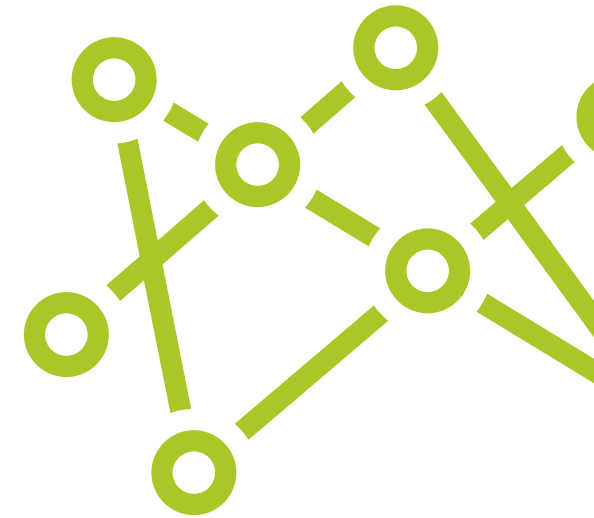




*Supporting Members Through
Challenge, Change & Opportunity*



Health & Social Care Apprenticeship Provision Report May 2023



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The Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network (GMLPN) is a network of over 115 members including, Independent Training Providers, FE Colleges, Community Voluntary Organisations, Universities and key suppliers and other stakeholders. GMLPN members deliver over 70% of the apprenticeships in Greater Manchester.

Several providers across the network have been reporting ongoing challenges within the Health & Social Care sector, including issues with staffing, funding rates and delivery; the impacts of these challenges are acknowledged to be reaching apprentices and employers in the sector and across Greater Manchester by our membership.

To scope and detail these challenges, GMLPN have worked closely with our Advisory Board to develop a survey to explore the challenges GMLPN members delivering Health & Social Care apprenticeships and the employers they work with are currently facing.

The respondents of the survey are currently training over **1,700 Health & Social Care apprentices across Level 2, 3, 4 and 5 across Greater Manchester and beyond.**

Based on the findings below, in order to address the challenges faced by learners, employers and providers the feedback from the survey suggests the following recommendations:

- More funded support for Mental Health and Wellbeing resources for apprentices.
- Consideration of funding skills requirements of Functional Skills Requirements for apprentices.
- A full and fair review of the funding allowances for health and social care apprentices in particular at access Levels 1 and 2.
- Any additional funding that can be used to support apprentices within the sector e.g. Multiply to support Maths achievement would be valuable.
- Potential to explore a Skills Bootcamp / pre-apprenticeship programme – including English and Maths – to help apprentices achieve and improve apprenticeship retention and success rates.

Impacts on Learners

Almost every respondent is seeing a decline in learners looking to do Health & Social Care apprenticeships. Most apprentices currently being trained were existing members of staff within the sector who are looking to upskill. There are issues with attracting new learners to the sector.

Many Health & Social Care apprentices are leaving courses early, impacting on apprenticeship success rates and retention, because of the challenges within the sector and the detrimental impact they are having upon their mental health and wellbeing.

Many apprentices are not able to progress to the next level of their apprenticeship due to the critical need for delivery staff, which in turn is causing them to leave their course as they feel unable to progress. The legacy of COVID-19 is still being felt by apprentices who have needed a lot of extra support to try and catch up with the requirements of their apprenticeship.

Impacts on Employers

Providers feel that low pay in the sector is heavily contributing to recruitment challenges employers within Health & Social Care are facing. Some also noted that employers have not yet fully recovered from the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges are exacerbating the impact upon apprentices as detailed above.

Problems with staffing are having knock on impacts on existing staff, including many apprentices, such as demotivation, sickness with stress and poor mental health issues. Employers and providers thus need to provide more support to help staff stay within the sector.

Most respondents to the survey highlighted that recruitment and retention of staff is the biggest challenge Health & Social Care employers are facing. Because of this a lot of businesses are understaffed and some are not able to properly commit to requirements of apprenticeships to train their staff, such as releasing staff for their off the job training requirements.

This is further compounded by the fact that apprentices are leaving the sector as they can get paid more for working in less pressured sectors.

Impacts on Providers

Many respondents are finding that Health & Social Care apprentices need a lot of extra visits and one to one tutoring when compared to learners from other sectors like engineering. In large part, this is because the learners need additional support with their mental health and wellbeing due to the stresses of the sector. This of course incurs additional costs for the provider.

Wider staffing challenges within the Health & Social Care sector are impacting upon apprentices' off the job training requirements. Employers agree to protect the off the job training time, but this slips when staff shortages and sickness issues arise. Due to this, some providers are finding it very difficult to organise and manage appropriate off the job training for their learners.

Additionally, many apprentices struggle with Functional Skills, with Maths being one of the biggest reasons apprentices in this sector fail to achieve. A lot of apprentices need extra tutoring support which adds additional costs for the provider.

One provider has recently had to create a team of functional skills specialists who deliver one to one sessions and group delivery across curriculum because the need is so great.

Impacts on Providers

In general, providers find that apprentices have a lot of reluctance for Functional Skills and it often becomes a mental barrier and additional source of stress for them.

Providers have found that employers have much more demand for virtual delivery following the pandemic.

All providers who responded to the survey are using a blended model of delivery, as this meets employers needs and fits around the shift patterns that many learners work. However, the lack of face to face learning means that tutors need to offer additional support and attention to learners in order to pick up on mental health issues they are facing.

The majority who responded also run the care certificate alongside the apprenticeship delivery.

Every provider who responded to the survey feels that the apprenticeship funding they receive to deliver each standard is insufficient. This issue is most significant with Level 2 and 3 funding, which is making a loss for many of the providers once all costs such as delivery, EPA, admin costs, and extra support is accounted for.

Funding rates for delivery at Level 4 and 5 are slightly higher, but not enough to make delivery worthwhile for respondents. These cost of delivery issues are compounded by the cost of living crisis which is further squeezing the providers.

One provider has ceased delivering at Level 2 and Level 3 completely because the delivery is not cost effective. Additionally, one of the colleges in Greater Manchester has also stopped delivering because of this reason. This is a worrying trend for a sector that is so in need of capable trained staff.

Several respondents are keen to access additional funding e.g. AEB, Multiply etc. to support apprentices to achieve.

Providers feel that the small amount of funding for Health & Social Care is reflective of how poorly valued the sector is by government.

Concerningly, most providers who responded are seriously considering their ability to continue delivering Health & Social Care apprenticeships due to the large number of challenges they are

currently facing and the amount of additional support they need to give to apprentices, which are impacting upon the cost of delivery.

If providers withdraw from training apprentices this will only deepen the crisis that the Health & Social Care sector is facing, so appropriate support must be given to stop this from happening.

Despite the challenges, several providers spoke passionately about the critical skills need in the sector, both across Greater Manchester and nationally, and how they feel a moral responsibility to continue delivering the training even though it's no longer sustainable from a business perspective