

# TALENT MATCH

LONDON



# Reach out Enable Connect

So more young Londoners  
can help themselves  
into employment



If not for the people at Talent Match London  
I believe I would still be overcome with fear  
Never truly on my own  
Yet somehow still feeling alone  
And that I can't possibly go anywhere  
They met me and saw the person hiding within  
The louder and talkative me  
With the mischievous grin  
The one who wants to help others  
Especially those like herself  
Be an ear waiting to listen  
To all the words that were missing  
When they couldn't speak for themselves  
Talent Match is a gift to those of us  
whose voices are not so clear  
They stand with us, in support for  
what the world is about to hear.

Lateisha Dobbs, Talent Match London  
participant, Collage Arts

# Foreword from the Big Lottery Fund

**Talent Match is a test and learn programme with a focus on how we understand what works in helping young people who are unemployed. At the heart of the programme is a core belief that young people matter. We need to support them to fulfil their potential; from becoming 'work ready', securing employment or taking up enterprising opportunities. This progression is important. Long-term unemployment can seriously harm the future life prospects of young people, from lower earnings, further unemployment and more ill health later in life.**

The programme has not been without its challenges. Numerous partnerships have told us that the young people they are dealing with are not just furthest away from the labour market, they have multiple and complex issues and barriers which prevent them from accessing work. These needs take time to address and overcome but with the correct wrap around support they are not insurmountable and progress can be made. An important aspect of this progression is for partnerships to continue to adapt to these challenges, and share the learning from both their local evaluations and the national evaluation led by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University.

Now at the start of its third year of delivery, Talent Match is having a real impact. Over 10,000 young people have engaged with the programme and over 1,600 of these have secured employment; many of which have previously been classed as 'hidden'. We want our investment to have a deep and lasting impact. We also wanted to test new approaches and provide learning to influence policy and practice. The findings from this report combined with the early evaluation findings from Sheffield Hallam continue to give us the belief that this is possible and that the hard work is beginning to have a positive impact.

I wish Talent Match London continued luck in the remaining three years of the project.

**Matt Poole**  
Head of Funding – Talent Match

# Foreword from London Youth

**When London Youth was asked by our voluntary sector peers to create and lead the partnership which would deliver Talent Match in London, it was on the basis that we would put young people at the centre of the programme, and would make the principles of good youth work fundamental to the way the programme was delivered.**

For us, both of these things felt like absolute common sense: for more than two decades, successive governments have run programmes aimed at helping young people who are out of work to get into jobs. Throughout that time, the approaches of these programmes have tended to treat young people as the “problem”; with many assuming that somehow – when more than ten years of formal education have not succeeded – an 8 week to 12 week intervention of CV workshops and as many job applications as possible might suddenly transform their life chances.

We wanted to do things differently. Not because we were sure we would get it right, but because young people, employers, policy experts and our voluntary sector partners were all united in believing that what was currently available simply wasn't working.

So we've spent the past two years working with an incredibly dedicated and expert group of partners to find, engage and support young people who face the biggest barriers to work, and give those young people the space and security to begin to make positive choices, develop and realise their ambitions.

If this all sounds very worthy but horribly impractical, then we hope you read on as this report aims to convince you otherwise. An approach that puts young people first really can be more effective in the long term.

We hope you enjoy this report. I am incredibly grateful to the Big Lottery Fund for giving us the resources to try something new; to the partners who've been on the journey with us; and most of all to the young people who come forward and wanted to get the best for themselves from Talent Match London.

From the outset of the programme, we asked a group of young unemployed people what they wanted. They said simply: *“Don't let us down”*.

Two years in, across our partnership we still remember those words every day. We hope the learning we've uncovered gives the potential for others to develop and deliver even more opportunities for young people.

**Steph Taylor**  
Head of Talent Match London

**“From the outset of the programme, we asked a group of young unemployed people what they wanted. They said simply: ‘Don't let us down’”**

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# Executive Summary

**Of young Londoners aged between 16 and 24 years old (105,000 individuals) around 1 in 10 are classed as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training)<sup>1</sup>. Unemployment in the capital is also two and half times higher for young people than for those aged between 25 and 64 years old. Estimates suggest that the number of young people out of work and not claiming any unemployment related benefits is around 36,500<sup>2</sup>. This lack of engagement with the labour market is not only potentially damaging to the life outcomes of each of these young Londoners, but could increase costs to the Government, wider economy and society in the longer term.**

<sup>1</sup> NEET Statistics quarterly briefing July to September 2015, Department for Education and Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 19 November 2015

<sup>2</sup> This figure is derived from looking at the NEET figures (Department for Education, Q2, 2015) and the DWP numbers of young people not claiming out of work benefit (DWP Benefit Claimants data, May 2015 via Nomis), source London Youth and CESI

This report explores the impact that community partnerships and youth-led solutions can have on unemployment. It draws on two years of delivery and partnership working in London, and presents learning about supporting young people furthest from the labour market into positive opportunities to build their careers.

## Talent Match London

Talent Match London is a partnership of organisations testing innovative youth-led solutions to unemployment and sharing learning for social impact. Supported by the Big Lottery Fund, the programme is designed to build young people's confidence, resilience, networks and skills to enable them to enter and sustain work. The model was designed by young people, in partnership with employers and the voluntary sector and focuses on reaching out to those furthest from the labour market, and supporting them to access more and better opportunities to get into sustainable careers.

During two years of delivery:

- 939 young people have engaged, 41% of whom were not accessing any support prior to starting on Talent Match London
- 66% of young people completing the programme are now in employment; of these at least 53% remain working 6 months later
- 9% of young people completing the programme are now in self-employment

“While London offers many positive opportunities... the picture is changing rapidly, and many young people still are unable to take advantage.”

## What we have learned about young people

While London offers many positive opportunities – particularly in some key industries such as regeneration, culture and media – the picture is changing rapidly, and many young people still are unable to take advantage. Over 35,000 18-25 year olds in the boroughs in which Talent Match London operates are currently in receipt of no out of work benefits, despite not being in work or education. They are accessing no formal support – so Talent Match London can provide for them a vital first step to re-engagement.

## What have we learned about what works?

Our early hypothesis – that a focus on outreach; taking a ‘youth-centred’ approach; and long-term employer engagement – is still broadly right. But we have learnt in more depth about how the core approach could work and develop.

These core recommendations for programme commissioners and practitioners are:

- **Outreach:** Use innovative ways and youth work organisations to find and engage young people for whom previous employment programmes have failed, or for whom access to statutory services is challenging
- **Take a youth-centred approach:** Let young people define what their aspirations are, and put their needs and peer networks at the heart of how they progress
- **Employer engagement:** Design solutions with employers and ask them to provide opportunities for young people who are unemployed to explore possible future careers and develop the skills they need for work, prior to entering their first job

# The story so far...



- 1 Barking and Dagenham
- 2 Croydon
- 3 Enfield
- 4 Greenwich
- 5 Hackney
- 6 Haringey
- 7 Merton
- 8 Newham
- 9 Southwark
- 10 Tower Hamlets
- 11 Waltham Forest



# Part one

Context in London

## Where we started from, what we are doing

**Talent Match London is a youth-led partnership approach to supporting unemployed young people into positive and productive futures. Through a distinctive ‘youth work’ approach Talent Match London aims not only to get young people into jobs, but also to equip them with the skills, capabilities and desire to navigate a fulfilling career pathway. The programme is focused on the long term, equipping young people with ‘tools’ for life, rather than temporary quick fixes. Talent Match London is as much about testing different approaches and, learning from what already works, as inventing new solutions.**

Since 2014 Talent Match London has been working predominantly in seven boroughs: Barking and Dagenham, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Newham, Tower Hamlets, and Waltham Forest, with some specialist activity also extending into other parts of London.

The programme is funded by the Big Lottery Fund as part of its nationwide Talent Match programme. This was conceived in 2011 after a national consultation with young people, who said that accessing jobs and opportunities was the thing they needed most help with. The funding is aimed at supporting new ‘test and learn’ approaches to allow innovation in locations which data showed had the highest numbers of young people facing significant or particular challenges to employment.

Having supported young Londoners in their local communities for many years now, we know that some of them can and do face significant barriers. But they all have the potential to succeed if given the right support and the opportunity to shape their own future. So it was on this basis that we developed the Talent Match London approach.

Talent Match London is delivered through lead local partners, each of whom have a strong track record of supporting young people in the target group into work. Partners were selected through a rigorous process, ensuring not only that they have a track record of delivery but that they operate within the values of Talent Match, involving young people in the design and delivery and building strong on-the-ground partnerships with employers and statutory services. These lead partners co-ordinate a network of over 20 other local and specialist delivery organisations, supporting activities in the identified London boroughs.

Because Talent Match London is explicitly about finding new ways of working, the programme’s lead partners take different operational and organisational approaches according to the need in particular local areas. These are explained in more detail later in this report, and a full list of the partners is included as an appendix on page 32.

However, all of the partners work to a shared set of outcomes for young people, have clear delivery targets, and most importantly, share the same overarching goal, which is illustrated by the programme’s Journey of Change – set out to the right:

## Journey of Change

### 1. GETTING TO KNOW US

You meet staff from the Talent Match London programme near where you live, at a workshop or youth event.

### 2. GETTING TO KNOW YOU

A Talent Match London staff member will speak to you about the programme and get to know you and what you need to access opportunities.

### 3. EXPLORE

You will take part in short activities and workshops with other young people to discover what you like and what you might want to develop.

### 4. TALENT PLAN

You and your support worker will start your Talent Plan which you will continue to work on together throughout the programme. This will look at your personal development and what you want to do in the future.

### 5. SKILL UP

You will start developing your employability skills and have the chance to visit an employer. You might also take part in more practical workshops on topics like money management.

### 6. FOCUS

The programme will become much more focussed on what your career goals are and developing job specific skills. You will have the opportunity to volunteer, shadow professionals and learn about starting your own business. You will be supported to apply for work placements and training courses.

### 7. ACHIEVE

You will be supported into employment and training opportunities.

### 8. SUSTAIN

We will continue to keep in touch with you for a period of at least 6 months before you become a Talent Match London Alumni.

## The London context for young people out of work

Borough	Job Seeker's Allowance	Employment Support Allowance	Single Parent	Others on Income Related Benefits	Total on out of work benefits	Estimated number of NEETs aged 18-24	Estimated Number of NEETs aged 18-24 NOT claiming out of work benefits
Barking and Dagenham	670	650	590	100	2,010	3,400	1,400
Croydon	910	1,010	880	270	3,070	5,200	2,100
Enfield	880	750	740	150	2,520	4,300	1,800
Greenwich	680	820	660	130	2,290	3,900	1,600
Hackney	710	640	480	80	1,910	3,300	1,400
Haringey	740	680	410	110	1,940	3,300	1,400
Merton	360	340	260	50	1,010	1,700	700
Newham	990	770	450	80	2,290	3,900	1,600
Southwark	910	640	570	140	2,260	3,900	1,600
Tower Hamlets	880	690	360	90	2,020	3,500	1,500
Waltham Forest	820	550	380	80	1,830	3,100	1,300
Non-TML Borough	9,720	10,430	6,840	1,480	28,470	48,500	20,100
<b>LONDON</b>	<b>18,270</b>	<b>17,970</b>	<b>12,620</b>	<b>2,760</b>	<b>51,620</b>	<b>88,000</b>	<b>36,500</b>

NEET figures are from the NEET Statistics, Department for Education, Q2, 2015. All benefits related data are from DWP Benefit Claimants data, May 2015 (via Nomis). All estimates are derived from Census 2011 data (also on Nomis).

London's economy is recovering quicker than other parts of the UK, following the downturn, which began in 2009. As a result, some sectors – including construction and regeneration, retail, culture, media and technology – are experiencing growth, and jobs are being created. And the labour market is becoming more complex and definitions of 'employment' (in practical if not technical terms) are becoming blurred. For instance, some estimate that in two years up to 18,000 people will have registered as Uber drivers; many young people now work on zero hours contracts or in other freelance capacity. This brings both challenges and opportunities.

Many young people are taking advantage of the opportunities within some growth sectors, and employers are working hard to ensure that young Londoners do have the chance to take the jobs that are being created. In some areas, however, employers still report skills shortages which mean they don't necessarily have a large enough local labour pool for particular jobs and industries; or simply don't know how and where to recruit and develop talent from within London.

While many 'employability' programmes and initiatives are aimed at supporting skills development to meet these needs, or offering people sufficient support to move from a state of unemployment into existing vacancies, Talent Match London is explicitly concerned with a wider challenge.

Despite economic growth, in many areas of London, and among particular communities, youth unemployment levels remain unacceptably high given the opportunities that are out there. The official unemployment figures suggest there is a 'core' group of young people who are not accessing any opportunities at all, and the number of young people in this group has not fallen despite many years of initiatives.

Our learning is that this group is not a single homogenous group. Young people will move into and out of work, or into and out of education and other programmes. But nevertheless they face barriers of such significance that they are

not able to sustain work in the long term, even if they manage to secure jobs from time to time. There are also significant numbers of young people across London who are simply outside of the system and not claiming any unemployment benefits or accessing support at all. It is these two related groups to whom Talent Match London has sought to offer support, and for whom our learning is most relevant.

### Who are the young people who face the biggest barriers to employment?

During the first year of Talent Match London the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (now named the Learning and Work Institute) conducted research on the demographic of unemployed young people in participating Talent Match London boroughs. The research found that in these boroughs, in addition to the 'known' numbers of young people out of work and claiming benefits (148,000) there were another (56,000) young people who could be described as 'hidden'.

Our learning suggests that in comparison to 'other' long-term unemployed young people those who are 'hidden' are more likely to be: male, non-parents, and without a disability. We might assume that parents and young people with disabilities are more likely to be able to access other benefits, so therefore would have less chance of dropping out of the system altogether.

Beyond these characteristics, our learning to date is that both long-term unemployed young people who are accessing benefits and those who are 'hidden', face a variety of barriers, which prevent them accessing or sustaining employment support. These range from perhaps more obvious factors – lack of qualifications and skills, childcare or other caring responsibilities, or ill health – through to things that other employability programmes are traditionally not designed to offer support with, such as a lack of confidence, a lack of work experience or (perceived) prejudice of employers.

“The official unemployment figures suggest there is a 'core' group of young people who are not accessing any opportunities at all, and the number of young people in this group has not fallen despite many years of initiatives.”



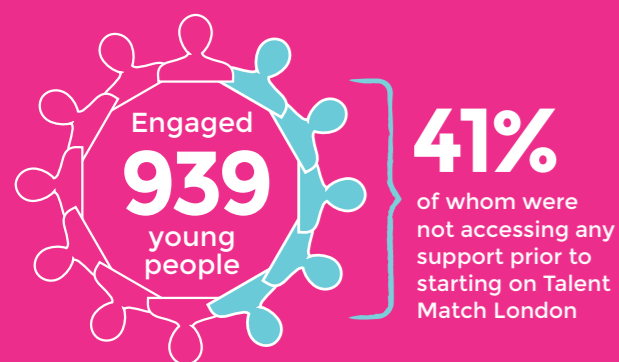
Barriers to employment for participants on Talent Match London:



Own your learning

Given this context, and the barriers young people face, we believe we have had some success as a partnership in engaging young people facing serious barriers, and giving them the opportunity to build their confidence, resilience, networks and skills to find work or employment. We can say with some confidence that this learning is valid because of the number of young people engaged to date, and the range and scale of successful outcomes. This is not at all to say that everything we have done has been a success, and the learning from the programme is just as relevant to us as to others. But it does give us a robust basis on which to make recommendations.

## Since January 2014 Talent Match London has achieved the following outcomes:



**66%** of young people completing the programme are now in employment;

**53%** of these at least remain working 6 months later

**9%** of these are now in self-employment

**In addition to this, young people tell us that taking part in Talent Match London has increased their confidence, their resilience and their work-related networks so that they feel more able to get a job and more likely to keep a job when they get one. We will evaluate this formally from the start of 2016.**

Our learning is broken down into three straightforward sections:

**Outreach:** Focus on how to find and engage young people for whom previous programmes or initiatives may have failed or who have very little contact with or ability to access relevant opportunities.

**Taking a youth-centred approach:** Instead of treating young people like passive users of a service, and in need of help, our approach lets them define what their aspirations are (and these may change and evolve over time) – and puts their needs and dealing with the challenges they face at the heart of how they progress.

**Employer engagement:** Employers are in our experience very keen to bring in new talent, employ young Londoners and do more for those people who have significant needs. But they can only do this if programmes are designed with their input, and they feel part of the young person's journey rather than being the recipient of 'job ready' young people who come out at the end of a process.

Under each of these headings there are specific pieces of learning which have influenced our policy and practice recommendations. Some of these are new ideas, some are built on existing practice, which has been extended or evolved within our partnership.

# Outreach

This section explores how young people who are unemployed or hidden can be effectively engaged, covering:

- Who is best placed to reach out to young people who are not engaged?
- Where and how should this outreach happen?
- What can organisations gain by working together?

## What are the best outreach methods to engage young people?

Our learning is that in general, far from the myth that young people do not want to work, many simply do not know where to get the support to help them transition to employment. Many programmes do outreach work, with specialist workers working within communities. However, too many programmes rely on young people 'coming to them' rather than reaching out to them. For most young people it could be argued that this is fine and they do readily attend and participate. For some, the barriers they face mean that leaving home is not an option; or going to different areas or locations presents – real or perceived – threats to them. For these, a different approach is needed.

One of the things we've seen work successfully within our partnership is peer-to-peer outreach – where young people themselves reach out to others within the community. The success of this approach is illustrated by the fact that the most common responses from young people on why they signed up to Talent Match London is, "I heard about it from a friend" and "I just thought I'd see what happens."

"Basically, one of my friends used to be with Sharaf, he used to have these 1-1 meetings with him, like mentoring. I came along with him once and Sharaf started talking to me about Talent Match [London] because I wasn't doing anything else so I thought I'd sign up and see what it's about."

**Kamran, Young person**

"My brother told me to come to the Apprenticeship fair...I heard Talent Match [London] would be helping us out in a different way and I thought, 'You know what, I'll sign up'...So when I first got the help, I thought 'This has been really helpful,' and the second time I was like, 'This is great, I might as well come every week!'"

**Fatima, Young person**

## Two examples of the impact of peer-to-peer outreach:

In south London ex-gang members have begun to approach Talent Match London for support after hearing about the positive experiences some of their friends were having. Meanwhile in Hackney, the use of young people as 'Talent Scouts' – trained and supported peer outreach workers – has engaged a significant and wider network of young people.

This kind of peer outreach is effective as it can help young people understand what is on offer in language they relate to. Language used when engaging young people was identified as a key influencer in whether disengaged young people feel comfortable to engage. The programme's delivery partners identified terms such as 'Employability Workshop' as an obstacle to engagement. The young people on the youth board expressed that it was too formal and so they came up with ways to sell the workshop to other young people that focuses on the opportunities it will give them to build their confidence, meet new people and have fun.

However, young people do need sufficient support and training to deliver effective outreach. Some of our partners have experienced challenges where young people have attracted other young people to the programme who were not suitable but as a result have attracted people to the programme who don't need it. So care needs to be taken to avoid creating disappointment and frustration among outreach teams and young people by making sure delivery is networked into the community and young people can be directed to other suitable provision if necessary.



## Location Location Location

There are still too many programmes which simply expect young people to turn up and join in. While for some this is a completely reasonable expectation, for others it is not going to happen because of their circumstances or personal challenges. And the longer a young person has been unemployed or hidden for, the more creative you need to be in seeking them out. There may be significant reasons why young people simply don't feel able to engage. For instance, we've worked with a number of young parents who (mistakenly) have feared that by seeking help through the job centre they risk losing their children.

Our teams – including peer outreach teams – spend a lot of time targeting places where young people choose to go: youth clubs, community centres, leisure centres, cinemas, youth services, GP surgeries, libraries and other places young people may access – and reassuring them that they can become part of Talent Match London without fear. Beyond this, delivery partners working with young people with disabilities have been reaching out to local clubs and holding marketing events that help a young person feel that the barriers they face will be understood by that organisation. There has also been targeted outreach done in take away shops and barbers.



## Building partnerships

Given the diverse nature of the needs that young people have, it quickly became clear to us that one organisation or approach could not effectively find or open up to all young people who might need the services of Talent Match London. Our partnership has specialist focus on supporting young people with disabilities and young parents and carers. But also within the locality-based partnerships, we have experience working around homelessness, with ex-offenders, in coaching, enterprise, media and sport. Outreach workers across the partnerships have reported that this diversity in specialism has been incredibly beneficial in enabling them to support and refer young people more effectively.

The programme has maintained a partnership approach by including collaboration as a target for partners and holding network events for outreach and support workers from across the partnership. The purpose of these networking meetings has been to share understanding of barriers and methodologies and to familiarise workers

(whose paths would not ordinarily cross) so that they are better able to refer young people and support each other.

Talent Match London partners have undertaken a targeted awareness raising and outreach campaign, working directly with Pupil Referral Units, Social Services, Probation Services and Family Information Service. Also they are carrying out dedicated outreach directly on the estates surrounding their 'Hub' to reach out to young people who are engaged in anti-social behaviour.

**Partnership events where local delivery organisations work together to allow young people interested in getting support to decide which organisation would be best for them based on the partner's specialism. In Haringey, for example, a young person might receive different support from different organisations during their journey, with delivery partners coming to them on site at the Chocolate Factory in Wood Green.**

## Practitioner recommendations

- Involve young people in your outreach: youth driven marketing is an effective tool to engage hard to reach young people.
- Build partnerships: who are the best organisations to contact different young people? Collaborate with partners who will lead you to places you can't reach.
- Engage young people where they are: those who aren't engaging may be at home, in youth clubs and community spaces, shopping centres and on estates.

## Recommendations to policy-makers and commissioners

- Design programmes that acknowledge and resource the role of community and voluntary organisations and up-skill staff in youth involvement.
- Build in time and resources for partnership management and engagement. Incentivise collaboration rather than competition for easy wins.
- Set targets or incentives for engaging with young people currently outside the system. Otherwise they will be ignored in favour of easy to reach young people.

# Taking a youth-centred approach to personal development

This section describes our learning around involving young people in the design and delivery of the programme and their own journey, covering:

- The importance of providing personalised support to young people
- Giving those young people choices through that support
- Supporting young people to mentor and help each other

Many programmes aimed at helping young people into work tend to start from a position that the young people need to be consumers of support and development. Despite the 'black box' approach, the experience of young people we have worked with, particularly those facing significant barriers, is that employment support remains generic and basic.

We began Talent Match London with the aim of turning that around, and putting young people's needs first, supporting their aspirations and allowing them to shape their own journey. A major part of this is ensuring that every young person joining the programme has their own Talent Match London advisor to work with them, and has their own Talent Plan, that they develop themselves, and evolve and revise throughout their journey on the programme.

"Talent Match [London] does all these things others don't do. You've got Beth and Deji and they talk to us individually and ask us what we want to do and they help us and get us pathways for how we're gonna get there."

**Cookie, Young person**

## CASE STUDY

**S has been part of Talent Match London since early October and has caring responsibilities for his parents. He has done a number of odd jobs but nothing long-term and had been out of work for over a year before joining. S developed his own Talent Plan with the support of Talent Match London staff and his peers, and identified his two main interests as fixing and maintaining bikes and computers. Meeting and supporting other young people who'd had similar experiences to him helped increase his confidence, and he explored the possibility of turning these pursuits into employment opportunities. He engaged with local employers, accessed a free training course and through doing this showed his potential to a local bike shop that offered him the chance to volunteer. S is now actively looking for work with the new skills gained and staff at his voluntary placement are involved in supporting his job search.**

## Personalised support

Participants across Talent Match London work with an advisor, mentor or youth worker to design a development programme which is catered to them. As participants start to understand more about their own needs and aspirations, this change is reflected in the support they receive.

## Young people exercising real choice

Many young people join Talent Match London with limited ideas about what they would like to do. Others often describe this as a lack of ambition. However, our learning is that young people who say – predominantly – that their career preferences are for retail, teaching or youth work are only reflecting the fact that these are often the only 'professionals' that they have access to.

They are encouraged and supported through Talent Match London to experience different aspects of work and workplaces, and to understand employers and the range of options they might ultimately have. Over time their ambitions and ideas often shift and evolve.

Additionally, some young people on the programme do choose to go into retail – or other – jobs early in their journey. Instead of considering this as a 'job done' for the programme, our learning is that young people can and need to be supported while in work, to progress their own development, while at the same time earning some money and gaining the practical experience they need to enhance their later prospects.

“The support worker customises the Talent Match London journey to the individual young person and listens to their needs. After discussions with them, she researches areas of work that might be best and helps them attend training. She keeps in touch with them after not hearing from them and motivates them to return and achieve their goals.”

**Cassie, Talent Match London Youth board member, during her 5 Point Youth Pledge visit**

## Peer-to peer-mentoring

Casual peer support from group work has also proved to be an effective tool for maintaining engagement, even if it is not in a designated framework of 'peer facilitators'. Talent Match London local delivery partners have developed peer group support systems, for example, through Youth Hubs which are open to participants throughout the working day. This peer support system has given way to the formation of several 'clubs' which have helped keep participants engaged and motivated.

“As young people were signing up to the programme, we realised that we needed a weekly event or activity to make them come together as a group and form a more cohesive and supportive peer group environment. We provide free food and drink as an incentive. Participant J had disengaged with the programme after signing up. The Breakfast Club has allowed her to re-engage with the programme. It gave her an easy gateway to come in and share her hobby and talent for baking which was received positively and encouraged her to return the following week.”

**Taz, support worker**

“Most [other employability] programmes are mainly individual help, so just you and a support worker, but on Talent Match [London], you've got that, but then you've got others you can interact with and everyone's kind of in the same boat, there's no judgement.”

**Lateisha, Haringey**

## Practitioner recommendations

- Offer programmes in spaces where young people want to be e.g. youth clubs, community centres, at home.
- Build programmes that are flexible – what one young person achieves in a single month may take another twice as long.
- Support young people to shape and design their own development and opportunities.

## Recommendations to policy-makers and commissioners

- Resource different models and places of delivery for programmes recognising that not all young people engage with institutions immediately.
- Allow risk and false starts – so build resources in to allow flexibility within programmes.
- Incentivise youth leadership and involvement, making it a central part of any commissioned organisation's delivery.

# Employer engagement

This section describes our learning about working with employers so that young people have the most chance of securing and sustaining work, covering:

- The importance of a varied work experience offer
- Focus on basic and 'soft' skills
- Helping employers to understand young people

Since the early development of Talent Match London, employers have told us of their desire to support more young people from different backgrounds into employment. But they've also told us of their frustration at being at the 'end of the chain' from many work-related programmes, which as a result means that young people who join them are not ready to make a success of their job.

The engagement of employers, whether from national, local or small and medium-sized enterprises, has been crucial since the initial development of Talent Match London. The original Steering Group included representatives from Business in the Community and the London Chambers of Commerce.

Large employers such as Barclays, British Land, Microsoft and O2-Telefónica, were also consulted in the planning process to understand their needs and how the programme can fit within their corporate responsibility objectives and other youth initiatives. We also connected with the Chartered Institute for Professional Development (CIPD) through their Learning to Work network, linking in to their work on closing the gap between young people and employers.

## Expose disengaged young people to different career options

Young people joining Talent Match London appear to have suffered particularly from the lack of structured careers advice and guidance available in schools in recent years. This is predominantly true for disengaged young people, who often have little interaction with employers and therefore lack an understanding of the labour market. 35% of the young people we asked cited lack of knowledge of the labour market as a barrier to employment. Our learning is that offering a variety of opportunities – starting in most cases with small scale, short (1 day) exposure – and then building to longer term structured placements can help young people build their knowledge, aspiration and readiness to ultimately go into a job.

**We have run two successful 'Hook Up' community events, which aim to bring together potential Talent Match London participants and employers. Put together by young Talent Scouts, the first event took place on Dalston Roof Park with a second, smaller event in the Pembury Estate, Hackney. The employers who attended the fair came with real work opportunities for the young people and were challenged to promote themselves in fun ways such as in a Dragon's Den style panel. Music from local artists encouraged young people to attend and brings the community together.**

Young people also identified this exposure to employers as a positive feature of the programme.

“...something different. That's what Talent Match [London] brought to the estate. They didn't bring [the same employers] and all those lies to get you jobs. They brought people that are actually big employers that normal people aren't going to meet...the young people just chat to them and they tell you the procedure and make them feel comfortable.”

**Javade, Hackney**



## Focus on basic and 'soft' skills – technical skills can come later

While 35% of hidden young people on Talent Match London cited a lack of qualification as a barrier to employment, the vast majority of employers do not prioritise qualifications when trying to fill a position. 97% percent of UK employers believe 'soft skills' are important to their current business success, and over half say skills like communication and teamwork are more important than traditional academic results<sup>3</sup>.

However young people, who have been unemployed and disengaged for long periods, tend to lack the basic building blocks of confidence, of networks and of resilience. They have reported that they can be nervous when considering going into employment and are cynical about their prospects of getting jobs. One local partner reports that many of their young people seeking first-time employment opportunities are lacking the necessary life skills to achieve or even apply for some of those opportunities.

Talent Match London focuses on using youth work skills – consistency of support, non-judgemental help and advice, signposting and coaching – to help young people build that confidence, and progress their emotional development. Employers are very used to taking on graduates, for example, not on the basis of technical skills but because they see that there is the potential for them to develop and excel. Employers seem to be more comfortable taking on people they can trust to be diligent and willing to learn. So the role of programmes such as Talent Match London is to help the young people to be ready for when the opportunities open up.

<sup>3</sup> Development Economics Ltd, January 2015 and YouGov Plc, September 2014



## Work with employers throughout the journey – so they better understand young people’s needs

In our regular dialogue with employers – particularly smaller businesses – they share many frustrations that while they would like to employ more young Londoners, they don’t necessarily have the time to give them the support that they might need. So one of our most crucial pieces of learning is the importance of continuing to support young people as they begin work – and to work with employers to help them address particular challenges which might affect the young person’s chances of success.

Working with small business at a local level is also important. In Haringey, the delivery model tries to take advantage of the opportunities for growth in London’s creative sector by delivering Talent Match London in workspaces provided for new businesses who play a role in supporting the development of young people on Talent Match London.

### CASE STUDY

12 months ago, RB found a job at Apple through working with Talent Match London. Alongside this he had an idea for a business and we provided continued support. RB used his income to make test products and sell them over social media. To produce more was costly and he faced a number of barriers in making his dream a reality. Talent Match London helped him stay focussed and build his confidence to re-work his business plan. Staff helped him make local connections to source suppliers and identify his USP. His ideas changed over time and he took on new skills through leaving Apple and getting an internship. RB made a substantial profit and is looking forward to the future. RB says: *“With the support from Talent Match London I was starting to see what other people could see in me and started believing in myself a bit more and not to be scared of taking risks.”*

### Practitioner recommendations

- Build in capacity and opportunity to train and develop youth workers to understand employer needs and opportunities.
- Help young people build their own knowledge of the workplace and broader labour market through multiple work experience opportunities – from tasters through to longer placements.
- Consult employers in the designing and development of employment support services.

### Recommendations to policy-makers and commissioners

- Resource and support quality career advice and guidance as part of employability programmes, so youth workers can meet real market needs.
- Incentivise and encourage employers to learn and change practice so they can sustain young people in jobs.
- Resource creative collaboration between groups of small employers.

# Conclusion

Talent Match London provides not only the skills, but the confidence, resilience, and networks that young people need as they set out to grab every opportunity the capital has to offer. We have had a challenging but brilliant two years, and we're really proud of what we've learnt from our successes and our failures.

We're essentially testing a hypothesis that good youth work, embedded in communities and connected to the labour market, can play an important part in supporting young people furthest from the labour market to both find, and keep work in the long term. We believe there is a significant role for partnerships like ours to play, and we'll be using our Big Lottery Fund investment over the coming 3 years to explore and refine this further.

Capturing what's not worked is a crucial part of our ethos and our reporting, and it is through this that we've grown and adapted the programme to best respond to young people's feedback. As with any innovation, we will spend some of the investment getting things wrong; but we hope we've demonstrated that this an inevitable part of taking new approaches and learning, and we'll continue to build on what works to improve our delivery and help others to do the same.

A flavour of some of things that didn't go so well:

- We initially built a pathway for young people interested in setting up their own business to follow. But this didn't work because it felt to be too big a jump by young people from localised support and they told us that early development of enterprise skills and the embedding of these throughout their journey, would benefit all young people.
- Putting young people in unpaid leadership roles meant that we were excluding those who couldn't afford to attend sessions or who missed out on paid employment because of this however much they saw the benefit. We now pay all youth leaders London Living Wage and for many, this being their first taste of employment (delivering peer support to other young people) is a great bridge into a future career.
- Over-supporting young people on the practical tasks related to getting a job such as CV writing or interview prep isn't the best use of time. We've learnt that if we support young people to build their confidence, resilience and work-related networks they can get their own job, and feel empowered and enabled to do so.

**It is our aim next to build on our recommendations here, to further test them out in practice, and to better connect with others in this space. We're always looking for organisations and individuals who are interested in working with us to do this, in an operational or strategic capacity – and we'd love for you to get in touch and join us on our journey.**



# Appendix

## Methodology

The learning set out in this report is drawn from a number of sources, which in combination provide a broad and critical view of the programme. At the programme's inception the learning was built principally on two sources – quarterly delivery reports from the programme's six lead delivery partners which provide the core qualitative data; and real-time quantitative data uploaded by all partners onto the Salesforce CRM, from which monthly data reports are produced. The quantitative data is drawn from Common Data Framework (CDF) questionnaires, a 35-question survey completed by each programme participant at the point of joining the programme and again at 3, 6, 12, 18 and 24 month intervals. The CDF includes demographic data, areas of employment interest, information of individuals' current and recent employment and education experience, and self-assessments of levels of confidence.

The partners' quarterly reports provide crucial learning about both the successes and challenges of delivery to particular communities of location, interest and experience; and the individual-focused CDF data reports enable cross-referencing in order to identify trends and opportunities for focused remedial action for particular groups.

Over the first two years of the programme new approaches have been designed to complement, explore, develop and challenge the data drawn from the two key sources, as follows:

Quarterly meetings with youth workers supporting programme participants have explored in more detail areas of success and concern highlighted in partnership reports and they have enabled the workers to engage in valuable peer learning and networking. During these meetings workers have also completed Process Questionnaires detailing

their experiences of delivering the programme which have also provided valuable insights into how best to work with young participants – not only in terms of core delivery but also into how best to engage young people with the high level of data capture required from them for CDF completion. Many of these workers also take part in bi-annual meetings with DWP to develop effective cross-partnership relationships with Job Centre Plus offices.

Twice yearly partnership events – known as Test & Learn events – where learning can be shared and explored by managers, workers and young people involved in the delivery of the programme have been an invaluable tool to engage all stakeholders in the strategic aims of the programme. Many elements of these events were planned and delivered by young people involved in delivery of the programme and in some cases those who are participants on the programme, which has had a great benefit in ensuring that the strategic view has remained tethered to young people's needs and experiences of the programme.

Over the course of the first two years of the programme youth-led approaches to programme development and learning have been particularly valuable in gauging programme participants' experience and in ensuring that the programme is both serving the needs of young people and that young people are supported to shape the developing programme. These approaches include focus groups with young people, visits to delivery organisations to ensure appropriate levels of accessibility and involvement, and towards the end of the period, *My Story*, which employs a longitudinal approach to participants' experiences through the programme.



# Talent Match London Partners

## Delivery Partners

3SC  
Barnardos  
City and Hackney Mind  
City Gateway  
Collage Arts  
Community Links  
Enterprise Enfield  
Fashion Enter  
Gingerbread  
Groundwork  
HBV Enterprise  
Hackney Council for  
Voluntary Services  
Immediate Theatre  
Kaleidoscope College  
Kori  
Mencap  
Metropolitan Housing  
My Social Innovation Limited  
Off Centre  
Poplar Harca  
Ravensbourne  
Rinova  
Skyway  
St Giles Trust  
Street League  
The Prince's Trust  
The Royal Association  
for Deaf People  
The Royal Society of  
the Blind  
Ways into Work  
West Ham United  
Community Sports Trust  
Working with Men

## Strategic Partners

Association of Colleges  
Barclays  
BITC  
Business in the Community  
Careers Development Group  
Department for Work and  
Pensions  
ERSA  
Greater London Authority  
Jobcentre Plus  
Learning and Work Institute  
London Chamber of Commerce  
London Councils  
London Enterprise Panel  
London Voluntary  
Service Council  
Marks & Spencer  
Mayor's Fund for London  
Microsoft  
Peabody  
Shaw Trust CDG  
Transport for London  
The Black Training and  
Enterprise Group  
YouthNet

“Employment support  
for young people is  
about supporting  
them to be an active  
participant, not a  
passive recipient”

**Talent Match London  
Youth Committee**



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