



Aspire in Partnership (AiP)

Newsletter – July 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 April to June 2026, we’ve proactively supported 18 employers to widen their candidate pools, placing 134 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+
134	42%	54%	4%	26%	59%	15%
Arab	Asian/ Asian British	Black	Mixed heritage	White		
0%	13%	29%	12%	46%		

Youth Jobs Guarantee

The Growth Company is proud to be delivering the Government’s new **Youth Jobs Guarantee** programme across all ten Greater Manchester boroughs, helping young people access meaningful employment while supporting employers to develop future talent. Currently in pilot phase, the GM region is one of six nationally to test and learn what will become a national flagship scheme. The programme forms part of the wider **Youth Guarantee**, a national commitment to ensure that every young person has access to employment, education, training or other opportunities that help them build a successful future.

Youth unemployment remains a significant challenge for many communities. While employers across Greater Manchester continue to face **workforce and skills shortages**, many young people struggle to gain the experience, confidence and opportunities needed to **secure sustainable work**. The Jobs Guarantee has been



designed to address both issues, creating a **practical route** into employment for young residents while helping organisations **strengthen their workforce**.

The programme offers **fully funded** six-month paid job placements for eligible young people **aged 18 to 21** who have been receiving Universal Credit and looking for work for an extended period. Participants work for **25 hours per week**, with wage costs funded through the programme, removing a significant barrier for employers wishing to provide opportunities to young people. Employers also receive **dedicated support with recruitment, onboarding and in-work guidance** throughout the placement.

The focus is not only on creating placements but also on ensuring that they offer meaningful experience, skills development and clear progression pathways into longer-term employment.

The programme went live in late-May. Early engagement has generated strong interest from employers across a wide range of sectors, including **health, professional services, construction, hospitality, digital and technology**. This reflects a growing recognition that investing in young talent is both a social responsibility and a strategic workforce development opportunity. On June 30th, there were **90 participants** on programme with **12 having started work placements**.

As delivery continues to scale throughout 2026, the Growth Company will work with partners to **maximise participation**, increase the number of available placements and support successful transitions into sustained employment. Over the course of the six month programme, it is anticipated that we will place **275 long-term unemployed** (18 months+) 18 to 21 year olds in GM into work.

By participating in the programme, employers can access **motivated young people**, strengthen their talent pipelines and contribute directly to Greater Manchester's **inclusive growth ambitions**.

To enquire about the Youth Jobs Guarantee, please contact Adrian Bird (details below).

Inclusive Best Practice Webinar Series

To accompany the **Youth Jobs Guarantee**, Aspire in Partnership are delivering a series of webinars designed to provide employers, managers and HR professionals with practical knowledge, tools and actions that can be implemented immediately within your organisation. The five topics (detailed below) will be broadcast weekly on a rolling basis:



Understanding Neurodiversity

Develop a clear understanding of neurodiversity in the workplace, including common profiles, strengths and misconceptions. Learn practical ways to create neuro-inclusive environments that improve both employee experience and organisational performance.

Disability Confident & Reasonable Adjustments

Understand the Disability Confident framework and how to implement effective reasonable adjustments across the employee lifecycle. This session provides practical examples to help remove barriers and support disabled employees to succeed.

Inclusive Recruitment

Learn how to design fair and accessible recruitment processes, from job design through to selection. The session focuses on reducing bias, improving candidate experience and attracting diverse talent.

Good Employment

Gain insight into the principles of the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter and how adopting these standards can strengthen your organisation's employment practices, workforce engagement and reputation.

Everyday Inclusion

Focus on the day-to-day behaviours that shape inclusive workplace cultures. Explore practical actions managers and teams can take to improve communication, collaboration and belonging across the organisation.

The webinars will be of particular interest to Business Leaders, HR Personnel, Recruitment Teams, Hiring and Line Managers or anyone looking to improve inclusion and employee experience.

To see the schedule and to book onto any of the webinars, please see the appendix at the foot of this newsletter.

Greater Manchester Housing Providers

Over the last six months **Aspire in Partnership** has been supporting Greater Manchester Housing Providers (GMHP) to drive positive change through two ambitious sector-wide initiatives. The **BOOST Organisational Change Programme** is focused on increasing ethnic diversity in housing leadership by tackling barriers to progression, supporting ethnically diverse colleagues through reciprocal mentoring, and helping housing organisations create more inclusive cultures and systems. At the same time, the **20% Movement** aims to ensure that by 2034, at least 20% of the housing workforce across Greater Manchester is made up of **social housing tenants** or people from **social renting households**. By promoting careers in housing, creating **tailored recruitment pathways**, and recognising the **value of lived experience**, the movement is helping housing providers build stronger



connections with their communities while opening up meaningful employment opportunities for local residents. Together, these initiatives demonstrate GMHP's commitment to creating a **more representative, inclusive and community-focused housing sector**.

In February 2026, Adrian Bird delivered an Inclusive Recruitment workshop to the GMHP Recruitment Sub-group, which is made up of Talent Acquisition personnel from the housing providers in GM. This workshop focused on the overall organisation framework required to be inclusive, followed by vacancy positioning, shortlisting, candidate preparation and interview best practice.

After the workshop, AiP has now reviewed the recruitment processes of several of the housing providers to ensure they're maximising their potential to succeed in both key initiatives.

In June 2026, AiP delivered an Inclusive Interview Techniques workshop to the Talent Acquisition team at the Riverside Group. They had identified that their interview panels were under-represented by a range of diverse ethnicities. The workshop will equip them to develop their ethnically diverse colleagues to become confident and effective interview panellists for their senior vacancies and to be more reflective of the candidates under consideration.

Colleague Representative Groups Network

In May, the fifth Colleague Representative Groups (CRG) Network event was held at University of Manchester, bringing together 40 network co-Chairs from 28 organisations across the public, private, and VCFSE sectors. The event focused on collaboration, best practice sharing, and shaping the future of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging (DEIB).

During the lively session we heard from Toby Mildon of Mildon Consultancy who spoke passionately about his own lived experience as a disabled man who has worked in senior positions in organisations such as Lloyds Bank and the BBC. He asked delegates to consider how they are energised. One of the key challenges a network leader faces is a lack of resource to be effective. Therefore it is vital that leaders utilise their own energy capacity and that of the members of their network to best effect. To help them do this, he introduced a tool called the Game Changer which helps people understand what type of activities and tasks they are naturally energised by. In understanding this, teams are able to work to strengths in order to be more successful.

Following Toby we heard from Graham Rimmer of Manchester NHS Foundation Trust and Amanda Hilton of DAC Beachcroft who both lead LGBTQ networks in their organisations. They presented on The Spectrum Collective, which is a network of LGBTQ Leaders from a range of organisations. Their presentation and table



discussions focused on the power of partnership working to elevate the status and performance of staff networks.

The next in-person event will take place in November 2026, location, date and time are to be confirmed.

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

Appendix

Inclusive Webinar Schedule

Inclusive Recruitment	10/07/2026	12pm
Good Employment Charter	15/07/2026	9am
Everyday inclusion	24/07/2026	12pm
Understanding Neurodiversity	21/08/2026	12pm
Disability Confident & Reasonable Adjustments	26/08/2026	9am
Inclusive Recruitment	04/09/2026	12pm
Good Employment Charter	09/09/2026	9am
Everyday inclusion	18/09/2026	12pm
Understanding Neurodiversity	23/09/2026	9am
Disability Confident & Reasonable Adjustments	02/10/2026	12pm
Inclusive Recruitment	07/10/2026	9am
Good Employment Charter	16/10/2026	12pm
Everyday inclusion	21/10/2026	9am
Understanding Neurodiversity	30/10/2026	12pm
Disability Confident & Reasonable Adjustments	04/11/2026	9am
Inclusive Recruitment	13/11/2026	12pm
Good Employment Charter	18/11/2026	9am
Everyday inclusion	27/11/2026	12pm
Understanding Neurodiversity	02/12/2026	9am
Disability Confident & Reasonable Adjustments	11/12/2026	12pm
Inclusive Recruitment	16/12/2026	9am
Good Employment Charter	08/01/2027	12pm
Everyday inclusion	13/01/2027	9am
Understanding Neurodiversity	22/01/2027	12pm
Disability Confident & Reasonable Adjustments	27/01/2027	9am
Inclusive Recruitment	05/02/2027	12pm
Good Employment Charter	10/02/2027	9am
Everyday inclusion	19/02/2027	12pm



Understanding Neurodiversity	24/02/2027	9am
Disability Confident & Reasonable		
Adjustments	05/03/2027	12pm
Inclusive Recruitment	10/03/2027	9am
Good Employment Charter	19/03/2027	12pm
Everyday inclusion	24/03/2027	9am
Understanding Neurodiversity	02/04/2027	12pm
Disability Confident & Reasonable		
Adjustments	07/04/2027	9am
Inclusive Recruitment	16/04/2027	12pm
Good Employment Charter	21/04/2027	9am
Everyday inclusion	30/04/2027	12pm

To register, click on the appropriate links for the session(s) you would like to attend.



Enquiries

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

Adrian Bird

07503620816

Adrian.bird@gcemployment.uk