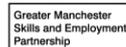




Hidden

Who are 'hidden' young people and why are they not engaging with welfare support?

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New Economy
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Greater Manchester Talent Match 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 *Greater Manchester Talent Match* partnership is led by Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation and includes New Economy, Business in the Community, Greater Manchester Youth Network, private sector employers (The Co-operative Group and Addleshaw Goddard), the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Manchester Skills and Employment Partnership.

Talent Match is a Big Lottery Fund £108 million investment to tackle youth unemployment in 21 areas of England. *Greater Manchester Talent Match* supports young people in the ten districts of Greater Manchester.

The *Greater Manchester Talent Match* vision is that Greater Manchester will be a place where all young people are valued and supported to realise their employment potential and enjoy fulfilling lives.

The author of this report would like to thank all of the host organisations and young people who participated in the research, their contribution and insight is invaluable.

Icons used in this document made by Freepik and Madebyoliver from www.flaticon.com.

Where direct quotes are included in the report, the following key is used to highlight the type of participant:



= Young person



= Talent Coach

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Hidden

Who are 'hidden' young people and why are they not engaging with welfare support?



Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from research undertaken to explore and understand 'hidden' young people across Greater Manchester.

The aim of this research was to identify:

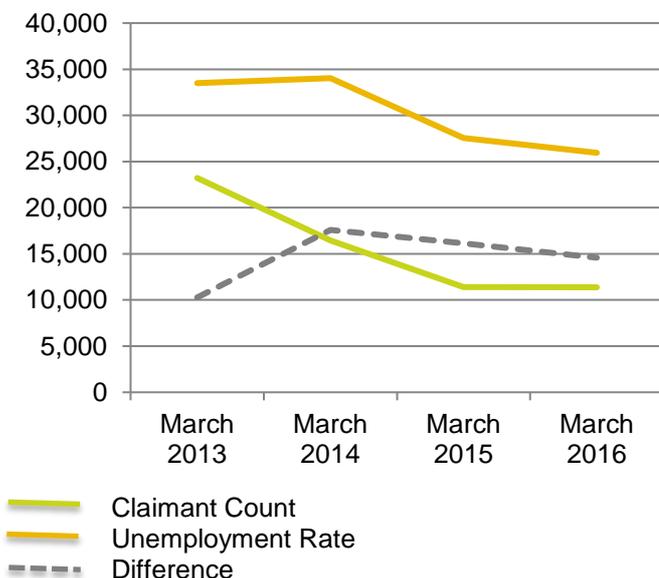
- The profile of 'hidden' young people
- Why 'hidden' young people do not seek or receive welfare support

Researching 'hidden' young people

'Hidden' young people are defined as people aged 18-24, who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and are not in receipt of welfare support.

Although it is not possible to unequivocally state how many young people are currently 'hidden', using a measure developed for the purpose of this research^{1,2}, it is estimated that just fewer than 15,000 young people (aged 16-24) were 'hidden' in Greater Manchester in March 2016.

Figure 1.1: The unemployment rate (reduced by 23%) and claimant count of 16-24 year olds in Greater Manchester, including the difference between the two figures



¹ The unemployment rate (defined as anybody who is not in employment, has actively sought work in the last 4 weeks and is available to start work in the next 2 weeks, or has found a job and is waiting to start in the next 2 weeks) reduced by 23% to account for 'unemployed' students, minus the DWP claimant count.

² The claimant count is the number of people receiving benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed. This includes those claiming JSA or the unemployment related element of UC.

The effect of being 'hidden'

As many welfare to work programmes, including the government's Youth Contract, target and support 'known' young people claiming out-of-work benefits (through participant criteria), 'hidden' young people, who are disengaged from the welfare state and are not claiming out-of-work benefits, are excluded from, and unlikely to receive any kind of economic or back-to-work support.

Research suggests that experiencing unemployment at a young age can have a long-term, negative effect on young people. Described as the 'scarring' effect, this suggests they are more likely to spend longer out of work throughout their life; be paid less when in work (Macmillan, 2012); have poorer mental and physical well-being; and be involved in criminal activity (Bell & Blanchflower, 2010).

Who are 'hidden' young people?

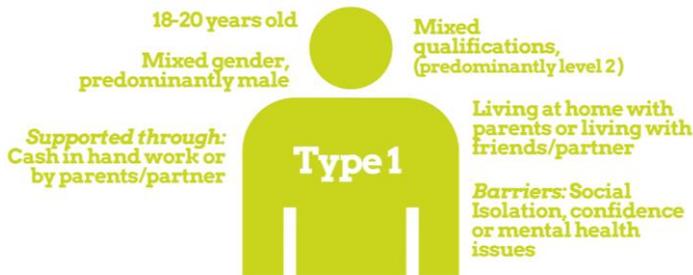


'Hidden' beneficiaries on Talent Match are predominantly male, aged 18-20, and live at home with their parents; a large number also live with relatives/friends/partners.

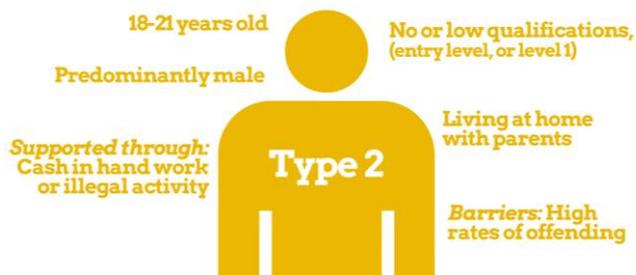
A typology of 'hidden' young people

From the research, a typology of 'hidden' young people has been developed which typifies the demographic of 'hidden' young people who participated in this research.

'Hidden' young people tend to fall into one of two groups; **Type 1** and **Type 2**, which are explored further overleaf.

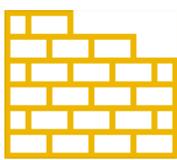


Type 1 young people have little certainty about their career interests and goals and, following disengagement with or withdrawal from Further Education (FE); spend increased periods of time at home, unsure of their next steps. As a result of subsequent social isolation, young people experience a number of issues, including mental health problems.



The cultural environment in which Type 2 young people live is thought to reinforce young people's perception that they are unable to source and attain meaningful employment. As a result of this, young people often withdraw from trying to find formal employment, and instead, turn to alternative, illegal means to financially support themselves.

Why are young people 'hidden'?



There are a number of barriers which deter 'hidden' young people from claiming welfare support and thus becoming 'known'.

For the most part, the barriers feature around their actual, or (more often than not) their perceived/expected experience, with the Jobcentre Plus.

In the main, this refers to the difficulties in applying for and maintaining welfare support; the experience of customer service; and issues around sanctioning.

"They have been sanctioned and then that's it, they just give up after that, some just don't bother."

Additional barriers include access to alternative finance and the stigma associated with claiming welfare support.

**"I don't want to be one of them",
"I'm above that"
"I'm not a scrounger"**

Recommendations

Early intervention is crucial to prevent young people from becoming 'hidden' and thus experiencing long spells of unemployment and subsequent scarring effects.

In line with the findings of the research, the following recommendations have been developed for consideration and focus largely on interventions prior to compulsory education leaving age (aged 18).

Early intervention recommendations



Targeted, additional provision to support all young people to achieve literacy and numeracy L2 in FE.



Intensive careers, education, information, advice and guidance targeted at 'at risk' young people.



Improved tracking of young people



Inclusion of Jobcentre Plus in education.

Failing to tailor provision to engage 'hidden' young people is likely to exclude them from employment help and support, and also prevent Greater Manchester from understanding the full extent of youth unemployment. The following recommendations are suggested with a view to continuing support for 'hidden' young people, and ensuring future employment support provision is accessible to them.

Recommendations for young people who become 'hidden'



Recognition of the importance of community-based provision, and continuation post Talent Match.



Additional research to understand how to best engage with and support 'hidden' young people, who are not engaging with employment support.



Section 1: Introduction

- 1.1 This report presents the findings from research undertaken to explore and understand 'hidden' young people across Greater Manchester (GM).
- 1.2 For the purpose of this research, 'hidden' young people are defined as people aged 18-24, who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and are not in receipt of welfare support.
- 1.3 The aim of this research was to identify:
 - 1) The profile of 'hidden' young people
 - 2) Why 'hidden' young people do not seek or receive welfare support
- 1.4 The findings from the research will be used to support *Greater Manchester Talent Match* project understanding and development, and the research also aims to inform wider policy development to ensure that future employment provision incorporates the needs of this cohort.

Context

Ascertaining the number of 'hidden' young people

- 1.4 Due to the limitations of the monitoring and tracking systems in place, it is not possible to unequivocally state how many young people are currently 'hidden', nor describe the characteristics of this group and the circumstances in which they become 'hidden'. Moreover, following a literature review, it is evident there is limited information available and research undertaken in this field.
- 1.5 A report published by Impetus-PEF¹ explores how a large number of young people become 'unknown' following compulsory education, and suggests this is due to the tracking mechanism employed by local authorities which fails to ascertain the destination (current activity) of a high number of young people. This group are subsequently recorded as 'unknown', which is likely to include young people engaged in a range of activity, including proportions who are NEET. The proportion of young people who are NEET in the 'unknown' group is generally estimated by local authorities at one in eight. As per the definition utilised in this research, this group are 'hidden'.

¹ Source: http://www.fabians.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/OutOfSight_WEB.pdf

- 1.6 As part of his work with Coventry City Council, the author of the report, Richard Brooks, explored this 'unknown' group in more detail and found that, in Coventry, the number of young people who are NEET in this group is significantly higher than the number estimated by local authorities. At the end of 2013 for example, it was between a third and a half of the 'unknown' group. The local authorities' estimate thus provides a misleading view of the full extent of what is referred to as the 'NEET problem'.
- 1.7 Other instruments used to measure the number of young people who are NEET encounter similar scrutiny. These measures include:
- The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) out-of-work benefit claimant rate (aged 18-24)
 - The International Labour Organisation (ILO) unemployment rate² (aged 16-24)
 - The ILO economically inactive rate (this comprises of various groups including those who are discouraged³) (aged 16-24)
- 1.8 These measures are useful in providing an indication of youth unemployment in GM; however they exclude, or do not provide any data regarding the number of young people who are 'hidden', unemployed and not in receipt of welfare support.
- 1.9 One way of identifying an approximate estimate of this (although it should be used with caution), is to calculate the difference between the number of young people who are 'unemployed', and the number of young people claiming out-of-work benefits.
- 1.10 As per the ILO definition however, the 'unemployment' rate is likely to also include students who are actively seeking work⁴ and are thus not 'hidden'.
- 1.11 Whilst it is not possible to identify the number of 'unemployed' young people who are students from ONS data, an article published by Eurostat⁵, which uses data from 28 EU countries, provides an indication of this, estimating that approximately 23% of this group are a student or apprentice⁶.

² The unemployment rate is defined as anybody who is not in employment, has actively sought work in the last 4 weeks and is available to start work in the next 2 weeks, or has found a job and is waiting to start in the next 2 weeks. This information is gathered via the Annual Population Survey (APS). The APS is a continuous household survey, covering the UK, with the aim of providing estimates between censuses of key social and labour market variables at a local area level. The APS is not a stand-alone survey, but uses data combined from two waves from the main Labour Force Survey with data collected on a local sample boost.

³ Discouraged workers are those who are not actively seeking employment or who does not find employment after long-term unemployment. This is usually because an individual has given up looking or has had no success in finding a job, hence the term "discouraged".

⁴ Source: http://glossary.reuters.com/index.php?title=ILO_Measure_of_Unemployment

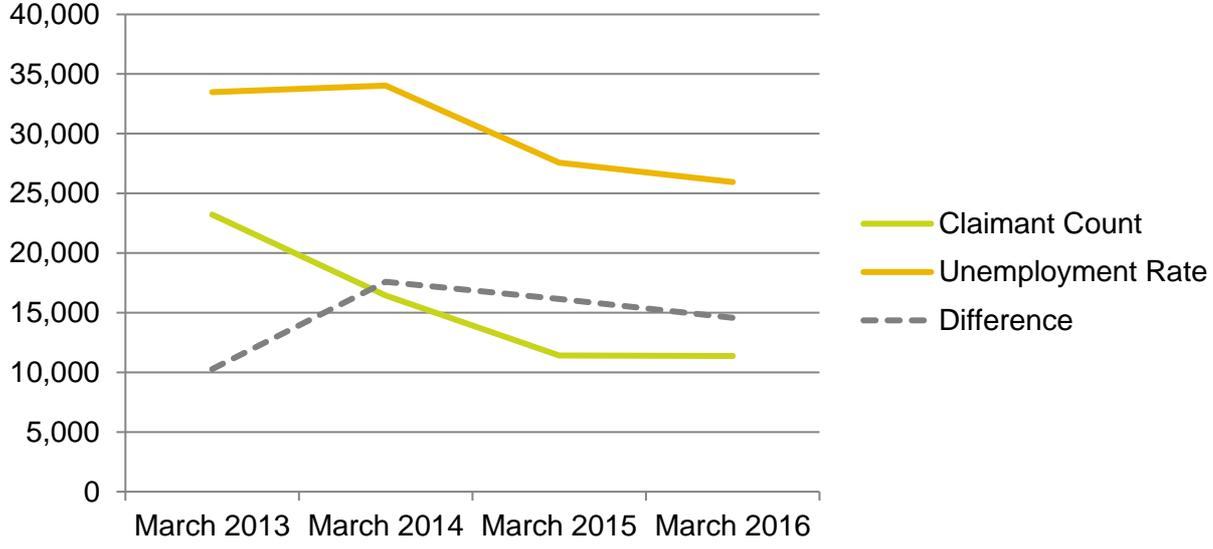
⁵ Source: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Youth_unemployment

⁶ This figure has been estimated by adding together the number of unemployed young people, both students and non-students, and calculating the number of unemployed students as a percentage of the whole group.

An estimate of the number of 'hidden' young people

1.12 Using this measure (the unemployment rate reduced by 23%, minus the claimant count), it is estimated that just fewer than 15,000 young people were 'hidden' in GM in March 2016.

Figure 1.1: The unemployment rate (reduced by 23%) and claimant count of 16-24 year olds in GM, including the difference between the two figures

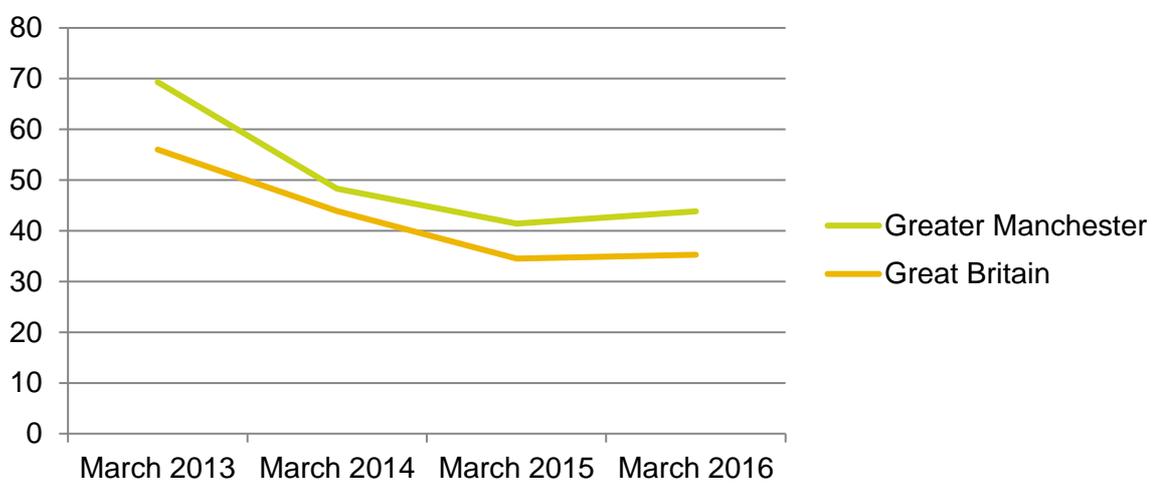


Source: Office for National Statistics

1.13 Whilst Figure 1.1 demonstrates a parallel, decreasing trend in the claimant count and the unemployment rate of 16-24 year olds in GM, in contrast, the proxy measure of 'hidden' young people (the 'difference' between the two figures) follows a very different trend, and has increased by 42% during this period.

1.14 The increase in the 'difference' between the above two measures over the period, suggests that the number of 'hidden' young people has increased.

Figure 1.2: The percentage (%) of 'unemployed' 16-24 year olds who are in receipt of out-of-work benefits



Source: Office for National Statistics



- 1.15 Moreover, when reviewing the proportion of young people who are ‘unemployed’ and are claiming out-of-work benefits, the proportion has reduced significantly, demonstrating that whilst fewer young people are claiming out-of-work benefits, a larger number are likely to be ‘hidden’, unknown to government agencies.
- 1.16 In GM, this has reduced from over two thirds (69%) of ‘unemployed’ young people claiming in March 2013, to fewer than half (44%)⁷ in March 2016.
- 1.17 An article released by The Money Charity⁸ supports this view, suggesting that in 2012 for example, 60% of people who were unemployed claimed JSA, and by November 2015, just 34% of those who are ‘unemployed’ were claiming (although the article does not specify whether these figures have accounted for the introduction of UC in 2013).

The impact of being ‘hidden’

- 1.18 As many welfare to work programmes, including the government’s Youth Contract, target and support ‘known’ young people claiming out-of-work benefits (through participant criteria), ‘hidden’ young people, who are disengaged from the welfare state and are not claiming out-of-work benefits, are excluded from, and unlikely to receive any kind of economic or back-to-work support.



“Many of the young people don’t exist in the system at all, which means a number of services aren’t available to them. A CSCS card for example, if you’re on benefits you get this for free, if not you don’t.”

- 1.19 The short and long-term consequences of this for young people and the wider economy have been found to be far-reaching.
- 1.20 The Commission on Youth Unemployment describe the ‘scarring’ effect of long-term unemployment for young people, suggesting they are more likely to spend longer out of work throughout their life; be paid less when in work (Macmillan, 2012); have poorer mental and physical well-being; and be involved in criminal activity (Bell and Blanchflower, 2010). Some of these characteristics are evident in the ‘hidden’ cohort of young people currently supported by *Greater Manchester Talent Match*.
- 1.21 They also found that *“in 2012 youth unemployment [was estimated to] cost the exchequer £4.8 billion (more than the budget for further education for 16 to 19 year-olds in England) and cost the economy £10.7 billion in lost output”*.
- 1.22 This potentially permanent impact on young people’s future, and the financial implication on the economy, demonstrates the importance of minimising periods of unemployment for young people in GM.
- 1.23 To realise its reform vision⁹, which aims to prevent and reduce youth unemployment, it is necessary for GM to understand the number of young people who are ‘hidden’ and engage with this unique group to support them to become economically active. This includes identifying who ‘hidden’ young people are; their background; and why they are not in employment and do not claim welfare support.

⁷ Source: ONS Annual population survey by unemployment rate

⁸ Source: <http://themoneycharity.org.uk/sharp-fall-unemployed-people-claiming-jobseekers-allowance/>

⁹ Source: <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/downloads/file/9/stronger-together-greater-manchester-strategy-summary>

1.24 This information is likely to inform further intelligence regarding this cohort, including the interventions or services that are most effective in reaching and supporting this group.

Existing provision for 'hidden' young people in Greater Manchester

1.25 A range of employment support provision is available to young people who are NEET across GM, including wide scale programmes such as the Youth Contract (Nu Traxx). In addition to this, a variety of activity is taking place within each local authority, across which provision varies hugely. In terms of provision for 'hidden' young people, limited information is available which indicates the amount of support specifically available to this group.

1.26 The number of 'hidden' young people in GM is a recognised concern across the conurbation, and is acknowledged as one of four priorities in the GM Careers and Participation Strategy. Work is underway across GM to jointly address this, particularly in light of the reduced tracking requirements of young people¹⁰.

1.27 A Policy Participation and Performance group, including officers from across GM Local Authorities, has been organised to work on how to better track and support vulnerable groups and young people who are NEET. This report has been welcomed in support of this agenda.

Talent Match

1.28 *Greater Manchester Talent Match* is a Big Lottery-funded programme that aims to support young people aged 18-24 who have been NEET for twelve months or more, to progress towards and into employment. In addition to the wider aims, the programme specifically targets and works with 'hidden' young people, addressing the current gap in provision for this group.

1.29 Access to this group through *Greater Manchester Talent Match* provides a unique opportunity to undertake research to better understand the cohort and identify successful approaches to engagement. The test and learn programme will run for five years (2013-2018).

1.30 The extent to which the young people engaging with *Greater Manchester Talent Match* can be classified as 'hidden' is acknowledged by the research, as they are now 'known' and voluntarily participating on *Greater Manchester Talent Match*. This group however were 'hidden' prior to joining the programme and thus provide a useful starting point and a pathway to further investigation of this unknown group.

¹⁰ From September 2016, local authorities are only required to track young people up to academic age 16 and 17. Whilst local authorities are still required to support and track 18 year olds at risk of becoming NEET, they are not required to report on this group.

1.31 To achieve the research aims, a mixed methods research approach was employed and divided into two stages.

a) Stage 1: to identify the profile of ‘hidden’ beneficiaries on *Talent Match* and whether they are representative of a wider ‘hidden’ cohort.

Research method	Aim
Literature review: desk based analysis	To identify sources of secondary research which provide any information relating to ‘hidden’ young people (their profile, their histories) to ascertain whether the ‘hidden’ young people on <i>Talent Match</i> are representative of a wider ‘hidden’ cohort.
Statistical analysis of the Common Data Framework (CDF) ¹¹ data, including other <i>Talent Match</i> locations	To ascertain ‘hidden’ young people’s profile, background; experiences; progression towards and into employment; particularly in comparison to non-hidden young people.

1.22 Due to the limited secondary data and information available, it was not possible to ascertain the typical characteristics of ‘hidden’ young people and thus compare to the *Talent Match* cohort. Additional data has been attained however, relating to the ‘hidden’ beneficiaries on four other *Talent Match* programmes to explore any regional similarities/differences. The four programmes include: Talent Match Greater Birmingham & Solihull, Talent Match Leeds City Region, Talent Match North East and Talent Match Northamptonshire.

b) Stage 2: to identify how to best engage and support ‘hidden’ young people.

Research method	Aim
Semi-structured interviews with Talent Coaches ¹²	To understand how to best identify and support ‘hidden’ young people from a practitioner perspective.
Semi-structured interviews with ‘hidden’ beneficiaries	To qualitatively explore ‘hidden’ beneficiaries’ background; their previous experience with the welfare system; why they do not receive out-of-work benefits; what would encourage them to apply for out-of-work benefits; and what support they find beneficial.
Ethnographic, unstructured interviews	To engage with truly ‘hidden’, non- <i>Talent Match</i> young people to understand who they are, why they are economically inactive, and what would motivate them to become economically active.

¹¹ The Common Data Framework (CDF) is a data collection system that has been designed and produced by Sheffield Hallam University on behalf of the Big Lottery Fund to collect standard data across all Talent Match programmes to evaluate performance.

¹² Talent Coaches are keyworkers who provide young people with one-to-one, holistic support, with a view to supporting them towards and into employment.

Sample

Stage 1

1.24 A purposive sampling method was employed in the analysis of CDF data to gather the data of beneficiaries who were 'hidden' when they joined the programme. This approach was also employed by the other Talent Match partnerships who gave their permission for their data to be used in the research.

Stage 2

- 1.25 A purposive sampling method also selected Talent Coaches who support one or more 'hidden' young people to participate in the research. Of the 31 Talent Coaches who were selected, eight took part in the research, a response rate of 26%.
- 1.26 Opportunity sampling gave 'hidden' young people supported by the eight Talent Coaches the opportunity to participate in an informal, semi-structured interview. Four young people took part in the research. As a token of appreciation, young people who participated in the research received a £20 gift voucher.
- 1.27 This research also attempted to engage truly 'hidden' young people, who are not engaging with any services, including *Greater Manchester Talent Match*. The very nature of this group made it very difficult, firstly, to find 'hidden' young people, and secondly, to engage them in the research. One approach to this included a snowball sampling technique, distributing a pro-forma to Youth Panel members¹³ to promote the research and recommend friends who were 'hidden'. No participants were referred via this route.
- 1.28 The other approach included working with a key informant (Talent Coach) from a Host Organisation who volunteered to act as a gatekeeper to access groups of 'hidden' young people in the community.
- 1.29 This informal, ethnographic approach involved the Talent Coach and researcher driving around the estate to 'hotspots' where young people commonly 'hang around'. Where groups were identified, the researcher, alongside the Talent Coach, informally approached the group to conduct unstructured interviews. Three groups were identified and participated in the research, including approximately 15 young people, all of whom were male.

Report structure

1.30 The report is structured as follows:

- ❖ **Chapter 2** describes the demographic of 'hidden' young people engaged on the *Talent Match* programme.
- ❖ **Chapter 3** highlights a typology of 'hidden' young people and draws on qualitative data to describe why young people are 'hidden'.
- ❖ **Chapter 4** explores the factors uncovered by the research which contribute to making a community-based approach successful in supporting 'hidden' young people.
- ❖ **Chapter 5** presents the conclusion and recommendations.

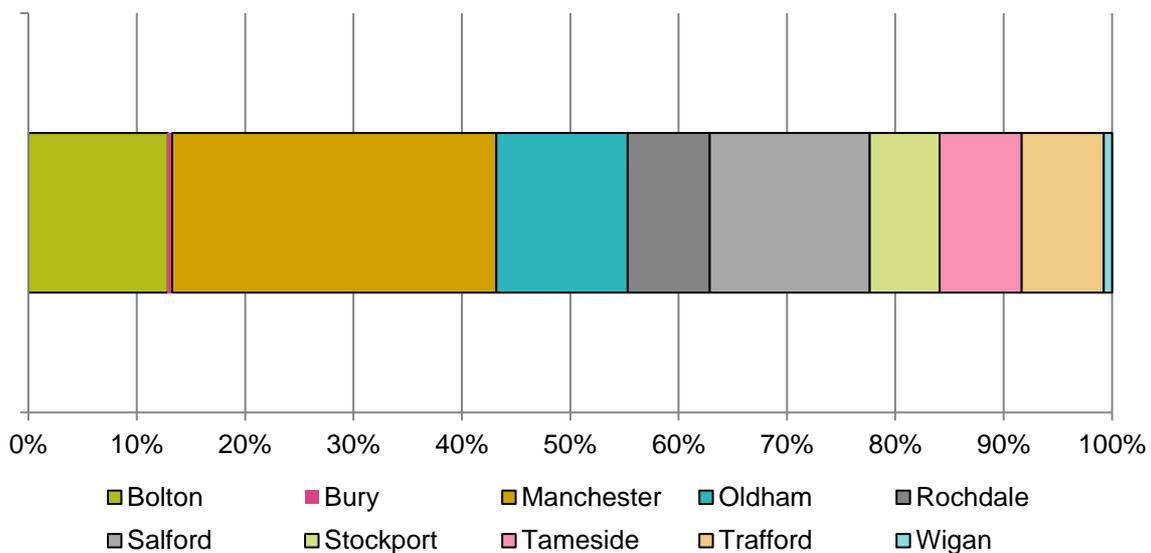
¹³ The Youth Panel is a group of young people aged 18-24 from GM who represent the views and opinions of young people on the programme.



Section 2: Who are 'hidden' young people?

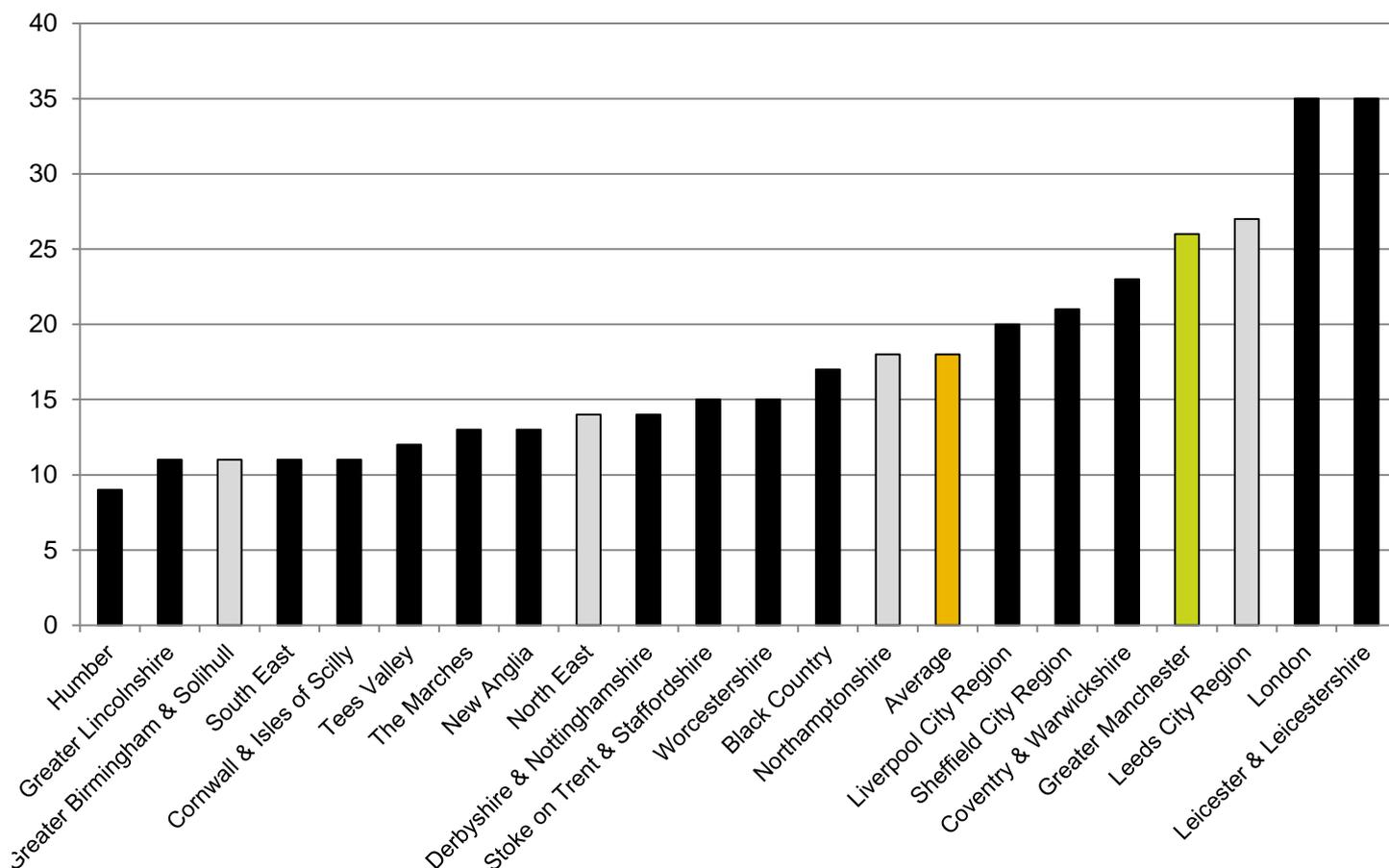
- 2.1 To July 2016, 267 'hidden' beneficiaries were engaging with *Greater Manchester Talent Match* (28% of the total number engaged). As beneficiaries on *Greater Manchester Talent Match* have been NEET for 12 or months or more, 'hidden' young people are identified as those who are not in receipt of benefits.

Figure 2.1: The percentage of 'hidden' young people engaged by *Greater Manchester Talent Match* by local authority, to July 2016



- 2.2 In contrast to other Talent Match partnerships, *Greater Manchester Talent Match* has the fourth highest level of engagement of 'hidden' young people and is above the programme average (18%).

Figure 2.2: The percentage of 'hidden' young people engaged by each *Talent Match* partnership June 2016



Demographic

Age

2.3 To join *Talent Match*, the entry criteria states that individuals must be aged 18-24. The age of beneficiaries upon joining *Greater Manchester Talent Match* is fairly evenly split across this bracket, with higher numbers of young people aged 19-20, and fewer beneficiaries at the older end of the spectrum.

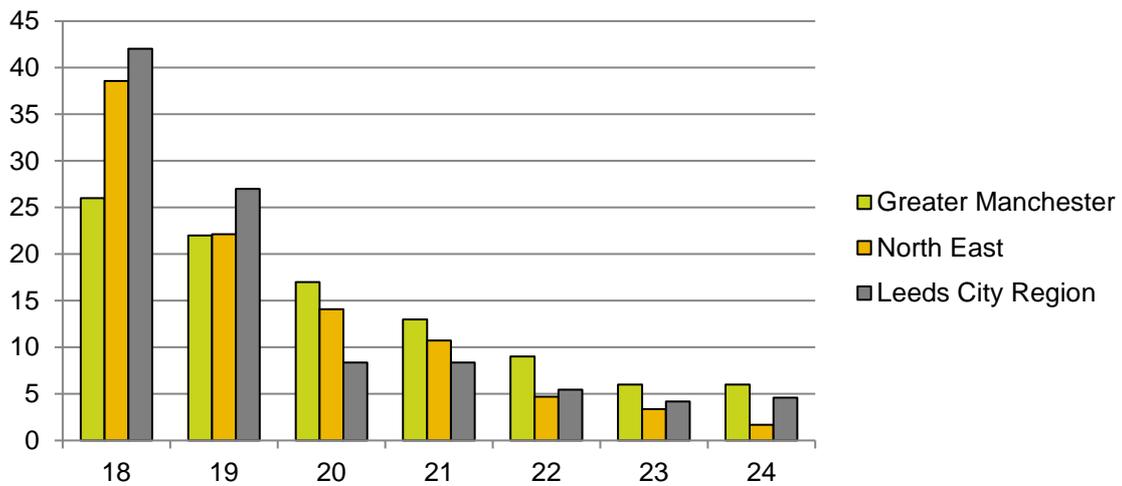
Figure 2.3: The age of *Greater Manchester Talent Match* beneficiaries

Age	'Hidden'		Non-'hidden'		All beneficiaries	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
18	70	26	66	10	136	14
19	58	22	116	17	174	18
20	46	17	128	18	174	18
21	34	13	105	15	139	14
22	23	9	101	15	124	13
23	17	6	97	14	114	12
24	16	6	76	11	92	10
Total	267	100	694	100	961	100

2.4 'Hidden' beneficiaries however, appear to be predominantly younger with over a quarter aged 18 (26%), and nearly two thirds aged 18-20 (65%). The ages of non-'hidden' beneficiaries, in contrast, tend to reflect the overall trend, with higher numbers of 19-20 year olds, and fewer beneficiaries in the older age range.

2.5 The age of beneficiaries on the Talent Match North East and Leeds City Region programmes (comparable Talent Match regions in terms of the number of 'hidden' beneficiaries, n=298 and n=478 respectively) mirror the trend on the *Greater Manchester Talent Match* programme, with a significantly higher proportion of beneficiaries aged 18 (both over a third), and over three quarters of beneficiaries aged 18-20.

Figure 2.4: The age of 'hidden' Talent Match beneficiaries (%)

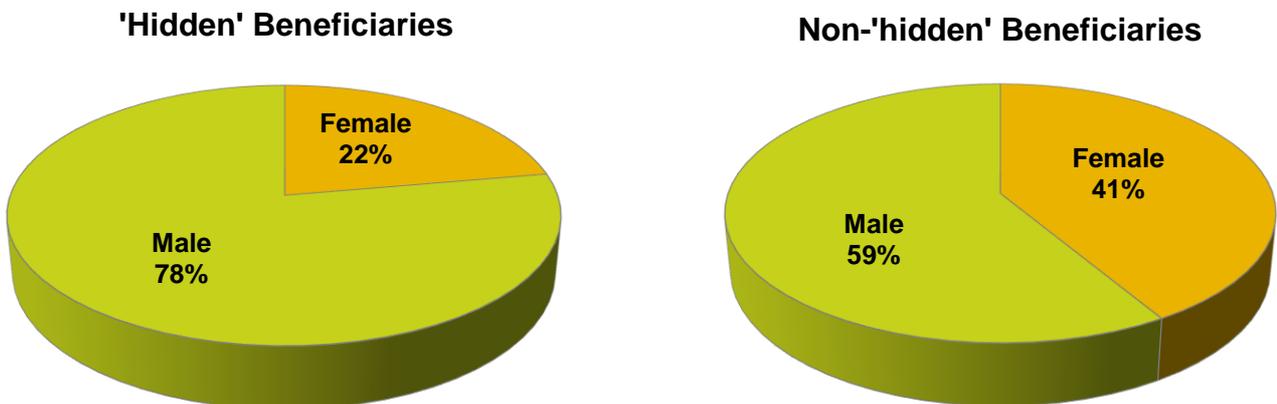


Gender

2.6 There is a fairly even split between the number of males and females engaging with *Greater Manchester Talent Match*, with slightly more males.

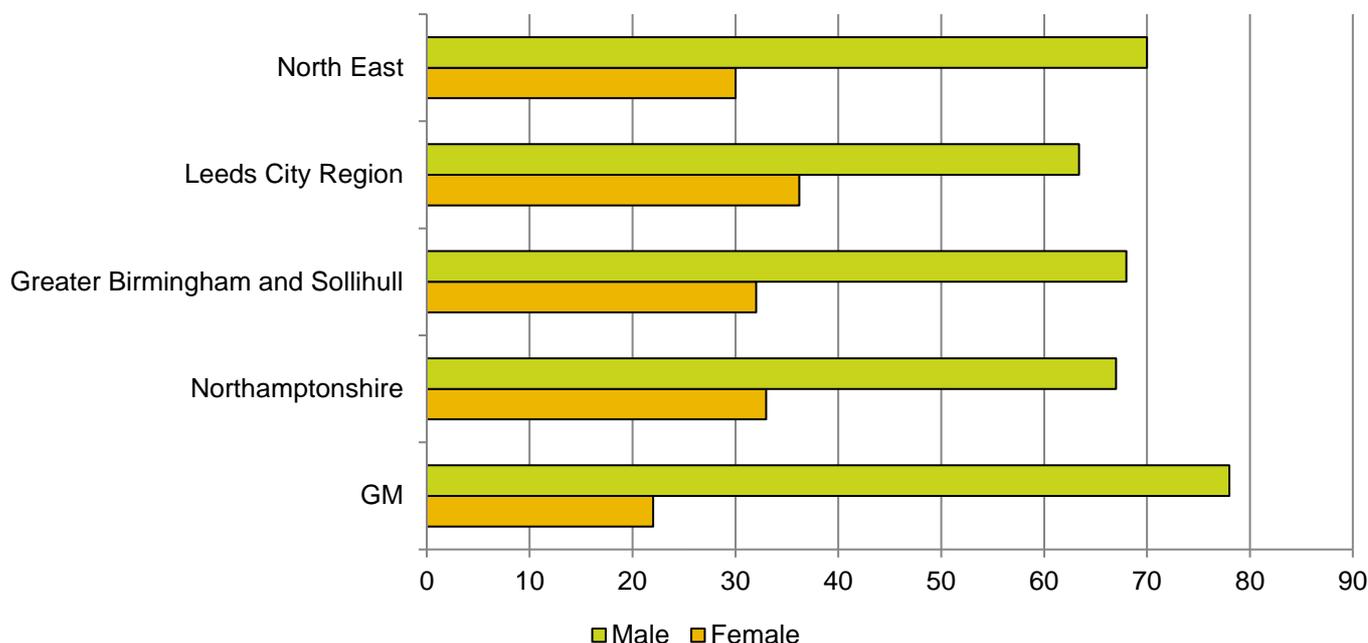
2.7 In contrast to this, of the 'hidden' beneficiaries, over three quarters are male (78%), with significantly fewer females (22%).

Figure 2.5: The gender of Greater Manchester Talent Match beneficiaries



2.8 A similar trend is observable across the four comparison *Talent Match* partnerships, which have, on average, twice as many ‘hidden’ males as females.

Figure 2.6: The gender of ‘hidden’ *Talent Match* beneficiaries (%)



Living status

2.9 Over half of the beneficiaries on *Greater Manchester Talent Match* live with their parents/guardian upon joining the programme (57%). Of the beneficiaries who were ‘hidden’ however, nearly three quarters lived at home with their parents/guardian (72%).

2.10 Although half of non-‘hidden’ beneficiaries also lived at home with their parents/guardian, in comparison to ‘hidden’ beneficiaries, they are more likely to be renting from a housing association or from their local authority.

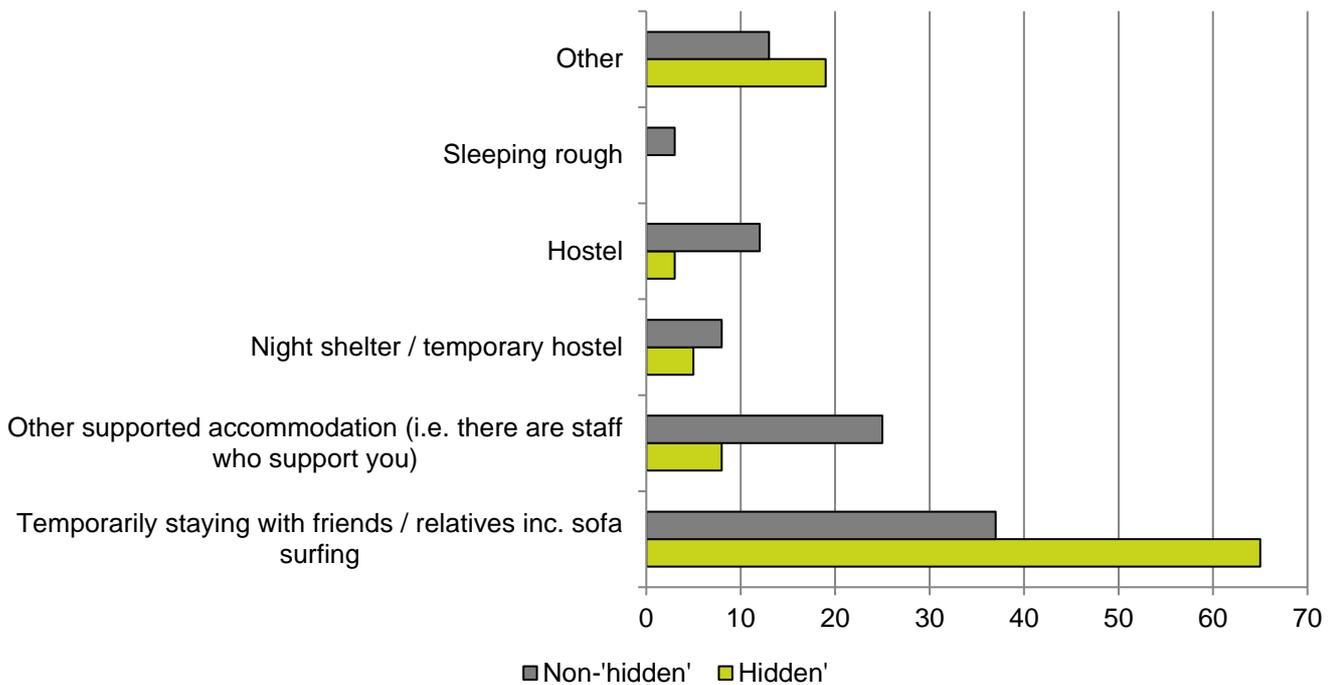
Figure 2.7: The living status of *Greater Manchester Talent Match* beneficiaries

Living Status	‘Hidden’		Non-‘hidden’		All beneficiaries	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Live with parents / guardian	193	72	350	50	544	57
Rented from a Housing Association	17	6	127	18	144	15
Rented from a private landlord	13	5	45	6	58	6
Rented from Local Authority	7	3	67	10	74	8
Other	37	14	105	15	142	15

2.11 Each of the four comparison *Talent Match* partnerships mirrored this trend, with over 80% of ‘hidden’ young people on each programme living with their parents/guardian.

2.12 ‘Hidden’ beneficiaries who selected ‘other’ were predominantly ‘temporarily staying with friends/relatives, including sofa surfing’ (65%).

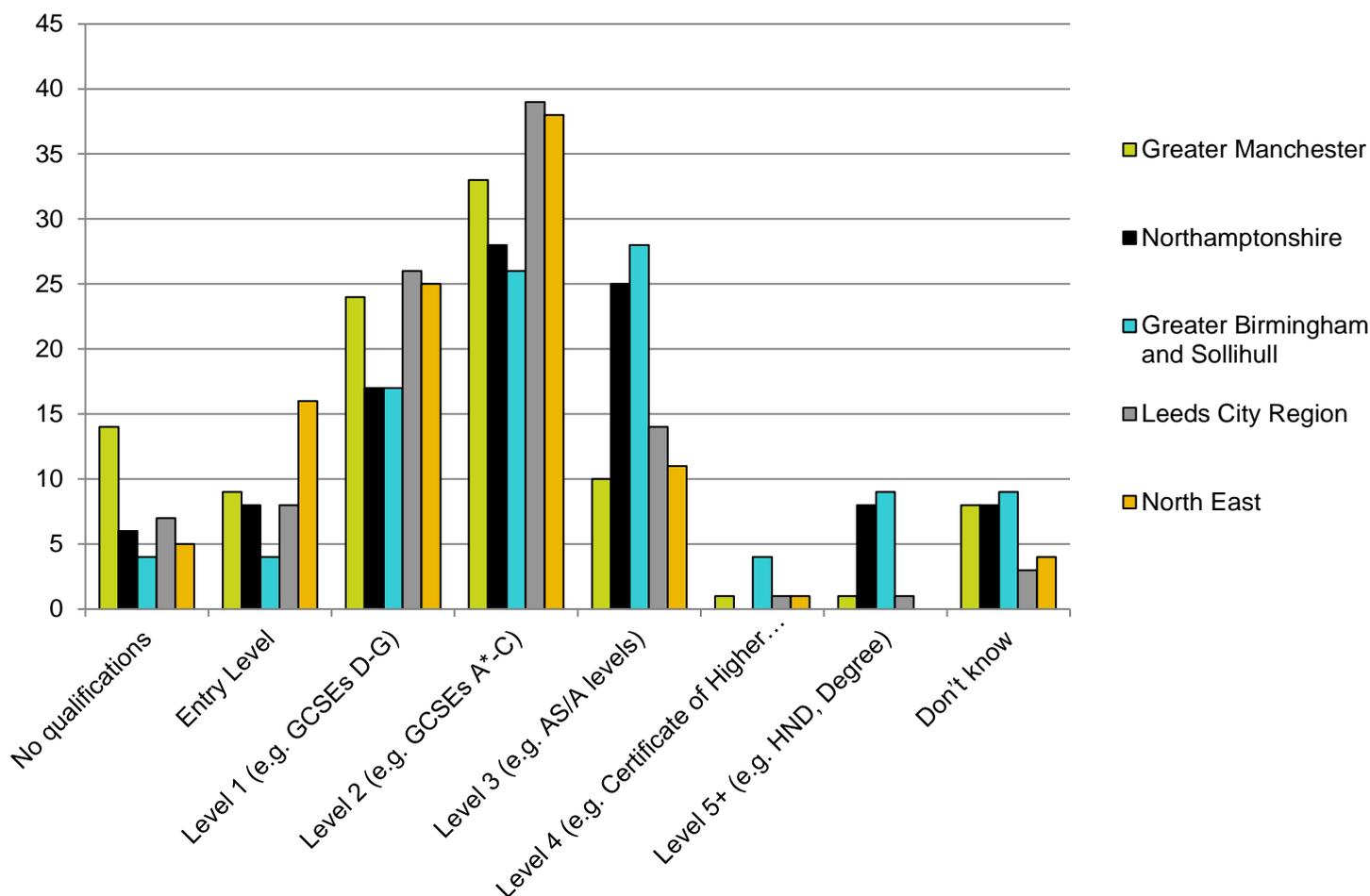
Figure 2.8: The living status of *Greater Manchester Talent Match* beneficiaries who responded 'other' (%)



Qualifications

- 2.13 In terms of their highest level qualification, there is little variation between 'hidden' and non-'hidden' beneficiaries on the *Greater Manchester Talent Match* programme, with just under a third of both groups holding a level 2 qualification (33% and 32% respectively), and 12% holding a level 3 qualification or higher.
- 2.14 This is similar for those who hold entry level or level 1 qualification; 33% of 'hidden' beneficiaries and 37% non-'hidden' beneficiaries. Again, there are minor differences between the percentages of 'hidden' and non-'hidden' beneficiaries who hold no qualifications, 14% and 11% respectively.
- 2.15 In contrast to other *Talent Match* partnerships however, twice the number of 'hidden' beneficiaries on *Greater Manchester Talent Match* have no qualifications.

Figure 2.9: The highest level qualification held by ‘hidden’ Talent Match beneficiaries (%)



2.16 Looking across the data it appears that the ‘hidden’ beneficiaries engaged by the programmes are relatively well qualified, with a high number holding at least a level 2 qualification.

2.17 A report by the Fabian Society¹⁴, which describes the characteristics of young people who are NEET, suggests this is not surprising. They argue there is a misconception of young people who are NEET, as they are often thought of as: “*troubled, excluded and even dangerous*”. They go on to suggest that their defining characteristic is in fact a lack of qualifications, especially in English and mathematics.

2.18 Analysis of data of ‘hidden’ *Greater Manchester Talent Match* beneficiaries supports this view as, whilst 43% hold a level 2 or level 3 qualification, only 26% have achieved 5 GCSEs A*-C, including English and mathematics. This trend is mirrored for non-‘hidden’ beneficiaries on the programme.

Experiences

2.19 The CDF questionnaire asks *Greater Manchester Talent Match* beneficiaries questions relating to their experiences to understand some of the barriers they face to employment.

¹⁴ Source: http://www.impetus-pef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Out-of-Sight_Fabians_Impetus-PEF_12_2014.pdf
13

Figure 2.10: Experiences of Greater Manchester Talent Match beneficiaries (%)

Experiences	'Hidden'		Non-'hidden'		All beneficiaries	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
I have been in local authority care	21	8	98	14	119	12
I have been convicted of a criminal offence	78	29	147	21	225	23
I have experienced alcohol dependency	7	3	27	4	34	4
I have experienced drug dependency	34	13	75	11	109	11
I have experienced mental ill health	49	18	200	29	249	26
I have experienced homelessness	47	18	158	23	205	21
None of the above	82	31	216	31	299	31

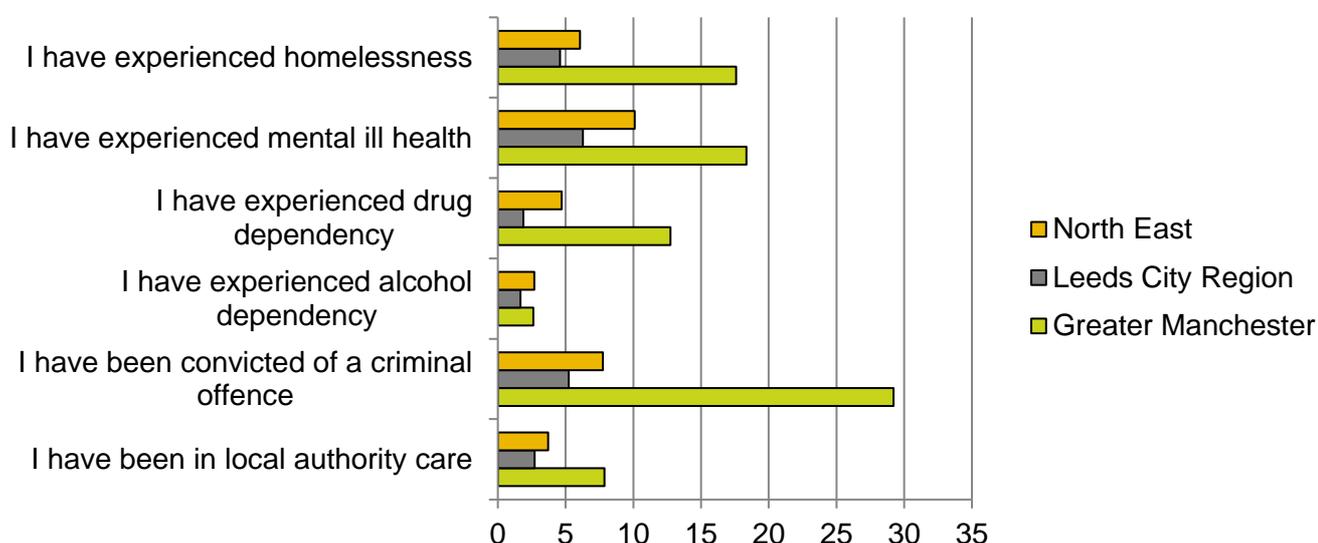
2.20 In comparison to non-'hidden' beneficiaries, a higher percentage of 'hidden' beneficiaries on *Greater Manchester Talent Match* have been convicted of a criminal offence.

2.21 Interestingly, the largest difference observed between the two groups, is their experience of mental ill health. 29% of non-'hidden' beneficiaries have experienced this in comparison to only 18% of 'hidden' beneficiaries. In the interviews with Talent Coaches however, this was described as a large barrier for the majority of the 'hidden' young people they work with, in one form or another, and may raise questions about young people's responses to questions regarding mental health, in terms of their understanding and their openness to discuss this.

2.22 Slight differences are also evident in the percentage of beneficiaries who have been in local authority care and have experienced homelessness, with a higher percentage of non-'hidden' beneficiaries experiencing this.

2.23 In comparison to North East and Leeds City Talent Match, a higher number of beneficiaries on *Greater Manchester Talent Match* have had such experiences, across nearly all the groups, and in particular, a significantly higher number have been convicted of a criminal offence.

Figure 2.11: Experiences of Talent Match beneficiaries (%)

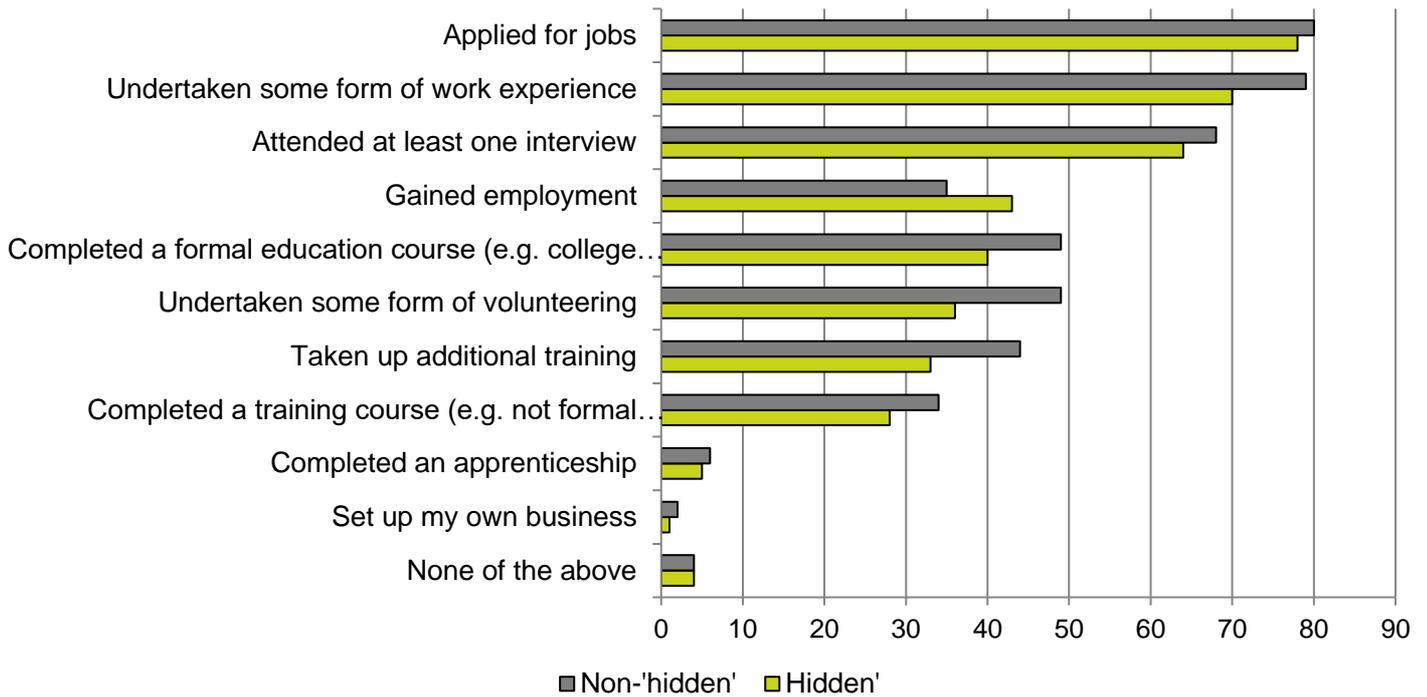


Work-related activities

2.24 A large number of beneficiaries had engaged in work-related activities prior to joining *Greater Manchester Talent Match*, including searching and applying for employment, or participating in training activities.

2.25 This is true for a higher percentage of non-‘hidden’ beneficiaries than ‘hidden’ beneficiaries with the exception of having gained employment. 43% of ‘hidden’ beneficiaries had gained employment at some point prior to joining the programme compared to only 35% of non-‘hidden’ beneficiaries.

Figure 2.12: The employment history of *Greater Manchester Talent Match* beneficiaries (%)



2.26 Since joining *Greater Mancheser Talent Match*, 23% of ‘hidden’ beneficiaries have entered employment, in comparison to 25% of non-‘hidden’ beneficiaries.





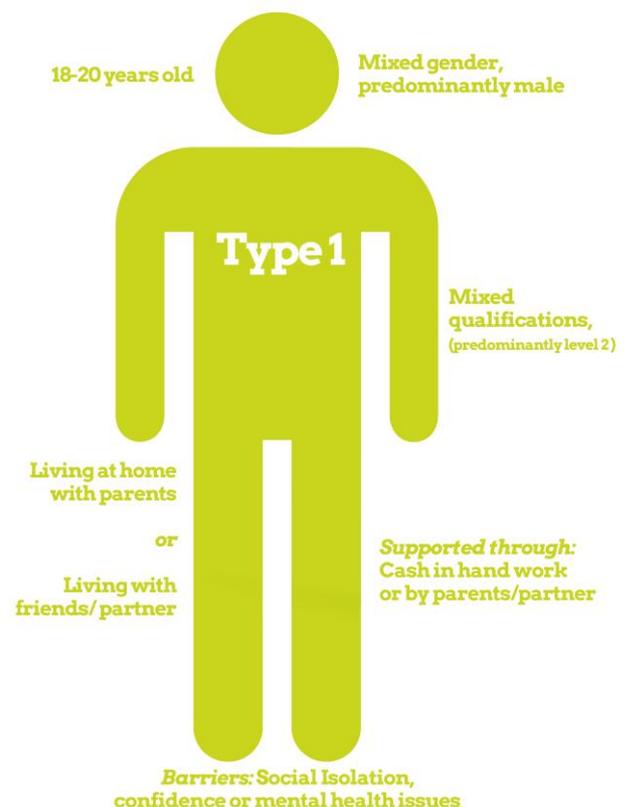
Section 3: Why are young people ‘hidden’?

3.1 Whilst the purpose of research was not to explore in depth how young people have become ‘hidden’, in their interviews, Talent Coaches gave a number of examples which typify some of the experiences of young people which may result in them becoming ‘hidden’. This has been described under two typologies of ‘hidden’ young people. This is not to say that all ‘hidden’ young people will fit into these categories, however the research indicates that a large majority are likely to.

The journey to becoming ‘hidden’

Type 1

Gender	Mixed gender, predominantly male
Age	18-20
Qualifications	Mixed qualifications (predominantly level 2)
Living Status	Living at home with parents / guardian. Living with friends/ partner.
Barriers to Employment	Social isolation, confidence/ mental health issues
Supported through	- Parents/partner - Cash in hand work



- 3.2 The journey to becoming 'hidden' for 'type 1' young people was described by a Talent Coach as initiated by disengagement and low performance in school. As a result of this, a number of young people either don't move into further education or employment following compulsory education, or are likely to withdraw prematurely from further education.
- 3.3 This transition from being a child to becoming an adult was described as a particularly difficult stage for a number of young people and can explain why some become 'hidden'. This, they suggested, is the difference between it being acceptable to disengage with services and spend a large amount of time at home at age 16/17, to then turning 18/19 and realising this is no longer the case. They subsequently find themselves unemployed and unsure of what to do or what their next steps are.
- 3.4 For some young people this may be due to the fact that they are financially comfortable and/or receive support from their parents, they are thus not likely to experience any pressure to find employment initially.



“[They] flutter about a bit, and then realise they’re 19 and they’re not doing anything.”



“Then they get to this age, and they’re like ‘oh’, and aren’t sure what to do.”

- 3.5 The difficulty in not knowing what job or career they want to do at this stage can be a further barrier. This is often as a result of a lack of exposure to activities that encourage “*socialising and trying out different things, exploring what their interests are*”, and subsequently what they would like to do as a career. Such activities include hobbies, work experience/volunteering and part-time employment.
- 3.6 One Talent Coach stated that young people become socially isolated and are then reluctant to leave the house or go out on the estate altogether as they ‘don’t fit in’ and are likely to ‘receive abuse’ from other young people.



“One young person doesn’t want to go out on the estate anymore... but hasn’t got [the] finance to do anything else.”

- 3.7 Not surprisingly, confidence then becomes an issue for such young people, especially as they have been out of work for so long, or have never worked. This lack of confidence can often lead to mental health problems; initially anxiety and then depression, one Talent Coach explained.



“Mental health seems to be a definite [barrier]; near enough all of the [young people] have some element of mental health issues. If you’re in a place where you have no money... [and] low self-worth.”

- 3.8 This subsequently becomes an additional barrier to employment and can result in young people being reluctant to actively seek help.

Type 2

Gender	Predominantly male
Age	18-21
Qualifications	No or low qualifications (entry level or level 1)
Living Status	Living at home with parents
Barriers to Employment	High rates of offending
Supported through	- Cash in hand work - Illegal activity



3.9 Following low performance in education, an alternative route for ‘type 2’ young people often involves a pathway to delinquency.

3.10 Upon leaving education, due to a lack of work experience and qualifications, young people can struggle to find meaningful employment. As one Talent Coach highlighted, “*employers only want the best*”.

3.11 As a result of this and the knock backs they receive, many young people give up at this stage, or due to a lack of confidence in finding meaningful employment, some don’t bother trying at all.



“Why would they employ me when I don’t have good qualifications?”

3.12 The cultural environment in which the young people live can reinforce the view that it will not be possible for those with limited experience and/or qualifications to find employment.

3.13 One Talent Coach described how a large proportion of people in a young person’s local area are out of work, and it is commonly understood that this is due to a lack of jobs or opportunities available. This leads many young people to believe there is little point in even attempting to find employment.

3.14 Young people who grow up in workless households, where it is ‘normal’ not to be working, are likely to receive little support from their family in terms of the drive and desire for them to find employment, in addition to being able to offer guidance or knowledge in terms of the process to gain employment.

- 3.15 Moreover, there are few role models or success stories for young people to aspire to and thus a self-fulfilling cycle occurs.
- 3.16 As a means to support themselves, young people frequently turn to alternative, illegal revenues.



“Young people are really keen for a job but they get knock backs and then turn to other options like selling bud (drugs).”

Barriers to receiving welfare support

- 3.17 As part of this study, this research has explored the reason behind why young people, who require and are interested in receiving help to gain employment, remain ‘hidden’ from government agencies, choosing not to seek economic or employment support through the Job Centre Plus.
- 3.18 The barriers which prevent young people from seeking welfare support were discussed in the interviews with both young people and Talent Coaches, and focused around seven key themes:

Stigma **Expectation** **External Pressure**
Customer service **The claiming process**
Sanctions **Alternative finance**

Stigma

- 3.19 ‘Stigma’, ‘embarrassment’ and ‘pride’ were terms used across all of the interviews in relation to why young people do not claim. The stigma surrounding claiming out-of-work benefits was evident in many of the responses from young people, particularly how this defines them as a person.
- 3.20 It is due to this that physically attending the Jobcentre Plus was seen as a barrier for young people who “*won’t be seen dead* [there]”.



“Three girls I was supporting, I really encouraged them to go and claim, so I took them to Jobcentre Plus and all three went in wearing hoodies with their hoods up.”

- 3.21 For a large number of young people, especially males, pride plays a huge role in their decision not to seek welfare support. Talent Coaches described comments from young people such as, “*I don’t want to be one of them*”, “*I’m above that*”, and “*I’m not a scrounger*”.
- 3.22 One young person, a Talent Coach described, was entitled to and should have been claiming Personal Independence Payments (PIP), but “*wouldn’t dream of it*” stating, “*I’m not that kind of person*”.

3.23 The responses from the non-Talent Match ‘hidden’ young people mirrored these views. In response to why they are not claiming they stated:



“It’s for poor people who don’t have anything, for people that desperately need it.”

3.24 This was partly because many members of the group were already earning a substantial income informally. When asked how they support themselves, members of the group stated they were ‘grafters’. This meant that they were working in the informal economy either through cash in hand jobs or illegal activity, such as selling drugs.

Alternative finance

3.25 Talent Coaches described how many of the ‘hidden’ young people they support are also in this position, where it is not necessary for them to claim out-of-work support as they can earn £30-£50 a day doing cash in hand jobs, often through relatives or people they may know.



“One lad refused to claim benefits but he always had nice clothes. He would do things like cut the grass for people, do a day’s work here and there with his Dad’s mate who was a plasterer.”

3.26 Although examples of typical cash in hand jobs were described in areas such as warehousing, shop work and construction, all of the examples offered in the interviews referred to young males, who worked cash in hand in the construction sector. This was particularly the case for young ex-offenders, as roles within this sector were thought to be one of limited options for them.

3.27 Other ways of young people gaining finance included illegal activity such as ‘dealing drugs’, ‘robbing’, and ‘shoplifting’.

3.28 One Talent Coach explained how many young people, particularly those who have low qualifications and limited or no work experience, must make a decision between short term and long term goals. To gain secure, formal employment for example, young people often must be committed to long periods of training or education, or start at minimum wage in an entry level role position, during which time, they are unable to access finance in the informal economy. For young people who support themselves independently, this may not be a viable option.

3.29 Instant gratification is an important factor in this decision for young people who are often able to earn money instantly through cash in hand jobs or illegal activity, rather than commit to achieving a longer term goal with little or no financial resources.

3.30 An example of the dilemma many young people face was provided by a Talent Coach.



“One lad was really struggling, he had been doing cash in hand work for two years but got a back injury so he couldn't work anymore. He got benefits and we arranged for him to do a plastering qualification, but he kept coming to me saying he had hardly any money coming in and people were ringing saying they had a day's work for him. That's really difficult because he needs the money short term, but he needs the qualification to work formally in the long term and get a formal job.”

3.31 Access to financial support was described as particularly difficult for ex-offenders following their return into the community from prison. If they don't have access to financial support, the temptation to return to their previous lifestyle is very high.



“[They often turn] back to reoffending, for them it's the only way they know how to make money or survive.”

3.32 This method of attaining finance is not applicable to all 'hidden' young people. Across many of the interviews, Talent Coaches highlighted that a handful of young people don't claim out-of-work benefits simply because they are supported at home by their parents or even their partner, and they don't need to.



“I don't really need to, I've got money and I'm hoping I will find something soon.”

3.33 One Talent Coach described an example of a young person they were supporting who had very comfortable circumstances and received a lot of financial support from their parents and thus had no drive to earn money. This meant the young person could be very selective in what job they wanted to do. They commented that this was particularly difficult as money is the motivational factor for most young people to finding employment

External pressure

3.34 The pressure placed on young people by their family prevents many young people from claiming out-of-work benefits.

3.35 A Talent Coach explained that for those living at home, if housing providers are aware they are living there, this is viewed as an additional income into the house, and the money/benefits their parents receive is reviewed in line with this. Young people are then expected to make up any additional income.

3.36 As a result of the financial implications placed on them, young people in this situation do not declare they are living at the address and do not 'sign on' to avoid becoming 'known' at the address.

3.37 A similar example of this was given of a young person who was living with his girlfriend. As she was receiving single parent allowance in her flat, declaring another person living there would have ramifications on the amount of money she receives, and thus the young person was reluctant to claim out-of-work benefits to avoid becoming 'known'.

The claiming process

3.38 The system applicants have to navigate to claim out-of-work benefits was described as a barrier itself by the majority of Talent Coaches. The revised application process for UC means applicants must complete an online form to apply, which can take up to four weeks to be processed.

3.39 As a starting point to apply for welfare support, Talent Coaches described a number of pre-requisites that young people must have. This includes:

- access to a computer/the internet;
- an email address they can check regularly;
- a bank account;
- identification;
- access to a working phone with credit; and
- literacy skills.

3.40 Many of the young people in this cohort, Talent Coaches suggested, do not have several of the prerequisites and do not know how to “*tackle this on their own*”. This can make the process very “*daunting and intimidating*” for young people, especially those with low levels of literacy skills, and self-confidence.



“I support a young girl who... was homeless; the stress with trying to get benefits was really difficult. She didn't have access to a phone or anything. I had to do a lot of chasing and speaking with advisors. If I hadn't supported her she would have given up. It was just a lot of hassle going back and forth, really stressful. She had no stable home, no phone, and would have either given up or had a breakdown.”

3.41 This ‘stressful’ process prevents many young people even applying for benefits, especially those who do not have access to support to complete the application.

3.42 Once the application form has been processed, applicants are then required to attend the Jobcentre Plus to meet with an advisor. For young people who experience anxiety or have issues with self-confidence, going to a new place and meeting someone new on their own, is also a large barrier.



“You turn up as a young person on your own surrounded by authority, it can be very intimidating.”

3.43 One young person expressed how formal they find the surrounding, which can be quite unfamiliar to young people.



“I don't want to go and sit in a room with people all formal in suits.”

3.44 For most of the young people interviewed, their experience of customer service in the Jobcentre Plus deterred them from claiming out-of-work benefits. Talent Coaches also highlighted this:



“They don’t feel they get a warm welcome when they go into Job Centre, the way they’re spoken to, they’re spoken down to, belittled”.

3.45 Interestingly, the feedback highlighted that whilst a number of young people had previously claimed out-of-work benefits and described their own experiences, the majority of the young people interviewed had never claimed out-of-work benefits and yet were able to provide detailed feedback in regards to the negative experience of claiming.

3.46 These young people had, through word of mouth, heard about friends’ or family members’ experiences in receiving welfare support, and this had deterred them from claiming. All Talent Coaches interviewed suggested this was the largest deterrent for young people.



“They hear from friends about the difficulties, so they just don’t bother”.

3.47 Many young people for example could give examples of such negative experiences.



“One lad, for example, was on a Princes’ Trust programme. [The Princes Trust] sent a letter to JCP to say he was on it, which is why he wouldn’t be able to attend a meeting, so they wouldn’t sanction him, and they still stopped his money.”

3.48 In line with this, and possibly because of this, a lack of trust was described in young peoples’ relationship with the Jobcentre Plus, with one young person explaining they did not feel as though they were there to find them a suitable job, rather that they were just there to provide financial support

3.49 This was described by one Talent Coach as a result of the targets advisors must meet, suggesting that *“as soon as you start claiming benefits, the clock’s ticking; they do everything they can to get you into employment: thirteen weeks, exit plan, get them off”*.

Sanctions

- 3.50 Sanctions¹⁵ were discussed across all of the interviews as a key reason for why young people do not apply for or claim out-of-work benefits.
- 3.51 The power imbalance present in the relationship between an advisor and a young person, due to the advisors' ability to deny a young person their benefits through 'sanctioning', prevents a large number of young people from claiming benefits.
- 3.52 In the cases described by Talent Coaches where young people had previously claimed benefits and had since stopped, this was a consequence of the negative experiences with the Jobcentre Plus and being sanctioned which had put them off claiming again.



“They don’t want to go through that again; they just want to stand on their own two feet”.



“They have been sanctioned and then that’s it, they just give up after that, some just don’t bother”

- 3.53 The reasons why following a sanction young people do not continue to claim benefits differ for each young person. For some, this may be that they have missed an appointment, have been sanctioned and haven't 'sorted it out'. For others, they are not aware they can reapply.



“Sometimes I make a call to the Jobcentre, they’re helpful in explaining [the] sanction was only for so long and young people can reapply – some think they can’t”.

- 3.54 Sanctioning was described as a regular occurrence for young people claiming out-of-work support and happens “*for all sorts of things: not applying for enough jobs, forgetting to attend an appointment, not keeping up to date*”. However, some young people aren't clear on why they have been sanctioned.



“Some get continuously sanctioned; they don’t understand why and feel it’s unfair”.

- 3.55 This can be a continuous cycle for some young people.



“One young guy starts benefits, then gets sanctioned, then leaves it, then starts again, and goes through another process”.

¹⁵ A sanction is a term used by the DWP, which means a claimant's benefit can be reduced by a fixed amount or to nil. A sanction lasts for a fixed period depending on which level it is. The level will depend on what it is the claimant has/has not done. A sanction decision can be disputed however often this will be without payment.

The expectation placed on Job Seekers

3.56 The perceived or experienced expectations young people must meet to claim out-of-work benefits, and to prevent being sanctioned, deters a large number from applying.

3.57 Many are concerned or worried about the 'strictness of signing on': not being in control and forced to do things they don't want to do, or made to go to places they don't know, such as, being "*put on a course they don't want to go on or travel to the other side of Manchester*".



"Even my mum's friend who claims JSA...they said to her she had to go forward for a job in Hyde, she's from Swinton, and if you don't do it, they come down on you like a ton of bricks".

3.58 One Talent Coach went as far to describe a young person as being 'too frightened to sign on'.



"One girl got as far as doing the application, we were going to the Jobcentre, and then [she] rang in the morning to say she can't go, she was scared of going to sign on and what they will do".

3.59 The '35 steps universal job match'¹⁶ was also raised in many of the interviews as requiring "*too much work for the amount of money*" claimants receive, and "*it wasn't worth it*", one young person described. Another young person said the system would involve applying for 30 jobs a week, which just isn't realistic. A Talent Coach described how being mandated to such activities can be a hindrance to those who are already proactive in their job search.

3.60 The pressure placed on young people to meet such expectations was described as having a particularly negative impact on young people who experience mental health problems, such as anxiety or depression. This is especially the case when they are mandated to attend opportunities in new places, or apply for jobs they feel they realistically cannot accept.

3.61 The jobs which young people must be seen to be applying for were described negatively as 'all low level jobs' with zero hour contracts, especially for people with little or no qualifications, or those with a criminal record. There is "*no career plan at all*".



"He does want to work and wants a job, but they make him apply for up to 30 jobs a week, the only jobs available for someone with no qualifications and a criminal record are zero hour contract roles, that's no career. 'Take this job or we'll take your money off you'. We should be career planning; 'a training course for this', 'what does he want to do', rather than saying if you want this money every week you must go through these hoops. It doesn't help putting them on any old training or applying for zero hour contracts with low pay."

¹⁶ Universal JobMatch is a British government website for searching and applying for job vacancies. The '35 steps' was referred to by interviewees as the number of hours JCP/UC recipients were required to search for jobs using the site.

Young Offenders

- 3.62 As one of the largest groups of 'hidden' young people on Talent Match, young offenders were discussed heavily in the interviews with Talent Coaches, and in particular, the expectation placed on them following their release from prison.
- 3.63 Rather than following the 'normal' JSA/UC claimant route, ex-offenders are placed immediately onto the Work Programme when they apply for out-of-work benefits.



“One young lad came out of prison and got a job straight away in construction, he was a bricklayer, and a good worker. The job was relocated in Wales but probation wouldn't let him go down to Wales to work and he had to sign on as he didn't have enough money. When he went to sign on for JSA he was told he had to go straight onto the work programme, 'because you've come out of prison, [even though he had employment since his release]'”.



“One lad [as soon as] he got out prison, straight from bail he had to go onto the work programme, and he said 'I won't be able to handle that, I'm too anxious', so he got a sick note and signed on for ESA payment. But he missed his medical and they stopped his money... He's appealing at the moment, but they said in the meantime we suggest you go on JSA/UC, but, he said, I'm not fit to work so what's the point,” then he has to start the process of job searching up to 30 jobs a week, a lot of hoops to jump through. He refuses to sign on to JSA but he doesn't have any money... He's a criminal and hasn't had any money for 8 weeks so he'll be out doing whatever it is he needs to do to get money”.

- 3.64 Many feel they cannot handle the pressure of the work programme, and feel there are limited job options available to them due to their criminal record. This can prevent young offenders from claiming altogether and turning to alternative means to gain finance, as aforementioned.
- 3.65 To avoid the pressures of the work programme, many young offenders, who may experience anxiety and depression, claim ESA. This is thought to provide them with the space to develop their skills and qualifications for employment whilst receiving financial support, as *“they don't have to constantly deal with the benefits system”*.
- 3.66 All of the Talent Coaches who support young offenders stated that this is something they actively encourage.



“I encourage them to claim because it... opens up any other training avenue [such as] free training. Sometimes when they say no way I'm signing on, I say go down the ESA route, get signed off with a sick note – they are anxious – then they can access training and things like that and usually get counselling as well, it's just a short term thing. If they don't sign on, the chances are they will commit some sort of crime again– if you've no money, then what do you do”.

3.67 The encouragement to claim welfare support was described by all Talent Coaches as a means to an end in terms of opening up opportunities for young people which would not otherwise be available. This referred predominantly to training opportunities which are available only to those in receipt of benefits. It was also recognised that it is difficult to find employment without any money as young people need access to a phone, the internet, travel, etc.



“A CSCS card¹⁷ for example, if you’re on benefits you get this for free, if not you don’t. I encourage my young people to sign up, get the paperwork through, get on the course and then they can sign off again”.

3.68 For some young people however ESA is seen as a way of receiving financial support without having to do any job searching. When asked whether they were in receipt of welfare support, one of the ‘hidden’ young people interviewed stated he was claiming ESA and this was due to anxiety. Towards the end of the interview however when he felt more comfortable with sharing information, he stated this was as he *“couldn’t be bothered [to claim JSA as] it’s too much like hard work”*.

¹⁷ **CSCS** is the leading skills certification scheme within the UK construction industry. Holding a CSCS card verifies workers’ identity and shows employers they have the required training, qualifications and experience for the type of work they carry out on a construction site. Most major contractors and homebuilders require all workers on their sites to hold a valid CSCS card.



Section 4: A community-based approach

- 4.1 Talent Coaches and young people both framed the support offered by *Greater Manchester Talent Match* in contrast to other available employment support services, particularly in terms of why a community-based approach best suits 'hidden' young people.
- 4.2 Whilst the aim of this research was not to identify the approaches that best suit this group, it is useful to draw upon the insight provided by research participants as points for further research and exploration in terms of how to best engage with and support this group.

Identifying 'hidden' young people

- 4.3 Due to their reputation in the community, the majority of Talent Coaches do not have to actively recruit or search for 'hidden' young people; young people approach the organisation when they require help or support.
- 4.4 The integration of the organisation in the community is crucial to this, as they are known and accepted by the community which means young people (and their parents) are aware of and trust the services and support available.
- 4.5 One Talent Coach highlighted how many of the young people in the area attended youth clubs at the organisation as teenagers, which meant the youth workers knew the young people from a young age, and had already formed a relationship with them.



“We might have young people who we were aware of when they were 15 and then like boomerangs they come back again”.



“They come to us, a lot of people come in and ask for help, they’ve heard about us through word of mouth. We’re well known in the community as we’re always out and about. Parents also know about us, sometimes through the adult classes we do”.

- 4.6 Due to the 'hidden' nature of the cohort, word of mouth has a significant role in attracting 'hidden' young people. Nearly all of the Talent Coaches described how referrals from young people to other people were the main driver for recruitment. Some Coaches explained how some young people had even brought friends along with them to meetings.



“Mainly through referrals from friends or word of mouth, I've had people who might be referred from probation and then said to their mates, come and do this. [Organisation] has a pretty good reputation also”.

The Talent Coach approach

- 4.7 The approach taken to supporting young people by community-based organisations further enhanced their reputation among the community. This approach was described as essential in engaging and supporting 'hidden' young people.
- 4.8 A number of key factors were highlighted as important, however the overarching theme across the interviews which all other factors characterise and strengthen, is the relationship between a Talent Coach and a 'hidden' young person.
- 4.9 For many young people this is having one key person they can trust will help them with all of their needs, and ultimately support them to find employment.
- 4.10 Talent Coaches tend to be trained youth workers with the knowledge and experience to work closely with young people specifically. This enables them to provide holistic support across all areas of their life, to address the significant barriers many 'hidden' young people experience that may not be addressed through other services. This includes mental health, housing, benefits, etc. Some Talent Coaches highlighted how their personal experience of similar situations enables them to relate to, and be empathetic towards, young people.
- 4.11 Moreover, rather than seeking to find any form of employment for young people, Talent Coaches understand and develop the talents and interests of their young people, to enable them to gain and sustain meaningful employment in an area of interest.



“We have a track record of putting people into fairly well paid employment, rather than just a traineeship for example”.

- 4.12 Due to the low case load on *Greater Manchester Talent Match*, Talent Coaches can provide in depth support to their young people, meet more frequently, and accompany them to meetings or Opportunities. The increased contact between Talent Coaches and young people enables them to rapidly build strong relationships.
- 4.13 The voluntary nature of the relationship and the support provided means young people do not feel pressured or obliged to engage in activity they are not interested in, and there is no power imbalance present. This creates an environment that means both Talent Coaches and young people are able to be honest and open with each other, which enables Talent Coaches to truly understand the young person and their barrier/s to employment.



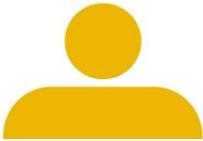
“Youth workers are a lot softer with young people and don't place any expectation on them. This allows us to have honest conversations about everything and anything without judgement; some [young] people have never been able to do that before”.

- 4.14 This equal relationship is promoted by Talent Coaches being 'on the same level' as young people, through an informal approach, dressing appropriately and 'speaking the same language' as young people.
- 4.15 Talent Coaches are also able to arrange meetings convenient to the young person they are supporting, meaning young people don't have to travel far, and can meet in their community environment, in a place familiar and comfortable for them.



“The fact that I go to them, always been a barrier for them, they do want the help, but it's making that step and because I go to them it moves them forward quicker”.

- 4.16 Once Talent Coaches have gained the trust of the young people and built a relationship, one Talent Coach explained, the young people are subsequently more likely to engage in work related activities, as they trust that the Talent Coach is working in their best interests.



“When they trust you're trying to help them then they start to do things for me, like go and visit a training provider or do a course. You just need to be on the same level as them, try and map out a journey for them and deliver it in bite size chunks”.



Section 5: Conclusion

The profile of 'hidden' young people

- 5.1 'Hidden' beneficiaries on *Talent Match* are predominantly male, aged 18-20, and live at home with their parents. A large number also live with relatives/friends/partners.
- 5.2 Just fewer than half of 'hidden' beneficiaries on *Greater Manchester Talent Match* hold a level 2 or level 3 qualification (43%), however only just over a quarter of 'hidden' young people have achieved 5 GCSEs A*-C, including English and mathematics (27%). In contrast, 67% of 16-24 year olds in GM hold a level 2 or 3 qualification¹⁸.
- 5.3 The analysis indicates that non-'hidden' beneficiaries are more likely to be older; have experienced homelessness and mental ill health; lived in precarious accommodation; and currently rent from a housing association or local authority.
- 5.4 This suggests a distinct contrast between the two cohorts, in that 'hidden' young people, who tend to be younger, may not need to claim welfare support (especially if they want to avoid the difficulties associated with this) due to their access to financial support and accommodation. Non-'hidden' young people however, who tend to be older, appear to have experienced a higher number of barriers to employment and, due to their living circumstances, have to seek welfare support.
- 5.5 An alternative view to this however, suggests that the difference between 'hidden' and non-'hidden' young people is simply their age, and the point in which they are at along the same journey. Non-'hidden' (older) beneficiaries were previously 'hidden' and in a similar, comfortable financial position aged 18-20, however due to prolonged unemployment, subsequently experienced the aforementioned barriers to employment, with few options but to seek welfare support in later years (to secure housing for example). Without any support or intervention, their younger, 'hidden' counterparts are likely to encounter similar experiences and present themselves for welfare support at a later age.

¹⁸Source: ONS Annual population survey - Qualifications (GCSE) by age, Jan 2015 – Dec 2015

Why do 'hidden' young people not seek or receive welfare support?

- 5.6 A number of barriers were described by both Talent Coaches and young people which deterred 'hidden' young people from claiming welfare support and thus becoming 'known'.
- 5.7 For the most part, the barriers feature around 'hidden' young people's experience, or their perceived/expected experience, with the Jobcentre Plus. This is in relation to the difficulties in applying for and maintaining welfare support; the experience of customer service; and issues around sanctioning.
- 5.8 Other external barriers include access to alternative finance and the stigma associated with claiming welfare support.

Summary and Recommendations

Prevention

- 5.9 Early intervention is crucial to prevent young people from becoming 'hidden' and thus experiencing long spells of unemployment and subsequent scarring effects. In line with this and the findings of the research, a number of recommendations have been developed for consideration and focus largely on interventions prior to compulsory education leaving age.

i) Improved careers education, information, advice and guidance

- 5.10 Careers education, information, advice and guidance (**CEIAG**) at a pre-16 level has a central role in preventing young people from becoming 'hidden'. Examples provided in the research indicate that, following education, a large barrier to employment for young people is uncertainty about their career aspirations/interests; self-confidence in their ability to achieve their desired career goals; and the knowledge of how to achieve desired career goals.
- 5.11 As part of the wider CEIAG agenda¹⁹ which aims to ensure all young people in GM have access to a high standard of CEIAG, **it is recommended that young people who are identified as being at risk of becoming NEET/'hidden' are targeted to receive intensive CEIAG.** This aims to:
- ❖ raise their aspirations;
 - ❖ enable them to make informed decisions about their future;
 - ❖ identify clear pathways to employment in sectors of interest; and
 - ❖ engage in relevant activity and gain qualifications in line with this.
- 5.12 Employers have a central role in engaging young people with CEIAG. By offering mentoring and work experience opportunities, employers can demonstrate the value of the skills and knowledge developed at school and highlight a range of career opportunities available to young people. Moreover, by working with employers and engaging in work experience opportunities, young people are likely to develop the skills and experience necessary for the workplace, and thus increase their employability, reducing the chance of becoming 'hidden'.

¹⁹ Source: <http://neweconomymanchester.com/our-work/skills-employment/raising-participation>

- 5.13 Work is already underway in this area in GM, with employers and educational institutions working together through existing mechanisms, such as Bridge²⁰. It is suggested that this work continues at scale and at pace to ensure all pupils have the opportunity to benefit from employer engagement in education.
- 5.14 To ensure young people who become 'hidden' continue to have access to a high standard of CEIAG, **it is further recommended that training opportunities are made available to professionals/keyworkers that support 'hidden' young people to enhance their knowledge of the career information, advice and guidance landscape.** This aims to equip professionals/keyworkers with the knowledge to provide young people with a basic level of careers information, advice and guidance, and signpost them to relevant services.

ii) Increased focus on literacy and numeracy

- 5.15 The attainment of GCSE grade C in English and mathematics has become a standard pre-requisite for many recruiting employers, often included as essential criteria in job specifications, even for entry level roles. This is also evident in the requirements of entry level apprenticeship roles.
- 5.16 The research presented in this report suggests that many hidden' young people attend further education and achieve level two/three qualifications, however do not attain GCSE grade C in English and mathematics. This leads to question the relevance of vocational qualifications for entry to employment, without a baseline level in core skills.
- 5.17 In view of this, **it is recommended that additional support is made available for young people in further education, who are identified as at risk of leaving without achieving literacy and numeracy at a level 2, to support them with functional skills** (GCSE English and mathematics grade C equivalent).
- 5.18 Outside of formal education, it is recommended that further education providers work closely with smaller organisations supporting 'hidden' young people to explore innovative ways to offer and support young people to achieve functional skills at a level 2.
- 5.19 **Attention should also be given to working with and supporting employers to review recruitment processes** to ensure appropriate roles are accessible to young people, and the prerequisites stated are necessary for the post.

iii) Inclusion of Jobcentre Plus in education

- 5.20 In regards to the skills needed for employment, a large number of young people are described as leaving compulsory education without the basic, necessary skills. A recent survey conducted by the British Chambers of Commerce, for example, found more than three quarters (88%) of businesses believe that school leavers are unprepared for the world of work, with 27% stating they have not recruited a young person (aged 16-24) in the last year due to this²¹.
- 5.21 To better prepare young people for employment, **it is suggested that Jobcentre Plus have an increased presence in secondary schools to support young**

²⁰ Source: <http://bridgegm.co.uk/>

²¹ Source: <http://www.britishchambers.org.uk/press-office/press-releases/young-people-need-more-support-to-make-transition-from-education-to-work,-says-bcc.html>

people who are at risk of becoming ‘hidden’ to become work ready. Increased contact with the Jobcentre Plus will also aim to change the perceptions held by young people of the service offered by Jobcentre Plus, to make it more familiar and approachable for young people, if and when it is required.

5.22 To this effect, Jobcentre Plus have recently piloted a programme of engagement across 10 districts which aims to support schools to engage young people (aged 12-18) identified as at risk of becoming NEET or who face potential disadvantage in the labour market. The key learning generated by the Support for Schools pilot evaluation²² will provide a useful insight into best practice for implementation of this in GM.

iv) Improved tracking of young people

5.23 Due to the tracking mechanisms in place, young people typically become ‘hidden’ following compulsory education, and do not receive employment support until they actively present themselves to support agencies (mainly Jobcentre Plus), following a (potentially long) period of unemployment.

5.24 In line with the aims of the aforementioned Policy Participation and Performance group, **it is recommended that data regarding the activity and destinations of young people is consistently shared across a number of partners, including Jobcentre Plus, local authorities and further education institutions.** This will enable local authorities to better track and identify young people who are at risk of becoming NEET, and provide early interventions to prevent prolonged periods of unemployment.

5.25 In particular, **it is recommended that young people who withdraw from further education prematurely are identified promptly and are supported with advice and guidance to reengage in employment, education or training.**

Young people who become ‘hidden’

5.26 Failing to tailor provision to engage ‘hidden’ young people is likely to exclude this group from accessing employment help and support, and prevents GM from understanding the full extent of youth unemployment, and thus realising its reform vision. The following recommendations are suggested with a view to continuing support for ‘hidden’ young people, and understanding, in more detail, their needs and barriers to engagement.

v) A community-based approach

5.27 For reasons outlined in this report, the service offered by Jobcentre Plus is not accessed by ‘hidden’ young people in GM, who typically only engage with local community organisations that offer one-to-one support from a keyworker.

5.28 **It is suggested therefore, that the importance of community-based provision is recognised within the wider youth employment landscape, and support for ‘hidden’ young people in this format continues following the completion of Greater Manchester Talent Match.** This intends to ensure employment support is available and accessible for all young people in GM, and in particular, those who are not in receipt of out-of-work benefits.

²² Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575003/rr932-evaluation-of-jobcentre-plus-support-for-schools-programme.pdf

vi) Additional research

- 5.29 Whilst a community-based approach appears to be successful in supporting a large number of 'hidden' young people, this does not shed any light on which interventions in particular are effective for this cohort. **It is suggested that a second stage of research is undertaken to trial and identify what interventions/approaches best support 'hidden' young people** engaging with *Greater Manchester Talent Match*.
- 5.30 As highlighted in the report, the extent to which Talent Match beneficiaries are 'hidden' is problematic, as they are now 'known'. Therefore, whilst this cohort has provided a useful starting point for exploration of the 'hidden' group of young people, **it is suggested that additional research is undertaken with a larger sample of 'hidden' young people who do not engage with any employment support, to better understand their experiences; how to best engage with them; and what support would appeal to, and be effective for, them.**