

EVALUATION OF THE REMOVING BARRIERS TO APPRENTICESHIPS PROGRAMME

Final report

David Morris

david@littlelionresearch.co.uk

Contents

[Introduction 3](#_Toc108012567)

[The RBA programme 3](#_Toc108012568)

[Context for the Programme 7](#_Toc108012569)

[Evaluation methodology 13](#_Toc108012570)

[Report structure 14](#_Toc108012571)

[Programme beneficiaries 15](#_Toc108012572)

[Total number of learners 15](#_Toc108012573)

[Profile of learners 15](#_Toc108012574)

[Learners’ barriers to learning 19](#_Toc108012575)

[Learners’ aspirations whilst on their Project 20](#_Toc108012576)

[Lessons from Programme delivery 23](#_Toc108012577)

[Project recruitment methods 23](#_Toc108012578)

[Training delivered by Projects 25](#_Toc108012579)

[Project support to learners 28](#_Toc108012580)

[Employer engagement and learner support in the workplace 30](#_Toc108012581)

[Impact of Covid pandemic upon learners’ experiences 33](#_Toc108012582)

[Programme outputs and impacts 35](#_Toc108012583)

[Programme outputs achieved 35](#_Toc108012584)

[Projects’ success in removing barriers to learning 38](#_Toc108012585)

[Learners’ plans 41](#_Toc108012586)

[Other comments from learners 42](#_Toc108012587)

[Conclusions and recommendations 45](#_Toc108012588)

[The effectiveness and impact of the Programme 45](#_Toc108012589)

[Implications for future practice and policy 50](#_Toc108012590)

[Annex A: Project monitoring information template 54](#_Toc108012591)

[Annex B: Baseline survey questionnaire 54](#_Toc108012592)

[Annex C: Follow-up survey questionnaire 54](#_Toc108012593)

[Annex D: RBA Programme logic model 55](#_Toc108012594)

List of Figures and Tables

[Figure 1: Minority ethnic apprenticeship starts in GM (as % of all apprenticeship starts) 8](#_Toc108012595)

[Figure 2: Removing Barriers to Apprenticeships programme logic model 12](#_Toc108012596)

[Figure 3: Age of learners across all projects 16](#_Toc108012597)

[Figure 4: Ethnicity of learners across all projects 17](#_Toc108012598)

[Figure 5: Map of learner home postcodes 18](#_Toc108012599)

[Figure 6: Learners’ self-perceived barriers to training and work 21](#_Toc108012600)

[Figure 7: Ways in which projects delivered support to learners 26](#_Toc108012601)

[Figure 8: Learners’ rating of different aspects of the training they received 30](#_Toc108012602)

[Figure 9: How often do you apply what you have learned in the workplace? 32](#_Toc108012603)

[Figure 10: Profile of learners recruited and trained by the Programme 36](#_Toc108012604)

[Figure 11: Profile of new apprenticeship starts recorded by the Programme 36](#_Toc108012605)

[Table 1: RBA funded projects 5](#_Toc108012606)

[Table 2: Total apprenticeship starts in Greater Manchester 8](#_Toc108012607)

[Table 3: Learner barriers to learning and/or accessing training 19](#_Toc108012608)

[Table 4: Learner hoped for outcomes through training 20](#_Toc108012609)

[Table 5: What would you have done if you had not had this training opportunity? 42](#_Toc108012610)

[Table 6: Other positive outcomes delivered by projects 46](#_Toc108012611)

# Introduction

This report is the final evaluation of the Removing Barriers to Apprenticeships (RBA) programme (the Programme).

# The RBA programme

In October 2018, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) approved £328,000 of funding to develop activity that supported underrepresented groups to access apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship activity which leads to improved social mobility for the individual.

In early 2020, the GMCA issued a call for proposals from projects designed to remove evident and/or identified barriers to apprenticeships amongst small cohorts of underrepresented learners. These barriers included, but were not exclusive to:

* People from ethnic minorities
* Single parents
* Care Leavers
* People with mental or physical health conditions
* Women in STEM occupations (i.e., Science, technology, engineering, maths)
* Older people (i.e., 50+)
* Young people from disadvantaged areas

GMCA funding of between £25,000 and £50,000 would be made available for each project.

Project proposals needed to be based in Greater Manchester (GM). GMCA was looking to support projects submitted by partnerships of apprenticeship providers, employers with apprenticeship opportunities and organisations representing or providing support for the target cohort. Projects had to include apprenticeship starts as a primary output.

10 applications were received, and each was evaluated by a panel including representatives from outside GMCA. Scoring was based on criteria including Partnership Arrangements and Collaborative Working; Target audience; Impact; Scalability and Legacy; and Social Value, with the scores being weighted and combined to provide an overall score which was used to rank the projects. Projects were then approved to receive funding in order, starting with the highest scoring proposal, until the available funding was depleted.

**A note on the terminology used in this report**

* Where the report refers to participants from a minority ethnic background, it is referring to participants whose ethnic background is Black, Asian, Mixed race, Multiple or Other ethnic backgrounds.
* The term BAME is only used in respect of the BAME Engineers project that was funded by the programme. The project team chose to use the BAME term.
* When referring to male participants, this includes trans men. Similarly, when referring to female participants, this includes trans women.
* A ‘younger’ learner is anybody aged <25.
* The acronym LLDD (Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities) is often used in post-16 education provision to refer to individuals with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). The two acronyms are used interchangeably in this report.

Table 1: RBA funded projects

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Project Title | Project Summary | Lead Bidder | Grant Value |
| Men In the Early Years (MITEY) | This project was a collaboration between Kids Planet nursery provider and the Fatherhood Institute who run the MITEY campaign. The partnership aimed to recruit and support a cohort of 12 men through Kids Planet’s in-house Early Years (Level 2) apprenticeship, with the apprentices working across 6 setting in GM. This project worked in Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Salford, Stockport, Trafford, and Wigan. | Kids Planet | £46,620 |
| BAME Engineers | This project was a partnership of Rochdale Training, Rochdale Borough Council, Positive Steps and Job Centre Plus. The target cohort was minority ethnic young people, who would complete an Engineering Pre-Apprenticeship programme with 20 learner starts, leading to a minimum of 10 apprenticeship starts, with work experience placements offered across GM companies. The project aimed to prepare learners for the Level 2 Engineering Operative Standard and / or progress onto Level 3 Engineering Technician Standard. This project was based in Rochdale but also targeted residents from Oldham and Bury. | Rochdale Training | £28,250 |
| Salford Supported Apprenticeships | This project was a partnership between Salford City Council, ForHousing and Career Connect. The target audience was 16-21y/o with SEND. The project offered development support to create new ‘Supported Apprenticeships’ (SAs) for 10 learners. Through a ‘Transition Mentor’ the project aimed to provide transitional, preparation support and advocacy between employers and training providers and continuous on-programme support. This project was delivered in Salford and focussed on health and social care and construction standards. | Salford City Council | £44,530 |
| Single Parent Teaching Assistants | This project was a partnership of Rochdale Training, Rochdale Borough Council, Positive Steps and Job Centre Plus. The target audience was Single Parents who would complete a Teaching Assistant Pre-Apprenticeship, with a minimum of 10 Apprenticeship opportunities created. The Apprenticeship Standard targeted would be the Level 3 Teaching Assistant Standard or the Early Years Practitioner Standard Level 2. | Rochdale Training | £29,050 |
| Digital Supported Internship | This project was a partnership between the White Room, Total People, Manchester City Council and Pure Innovations. The project provided additional resource to a new Digital Supported Internship (DSI) established by The White Room and The Manchester College. The project was built to directly remove barriers to apprenticeships for SEND young people, particularly those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and both those with and without Education Health & Care Plans (EHCP). The DSI offered 15 places to GM young people with an EHCP. The target standards were to be based in the digital sector and were to include; Level 3 Digital Support Technician, Software Development Technician, and Level 4 Cyber Intrusion Analyst. The project recruited from across all 10 GM boroughs. | The White Room | £50,000 |
| Oldham 16-25 year olds | A partnership between Oldham Council, Northern Care Alliance, and Positive Steps, based at Royal Oldham Hospital. The target audience was those aged 16 to 18 year and those aged up to 25 with additional barriers to employment (e.g., care leavers, young carers, minority ethnic, or those with an EHCP or additional needs without an EHCP.) The project aimed to give a cohort of 40 young people pre-apprenticeship support. Of these, 10 would progress into full apprenticeships with the NCA in Business administration and Healthcare Assistant. | Oldham Council | £50,000 |
| Coldhurst Ward, Oldham | This project was a partnership between Oldham Council Get Oldham Working team and Northern Care Alliance NHS Group. The project was aimed at the residents of the Coldhurst Ward in Oldham, with specific focus on single parents, minority ethnic residents, and those with mental health conditions. The outputs of the project were to be 30 residents engaging with pre-employment training, with 10 subsequently starting apprenticeships in Healthcare Assistant and Business Administration. | Oldham Council | £49,510 |

## Context for the Programme[[1]](#footnote-2)

Data, both nationally and in Greater Manchester (GM), on which groups are accessing apprenticeships is complex and incomplete.

In November 2018, GMCA carried out analysis of ethnicity patterns amongst the GM workforce, and school, further education, and university populations, to explore why there are relatively few apprentices from minority ethnic backgrounds[[2]](#footnote-3). Key findings from this research were that:

* There are 36% fewer minority ethnic apprentices than would be expected in GM given ethnic diversity overall. In GM 16.2% of residents come from ethnic minority communities; but only 10.4% of apprentices are from these communities.
* The issue of a lack of diversity among apprentices is much more pronounced among young people.
* The proportion of minority ethnic apprentices decreases at advanced and higher level.
* Minority ethnic apprentices are also heavily concentrated in just three subject areas: business administration, health and social care and retail and commercial enterprises (81% of minority ethnic apprentices compared with 72% of ‘white’ apprentices).
* However, minority ethnic young people in GM outperform in terms of education attainment and are more likely to enter Higher Education than their white peers.

The report concludes that although there is some evidence of a more academic orientation among certain ethnic groups which may potentially disincline minority ethnic young people towards apprenticeships, there is also evidence that ethnic discrimination persists both in the skills system and the labour market. The report also notes that the interaction of ethnicity with other characteristics such as gender, socio-economic background and disability have a combined influence on the choices and opportunities available to people, and the barriers they face in the navigation of education and skills pathways and the wider world of work.

Around 85% of apprenticeship starts in GM are by people from a White ethnic background. – this is representative of the ethnic profile of GM’s working-age population. The percentage of all apprenticeship starts in Greater Manchester made by people from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased over the last three years.

Figure : Minority ethnic apprenticeship starts in GM (as % of all apprenticeship starts)

Source: ESFA Locality Datacube, 2020/21

This increase in GM apprenticeship starts made by residents from minority ethnic backgrounds has come at a time when total GM apprenticeship starts have been falling.

Table : Total apprenticeship starts in Greater Manchester

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ethnic group | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | Grand Total |
| Asian/Asian British | 1,205 | 1,033 | 1,144 | 3,382 |
| Black/African/Caribbean/Black British | 666 | 552 | 598 | 1,816 |
| Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Group | 638 | 511 | 525 | 1,674 |
| Not applicable/Not known | 391 | 322 | 406 | 1,119 |
| Other Ethnic Group | 143 | 155 | 113 | 411 |
| White | 19,215 | 14,835 | 14,485 | 48,535 |
| Grand Total | **22,258** | **17,408** | **17,271** | **56,937** |

Source: ESFA Locality Datacube, 2020/21

The Department for Education (DfE) has conducted qualitative research into barriers to learning for disadvantaged groups[[3]](#footnote-4). This found:

‘Adults face a range of situational, institutional and dispositional barriers as they navigate learning opportunities…the most disadvantaged learners were more likely to describe the cumulative effect of multiple barriers to learning. These groups included: people in receipt of benefits; people with disabilities and health conditions; single parents; and participants whose first language is not English.’

 ‘A set of practical and circumstantial factors often need to be in place to facilitate learning. These are connected with overcoming some of the barriers to learning, such as cost, childcare, awareness of opportunities and employer support.’

The research recommended that interventions seeking to engage adults in learning should therefore seek to address more than one type of barrier to learning, using flexible delivery models, and recognising that barriers and motivations to learn change over time. The research also called for more publicity of the value of learning.

### National apprenticeships policy

It has long been recognised that the skills and qualifications and hence productivity of the UK workforce is not as good as in other developed countries. Apprenticeships are a form of vocational learning; paid jobs which incorporate on and off the job training. They take between one and five years to complete and are available in 1,500 occupations across more than 170 industries.

The government recognises apprenticeships as a crucial way to develop the skills wanted by employers and is committed to increasing the quantity and quality of apprenticeships[[4]](#footnote-5). The Government’s stated goal is for young people to see apprenticeships as a high quality and prestigious path to successful careers, and for these opportunities to be available across all sectors of the economy, in all parts of the country and at all levels. This will support the Government’s aim for young people to get the best start in life, through the opportunity that high quality education and training provides.

In 2015, the then government set a target of three million new apprenticeship starts by 2020 and since 2016 the government has been obliged to report against this target. For a range of reasons, apprenticeship starts in England have fallen in recent years, and between 2016 and 2020, there were a total of 1,907,990 apprenticeship starts in England[[5]](#footnote-6).

### Rationale for the RBA programme

Skills and qualifications are essential to economic growth and productivity and have been prioritised by national and regional policymakers; one of the strategic priorities in the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy is *“investing in a highly skilled…city-region[[6]](#footnote-7)”*. Helping people from disadvantaged groups to access the education and training that gives them these skills and qualifications will make a major contribution towards GM’s ambition for inclusive growth.

Vocational learning is regarded as particularly effective way of giving people the practical and employability skills they need to secure a job upon the completion of their education and training. However, the UK has struggled to deliver high quality, vocational education for large numbers of its citizens. The picture in GM is no better in this regard. While opinions on vocational learning, such as apprenticeships, has improved, more effort is needed before young people and their parents/carers see vocational study routes as having parity with academic routes. University is seen as the ‘gold standard’ of post-secondary education, with 62% of students surveyed by Investors in People said they wanted to go to university[[7]](#footnote-8). Vocational learning such as apprenticeships is perceived as producing employees who are less productive. Fewer than one in five young people see an apprenticeship as the most useful way to start a career[[8]](#footnote-9). Most parents feel they lack knowledge of apprenticeships and feel that university and other forms of academic study are valued more highly than an apprenticeship.[[9]](#footnote-10)

There have been several recent reforms to the apprenticeship system which aim to improve standards and increase employer demand for apprentices. However, these reforms are yet to increase the number of apprenticeships starts in England. In fact, since the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, apprenticeships starts have fallen. Learners from minority ethnic backgrounds, women, people with health and disability issues, single parents, and those living in deprived areas have always been under-represented in terms of apprenticeships starts. Where these disadvantaged groups have taken up an apprenticeship, often this has been at a level of study or on an apprenticeship standard that is unlikely to significantly boost their work and earning potential. The recent reforms have not changed the likelihood of these disadvantaged groups benefiting from an apprenticeship.

There are many factors which explain why disadvantaged groups are not fully benefiting from apprenticeship opportunities. Some relate to the learner context, some to the attitude of training providers and employers towards disadvantaged learners. The presence of multiple issues and barriers means that policy responses to boost the presentation of these groups on apprenticeships need to be multi-faceted.

The RBA programme sought to directly address the under-representation of disadvantaged groups within GM’s apprenticeships system by channelling funding to projects that offered routes into apprenticeships for these groups, focused on communities where these groups live. By helping these individuals to gain qualifications, the programme would support them to enter and progress in work which will benefit the GM economy. The apprenticeships created through the programme would be paid, making them more attractive to learners who might be facing financial difficulties. The programme paid project teams to deliver pre-apprenticeship and wraparound support; this recognises that disadvantaged groups often face multiple and non-learning related barriers to apprenticeships. RBA project teams each intended to include one or more employers with apprenticeship opportunities. The programme would learn more about employers’ attitudes towards offering apprenticeships to disadvantaged groups and how employers can be influenced to offer more apprenticeships. By promoting a test and learn mentality, the programme is encouraging project teams to explore which delivery methods are most effective at removing barriers to apprenticeships and fill gaps in the evidence base.

### Programme logic model

The evaluation has looked for evidence of links between the Programme activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts illustrated below.

Figure : Removing Barriers to Apprenticeships programme logic model

Constructive learning approach, using network meetings to share insights, identify best practice and boost partnership working.

Rationale for intervention to boost apprenticeship starts for disadvantaged groups

**Improved transitions for beneficiaries from initial contact with training provider, to training activities, to entry into work, to sustaining employment and taking next step in career and learning plans**

External Factors: National and Local Policy, National and Local Economic Conditions (including Covid-19)

Return on investment – value for money

# Evaluation methodology

The role of the evaluation has been to provide an evidence base that describes the impact and learning obtained from each of the projects delivered under the Programme.

The evaluation was to focus on:

* The overall effectiveness of the approach being tested and delivered through each project.
* The impact of the Programme on individual participants, in relation to their distance travelled, their ability to develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to progress into an apprenticeship, and whether the barrier(s) faced have been adequately addressed.
* Identifying good practice and areas for improvement that can be adopted by project providers and delivery partners to further develop and/or sustain projects beyond the Programme end date.
* Generating insights and learning that can be used by the GMCA, and other relevant commissioners, to shape and develop more responsive and effective programmes and interventions for underrepresented groups in the future.

Evaluation research took place from autumn 2020 to early 2022.

The evaluation combined qualitative and quantitative research. It included analysis of project monitoring data and baseline and follow-up learner surveys. Three case studies were produced. These collated evidence from projects on how specific groups of learners can be helped to access apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship activity. A more detailed description of the evaluation methodology is provided in the Evaluation Framework document that was developed at the outset of the research.

GMCA shared programme monitoring information on each project with the evaluation team. This information was provided by individual project teams and was assumed to be a fair and accurate picture of activity and of learner barriers.

The learner surveys were voluntary. 94 learners completed a baseline survey; 25 learners completed a follow-up survey. The low percentage of learners who completed a follow-up survey means that findings around Programme impacts should be read as anecdotal rather than definitive.

## Report structure

The final report is structured as follows:

* [Chapter 2](#_Programme_beneficiaries) provides detail on the number and profile of beneficiaries supported across the seven projects and uses baseline survey data to describe the barriers to training and employment faced by beneficiaries.
* [Chapter 3](#_Programme_impact) sets out what has been learnt about effective ways to support under-represented groups to access training opportunities.
* [Chapter 4](#_Programme_outputs_and) considers the Programme’s outputs and impacts by analysing changes between the beneficiary baseline and follow-up surveys. It also summarises findings from qualitative research with learners and project teams.
* [Chapter 5](#_Lessons_learnt_from) sets out the evaluations conclusions and make recommendations on how to sustain and scale the Programme’s impact.
* [Annexes](#_Annex_A:_Project) provide an example of the project management information template that project teams submitted to GMCA each quarter, and copies of the beneficiary survey baseline and follow-up questionnaires.

# Programme beneficiaries

This chapter uses the monitoring information that project teams submitted to GMCA on a quarterly basis, plus baseline survey findings, to describe the learners engaged across the seven RBA projects.

## Total number of learners

**Across the evaluation period, the seven projects worked with 147 learners**. Monitoring information provided by projects to the GMCA allowed the evaluation team to generate descriptive statistics of the makeup of learners across all seven projects, and individually.

* Digital Advantage worked with 11 learners, who were mainly younger, white males, who considered themselves to have a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or health problem.
* Men in the Early Years worked with 5 learners, all of whom were white, male, and under the age of 25.
* Oldham 16-25 worked with 38 learners. Learners were all under the age of 25, mainly female, with a quarter of learners considering themselves to have a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or health problems. Learners were mainly from white ethnic backgrounds.
* Oldham Coldhurst worked with 40 learners, just under half of whom were of Bangladeshi ethnicity. The project supported learners across all age ranges, with just over half of learners in the 31-49 age range. Most of the project’s learners were female.
* Rochdale Engineering worked with 17 learners, all of whom were from minority ethnicities, mainly of Pakistani backgrounds. Learners were all under the age of 25, and all but one were male. Only one learner considered themselves to have a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or health problem.
* Rochdale TA worked with 19 learners, who were mainly female and in the 31-49 age range. 90% of learners were white, with just under a third considering themselves to have a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or health problem.
* Salford worked with 17 learners, with just under half holding an EHCP. All learners were male and under the age of 25. All but one learner was from a white ethnic background.

## Profile of learners

**Detailed demographic information was provided for 145 learners**. Of these:

* **59% of learners were female.**
* **41% were male.**

Projects were asked whether their learners considered themselves to have a learning difficulty or disability (LLDD) and/or health problem. **28% of learners across all projects either hold an EHCP** (all these learners were on the Salford project) **or consider themselves to have LLDD and/or health problems**. 72% of learners did not.

65% of learners recruited were under the age of 25 (hereafter referred to as ‘younger learners’, with those over 25 referred to as ‘older learners’). All the learners in the 31–49-year-old range came from two projects: Oldham Coldhurst and Rochdale TA. The learner breakdown by age is shown in more detail in Figure 3 on the following page.

Figure : Age of learners across all projects

Source: GMCA PMI data, n=145

White learners made up 51% of all participants across the programme, with Pakistani (19%) and Bangladeshi (15%) ethnicity learners the second and third largest groups. Other ethnicities represented on the programme were Black/African Caribbean/Black British, and other Asian/ethnic groups.

Figure : Ethnicity of learners across all projects

Source: GMCA PMI data, n=145

Most Barriers to Apprenticeship learners lived in Oldham and Rochdale. There were six postcodes within these two localities which provided 10 or more learners. Projects worked with relatively few learners who lived to the west and south of Greater Manchester. This is partly due to two projects being explicitly Oldham based, and another two projects led by a training organisation based in Rochdale, hence the concentration of learners from those two localities.

Figure : Map of learner home postcodes

Heat map of learner home postcodes:

The map shows the highest concentration of learners living in Oldham and Rochdale postcodes. Of the 143 learners, 30 came from the OL9 postcode.  

Source: GMCA PMI data, n=143

The baseline survey asked learners what they were doing prior to starting on their project:

* 47% were unemployed.
* A further 7% were ‘economically inactive’[[10]](#footnote-11).
* 22% of learners were in education or another form of training.
* 19% were in work.

## Learners’ barriers to learning

Projects teams were asked what barriers to learning their participants were facing. A typical learner was perceived to face 2-3 barriers to learning/accessing training:

* Project teams were most likely to view a learner’s lack of confidence and low aspirations as a barrier to learning.
* However, lack of confidence and low aspirations were rarely the most prominent barrier – under-representation in the workforce, childcare responsibilities, and mental health barriers were seen as more prominent barriers to learning.
* Project team perceived barriers were specific to certain learner groups on certain projects, e.g., two-thirds of all under-representation in the workforce as the most prominent barrier mentions were from the Oldham Coldhurst project, and 90% of all mentions of childcare responsibilities as a barrier were from the Rochdale TA project.
* Other barriers included academic difficulty (7 mentions), lack of access to digital devices (6 mentions), and the learner being NEET (5 mentions).

Table 3: Learner barriers to learning and/or accessing training

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Perceived barrier to learning | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th | Total |
| Lack of confidence, Low aspirations | 8 | 43 | 28 | 1 | 2 | 82 |
| Learner under-representation in workforce/apprentices (gender/ethnic minority/SEND) | 58 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 59 |
| Other | 6 | 10 | 6 | 6 | 15 | 43 |
| Mental health | 20 | 4 | 3 |  | 2 | 29 |
| Lack of access to career information | 3 | 10 | 11 | 1 |  | 25 |
| Poor previous experience of education | 10 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 25 |
| Childcare | 21 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 22 |
| Inflexible recruitment practices |  | 8 | 8 |  |  | 16 |
| Lack of work experience | 1 | 2 | 2 | 9 |  | 14 |
| Lack of transport |  | 8 | 2 |  |  | 10 |
| Caring responsibilities | 4 | 2 |  |  |  | 6 |

Source: GMCA PMI data, n=145

## Learners’ aspirations whilst on their Project

The baseline survey asked what learners hoped to achieve from their time on the programme, and responses often included more than one hoped outcome per learner. 94 learners responded to this question, with 59% of them mentioning gaining employment as an outcome. 31% mentioned gaining qualifications, and 22% wanted to move into an apprenticeship upon completion of their training. More detail on hoped for outcomes is provided below, followed by quotes which illustrate participants’ hopes whilst on their training course.

Table 4: Learner hoped for outcomes through training

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Outcome | Count | % of respondents |
| Career/employment | 55 | 59% |
| Qualification/skills | 29 | 31% |
| Gain an apprenticeship | 21 | 22% |
| Understanding of sector | 16 | 17% |
| Grow in confidence | 14 | 15% |
| Meet new people/make friends | 7 | 7% |

Source: Baseline survey, n=94

“A qualification…and hopefully gain an Apprenticeship from it once I have completed my course. I also want to make new friends from the Course and mix with other people”

“I want to be able to gain experience and more knowledge about working in the NHS and have a higher chance of being accepted for a job/apprenticeship as I am only 18 and do not fully have enough qualifications to be hired, I would also like to improve on my maths and be able to work on my confidence with working with new people.”

“To be in a good apprenticeship programme with a good company”

“To learn practical skills that are useful in work and to expand my knowledge and meet new people”

The baseline survey asked learners whether they thought any aspects of their identity were a barrier to them getting the career they wanted.

* **70% of respondents did not feel any aspects of their identity were barriers to them getting the career they wanted.**
* **The remaining 30% mentioned barriers such as gender, age, mental health (anxiety, panic attacks), and religion.**

“I did think that with having anxiety and other mental health issues would prevent me being able to work within the hospital environment”

“I thought I was initially too old for an apprenticeship but was told there is no age [limit]”

“Religion as I applied [previously] for voluntary work with \_\_\_\_\_\_ but they said I had to work with males too. I said I just wanted to work with females. This was not an option so I couldn’t volunteer”

Whilst most learners did not perceive any aspects of their *identity* as barriers to them getting the career they wanted, **most or large minorities of learners worried that their previous educational attainment and/or their knowledge of training and work would be barriers to them making progress**.

In other words, learners mostly felt that it was their experiences, not their identity, that presented a barrier to progress.

Just over one quarter of learners thought that even if they completed their training, employers would not want to offer them a job; a similar percentage said they were worried about traveling for training or work.

While 31% of learners agreed that they were worried about working and studying with strangers, 54% of learners said that working and studying with strangers did not concern them.

Figure : Learners’ self-perceived barriers to training and work

Source: Baseline survey, n=94

**Different groups of learners perceived certain barriers to them progressing in their training and careers**:

* Female learners (57%) and older learners (76%) were most likely to agree that they didn’t know enough about training opportunities available to them (All learners = 48%).
* Female learners (63%) and ethnic minority learners (64%) were most likely to feel they weren’t qualified enough (All learners = 56%).
* Older learners (39%) were more likely to feel that other study options (A levels, university, etc.) would be better choices for them (All learners = 21%).
* LLDD learners (39%) were most likely to feel their health was a barrier to learning (All learners = 24%).
* Older learners (39%) were most likely to feel they would struggle to fit their training around other commitments (e.g., caring for others) (All learners = 25%).
* Older learners (36%) and LLDD learners (35%) were most likely to feel they would struggle with travel (All learners = 26%).
* White learners (48%) and LLDD learners (43%) were most likely to be worried about working and studying with strangers (All learners = 24%).

Comparing project teams’ views of the barriers to learning faced by learners, to the views of learners themselves, we see that:

* **Project teams were more likely to feel that learners faced barriers to learning and working than learners themselves**.
* Project teams were more likely to feel that learners could be discriminated against when it came to securing an apprenticeship/job than learners themselves.
* Learners were more likely to be concerned about their limited knowledge of training opportunities and career options and how this prevents them for applying for training opportunities, whilst project teams viewed a lack of career information as a lesser barrier.

# Lessons from Programme delivery

From 1-2-1 discussions with project team members and beneficiaries, online network meetings, and via case study research, the evaluation has generated insights into how training schemes can be designed and delivered in ways which help disadvantaged learners to access training and progress in their studies.

## Project recruitment methods

**The seven projects used a range of methods to identify and recruit learners.** At the time of the baseline survey, 48% of learners (n=89) said they were made aware of the training opportunity through a support organisation, for example Job Centre Plus (12% of learners), Positive Steps (9%), Get Oldham Working (6%).

A further 27% of learners heard about the opportunity through word of mouth (family or friends), 9% via an online resource (council website, gov.uk) and 4% through social media. 8% of learners heard about the opportunity in school/college or a previous course. 3% of learners heard through other means, such as seeing a leaflet or in a place of worship.

**Most learners were satisfied with the processes they had to go through to join their project**:

* 91% of learners said the amount of paperwork they had to complete was ‘about right’.
* 86% said the length of time it took for them to be signed up was ‘about right’.

The topic of recruiting learners was discussed during a network meeting with the seven project teams. **Several project teams mentioned how they had worked with/relied upon local agencies to refer potential learners to their project.** This approach was felt to be advantageous because local agencies knew the groups of learners that projects were targeting, maximising the chance that projects would work with harder/hardest to reach learners. For some projects there were existing referral pathways; for example, the Salford project team worked with tutors and transition mentors who were supporting Year 11 students to identify young people who could benefit from the project’s offer of a supported apprenticeship.

**Project teams did not accept referrals from other agencies unconditionally.** Several teams made the point that partner agencies would refer individuals who did not fit with the type of learner they were aiming to support or would refer everybody from a particular class or year group. In such instances, projects found it helpful to build in a review stage where they could sense check the learners who were being proposed. Linked to this, most projects did not run an ‘open’ recruitment process, i.e., they did not publicise the training opportunity via the media or through job sites. Instead, project teams preferred to operate a soft launch approach, working with suitable individuals who were referred to them. This fits with what learners said in the baseline survey when asked how they had heard about their training opportunity. One project lead said they had not wanted to generate excess demand for training places and then reject applicants as this could have led to the local community developing a negative perception of the project.

**Using (largely) closed recruitment processes meant that projects did not need to invest time and money in creating marketing materials. Projects which did market themselves found it helpful to produce marketing materials that would be seen/heard and understood by the communities they wanted to support** – for example, projects operating in Rochdale and Oldham marketed themselves through community radio and press, and in places of worship. The Rochdale Engineering project produced leaflets explaining their training offer and had the leaflets translated into Urdu; the translation was not aimed solely at the young engineering apprentices the project was looking to recruit, it was also done to raise awareness of the project with local parents and grandparents who may not speak English as their first language.

**Project insight –** [**Men in The Early Years recruitment video**](about:blank)

As part of their project recruitment efforts, the MITEY team created a video of some of their existing male apprentices and male early years practitioners talking about their role. The aim of the video was to promote the benefits of having male staff in nurseries and to raise interest in EY careers, and not just from men. The project lead reported that the video generated lots of positive feedback and lots of job enquiries from men. The video also helped Kids Planet to broaden the network of organisations they are working with to promote EY job opportunities.

The Oldham 16-25 project ran **open days for potential learners**. These were held at NHS sites to allow candidates to see where they could be working in the future and to build their enthusiasm for NHS job opportunities. Learners gave positive feedback on this approach; some commented that visiting the hospital site before they started their training had helped them to overcome the nervousness they felt about undertaking training in a new environment.

**Project teams reported that demand for training places was higher than they had been expecting.** They pointed out that the closure of schools and colleges in March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic had meant that face-to-face career events had been cancelled, and many young people had not engaged in remote/blended learning whilst places of education were closed. They felt that these young people were worried that they had missed out on opportunities to hear about and plan their further study options and were attracted by the practical training and guidance the RBA projects were offering.

Alongside reporting high demand for training places, **project teams also reported a high quality of applicants for training places.** Again, the closure of schools and colleges was cited as a reason for this, with higher achieving students having missed out on other further study routes or reconsidering whether they wanted to enter higher education given the shift to online lectures and learning adopted by many universities.

Project teams felt the combination of more and higher quality applicants for training places had created a risk that learners further/furthest from the labour market lost out on training places to students with stronger attainment records. As mentioned, project teams mitigated this risk by working with local agencies to identify young people who could benefit most from the support on offer.

## Training delivered by Projects

The seven projects delivered support to learners in a range of ways. Over two thirds of learners received a combination of classroom learning and 1-to-1/1-to-many mentoring. Nearly half of learners received on the job learning opportunities. A fifth of learners received ‘Other’ forms of support such as payment of travel expenses, weekly phone calls, and first aid training.

**Nearly all project training was at Level 2 or below.** Only three learners, across two projects, had participated in Level 3 training by the time that Quarter 4 monitoring information was submitted to the GMCA.

Participants on the Oldham 16-25 project described undertaking training in small groups of five. One learner talked about understanding that everybody in your group faces similar challenges in relation to confidence, mental health etc. and how having this understanding helped the group to bond, to trust one another, and feel able to ask for additional help from tutors when they needed it.

**Project insight –** **the importance of 1-2-1 tutor time for disadvantaged learners**

One of the FE training providers involved with the Salford Supported Apprenticeship project took the decision to move some of their learners from classroom-based learning to 1-to-1 tutor support. They saw big improvements in the pace of progress made by these learners. The decision was informed by many learners having had bad experiences of mainstream education and finding classroom learning stressful.

Figure : Ways in which projects delivered support to learners

Source: GMCA PMI data, n=145

The Salford Supported Apprenticeship projectextended the induction process for their apprentices. During the extended induction, new learners would be given a tour of college, and introduced to their future work colleagues. This meant that learners had some familiarity with their surroundings on the first day at college or in work and were less anxious as a result. Digital Advantage took a similar approach, with initial meetings and video calls with the learners to start to build confidence. The training then started informally as the young people did not know one another and needed to overcome trust and communication issues. The programme was not too prescriptive at the initial stage and tailored activity for each individual according to their interests to build engagement.

**Project insight –** **part-time training models**

During network meetings and 1-to-1 discussions with the evaluation team, project teams mentioned allowing learners to start on a part-time, blended learning basis so they could fit training around their other commitments. One example of this was the Rochdale Teaching Assistant project, where learners undertook online learning from Monday-Thursday, then attended the training centre on Fridays. This approach was well received by the learners, with the inclusion of a whole group day helping any learners who felt isolated when learning from home. However, a part-time learning approach means it can take longer for learners to record the necessary number of hours training to achieve a qualification. This in turn means that training providers have to offer learners support over a longer period, which places a strain on training provider funding and resourcing models.

Oldham 16-25 participants said the content and delivery methods used in their training had been helpful. They appreciated being given hard copy training materials to look at when at home. This enabled them to refresh what they had learnt between sessions and before days in the workplace. Having materials to take home also gave them reassurance if they felt they were not picking up everything that was covered in the classroom.

**Project insight –** **helping learners to juggle learning and other commitments**

The Oldham Coldhurst project supported mainly female learners. The project team scheduled initial training sessions to run in the same venue and at the same time as nursery and early years sessions so that parents of young children could still attend training sessions.

### Functional skills assessments

To meet the minimum requirements set out in the apprenticeship standard, an apprentice needs to demonstrate their functional skills in English and Maths. Project teams identified a lack of functional skills as a barrier to learning for only 9 of the 147 learners. However, project teams also recognised that many learners would benefit from functional skills training. As initial contact with a lot of learners was within the first Covid-19 lockdown, it was not possible for them to take part in the practical aspects of their training. Functional skills was seen as a way to start learners off slowly, and introduce them to the project teams.

**Project teams identified various methods that were effective in developing learners’ functional skills:**

1. Projects such as Rochdale BAME engineering and Oldham Coldhurst focused on employability skills (motivation, organisation, resilience etc.) more than functional skills during their initial contact with learners. The project teams felt that focusing on employability skills helped to ease learners into training, allowing time for a bond to develop between trainer and trainees. Once this bond was in place, the projects introduced functional skills training and assessments to the learner journey.
2. The Salford project took a small group of their leaners aside and provided them with additional functional skills support during lunch hours. This group was then split into two smaller groups so the learners who needed most functional skills support could have additional 1-to-1 time with a dedicated functional skills tutor.
3. The Salford learners were also supported to develop their functional skills whilst on the job. For example, instructors at the ForHousing Skills Centre make functional skills relatable to construction i.e., maths teaching covers area, volume, and ratios to consider what learners will need to draw upon in a construction role.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the requirement that apprentices demonstrate their functional skills capabilities was put on hold (till end July 2021) in recognition of the fact that some apprentices would not be able to get the functional skills support they needed during periods of lockdown. Despite this, project teams reported that **learners wanted to take functional skills assessments because they understood they would need these skills in whatever line of work they ended up in**.

However, **training providers remained concerned about disadvantaged learners experience of the functional skills assessments**. One training provider pointed out that the assessment is carried out by an independent invigilator who does not know about a learner’s background and additional needs. This could lead to anxiety for the learner and under-performance in the assessment.

## Project support to learners

The seven projects supported their learners in the classroom, outside the classroom and in the workplace in a range of ways. These involved tutors, mentors and other staff who could offer pastoral support to learners, and staff whose role was to act as liaison between training provider and employer.

An early insight from the Salford Supported Apprenticeship project in relation to supporting younger learners and apprentices was that **the processes training providers have in place to support their younger learners may not be enough and/or relevant to the needs of disadvantaged younger learners.**

One of the Salford project training providers talked about how their ‘learner support team’ focused on the young person's record of needs and support from their time in mainstream education. This approach works less well with disadvantaged younger learners who may have had periods of time out of mainstream education, or who may have additional, undiagnosed support needs. They noted that, **for many individuals with bad previous experiences of mainstream education, returning to a classroom setting can be terrifying**. For this group, taking more time to settle the learner and providing them with ongoing pastoral support when they need it was seen as key to that learner staying on their training course.

Regarding the initial assessment of learners of all ages, another training provider is using what they have learnt from their project involvement to redesign how they assess and support learners. The training provider is investing a significant amount of money in:

* Recruiting an apprenticeship additional learning support coordinator who will work out what extra support apprentices need and coordinate this ongoing support, including delivering some support themselves.
* Procuring a technology solution that can carry out remote assessments of learners needs when they are not in the training centre, so that the training provider can adapt the support they give each apprentice.
* Including additional learning support as a key theme in all staff training and in the annual conference the training provider runs.

The decision to hire an apprenticeship additional support coordinator was made following the observation that previously, apprenticeship tutors and support staff had tried to take on the additional support role themselves but had lacked the knowledge and skills needed to understand and address the complex problems that some learners face.

“We at [training provider] have been made to think long and hard about our approach and challenge our own custom and practices. I have supported the coaching of several staff into the needs to our supported apps and the role of the employer. We are also putting in place a formal review of progress with the support team as for some they appear no longer need the degree of support due to their improved behaviours which is phenomenal.”

**Project insight –** **the importance of providing mentors for younger learners**

A common learner support approach used by projects supporting younger learners was employing ‘mentors’ or support workers. The role of the mentor/support worker is seen as being akin to a youth worker. The team member is a trusted adult for the young person, someone who will support them and be there for them whenever they need. In consultations, project beneficiaries spoke about the reassurance they took from knowing they could call their mentor at any time to discuss issues or anxieties they had; this could be the difference between them turning up at work on Monday or not.

Mentor/support worker roles sometimes extended to working with the apprentice’s family to agree the support that would be put in place to help the learner to remain on the training course. Mentors would also reach out to schools and other agencies with expertise of working with the young person where necessary.

Project teams feel that **good mentors/support workers can understand the backgrounds that disadvantaged learners are coming from, build trust with learners, and through this trusting relationship spot emerging crises and head them off before a learner disengages**.

Some learners will have experienced complex and traumatic events in their lives. In such cases, support workers need professional knowledge and skills to respond appropriately. The Salford Supported Apprenticeships functional skills tutor has a counselling background and has worked in prisons in the past so has a good understanding of the need to support the learners’ mental health and the need to consider their challenging background circumstances.

Several project teams advocated training provider staff being trained to understand adverse childhood experiences (ACE) and how these can impact a young person’s behaviour and needs.

The final survey asked learners to give feedback on aspects of the training they had received. **Feedback was extremely positive. Positive feedback was consistent across the projects, and consistent for all types of learners (age, gender, ethnicity, LLDD status etc.)**.

Learners gave particularly high praise to the training materials they had received, the breadth of topics covered in their training, and the support they had received from tutors.

Figure : Learners’ rating of different aspects of the training they received

Source: Final survey, n=25

**88% of learners felt they had received the right amount of support from their training provider/tutors**; 8% felt they could have done with more support.

## Employer engagement and learner support in the workplace

A core aim of the Programme was that participants would start and sustain apprenticeships with employers.

**Several project teams said that securing apprenticeship opportunities for learners was difficult.** This was felt to be partly due to the economic climate. Firms in many sectors were reluctant to offer new apprenticeship opportunities when existing apprentices and other staff members were only just returning from or still on furlough. Employers were also unsure on the pace at which the economy would ‘reopen’ following the pandemic and were cost conscious as a result.

The reluctance of employers to offer apprenticeships was also felt to be due to nervousness about the additional support that project learners might need. Training providers recognise that supporting a new apprentice is hard and time consuming, even more so if the new apprentice is working from home for some or all or the time and has additional support needs.

**Project insight –** **giving employers information about potential recruits**

One RBA project decided to increase the amount of background information on the learner they gave employers. Employers and line managers appreciated this as it helped them to work out which staff members should/should not work with the young person. Employers said they preferred an open and honest conversation before an apprentice started in post to uncovering a major issue several months down the line when they would have invested staff time and money in supporting the young person.

**Information sharing with employers needs to be proportionate and done in a sensitive manner**. Employers do not need to know certain things, and learners may not want all background information to be divulged. In some instances, it may be sufficient for a line manger to know who to contact within the training provider team or another agency if they sense other things in the apprentice’s life are impacting their performance at work.

**Information sharing with and training for employers needs to go deeper than one line manager**. Examples were given of employers where one member of staff or department saw the value and took time to understand how to support disadvantaged new recruits, but this support fell away when the line manager changed job, or the recruit moved to a new team. These shifts in the work environment could be especially unsettling for learners who find it hard to deal with sudden changes and working with people they do not know.

“As an employer communication [on how to support disadvantaged learners] needs to be very broad across the business from the beginning - more than we have done to be completely honest, buy in from our HR team earlier in particular.”

Projects sought to reduce the impact of sudden changes in work (and training) environments by **making sure that all participants met each other and were exposed to multiple parts of the business or organisation in which they were working**.

The final survey asked learners to rate the support they had received in the workplace from their line manager and from other employees. Feedback from learners (n=17) who were in work at the time of the final survey indicates that **learners feel well supported in the workplace**:

* **76% of learners rated the support they received from the line manager as good or very good.**
* **75% rated the support they received from other employees as good or very good.**

Female learners were more likely than male learners to rate support from line manager as *very* good (56% vs. 13%) but most male learners rated the support they are receiving from their line manager positively. Feedback on line manager support did not vary in terms of the learner’s age, ethnicity or LLDD status.

Feedback on support from other employees did not vary in terms of the learner’s gender, age, ethnicity or LLDD status.

Learners from the Oldham 16-25 project talked in more detail about their experiences of working within the NHS. They appreciated the supervision they were receiving from senior staff. The learners recognised that they would make mistakes in their new jobs but were reassured that other staff would understand this and not judge them for these mistakes.

**Project teams advocated the identification of disadvantaged learner recruitment champions within employers**. This staff member can help to drive recruitment and train/procure training for other staff on the additional support disadvantaged learners may require.

**More than two-thirds of learners (n=18) said they were applying what they had learnt on their training course ‘all the time’ or ‘often’.** Only one learner said they ‘never’ applied what they had learnt.

Figure : How often do you apply what you have learned in the workplace?

Source: Final survey, n=18

The frequency with which learners were applying what they had learned in the workplace did not vary in terms of the learner’s gender, age, ethnicity or LLDD status.

When asked for example of how they applied what they had learned in their work, answers included:

“I know how to find the gauge of a roof and tile the roof due to my training.”

“I make sure I am aware of the safeguarding team or the officer. This is especially so since I became a SEND teaching assistant, doing a one to one with vulnerable pupils/students.”

“Building on my communication skills and confidence.”

“Use of basic knowledge like being able to know the different types of materials, how to read a micrometre, general terminology for tools, machines, and operations. Knowing to tap, how to use a band saw, the importance and practices of basic health and safety.”

## Impact of Covid pandemic upon learners’ experiences

For large parts of their delivery, projects were restricted in the amount of face-to-face contact they could have with learners due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Training had to be delivered online instead. **Online learning was challenging for many participants**; over half of final survey respondents gave examples of how online learning had proved challenging:

*“Communicating to people I didn’t know in my group [was hard online].”*

“The pace of [the online] learning was too quick.”

“The teacher wasn’t there to help us all the time.”

“[Online] training modules would freeze, which hindered progress and [made things take longer].”

Project teams agreed that online learning was not ideal for learners who have had less experience/less positive experience of education and training. On a practical level, project training providers found it logistically challenging and expensive to get IT equipment to learners who needed it. This meant some learners had to participate in online training over the phone, which is not easy.

On the other hand, the Salford Supported Apprenticeship project found that the necessity to work 1-to-1 or in small groups due to Covid restrictions was advantageous for SEND learners as the tutor had more time to provide tailored support and the young people were more likely to be comfortable opening up in a smaller setting.

Those projects that placed learners onto apprenticeships had to deliver the full range and amount of training required under the apprenticeship standard within the pre-Covid timeline. This was hard to achieve if learners struggled to adapt to online learning. The requirement to deliver the full amount of apprenticeship training was different to A level teaching, for instance, where the government introduced flexibilities into what had to be taught by when.

**The pandemic also influenced learners’ experiences in the workplace.** Pandemic guidelines meant that many new workers were not able to meet other staff face to face. One project team felt a key cause of their recruits dropping out was the isolation they felt in the workplace during a period of increased stress for many workers.

# Programme outputs and impacts

At the outset of their involvement with projects, learners faced a range of barriers to learning. Project teams felt that learners lacked confidence and had low aspirations, whilst also identifying mental health, childcare responsibilities, and under-representation in the workforce as further barriers to their learners’ progress. Most or large minorities of learners worried that their previous educational attainment and/or their knowledge of training and work would be barriers to them making progress. Different groups of learners perceived different barriers to them progressing in their training and careers

This chapter combines follow-up survey[[11]](#footnote-12) feedback from learners, project monitoring information submissions, and qualitative research with learners and project teams to consider the extent to which projects have removed these barriers to learning.

## Programme outputs achieved

The Programme had three target outputs:

* 151 new learners recruited and trained across the seven projects.
* 70 new apprenticeship starts.
* 70 apprenticeships sustained for at least four months.

By January 2022 (Q5 of delivery) the Programme had achieved:

* 144 new learners recruited and trained across the seven projects (95% of target).
* 31 new apprenticeship starts (44% of target).
* 8 apprenticeships sustained for at least four months (11% of target).

Figure : Profile of learners recruited and trained by the Programme

Source: GMCA PMI data

The rate at which projects recruited and trained new learners was broadly in line with the rate expected at the start of the Programme. However, it took longer for projects to start these learners on apprenticeships than had been forecast, and despite an increase in project apprenticeship starts in mid-2021, the Programme never hit its expected number of 70 apprenticeship starts.

Figure : Profile of new apprenticeship starts recorded by the Programme

Line graph showing the profile of new apprenticeship starts recorded by the programme from September 2020 to January 2022.



Source: GMCA PMI data

All seven projects recruited and trained five or more new learners, with the two largest projects recruiting and training 38 and 37 learners.

Five of the seven projects recorded at least one apprenticeship start. The most apprenticeship starts recorded by a project was 12.

As of January 2022, of the five projects that recorded an apprenticeship start, one project also recorded sustained apprenticeships, i.e., the eight sustained apprenticeships recorded at the Programme level all came from one project. As the evaluation ended, many projects reported that apprentices remained on their training; it is reasonable to assume that the Programme will hit its sustained apprenticeships target in due course.

## Projects’ success in removing barriers to learning

This section uses monitoring information submitted by project teams, baseline and follow-up survey data, and face-to-face discussions with learners, to consider the impact of the Programme in removing barriers to learning, both overall and for specific groups of learners.

This section includes five learner journeys as case studies of how projects have supported different types of learners to overcome the barriers they face to learning and progressing in their careers. Further examples of learner journeys are provided in the three thematic case study reports that have been produced in addition to the final evaluation report.

**Learner A – Young, White, male, studying for a construction apprenticeship**

Learner A had been excluded from school and was unemployed before starting on their training course.

Learner A did not know what they wanted to do for a career, and when they first joined the project, had no real sense of why they were there, it was just another place to come because they were not allowed to return to mainstream schooling. The project team recognised the Learner A’s poor previous experiences of education were a barrier to them succeeding on the project.

Over time, Learner A began to appreciate the opportunity they have been given. They were happy with the support they received from course tutors and from line managers and colleagues in the workplace. Learner A appreciates that all staff treat him as an equal. They enjoy the camaraderie between learners and value the friendships they have made with peers who they would not have met or socialised with outside of the project.

Learner A is confident they will make progress in the training and chosen career path. The project team recognises the great progress Learner A has made and want him to remain focused on his studies and listening to the staff who support him in the workplace.

At the baseline survey, 70% of learners did not feel any aspects of their identity were barriers to them getting the career they wanted; however, most or large minorities of learners worried that their previous educational attainment and/or their knowledge of training and work would be barriers to them making progress.

The follow-up survey asked learners whether they felt they still faced barriers or challenges to being successful in their apprenticeship. 18 learners answered the question, of these 10 **(56%) felt they still faced barriers or challenges**.

* Learners from minority ethnic backgrounds were more likely to say they still faced barriers or challenges than White learners (71% vs. 45%)
  + White learners were more likely to feel their learning difficulty/disability, and challenges getting to and from work are barriers to learning.
* Older learners were more likely to say they still faced barriers or challenges than younger learners (67% vs. 50%).
  + Older learners were more worried about COVID-19, childcare, mental health barriers, and getting to and from work.
* Female learners were slightly more likely than male learners to say they still faced barriers or challenges (63% vs. 50%).
  + However, male learners are more likely to cite their mental health or learning difficulty or disability as a barrier to learning, while female learners are more nervous about working with strangers.

**Learner B – Older, non-White, female, wants to work in the NHS**

Learner B was unemployed before Get Oldham Working referred her for project support.

Learner B knew that she wanted to work for the NHS within the field of mental health but feared her religion would be a barrier to working in her chosen field. She had some prior volunteering experience. The Project team thought Learner B lacked confidence.

Learner B really enjoyed all aspects of their training, praising the breadth of training topics and the quality of materials and saying they got strong support from the project tutor and other staff. They would recommend the training to their peers.

Learner B is very confident they will complete the training and progress into their preferred line of work. In their final survey, Learner B commented, *“The training was very informative and helpful. [The tutor] made it interactive and engaging.”*

Looking in more detail at what barriers or challenges learners feel they still face:

* 60% of learners who felt they still faced a barrier(s) mentioned mental health.
* 40% mentioned worries about Covid-19.
* 40% felt their low confidence was a barrier.
* 30% mentioned getting to and from work and learning difficulty/disability.
* <20% of learners mentioned being nervous working with groups/strangers, childcare, financial pressures to earn more doing something else, physical health, poor basic skills, or other challenges in home life as continuing barriers to learning.

**LLDD learners** were most likely to say that their mental health, or worriers about Covid-19, are barriers to them being successful in their apprenticeship. **Male learners** are more likely than female learners to regard their mental health as a barrier. Male learners are also more likely to cite a lack of confidence as a barrier to being successful in their apprenticeship.

**Learner C – Older, White, male, LLDD, wants to run his own business**

Learner C was unemployed at the start of the project, and the Project team felt his mental health, lack of confidence and organisational skills represented barriers to learning at the outset.

Learner C agreed that his anxiety was holding him back from getting the career he wanted. He was also worried about travelling to training or work and working with strangers. He felt that even if he completed the training employers would not want to offer him a job. Learner C wanted to use the training to build up his knowledge on how to run a business and to build up contacts.

Learner C rated all aspects of his training as good or very good. He feels his time on the Project has been worthwhile and he would recommend the training.

Learner C is still worried about COVID-19 and sees his mental health and learning difficulty/disability as a potential barrier to being successful on their training. However, receiving mentoring support both online and in-person he feels that he has successfully achieved what he hoped to at the outset.

The evaluation was able to track 21 learners from completion of a baseline survey to completion of a follow up survey. Amongst this group:

* **8 of 21 mentioned a barrier to learning at the baseline survey = 38%**
* **6 of 21 said they still felt they faced a barrier to learning at the follow-up survey = 29%**

The most prominent barriers to learning faced by the 21 learners at baseline were: a feeling they were not qualified enough to take up a training opportunity; not knowing what career they wanted; not knowing enough about training opportunities; health (including mental health) barriers; and worries about travelling for study and work.

At the follow-up survey, none of the 21 learners mentioned feeling they were under-qualified, or that they lacked knowledge and information on training opportunities and career paths. However, learner concerns about their mental health (6 of the 21 learners saw their mental health as a barrier to progression at the follow-up survey), low confidence (4 of the 21), and worries about travelling for study and work (3 of the 21) have persisted.

By tracking individual learners from baseline to follow-up survey we see that:

* **4 of the 6 learners who cited their mental health as a barrier to being successful in their studies at the follow-up survey had also mentioned mental health as a barrier at baseline.**
* **2 of the 4 learners who cited low confidence as a barrier to being successful in their studies at the follow-up survey had also mentioned employers not wanting to give them a job as a barrier at baseline, and 3 of the group had said they weren't qualified enough at baseline.**
* **2 of the 3 learners who cited travel as a barrier to being successful in their studies had also cited travel as a barrier at baseline.**

## Learners’ plans

Learners were asked how confident they were that they would complete their apprenticeship/training:

* **75% of learners were confident or very confident they would complete their apprenticeship/training.**
* 10% were unsure.
* One learner said that they were not confident at all, despite having been satisfied with the support they had received from the project team.

Learners were asked how confident they were that they would progress in their chosen career:

* **53% were confident or very confident that they would progress in their chosen career**.
* 29% were unsure,
* One learner said that they were not confident at all.

Learners were also asked how likely it is they will continue to seek out training to develop their skills:

* **71% said it was likely or highly likely they will continue to seek out training to develop their skills**.
* Two learners thought it unlikely they would continue to seek out training.

There was no clear difference between male and female learners in respect of the likelihood of a learner completing their training and progressing in their chosen career. Male learners were more likely than female learners to think they will continue to seek out training to develop their skills (90% vs. 55%).

Younger learners were more confident than older learners that they would complete their training, progress in their chosen career, and continue to seek out training opportunities. For older learners, follow-up survey responses suggest this group are unsure as to whether they will complete/undertake training in future rather than feeling negative about completing/undertaking training.

Minority ethnic learners are more confident about completing their training than White learners (80% vs. 67%); but White learners are more confident about progressing in their chosen line of work than minority ethnic learners (67% vs. 45%).

There were no obvious differences between LLDD and non-LLDD learners in respect of completing training, progressing in a chosen career, and continuing to seek out training opportunities.

## Other comments from learners

The final survey asked learners to reflect on their time on project and whether they had achieved what they had hoped to achieve. Responses to these questions (n=23) were very positive:

* **96% of learners felt their time with the training provider had been worthwhile.**
* **96% of learners said they would recommend apprenticeships and training to their peers**
* **When asked whether they had achieved/were on track to achieve what they had hoped at the outset of their training, 87% of learners felt they had.**

**Learner D – Older, White, female, studying to be a teaching assistant**

Learner D was unemployed and working with a Jobcentre Plus work coach at the start of the project. They felt they wouldn’t be able to fit training around their caring commitments and were worried about travelling to training or work. They also lacked information about training opportunities and did not know what career they wanted.

At recruitment, the Project Team felt Learner D lacked confidence, had low aspirations, and recognised that childcare was a barrier to their learning.

Through the Project, Learner D has received a mix of classroom and 1-2-1 support. They used Zoom to participate in online training. Through this, they received the basic skills training they need to work as a teaching assistant.

Learner D felt very supported by her training provider and employer and feels that she has successfully achieved what she hoped to at the outset. Learner D is no longer worried about childcare and travel issues being a barrier to being successful in her training.

Learner D gave the following feedback on their experience, *“I am now working in a primary school so am able to apply all I learnt continuously.”*

.

The high rates of positive responses to these questions were consistent across all projects and across all types of learners (age, gender, ethnicity, LLDD status).

When asked what they would have done had they not undertaken their training, most learners said they would not have sought out another education or training opportunity and instead would have looked for work or remained unemployed.

Table 5: What would you have done if you had not had this training opportunity?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Answer | % |
| Found a job/another job | 26% |
| Don’t know | 17% |
| Become/remained unemployed | 17% |
| Other | 13% |
| Returned to education | 13% |
| Found another training course | 13% |

Source: Final survey, n=23

LLDD learners, older learners, and male learners were more likely to say they would have become unemployed if they had not had the training opportunity.

Female learners, younger learners, and non-LLDD learners were more likely to say they would have found a job if they had not had the training opportunity.

The final survey included space for learners to suggest how projects could improve their offer to learners. Suggested improvements included:

“In-depth explanation for why we do things in a certain way or use some things, so that I can understand the reasons behind procedures or the uses of them and remember the purpose of them.”

“More structure after course – more information about opportunities or ways to improve skills after course.”

“when you’re out of the class you’re in the dark and not sure what’s happening. Need a focal point for updates and access to further information and progression.”

**Learner E – Young, Pakistani, female, wants to work in engineering**

Learner E was unemployed before joining her training programme. She was referred to the project via a local support agency.

Learner E knew she wanted to be an engineer and had strong support from her family for her choice of career, despite it being a different study route to that being followed by many of her friends.

Learner E worried about wanting to work in traditionally male sector; she questioned whether an engineering firm would want to employ a female apprentice from a minority ethnic background.

Learner E also had concerns about quality of vocational training schemes compared to academic study routes.

Learner E is really enjoyed her apprenticeship and feels confident about her future career path. She has learnt that attitudes towards women working in engineering are changing. Nevertheless, Learner E still feels that her mental health and issues outside of work present a challenge to her making progress in her studies and her career.

The final survey closed with space for learners to make final comments about their time on their training course. Comments included:

“I am so grateful I took the course.”

“I found this course very good and would recommend to anyone.”

“[I'm] not used to having a job yet – sometimes feel like it’s all a dream, why am I here.”

“Once the course is finished [I will still] need access to further information on education and further advice on career development. Also, I need details of financial help on how to progress further.”

“When I’ve needed help, I’ve always been helped.”

# Conclusions and recommendations

The Removing Barriers to Apprenticeships programme has sought to test a range of interventions to help learners from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds access apprenticeships.

The evaluation of the Programme was tasked with:

* Considering the overall effectiveness of the approach being tested and delivered through each project.
* Measuring the impact of the programme on individual participants, in relation to their distance travelled, their ability to develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to progress into an apprenticeship, and whether the barrier(s) faced have been adequately addressed.
* Identifying good practice and areas for improvement that can be adopted by project providers and delivery partners to further develop and/or sustain programmes beyond the project end date.
* Generating insights and learning that can be used by the GMCA, and other relevant commissioners, to shape and develop more responsive and effective programmes and interventions for underrepresented groups in the future.

## The effectiveness and impact of the Programme

The RBA programme was created because it was felt that certain groups of leaners in GM face more barriers to learning than others. The evaluation has found evidence that these groups do face barriers to learning, most often a lack of confidence (and how that manifests itself when applying for jobs, working with others etc.), and a lack of knowledge and information about training and careers.

Most learners do not see aspects of their identity (sex, age, ethnicity etc.) as a barrier to getting the career they want. A minority (37%) of learners regard their health (mental or physical) as a barrier; but this barrier is less of an issue than logistical barriers such as fitting training around other family commitments (45% of learners agreed this was a barrier) and traveling for training and work (45% of learners).

The evaluation has recorded how barriers to learning are often specific to different groups of learners. For instance:

* Female learners, and older learners are more likely to mention information barriers (not knowing enough about training opportunities) or other time commitment barriers.
* LLDD learners are most likely to feel their health was a barrier to learning; this group is also more anxious about studying and working with strangers.

The **difference in Project Teams' and learners' perceptions of barriers** is interesting and probably reflects the fact that learners often don't see aspects of their identity as a barrier as for them it is a part of their day-to-day life, and it might not occur to them as a barrier. The contrast also shows that Project Teams might not always recognise the prevalence of social anxiety amongst learners that affects their willingness/ability to travel independently and meet/work with new people.

The Programme has helped GM learners to overcome these barriers. By January 2022, 144 learners have been recruited onto a training project and 31 have started on an apprenticeship. Most of these learners think they would not be training if not for the Programme.

‘Other positive outcomes’ in addition to apprenticeship starts delivered by the Programme have included examples of participants leaving the training to enter employment, or taking part in basic skills training (for example, Health and Safety).

Table : Other positive outcomes delivered by projects

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Project Title | Other specific (non-apprenticeship) positive outcomes |
| Coldhurst Ward, Oldham | 9 |
| BAME Engineers | 5 |
| Salford Supported Apprenticeships | 0 |
| Single Parent Teaching Assistants | 14 |
| Digital Supported Internship | 9 |
| Oldham 16-25 year olds | 4 |
| Men In the Early Years (MITEY) | 0 |

Source: Removing Barriers to Apprenticeships project team monitoring

Project **recruitment** has worked best when there is a close working relationship with referral agencies. Having these relationships has helped projects target the harder to reach learners that were the target of the support. An open recruitment process would have risked missing these learners. Challenges around recruiting hard to reach learners have been exacerbated by the Covid pandemic closing other study routes for learners resulting in a higher 'quality' of applications in terms of academic achievement than might otherwise be the case.

Projects have not delivered the number of sustained apprenticeships hoped for but most learners remain engaged with their projects, meaning the numbers of Programme apprenticeships, sustained apprenticeships and other positive outcomes should increase in the coming months.

Projects funded through the Programme have provided support to learners in a range of ways. Learners say that their training has been high quality and that it has helped them to make the progress they were hoping to make:

* **96% of learners felt their time with the training provider had been worthwhile.**
* **96% of learners said they would recommend apprenticeships and training to their peers.**
* **87% of learners say they have achieved what they hoped to achieve.**

The evaluation heard examples of how barriers to learning can flare up due to issues in a learner’s home life. In response, the projects have spoken about the need for **flexibility** in learning approach and the importance of not assuming a learner’s readiness to learn. Several projects have found part-time training models to be an effective way of engaging learners; part-time learning (at least initially) allows learners to experience their new learning and working environments in small doses, giving them time to build their confidence. This can be especially important for learners whose poor or distant previous experiences of education mean they do not feel comfortable in a classroom.

**Learner F – Young, White, female, felt isolated and believed their other responsibilities meant they could not train or work**

Learner F said: *“I left college when I found out I was pregnant with twins. Being a young mum as well as helping my dad look after my sister who has disabilities meant that I didn’t have much time to myself*.

*“I got some advice off a friend and she signposted me to [the project].*

*“At the beginning, I felt drained and I was nervous. My anxiety gets bad when I meet new people but I took a risk and I realised that nothing comes easy.*

*“None of my friends have kids so learning with other people I could relate to was amazing. We’ve got a WhatsApp group and contacted each other on Snapchat. Knowing I had that support felt good.”*

Since completing the programme, Learner F has secured a work placement within the NHS, and has had excellent feedback from their line manager.

Learner F added: *“I’ve grown in confidence and I’m so proud of myself. I don’t even have the words for it – I feel so encouraged and can’t wait for the future.”*

**Being in a classroom or other group learning environment** is beneficial for learners who face additional barriers to learning. Meeting other learners whose background are like their own helps to build confidence and social skills. Working in small groups and having the opportunity for 1-2-1 support allowed learners to make faster progress. Small group learning also helped learners to form a bond with their tutors. For some younger learners, seeing their tutor as someone who respects them and treats them as an equal was a significant positive difference to previous school or college experiences, where they felt they could not relate to their teacher or tutor and were seen as a problem to be managed.

When projects had to rely on online learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many leaners found this challenging.

Vocational learning projects also pose challenges for disadvantaged learners. Most tutors have come from an industry background and are not trained in learner pastoral care. Vocational learning can lead to learners feeling isolated in workplace.

These points highlight the importance of training providers being able to offer mentors or support workers, especially for younger learners. The importance of **mentors** has been highlighted by many of the RBA projects. Mentors can work across the training provider and the employer, offering young learners a consistency of support, information and experiences in the classroom and the workplace. Mentors can make themselves available to younger learners at different times of the day, extending the support available to a learner beyond ‘school’ or ‘work’ hours. This ability to talk to someone in a time of difficulty or crisis can be the difference between a younger learner continuing or dropping out from their course.

Removing barriers to learning takes time. This is shown by:

* The under-performance of some RBA projects regarding starting learners on apprenticeships.
* Feedback from project teams about the additional time and effort it takes to diagnose, support and place disadvantaged learners.
* Feedback from learners in the follow-up survey about the barriers to learning they still faced:
  + Mental health issues and low confidence are the barriers which appear to be hardest for learners to overcome – two thirds of learners who cited poor mental health as a barrier to learning at baseline, still faced this barrier at the follow-up survey.
  + Male and LLDD learners appear most likely to face these (sustained) barriers.

**Most programme learners who have taken up an apprenticeship or other work experience/placement say they have had a positive experience.** 76% of learners rated the support they received from the line manager as good or very good. More than two-thirds of learners (n=18) said they were applying what they had learnt on their training course ‘all the time’ or ‘often’.

Employers need support themselves to understand the barriers to learning that a learner is facing, and to be able to support the learner accordingly in the workplace. Project teams advocate the creation of additional **information and tools for employers** on working with disadvantaged learners would help them to understand the support that may be required. Awareness of these tools could be raised by identifying disadvantaged learner champions within business or organisations.

But it can be hard to have consistent champions within employers, especially if they are small company. Staff will change roles or move on; and learners can find it disorientating to have a sudden change in their working environment. Having **consistent employer information and training in place** will mean that supporting a disadvantaged learner does not fall on one employee or line manager but is something the whole company or organisation can do.

Even with employer engagement, the bulk of work around engaging, recruiting, and providing ongoing support to apprentices will fall to training providers. **Training provider delivery models may struggle to fund and resource this additional support**. Some project teams have found technology solutions help them to understand more about learners’ support needs, but such solutions can only do so much as they cannot provide 1-2-1 interventions or 24/7 support when a learner is experiencing a crisis. Recruiting mentors, training tutors, and having the capacity to give learners 1-2-1 support when they need it will mean training providers need more staff working with disadvantaged learners. This will cost money.

Other insights generated through the research have included:

* **Training providers should be encouraged to ask their learners what (additional) support they need**. This conversation should be framed around ‘opening doors’ rather than ‘removing barriers’ as many learners do not perceive they face barriers and therefore may assume additional support is not for them.
* There is an issue relating to the **functional skills assessment** that all apprentices must undertake.Functional skills assessmentinvigilators should be made aware of the learners' backgrounds and additional needs to avoid unnecessary anxiety and potential under-performance in assessment. The evidence does not imply that disadvantaged learners should be excused from undertaking a functional skills assessment, however; the learners spoken to about this recognise the need for them to be able to demonstrate basic skills.
* Changes to the apprenticeship **End Point Assessment** process and content are not fully understood by employers or by training providers. Compared to the ongoing assessment style of an apprenticeship framework, the exam-like nature of EPA is perceived by project teams as a barrier for learners with poor confidence.
* There has been a **reduction in the number of apprenticeship standards available, especially at Level 2**, compared to apprenticeship frameworks. Several standards that are felt to appeal to disadvantaged learners (e.g., business administration) from the Level 2 list have been removed, and project teams felt that the jump straight to a Level 3 apprenticeship can be very challenging.
* **Training providers on the projects say they have learnt the importance of celebrating every learner success.** They see how young people talk to each other whilst on their training. If there is a negative experience, this needs to be addressed quickly, otherwise it can spread via social media.

## Implications for future practice and policy

The projects funded via the Removing Barriers programme were delivering training and support to GM learners during a period of unprecedented turmoil caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions placed on economic and social activity in response.

As the November 2021 report Begin Again[[12]](#footnote-13) noted, COVID-19’s impacts have been unequal. Some sectors, some communities and some demographics have suffered more than others.

* For the labour market, the pandemic has not led to large scale unemployment, but it has led to reduced rates of economic activity amongst older female and   
  middle-aged male workers. The pandemic has also led to changes in the ways we work, such as a greater degree of remote working. Some individuals, for instance younger workers who want social interaction through work or those with mental health conditions, may find it hard to adapt of these changes. Individuals may be reticent about returning to workplaces whilst COVID-19 remains widespread.
* For the economy, the pandemic has led to a contraction in employment within sectors which have traditionally provided routes into work for young people (e.g., retail and hospitality); and a growth in sectors which traditionally use prior training and qualifications as a condition of employment (e.g., healthcare).

These (emerging) impacts mean the case for policy and interventions which help disadvantaged groups to train/retrain is strong.

Whereas previously such interventions were (mainly) concentrated on younger people (e.g., NEETs), there now appears to be a stronger case for tailoring interventions to different demographics and to specific sectors.

The content and delivery style of training will need to develop to reflect the labour market which trainees will be entering, and the anxieties trainees may have about work.

### Policy recommendations

From the evaluation’s findings, we make 12 policy recommendations:

1. **In policy, and through training provider delivery, move away from using terms like ‘removing barriers’ in favour of ‘creating pathways’ and ‘opening doors’.** 
   * The evaluation has found that most learners do not feel their identity is a barrier to them accessing training and/or employment. They may be put off by language which implies they are deserving of special attention or support, or conclude that they would not be eligible for support.
2. **Continue to fund vocational training projects which aim to help disadvantaged learners to obtain skills and qualifications needed for work and further.** 
   * There is evidence that vocational training is (more) appealing to disadvantaged learners than mainstream/academic educational routes.
3. **Focus funding on projects to support SEND/EHCP/suspected SEND learners.** 
   * This cohort face many barriers to training and employment, are more likely to be out of mainstream education, and it generally takes longer to remove the barriers to training and employment faced by this group, placing greater costs upon training providers.
   * The evaluation has uncovered less evidence of a need for projects that target learners from specific minority ethnic backgrounds or projects that aim to address gender bias in sector recruitment patterns.
4. **Consider funding projects with a focus on support older learners into training and employment.**
   * Older (age 25+) learners are more likely than younger learners to feel they have more barriers to learning and employment (including limited/out of date knowledge of training options), they are less confident about completing training programmes, and they are more likely to feel they continue to face barriers post-support.
   * Emerging evidence suggests that older workers are less likely to have re-entered the labour market post pandemic.
5. **Encourage flexible, learner-centric delivery models.** 
   * Improving the recruitment of disadvantaged learners onto traditional vocational training courses without also changing how courses are delivered could result in lots of disadvantaged learners dropping out of training as their wider issues and barriers go unaddressed.
   * Successful Barriers to Apprenticeships projects have invested in tools to diagnose learner support needs at the outset, combined online and classroom-based sessions, provided learners with wrap around support, and given learners tasters of the workplace.
6. **Where training providers are working with younger learners, encourage them to include key worker/pastoral care/mentor roles in their support offer.**
   * Not all tutors have the skills needed to talk to learners about wider issues and challenges, and tutors should not be expected to be experts on this.
   * Key workers/mentors can be available to learners outside of classroom hours when they may be feeling anxious about their studies or be encountering home life challenges that could affect their ongoing participation.
   * Younger learners were very positive about the relationship they had with their project key worker/mentor.
   * Key workers/mentors can link the young person, their family, their tutor(s) and their line manager, sharing information on a proportionate basis to ensure all sides can help the young person to remain in training and employment.
7. **Support training providers to review their induction period with a view to extending the support available for new starters with additional barriers**
   * The induction period and relationship building at the start of a training course is critical to understanding barriers from the learner’s perspective.
   * After using new tools, several training providers found that more of their learners faced barriers, and hence were eligible for additional support and funding, than they initially thought.
8. **Maximise the opportunities offered by place-based training projects by linking training activities to other public services.** 
   * The offer of quality training and future employment can be very attractive in communities where other public services are not well utilised and so can play an important role in connecting people to other support services.
9. **Make sure that an employer(s) is involved in the training from the outset.**
   * Learners told us they were enthused by the prospect of the training leading to a career as opposed to just a way of earning money.
   * Projects used their employer contacts to aid recruitment (e.g., hosting open days for potential applicants) so people could see and be reassured about where they would be working.
   * Some learners said they found it easier to talk with employees and line managers than tutors or teachers. The former group often came from similar areas or had similar backgrounds to the learner.
   * Having early and regular contact will help to ensure that the employer is aware of an individual’s additional support needs and can put in place processes to support the individual in the workplace as required.
10. **Promote the creation of disadvantaged learner workplace champions.** 
    * Vocational study involves periods of time spent in the workplace working under a line manager or as part of a team. Line managers and other staff within teams often move roles/employers, meaning trainees must build new working relationships.
    * Disadvantaged learners can find such change unsettling. It takes them time to build confidence and trust with colleagues.
    * Having disadvantaged learner workplace champions would give trainees more regular/consistent points of contact within an organisation. It would reduce the risk of a learner’s support network being significantly disrupted by staff changes.
    * GMCA could do this via the GM Good Employment Charter.
11. **Commission Adverse Childhood Experiences training for training providers and employers.**
    * In specific circumstances, a learner will have had adverse prior experiences that can significantly impact their engagement in training.
    * Tutors, key workers/mentors, and employers cannot be expected to manage the impact of these experiences without greater knowledge and skills of how these experiences affect learners and how they can be accommodated.
    * GMCA could promote general awareness of ACEs via the GM Good Employment Charter and through GM training provider networks.
12. **Promote the inclusion of robust mental health support in training programmes.**
    * Of learners who told us they still faced barriers to training and employment following project support, most told us that their mental health and how it impacts their ability to engage in training and work was the barrier they faced.
    * Male learners and the LLDD cohort seem most likely to face ongoing mental health challenges around training and work.
    * National studies show that young people’s mental health has deteriorated during the COVID-19 pandemic[[13]](#footnote-14).
    * Improving learner mental health is too large an issue to be dealt with through skills policy alone. It will require mental health policies and healthcare funding to be achieved.
    * GMCA should lead a campaign which creates and supports training provider activity on this issue.
    * The campaign should draw upon and be linked to mental health support and initiatives delivered through the NHS (e.g., The GM Health and Social Care Partnership in piloting approaches to improving the mental health of secondary school children in five GM neighbourhoods), and the national skills and training system (e.g., the Access to Work scheme for supporting apprentices experiencing mental health difficulties).

# Annex A: Project monitoring information template



# Annex B: Baseline survey questionnaire



# Annex C: Follow-up survey questionnaire



# Annex D: RBA Programme logic model

* Inputs
  + £328,000 Skills Underspend
  + £295,438 cash match funding
  + £182,573 in-kind match funding
  + GMCA Staff time (x FTEs)
  + Project teams time (x FTEs)
* Activities
  + Marketing of projects to potential apprentices
  + Recruitment and induction assessments
  + Pre-apprenticeship, employability & basic skills training
  + Apprenticeship Standards teaching and training - one-to-one, classroom, on the job etc.
  + Mentoring
  + Work experience/placements
  + Appraisals, end point assessments, exit interviews
  + Ongoing in work support for apprentices and employers
* Outputs
  + 77 apprentices
  + 100 other beneficiaries (pre-apprenticeships and basic skills)
  + Existing staff trained to be diversity champions
* Short-term Outcomes & Impacts
  + Beneficiaries
    - Qualifications
    - Employability skills
    - Removal of barriers to work
    - Practical experience of world of work
    - Change perceptions of work
    - Aware of wider range of career options
  + Employers
    - New employees
    - More/stronger training provider links
    - New recruitment channels
    - Staff training policies
    - Better understanding of apprenticeships
  + Project teams
    - More/stronger employer links
    - Better understanding of employer needs
    - New learner engagement routes
    - Better understanding of diversity of learner needs
    - New/adapted apprenticeship delivery models
* Medium-term Outcomes & Impacts
  + Beneficiaries
    - Entry into employment/self-employment
    - Volunteering
    - Entry into further study
    - Confidence and motivation
    - Receive support to address other issues in their lives
    - Sustain employment with help of wider support
    - Positive attitudes towards apprenticeships
  + Employers
    - Fewer recruitment shortages
    - Fewer skills gaps
    - Reduced staff turnover
    - New recruitment policies
    - More diverse workforce
    - Commitment to staff training
    - Positive attitudes towards apprenticeships
  + Project teams
    - New mainstream delivery models
    - New ways of supporting people in work
    - Raised profile with businesses, other training providers etc.
    - Improved ability to demonstrate impact
    - Roll out of approach to new sectors/areas
    - New partnership working, institutional knowledge and processes
    - Leverage further funding
* Longer-term Impacts
  + Sustained employment for beneficiaries
  + Progression in work for beneficiaries
  + Reduction in NEET and unemployment rates amongst beneficiaries
  + Tackling stereotypes regarding groups of learners and professions
  + Scale up of effective delivery models to cover more learners, more localities, more sectors & more employers
  + Reduce gap in apprenticeships take-up between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged groups
  + Stronger integration between GM skills policy and policies such as inclusive growth

1. A more detailed consideration of the evidence base and rationale for the Programme is provided in the evaluation framework document. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. *Apprenticeships and diversity in context in Greater Manchester*, GMCA, November 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Barriers to Learning for disadvantaged groups, DfE, August 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. English Apprenticeships: Our 2020 Vision, HM Government, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [Apprenticeships and traineeships, Academic Year 2021/22 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy, June 2019, p62 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. [Apprenticeships: what do young people really think about it? (investorsinpeople.com)](https://www.investorsinpeople.com/knowledge/young-people-apprenticeships/) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. All statistics from *The Interserve Society Report*, Interserve, 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. <https://www.populus.co.uk/insights/2018/02/exploring-attitudes-towards-apprenticeships/> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Includes responses alluding to the client not actively seeking employment, e.g., care or parental responsibilities. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. 25 responses to this ‘follow-up survey’ were gathered. Not every respondent answered every question, so the sample size for each question may also be lower than 25. We have noted where this is the case. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. [Begin-again.pdf (resolutionfoundation.org)](https://economy2030.resolutionfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Begin-again.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/MHF%20Scotland%20Impacts%20of%20Lockdown.pdf>; <https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642(21)00177-2/fulltext>; <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2021-follow-up-to-the-2017-survey> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)