**Apprenticeship Ambassador Programme**

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*“The ambassadors have been an integral part of the careers programme at Priestnall and I would love to see the programme continue as I know both parents and students have benefited from this first-hand experience and the honesty and commitment of the ambassadors.”*

Sue Arthur, Head of Careers, Priestnall School

*“I became an Apprenticeship Ambassador because I felt there was a lack of understanding and information available to the general public, especially children at high school. I wanted to use my personal experience to inspire people in a similar situation or of similar learning style. Becoming an Ambassador also helped me gain more confidence and overcome an issue with public speaking; I have gained experience which I believe will be beneficial to my future career. “*

Matthew Davenport, Apprentice Lab Technician

**Executive Summary**

**Over the past four years the GMLPN have:**

* **Recruited and trained 346 Apprenticeship Ambassadors**
* **Placed ambassadors into events at 127 schools and colleges across Greater Manchester**

**Apprenticeship Ambassadors have:**

* **Shared their positive Apprenticeship experience with over 19,000 young**
* **Developed their presentation and communications skills, as well as their confidence, which has been of benefit in their workplace**

**The programme adds value to other Apprenticeship IAG projects, for example, the Apprenticeship IAG Service which utilised expert advisors to provide an overview of Apprenticeships to students. We coordinated ambassadors to accompany the experts who were able to share their personal story.**

**The GMLPN have been delivering the ESFA funded Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge (ASK) Project in Greater Manchester since October 2017. The project engages with students, teachers and parents by providing an overview of Apprenticeships as well as supporting students to register, search and apply using the Find an Apprenticeship website. During the last academic year Ambassadors supported those sessions. During the current academic year we have over 100 events scheduled between September 2017 and January 2017 reflecting the increase in demand for Apprenticeships IAG. Ambassadors could add value to those events if funding was available to continue to cover the cost of recruitment, training, coordination and expenses.**

**Introduction**

The Apprenticeship Ambassador Programme is funded by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and delivered by the Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network (GMLPN). The programme is an Apprenticeship information service for schools in Greater Manchester which utilises apprentices’ who have volunteered to share their first-hand knowledge and experience of Apprenticeships as a route into a successful career.

The premise of the programme is that the best people to promote Apprenticeships to young people in Greater Manchester schools are young people undertaking an Apprenticeship. The project is uniquely positioned to provide an insight into Apprenticeships and Traineeships by mobilising real apprentices to share their personal experiences with students who are typically only a few years younger than the ambassadors. Other CEIAG projects provide high quality information, advice and guidance but only the Apprenticeship Ambassador programme promotes the pathway using those who have chosen that route.

Apprenticeship Ambassadors engage with young people through two main methods:

1. Ambassadors deliver a presentation to classroom-sized groups of young people. The Ambassadors share their own personal experience on how they applied for and secured their Apprenticeship, what their role is in the workplace, how their training provider supports them and what their future plans are.
2. Ambassadors support a stand at careers fairs to engage with young people, teaching staff and parents in an informal manner. As with the presentations, they draw upon their own personal experience to promote the benefits of Apprenticeships.

**GMLPN’s role**

The GMLPN is a network organisation of over 100 independent training providers and colleges including the 30 largest Apprenticeship providers in GM. We recognise the long-term benefits to our members of promoting Apprenticeships to students in school by raising awareness amongst young people which should lead to an increase in applications to Apprenticeships and consequently Apprenticeships starts.

The GMLPN’s lead role includes:

* Recruiting and training Ambassadors
* Promoting the programme to schools and colleges
* Liaising with JCP representatives and other relevant partner stakeholders
* Day to day coordination of ambassador visits
* Reporting and evaluating progress.

**Policy Context**

The High Level Activity Plan within the draft Greater Manchester Apprenticeship Strategy 2016-2021 identifies that activity is required to “Continue to build upon the cultural shift within schools around the perception of Apprenticeships.” The Apprenticeship Ambassador Programme is a key , effective and successful activity providing real value for money as the Ambassadors are all volunteers.

The project supports the aims of The Greater Manchester Careers and Participation Strategy in particular Priority Two: Careers Education Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) for young people, by providing a free impartial service to schools and colleges.

**Four Year Review**

**Ambassador Recruitment**

Between 2012 and 2017 the GMLPN have recruited and trained 346 Apprenticeship Ambassadors.

Apprenticeship Ambassadors were recruited using a variety of strategies. We developed a marketing and communications strategy, which included developing e-shots, web pages and presentations, to support the recruitment of ambassadors by promoting the benefits of the programme to the following stakeholders:

* **Providers**

We targeted independent training providers and colleges who deliver Apprenticeships by promoting the programme at GMLPN events, e-marketing campaign and presenting at assessor meetings. We highlighted the benefits to providers, their employers and their apprentices. We provided them ready-made e-mails to send out to their apprentices and employers promoting those benefits.

* **Local Authorities**

All Greater Manchester Local Authorities have nominated ambassadors from their own employees and some have used the programme to support their own school engagement strategy.

* **Housing Associations**

We have recruited ambassadors from housing associations across Greater Manchester. The greatest number came from First Choice Housing in Oldham.

* **Employers of Existing Ambassadors**

We approached employers of existing ambassadors on the assumption that if they had already nominated an apprentice and had a positive experience then they were likely to nominate again. This approach was successful with employers such as BNY Mellon, Jacobs Engineering, Pennine Acute Hospitals Trust and Carillion.

* **Nominate a friend incentive**

We offered incentive payments to ambassadors if they nominated a friend. We offered a £50 voucher to any ambassador who nominated another, on condition that both attended at least one event.

**Ambassador Training**

Prior to visiting any schools all ambassadors attended a high quality training session to prepare them for engaging with students which consisted of:

* Sharing their personal experiences with each other
* Updating their knowledge of Apprenticeships and relevant resources
* Developing presentation skills
* Supporting them to develop their own story into a presentation

The training enables ambassadors to be able to share their stories in both a presentation format and at careers fairs. It provides them with the key information to both inform students and to signpost them to further resources.

**Ambassador Demographics**

The pie chart below shows that 209 ambassadors are female and 132 are male, with five not supplying the information. Just over 60% of the ambassadors are female, which is a higher proportion than Apprenticeship starts nationally between September 2012 and April 2017, where 53.4% of starts were female.

The 346 ambassadors are aged between 16 and 41. Nearly half (49.7%) were aged between 16-19 which reflects the tendency to target and recruit ambassadors who are aged 21 years and under who are closer in age to the young people they engage with in schools and colleges.

270 (78%) of the 346 Ambassadors identified themselves as white British, (21.1%) of Ambassadors identified as being from BAME backgrounds and reflected our recruitment aims. This compares positively with national starts between September 2012 and October 2017 where 14.8% of starts were apprentices from BAME backgrounds.

At time of training 48% of ambassadors were undertaking or had completed an intermediate Apprenticeship, 46% were advanced Apprenticeships and the remaining 6% were higher or degree apprentices.

Ambassadors represented a range of employment sectors and a wide range of Apprenticeship Frameworks/Standards.

331 ambassadors were residents of Greater Manchester. The 15 who lived outside GM were employed by a GM located employer. There was a fairly even distribution of ambassadors across the 10 local authorities with Oldham (13.0%) the highest and Stockport (5.7%) the lowest.

The table below compares the percentage of ambassadors by local authorities and the number of Apprenticeship starts by local authorities.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Local Authority** | **%age of GM Ambassadors (331)** | **%age GM Apprenticeship Starts (Aug 12 – Oct 17)** |
| Bolton | 10.6 | 10.5 |
| Bury | 10.6 | 6.7 |
| Manchester | 8.8 | 15.7 |
| Oldham | 13.0 | 9.0 |
| Rochdale | 11.8 | 8.3 |
| Salford | 10.3 | 9.4 |
| Stockport | 5.7 | 9.9 |
| Tameside | 7.9 | 9.3 |
| Trafford | 9.1 | 6.9 |
| Wigan | 12.1 | 14.3 |

**Events**

The Ambassadors attended a total of 482 events, arranged by GMLPN, between September 2013 and July 2017. In addition, feedback from ambassadors has indicated that they attended approximately 800 additional events, on behalf of their employer and/or training provider.

The events were divided into five event types:

* **Presentations** where ambassadors delivered a 5-10 minute presentation usually in support of a longer, Apprenticeship presentation
* **Careers Events** which included school careers events, parents careers events and both LA wide and GM wide multi-school events
* **Frontline Worker events** including JCP work coaches, teachers and Connexions staff
* **Employer Events** as a response to demand during the first few months of the programme
* **Apprenticeship Week events** which were events that took place during National Apprenticeship Week each year and were made up the events described

The graph below shows the total and type of events, arranged by GMLPN, which took place in each GM local authority. Manchester had the highest number of events, 21.1% of all events took place there. This may be due to two factors: Firstly, it has the greatest number of schools and secondly the early momentum was due to the pilot taking place there.

The graph below shows the number of unique schools and college attended on at least one occasion throughout the programme. The schools include: mainstream schools and academies, FE Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges, Special schools, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and Independent schools. Manchester has the highest number of schools reflecting the greater number of educational institutions located there.

**School Feedback**

The programme supports schools and colleges by providing them with a resource that supports their CEIAG provision. Throughout the duration of the programme school teachers and careers staff have provided positive feedback. Here is a small sample of the feedback:

* *“I thought that they were exceptionally brave, informative and fantastic and really illuminated students to some of the information which needs to be considered when contemplating an Apprenticeship.”*
* *“Fantastic Ambassadors, it is an excellent idea to have 'real' people speaking to the students, they are more engaged when they can identify with the person delivering the information. Your Ambassadors are a credit to you!”*
* *“The Ambassadors did very well at interacting with both pupils and parents. Pupils took a lot from this.”*
* *“Ambassadors provided a valuable input at our event. The support they provided in helping to promote the NAS vacancy website, as well as assisting with applications, will hopefully lead to some tangible outcomes for some of the attendees.”*
* *“The Apprenticeship Ambassadors were very knowledgeable and welcoming to all students, staff and members of the public that attended. They had fantastic knowledge of Apprenticeships and the differing types and opportunities available. Completely professional from start to finish.”*
* *“Excellent presentation and role modelling.”*
* *“Very informative and well presented. The Ambassadors really engaged with the students.”*
* *“Students were comfortable to ask questions during the session which I felt showed they were at ease with the Ambassadors.”*
* *“Apprenticeship Ambassadors have inspired and engaged our students with their enthusiasm and their stories of their Apprenticeship journeys.”*

**Ambassador Feedback**

The programme relies on young apprentices who are willing and able to share their positive experiences. The programme is designed to enable them to do so as well as providing them with additional skills and experience that benefit them in their chosen careers.

Two Apprenticeship Ambassadors have won awards at the 2015 Skills For Business Awards - Apprentice of the Year and Advanced/Higher Apprentice of the Year. A number of Ambassadors have gained promotions at work as a result of building their presentation skills and confidence.

We asked the ambassadors for feedback on the why they became ambassadors and what they have gained by doing so. A number of Ambassador case studies can be found [here](http://gmlpn.co.uk/our-projects/apprenticeship-ambassadors/)and a small sample can be found below:

“I became an apprentice ambassador because, when I was at school, university was essentially forced on all the students as our only option if we wanted to be successful in life. I was keen to show that an academically able student is not a failure for not attending university and apprenticeships are available for any student, in any walk of life whether you want to be a lawyer, hairdresser, electrician or engineer. I am passionate about my role as an apprentice and about the benefits of apprenticeships in general and being an ambassador has allowed me to share this passion with quite literally hundreds of students who may have never before considered apprenticeships as a viable option. “

Holly O’Farrell, Paralegal apprentice

“The most important thing I have gained from this is confidence when talking to new people, this will be invaluable throughout my construction management career and has already helped both my personal and professional development. My employer been incredibly supportive in allowing me the time to perform my ambassador duties.”

Natasha Swain, Apprentice Quantity Surveyor

“I became an Ambassador because when I was looking for the next step after college, University was portrayed as the only option available to get to where I am today, so I want to tell the kids of today, that it is not. I personally enjoy being an Ambassador, I enjoy the fact you’re giving guidance to the next generation who were in your shoes deciding what the best route is. I think any sort of exposure from current or former apprentices is helpful.”

Cameron Furlong, Accounts apprentice

**Links to other projects**

The project has worked in partnership with a number of other GM and national Apprenticeship IAG projects.

These include The Apprenticeships Hub Marketing and Communications project - #SEEDIFFERENT, The Apprenticeship IAG Service and The Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge (ASK) for Schools Project

The Apprenticeship Ambassador Programme utilised the branding and resources created for the Apprenticeships Hub Marketing and Communications project to ensure that there was a consistent Greater Manchester Apprenticeship brand.

Between September 2014 and July 2016 we have developed a successful relationship with the Greater Manchester Apprenticeship IAG Service, managed by Positive Steps. We benefited from Ambassadors attending events where they were supported by an IAG professional with knowledge of Apprenticeships. In turn, their project benefited from having a real apprentice who young people can engage with.

During the 2016-17 academic year the ambassadors aligned with our delivery on the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge (ASK) project. The ASK project is funded by the ESFA and offers schools an Apprenticeship overview and support with registrations and applications on Find an Apprenticeship (FAA).

These have been ideal vehicles where the ambassadors could add value to existing provision and be supported by an Apprenticeship expert.

**The future of the programme**

We have continued demand from schools for ambassadors to engage with their students. In order to meet that demand from schools new ambassadors would need to be trained to replace older ambassadors who are no longer able to support the programme.

The programme would be sustainable if 60 new ambassadors were trained and deployed every year as per 2016-17, at a cost £37,500 per year including working with stakeholders.