

Local Skills Report & Labour Market Plan

Greater Manchester Employment & Skills Advisory Panel

March 2021



Contents

Contents.....	2
1 Foreword	3
2 Introduction: Skills Advisory Panels.....	7
3 Skills Strengths and Needs	13
4 Skills and Labour Market Strategy.....	21
5 Skills Action Plan	38
6 Assessment of Progress.....	47
7 Positive Impact Stories	55
8 Looking Forward.....	69
See separate Data Annex document for:	73
Annex A – Core indicators.....	73
Annex B1 – Additional Analysis.....	73
Annex B2 – Data Sources / References.....	73
Bibliography:	73

1 Foreword



Cllr Sean Fielding

Chair, Greater Manchester Employment & Skills Advisory Panel

Our people are our greatest asset. Skills have the power to be a game-changer, whether preparing people to enter the labour market for the first time or helping Greater Manchester residents to retrain, up-skill or refresh their skills throughout their working lives.

It is difficult in the current circumstances to produce a report of this nature that does not default to a Covid recovery plan: more than ever, we need to ensure that no-one is held back, and no-one is left behind in our economic and social recovery. The impact of Covid has been unequal and unfair, highlighting starkly the inequalities that have existed for many years and which we are working to change. More deprived areas have experienced both health and economic inequalities, such as greater risk of exposure to illness during the course of work, higher rates of furlough and redundancy, reduced access to remote education and skills provision due to digital exclusion/data poverty, and unequal access to other services/facilities that support health and well-being through difficult times.

Yet this is not just about Covid. Supporting our residents and businesses through the challenges that lie ahead will require a careful balance between meeting the needs of those impacted by economic downturn linked to the pandemic, with meeting the needs of those cohorts, sectors and places that already faced labour market inequalities, barriers and skills gaps or mismatches prior to Covid.

Supporting all of Greater Manchester's residents to move towards, into and within the labour market is essential if we are to tackle those long-standing barriers and spatial inequalities across the city-region, support positive outcomes for our residents and communities, and support businesses to access the local talent pipeline they need for recovery, growth and productivity.

No single organisation or plan can bring about this type of change alone, nor can it be solely either a national or a local response, but we can join up different parts of the skills and employment system to make the overall impact far greater than the sum of its parts.

This time last year the Greater Manchester Employment and Skills Advisory Panel (ESAP) was working with Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) to update GM's Work and Skills Strategy which had been in place since 2016. We were reflecting on progress made during the span of the previous strategy, taking on board changes within the education, skills and employment support landscape, and identifying our shared priorities for the coming years. That work was set to dovetail with the refresh of *Our People, Our Place – the Greater Manchester Strategy* (GMS), which was to have updated the city-region's wider ambitions in the coming years.

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that this work paused while we all began to make sense of these unprecedented health, economic and social challenges. Those challenges continue to unfold: we know that it will be a long road ahead and it is difficult to predict the shape of that recovery in labour market terms with any certainty, but roll-out of the vaccination programme now brings hope of stability and recovery.

Prior to the pandemic, the challenges and opportunities facing Greater Manchester and the UK more generally had been articulated in respective industrial strategies; in GM, our [Local Industrial Strategy](#), together with GMS, has provided a strategic framework to drive our skills and work activity and set out a vision for an integrated education, skills and work system that will help all of our residents to be ready for life and for work:

- **Young people leave education and training ready to succeed** in the labour market, with a balance of academic, technical and 'life ready' skills
- **Adults can acquire the skills, mindset and support they need** to fulfil their career potential and adapt to changing employer needs throughout their lives, from entering employment for the first time through to highly skilled careers and retraining
- **Employers have access to a system that is flexible, resilient and adaptable, and which meets their needs** in the rapidly changing 21st century world of work, driving a sustainable economic future for GM in which companies compete on the basis of high productivity, good quality work, and excellent employment practices
- Residents are supported by a welfare system, under Universal Credit, that provides access to **good work for those who can, support for those who could, and care for those who can't.**

A year on, and with much turbulent water having passed under the bridge, in many ways that vision for our labour market, the ambitions and opportunities set out in our Local Industrial Strategy, and the priorities that had been identified by GM's ESAP prior to the pandemic, remain as relevant as ever.

Young people need clear lines of sight into education, training and employment opportunities in sectors that are stable, active and growing, together with the support that will help them progress along their chosen pathway. The complex barriers faced by some of our residents around learning and/or work remain and must be addressed with flexible, personalised support around core skills and employability linked to jobs and progression. Developing the technical skills needed for inclusive growth and productivity gains, particularly within GM's frontier sectors, remains crucial to GM's future and will help to stimulate wider recovery. And challenges around tackling low pay and in-work progression pathways, particularly within the foundational sectors of our economy, have been brought to the fore by the vital role played by key workers in sectors such as social care, retail/logistics and the public services.

The picture is not solely one of challenge. Greater Manchester's long history of collaboration, our partnerships – both long-standing and more recently established – and our track record of developing and delivering a unique combination of skills and employment activity stands us in good stead.

There is a strong appetite to not simply return to where we were, but, with collaborative partnerships on the ground in GM and the right support from Government, to create a fairer, greener, and more inclusive Greater Manchester: a city-region that is as ambitious as ever in terms of inclusion and future growth, which works with employers to create good jobs and opportunities to progress, and high quality, responsive providers who can deliver the skills provision and employment support needed at every level and in every place.

As a Panel, we know that this Local Skills Report & Labour Market Plan comes at a point in time when the situation continues to evolve, and we recognise that much can – and will – change in the coming months. We will revisit this report later in the year and see this as a stepping stone to our future plans and, in due course, to the Local Skills Improvement Plans signalled in the FE Reform White Paper.

But, in the meantime, it lays down a marker around the priorities that Greater Manchester's ESAP has identified, our strategy and plans for the year ahead, and reflects on some of the progress, achievements and excellent work already underway to support our people, our businesses and our place.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Fielding', written in a cursive style.

Cllr Sean Fielding

Chair, Greater Manchester Employment & Skills Advisory Panel and GMCA Lead for Skills, Employment and Digital

2 Introduction: Skills Advisory Panels

Skills Advisory Panels: the national context

Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) bring together employers, skills providers and key local stakeholders to better understand and resolve skills mismatches at a local level.

There are 36 SAPs across England as part of Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships.

In Greater Manchester, due to the integrated approach being taken to labour market, underpinned by a unique range of devolved functions in skills, employment support and health & social care, it was decided to establish an **Employment and Skills Advisory Panel (ESAP)** bringing together core partners/stakeholders from across that full landscape, enabling the Panel to consider the labour market in its totality, rather than skills in isolation.

The Department for Education (DfE) supports SAPs with grant funding primarily to produce high quality analysis of local labour markets and [Local Skills Reports](#). The Reports, of which this is the first, will set out the local strengths and skills needs and how the SAP proposes its area addresses its key priorities. The Reports aim to support and influence local partners and feed intelligence to central government, including the national-level [Skills and Productivity Board](#) (SPB).

In January 2021, DfE published its White Paper “[Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth](#),” which set out a number of reforms aimed at putting employers more firmly at the heart of the skills system. The White Paper outlined plans to test in 2021-22, in a small number of areas, “Local Skills Improvement Plans” created by business representative organisations.

The White Paper committed to build on the work of SAPs to date. SAPs and their Local Skills Reports will continue as the DfE trailblazes “Local Skill Improvement Plans” and until any potential changes are made to a SAP’s remit and responsibilities.

2.1 Background: Greater Manchester geography and governance

Greater Manchester encompasses the ten districts of Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan. With more than 2.8m residents, and a further 7m people living within an hour's commute, a prosperous and productive North of England requires a successful Greater Manchester.

With over 124,000 businesses and a diverse economy, Greater Manchester is, for many, already a great place to live and work. Prior to the pandemic the city-region's economy was diverse and growing. Employment growth had been strong for a decade and there was real cause for optimism: a growing skills base, significant rises in business start-ups, and major infrastructure investments planned and underway. Innovative forms of cooperation between Greater Manchester's private and public sectors, and between local and central government, mean it continues to be an example of effective leadership for the Northern Powerhouse, the UK, and the world.

Greater Manchester is building on a decade of strong investment in businesses, infrastructure, and in new forms of government. Our ten local authorities have worked closely together for decades, and with the formation of the Combined Authority, election of a Mayor, and six devolution deals signed, the city-region now has a unique set of functions, powers and levers across multiple policy areas, influence over billions of pounds of associated spending, and a new relationship with central government.

Against that backdrop, working with government and with local partners, Greater Manchester has begun a shift in the way that adult education and skills are prioritised and funded via the devolved Adult Education Budget, successfully supported the long-term unemployed back into work through the nationally-acclaimed GM Working Well programme, piloted new ways of working to address skills gaps linked to jobs, and is working to explore and address the recognised interactions between poor physical and/or mental health and productivity.

Greater Manchester's Independent Prosperity Review and Local Industrial Strategy identified that there are barriers to be overcome to improve economic performance. These include population health, education and skills, infrastructure, innovation, and leadership and management.

With those cross-cutting challenges in mind, in recent years Greater Manchester has established a clear vision for an integrated labour market system that brings together education, skills, work and health, recognising that these factors are inextricably linked in building strong communities and a thriving economy, and that those activities must be aligned in a place in ways that are simply not possible at central government level if the policies from different parts of government are to deliver positive outcomes for our residents and businesses on the ground.

This holistic view to the wider Greater Manchester labour market drives the considerations of the Employment and Skills Advisory Panel.

2.2 Greater Manchester's unique opportunities: An integrated approach to the labour market

The Prosperity Review recommended taking an integrated approach, as is already being applied in Greater Manchester's health and social care system, to create a single education, skills and work system for the city-region. Clarity, simplicity and responsiveness within that system are vital for our residents and employers.

There are clear opportunities to deliver this ambition in Greater Manchester, and to make the system greater than the sum of its parts. We are already working differently with central government and with local partners through the ESAP, building on Greater Manchester's unique range of functions, resources and assets:

- Devolved adult skills functions and associated funding
- Devolved employment support through GM Working Well (Work & Health Programme), including a tailored, locally-commissioned offer of broader Working Well programmes to supplement the core activity
- Devolved health & social care system
- Working flexibly and remaining responsive to the needs of 'place' when using (and augmenting) nationally funded models such as Careers & Enterprise Company activity

- Earned confidence as a testbed for valuable pilot/test & learn programmes, many of which are in partnership with government, including Fast Track Digital Workforce (a forerunner to the bootcamp model being tested under the National Skills Fund), Enterprising You (skills development pilot for self-employed people in partnership with the Federation of Small Businesses), and Future Workforce Fund (NEET reduction/prevention programme in partnership with Prince's Trust)
- Trailblazing activity with partners where GM has shown particular leadership and appetite, such as around ageing well and supporting older workers (Greater Manchester was the first place in the UK to be recognised by the WHO as an age-friendly city-region)
- ESF Co-Financing Organisation status, which has enabled local commissioning of skills provision and employment support to meet employers' and residents' needs, including the £40 million Skills for Growth programme.

2.3 Greater Manchester ESAP: role and remit

Whilst Greater Manchester's ESAP is not a decision-making body, it provides vital strategic advice, oversight and recommendations to decision-makers, leveraging existing networks and relationships to provide challenge and debate across the labour market landscape.

ESAP members represent networks of partners, rather than solely their own organisation or institution. They act as conduits to wider networks of stakeholders and providers in Greater Manchester's skills and employment ecosystem, bringing their expertise and that of the networks that they represent to bear and providing the crucial link between local and national, and between policy development and implementation.

GM ESAP Membership

Panel members represent wider networks of core stakeholders and partners across Greater Manchester's education, skills, employment support and health landscape as well as a number of national partners. ESAP is chaired by Greater Manchester Combined Authority's portfolio Lead for Skills & Employment and Digital.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association of Colleges • Association of Education and Learning Providers (AELP) • Business Representatives (large & SME) • Department for Education (national) • Department for Work & Pensions (national) • Education & Skills Funding Agency (local) • Employment Related Services Association (ERSA) • GMCA Portfolio Lead, Deputy Portfolio Lead, and Lead CEx for Skills, Employment and Digital | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GM Centre for Voluntary Organisations (GMCVO) • GM Chamber of Commerce • GM Colleges Group • GM Education & Employability Board • GM Executive Lead for Population Health and Commissioning • GM Higher Education Institutions • GM Learning Provider Network • GM Local Enterprise Partnership • Jobcentre Plus (local) • Learning & Work Institute, CEx • Local Authorities • Regional Schools Commissioner • The Growth Hub |
|---|--|

The Panel:

- Acts as a 'critical friend' to GM's decision-makers, working closely with key stakeholders to focus on the contribution that employment and skills policy and delivery can make to the competitiveness and performance of GM's economy and to improving the quality of life for our people and communities
- Provides detailed oversight of the whole employment and skills landscape to ensure that policy and delivery changes are aligned to local priorities, making use of a range of data and local intelligence to ensure provision is responding to the needs of learners & businesses across GM's post-16 landscape
- Brings together representatives of local employers and providers to understand local skills needs and translate them into skills provision and employment support services
- Forms a strong strategic partnership between central Government and Greater Manchester

- Aligns agendas from education, skills, work and health to ensure GM truly benefits from a devolved system.

2.4 Industry intelligence informing strategy

In delivering these functions, the Panel draws on a range of evidence in order to shape Greater Manchester's labour market response. Quantitative measures like those set out in the data/core indicators within the analytical Annexes which accompany this report provide only part of the evidence base. The data must be accompanied by local 'soft' intelligence - gathered from the Panel and its networks and from employers at both district and city-regional level. Increasingly, that intelligence is coming directly from industry (with a particular focus on occupational roles and pathways within Greater Manchester's growth and high employment sectors), from providers of skills and employment support programmes, from those shaping and delivering careers guidance for people of all ages and levels of prior attainment, and from the grass-root community-based organisations that perform vital outreach activities to engage those who are furthest from the labour market.

It is only by understanding the issues that sit beneath the data and the ways in which funding streams from different types of provision flow into the labour market / drive behaviour, that truly responsive strategies can be developed, balancing priorities on both demand and supply sides, and ensuring that individuals and employers can access the skills and employment support they need to contribute to and benefit from inclusive growth.

3 Skills Strengths and Needs

Greater Manchester's goal is to deliver ambitious improvements in skills and employment for the 2.8 million people living in the city-region. Central to this is developing a responsive, integrated labour market system that enables all people to achieve their full potential and which provides the talent that our businesses need for the future. Whilst each GM district is working towards their individual skills and employment priorities led by local authority teams, there are collective strengths, challenges and opportunities that we approach together.

Recovery and inclusive growth rely on tackling long-standing labour market inequalities



There are strong links between skills disadvantage and disadvantage more generally. Over a fifth of GM wards are amongst the 10% most deprived in England in terms of income and employment, and 3 of England's most disadvantaged wards in terms of skills are in a single GM district



1 in 10 of GM's working age residents has no qualifications:

- c.11% = highest qual is L1
- c.16% = highest qual is L2

Of GM's working age residents with no qualifications, 65,600 were in employment



1 in 5 vacancies in GM are linked to skills shortages; yet over a third of GM workers have skills/qualifications at a higher level than their job requires. Fewer GM residents have L4+ quals than the England average, yet this is the level that employers say they need most

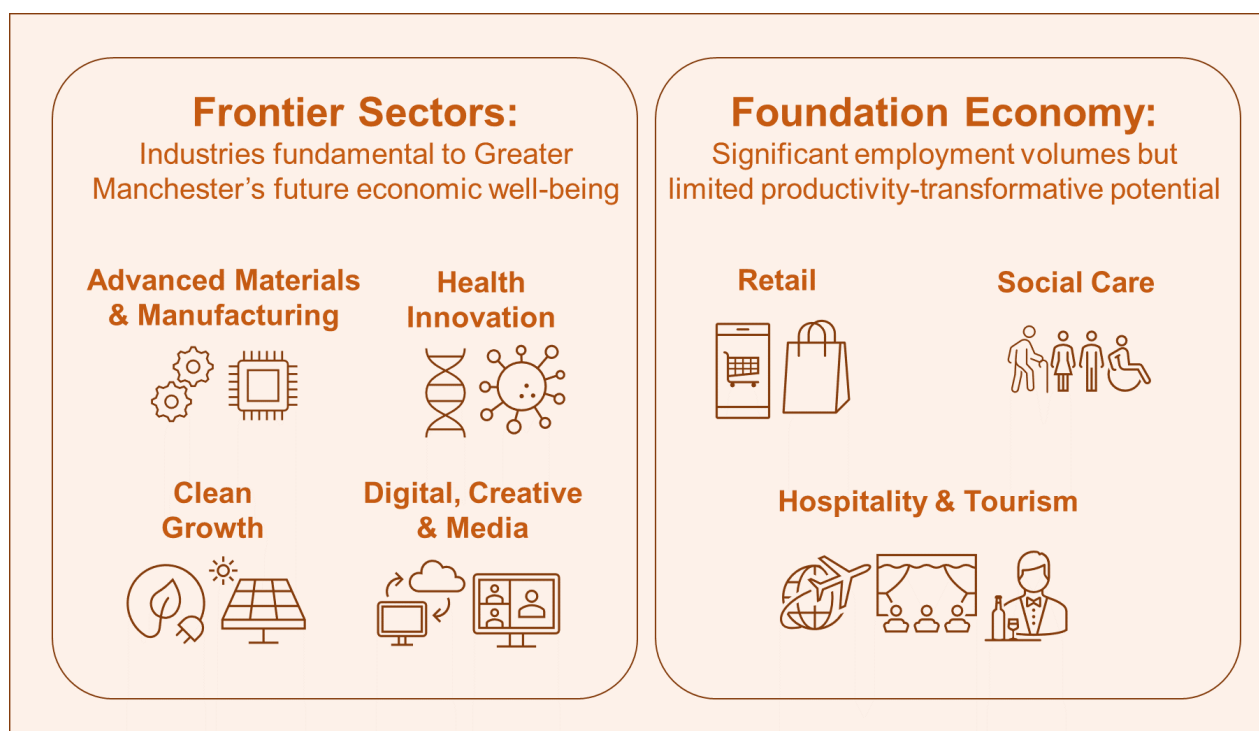


A quarter of residents are paid below the Living Wage. Pay remains lower than in 2008/09 and continues to fall. A typical GM worker earns almost £1 per hour less per hour worked than UK norm*



Poor health is a barrier to entering / progressing in work, and a central factor in low productivity. The employment rate of GM adults with long-term health issues is 13% points lower than for the GM population as a whole

*Based on pay for a full time worker converted to hourly rate



3.1 Greater Manchester Labour Market: the evolving evidence base

Regular reviews of skills, and assessments of the relationship between skills development, employment support, the labour market and the economy have been undertaken relatively frequently within GM. This dates back to the [Manchester Independent Economic Review](http://www.manchester-review.org.uk/project_722.html#http://manchester-review.org.uk/download/?id=593) of 2008, believed to be the first ever independent investigation of a city region in the UK¹. More recently, [GM's Industrial Strategy](#) has also encompassed an [GM Independent Prosperity Review](#), again led by leading independent economists². GMCA also takes steps to ensure skills and work data is publicly available, easy-to-access and interpret via dashboards on its website (the annual [Labour Market and Skills Review](#)). Further information and analysis can be found in the Data Annex document which accompanies this report.

¹ Manchester Independent Economic Review, *Understanding Labour markets, Skills and Talent*, 2009 http://www.manchester-review.org.uk/project_722.html#http://manchester-review.org.uk/download/?id=593

² [Greater Manchester Independent Prosperity Review](#) (GMCA, 2019) was also revisited and revised in the light of Covid in summer 2020: [Greater Manchester Prosperity Review: One Year On](#), (GMCA, September 2020).

The Prosperity Review, underpinned by a series of technical reports³, identified many strengths in Greater Manchester's education and skills system, including a history of partnership working at city regional level between employers' organisations and learning providers, a vibrant higher education sector, and rapid improvements in college performance. However, it concluded that the system remains fragmented, is delivering less than the sum of its parts, and skills inequalities serve to constrain life chances. Too many young people – typically those from less well-off backgrounds – learn in institutions that are not 'good' or 'outstanding' according to Ofsted. And too many people lack the functional and technical skills, especially digital skills, that employers need and that are the foundations of being able to progress in work.

3.2 Labour market inequalities, disadvantage and the impact of Covid-19

All indications are that the impact of the pandemic will be experienced unequally, hitting more deprived areas harder. As the [2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) (IMD) data shows, Greater Manchester figures prominently in deprivation measures. Just over a fifth of the neighbourhoods in GM fall into the bottom 10% of most deprived neighbourhoods nationally in respect of employment and income. Meanwhile, in terms of skills deprivation, 13% of Greater Manchester neighbourhoods fall into the bottom 10%, although this masks significant variation between districts (in Oldham, for example, 30% of neighbourhoods are amongst the most deprived on skills).

Such data reflect the fact that the economic backdrop to Greater Manchester's skills and employment system presents multiple pressures. These include both spurring inclusive economic growth and attempting to alleviate some of the most extreme poverty and skills deprivation levels in the country. This kind of economic inequality (alongside other types of inequality, such as ethnicity, age and gender) is a long-standing issue in Greater Manchester, prompting the launch last Autumn of the [Greater Manchester Independent](#)

³ Technical papers covered a range of issues around productivity, innovation & global competitiveness, skills & employment, and infrastructure. Skills & employment papers included [Transitions in Employment and Skills](#), [A New Approach to Education, Training and Skills](#), and [The Future of Work and Skills](#) (all available on the [GMIPR webpage](#))

[Inequalities Commission](#). This Commission has been tasked with reflecting on and recommending responses to inequality issues in the city region.

As seen elsewhere, GM's labour market has struggled through the pandemic.

Unemployment (whether understood through the claimant count or through the Labour Force Survey/Annual Population Survey) has risen, affecting 72,000 people (to 5.1% in September 2020 compared with 4.9% nationally) – and is likely to rise further.

Employment has also fallen rapidly in GM. In addition – and in contrast to patterns elsewhere in the UK – economic inactivity in GM and the wider North West of England has risen markedly (by 6,500 between March and September 2020, driven in particular by Rochdale, Salford and Tameside). This suggests that as people lose their jobs many are leaving the labour market rather than searching for work. The 16-64 economic inactivity rate in GM was 23.7%, compared with 20.8% nationally, in September 2020. Such data accentuates the pressures on the labour market system: as well as aiming to support the unemployed into work, a further need is for skills/employment support programmes to facilitate a reduction in inactivity among those of the inactive who say they want to work.

3.3 Greater Manchester: the nuances of 'place'

GM is a large, broad-based and diverse city region without a particular dependence on any single sector or occupational group for its economic well-being. Its sectoral and occupational location quotients (LQs) are modest, with no particular reliance or disproportionate number of particular occupations or industries in our job market relative to other sectors or to national norms. It has local authorities within its districts that are among the most deprived in the country – as well as others that are relatively well off⁴. City-regional averages therefore need treating cautiously as they can mask significant variations between districts. For example, where there is evidence of polarisation, whether of pay, skills or other socio-economic inequalities, city regional averages may serve to mask rather than illuminate any central tendency.

⁴ *Index of Multiple Deprivation*, 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

That said, certain features of GM as a ‘place’ stand out in respect of skills. As shown in the data annexes, GM has 9.4% of its population without any qualifications compared with 7.4% nationally. Addressing functional numeracy and literacy, alongside enhancing basic skills and employability, remains a key challenge. GM also has a large student population (about 102,000) between the five HEIs, with about 30,000 graduating into the labour market each year. Retention of graduates is important, with about 40% opting to stay on in GM post-graduation (this has been a long-term pattern).

Greater Manchester is also looking to increase support for technical education and skill development – especially at level 3, 4 and 5, whether through apprenticeship or high quality vocational education, to ensure non-graduate routes into high quality work. The first T-level programmes were rolled out in Oldham last autumn; wave two will follow this September and from next year a T level offer will be delivered by every college in GM. Generating demand for these higher level skills will be key, both to improve skills utilisation in Greater Manchester’s labour market and to ensure progression pathways and entry opportunities throughout the talent pipeline.

3.4 Sectors and priorities

GM’s local industrial strategy (LIS) segmented the economy into ‘frontier LIS sectors’ and ‘foundational economy’ sectors. The former are those industries seen as fundamental to future economic well-being. They are **health innovation, advanced materials and manufacturing, digital, creative and media**, and ‘**clean growth**’. The latter comprise sectors with significant employment volumes but not necessarily productivity-transformative potential. They include **retail, social care, and hospitality & tourism**.

Each of these sectors has specific skills and development needs and thus sector focused, intelligence-led strategies are appropriate. However, underlying themes include ensuring adequate skills supply, taking steps to encourage greater skills demand amongst employers (especially important in the foundational sectors), and maintaining a focus on boosting productivity.

3.5 Skills and Productivity

For many northern areas, productivity remains a fundamental problem and links to all other aspects of life. In the decade to 2008, GM’s productivity record was actually

relatively encouraging, with real (inflation adjusted) GVA outpacing the UK average (excluding London). The financial crisis, however, has left a deep legacy. Poor productivity has fed through into very low pay growth. The inflation adjusted hourly pay median in 2020 was still well below 2008 levels (£12.04 per hour in 2020 compared with £12.41 in 2008 in GM). Whilst the trend had been one of improvement, this will inevitably be hit hard by the wider economic impact of the Covid pandemic, as well as factors such as Brexit.

Skills are part of the answer to poor productivity, but the relationship is complex. The traditional view is that skills supply is key (with an especially strong emphasis on level 4+ skills⁵). However, national level evidence, GM's reviews of its own evidence, and recent experience have demonstrated that a simplistic view of skills supply needs challenging. For example, although there is a theoretical link between productivity and skill levels in the economic literature, simply increasing the prevalence of level 4 skills in the economy will not transform productivity. It is about the nature of skills and their context.

Skills shortages do not appear to be a particularly acute economy-wide problem, according to the Employers Skills Survey, although local intelligence shows they are in some individual sectors ranging from software and programming, nursing and care, and certain construction trades. Some 7% of GM firms reported a skills shortage vacancy in 2019 (6% in England). The proportion of firms with a skills gap in GM was 15%, again slightly higher than England's average at 13%. Furthermore, as well as skill levels, the reviews have focussed attention on the relationship between poor levels of health in the population and weak productivity growth⁶.

3.6 Skills demand: employers and skills

Skills demand is a complex policy challenge, but the GM reviews have highlighted the need for policy action on a number of issues.

First is the prevalence of low wage employment. (It is important not to generalise about the skill levels of these low wage jobs, as many workers have skills and qualifications higher than those needed to do the job successfully – especially in sectors such as care).

⁵ Oguz, S. and Knight, J., Regional Economic Indicators, Economic and Labour Market Review, [Office for National Statistics](#), February 2011

⁶ See GMIPR Reviewers Report, op cit.

About a fifth of the workforce earn less than a living wage in GM. The share of employment in low productivity sectors in GM (defined as sectors with lower than £30,000 GVA per employment, at 2013 prices) – has increased gradually over time (from 37.7% in 2005 to 41.8% in 2015). The employment share of each of the main low productivity employment sectors has increased over this period, except for retail, where it has remained at the same level. The increase in employment share has been highest in Health and Social Work (1.9 percentage points) and in Administrative and Support Services (1.5 percentage points). In 2019, the Prosperity Review Reviewers' Report noted: "*Low quality jobs with low demand for, and utilisation of, skills are a barrier to the development of skills through the education and training system.*"⁷ This echoed a similar conclusion reached by the Manchester Independent Economic Review a decade earlier. "*The aim must be to enhance the demand for skilled labour in the region*"⁸.

Second, skills are not consistently well-used. The definition of 'under-utilisation' used in the ESS is that the employer has at least one member of staff with qualifications *and* skills that are more advanced than the level needed to do their current job (although the employer can only report on what they are aware of). The proportion of establishments reporting that they have 'under-utilised' staff increased in GM from 25% in 2015 to 35% in 2017 and to 36% in 2019, according to the ESS (England's score was 34% in 2019). Utilisation problems affect more than double the percentage of firms with skills gaps and about five times the proportion with skills shortage vacancies.

Third, and consistent with the picture of significant low wage work and poor skills use, employer commitment to training, and commitment to investing in training, appears to be lower than it was a decade or longer ago. Declining investment in skills development has been reported on in national evidence. For example, a report using data from the Skills and Employment Survey found that there was an 18% decline in the number of days in which on-the-job instruction took place between 2002 and 2017⁹. This follows earlier falls

⁷ GMIPR, op.cit., p46

⁸ Manchester Independent Economic Review, *Understanding Labour markets, Skills and Talent*, 2009, p7

⁹ Green, F., Felstead, A., Gallie, D., Inanc, H. and Jewson, N., *What Has Been Happening to the Training of British Workers?*, Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies, 2013 at: <http://www.llakes.org> Green et al, op cit.

observed through the SES between 2006 and 2012¹⁰. Other data sources (eg. the Quarterly Labour Force Survey which questions employees) also show a decline in average time spent in job related training and in the length of courses¹¹.

For Greater Manchester, the ESS finds that training per trainee has improved since 2017. Employers in GM offered an average of 6.6 training days per trainee in 2019 (5.5 in 2017) compared to the England average of 6.0. Yet it is still below the level of 2013 when it was over seven and a half, and in general terms people with higher/more recent qualifications are more likely to undertake training than their less well-qualified peers. There are also sectoral variations, with Manufacturing reporting some of the most acute skills gaps yet is one of the lowest investing sectors in terms of training.

¹⁰ Henseke, G., Felstead, A., Gallie, D., and Green, F., *Skills Trends at Work: First Findings from the Skills and Employment Survey, 2017*; see also

¹¹ Green, F. and Henseke, G., *Training Trends in Britain*, Unionlearn, 2019, p34

4 Skills and Labour Market Strategy

4.1 The Strategic Framework

Alongside the national policy framework, GM's strategy to date has been shaped by:

- [*Our People, Our Place – the Greater Manchester Strategy*](#) (GMS)
- [*Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy*](#) (LIS), together with the GM [*Independent Prosperity Review*](#) and technical reports detailed above
- [*Greater Manchester Work & Skills Strategy and Priorities*](#) (WSSP)
- Greater Manchester's annual [*Labour Market and Skills Review*](#) dashboards
- More recently, [*Greater Manchester Living with Covid Resilience Plan*](#)
- District level Work & Skills plans developed in each local authority within GM.

In addition to this place framework, there is a labour market policy landscape with a range of drivers, national and local, which is either currently shaping activity or expected to do so in the months ahead:

LABOUR MARKET POLICY LANDSCAPE

- **Build Back Better: Our Plan For Growth**, published alongside the March 2021 Budget, set out the government's plans to support growth through investment in infrastructure, skills and innovation, and to pursue growth that levels up across the UK, enables the transition to net zero, and supports the government's vision for 'global Britain'. Within the skills strand, the focus is threefold:
 - Support productivity growth through reform of FE, aligned with employer demand
 - Introduce the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, rolling out employer-led skills bootcamps, and introducing the Lifelong Loan Entitlement.
 - Continue apprenticeship reforms including national levy transfer system.
- **Comprehensive Spending Review**: there has not been a comprehensive multi-year spending review since 2015 but it is hoped that 2021 will see the Government set out its spending plans for the remainder of the current Parliament.
- **English Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper**: originally scheduled for publication in 2020, this long-awaited paper should set out Government ambitions to connect local recovery with levelling up, with a place-based strategy to boost regional economic performance.
- **Further Education Reform White Paper**: implementation will include a stronger voice for business representative organisations in shaping the content and prioritisation of technical education and skills, changes to funding, governance and accountability, and development of the post-16 skills teaching workforce.
- **Lifetime Skills Guarantee** – legislation will embed this as a new statutory entitlement, making fully funded courses available to adults without a full qualification at Level 3 from April 2021. A list of 400 eligible courses has been determined by Government, which GM will supplement via AEB with an additional localised list in order to address the mismatch between the national approved qualifications list and GM needs/priorities.
- **Covid response measures** – we must ensure that the longer term measures – Kickstart, apprenticeship incentives, etc – are integrated within the local work and skills ecosystem, as well as taking steps to support those ineligible for national programmes and mitigate cliff-edges as measures such as the furlough scheme and self-employed income support are phased out.
- **In-Work Progression Commission**: announced in Spring 2020, DWP established this commission in order to increase its evidence base and support policy development on helping people to progress in work by defining/addressing the barriers individuals and groups face to progressing and moving into higher paid work. A call for evidence closed at the end of 2020 and the Commission is expected to report later this year.
- **GM Independent Inequalities Commission** - Launched in October 2020 and due to report in March 2021, the Commission is exploring the causes of inequality across Greater Manchester and will recommend new policies, activity and ways of working that challenge existing approaches, explore powers and levers for change, and set out a new direction for tackling inequality.
- **Mayoral Elections** – postponed from May 2020 due to the pandemic, additional work and skills priorities and commitments may arise from the successful candidate's manifesto.

An update of GMS and review of the WSSP will take place in Summer 2021¹², which will set out the framework to 2025 and beyond, but in the meantime this report sets out our plans to tackle the shorter-term skills and employment challenges facing our residents, communities, businesses and economy. Whilst of course the impact of Covid cannot be overlooked, this report focuses on GM's broader skills landscape, including our continuing drive to tackle existing labour market inequalities – brought into sharper focus by the pandemic but a long-standing challenge for the city-region – as well as other factors such as the emerging implications of the end of the transition period for the UK's departure from the European Union.

The post-16 skills sector is also mobilising to work with government to implement the reforms set out in [Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth](#). That White Paper, published in January, outlined more than 30 commitments from government relating to five areas of FE skills policy reform aimed at building a world-class further and technical education system. GM's ESAP looks forward to working with government to further develop and implement those commitments, as well as ensuring that we do all that we can do dovetail the reformed skills system with the new programmes of employment support such as Kickstart, Restart, Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS) and the Job Finding Support Service introduced under [A Plan for Jobs 2020](#).

The overall direction of travel of the White Paper is welcome, reflecting Greater Manchester's existing approach to a more flexible, responsive system led by what employers are telling us about skills and jobs on the ground.

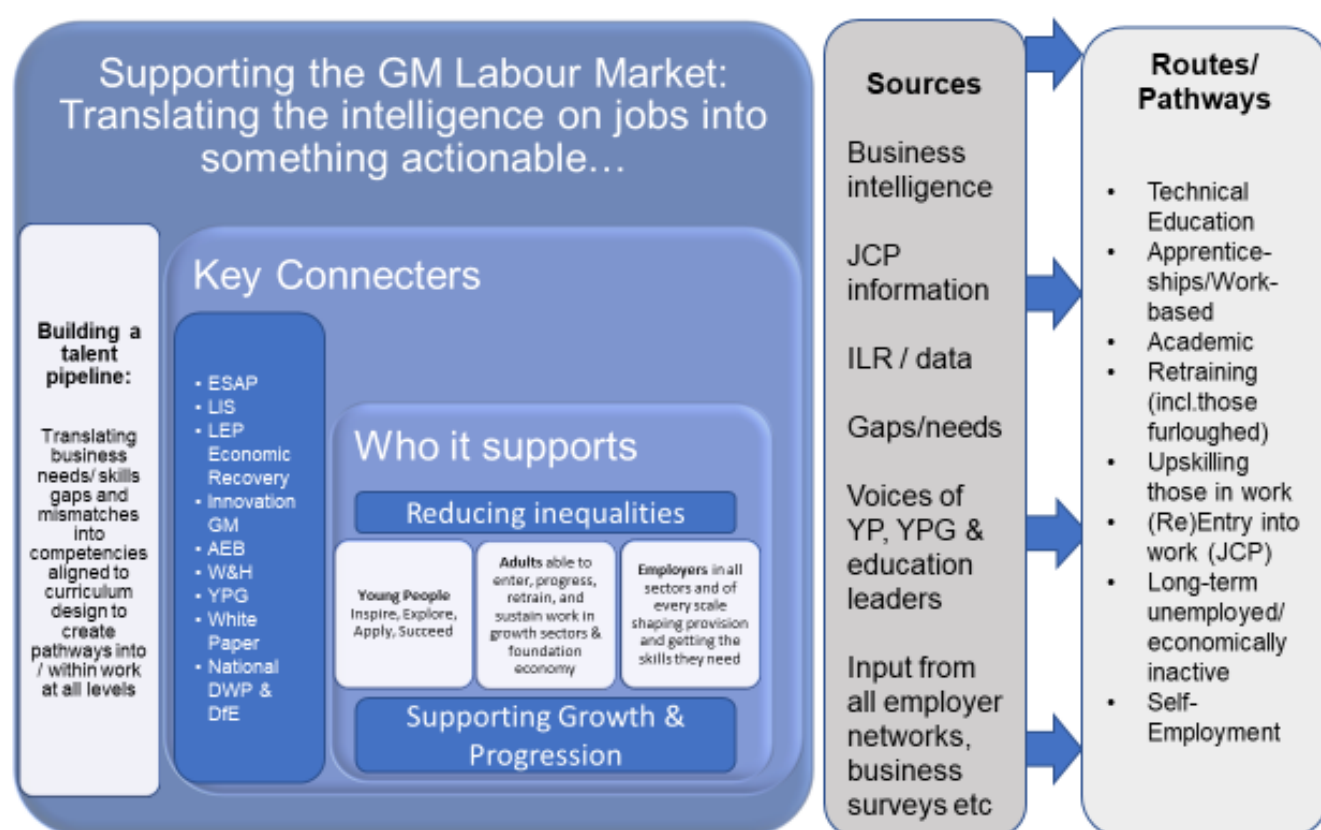
Employer-led intelligence gathering

Greater Manchester's industry skills and labour market intelligence activity, a partnership between GMCA, employers and providers, is already conducting sector-based deep dives into the skills, knowledge and competencies needed in high-demand job roles within the current and future Greater Manchester labour market. Intelligence reports have already

¹² Updates to these strategies were originally due to take place in early 2020. Although work was underway on the refreshed WSSP and we were preparing to consult last Spring, in light of the Covid-19 outbreak and its rapid and unprecedented impact, it was clear that the update should be postponed to summer 2021 to allow the updated strategy to take account of shifts within the labour market.

been completed in [Digital](#), Retrofit, and Manufacturing; reports on Health & Social Care, FinTech, Construction & Infrastructure and Health Innovation/Life Sciences will follow.

This approach, summarised in the table below, is helping to identify occupationally specific skills needs, gaps and mismatches in our key industries. Drawing on real-time intelligence from across the public and private skills and employment support landscape, this will support system-wide activity for young people, adults and employers, illustrating the range of different routes and pathways into/within the labour market and influencing everything from curriculum design and careers education through to targeted commissioning of local skills and employment support.



The next stage will see the findings from these reports mapped against the skills and qualification content in order to support curriculum design, ensure a better match between careers education/inspiration (for all ages), and to inform local commissioning decisions. Action plans are in development for the first three reports, due for publication in late Spring.

Industry Intelligence: translating employer needs into actionable intelligence

Outcomes:

- **Careers and Inspiration activity:** closer relationship between careers programmes for young people & demand from the labour market
- **Curriculum development both pre & post 16:** responsive curriculum offer that reflects the changes in the labour market and appropriately tailored by age
- **Technical education/ Apprenticeships:** Development & increased availability / take-up
- **Translating intelligence for specific groups:** young people, influencers, job seekers/career switchers, etc
- **Development of all level, all age career pathways** enabling line of sight into occupational areas via different routes
- **Working with employers** around their demand and the skills utilisation/training programmes and low quality jobs
- **Co-commissioning/facilitation of targeted labour market interventions** and activity with networks/stakeholders – starting with ESF funded Skills for Growth
- Holistic sector specific support written into commissioning – e.g. Mentoring.

4.2 GM Strategic Priorities

Whilst the strategic and fiscal events in the labour market landscape identified above will have a material impact on future strategy, our interim actions can nonetheless make a positive long-term difference. With both Covid recovery and the underlying skills and labour market challenges in mind, individual resilience and agility in the labour market will be more important than ever, built on foundations of core transferrable skills and personalised employment support, and further developed through targeted skills, careers and employment provision.

Greater Manchester's skills and employment strategy therefore focuses on four central priorities:

- Young people leave education and training ready to succeed in the labour market, with a balance of academic, technical and 'life ready' skills
- Adults can acquire the skills, mindset and support they need to fulfil their career potential and adapt to changing employer needs throughout their lives, from entering employment for the first time through to highly skilled careers and retraining
- Employers have access to a system that is flexible, resilient and adaptable, and which meets their needs in the rapidly changing 21st century world of work, driving a sustainable economic future for GM in which companies compete on the basis of high productivity, good quality work, and excellent employment practices
- Residents are supported by a welfare system, under Universal Credit, that provides access to good work for those who can, support for those who could, and care for those who can't.

4.2.1 Young people leave education and training ready to succeed in the labour market, with a balance of academic, technical and 'life ready' skills

We must ensure that our young people have not only high quality education and training that prepares them for life and work, but also a robust careers education offer embedded into their curriculum which offers them a clear line of sight into the opportunities available in Greater Manchester's labour market and supports them - whether they are pursuing an academic pathway or a technical one centred on Apprenticeships or T levels - with the skills and attributes needed to access those opportunities as the labour market changes over time. This must include workplace/employer encounters: research from the Education

and Employers Taskforce¹³ shows that a young person who has four or more meaningful encounters with an employer is 86% less likely to be unemployed or NEET and can earn up to 22% more during their career.

A closer relationship between the curriculum and the world of work means more access to local businesses in a variety of ways, maximising our relationship with the Careers and Enterprise Company and tailoring our placed-based approach to careers to meet the needs of both supply and demand. Through our tailored support to education, businesses and young people under Bridge GM, along with young person facing tools (Greater Manchester Apprenticeships and Careers Service (GMACS) and Curriculum for Life), we can provide the best conditions for this to flourish and to anchor an economic dimension to current education practices.

There is much already happening to ensure that young people are ready for learning, life and work, with significant good practice evident, but there are still too many young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Attempts to tackle this have not been widely successful, in particular for those aged 17+, and whilst we might know the scale of the issue we still do not know enough about the nuances and how best to match need with provision or services. This group of young people experience the most barriers to accessing employment and skills development and more needs to be done to work in an integrated way via multi-agency working.

We must take a different look at supporting young people through the lens of Life Readiness in order to ensure they understand the opportunities GM has to offer and are in a position to access them. Current investment in NEET intervention and prevention has seen some success in GM, but its root causes have not been adequately tackled or understood to date. GM will work in partnership across the system (including with Local Authorities, JCP, DfE, health, justice, schools, colleges, voluntary and community sector) to better understand how we can plan, commission and evaluate our current services and resources for the benefit of our young people who are NEET or who risk becoming NEET in the future.

¹³ <https://www.educationandemployers.org/research-main/key-findings-from-our-research/>

Compounding some of these long-standing challenges, the pandemic has had a devastating impact on many young people. In 2020, GM developed a Young Person's Guarantee as a commitment to improving the lives and experiences of young people and young adults by addressing wider needs and barriers to success, harnessing existing best practice, and bringing coherence to a busy and complex space. It was in direct response to Covid-19 and was a short intervention to drive up a series of commitments to address the concerns young people said they had. It was a good example of multi-agency partnership coming together to respond to the asks from young people relating to the impact of Covid, but also to their concerns for their future employment prospects. Co-designed with young people and supported by employers, the Guarantee has helped to secure commitments to support four key areas:

- **Keeping Connected** - including tackling digital exclusion/disadvantage and data poverty, supporting access through transport links
- **Staying Well** - supporting and promoting physical and mental health/well-being
- **Making effective transitions** - preventing/tackling young people becoming NEET, supporting take-up of Traineeships through devolution, improved access to and professionalisation of careers education and guidance for all young people/young adults
- **Removing economic inequalities** - greater flexibilities around youth employment programmes, additional support for young people not claiming benefits, additional support for youth enterprise / self-employment.

4.2.2 Adults can acquire the skills, mindset and support they need to fulfil their career potential and adapt to changing employer needs throughout their lives, from entering employment for the first time through to highly skilled careers and retraining

Recognising that more than 80% of the 2030 workforce have already left compulsory education, we will focus on connecting adults with the opportunities that Greater Manchester has to offer, enabling people to acquire and develop their skills, supporting them into employment and helping them to progress in work.

That journey begins with recognising and nurturing individuals' core skills and talents, going beyond the knowledge and skills represented by qualifications in and of themselves, to understanding and developing the competencies and qualities that employers are looking for and that everyone needs to get ahead in life and in work. These include not only essential English, maths and digital skills but also things like problem-solving, critical analysis, creative and entrepreneurial skills relevant to progression pathways into work. These skills cannot just be linked to employability, but to employability within the occupational areas and sectors which offer opportunities within Greater Manchester, so that people can see the application of their skills within the local labour market.

We also want to support people who are employed but unable to access skills development and training opportunities that might ordinarily be offered by employers, such as the self-employed and those working in atypical or precarious jobs within the gig economy.

The Adult Education Budget – devolved to GMCA from the 2019/20 academic year – plays a significant role in this. We have already introduced funding policy flexibilities that have expanded access to essential skills provision and made it easier for residents most in need of those core skills to access training in ways that support future progression. We have also begun shifting the emphasis of AEB funded provision to ensure that it provides an entry point or development opportunity for adults looking to enter the labour market for the first time, or to return to it after a period of unemployment or economic inactivity, including the ability to add modules of advanced learning to intermediate programmes in order to support progression and up-skilling.

Apprenticeships will also play an important role in helping adults to develop their careers and retrain in new occupational areas. With a refreshed focus from policy makers nationally on lifelong learning as a route to higher technical skills and skilled employment, Apprenticeships offer an attractive opportunity for technical and profession career development as well as retraining to support career change.

4.2.3 Employers have access to a system that is flexible, resilient and adaptable, and which meets their needs in the rapidly changing 21st century world of work, driving a sustainable economic future for GM in which companies compete on the basis of high productivity, good quality work, and excellent employment practices

The challenge of matching employers' skills needs with supply is not a new one. There has long been recognition that technical education and skills will be the key to ensuring that businesses can access a suitably skilled workforce, now and in the future, and that the Greater Manchester labour market can meet economic challenges and opportunities head-on.

Employers report most difficulty in filling mid to high level technical roles requiring L4/5 skills, yet this is the area where there has been least co-ordinated public support until the recent FE Reform White Paper. The government has now set out its plans to deliver this step-change and the repositioning of technical education (including T-levels, Apprenticeships and higher technical qualifications). There is a particular challenge in meeting employers' needs in occupational areas where formal qualifications are not appropriate or struggle to keep pace with the rate of technological change in the industry, so the measures set out in *Skills for Jobs* are a welcome reflection of the approach GM is taking through our ESF funded GM Skills for Growth programme, with its flexible, sector-specific modular training. Skills for Growth is incorporating lessons learned from two years of pilot activity, testing short, intensive upskilling programmes linked to job vacancies in the digital sector through the Fast Track Digital Workforce Fund.

This is not, however, solely an issue of skills supply. As noted in Chapter 3, the large volumes of low paid, low skilled work in the Greater Manchester labour market had not improved between the MIER in 2009 and the GMIPR in 2019, so there is also a clear need for both better skills utilisation within the workforce and a shift towards employers offering higher value activity and better quality work.

Greater Manchester will work with government and with local partners and employers to implement the White Paper reforms in ways that build upon our existing plans in this space around sector-specific responses to the particular challenges being faced at industry or occupational level. In particular, we will prioritise advanced and higher technical skills pathways within GM's frontier sectors where we have globally competitive

strengths (Digital, Creative & Media, Health Innovation, Advanced Materials & Manufacturing, and Clean Growth), as well as in our foundation economy/high employment sectors (Retail, Social Care, Hospitality & Tourism). We will support this supply side activity with leveraging mechanisms such as the GM Good Employment Charter to shift the dialogue with employers around the quality of work.

4.2.4 Residents are supported by a welfare system, under Universal Credit, that provides access to good work for those who can, support for those who could, and care for those who can't

Improving skills is only one part of the equation: for individuals for whom work is a realistic and achievable outcome, skills development must be paired with a broad integrated employment support offer that links people to jobs. For those for whom employment is not a realistic prospect, we will continue to work with AEB funded providers to ensure that every resident has the essential skills they need to engage in society and access vital services.

With demand for work outstripping vacancies, pay (which had not recovered in GM to levels seen prior to the 2008/09 financial crisis) is likely to be driven down, skilled individuals are likely to find themselves under-employed in roles that are not commensurate with their skills and experience, and entry level opportunities will be hard to come by.

In the context of a post-Covid labour market, the employment offer must encompass everything from entry level roles – which have reduced as a proportion of job vacancies during the pandemic – through to resuming highly skilled technical and professional employment for those with higher qualifications and more recent work experience. For the newly/recently unemployed, the support will be lighter touch, while more intensive, bespoke support will be needed to tackle barriers for the long-term unemployed and more economically vulnerable residents such as older workers, people with adverse physical and/or mental health conditions, and those with caring responsibilities. In particular, links with Kickstart and Restart will be vital to ensure that participants on those programmes achieve positive, sustainable outcomes, but there is also a cohort of young adults who are 'hidden' from the system having either never worked or only sporadically, and who have become disengaged and are not accessing mainstream skills and employability provision.

We will continue to align activity AEB and locally commissioned targeted skills programmes informed by industry intelligence with the GM Working Well suite of support to help GM residents enter, return to, sustain and progress in work. We will also work with VCSE organisations and other partners to support individuals who are further from the labour market but who are not engaged with the mainstream support available through JCP.

Partnerships between with JCP/employment related service providers, VCSE organisations, education and training providers, careers service partners, and employers to ensure that adults who need to retrain and/or upskill – including those whose skills and employment have been impacted by redundancy or furlough during the pandemic – have access to the skills and employment support and associated advice/finance that they need.

4.3 Crosscutting strategic priorities

Supporting delivery of those core priorities are a number of cross-cutting challenges and drivers that touch on not only all parts of the economy, but on our communities and society more generally:

Tackling Inequalities and ‘Levelling Up’

The Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission is due to publish its recommendations in March around policy changes and new ways of working that set out a new direction for tackling inequality in Greater Manchester; ESAP will consider those recommendations and work with partners to respond to those recommendations. In the context of the pandemic, when we have seen more deprived areas experiencing worsening of long-standing health and socio-economic inequalities, there is real appetite locally and from government to close gaps for people and places experiencing disadvantage and levelling up – not down – is a fundamental objective as we look to recovery and inclusive growth.

Employer Engagement

More than ever, a strong economy, the levelling up of opportunity, and an effective labour market system rely on the effectiveness of our work with employers, which extends far beyond simple issues of skills supply and demand into complex and wide-ranging areas of policy and practice. From offering employment/training opportunities and good work/business practices, to supporting careers inspiration, curriculum design and industry knowledge exchange for the teaching workforce, there are many calls on employers' time and expertise, as well as an onus on employers to get actively involved in tackling skills/competency gaps and mismatches.

Over time, this has become an increasingly busy arena in which it is difficult for employers to know how and where to engage with the system to greatest effect, and 'engagement fatigue' is a real risk for those who have been willing and able to get involved. In the current economic climate, a key priority for Greater Manchester, as for the rest of the country, is clarity in the way in which we work with employers, moving away from a transactional 'ask and offer' to a more strategic relationship, which recognises both that the publicly funded skills and employment system can only do so much, and that employers have a much wider and richer role to play.

Climate Change and Clean Growth

Greater Manchester's ambition for carbon neutrality by 2038 and the clean growth challenge is set out in GM's [Five Year Environment Plan](#)¹⁴, launched at in March 2019 during the second Greater Manchester Green Summit. This carries multiple skills opportunities and challenges, including (but not limited to) investing in innovation and development of new technologies, new approaches to the design, construction and maintenance of cleaner built environment, transport and other infrastructure, ensuring that the skills are in place to update and retrofit the existing infrastructure, and supporting businesses, communities and residents to develop their 'carbon literacy' and adopt cleaner practices.

¹⁴ <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/>

Ageing Society

Providing conditions and opportunities for older workers to remain in employment or to (re)join the labour market by ensuring skills currency is maintained and developed presents significant opportunities and challenges. There is a need to maintain and update currency of work-relevant knowledge and skills, yet investment in training of older people, both from an employer and government perspective, is relatively lower than for other age cohorts.

Whilst employers and funders often prioritise training for young people, demographic change means that, between 2018 and 2025, there will be 300,000 fewer workers aged under 30 in the UK but 1million more aged over 50. In GM, the over 50 population is forecast to grow by 235,000 people by 2041, accounting for 83% of forecasted total population growth to 2041. GM has below national average economic activity rates for over-50s, a situation likely to be worsened by the pandemic, as there is very real concern that older workers who lose their jobs are more likely than younger workers to experience long-term unemployment and, in effect, slide into unplanned/involuntary early retirement. [ONS data](#) show that one-third of unemployed people over 50 have been out of work for at least a year while one in five have been out of work for at least two years; this compares with 20% and 8% of those aged under 50 respectively.

STEM skills

The OECD¹⁵ estimates that 14% of existing jobs could disappear as a result of automation in the next 15-20 years, and another 32% are likely to change radically as individual tasks are automated. Furthermore, it estimates that 38-42% of the UK population will need to completely retrain within the next 10 years owing to the fourth industrial revolution and artificial intelligence.

GM's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) industries are key to our LIS frontier sectors and are powered by skills that can be applied in a number of

¹⁵ *The Future Of Work: OECD Employment Outlook 2019* (OECD, 2019)
<https://www.oecd.org/employment/Employment-Outlook-2019-Highlight-EN.pdf>

sectors and we must create a talent pipeline for STEM where opportunities to develop skills and knowledge are available for all residents. To do this we need to:

- enhance the existing offer by developing higher-level technical skills provision for the benefit of current and future STEM industries, as well as our key growth sectors
- develop fast-track responses to meet immediate gaps where employers are reporting acute skills-shortage vacancies that are hampering growth and productivity
- identify innovative, co-designed training, working with employers and providers, that keeps pace with the rate of technological change in fast-moving industries.

Through [Greater Manchester's STEM Framework](#) (launched in early 2020), we will take an employer-led approach to identifying and increasing the pipeline for the priority occupations we need now and in the future, creating an agile and diverse STEM workforce, with the skills and flexibility Greater Manchester needs as we enter the fourth industrial revolution.

Digital

Digital skills are essential for the entire labour market, not just the Digital & Creative industries but in virtually every sector, from entry level positions to highly specialised technical and professional occupations. Greater Manchester is working towards an ambition to be recognised as a world leading digital city-region. In February 2020, we launched the new [Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint](#), which sets out a three-year approach to meeting that ambition. The Blueprint identifies five digital priorities, the priorities have been co-designed and developed with the input of key stakeholders

We must first focus on getting the foundations right: baseline digital skills and proficiency in common software/tools are a ticket to entry into the labour market, which is why Greater Manchester has prioritised access to digital skills and exploring an enhanced GM entitlement within our AEB funding policy that goes beyond the statutory minimum (Level 1), supporting relevant learning which meets the Essential Digital Skills Framework up to and including Level 2. However, acquiring specific mid-higher level digital skills is what will help residents to progress their careers and address the shortage of digitally skilled talent experienced by businesses.

We have identified seven clusters of specific cross-cutting digital skillsets that are key to increasing pay and productivity across the GM economy, regardless of sector: software and programming, computer and networking support, data analysis, digital design, CRM, digital marketing and machining & manufacturing technology. We particularly need to focus on addressing skills shortages in programming and software development as these skills feature in thousands of job vacancies across the economy.

Commissioning, Evaluation and Social Value

Where our labour market and skills priorities are supported by funded activity, strong performance/risk management, evaluation and social value principles are applied. We adopt smart commissioning strategies and approaches, including Social Value requirements since 2017, which ensure our residents and employers receive a quality service, are enabled to achieve sustainable outcomes, and that all local commissioning delivers the widest possible benefits for Greater Manchester, its people and the environment.

Contracted providers are integrated within GM's place-focused governance and stakeholder systems to ensure services provide added value to GM's work and skills priorities. Appropriate performance and risk management regimes - including Open Book Contract Management (OBCM) processes – are implemented on all of our contracts to drive the delivery of positive outcomes. Ongoing evaluation (both independent and in-house) of GM programmes plays a crucial role in learning lessons on service design and understanding what works for different types of residents at the local level. All of which helps to inform and better target our future priorities and commissioning.

As we rebuild our economy in Greater Manchester following the crisis caused by Covid-19, we will also seek to use social value to make the economy impact-focussed, fair and sustainable. We will encourage every organisation in Greater Manchester to carry out its primary activity, managing the resources that it controls and drawing in investment, in such a way that it encourages them to tackle inequalities and create lasting benefits to society and the economy, whilst making positive impacts (or at least minimising damage) on the environment.

In September 2020, the GMCA published a new [framework of priorities](#) for social value, which can be used by any business, public sector or voluntary organisation, community

group, co-operative or social enterprise to guide their activities and operate their business in way that maximise broader positive impact above and beyond their direct delivery. This framework can be used across all sectors to guide actions on six priorities:

- Good employment
- Clean Air
- Employment and Skills
- Strong Local Communities
- Green Organisations
- Local Supply Chains

A programme of work is underway to embed the new shared approach to social value in commissioning and procurement activity to maximise the impact across GM. This includes working up specific guidance around each of the priorities listed in the Social Value Framework, developing a social value toolkit for commissioners, and supporting GM organisations to embed and grow their social value activity.

5 Skills Action Plan

A local strategy alone cannot deliver the nature and scale of activity needed. The challenge of balancing recovery with tackling labour market inequalities and enabling inclusive growth and productivity gains will require a combination of actions that can be undertaken at sufficient scale to have impact, balanced with activities that are flexible and responsive enough to tackle complex barriers:

- **National:** large-scale universal activity where volumes and resources required can only reasonably be led by central Government, or where a lighter touch approach to support is adequate to achieve a positive outcome for the individual. These national programmes must, nonetheless, work in the local context
- **Co-commissioned:** partnership activity in which national policy and resourcing at scale are necessary but local needs can be met and alignment ensured through co-design and/or co-commissioning with GM. This approach has seen successful ‘test and learn’ activity in which GM has piloted activity in partnership with government (such as the digital bootcamp pilot for GM and Lancashire initially funded by DCMS and then expanded by DfE) as well as co-commissioned such as GM’s activity in partnership with DWP and JCP to deliver the Working Well suite. In this way we can help government to view the interaction and interdependencies of skills, work and health policies and programmes in a place
- **Local:** tailored programmes and interventions designed, commissioned and delivered locally for residents requiring more intensive or bespoke skills/employment support, and enabling greater alignment of programmes/funding streams and reduction in silo working. Examples include our sector-focused skills provision through GM’s Skills for Growth programme, flexibilities within devolved AEB funding policy, and the local additionality offered within Working Well, such as Early Help and the Specialist Employment Service for people with a learning disability and/or autism via GM’s ten local authorities and Individual Placement and Support for people with a severe mental illness.

Over the past year ESAP has worked hard to strike a balance between responding to the evolving needs arising from the pandemic and maintaining the necessary focus on the

existing priorities, so that those who already faced labour market challenges prior to the pandemic are not displaced or overlooked as an unintended consequence. The work that has been done on GM's 12 month *Living With Covid* plan, including the labour market response led by the ESAP, as well longer term strategic planning linked to the paused refresh of GM's *Work & Skills Strategy* has identified a number of clear priorities for action.

This has involved targeted consideration of both national and local provision in terms of the people, communities and businesses we support with a clear focus on reducing inequalities, identifying where there is a national support offer, what Greater Manchester is already doing locally, and where gaps remain.

This complex ecosystem of skills and employment support is set out in the (non-exhaustive) table below:

		Newly unemployed						Unemployed/Inactive requires more intervention			Furthest from the labour market	
In-Work		Furloughed: Need to be ready for service tapering off	Self-serve (unguided)	Self-serve (guided)	Reskill/Retrain - High skills - Lower skills - Large-scale redundancies	Young people / Graduates – labour mkt entry	Require short-term/active intervention	Longer term claimants: Require longer-term/intensive support	Longer term claimants: At greatest risk (young adults, BAME, 50+, deprived areas..)	Workless/ Economically Inactive e.g. ESA claimants		
Data:		c.154,300 furloughed (@Dec20)	Total number of people claiming UC in GM was 313,500 in Nov 2020, which is a 79% increase in GM UC claimants from March 2020						Total number of people claiming unemployment related benefits has risen from 74,760 in March 2020 to 141,250 in Nov 2020. (Including JSA and the unemployment elements of UC)			
Activity / Intervention		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IAG• Training• Skills Toolkit• Enterprising You• WW• Find a Job• EmployGM• ESF• In work prog pilot	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brokerage• Recruitment agencies• EmployGM• Find a Job• Skills Toolkit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brokerage• IAG• JCP• EmployGM• Working Well JETS• Find a Job• NCS• Skills Toolkit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brokerage• Skills• IAG – at scale• NRS• AEB/ESF• Colleges & Providers• Digital support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ESF• Princes Trust• School• College• HEI• Localities• GMACS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brokerage & IAG• Skills support eg. CV, Interview, Confidence• Wider support eg. Digital, Finance, Health etc• WW (incl. JETS, Early Help).• ESF• AEB	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brokerage & IAG• Skills support eg. CV, Interview, Confidence• Wider support eg. Digital, finance, health, transport• Job clubs & Work Experience• WW progs• Local CVS offer• Ageing Hub pilots	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jobs (subsidised)• Training• IAG• Transport support• Potential for ILM / wage subsidy approach• Job / learning guarantee• Ageing Hub pilots	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health & Wellbeing• Skills Support• IAG• Work Trials• Working Well programme• DWP – IPES/A2W• Ageing Hub pilots• Local CVS offer	ESAP: Set priorities Balance recovery, reform & growth Clear 'ask & offer'	
Gaps/Asks / Flexibilities		AEB flex for furloughed workers plus national support	Continue to develop online tools. Greater vacancy sharing and management.	Bring together JCP/GC / GMCC / GMCG / GMLPN / NCS to create clear package of support	Rapid response linked to jobs / sectors & alignment with AEB to create pathways. Bootcamp model. GM Tech Fund expansion	Develop YP guarantee and focus NEET prevention/reduction. Explore youth ILM. Bridging programmes across FE/HE	More funding and flexibility in contracts/ESF to allow shift in cohorts and delivery. Requires join up across contracts.	More funding and flexibility in contracts to allow shift in cohorts and delivery. Requires join up across contracts.	Funding gap needing development with Government; potential flex to App levy to support app wage. Continued support and flex where needed in GM contracts: working with JCP/localities	Continued support and flex where needed in GM/national contracts: working closely with JCP/localities.		

5.1 Young people leave education and training ready to succeed in the labour market, with a balance of academic, technical and 'life ready' skills.

For GM's residents, particularly young people, to succeed in the labour market they must be life-ready and work-ready. They must be able to see clear lines of sight into local education, training and employment opportunities in sectors that are active and growing, together with the support that will help them get ahead in their chosen career, whether they choose an academic, technical or work-based pathway, and with support in place to mitigate the cumulative impact of the pandemic and of pre-existing inequalities and barriers.

Careers education and inspiration must help to raise aspirations and awareness, linked to real-time labour market information about the opportunities available across the city-region, and to mechanisms that enable young people to access those opportunities.

For young people who are not in education, employment or training, and for young adults who have never worked or have done so only sporadically, tailored support must be in place to help build not just skills and employability but confidence, aspirations and hope for the future in ways that help to reduce the risk of long-term disengagement from the labour market and the social and economic 'scarring' associated with long periods of unemployment when young.

We will:

1. Continue to **increase the number of, and access to, opportunities for young people** (especially marginalised young people) in GM, and begin to tackle some of the more systemic challenges that cannot currently be overcome
2. Continue to **co-work directly with young people**, ensuring that the services (such as GMACS and Curriculum for Life) that we can provide directly to young people are designed with them at the heart and are responsive to GM's current economic picture
3. Continue working with schools, colleges and careers partners to **increase the standing of careers education so that it is prioritised and embedded within**

the curriculum, with links to the local labour market strengthened further by a range of business engagement activities

4. Continue to improve the way in which technical pathways (including Apprenticeships) in GM are explored by young people and their families and educators, tackling prejudice/myths and exploring potential
5. Push the boundaries of **best careers education practice**, in partnership with CEC and our local models, to engage both education and business to achieve a sustainable relationship for the benefit of young people and employers
6. Continue to **support youth employment**, through working with JCP to support the Youth Employment Programme and Youth Hubs for 18-25 year olds, through system stewardship of programmes such as Kickstart, and by identifying/addressing gaps in support for 'hidden' young people who are not engaged with JCP's employability support.

5.2 Adults can acquire the skills, mindset and support they need to fulfil their career potential and adapt to changing employer needs throughout their lives, from entering employment for the first time through to highly skilled careers and retraining.

We want our residents to acquire the skills and support they need throughout their lives, from entering employment for the first time through to highly skilled careers and retraining. In order to tackle inequalities and disadvantage, and to prepare our residents for routes into fulfilling careers, we must ensure core skills and talent are developed, providing solid foundations of skills and employability linked to occupational progression pathways. All-age careers information, advice and guidance must be made available to all residents to support that journey.

We will:

1. Ensure **devolved AEB funding policy** supports ambitions around core skills and talent, including statutory entitlements around English, maths and digital, as well as provision that supports inclusion, eg ESOL
2. Continue to develop a **Level 3 offer for adults aged 19+** that supports the new national guarantee but also aligns with employment opportunities and progression pathways within the LIS frontier and foundation sectors, building on GM's industry intelligence work
3. **Expand the upskilling and retraining offer** to support for individuals moving within the labour market or attempting to (re)enter it, including through Apprenticeships and expansion of/building upon the successful bootcamps model piloted through the Fast Track Digital Workforce Fund.
4. Working with local partners, including JCP and NCS, explore an **all-age, all levels careers and progression advice** model to support adults in making informed choices about skills development, career changes and other shifts in their employment planning
5. Support a more inclusive approach to the labour market, **testing targeted skills and employment support**, including flexible/supported Apprenticeship models, for those facing labour market inequalities, eg older workers, low paid workers
6. Develop an aligned **multi-agency approach to supporting individuals facing complex barriers to skills and work**, eg working with MoJ/HMPPS, Cheshire & Greater Manchester CRC and GM's Justice Team, support education, training and employment for offenders, through joint commissioning and aligning specialist services with mainstream GM skills and employment provision
7. Continue to support GM's most vulnerably self-employed via the **EnterprisingYou pilot** programme which has been commissioned with DfE and developed in partnership with the Federation of Small Business.

5.3 Employers have access to a system that is flexible, resilient and adaptable, and which meets their needs in the rapidly changing 21st century world of work, driving a

sustainable economic future for GM in which companies compete on the basis of high productivity, good quality work, and excellent employment practices.

We want GM's employers to be able to recover, grow and compete. *Skills for Jobs* will put employers and business representative organisations at the centre of developing the standards upon which all technical qualifications will be based by 2030, but in the meantime, Greater Manchester will continue to develop a clearer understanding of the needs of GM's employers, working with providers to ensure that those needs are reflected in curriculum design and a comprehensive, high quality skills offer at all levels and in all parts of the city-region.

Some of this work is already underway, with our industry intelligence work beginning to establish a credible, employer-led, shared understanding of the jobs, talent and competencies that employers need. Our actions will centre on ensuring that Greater Manchester's labour market support system is easily navigated, delivers a core universal offer in every district alongside specialised bespoke options/occupational pathways, and is clearer and more joined-up in both the offer to employers and the asks of them.

The focus of our activity must not be solely on skills supply, but on working with employers in all sectors and of all types and sizes to drive upskilling and progression, better skills utilisation, and on good quality work and employment practice, using GM's Good Employment Charter framework and other levers to support our dialogue with employers.

We will:

1. Complete **employer-led industry skills and labour market intelligence reports** in key technical sectors: Digital, Green Economy (Retrofit; Energy & Natural Environment), Health Innovation, Health & Social Care, Manufacturing, Profession & Financial Services (FinTech), Logistics & Distribution, Construction & Infrastructure
2. Take forward findings with employers and providers, including **commissioning technical skills provision** through GM's £40m ESF Skills for Growth programme
3. **Support the digital transformation agenda across all sectors (particularly SMEs) and public services** underpinned by targeted commissioning that meets

current skills needs and helps to diversify the tech workforce, and provides clear information for individuals about pathways and opportunities within the industry (in partnership with JCP, NCS and GMACS)

4. Support **innovation and business development, particularly within SMEs**, through core innovation skills and sector-specific leadership & management and HR/OD development in line with Innovation GM (our plan for boosting innovation and R&D in Greater Manchester)
5. Ensure GM has a **thriving, strong and diverse Apprenticeships and Technical Education** landscape with clear progression pathways, ensuring easy access/engagement for employers, and enabling provider access to timely industry/labour market intelligence that supports both curriculum planning and development of the teaching/training workforce
6. Work with employers to shift the skills dialogue and **drive demand for upskilling and better skills utilisation**, leveraging mechanisms such as the GM Good Employment Charter.

5.4 Residents are supported by a welfare system, under Universal Credit, that provides access to good work for those who can, support for those who could, and care for those who can't.

Skills planning will not be fully effective unless considered in parallel with employment support; this goes to the heart of our integrated approach to the labour market and, with Greater Manchester's devolved Working Well suite of support, this offers unique opportunities to ensure that skills and jobs go hand-in-hand, an approach which is already having an impact.

In the context of Covid, economic downturn means that there is a large group on the edges of the labour market who are newly unemployed and looking to re-enter work, including furloughed workers for whom a return to the same occupation or employer has not been/will not be possible. With their more recent work history and up to date skills, many of these newly employed individuals are likely to find it easier to return to work than long-term unemployed people or others facing barriers. As a result, there is a real risk that

individuals who already faced disproportionate competition or complex barriers to securing and sustaining work prior to the crisis will be further displaced and more distant from the labour market than ever before, particularly for those individuals who are not engaged with JCP and the range of welfare to work support available.

We will:

1. Continue **supporting people into work** through the GM Working Well suite of employment support, aligned with AEB and other skills and careers support
2. Support **individuals with complex health needs and disabilities** to move towards/into work through the WW Specialist Employment Service
3. Support the development of **life skills for all**, including those for whom employment is not a realistic outcome, ranging from the core skills and talent outlined above to supporting tools to help tackle disadvantage, eg financial literacy
4. Support **rapid return to employment** for furloughed workers and those facing possible redundancy through targeted skills and employment support including Working Well WHP JETS and AEB funded provision, and similarly for those with underlying health conditions through WW Early Help.
5. Continue to work in partnership with DWP to **support the delivery of the national Restart programme for long-term unemployed**, including engaging in the procurement process and integrating the new service provider in the wider education, skills and work system in GM
6. Provide **system leadership in non-devolved programmes** to maximise impact, eg through the GM Kickstart Board, provide system leadership, working collaboratively with partners (employers, gateway organisations, public sector agencies, VCSE and young people) to steer, influence and promote programme delivery in Greater Manchester.

6 Assessment of Progress

6.1 Key challenges and achievements in 2020/21

By necessity, significant activity over the last year has focused on responding to and mitigating the impact of the pandemic. That impact has been felt unevenly across the country, across Greater Manchester and across different sectors and, as noted above, all too often it has been those who already faced disadvantage or inequalities who have felt the impact most acutely. Most recently, this has been compounded for many businesses and sectors by the emerging challenges of operating in a post-Brexit environment; local employer networks are predicting unprecedented sectoral divergence in the labour market challenges that lie ahead.

In addition to the direct and immediate skills and employment challenges these factors have posed, they have also had the dual effect of reversing gains that had been made since the previous financial crisis and – with many employers focusing on business survival rather than growth – stalling some of the wider work around boosting employer demand for/investment in developing the workforce and the talent pipeline.

Against that backdrop, the ESAP has focused on:

- **Taking a local leadership role**, both in setting the direction of travel for future activity over which Greater Manchester has direct control and in providing system stewardship to ensure national policy operates effectively in the local context. This will be increasingly important moving forward, in order to ensure that the increasing volume of national policies, interventions and commissioned programmes are implemented in ways that genuinely meet local needs
- **Enhancing local knowledge** by bringing real-time intelligence to bear in a rapidly evolving labour market context, making use of qualitative and quantitative analysis, and by laying the foundations for an employer-led, evidence-based response to the skills and employment challenges facing Greater Manchester's priority sectors through development of our industry intelligence approach

- **Covid recovery and renewal plans**, having a clear focus on the need to support those employers and individuals directly impacted by the labour market effects of the pandemic, minimising displacement of those already facing inequalities, and using this as an opportunity to focus on building a fairer, greener and more resilient labour market in the future
- **Impact on local skills and employment support provision**, through working with providers to deliver the Covid response, through testing scalable pilot approaches to meeting skills and employment needs tailored to particular cohorts or occupational areas, and in taking steps to begin the shift needed to tackle long-standing labour market challenges.

As is reflected throughout this report, ESAP has been developing its role as the primary labour market forum in Greater Manchester, bringing together networks of core stakeholders to consider skills and work priorities and contribute real-time intelligence, to provide challenge, and to shape the way in which the skills and employment ecosystem in Greater Manchester responds to new and existing challenges.

Early into the first period of lockdown, ESAP took a leadership role on the skills and employment elements of Greater Manchester's economic recovery plan, moving from quarterly to weekly meetings in order to ensure that our labour market response was timely, comprehensive and based on the most up to date evidence available. The timeliness and granularity of data – in relation to both new activity and the existing evidence base upon which ESAP has previously relied in order to identify skills and employment priorities – has represented a key challenge, and one which has brought into sharp focus the value and importance of real-time intelligence available locally through ESAP members' respective networks.

However, throughout the year, the focus on the existing agenda has been maintained; despite the rapid changes in the policy landscape, the integration of response measures into the existing labour market ecosystem within Greater Manchester has been a key priority, so that recovery and inclusive growth go hand-in-hand. Greater Manchester partners have mobilised to support implementation of new skills and employment programmes, ranging from those over which the city-region has a degree of formal control (such as the devolved Working Well JETS programme, and skills support for adults where funding has been channelled through AEB), through to initiatives where there has been no

formal role for 'place' but in which ESAP partners on the ground have come together to provide collaborative system leadership and added value through aligning new interventions with the existing offer, such as through the GM Kickstart Programme Board.

At the same time, GM has pivoted locally commissioned provision to support the pandemic response/recovery. Supported by the ESAP, GMCA worked with its delivery partners to secure and stabilise around 100 locally commissioned contracts for skills and employment programmes worth a cumulative total of over £200million. Steps were taken to review, re-purpose/refocus and adapt existing activity where appropriate, as well as making additional resources available through Greater Manchester's devolved functions/budgets and other sources of funding.

One of the challenges that this presents moving forwards is that evaluation and programme data will not provide the 'steady state' picture that will help us to fully assess impact, progress and trends, particularly in relation to the first two years of devolved AEB as we begin shaping GM's adult skills plans later this year for the next phase of AEB commissioning (for delivery commencing in autumn 2022). Nonetheless, much has been learned about how we can make better use of resources and begin targeting support where it will have greatest impact.

Faced with these challenges, the response from providers and partners throughout the last year has been exceptional. Providers acted rapidly and effectively to adapt to remote delivery, with both skills and employment support provision moving online wherever possible, supported by a partnership of businesses, network providers and others via the GM Technology Fund to ensure that those facing digital exclusion were still able to access skills and employment provision. Colleges have remained open throughout for vulnerable learners and the children of key workers, and local authorities and other community/resident-facing organisations have played a leading role in every aspect of the local response, from skills and employment support to the basic humanitarian response. This has involved more than just supporting learners and employers impacted by some of the most stringent and long-lasting restrictions in the country, but also maintaining continuity of provision and services, and a crucial focus on existing priorities and forward planning.

This willingness to adapt to serve the interests of GM's people and businesses, including some of our most economically and socially marginalised residents, demonstrates that building back better can and will be a central theme in Greater Manchester's future.

6.2 Key achievements in 2020/21

Notwithstanding the significant challenges, there has been real progress during 2020/21, upon which to build in the year ahead.

6.2.1 Young People and Young Adults

- **Launched the GMACS service for young people**, helping them to navigate the choices open to them and to build and amend their own career plans from Year 7 to Year 13. The service saw a clear increase in usage during school/college closures, with a live chat function launched to provide additional support
- Shaped and developed the youth-led **Young Person's Guarantee**, to drive over 1,000 commitments to young people as a rapid response to Covid-19. Its legacy is to tackle some of the biggest barriers and inequalities still outstanding over next 12 months
- Over **25,000 young people accessed virtual employer encounters** during lockdown through their schools and colleges as part of their careers programme.
- Working with 150 schools across GM, delivered the Go Digital & Digital Futures programmes to **prepare young people for digital careers**
- Supported Routes Ready **T level Curriculum Groups** to share best practice and ensure GM is ready for phase two of T Level roll-out in September 2021
- **Supported disadvantaged and digitally excluded pupils** most in need by providing over 1,200 digital kit and data bundles worth £280,000 through **the GM Technology Fund in 2020/21**
- Through the Local Growth Fund, a total of £141.7m has been allocated to support **14 Skills Capital projects and 13 wider economic development & regeneration projects** across Greater Manchester. Through this activity, over 1,000 jobs have been created to date and a further 2,500+ are forecast to follow as projects are

completed. In leveraging this funding, £219m match funding has been generated within GM to date, and a further £200m in match is forecast to be secured before the end of the projects

- **Established GM Kickstart Board** to steward the scheme in Greater Manchester. The Board brings together stakeholders from the GM LEP, GMCA, DWP, local authorities, GM Learning Provider Network, Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation, colleges, housing providers and employment service providers

6.2.2 Apprentices

- Tested **support for apprentices made redundant** during the pandemic to move into new roles to continue their training
- Extended the **Stimulating Employer Demand for Apprenticeships** (SEDA) project to support a further 200 businesses with their skills planning, including the creation of workforce development plans leading to new apprenticeship opportunities
- Worked with employers and providers through the **GM Levy Matchmaking Service** to facilitate apprenticeship levy transfers worth £3.5m, creating more than 270 new apprenticeship starts to December 2020
- Tested new tailored approaches to support unemployed people from under-represented groups into apprenticeships through the **Removing Barriers to Apprenticeships Programme**, with pilots totalling £300k creating at least 70 new apprenticeship opportunities
- 75 bicycles and safety kit given to key worker apprentices as part of our **transport offer for apprentices** and supporting the GM Moving initiative to encourage healthy, active lifestyles
- Delivered online sessions to young people and created content and case studies for websites through the peer to peer **Apprentice Ambassadors**
- Delivered **Virtual Apprenticeship Week** around Results Days in 2020 with GMACS and #SeeDifferent teams, as well as virtual National Apprenticeship Week in February 2021
- Development of an online induction for all GM public sector apprentices.

6.2.3 Adults: Retraining and Re-/Up-skilling

- Launched and expanded the **Fast Track Digital Workforce Fund**, supporting people from underrepresented groups to enter well-paid creative, digital & tech roles, and helping local businesses to address skills gaps/skills shortage vacancies. To March 2021, 29 bootcamp programmes have supported around 1,200 people and learning will help to inform future scale-up of this approach
- **Growth funding** approved for AEB providers to support residents to **upskill in LIS sectors** such as Advanced Manufacturing, Digital, and Health & Social Care
- **Flexed devolved AEB funding** to support residents to access digital kit or other tools needed to **improve accessibility to learning**
- Developed and launched the new **GM Labour Market Intelligence Team**, with the first sector reports published and others due to follow imminently
- Launched commissioning for £7million Skills for Growth SME Support Programme that will support 3,000 SMEs and 15,000 individuals to up-skill in GM's priority sectors
- Set up a Safe Returns to Work Programme with AEB funding to support up to 1,600 residents in getting back to work safely
- Launched a **pilot to support Over-50s into Employment** in partnership with Centre for Ageing Better, DWP and Local Authorities
- Delivered **Switch to Digital Week**, a programme of webinars and panel discussions with employers for people exploring a career change to find out more about working in the sector, delivered by Manchester Digital and the GMCA
- **Launched the Enterprising You pilot programme to support the self-employed and those in the gig economy**, the only programme of its kind in the UK that is offering this multi-faceted level of support to those on low incomes. Since launching in March 2020, in its first year of delivery the pilot has supported over 700 people:
 - 63% reported improved skills to run their business which is likely to impact across other key areas including business sustainability

- 61% have seen an increase in their business turnover as a result of EY, 48% reported an increase in profitability, and 56% reported an improvement in business stability
- 30% of the clients supported are claiming UC, 67% of are female, 26% are from BAME communities and 29% are aged over 50.

6.2.4 Adults: Furloughed Workers

- **Developed EmployGM** to support individuals to find employment & training
- Targeted the **Working Well Early Help offer** for furloughed workers in SMEs
- Developed **short retraining programmes for those at risk of redundancy** to help them move into more secure jobs using devolved AEB funding
- Adjusted devolved AEB funding rules so that **furloughed workers** in receipt of low wages can access **fully funded adult skills** provision

6.2.5 Newly Unemployed

- **Skills Pathway programmes** set up through devolved AEB, giving opportunities for up to 1,000 unemployed residents to **gain employment in key worker roles**
- **Significantly increased volumes** of newly unemployed residents able to receive support through **Working Well Early Help**
- Developed a **£13m Working Well WHP JETS** service with DWP to support around **13,000** unemployed residents, running from October 2020 to March 2022. In addition to the national JETS provision, GM has also embedded additionality through a debt service, dedicated access to online mental health (CBT) and a clear pathway to access the skills system, with several skills advisors working within the service and reporting to a new Skills Forum.

6.2.6 Long-term Unemployed and Economically Inactive

- **Flexed devolved Working Well** (Work & Health Programme) to deliver:
 - 85,000 point of contacts during COVID-19, supporting over 5000 people between March-Dec 2020.

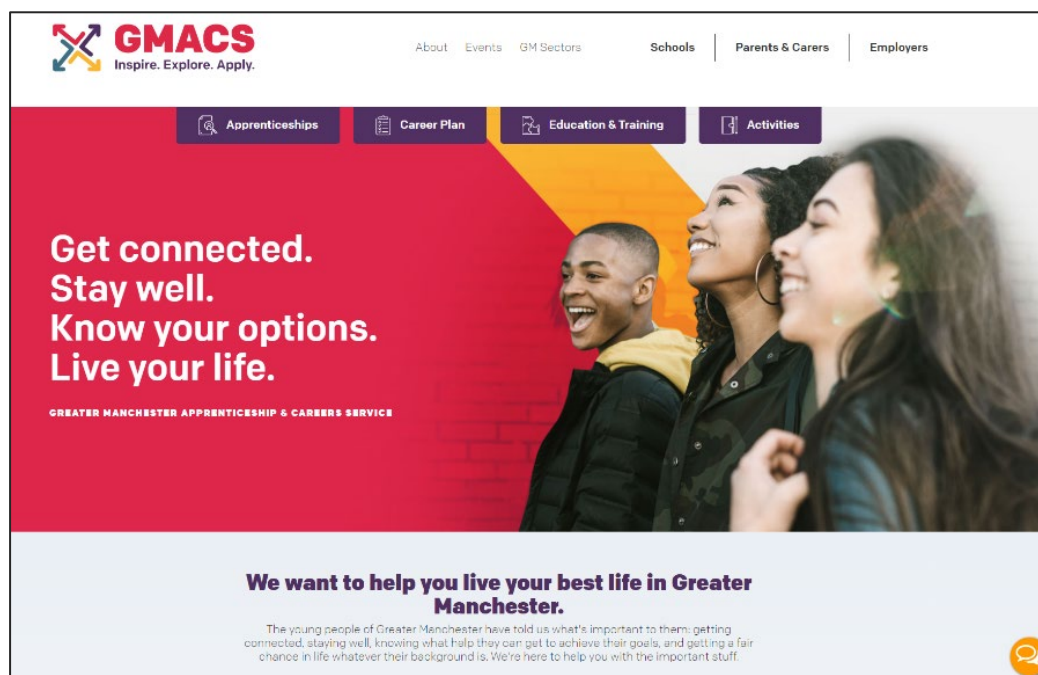
- iWorks digital portal to support and ensure a diverse remote support offer
- Laptops/IT kit distributed to participants for home-working
- Increased specialised mental health support during lockdown
- £2 million **Local Authority Grant Scheme** launched to tackle barriers for residents to access adult education, increase digital inclusion and improve access to ESOL
- Extended AEB Funding Rules to fully fund adult skills provision for unemployed and economically inactive residents
- Launched the **Working Well Specialist Employment Service** for people with a learning disability and/or autism and severe mental illness which, despite the pandemic, is already getting people with complex health needs and disabilities in to work.

It is clear from this chapter that, despite the most challenging of circumstances, our collective efforts are making a significant difference to individuals, families, businesses and communities across Greater Manchester. The next chapter will look at the impact of just a small cross section of this activity, and the difference being made on the ground.

7 Positive Impact Stories

Case Study 1: Clear line of sight for young people into local career pathways: Greater Manchester Apprenticeship & Careers Service (GMACS)

The Greater Manchester Apprenticeship & Careers Service (GMACS) helps young people explore, design and apply for their next steps before leaving school. It responds directly to the need to ensure that those young people who want to explore technical and vocational careers pathways have as many opportunities across GM as those who are following an academic pathway.



The GMACS website brings together different stages of the career planning process, helping students navigate the choices open to them and develop the tools to start working life. It showcases what Greater Manchester can offer, provides information about the local labour market, and provides a direct way to apply for courses, jobs and apprenticeships.

With a 'careers matchmaker' quiz, it enables young people to explore jobs and career clusters, then work backwards to plan the options and courses that will help to form that pathway.


There are currently 13,000 young people accessing the site and exploring careers, activities and opportunities. A new chat function has been introduced under the Young Person's Guarantee to enable young people to share their views and concerns and seek support.

A student from Droylsden Academy in Tameside said that GMACS had worked perfectly for them. *"I am glad there appears to be a different take on the subject of careers education, as the assemblies felt like they were overused, and it seemed to be the same thing every half year. The platform is excellent for it, as it attaches career options for your personality, your own preferences and what you would prefer to work with or as."*


More than 125 schools and colleges across GM have already incorporated GMACS into lessons and will be using it as an application function from next year for young people to apply for college courses, apprenticeships and other work-related opportunities.

John Peet, careers leader with The Laurus Trust, said: *"It is an easy win to tie GMACS to our existing framework. I have been involved in careers for years and it is the best thing I've ever seen, I'm so excited!"*


What are the top 5 career sectors in Greater Manchester?




Business, financial and professional services




Retail and wholesale distribution



Health and social care



Manufacturing



Digital

Software Developer

Job Description

A software developer talks through requirements with the client and the development team. They take part in technical design and progress meetings, writing or amending computer code, testing software and fixing problems, keeping accurate records of the development process, changes and results, carrying out trials and quality checks before release, maintaining and supporting systems once they're up and running.

Alternative titles for this job include Programmer Software developers design, build and test computer programs for business, education and leisure services.

Salary Range
£20,000 - £70,000


Working environment
You could work at a client's business or in an office.

Hours
37 to 40 hours per week including evenings and weekends

Opportunities
With experience, you could become a senior developer or a project manager, with planning or research responsibilities. You could move into related areas like systems design, IT architecture and business systems analysis.

You could also set up your own business or work as a consultant in most areas of the economy, for example business services, finance, cyber security, telecommunications and healthcare.

[EXPLORE THIS SECTOR](#)
[ALL SECTORS](#)



Case Study 2: Stimulating Demand and improving access to Apprenticeships

As part of the wider work to address the decline in apprenticeship numbers in recent years, particularly in SMEs, a suite of programmes was developed to support employers. The package included grants via local authorities (a direct legacy from the lessons learnt through the devolved Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (GM AGE), which was the first devolved function/budget), CPD for business engagement staff, workforce development support for SMEs and a 'levy matchmaking service' that has been operating since August 2019.

When Apprenticeship Levy transfers were introduced, there was little objective support available to broker direct conversations with / between employers who had capacity to transfer funding with those who were in a position to utilise it. GM recognised that, for Levy transfers to have maximum impact, there was an enabling function that could only work at a local level. Greater Manchester was one of the first areas in the country to launch an online approach to matching large and small employers to facilitate levy transfers, enabling us to mobilise GM's employer base much more quickly to create new opportunities. As well as supporting employers to utilise their levy to support local SMEs/supply chains in GM, it also became an invaluable tool for providers to maintain the Apprenticeship offer when national funding for non-levy contracts was exhausted, without which many apprenticeship opportunities would have been lost.

Since the launch of the Greater Manchester Levy Matchmaking Service:

- £3.5m has been committed to date by around 30 levy paying employers, including Lloyds Banking Group, Amazon, BBC and Bentley Motors
- More than 270 apprenticeship opportunities have been matched, of which 150 confirmed starts are already underway.

The workforce development element of the support package has now evolved into Greater Manchester's new £7m ESF Skills for Growth SME programme, which was commissioned in autumn 2020 with the aim of supporting 3,000 SMEs and 15,000 residents across Greater Manchester.

A partnership between Lloyds Banking Group and Return is just one of the matches made through this work.

Gary Levine, Managing Director of Return, said: “We work in a really competitive talent market, and we needed to find a new way to access talent to help us grow. Without the Levy Matchmaking Service it would have been much harder – we wouldn’t have known where to start.”

Ian Browne, Apprenticeships Manager for Lloyds, said: “What we see with our apprentices is that they’re more committed to the business and more engaged, and they have ambitions for furthering themselves and our company. The Levy transfer allows us to share some of the benefits that we see with smaller businesses so they can benefit in the same way.

“The work that Greater Manchester does with the Growth Company and the creation of the portal makes levy matchmaking and finding businesses that we can help that much easier. The Levy Matchmaking Service was instrumental in helping us to connect in the first instance with Return to understand the hopes and aspirations that they have for apprentices within their business, and to help us be able to help them with funding for the apprentices that they’re looking to take on board.”

Case study 3: Supporting Adult Learners: Alleviating Barriers

Greater Manchester is using the flexibilities of the devolved AEB to look for new ways of breaking down barriers and enabling residents to access the education and training that they need by making more effective use of existing resources and provision.

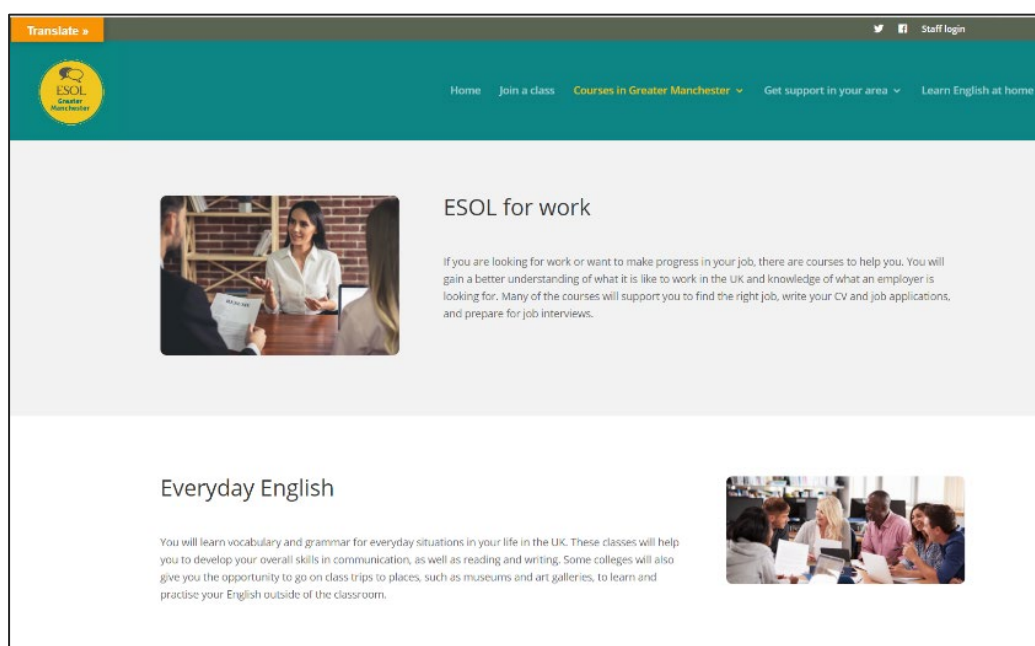
In 2020 a £2 million Local Authority Grants programme was set up within the AEB to:

- alleviate barriers to residents accessing provision
- tackle digital exclusion (both in terms of the digital entitlement/skills needed to function in an increasingly online world and the kit needed to learn those skills)

- improve the ease and speed of access to provision in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) across Greater Manchester, particularly in those areas in which there were waiting lists.



One of the projects delivered through this grant programme is the Greater Manchester ESOL Service, building on and scaling up a model developed by Manchester City Council. The aim of the service is to provide a single point of entry for adults with ESOL needs to access appropriate courses in each participating local authority area of Greater Manchester, with collaboration across areas to prevent duplication.



The service uses a centralised assessment and referral service to ESOL provision in each participating local authority area, including the management of a single waiting list per area that serves all local providers rather than each provider operating a stand-alone waiting list, and a common initial assessment process which is recognised by all providers. Each participating authority can adapt/ supplement the model with wrap-around support, progression services and other support.

This collaborative approach has increased co-ordination across GM, improved the experience for residents applying and/or waiting for provision, and enabled a clearer picture of ESOL demand across the city-region.

Case study 4: Aligning skills and employment support: pathways into work

GM Working Well (Work & Health Programme) is Greater Manchester's 'whole population' approach to health, skills and employment. It is a programme that has evolved since the pilot in 2014 and is now a central element of our integrated ecosystem of labour market support, putting personalised, holistic support for participants and the needs of employers at its centre.

Our approach is underpinned by:

Maximising financial investment for our communities



Working closely with local and national partners in the design and delivery of programmes



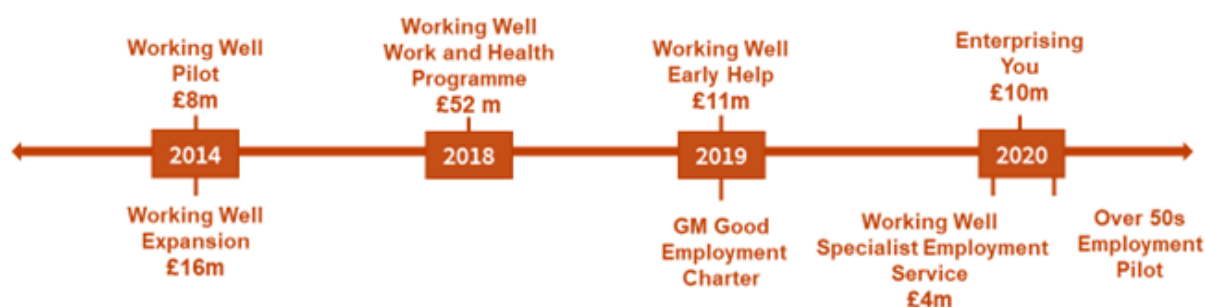
Innovation and expansion, prioritising levelling-up for people as well as places



Strengthening the evidence base, rapidly translating findings in to practical action



Timeline of developments - committing more than £100 million in employment provision in Greater Manchester:



This is a £52m package, including an additional £22m ESF and local funding generated by GM to nearly double the size of the core national activity. It will support 22,500 GM residents over the life of the programme, not only through the core activity but through a comprehensive suite of additional tailored support that has already helped around 9,000 long-term unemployed people into work to date. This additionality brought by GM includes:

- WW Early Help, a test & learn programme designed to provide early intervention for people who have fallen out of work, or are at risk of doing so, due to a health condition and/or disability
- WW Specialist Employment Service, a £4 million, three-year programme launched in August 2020 to support up to 1,200 participants with complex health needs and disabilities. This activity is jointly funded via ESF (through GMCA), the NHS mental health transformation fund (through the Greater Manchester Health & Social Care Partnership), and GM's ten local authorities. The offer comprises:
 - Supported Employment for people with a learning disability and/or autism via GM's ten local authorities
 - Individual Placement & Support for people with a severe mental illness, integrated into GM's three mental health Trusts.

James's Story

James secured part time work as a result of personalised, holistic support from Working Well and its integration partners. James had been homeless for 18 months, sleeping on the streets 4/5 nights a week. In the past, he had violent outbursts, some of which had led to time in prison, and despite his GP diagnosing anxiety, James had received limited support and felt his mental health condition was more severe.

With support from a Working Well key worker and a multi-agency team, James received support around his mental health, housing and employability. He says that being able to manage his condition has left him feeling much more positive and has really helped him to turn his life around. James was recently able to have his young daughter to stay with him for the first time since she was born. He feels he has been given tools and techniques that can help him combat his anxiety by himself in the future which will help him stay well and stay in work.

This integrated approach, and alignment of programmes, and close cross-agency working on the ground has delivered real benefits and additionality. Working Well (WHP) has seen the volume and distribution of referral outstripping those of other CPAs, onward referrals to other complementary services ten times greater than seen in the NW, and joint investment across agencies in a Social Prescribing platform transforming multi-agency working.

Buy-in to Working Well across the GM system is also creating job opportunities, with major employers recognising the value of programme and its role in developing and recruiting the future workforce. The Northern Care Alliance, for example, has committed to using WW and aligned AEB skills provision to fill 1,000 health and social care vacancies.

Two-thirds of participants have reported improvements in their skills and qualifications, but there are much broader benefits reported by individuals: 88% report improvements in relation to health management, 80% in relation to debt/finances, and 74% in relation to chaotic family lifestyle.

GM Working Well – Making A Difference

The Client

“There has been more understanding regarding my disability than other programmes and I have found the key workers much more friendly. Other programmes ... were dreadful.”

The Employer (Bolton College):

“Being part of the Working Well Programme is something that Bolton College are extremely proud of. As a College with strong community links, the programme enables us to offer local people who have been out of work, employment opportunities. It has been a really positive experience working with our local authority Local Lead and Ingeus, who are passionate about the programme and are skilled at ensuring that the College is introduced to individuals who have the skills and experience which are best suited to our organisation.”

The Partner (New Charter Housing Trust):

“Working Well has had an extremely positive impact on a wide range of people. Many of the customers Housing Providers deal with find themselves in a combination of circumstances which makes entering the job market extremely difficult. Acknowledging that those who have a number of barriers to employment, and for whom the Work Programme has been unable to fully support, has been a major step.”

Case study 5: An Employer-driven, Intelligence-led labour market response

Our industry skills intelligence function is putting employers at the heart of driving provision, including the likes of BAE Systems, Microsoft, Manchester Digital and many SMEs.

Input from employers, business networks and employer-facing stakeholders is informing industry intelligence reports, which is shared with partners and providers to ensure a GM-wide understanding of skills and labour market needs, couched in the language of employers. It is already being used to support careers and inspiration activity by adding richness to existing LMI through platforms such as GMACS, to support JCP in supporting job-seekers (including through initial sector skills training for staff delivering the JETS programme), and to mobilise employer networks with focussed initiatives, such as working closely with the construction industry to identify skills needed for retrofit and other low carbon construction/infrastructure. JCP, the Growth Hub and other key employment partners are engaged to ensure that the intelligence helps shape employment pathways.

It is early days in the development, embedding and application of the intelligence that is being gathered and there remains much to do to translate it into/embed it within curriculum design. However, there have already been notable early successes in its application:

Shaping Skills Commissioning

- Industry Skills Intelligence gathered for the Digital and Tech industry has recently informed commissioning for DfE funded Round 3 of Digital Bootcamp funding
- Shaping skills commissioning to support high level technical skills needed across sectors identified in the LIS through the ESF funded Skills for Growth Programme: Upskilling for Retrofit and Digital Transformation will be some of the first commissions in Spring 2021 totalling around £3.5 million
- Shared with partners to support applications to DfE National Skills Funding tender in order to ensure bids reflect high-level technical skills needs in our region
- Used by The Prince's Trust to shape round three of their Future Workforce Fund skills training for NEET young people, identifying new sector areas in which to develop training that is better aligned to GM's growth sectors and future skills needs.

Supporting Local Authorities

- Local Authorities are utilising regional and local skills intelligence as their evidence to shape work and skills recovery and inform discussions with providers as part of local Covid recovery planning.

Informing skills initiatives with external stakeholders

- Recommendations from the Digital and Tech intelligence report have provided a framework for skills partnerships with employers and other digital stakeholders to coordinate skills initiatives. Examples include:
- Cyber Advisory Group initiatives described above
- Microsoft have developed their own action plan against the eight digital skills recommendation areas which strategically links their skills activity in GM
- STEM Learning has partnered with GM to translate digital skills intelligence to share with their computing networks of teachers to support them to embed local labour market and skills intelligence related to digital and tech throughout schools
- GMCA have partnered with Manchester Metropolitan University and their work with Net Zero North West to share the industry intelligence around GM's Green Economy in order to shape their skills offer.

Case Study 6: Developing specialist technical skills - supporting our businesses and our people

Supporting businesses

Employers need relevant, responsive training to fill technical skills gaps with workers who can hit the ground running. Full-time qualifications are not always the answer.

To support our growing Digital industry, Greater Manchester and the Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership have worked with DCMS and HM Treasury to design and pilot a locally tailored 'bootcamp' model through the **Fast Track Digital Workforce Fund**, the success of which has seen the pilot expanded with DfE funding. To March 2021, the pilot has delivered 29 bootcamp programmes, testing short, intensive training programmes linked to job vacancies and tailored to meet employers' immediate skills needs. It has worked with top employers like AO and Autotrader to diversify their tech workforce, as well as supporting a range of SMEs to fill digital skills gaps through partnerships like Made Smarter.

Raytheon UK planned an expansion of its cyber capability in the UK. Following evaluation of five different locations, including the Greater Manchester area, Raytheon were put in touch with MIDAS, which provides inward investment support to businesses considering moving to GM.

Raytheon UK's Head of Business Development Cyber & Intelligence said: *"MIDAS were very forward leaning and engaged with us in detail providing us with much better clarity of local skills availability, recruiting conditions and potential office locations. Their local knowledge and support rapidly moved GM to the top of our preference list and in 2017 we opened a new office in Salford Quays, with dedicated office space for local SMEs that we work with.*

"We have since grown rapidly and now have close to 100 employees in Salford. We continue to grow and have really valued the continuing support from GMCA and its teams in helping us understand and exploit the local recruiting environment."

In parallel, our Digital industry intelligence deep dive conducted extensive research and facilitated workshops with businesses and industry partners, considering the longer term skills needs both of the Digital industry and tech roles in the wider labour market. The aim has been to develop actionable intelligence at occupational levels, and the outputs are already informing GM's skills response.

As a result, the GM Cyber Advisory Group will now take forward three targeted initiatives:

- Development of a toolkit for best practice in cyber talent development
- High quality curriculum criteria for cyber, co-designed/delivered by employers
- Narration of the career opportunities available in cyber and routes into the industry, supporting careers/employment services such as WW JETS and GMACS.

Supporting People

As well as meeting employers' needs, provision for retraining and up-skilling – particularly for people impacted by redundancy or displaced from the labour market due to Covid – must be flexible, intensive and linked to real-time vacancies.

To March 2021, the 29 bootcamp programmes delivered under the Fast Track Digital Workforce Fund pilot have supported around 1,200 individuals to begin upskilling in diverse roles, from digital marketing to software development to data. Despite significant and widespread challenges in the employment market with many staff across the tech sector on furlough and recruitment freezes in place, more than a fifth of participants who have completed their bootcamps have already progressed into employment, the vast majority of whom were unemployed at the start of their course, and many more are involved in interviews/recruitment process with prospective employers. Other participants have been able to up-skill with a view to progressing in their careers.

Through our nuanced understanding of industry need and relationships with local partners, GM has delivered significant added value alongside the pilot. A highly successful 'Switch to Digital' campaign with Manchester Digital saw over 600 individuals engaged in career switch activities in just one week, engaging with advisers and employers to explore career options and the support available to help them make that move.

This model of flexible, bespoke training linked to vacancies, combined with occupationally relevant support for those looking to enter work or switch careers, has demonstrated how different parts of the system can be brought together to inspire, reskill and retrain across a variety of sectors at scale.

Generation is an independent non-profit founded in 2014 by McKinsey & Company to help bridge the skills gap employers were reporting for entry level tech roles at speed and scale. Generation received funding in round 1 of the Fast Track Digital Workforce Fund to deliver their AWS re/Start training programme, a 12 week, full-time, boot camp run in collaboration with The Prince's Trust, which prepares individuals for entry-level cloud positions. The program was designed to support unemployed and underemployed individuals by providing education in AWS Cloud skills and connecting participants with potential employers.

Victoria, 26, was interested in a tech career and was studying web design in the evenings, but she was unemployed and struggling to find meaningful employment until she took part in the AWS re/Start bootcamp. Three months later, after completing the course Victoria secured an interview at Oxbury Bank Plc and was offered a role as Trainee AWS Engineer.

Stuart Ellidge, CTO at Oxbury said: "We're really excited to have Victoria join the Oxbury IT Operations team. The skills she has acquired on the AWS re/Start programme will definitely stand her in good stead and we look forward to helping her to achieve her potential in a fast-moving and dynamic industry."

**"It's a dream come true!
Having secured a job so soon
after graduation, especially in
these difficult times, is a
miracle.**

**"I'm so thankful. All the
support from AWS re/Start
made it happen."**

**AWS re/Start graduate
Victoria**



8 Looking Forward

As we look forward, we are already seeing rapid change within the labour market, and it is likely that the pandemic will accelerate trends that were already emerging, such as people holding varied portfolios of jobs through their working lives, more agile employment, and the advent/expansion of artificial intelligence and new technologies. Flexibility and innovation in the way that we view skills profiles and employability will be key if we are to future-proof our residents and employers against economic shock and labour market changes. For example, research in the US¹⁶ found that school secretaries have many of the skills required to become IT business analysts.

If we are to improve the agility, responsiveness and inclusiveness of GM's talent pool in a rapidly evolving labour market, this ability to look differently at work and skills will be paramount: identifying job roles and subsectors most in demand and those that are declining or vulnerable; highlighting 'skills networks' of competencies that have transferability to other (sometimes apparently unrelated) occupations; and identifying/commissioning relevant skills provision and employment support that link people to jobs.

Individuals, employers, policy-makers and commissioners need to plan and adapt for a labour market that will see some of the skills acquired in education and early employment becoming obsolete as the nature of work changes. The importance of lifelong learning and retraining has already come to the fore as individuals explore and pursue multiple careers during their working lives. Flexible, bespoke training might come to replace lengthy qualifications in some jobs and occupational pathways. What we mean by 'employability' is also likely to change, which employers looking for different qualities and attributes than they might have in the past.

Whilst some of these changes in the world of work are longer-term considerations, in the immediate future there are some significant external factors (though not unique

¹⁶ <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/the-future-of-work-in-america-people-and-places-today-and-tomorrow>

to Greater Manchester) which will inevitably have an impact on the success of our skills strategy in the short term and the shape of medium-/longer-term planning:

- Degree of ‘scarring’ for businesses from Covid, Brexit and wider economic influences – changes to the workforce including redundancies, need for retraining/upskilling of existing workers, reduced employer investment in training & development, changing business models, levels of indebtedness, pauses in trading, delayed or cancelled investment, ongoing disruption and absences, extended low levels of demand, business closures
- Process of wind-down of large-scale business, employee and welfare support schemes/ uplifts during 2021
- Degree of ‘scarring’ for individuals - life chances, unemployment rate and duration potentially leading to economic inactivity, early retirement (including risk of involuntary/‘forced’ early retirement for unemployed older workers) and loss of income, health impacts
- Severity and duration of disruptions to international trade, with the associated knock-on impact to supply chains in terms of workforce/skills supply and demand
- Extent of business model change (digitalisation, flexible working, reduction in person-person services)
- Return of confidence: consumer, business, investor (timing and strength)
- Sectoral shifts (some hit hard but bouncing back, some where long-term trends have been accelerated)
- Geography of impacts and labour market interdependencies (e.g. the impact on city centres and towns – a knowledge worker based in a city centre can support up to five other job roles, raising broader issues around employment of / reskilling for workers)
- Central policy response and constraints – fiscal and monetary environment
- Extent to which health and public health interventions are successful in controlling Covid-19 and limiting the compounding economic impact of further disruption in 2021.

We cannot predict the impact of these factors over the months and years to come but what we can do in Greater Manchester is make sure that our residents and

employers are ready to make the most of the opportunities and ride out the challenges that lie ahead.

Many of the actions set out in this report are part of a long-term journey of change on which we will work with government and local partners. As acknowledged previously, this is a wide-reaching agenda and no single part of the system – whether national or local, public sector or private – can bring about the required changes alone. Equally, no stakeholder can sit back and expect change to happen without bringing their own expertise, energy and capacity to the table.

With that in mind, we must have different conversations, both within Greater Manchester and with government, about the ways in which we can make skills and employment policies work better on the ground. GM's Local Industrial Strategy has been a catalyst for this, presenting a real opportunity to work in different ways to make sure that policies, interventions and services dovetail, rather than overlapping or conflicting with each other. It is hoped that the opportunities presented by FE reforms the resources that will be channelled through the National Skills Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and the commitments set out most recently in [*Build Back Better: Our Plan For Growth*](#) will be harnessed in ways that support shared ambitions and deliver national policy with local impact.

We must also focus on the 'aggregation of marginal gains' in the things that are currently within our gift within Greater Manchester – making small changes that have the potential to add up to something transformational. Through this approach we've already been able to work with schools, colleges, employers and other partners to bring fresh conversations and ideas to the table which were absent before.

Partnerships across health, skills, school readiness, the green agenda, transport, culture, justice and other areas now exist where we haven't had that same traction in the past; work and skills are a common thread linking and enabling all of these policy areas.

We have already seen with the devolved Adult Education Budget that we can do things differently when we are given local control. In the first year of devolution we were able to introduce a range of flexibilities which, over time, will help us to better meet the needs of Greater Manchester residents and employers, as well as joining up complementary services that have previously operated separately from each

other and delivering better value for money for the public purse. Many of those changes have been reflected in subsequent government policy.

It is important that we take the opportunity to tell the 'Greater Manchester story' and demonstrate the added value of our integrated approach, especially where the evidence before us and the issues we face, far from Westminster, suggest that there might be a compelling case for doing things differently. We must also demonstrate – as illustrated in the case studies within this report – that Greater Manchester is not going from a standing start. Employer-led intelligence is already shaping our labour market strategy, with skills and employment provision that are driven by the needs of our people, our businesses and our place.

In the meantime, we will continue to work in partnership across Greater Manchester to bring cohesion to the system – taking account of the wide range of players and levers involved and looking at how we make that shift towards a system that is characterised not by its individual parts or where one funding stream stops and another kicks in, but by the pathways, support and opportunities that will make Greater Manchester one of the best places in the world to grow up, get on, and grow old.

See separate Data Annex document for:

Annex A – Core indicators

Annex B1 – Additional Analysis

Annex B2 – Data Sources / References

Bibliography:

A Plan for Jobs (HMT, 2020) [A Plan for Jobs: documents - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-plan-for-jobs)

Build Back Better: Our Plan for Growth, (HMT, 2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/build-back-better-our-plan-for-growth>

Five Year Environment Plan for Greater Manchester (GMCA, 2019) [Five-Year Environment Plan - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/environment)

Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint, (GMCA, 2020), [Digital Strategy - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/digital)

Greater Manchester Independent Prosperity Review (GMCA, 2019), <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/economy/greater-manchester-independent-prosperity-review/>

Greater Manchester Labour Market and Skills Review 2019/20, (GMCA, 2020) [Labour Market and Skills Review - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/labour-market)

Greater Manchester Living with Covid Resilience Plan, (GMCA, 2020), <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/news/greater-manchester-living-with-covid-resilience-plan-published/>

Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy (GMCA, 2019)

<https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/economy/greater-manchesters-local-industrial-strategy/>

Greater Manchester Social Value Framework, 2020 (GMCA, 2020), [Social Value can make Greater Manchester a better place - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/social-value-can-make-greater-manchester-a-better-place/)

Greater Manchester STEM Framework, (GMCA, 2019), [Greater Manchester STEM Framework - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/greater-manchester-stem-framework/)

Greater Manchester Work & Skills Strategy and Priorities, (GMCA, 2016), <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/work-and-skills/>

Industry labour market and skills intelligence report: Digital and technology (v1), (GMCA, 2020), <https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/3918/industry-labour-market-skills-report-digital-tech.pdf>

Our People, Our Place – the Greater Manchester Strategy (GMCA, 2018), <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/ourpeopleourplace/>

Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth, (DfE, 2021) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-for-jobs-lifelong-learning-for-opportunity-and-growth>