



Aspire in Partnership (AiP)

Newsletter – April 2026



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 2026, we’ve proactively supported 21 employers to widen their candidate pools, placing 107 unemployed people into work in the process. All placements are with employers paying at least the Real Living Wage (RLW).

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

RLW Job Starts	Male	Female	Non-binary	16-24	25-49	50+
107	36%	64%	0%	7%	67%	26%
Arab	Asian/ Asian British	Black	Mixed heritage	White		
1%	15%	28%	6%	50%		

Colleague Representative Groups Network

Across the first quarter of 2026, the CRG Network brought together staff network leads from organisations across Greater Manchester to share best practice, strengthen collaboration, and explore emerging inclusion themes.

The January session examined the **evolving landscape of staff networks** and how organisations are responding to external pressures. **Tetra Tech** outlined a major restructure of its employee resource groups after US political directives challenged explicit DEI language. In response, the company launched **Belong@TetraTech**, built around six cross-cutting themes such as wellbeing, recognition and leadership. The new model increased participation and introduced unified governance.

February’s meeting included a detailed session on **Ramadan**, led by **Stevensons Solicitors**, covering the significance of fasting, inclusive workplace practices and



respectful allyship. Guidance included flexible hours, avoiding food-based social pressure, prayer space, and greetings such as “**Ramadan Mubarak**”.

Participants also discussed how trauma and **long-term health conditions** affect working life, highlighting the value of supportive managers, flexible attendance, wellbeing action plans and policies that do not rely on formal diagnosis. Colleagues emphasised the need for consistency across teams, better awareness of **invisible disabilities** and psychologically safe spaces for disclosure.

The March meeting spotlighted **Neurodiversity Celebration Week**, with the **Growth Company** showcasing new initiatives including an e-learning module, wellbeing communications, lived experience sessions and a **Reasonable Adjustments** one-pager to help guide employees and managers to make their workplace neuro-inclusive.

The next in person event of the **CRG Network** is on **19th May** at the **Alliance Business School, University of Manchester**.

To attend, please contact Adrian Bird (details below).

The Social Value Imperative

Greater Manchester has become a national leader in **social value-driven procurement**, with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority setting clear expectations that all public sector contracts deliver social, economic and environmental benefits. **GMCA’s Social Value Framework** requires social value to be included in evaluations for all above-threshold procurement, ensuring every contract contributes to a fairer, greener and more inclusive regional economy.

This commitment is echoed across the city region. **Manchester City Council**, a long-standing innovator, has applied a **20% social value weighting** since 2016 and added a further **10% environmental weighting** in 2021. These priorities reflect Greater Manchester’s wider ambitions: paying the Real Living Wage, aligning with the Good Employment Charter, reducing carbon emissions ahead of the 2038 net-zero target, tackling inequalities and strengthening local supply chains.

For companies bidding for public sector work, **social value is now a decisive part of evaluation**, not an optional add-on. Bidders must show how they will deliver measurable, contract-specific benefits, including inclusive employment pathways, workforce development, support for under-represented groups, environmental impact and broader community outcomes.

The Growth Company supports organisations **through the full Social Value process** by supporting strategy; informing tender submissions; and creating practical action plans to help organisations deliver on commitments. Part of GC, Aspire in



Partnership supports organisations to create inclusive recruitment pipelines and widen access to opportunities. Employers benefit from a trusted, regionally connected service that strengthens bids, improves workforce diversity and turns social value commitments into meaningful, long-term achievements.

Contact Adrian Bird (details below) for more information on Social Value.

The National Hiring Strategy

Aspire in Partnership, as an active member of the **Better Hiring Institute**, is proud to champion the UK's growing movement to modernise, streamline and safeguard recruitment. Two recently published resources, the [National Hiring Strategy](#) and the [Better Hiring Toolkit on Tackling Hiring Fraud](#) outline an ambitious transformation of how the UK hires.

The National Hiring Strategy, developed with input from over 500 employers, sets out a clear vision: **to make UK hiring the fastest, fairest and safest in the world**. It highlights the need for urgent reform, with slow and inefficient processes costing the economy over £75 billion each year. The strategy calls for a shift away from outdated practices towards digital credentials, AI-enabled matching, simplified job adverts and improved onboarding. These changes could cut time to hire by 20%, increase productivity, support inclusive recruitment and reduce early attrition.

Central to the strategy is the **Recruitment Technology (RecTech) Roadmap**, promoting the ethical use of technologies such as digital identity wallets, blockchain verification and automated skills-based matching, with **human oversight remaining essential**. It also calls for national hiring metrics, standardised processes and modernised legislation to create a faster and more accessible labour market.

Alongside the push for efficiency, the **Better Hiring Toolkit on Tackling Hiring Fraud** highlights growing risks. Hiring fraud is becoming more sophisticated, harming businesses and exposing jobseekers to scams. The toolkit offers practical steps employers can implement immediately, including rigorous identity and qualification checks, use of accredited digital right-to-work providers and fraud-aware onboarding.

For more information on how to be inclusive whilst utilising technology in your recruitment process, contact Adrian Bird (details below).



New workshop: Inclusive Interview Techniques

Given intended changes to legislation with the upcoming **Employment Rights Bill**, we are excited to introduce our new **Inclusive Interview Techniques Workshop**.

Content is designed specifically for **internal recruiters, hiring managers and HR professionals** who want to elevate their recruitment practice, build a fair, confident and bias-aware approach to interviewing and reduce the risk of making a bad hire.

Inclusive hiring isn't just about compliance; it's also about strengthening organisational performance through the recruitment of the right talent.

This workshop gives participants the tools and insight to run interviews that are structured, transparent and genuinely equitable, helping to attract stronger candidates, reducing hiring risks and **supporting better long-term outcomes**.

Across a series of practical, interactive sessions, participants explore the purpose and value of fair selection processes and the impact of **unconscious bias** on decision-making. The workshop also covers the legal and ethical responsibilities that underpin inclusive recruitment.

A key feature of the workshop is **structured interviewing**. Delegates learn how to design and ask competency-based questions, use frameworks and apply scoring models that promote objectivity and consistency.

Alongside practical interviewing skills, the workshop focuses on **inclusive panel dynamics**, exploring how hierarchy, confidence and communication styles can influence decisions.

Finally, the workshop examines the **candidate experience**, from pre-interview communication to accessibility and psychological safety. Participants leave with a clear understanding of how to create an environment where every candidate can perform at their best, leading to employers hiring the right people for their organisation.

This workshop is an essential step for organisations committed to fair, consistent and inclusive recruitment.

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



Enquiries

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