CONNECT: Learn, Share, Improve Recommendations Summary

Greater Manchester Talent Match (GMTM) is a Big Lottery-funded programme bringing together the private, public and voluntary sectors to support young people aged 18-24 who have not been in employment, education or training for twelve months or more and who need extra support to help them along their pathway to work. The programme finished in November 2018.

In 2017 GMTM commissioned Youth Employment UK to support the Youth Panel, whose membership comprises of young people aged 14-24 who have all experienced barriers to employment, to identify a current issue within the youth employment space and develop an initiative or project which would aim to influence policy and decision makers. The Youth Panel chose a project focussing on young peoples’ experiences of JCP:

**Aim 1: Support JCP to improve their services by understanding young peoples’ needs**

**Aim 2: Support disengaged young people to find out more information about JCP and its services**

Online surveys were created for young people and JCP work coaches. Additionally, Youth Panel members interviewed 6 JCP work coaches and 8 young people to get more in depth data. After reviewing data from all of the surveys and interviews, the following suggestions and recommendations were put forward to the DWP by the Youth Panel under the three themes of information about JCP; training for work coaches about working with young people; and creating a welcoming and supportive JCP environment.

**Information about JCP**

The main issue was that it was really hard to know what the Jobcentre provide or how they can be of help. Echoing the views from the research, the Youth Panel were unclear on what was available to them at their local Jobcentre and what they could expect. It was clear that information about the Jobcentre is difficult to access without having to visit a branch.

Having youth friendly information available where young people are likely to look is vital to getting more young people using the Jobcentre. The Youth Panel suggested they look online for this information: the Job Centre isn’t somewhere they were likely to pop in to get more information.

1. Better, more youth friendly communications and media to advertise and promote services
2. Easy to use online webpage with all information about local Jobcentre services in one place (with a jargon buster)
3. Advertise outside of Jobcentres: advertising needs to be where young people are and needs to be available where and when they are looking including on social media, leaflets, online
4. Take Jobcentre staff into schools to support with better careers advice and information, CV building etc.

**Welcoming and supportive**

The Jobcentre can be an intimidating place for young people: they can often feel as though visiting a work coach is a numbers game and a protocol rather than a two way process. The Jobcentre has to work for everyone but the Youth Panel suggest some positive steps that could be taken to make the process more comfortable for both sides.

1. Hold sessions that are exclusively for young people. This would be both beneficial to young people and work coaches in terms of creating a youth friendly atmosphere
2. Create a Youth Panel or Youth Advisory Board that meets with staff and managers regularly to talk about challenges
3. Better promote the message of the role of work coaches and the expectations from each side
4. Create some private areas to hold conversations away from the open plan office that young people can ask to use to share information or if they feel anxious
5. Hold workshops, discussions, events and activities that promote better engagement with young people. This will allow more young people to engage with work coaches outside of booked appointments
6. Promote case studies where the Jobcentre have helped jobseekers in positive ways in order to share the story of how the Jobcentre helps
7. Be present in other areas like libraries as more people might engage if the work coaches or staff come out of the Jobcentre environment
8. Staff, including security, could be more friendly and aware of young people needing additional support to feel comfortable

**Training for work coaches about working with young people**

Being able to share their experiences, challenges, hopes and aspirations is an important part of young people ‘buying in’ to the process and achieving their desired outcome. Young people are facing many challenges and the world is changing rapidly for them. Therefore, creating a better understanding of what they face and training staff in dealing with this is an important consideration.

1. A feedback process should be in place in order to give feedback, make suggestions and evaluate work coaches and the service you are receiving
2. Services shouldn’t just be tailored to ‘type’ of young person: time is needed to understand what each young person needs to better achieve their goals
3. Regular reviews of training processes and quality checks should be in place to consider feedback from people using the service
4. There should be a place for work coaches to get quick, expert advice guides to refresh training before meeting their clients
5. The Jobcentre should offer work coaches training in mental health; outreach; communication; interpersonal skills, and body language training.
6. Regular awareness sessions on disabilities, mental health and issues such as dyslexia too should be run with work coaches