Prince's Trust:

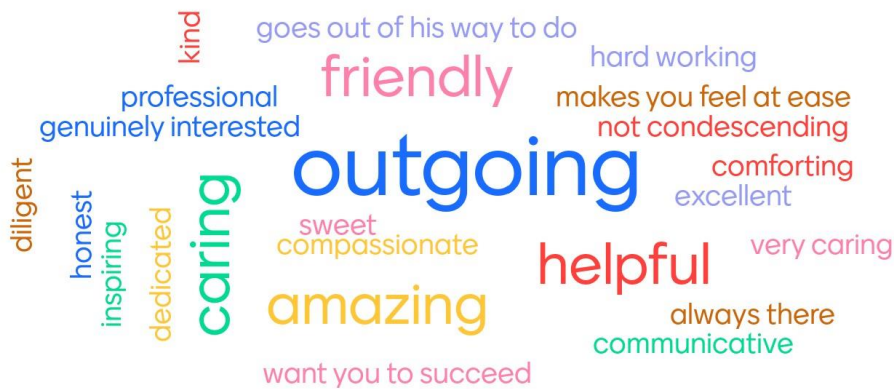
“I like the fact that she, she basically told me to go and ask if people are recruiting rather than waiting for them. I would sit around waiting for the opportunities to come up, she was like well take the opportunity to them if that makes sense. Yeah I like that because I never really realised you could do that.”



Beneficiaries were also asked to describe their Talent Coach or Mental Health Practitioner in one word

How would you describe your Talent Coach?

Mentimeter



Question Two – Personal Reflection

Beneficiaries were asked what they had personally learned, gained or developed from the GMHT programme.

Many young people reflected on a general improvement in their **confidence**, either in their ability to approach job seeking or to undertake specific employment-related training:

“I wasn’t very confident at going out and getting jobs and that because of previous events and she’s boosted me up without giving up on me.”

“That I can do it, I mean, I’m doing a university course on policing now. I’m doing it at Hopwood Hall [a college and training provider]. I’m doing it now, I’ve been getting Distinctions.”



Beneficiaries also spoke about improvements in their **communication**, and ability to interact with people they don't know:

“I feel like I find it easier to approach people and ask questions and stuff because before I usually would just sit and deal with it... If I have an issue or if I need to know something and I will go and ask rather than just like guessing figuring it out myself.”

“I'd say interactive skills like face-to-face talking, putting my ideas on the table...Phone calls as well because we've had phone meetings so I'm more confident on the phone and stuff like that.”

Some beneficiaries described an improvement in their understanding of their own **mental health** and improved acceptance of this, as well as gaining the skills needed to manage this such as journaling which has helped them to feel less confused and better able to express themselves:

“It's okay not to be okay and yeah, just get support whenever you want.”

“Honesty I suppose, but not in a bad way, more being honest with myself.”

“Working with XXXX I started learning that it's okay to be myself and that I'm able to go outside more without having panic attacks, as such I find myself looking for exits far less often.”

One young person connected improvement with their mental health with improved **independence**, describing how they now feel able to get on a bus by themselves which is something they didn't previously feel able to do.

Question 3- Rating scales

Beneficiaries were asked to give a rating out of 10, with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, for the following questions. We calculated the mean average for each of the eight Delivery Partner organisations, and then used these scores to calculate the mean average for the programme. As such, the scores below are the mean average of 17 different beneficiaries.



	Mean average /10
How would you rate the support from your Talent Coach?	8.8
How would you rate your experience of the programme?	8.4
How useful are you finding the Hidden Talent Programme?	8.6

Beneficiaries from 42nd Street were only asked to rate the support they received from their Mental Health Practitioner. The mean average of these scores is 9/10, calculated from two individual scores.

Question 4 - Peer Recommendations

Beneficiaries were asked whether they would recommend working with a Talent Coach or Mental Health Practitioner to other young people. Everyone who took part responded positively to this, with many referring to how working with their Coach has improved their motivation, and how the support that Coaches provide extends beyond support with employment¹. Many beneficiaries spoke about the benefits of working with a Coach who can provide lots of information about jobs and employment pathways that young people weren't aware of.

Unique relationships

“Definitely because everybody always leaves and he hasn't done, it's the consistency if you get that, he's good like that.”

“I would say yeah because it's like, it's not scary or anything like that. They are genuinely trying to help you and it's better to accept help than struggle.”

“I would recommend it, because they will help if they are a Talent Coach that is willing to help. If you get one you can talk to and that's interested and can communicate clearly with then it's good.”

¹ For further details on how Talent Coaches have delivered holistic support, see this report: <https://www.gmcvo.org.uk/publications/greater-manchester%E2%80%99s-hidden-talent%E2%80%99s-response-covid-19-crisis>



Guidance and support

“Yes because it’s just that extra bit of support that you may need to encourage you to move forward and take another step.”

“Yes. I’d recommend it because she does everything in her power to try to get you where you want to be at.”

“Yes because sometimes in life I feel like you get a bit stuck, and when you’ve got someone there to support you I think it is very helpful, especially with all that they can offer as well.”

Holistic approach

“I would definitely recommend it, especially the people who go through things like mental illness because it gives you a reason to get up and get out of bed. It gives you someone to interact with who isn’t necessarily personally close but has an understanding and a compassionate approach to helping you rather than fixing it for you.”

“Yes, if you have areas you struggle with in life the Talent Coaches... don’t just try to throw you into work, they care and want to address the barriers over the notion that you must get into work.”

“Yes, I would definitely, they are very respectful and helpful. They are always there if you need them financially or like for support. They’ll do anything for you, they are just like that.”



Access to information and opportunities

“Yes because she helps with a lot of stuff, like with my CSCS card and then she mentioned about the Maths and English at the Powerhouse (*The Moss Side Millennium Powerhouse*)”

“Yes, I would recommend working with a Talent Coach. I just think it’s an important thing for young people because often young people lose sight of what they want and what they want to do and they kind of lose sight of who they are so I think having a Talent Coach kind of keeps you on track, motivates you, inspires you and shows you what you can do, you know, and gives you more opportunities like volunteering opportunities and stuff.”

“Yeah because if you’re struggling for ideas on where you want to go job-wise or apprenticeship-wise then just to have someone there to speak to can just help to give you more ideas on what you want to do and speaking to someone definitely helps.”

“Yes because they give you a lot of information and details and they explain to you what the job vacancies are and where they are available and what we’ll be doing in the job.”

Mental Health Practitioner recommendations

“I wasn’t not believing in it, but I just didn’t think it would help because it is just like talking to someone, but it’s like a helping hand as well, it’s not telling you to do something and it’s not like an interrogation. It’s just like a conversation but obviously XXX is helping with the words they are using and the skills they ask me to try out and stuff.”

“I would definitely recommend XXXX. I think just because, like I said, they are really understanding. They put a lot of effort in to understand. I just think with me there is a lot of added difficulty because no one knows if I am disabled or not and, like I said, they will try and explore any avenue and give you any resources that you may not even begin to know how to look for and offer support which is far above what the standard is for other therapists and mental health workers that I have experienced in the past.”



Question 5- Impact of the pandemic

Beneficiaries were asked if they thought that the pandemic had affected their experience on GMHT, or their experience of working with their Talent Coach. Over half of them felt that the pandemic had had a negative impact, mostly due to the fact that face-to-face meetings with their Coaches stopped either for a period, or permanently for some beneficiaries depending on the organisation they receive support from.

However, all of these beneficiaries noted that contact with their Coach hadn't stopped but the nature of communication had changed to calls, texts or WhatsApp. One young person noted that the inability to go to visit their Talent Coach had a negative impact on their whole routine:

“Yeah it’s like I just mentioned, the whole getting up, going out and actually doing something has come to a complete halt. It’s now phone calls, texts, it’s a different experience entirely. It doesn’t feel quite as engaging.”

“Yes I think it has affected it because it’s given me less time seeing him in person. But fortunately we do talk on WhatsApp, but it’s just that we don’t have those talks as much in person.”

Conversely, 37% of beneficiaries didn't believe that the pandemic had had a negative impact on their experience, with many commenting on the fact that contact with their Coach by telephone was beneficial:

“No. It’s been like more distanced really because of all the lockdown rules, but it’s not really affected me...”

“No, I wouldn’t say so because we communicate a lot over the phone anyway ... I don’t think it would be any different due to the pandemic because, like I say, over the phone we can still get in contact with each other when we’re not allowed to see each other. And she can send me stuff on email as well and stuff over the phone like new jobs and stuff, so I don’t think it’s been affected because, like I say.., we still have regular contact weekly.”



Some beneficiaries were able to distinguish between the fact whilst their employment prospects had been negatively impacted by the pandemic, the support they received had not:

“It’s affected my prospects because there’s not as many jobs gone out but the pandemic has happened, but they haven’t stopped ringing anyone up so it’s good. Everyone’s still job searching.”

“Yes, in a way. Due to Covid-19 it’s been getting harder to find jobs for me so my Talent Coach has to be on point and has to keep communicating and know whether there’s jobs available, but it’s kind of hard to do so because of Covid-19. So he can’t really give any calls and keep me updated.”

One young person gave a very specific example of how the pandemic had resulted in her losing a work placement that her Coach had supported her to find, and the steps that she has been supported to take to find new options:

“Yeah XXX got me a job, like a learning experience thing in March, at a college but then three weeks into it they were like, well we are having to close for the quarantine stuff. They said to me I could go back after Easter, then after Easter it was still a quarantine pandemic kinda stuff.

“Then they said I could go back in September, so I messaged in August and they said, “we just had to lay a load of people off so you are not going to be able to come back”. That’s why I’m on this Prince’s Trust programme right now because I was literally just waiting around for six months for something that didn’t happen.”

Conclusion

Some clear themes emerge from the responses to the first four questions asked in this year's evaluation conversations. One is the quality of the one-to-one relationship between beneficiaries and their Talent Coach or Mental Health Practitioner. Beneficiaries have repeatedly described the understanding, supportive and non-judgemental nature of these relationships. It is perhaps not surprising that Coaches and Practitioners are most frequently described as outgoing; friendly; helpful and amazing. The Youth Panel were pleased to note a number of responses describing support that "goes above and beyond".

A second theme is an appreciation of the holistic support provided by Talent Coaches which has had an increased focus on wellbeing, including physical and mental health of young people in the second year of the programme. Beneficiaries have also referenced financial support, including referrals to food banks, and work that Talent Coaches have done with their wider families. The Youth Panel noted this as a positive theme in their feedback to Talent Coaches at the February 2021 Talent Coach meeting.

Looking at the responses from beneficiaries about what they have learned, gained or developed as a result of the GMHT programme, it is clear that all the young people who took part felt an increase in confidence. This includes not only an increase in confidence to move towards employment, but also in their communication skills and in their ability to develop independence, such as their confidence to travel on public transport. The answers also show that many young people have an improved understanding of their own mental health and wellbeing, and often an increased acceptance of this.

All the beneficiaries that took part rated the support from their Talent Coach or Mental Health Practitioner, and their experience of the programme higher than 8/10. And all 19 young people would recommend working with a Talent Coach or Mental Health Practitioner to a friend.

Whilst the response regarding the impact of the pandemic on beneficiaries' experience of the programme was mixed, more than half acknowledged that it has had a negative impact. Most young people attribute this to the fact that communication with their Coach had changed from in person meetings, to mobile messaging or WhatsApp.

Finally, although the number of beneficiaries that took part in Year 2 was only slightly lower than in the first year, we included an additional Delivery Partner so would have expected an increase in the number of participants. The Youth Panel were disappointed that three Delivery Partners were only able to find one beneficiary willing



to take part. This meant that they were not able to hear a range of experiences from some organisations. The Youth Panel would have liked each Delivery Partner to be able to nominate at least two young people to take part. However, the Panel do understand that many beneficiaries may have been put off by the fact that the conversations could only happen over the phone or online this year. This was also difficult for Panel members, some of whom weren't confident enough to take part in the phone calls.

Moving forward

The Youth Panel have reviewed each Delivery Partner's individual report, and met with the GMHT Partnership Officer to share their thoughts. This will inform individual conversations that the Partnership Officer will have with each Partner. The Panel also presented a summary of their observations at the February Talent Coach meeting.

This report will be shared with GMHT stakeholders including the Youth Panel; Delivery Partners and the Strategic Steering Group. It will also be shared with the programme's funders and used in future funding bids.

Finally, it will also be shared with external stakeholders from the youth employment landscape that the programme seeks to influence, including local authority youth employment partnerships.

Acknowledgement

The GMHT team would like to thank all of the young people who took the time to chat to the Youth Panel, and provide their opinions on their experience of the programme and their time spent working with their Talent Coaches.

Level of engagement: the table on the next page documents the number of participants per Delivery Partner in this process over the course of the programme.



	Year 1 participants	Year 2 participants
Bolton Lads & Girls Club	4	4
Early Break	0	1
Manchester Young Lives	3	3
Upturn Enterprise	3	1
The Broughton Trust	4	2
Stockport Homes Group	4	2
Reform Radio	0	0
G-Force	4	3
Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire & Merseyside	0	1
42 nd Street	N/A	2
Totals	22	19