

GMLPN Strategic Partnerships & Policy Consultant - Maternity Cover

About GMLPN

GMLPN is the membership network of over 140 members including, independent training providers, colleges, universities, community learning providers, local authorities and awarding organisations across Greater Manchester.

For 25 years we've championed collaboration across the skills sector, providing a collective voice for our members while delivering high-quality events, projects and opportunities that improve outcomes for learners, employers and communities.

As the skills landscape continues to evolve through devolution, industrial strategy and skills reform, GMLPN is seeking an experienced Strategic Consultant to provide high-level strategic leadership, influence and consultancy support during a period of maternity cover.

The Opportunity

This is an exciting opportunity for an experienced senior leader to work alongside the Chair, Board and Head of Operations (Interim) to help shape the future direction of GMLPN.

The successful consultant will act as a trusted strategic partner, helping to strengthen GMLPN's influence across Greater Manchester and nationally while ensuring the organisation continues to deliver value for its members.

Working at executive level, the consultant will help position GMLPN as the recognised voice of the post-16 skills sector by influencing policy, strengthening strategic partnerships, identifying opportunities for growth and supporting collaborative working across the network.

This is a consultancy arrangement of approximately one day per week, although activity may fluctuate depending on priorities, stakeholder engagement and strategic opportunities.

Purpose of the consultancy

The consultant will provide strategic leadership to help GMLPN:

- Strengthen its position as the collective voice for post-16 education, skills and employment across Greater Manchester.
- Influence regional and national policy and decision-making.
- Build and strengthen strategic relationships across government, business and the education sector.
- Increase value for members through collaboration, intelligence and partnership opportunities.
- Support organisational sustainability through funding, commercial development and strategic growth.
- Raise the profile and reputation of GMLPN across the skills sector.

Key Areas of Support

Strategic Influence, Representation and Lobbying

- Representing GMLPN at regional and national forums.
- Building trusted relationships with senior leaders across Greater Manchester and beyond.
- Developing and delivering GMLPN's influencing strategy.
- Acting as a strategic ambassador for the organisation.

- Leading engagement with key stakeholders including GMCA, Local Authorities, Government departments, Chambers of Commerce, universities, employer representative organisations and strategic partners.
- Coordinating GMLPN responses to consultations, policy developments and emerging reforms.
- Influencing local and national policy that supports members and the wider skills system.
- Identifying opportunities to strengthen GMLPN's voice within regional and national policy discussions.

Strategic Partnerships and Network Development

- Develop and strengthen strategic partnerships that create value for members.
- Broker collaborative opportunities between members, employers, public sector organisations and strategic partners.
- Facilitate strategic roundtables, leadership discussions and cross-sector collaboration.
- Identify opportunities for collaborative funding bids and partnership projects.

Thought Leadership and Intelligence

- Produce strategic insight papers and briefing notes.
- Lead horizon scanning across policy, funding, labour market intelligence and sector reform.
- Provide regular strategic intelligence to the Board and membership.
- Identify emerging risks and opportunities.
- Position GMLPN as a recognised thought leader across the skills sector.
- Support the development of evidence-based policy positions.

Strategic Development

- Support delivery of GMLPN's strategic priorities.
- Provide strategic advice to support Board decision-making.
- Identify future opportunities for organisational growth.
- Support the development of new programmes and strategic initiatives.
- Provide challenge and constructive advice to support continuous improvement.
- Help shape GMLPN's future strategic direction.

Governance and Leadership

- Attend Board meetings and provide strategic updates.
- Attend Advisory Board meetings and Network Meetings where appropriate.
- Prepare strategic briefing papers and recommendations.
- Report progress against agreed priorities.
- Support effective governance and organisational decision-making.

Person Specification

We are looking for someone who has:

Essential

- Significant senior leadership experience within the post-16 education, skills or employment sector.
- A strong understanding of the Greater Manchester skills landscape.
- Extensive experience influencing policy and working with senior stakeholders.
- Excellent strategic thinking and organisational development skills.
- Experience identifying funding opportunities and developing successful partnerships.

- Strong communication and relationship management skills.
- Experience presenting to Boards and senior leadership groups.
- The ability to work independently while acting as a trusted advisor.

Desirable

- Experience working with membership organisations.
- Established relationships across Greater Manchester and the national skills sector.
- Experience of devolution, Combined Authorities and Local Skills Improvement Plans.
- Experience of business development and income generation.
- Established relationships across Greater Manchester and the wider skills sector.

Deliverables

- Delivery and progress of agreed strategic activity monitored and reported.
- Clear actions and strategic recommendations developed to support Board decision-making and organisational priorities.
- Enhanced engagement with regional and national strategic stakeholders.
- New funding and partnership opportunities explored and brought forward for consideration.
- Policy consultation responses where appropriate.
- Enhanced intelligence reporting on policy, funding and labour market developments.
- Support for the development of bids and strategic projects.
- Continued strengthening of GMLPN's policy influence and representation.
- Monthly progress report at Board Meeting against agreed priorities.

Contract Arrangement

This opportunity is offered on a self-employed consultancy basis.

- Approximately one day per week (average).
- Flexibility will be required to respond to organisational priorities.
- Workload may fluctuate depending on projects and stakeholder engagement.
- Home-based with travel across Greater Manchester as required.
- Attendance at key meetings and events will be expected.
- The successful consultant will be required to declare any potential conflicts of interest and ensure that any existing commitments do not impact their ability to deliver the agreed consultancy support.

Contract Term

The consultancy is expected to commence in October 2026.

The appointment is anticipated to run for up to 12 months as maternity cover and will operate on a rolling monthly consultancy agreement, reviewed against agreed priorities and organisational requirements.

Why Work with GMLPN?

This is an opportunity to help shape the future of the skills system across Greater Manchester by working with one of the region's most established membership organisations. The successful consultant will work closely with GMLPN's Chair, Board and wider membership network, providing strategic insight and support during an important period of organisational development and growth.

This role provides the opportunity to:

- Influence policy and strategic decision-making across the skills, education and employment landscape.
- Support collaboration across a diverse network of learning providers and partners.
- Help identify and develop new opportunities that deliver impact for learners, employers and communities.
- Contribute to the next phase of GMLPN's growth and strategic ambitions.

How to Apply

Interested individuals should submit the following to hr@gmlpn.co.uk by 5pm, 14th August 2026.

1. An up-to-date CV outlining relevant experience.
2. A short Expression of Interest (maximum two pages) responding to the questions below:

1. What skills, experience and expertise would you bring to this consultancy opportunity?	Please highlight your experience of: • Strategic leadership within the skills, education or employment sector. • Influencing policy and working with senior stakeholders. • Supporting Boards or senior leadership teams. • Business development, partnership working and securing funding opportunities.
2. How would you support GMLPN to strengthen its strategic influence and profile?	Please provide examples of your experience in: • Building strategic relationships. • Lobbying and influencing decision-makers. • Representing organisations at a regional or national level. • Identifying opportunities to shape policy or influence the wider skills agenda.
3. This consultancy is expected to average approximately one day per week, although the level of support may vary depending on organisational priorities. How would you manage this flexible commitment alongside your existing work, ensuring responsiveness to GMLPN's needs?	
4. What do you see as the key strategic opportunities and challenges facing GMLPN over the next 12 months, and how could you help the organisation maximise its impact?	
5. Please outline your proposed consultancy fee, including:	• Your daily rate (exclusive of VAT where applicable). • Confirmation of your self-employed/consultancy status. • Any additional expenses or charging arrangements (if applicable).

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an interview (w/c 7th September) with representatives of the GMLPN Board to explore their experience, approach and suitability for the consultancy.