

# Aspire in Partnership (AiP)



Newsletter – April 2025



This report provides a quarterly summary of EDI-focussed activity, aimed at supporting employers to diversify their workforces.

Aspire in Partnership (AiP) is a Growth Company (GC) service designed to help businesses attract and retain best-in-class talent from a diverse range of backgrounds – creating a productive workforce and opportunities for all.

## Overall Impact

Over the months of January to March 2025, we’ve proactively supported 32 employers to widen their candidate pools, placing 215 unemployed people into work in the process. All placements are with employers paying at least the Real Living Wage (RLW).

Below is a breakdown of the key D&I metrics:

RLW Job Starts	Male	Female	Non-binary	16-24	25-49	50+
215	45%	54%	1%	21%	63%	16%
Arab	Asian/ Asian British	Black	Mixed heritage	White		
0%	20%	29%	11%	40%		

The first quarter of 2025 has seen a significant increase in the number of job starts achieved when compared to the same period of 2024 (110 job starts). Though the jobs market is tightening, with less vacancies overall being promoted, our close partnerships with key employers are allowing for continued job placements.

## Employer Case Studies

### L&Q Housing

In January, we supported L&Q Housing to recruit six Customer Service Advisors. Diversity & Inclusion is a high priority to L&Q and recruiting inclusively helps them both to attract great candidates for the roles they have to offer and also to reflect the communities they serve. There are several steps to their process, including simulated tasks which help candidates to demonstrate they have the required skills.



One of the candidates we put forward was FK, a woman who lives with her partner in an inner-city, privately-rented apartment. The Customer Service roles were offered on a remote working basis, which suited FK, as she felt uneasy when travelling alone. The type of role meant she could work from home, in a safe environment.

Following the selection process, FK was successful in receiving an offer of employment, provided she had access to stable broadband, operating at a sufficient speed to process video conferencing. Broadband is included by the landlord where she lives, however it isn't strong enough for the needs of L&Q.

FK contacted our colleague Annalee, to withdraw her interest, as her landlord was unwilling to improve the internet connection. After Annalee ascertained why, she got to work to identify a solution that would mean FK could accept the offer of employment. An affordable 5G dongle with unlimited data solution was sourced. As a result, FK accepted the offer of employment and is progressing well.

It's often thought that Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) centres on the nine Protected Characteristics of the Equality Act. In reality, not only is it legally imperative employers embed DEIB throughout all areas of the organisation, but also that they consider wider under-represented groups such as those who are digitally-disadvantaged. AiP supports organisations to adapt their recruitment processes so that they do not disadvantage people - ensuring the best candidate gets the job.

**For support to assess your recruitment processes, please contact Adrian Bird (details at the foot of the newsletter).**

## Sisk

Sisk have been awarded contracts to develop the North Stand at the Etihad Stadium and the Jersey Wharf & Eliza Yard development in Ancoats. A key requirement of both projects is to ensure job opportunities are made available to local, unemployed residents. In winning the contracts, Sisk committed to a range of social value measures, including offering opportunities to local residents from under-represented backgrounds such as those with criminal justice experience, young people, or those with disabilities or long-term health conditions.

Since January 2024, GC have supported Sisk in promoting vacancies locally through a series of engagement events in wards close to the developments. Overall, 18 residents have been successful in gaining roles with either Sisk or one of the specialist contractors working on the project. All are from neighbouring wards such as Clayton, Openshaw, Fallowfield & Gorton. Of those placed, 28% are under 25, 33% from diverse ethnic communities, 33% disabled and 18% with criminal justice experience. Work continues on both projects, so these numbers are set to grow further as the year progresses.



## T Levels

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) has introduced T Levels for 16-19-year-olds. Delivered by FE Colleges, they combine 80% classroom education with 20% industrial placement. Designed in collaboration with employers, T Levels address skills gaps in sectors like Education, Construction, Digital, Creative, Financial and Engineering. Equivalent to three A Levels, they offer a nationally recognised certificate and UCAS points for university entry.

Employers can benefit from T Levels by using them to access skilled talent, enhancing their workforce, positively impacting the community, and boosting their brand. Hosting students for a minimum of 315 hours (45 days) provides meaningful work experience in a safe and inclusive environment and allows for more substantial projects and pieces of work to be completed.

T Levels differ from Apprenticeships in that there's no legal requirement to pay a T Level student for their time on placement and they can be used effectively to identify future Apprentices.

Employers are now being encouraged to pledge support for T Level placements in preparation for the 2025-6 academic year, contributing to the development of a skilled workforce in Greater Manchester. For more information and to pledge, visit [www.gmtlevels.org](http://www.gmtlevels.org).

## Talent Pipeline Development

Studies indicate that starting career education, including employer involvement, by age 10 is beneficial to an understanding of the world of work. The North Manchester Business Network's "What's My Job" programme exemplifies this approach.

Employers visit primary schools, making short presentations and bringing in props related to their work. Students in Years 5 and 6 then ask questions about the nature of the role before trying to guess the profession. Recently, Suzanne Grange a GC recruitment specialist won the 'What's My Job' Champion Award for her contribution and support for local schools over a number of years.

As students progress to High School, careers education becomes more structured and many employers take on the role of an Enterprise Adviser, joining a national network of over 450 employers who engage with schools and colleges to develop talent, close skills gaps and help young people to master essential skills for the workplace. EA's collaborate with careers advisors, to help them to develop effective careers strategies that reflect and support the current labour market.

If you or a colleague are interested in supporting What's My Job, please contact [suzanne.grange@gcemployment.uk](mailto:suzanne.grange@gcemployment.uk). Whilst further information on the Enterprise Adviser scheme can be found at [Employers | The Careers and Enterprise Company](#).



## Inclusive Practice Workshops

Requests for Inclusive Practice workshops are proving popular again this year. This quarter alone, AiP has delivered workshops to 160 delegates across 12 organisations. There are currently three programmes to choose from:

- Entry to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging (DEIB)
- Inclusive Recruitment Best Practice
- Understanding Neurodiversity

Funded by GC, the sessions are free and can help to meet Social Value commitments relating to workforce education. Aimed at hiring & line managers, the first workshop is a holistic overview of DEIB in the workplace. In addition to a general overview of DEIB, the Inclusive Recruitment workshop looks at each section of the recruitment process to help internal recruiters understand how to shape their procedures to attract a diverse candidate pool that receives equitable treatment through the process. Understanding Neurodiversity covers the range of neurodivergent conditions, strengths and challenges faced, disability & reasonable adjustments, neuro-inclusion and wellbeing. The workshop is for all employees to help understand what neurodiversity is and how to be neuro-inclusive.

**To enquire about workshop delivery, contact Adrian Bird (details below).**

## Colleague Representative Groups Network

During January & February, the six affinity groups of the CRG Network met online to discuss the activity and development of their diversity networks. Common topics of discussion across the groups centred on development and engagement of the networks, plus plans to mark key celebration events this year. Other topics covered included the development of 'Human Libraries' in some organisations. Human Libraries are where colleagues create content which outlines their own lived experiences of under-representation, coupled with regular meet ups in a safe space where colleagues can share their stories.

The next in-person event will be held on 16<sup>th</sup> May at University of Manchester, where UoM's Isabel Tavora will showcase a diagnostic tool they have developed which helps CRG Co-Chairs understand the health of their network and offers guidance on network development. There will also be table discussions giving space for members to talk about their plans to drive the engagement of their members and to raise the profile of affinity groups in their organisations.



## Enquiries

For more information on any of the areas covered in this newsletter, please contact:

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