



Open Minds

The Birmingham & Solihull Talent Match Legacy



Open Minds...Our Talent Match Legacy



Over five years ago BVSC together with Solihull Sustain, and supported by our local partners, developed a Talent Match programme for Birmingham and Solihull. The programme, funded by Big Lottery (now the National Lottery Community Fund), was designed as a service aimed at tackling the high levels of unemployment and disadvantage experienced by many of our young people. As the Talent Match programme concluded its delivery in 2018, we focused on building a legacy: taking forward our learning and shared experiences, with the young people we have supported and the delivery we have provided to many local businesses. We believe that to bring lasting change to Birmingham and Solihull's youth we need to have **Open Minds**; recognising the challenges both young people face in finding sustainable work and the business community faces in recruiting a talented workforce.



Our experience with Talent Match has demonstrated that we can help connect young people and businesses together by being responsive to individual needs and offering a high value, professional, service to employers. Looking ahead we aim to share our experience and to continue to listen to young people; working with them to provide more opportunities to train and find work. We believe we can also build an ambitious partnership with local employers, working together to help more young people into local jobs and more local businesses involved in supporting the young people living across their local communities in Birmingham and Solihull.

Here in this report we present a summary of the impact Talent Match had and provide an insight into our focus on developing an **Open Minds** legacy.

Brian Carr
Chief Executive Officer
Birmingham Voluntary
Service Council



The Talent Match Story

Talent Match was a National Lottery Community Fund (formerly Big Lottery Fund) strategic programme, launched in 2012, to help long-term unemployed young people on a pathway towards and into work.

The Lottery provided significant investment, £108 million, over five years (2014 to 2018) to 21 areas in England targeting “youth unemployment hot spots”. Its purpose was to help young (18-24 year old) people considered to be furthest away from the labour market – young people with multiple and complex needs, not in employment, education or training (NEETs) and “hidden” NEETs (young people not receiving benefits and not in work, education or training) and therefore unlikely to be known to local agencies. Local voluntary and community sector organisations were invited to form partnerships to devise innovative and creative approaches to support young people on a pathway to employment. This would include measures to overcome the barriers they experienced in finding and securing work. Partnerships were to be led by the VCS (voluntary and community sector) but were to involve appropriate public, private and other community stakeholders and importantly, to encourage young people to be at the heart of programme development.

Talent Match recognised that for many young people, on the periphery of the labour market and on the margins of society, the “barriers” to accessing employment and sustaining a job or career path can be multi-faceted and deep rooted. They require a range of interventions or support measures to help them become more employable. Barriers can include a lack of good qualifications, skills, previous work experience and general attitude or outlook. Yet these issues can characterise many people looking for work and claiming benefits such as JSA (Job Seekers Allowance).

Talent Match helped provide support for those a long way from the labour market – young people who cannot be easily placed into work or training. They typically have more entrenched and personal barriers, for example: isolation, chaotic home lives, anxiety, depression, mental health issues, disability, drugs and alcohol dependency, debts, other health issues, a lack of friendships within their peer group, little social interaction with others and a lack of routine in their daily lives. Compounded by poor experiences of school or college (and, for some, university) and possibly poor experiences of other “quick fix” training schemes or careers advice, the young people that Talent Match was designed to help often require more personalised and sustained support over a longer period of time.



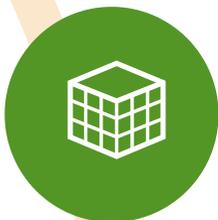
Developing Best Practice For Future Youth Employment Services

4-STEPS DELIVERY MODEL



Referral

Referrals need to target areas of high disadvantage, as well as linking with new and existing services that young people access across social and welfare provision. Young people themselves advocating support initiatives and campaigning with their peer groups are key to building up momentum.



Support

Support must be focused on the needs of each individual, tailored and flexible in order to be responsive to often complex needs but also work quick and proactively, to help build confidence and achieve positive outcomes.



Work

Careers advice and addressing work aspirations are important to help young people make informed choices. Support linked to work training and employability must be balanced alongside personal development.



Sustain

Support services for employers and young people placed into work should be seamless, with a range of employer facing initiatives offered including vacancy brokering, access to financial support where available, in work advocacy between the employee and employer, and ongoing HR support.

Over five years we have developed and refined a delivery model centred on the needs of young people and employers.



Young People and Employers: Talent Match in Their Own Words



"I think there's just such a high success rate in being involved in something like Talent Match. I've got a job for the first time in three years!"

"He has been an outstanding representation of how, with the right support and a positive attitude, participants on Talent Match have reached their goals and have passed on vital support to others."

"He is already thriving at his workplace and is getting really positive feedback from his colleagues."

"Talent Match is a great alternative to help give young people a chance in life."

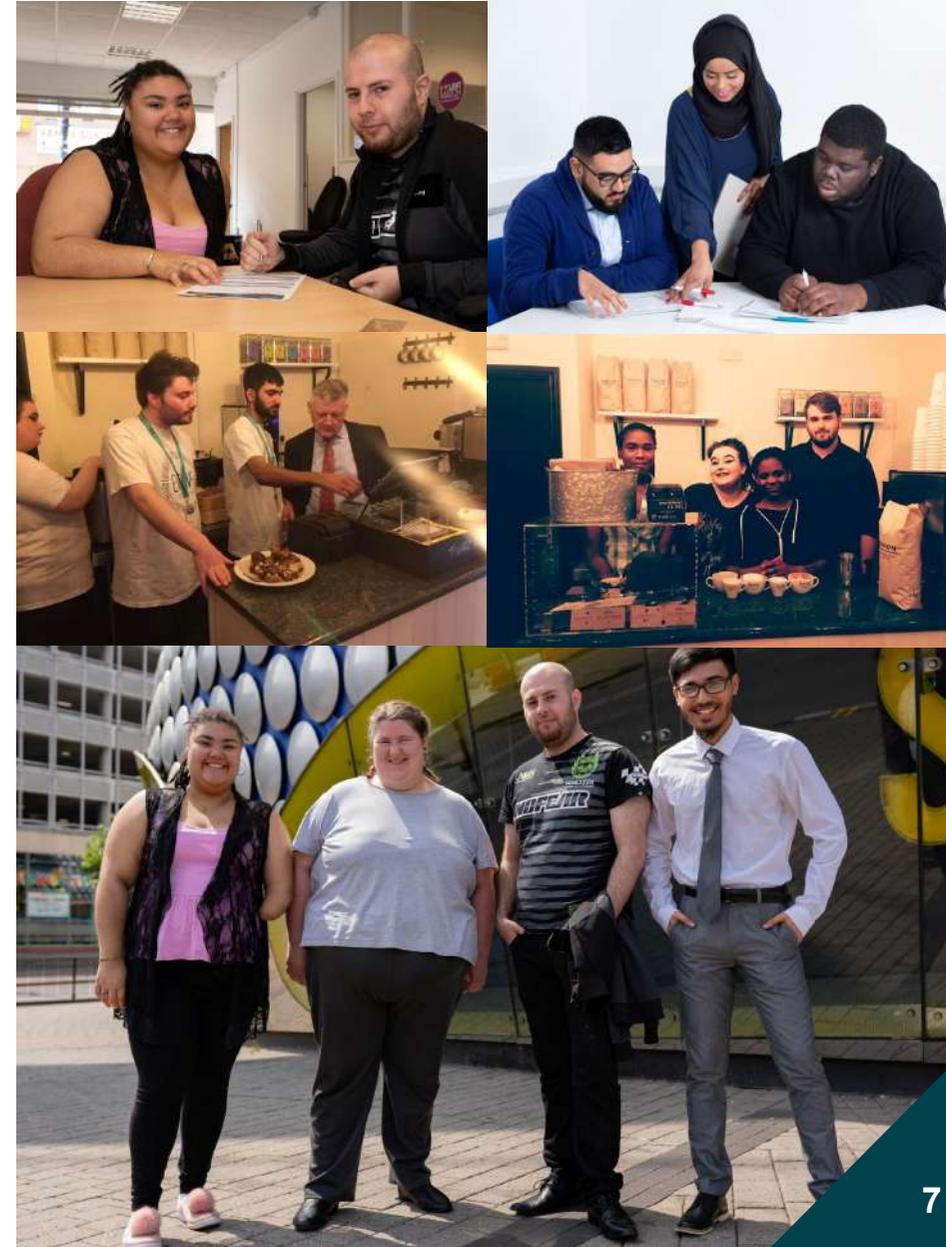
Young People and Employers: Talent Match in Their Own Words

"Quite simply without Talent Match we couldn't have operated."

"The support I've had feels personalised, rather than forced or random. Talent Match has helped look at every little detail of 'you'."

"Talent Match allows you to express yourself and be yourself!"

"I was nowhere near ready for work. I was lacking in confidence but with Talent Match, when you are feeling a bit 'rubbish' you can talk to your coach. They care for you and help you."



Our Legacy: Working with Employers

An important facet of Talent Match was to build positive relationships with local employers, opening up work opportunities for young people supported by the programme.

Here in Birmingham and Solihull Talent Match we developed a Talent Match Company (TMCo) model, unique amongst the Talent Match programmes, which provided paid work placements for 6 to 9 months, with a match to a local employer, a contribution from the employer and dedicated in-work support. In effect, a subsidised work placement routeway.

The capacity to deliver employer facing services increased within the programme over time and the partnership created new roles to focus upon employer liaison and retention, and Human Resource support within the TMCo function. This helped us to significantly improve the flow of available vacancies and the employer engagement team worked seamlessly with the coaches to manage the progress into work placement. The employment team, with extra capacity brought in from 2016/18, proactively developed work taster opportunities and short-term work experience initiatives, to help participants learn about work within different sectors and match these requirements to their job seeking goals.



Feedback from employers has been positive. Awareness of the Talent Match programme came from our existing working relationships and from the engagement we have developed via brokerage and business networking events (e.g. Chamber of Commerce).

This engagement led to a pipeline of work experience opportunities and the identification of longer term employment. Talent Match has received strong feedback on the good calibre of candidates the programme has supported, reflecting on the positive attitudes and enthusiasm of young people involved. For most employers, it has enabled them to see a potential candidate operating in the workplace on a placement before committing to offering a full-time job and provided the young person the time to see how well suited they were to the requirements of the job.

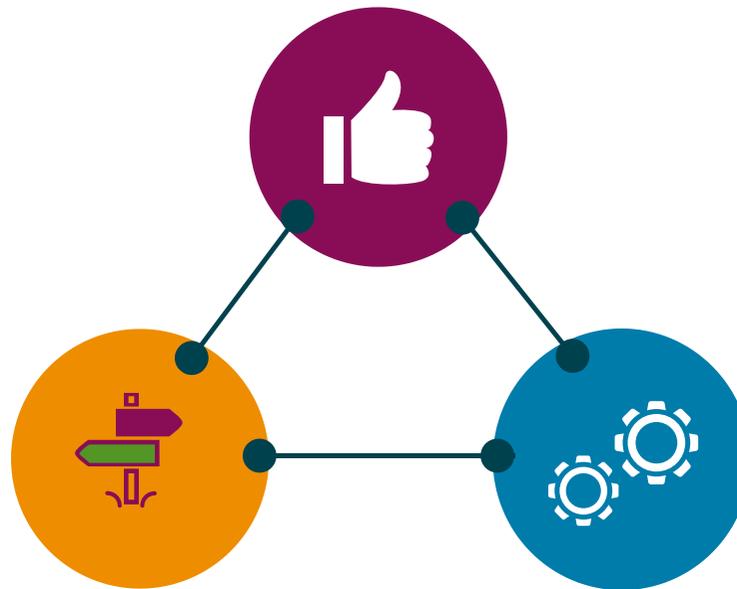
Employer Facing Activity - Grouped into Three Key Areas

The TMCo model was a unique feature within the Birmingham and Solihull Talent Match programme. We have purposefully developed it as a stand alone employment service offering brokerage of vacancies, matching of jobs and recruitment support. In addition, it includes ongoing support for both employers and candidates to help with retention and ongoing HR needs.

External liaison and brokerage activity: networking with businesses via events and activities, working through community outreach to secure work placements and direct engagement with key employers across the Birmingham and Solihull area.

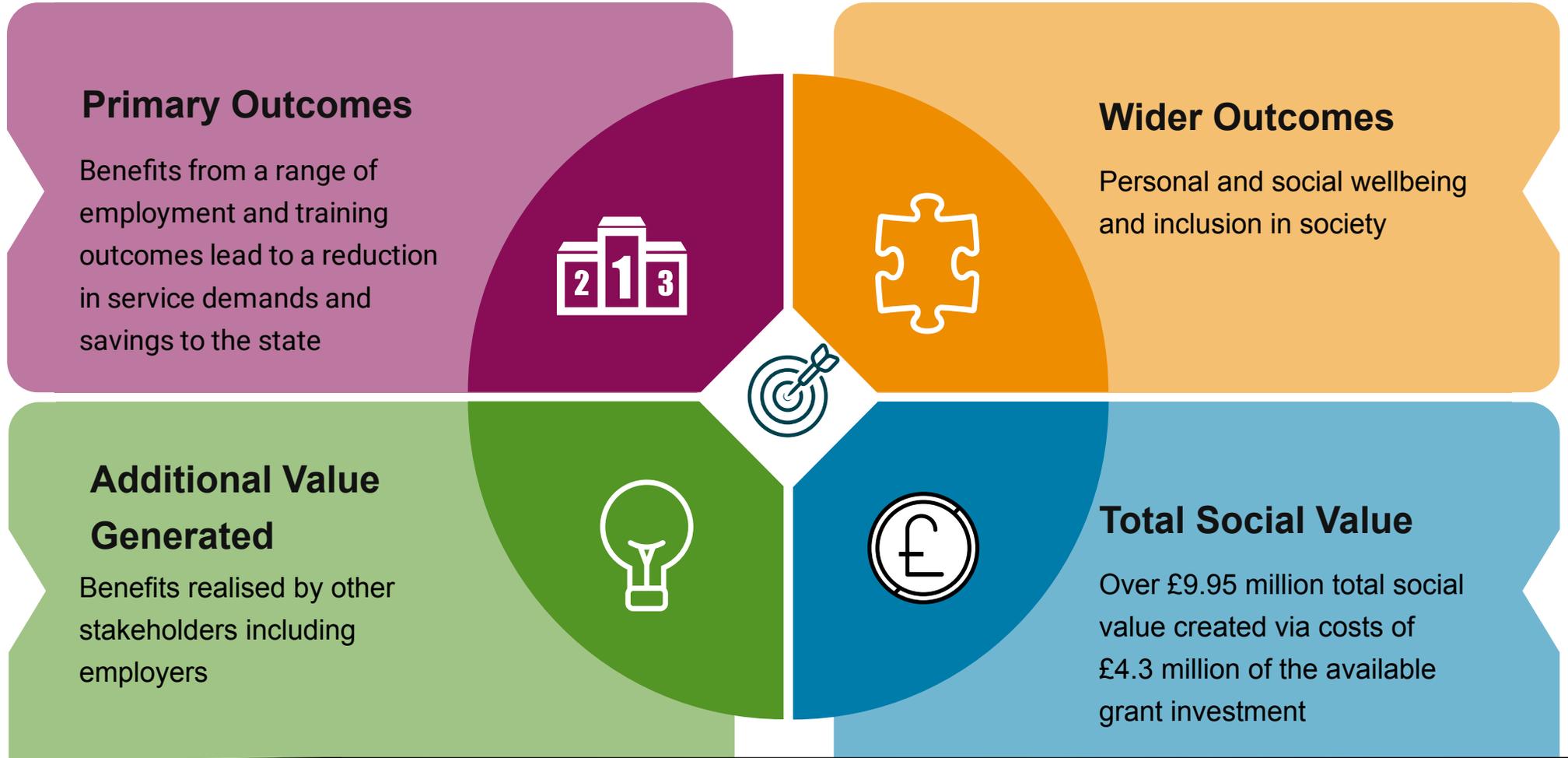
Throughout 2018 we had positive feedback from employers, participants, partners and operational staff around the benefits of the TMCo service. This includes us offering an initial subsidised work placement routeway, particularly to broker job opportunities for SMEs and its recruitment agency functions - handling vacancy administration, HR and payroll actions.

Internal liaison and participant work preparation: the team were significantly involved in supporting the participants with their employability skills and overall work readiness, overseeing their 'registration' into TMCo once work ready and actively seeking live vacancies.



Co-ordination and retention activity: overseeing the placement into work, including recruitment procedures, HR requirements and administrative/legal requirements from the employer. Once placed, then an ongoing retention liaison role, with a focus on forward destination planning once a job placement approached its end.

Investing in Young People - Creating Added Social Value



For every £1 invested in Talent Match, £3 social value was generated

Social Return on Investment aims to put a financial sum to the value created by a particular investment and is a form of cost / benefit analysis. Whilst there are many definitions associated with SROI, fundamentally it aims to address the question: "If I invest £X, to what extent this will translate into benefit to community or society, and consequently considers the value generated and expressed as £Y".

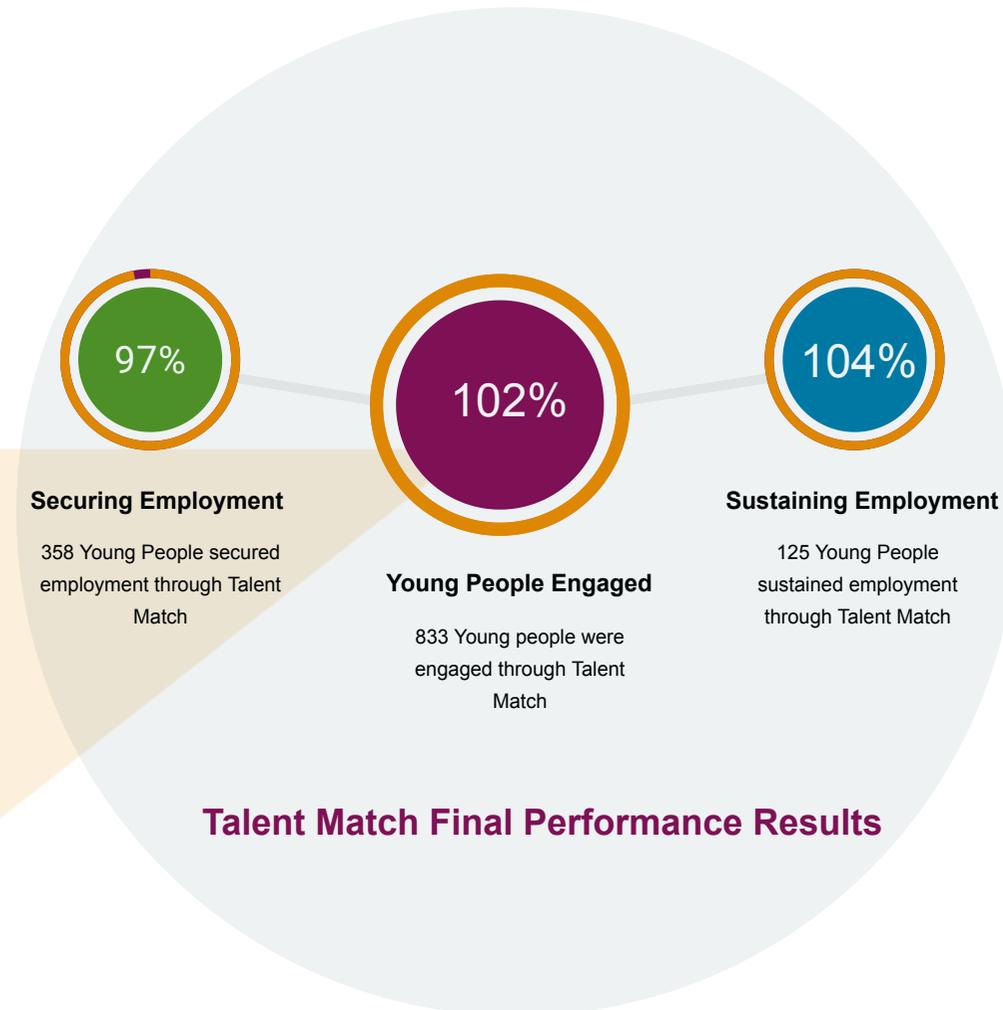
Investing in Young People - Creating Added Social Value

The Birmingham and Solihull Talent Match programme had several core objectives. There were, however, three main outcomes used to measure the overall success of the service.

When young people experience long term economic and social exclusion their chances of securing economic independence and personal and social wellbeing are affected. Multiple and complex barriers often develop, which places demands on welfare and community services, as well as having personal, social and economic implications. We have learnt that to support a young person to progress towards employment, support must be person-centred and flexible; responding to multiple needs at different stages of each young person's unique journey. Our analysis of the value of Talent Match and the social return it has delivered has demonstrated a range of benefits overall:

- Increased availability of and incentives for employment, and an improved perception of being better off in work than on benefits
- Improved skills and attitudes for employment, and more likely to find or enter employment as a result of improved functional and interpersonal skills, motivation, attitudes and behaviours
- Improved occupational-specific skills and work experience, and therefore more likely to gain employment as a result of increasing skill levels and attaining relevant work experience
- Increase entry to employment and sustain (quality) employment (wages, hours, contract type), and sustain work for a specified period.

Young people who are NEET are a vulnerable group and are more likely to experience complex and multiple disadvantage. Factors may include lower educational attainment, health and disability or specific social circumstances such as caring responsibilities and homelessness. We have identified a wide array of outcomes that can also be attributed to Talent Match on this basis. In turn, this brings with it a host of other outcomes relating to participants' personal/social wellbeing, and inclusion in society.





...of education for
... or South
... office to find
... employment, 8-10

... of the
... of the
... of the
... of the

Talent Match & Youth Employment - Our Legacy

The positive impact that Talent Match has had for the young people that have engaged with the Birmingham and Solihull programme is profound.

Young people commented on how their lives were “not in a good place” at the start of Talent Match – directionless, bored, anxious, depressed – and how they were struggling to cope with life or simply lacking a positive outlook for their own futures. The changes in their lives, they reported, have been dramatic. They have become more hopeful, more self-confident, better equipped to deal with day to day and wider challenges and much more able to lead a more fulfilling life; contributing to society and the economy. Young people reported how their experiences of the “system” – previous experiences of school / college / university, training courses, and, even of employers – had not been positive. They felt disengaged and unsupported, and these negative experiences had the effect of dulling their enthusiasm.



Talent Match has tried to break this cycle of young people by having the resource to take time to nurture a one to one relationship (between a young person and their advocate / mentor) and guiding the planning of their own ambitions. We have worked with young people to help them on a journey to a more hopeful future in the world of work. Youth unemployment, and particularly for those who have never worked before, can be very dispiriting and present many challenges for young people seeking a foot onto the work ladder or, simply, a brighter future.

Where Talent Match has stood out as an excellent “employability” model has been in the resources, freedoms and flexibilities it has offered. This has enabled the programme to respond to individuals’ needs on a case by case basis, by putting the young person at the centre of the programme and with a named and consistent one-to-one coach to help them on their journey. It has enabled real and sustainable positive change for the lives of many young people across the Birmingham and Solihull area.

Applying Our Learning

Our Talent Match delivery model is a culmination of five years of service delivery and is representative of an ongoing process of evaluation and 'test and learn' scrutiny. To this end the core elements, representing best practice and highest impact, within the context of supporting long term youth employment, should be used to inform future commissioning and service design. We intend to use this as an evidence base for guiding area wide development, which can make best use of the voluntary, private and public sectors together.

The Talent Match Company represents a significant opportunity for formalising and expanding an employer facing service. We have refined an employer facing operating model that is able to broker services across a range of themes linked to employee supported placement and its potential to tailor employer services according to sector needs.

We recognise the importance of building a broad, multi-sector, Open Minds partnership for action on Youth Employment. We intend to continue in our role in representing the community and voluntary sector within the youth employment agenda and recognise many stakeholders across our communities have an important contribution to make in tackling long-term youth unemployment.



With Thanks...

BVSC and Blinkbright would like to thank everyone who took part helping us design, develop and deliver Talent Match across the five years of the programme; this includes involvement from key partners, Talent Match Company host employers, and other strategic stakeholders in Talent Match. Particular thanks to the grant investment via the National Lottery Community Fund, whom without their funding and support none of this would be possible. In addition, thanks must go to the Participants and Ambassadors who contributed in focus groups and case study interviews; your sincerity and willingness to share your experiences have proved to be an invaluable resource. We would also like to thank all the members of our Core Group who have helped us steer and shape our Talent Match service.



Designed by Blinkbright

