

Foundational Economy Innovation Fund Yearbook 2023-24



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**FOUNDATIONAL
ECONOMY
INNOVATION FUND**

Introduction

The Foundational Economy Innovation Fund is providing grants for businesses and organisations working in or with Greater Manchester’s ‘foundational’ or ‘everyday economy’ to trial new ideas and become more resilient. Launched in June 2023, the fund is awarding a total of £1 million over two years.

The foundational economy refers to the parts of the economy people depend on for their daily needs. It includes sectors like adult social care, early education, childcare, retail, and leisure and hospitality – activity that underpins places, supports other parts of the economy and improves people’s wellbeing.

In the fund’s first phase, 40 projects were awarded initial grants of £10,000 and were provided with expert support, to develop or trial ideas and innovations over a six-month period. The second phase will award grants of up to £60,000 to 15 projects.

Delivering a thriving and productive economy in all parts of Greater Manchester is one of the key priorities of the Greater Manchester Strategy – ‘Our People, Our Place’.

Why Greater Manchester is supporting the foundational economy

The foundational economy provides the goods and services we rely on for our daily needs. Sectors like social care, childcare, retail and hospitality provide the foundations upon which the rest of our economy and society are built.

During the pandemic the true value of the foundational economy became apparent, but these sectors are still overlooked and undervalued. Businesses and organisations struggle to attract investment from the private sector, and conversations about innovation tend to focus on high-tech industries.

Through the Foundational Economy Innovation Fund, Greater Manchester is taking a different and

distinctive approach. The Fund is providing grants to a broad range of innovative projects, while giving them the support they need to develop their ideas further. With around 40% of Greater Manchester's workforce employed in the foundational economy, we need to find ways to improve resilience, boost productivity and increase wages if we are to become a more prosperous place.

The foundational economy is powered by thousands of people, serving the needs of millions more. Even marginal improvements – in how a business operates, or the way a service is delivered – could have a massive impact. Supported by GM Business Growth Hub as our delivery partner, the projects have made fantastic progress so far and we are excited to see what comes next.

Cllr Bev Craig, Leader of Manchester City Council and Greater Manchester lead for Economy



The Participants:

Early Years and Childcare (0-5 years)

Brighter Beginnings

Developing affordable, eco-friendly play resources from recycled materials for early years settings.

Early Years Alliance

A training pathway to bring new parents, career-changers and those aged 50+ into the workforce.

Ladybird Childcare

A practical and first-hand approach to upskilling parents and attracting them to work in the sector.

Poppinz

An online marketplace to connect families who have children under five with childcare providers.

Social adVentures

Tackling recruitment issues and using forest school education as a way of delivering childcare differently.

Unlimited Potential

Implementing a 'positive fatherhood' approach, including recruiting more men into the workforce.

Wraparound Partnership

A digital offer to better connect families with additional needs children to appropriate providers.

YouChooseWork.com

Directly connecting childcare and adult social care providers with the temporary workforce.

The Participants: Health and Social Care

Equal Care Co-Op

Exploring the benefits of increasing data availability for carers, care teams and recipients of care.

Greater Manchester Integrated Care

Developing the PA workforce to better support ill and disabled adults and children.

Great Places Housing Group

Training, coaching and in-work support for long-term unemployed housing association tenants.

Made By Mortals

Staff training via immersive learning experiences, including performance, audio and visual art.

Manchester Care and Repair

A tech portal to streamline referrals from hospital discharge into post-hospital discharge support.

Persona Care and Support

A new career development and training programme to upskill social care workers for leadership roles.

PossAbilities

A digital library of activity ideas for PAs to better engage and support adults with learning disabilities.

Quic

A digital solution to help care homes with residents who have diabetes and other long-term conditions.

The Participants: Health and Social Care

Social Sense

Integrating a care management app into a care home, increasing resident-family interaction.

Spreading Our Net

A new approach to addressing loneliness, focused on strengthening sustainable local networks.

Trafford Community Collective

A community-based engagement approach to system change and working with older people.

Wisterias Care Management Software

Improving operational efficiency in the social care sector by streamlining workflow processes.

The Participants: Hospitality and Leisure

A Brilliant Thing

Localised skill development, wellbeing support and employee development in the sector.

Cabasa

Supporting the development of locally-produced natural fabric dye supply chains.

CERT Property

A hyper-local supply chain business model looking to utilise abandoned buildings.

Green Street Pioneers

A reusable food and drink container scheme which includes perks for independent cafes and takeaways.

Marketing Manchester

Exploring opportunities to increase staff recruitment and retention amongst hotels.

The Clever Carbon Company

Reusable shower dispenser and wash formula for the hotel market, supplied via a takeback scheme.

The Modernist Society

A geo-location based mobile app to facilitate heritage based architectural tourism.

Veg Box People

Shared transportation between small-scale local food producers to lower costs and reduce emissions.

WalkSafe

Supporting the safety of employees when travelling to and from work in the night-time economy.

The Participants:

Retail and Personal Services

Age UK Manchester

Micro-local creative recycling and upcycling of charity shop donations through to point of sale.

Altrincham Business Improvement District

A flexible, turnkey cargo bike solution service for small businesses and wraparound support.

Automedi

Recycling retail plastic waste with decentralised 3D print vending machines.

By Inspiration

Communications management software, including customisable automated message management.

Dustid

Streamlining the online gifting process by using mobile phone numbers in place of shipping address.

Happy Linen Co

A digital tool for micro/SME retailers, giving simplified logistics, operations and data management.

Nornir

Enlisting Probation Community Payback Teams to produce food supplies for donation to austerity retail.

Second Earth

An e-cargo bike last mile delivery service, including user-friendly delivery management software.

The ParTimer

Better connecting the part-time workforce and employers with stable employment opportunities.

The Reveller

A sustainable craft beer hub that utilises re-usable bottles to provide keg quality beer.



Kerry Tottingham, Co-Director, explains how the Bury-based community interest company is helping to address major problems in the hospitality sector.

These include insufficient repeat customer engagement, high employee turnover, and lack of progression routes for staff.

A Brilliant Thing CIC

brilliantthing.co.uk

Why did you apply?

In a busy catering environment, with a high workforce turnover, fluctuating customers and skill shortages, the social value created by collaborating with communities is not often prioritised. This means the hospitality industry misses out on benefits such as increased staff retention and fulfilment, upskilled teams, and improved local relationships that lead to increased customers and loyalty.

We wanted to address workforce wellbeing in the hospitality sector, using collaboration between business and community as a tool to attract, engage and develop new, long-term hospitality careers. And to support chefs and front of house staff to have pride in their careers and strive to develop.

Tell us about the project

We worked with Bury-based Cosalea across their pubs,

restaurants and coffee shops on a collaborative project called CAFE (Community Action: Foundational Economy). This focused on strengthening employee engagement, increasing food margins, and building a vibrant local network of customers, suppliers and collaborators.

What have you achieved?

Leadership development coaching was provided, along with one-to-one and group sessions to help staff to create a supportive, positive team culture. The focus was on creating brilliant customer experiences, confidence and community leadership skills.

We held Community Connection events themed around Wellbeing, Creativity and Enterprise; these supported local social enterprises and community focused businesses to develop, network and engage with the community. This also gave staff opportunities

to develop event management skills.

A Food Development programme was led by an award winning Bury-based chef with Michelin star and commercial experience, who worked with Cosalea chefs to create street food style dishes with local hero ingredients. The project also improved relationships between staff through teambuilding workshops.

What does the future hold?

We'll continue to create social value on the high street in Greater Manchester by collaborating with businesses and communities to create vibrant, welcoming, sustainable places.





Age UK Manchester spotted an opportunity to grow its retail offer through creative redesign and recycling.

Rick Hartley, Retail and Income Generation Manager, talks about reducing waste by giving donated clothing, accessories, homeware and furniture a new lease of life.

Age UK Manchester

ageuk.org.uk/manchester

Why did you apply?

Through a pop-up shop at Hatch in Manchester city centre, we were showcasing some of the more unusual and valuable items donated through our charity shops, and using it as a base for our online sales department.

Funding enabled us to expand this initiative, focusing on the challenge of localising supply chains.

Tell us about the project

Charity shops currently operate in quite a standardised manner, reselling donations as they come through. Up to half of the items donated don't make it onto the shop floor, due in part to attempts to keep the quality of products high.

And products not bought after a month are often either sent to recycling merchants – to be sold on to third parties, often for resale

outside of the UK – or thrown directly into waste.

Our project looked at reusing, upcycling and repurposing such items. We used the phase one funding to invest in the equipment and talent needed, employing two students from the University of Manchester's school of fashion to create, market and sell the goods at Hatch – giving them practical and real-world opportunities.

We also put on eight workshop events around sustainability through upcycling.

What have you achieved?

We've been able to create a diverse and quality range of clothing, accessories and furniture. We had to leave our pop-up shop when Hatch closed in September 2023, but decided to retain our creative staff on reduced hours within our current retail network. Following a lot of good feedback

about the items we were creating, we continued our upcycling project.

What does the future hold?

We hope to move into a larger workshop space where we can recruit a bigger team and increase the output of our product line. We're also planning to expand to include a repair and tailoring service, and we want to provide monthly events that showcase and teach upcycling, repairing, repurposing, and sustainability.

We're excited about innovating within the charity retail sector and influencing others to do the same.





Mandy Whilte, Director, talks about Altrincham BID's ambition to build a flexible, low carbon, low-cost local delivery option for local businesses.

The innovative initiative can also help reduce the town centre's congestion, improve road safety and alleviate parking issues.

Altrincham BID

visitaltrincham.com/altrincham-bid

Why did you apply?

Altrincham Business Improvement District (BID) has over 500 members doing business across the town centre. We knew the funding would help us to support local businesses and organisations to move away from using motor vehicles to cargo bikes for delivering goods and services – alleviating congestion and making full use of the local cycle infrastructure.

Tell us about the project

We're aiming to address several challenges, including reducing carbon emissions, reducing local air pollution, improving road safety, and providing cheaper operational solutions.

Working with a cargo delivery consultancy and a local cargo bike supplier, we analysed which businesses were most suited to cargo bike use, and provided

financial and logistical assistance for those wishing to trial such deliveries. We offered a turnkey solution, through our delivery partner, including security and storage, insurance and risk assessment, maintenance, repair, online booking, and data capture to assist with evaluation of the programme.

What have you achieved?

During a two-month trial, we engaged 86 businesses and identified 72 that expressed an interest, with 10 going on to actively take part.

Two signed up to use the local cargo bike courier instead of van-based courier services, while eight were supported through their Community Access Grant applications for cargo cycle solutions – each displayed a very strong interest in using cargo bikes, and highlighted that bike costs were a key barrier.

We also made a successful Community Grant Fund application for a community cargo bike, which will be stored in the centre of Altrincham, with six businesses expressing an early interest in using it.

What does the future hold?

We're continuing to promote the use of cargo bikes, expanding the project across Trafford throughout an 18-month project, which is allowing us to engage larger, slow-moving organisations as well.

Cargo bikes are rapidly growing in popularity across Europe, and are evidenced to offer businesses cheaper, greener and more time efficient deliveries.

Altrincham
Business Improvement District



Automedi

automedi.co.uk

Automedi has developed a cost-efficient solution to recycling waste that conventional collectors do not like and is often incinerated or sent to landfill.

Ethar Alali, Founder and CEO, talks about testing the expansion into a residential waste offer called ReallyRecycle.

Why did you apply?

We wanted to trial a new residential circularity service – recycling the plastics local councils won't – and the technology behind it. We were conscious that paid-for models from competitors were limited, and seen as expensive, so we created an alternative that saved more emissions, as well as recycling and remanufacturing more plastics locally.

The question was whether this would appeal to the market, and whether engagement models would increase awareness of both the problems with conventional recycling and our solution.

Tell us about the project

The project aimed to divert plastic from 500 household collections from landfill using a new collection bag. Participants fill the bags with dry plastic waste that can't currently be processed in recovery

facilities – such as yoghurt pots, plastic children's toys, bioplastics etc – and would otherwise be destined for landfill.

Each bag is registered to the resident against an online account; residents simply scan QR codes on the seal for collection and it is taken to our local facilities nearest to them. Each user's online account shows residents the amount of plastic they have recycled.

The plastic is turned into filament and used to refill our distributed 3D print vending machines, which vend products and accessories printed from that captured plastic.

What have you achieved?

During a two-month trial, we ran regular local public engagement events and provided waste containers to attendees, where around 500 households were recruited to take part. Waste was

collected over the course of 12 weeks and a resulting 1.435 tonnes of plastic was recycled, saving 5.9 tonnes of CO2e.

Several new products were consequently generated via the 3D print vending machines. We were also able to determine that 'climate aware' consumers are no more likely to buy sustainable products than 'unaware' consumers.

What does the future hold?

Within the next year we are hoping to expand. The results of this project demonstrate that it is possible to create sustainable and profitable businesses.





Sharon Street,
Director of
Brighter
Beginnings Day
Nursery,
identified a gap
in the early years
education
market for
affordable, eco-
friendly
resources.

'Green Play' will,
she hopes, help
transform how
we educate
young minds.

Brighter Beginnings

brighterbeginnings.co.uk

Why did you apply?

After more than 30 years in the early years education sector, I saw a crucial gap in the market for affordable, eco-friendly resources.

This funding was key to creating impactful, sustainable materials that are both financially viable and environmentally responsible. It has given us a chance to revolutionise early years education by combining educational excellence with ecological awareness.

Tell us about the project

Existing play equipment for the early years is often expensive and doesn't allow for children to learn through open-ended exploration and imagination. Green Play resources and equipment use recycled materials, such as wooden pallets, old tyres, crates, wood and natural resources.

As well as producing the items, as

we've carried out market research, gathering insights from parents, educators and children, to ensure our designs resonated with their preferences.

Through pilot programmes in our nurseries, we tested and refined the original designs, based on real-world feedback. This approach allowed us to create engaging resources tailored to the dynamic needs of early years education.

What have you achieved?

We've developed website and social media platforms, and this has provided a robust online presence that enables us to showcase our mission and products effectively.

I'm delighted that we've established Green Play as a credible and innovative player in the market, and now have a set a strong foundation for further progress.

What does the future hold?

We envision widespread adoption of our eco-friendly resources across the sector. It's our aim to reach a broader audience, empowering nurseries to choose sustainable options without compromising affordability. We're planning to diversify our product range, respond to evolving educational needs, and continually innovate.

By fostering a socially and environmentally responsible brand, Green Play aspires to be a leader in promoting sustainable practices in early years education.





By Inspiration uses the latest software and tech for business transformation.

Client Director Anya Spencer discusses Collab Comms, an innovative new app to help the foundational economy's businesses run more effectively and efficiently.

By Inspiration

byinspiration.co.uk

Why did you apply?

We really felt we could help the foundational sector improve its processes, and needed the extra funds to get to the next phase of development.

The Collab Comms application we're creating requires specialised development time, which we haven't been able to dedicate due to the need to keep bringing in money monthly from the business-as-usual commitments.

Tell us about the project

There's been a total shift in how the retail and personal services industry uses communication channels such as emails, chatbots, social media and SMEs for day-to-day business operations. These channels have become an integral tool.

Collab Comms helps such businesses keep up with the

multiple communication channels their customers use to contact them.

It's a cloud-based hub that combines all communications to one platform where you can receive, review and answer any messages your business receives from any channel.

This eliminates the need to have multiple devices and manage numerous communication accounts. It can also scan incoming messages and answer them using a pre-prepared automated response.

What have you achieved?

Collab Comms was broken down into smaller 'sprint' phases. Before we applied for funding, we had completed up to sprint four, so with the grant we were able to complete sprints five and six, as well as start on a prototype.

What does the future hold?

There is software available specifically aimed at the personal services and retail industry that covers business operations, but this doesn't include tech that can read your messages and respond with automated replies. Nor does existing software have the capability to manage messages that come from social media channels.

We want to turn Collab Comms into a viable product, ready for a soft launch in September 2025. In the meantime, we'll continue to develop the features of Collab Comms and make improvements where necessary.





Cabasa has created an innovative response to the environmental impacts caused by the carnival industry.

Artistic Director Emily Wood explains how the Tameside-based social enterprise is committed to finding new ways of using natural dyes and textile processes.

Cabasa

cabasacarnivalarts.com

Why did you apply?

It was really exciting to see money coming from Greater Manchester for Greater Manchester organisations.

We'd already begun thinking about how to start to move away from using synthetic dyes in the fabrics that are central to the carnival industry. This funding gave us the money, time and space to continue to investigate how we could reduce the current reliance on synthetic dyes that are sourced from outside of the region.

Tell us about the project

We've researched methods of using natural dyes, materials and fibres, and explored how we can implement these in our work.

We've created our own dye garden, and are helping the local workforce to develop skills in producing and using natural dyes, with the

emphasis on reaching hundreds of culturally under-served women.

This has given birth to 'The Living Dress', which will see naturally dyed fabric adorning a series of five-metre outdoor sculptures in Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside, creating stunning artworks that we hope will be enjoyed by tens of thousands of people.

What have you achieved?

The Living Dress provides a high-profile platform for sharing our learning and low-carbon fashion practices, and for testing the potential for scaling-up the project. We'll work with community groups throughout 2024, involving more than 400 people, and we've already been able to sell The Living Dress into other arts organisations.

None of this would've been possible without this support, which has created a real snowball effect of investment and interest.

What does the future hold?

Our aim is to launch a new period of exploration and innovation in sustainability for carnival arts practice. As well as selling The Living Dress model across the country – helping to generate bold, beautiful and sustainable outdoor events that capture the joy of being part of a community – we want to become more climate-kind.

If in two years' time we're incorporating home-grown and locally sourced natural dyes within our work, that will mean this exploration of innovative processes has been a success.





George Konstantakopoulos, Head of Innovation and Ventures, is eager to address the impact of global food challenges on the UK.

The issue of low-quality food, he says, is being magnified by a poorly-produced food supply chain, travel miles, and cost.

CERT Property

certproperty.co.uk

Why did you apply?

This was an amazing opportunity to further explore and develop our concept idea.

A successful application would allow us to allocate more time in designing our pilot, gaining insight and analysing potential business models and the technologies involved.

It would allow us to understand the interest from the regional authority for our venture idea. We also wanted to gather data to validate (or not) our assumptions, and further shape our understanding of consumer perceptions for the project.

Tell us about the project

By taking a hyperlocal approach, it aims to solve a triptych of issues we are facing as humanity, related to global food challenges and its impact on the UK.

We have low-quality food, which is magnified by the poorly-produced food supply chain, food travel miles, and food cost.

What have you achieved?

Using the grant, we managed to develop a much better understanding of the requirements for our project, as well as to further develop our knowledge on existing business models.

Although the latter adds complexity to the path forward, we are much more confident about proceeding and we can clearly see the next steps.

We have identified technology understanding that allows us to build a better operational model and detailed calculation of costs in the process of defining an MVP/pilot.

We've also pinpointed key partners that can be involved in defining an

MVP and/or pilot project, including designers and engineers.

And we've conducted primary research, researching a number of indicators regarding consumer perception and decision-making, covering over 800 people living in major UK cities.

What does the future hold?

We are assessing funding strategies, which will shape how the future looks.





Dadly Does It seeks to develop a more systemic approach to improving outcomes for children and all parents – by recognising and engaging with positive fatherhood in early years services.

Chief Executive, Chris Dabbs, explains more.

Dadly Does It

dadlydoesit.org.uk

Why did you apply?

We saw this as the chance to build on the new ideas we'd had, take them into the development phase, and eventually make a hugely positive difference to a large number of lives.

Tell us about the project

Historically, communities and child-related services and organisations tend to focus on mothers. Some services and communities largely ignore fathers. Sometimes, the system fails children and families: dads experience a system not designed to recognise their value, and mums experience a system that focuses, and puts the burden, on them.

Improving the wellbeing of fathers from disadvantaged backgrounds can improve the wellbeing of their children. The Dadly Does It approach starts from the perspective that most dads love

their children and that positive fatherhood is a largely untapped asset for the wellbeing of children. It's especially important to engage dads in the ante-natal period and early years, when the relationship with the child is formed, and the tone and mindset are laid for later on.

What have you achieved?

We've tested our theory of change about positive fatherhood in several early years settings, including maternity services, family hubs and community nurseries. This has informed Salford's Positive Fatherhood Working Group, which involves senior professionals from within the children's services system.

We've created a briefing on positive fatherhood, have developed and tested the outline of a training course about positive fatherhood, and launched a new website that includes downloadable resources.

We've also drawn learning to consider the integration of positive fatherhood in staff learning and development, and identified barriers to – and enablers of – more men being in the early years workforce.

What does the future hold?

For the full impact of positive fatherhood to spread requires a cultural and whole system change. We want to spread Dadly Does It as an offer across Greater Manchester, towards wider systemic change.





DropMe is a last mile delivery service.

Founder Essolh Mohamed-Ali explains how his sustainable approach aims to reduce the urban congestion, pollution and carbon emissions caused by the sheer volume of goods that are being transported through cities.

DropMe

dropme.uk

Why did you apply?

The grant provided a valuable resource to overcome initial financial challenges and implement key objectives for our last mile delivery service, DropMe. I saw it as crucial for establishing a solid foundation and contributing to the economic and environmental goals of the Greater Manchester region.

Tell us about the project

The problem DropMe aims to solve lies in the inefficiencies and environmental impact associated with traditional delivery methods. Last mile delivery – the final part of a product's journey – is often characterised by congestion, emissions and logistical complexities.

What have you achieved?

We established a city hub, creating a centralised operational

base for efficient deliveries. The introduction of electric cargo bikes enhanced sustainability, reducing carbon emissions compared to conventional delivery vehicles. The recruitment of the first riders also contributed to operational readiness.

Significant progress was made in developing the company's online presence. The website underwent enhancements to ensure user friendly navigation and comprehensive information.

Communication strategies were also refined during this phase, as well as our delivery software, which makes it possible for any business to have a zero carbon delivery service with online payment.

What does the future hold?

The future for DropMe holds a trajectory of continued growth, sustainability and positive impact on urban mobility. We want to

expand our footprint by installing a new city hub, acquiring electric vehicles and optimising our online presence. Diversification of services, such as an online laundry, are also on the horizon.

Our focus includes staying abreast of technological advancements, fostering a culture of innovation and addressing challenges in the evolving market. With a commitment to environmental sustainability, efficient operations and responsive adaptation to market dynamics, DropMe aspires to contribute significantly to the future landscape of urban mobility





Michael Livingstone envisions his tech start-up as "the world's address book".

By providing an efficient way to address online forms, Dustid speeds up the checkout process and will increase conversion rates for Greater Manchester's e-commerce SMEs, says the company's CEO.

Dustid

dustid.com

Why did you apply?

As a bootstrapping start-up, funding and resources are always limited. This grant was very attractive, because we saw it would give us the opportunity to gain some traction and generate the metrics that would underpin our proposition to an investor.

Tell us about the project

Research confirms that people hate completing online checkouts – and one of the major frustrations is the shipping address section.

We wanted to simplify how a buyer inputs the details of someone they're buying a gift for. Rather than customers having to try to find, or ask for, the postal address of friends or family members – and 80% of us don't have immediate access to this info – Dustid uses the buyer's mobile phone contact list. By making it simple for online shoppers to get through the

checkout, we're giving SMEs a tool that helps them compete against the bigger brands, who have mastered online retail.

What have you achieved?

The grant has allowed us to accelerate our development. We've been able to build our MVP and complete successful trials. Numerous retailers in Trafford are expressing an interest, and we've built an app for iOS and Android.

We've trained retailers, supporting them to install the Woo-commerce integration kit into their websites, and we're now looking to build additional integration kits for the other e-commerce platforms that retailers use. The team and I are delighted with how things are progressing so far.

What does the future hold?

Address verification is a multimillion-pound industry,

that revolves around how many addresses you process. For us, success means processing more addresses than our competitors, who provide postcode look-up tools. We're aiming to grow beyond Trafford, expand across Greater Manchester, and scale the product from there.

We're driven by the desire to help people maintain and improve their connections. There are times when all of us think to ourselves 'Oh, I need to send that birthday card or Christmas present', but very often something comes along and stops us from doing it. If Dustid can remove one of those roadblocks and make it easy to send the item then we've achieved our goal.

Dustid



Early Years Alliance wants to reduce the stress on the sector by supporting individuals back to work via a career they may not have considered.

And there's a particular focus on bringing new parents, career changers and older people into the workforce, explains Kath Duffy, Business Manager.

Early Years Alliance

eyalliance.org.uk

Why did you apply?

With recruitment within the early years sector so challenging at present, we want to raise the profile of early years employment.

Our idea is to inspire individuals who have not considered early education as career path to feel that this could be a career for them.

Tell us about the project

The project supports families to understand how their own children learn and develop, aimed at sparking an interest in early years and a career in the sector, particularly focusing on new parents, career changers and those aged 50-plus.

It addresses recruitment and retention problems by upskilling individuals to better understand the importance of early years, and how they could find a route into

a career that may really suit their family life. Early years employment can be flexible – term time-only working running alongside school hours, for example.

Equally, children can attend the setting that the parent is working in; or there's the possibility of becoming self-employed as a childminder, which would allow the parent to be able to educate their own child alongside others, and be in control of the hours they chose to work.

What have you achieved?

We delivered information sessions to give a flavour of what a career in education and childcare looks like, with the hope that parents would enrol in our practical, hands-on 'Play to Learn' course.

We delivered two of these face-to-face 20-hour courses, as well as additional virtual sessions, with evaluation showing that they have

been very valuable to participants, who have taken a lot away in terms of their learning and self-confidence.

What does the future hold?

We would like to repeat this programme in other areas of the country if funding can be sourced.

The Early Years Alliance aims to support participants to gain further training with a tutor, and bespoke support throughout the process, which would help them to gain employment in the longer term.





Equal Care Co-op is developing the way in which it presents data to its members, making this more accessible, efficient and effective.

Emma Back, Co-Founder and Strategy Lead, talks about empowering the workforce and facilitating decentralised decision-making.

Equal Care Co-op

equalcare.coop

Why did you apply?

We are a not-for-profit social care co-operative that doesn't have large cash reserves to drive forward innovation. Grants like this are essential in helping us to provide better services and outcomes for our members.

We were attracted by a well-designed application process that didn't require an exceptional amount of time to complete. We are effectively a start-up, where all staff have a range of responsibilities, including on the frontline of care. This means we have limited time for fundraising, despite its importance.

Tell us about the project

We aimed to explore the benefits of increasing the availability of relevant data for Equal Care carers, care teams, and recipients of care, to empower the workforce and facilitate decentralised decision-

making. This is a radical departure from the existing market model, where decision-making and data is concentrated with managers who are often detached from the reality of on-the-ground care.

Such a situation has negative effects on the quality of care and outcomes for everyone in the caring relationship. It stops those directly involved in caregiving from making informed decisions about fundamentals, such as who supports who, and when support happens.

What have you achieved?

We've co-designed a new model with our members and have developed enhancements to the platform. We've already seen how access to data improves outcomes for teams. For example, instead of them relying on communication from a central office during extreme weather, they're able to successfully co-ordinate and cover

shifts based on their knowledge of care workers' availability and location.

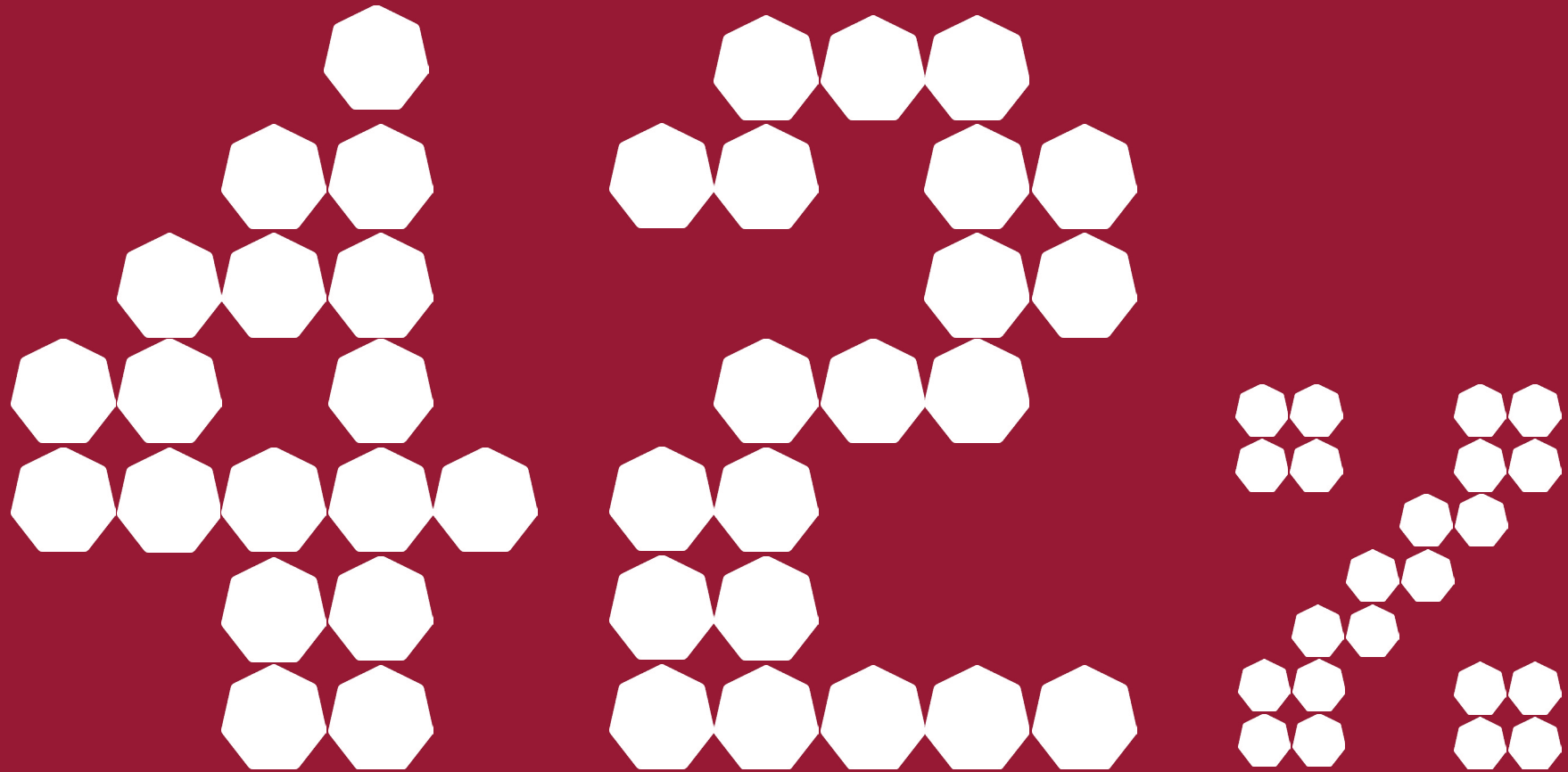
What does the future hold?

Our goal is to change the paradigm of power that is typical in social care, where managers sit at the top of the decision hierarchy, with an unfair level of access to user data.

By further developing our digital platform to present more useful data to our members, and put the relationship between giver and receiver first, we can achieve this change.



**The foundational economy accounts
for over 42% of jobs in the city region**





Greater Manchester Integrated Care is helping to better support ill and disabled adults and children.

Merry Leslee, Head of Individualised Care/ Personalisation Lead in Trafford, explains how.

GM Integrated Care

gmintegratedcare.org.uk

Why did you apply?

We applied for the funding in order to improve and standardise training and development opportunities for Personal Assistants working with direct payment employers across Greater Manchester. These PAs operate as direct employees of individuals and families who have Personal Health Budgets (PHBs), providing them with care and support.

There is the need to improve the standard of training provision for PAs working with individuals living in their own homes who require intensive social care and clinical support. This area of work requires enhanced training, which must be well co-ordinated and documented.

Tell us about the project

PHBs are offered in all areas of GM Integrated Care localities, and offer greater choice and control for

people to meet their health needs in a personalised way.

To ensure that the PA role is effective, valued and competent, the new model will provide standardised recruitment, training and development.

This includes good practice guidance; templates for recruitment, supervision and development; and a mandatory training package. To our knowledge, no similar model exists across England.

What have you achieved?

We successfully created guidance for case managers working with PHB direct payment employers. There is an established working group to implement this guidance across the NHS GM region.

We also produced a specification to create an approved provider framework of training providers

for personal assistants employed by, and for the use of, PHB direct payment employers.

This opportunity will be offered via the NHS procurement and contracts system, and provide direct payment employers and PAs with access to quality, responsive and cost-effective training providers.

What does the future hold?

We'll be giving ongoing support and development for PAs across Greater Manchester, supporting a role that tends not to be promoted in the wider market.





Rebecca Cremin,
Contract
Performance
Specialist,
discussed how
the Great Places
Training
Academy can
equip vulnerable
adults with a
pathway towards
support,
placement and
employment in
health and social
care.

Great Places

greatplaces.org.uk

Why did you apply?

We really struggle to find and retain staff within our Independence and Wellbeing services, which provide accommodation and support services for very vulnerable individuals. Alongside this, we have customers who want to get back into work, yet face multiple barriers – primarily systems based – which we intend to change.

We knew the funding would help us to enable better pathways for these individuals to get into the health and care sector, and allow us to test innovation and share learning.

Tell us about the project

The Great Places Training Academy allows us to give people the relevant skills required for jobs in our Independence and Wellbeing services. The project aimed to recruit customers and individuals from our communities,

and move them through a pathway of support, placement and employment.

This includes people not yet ready for the journey into work, who may have experience of mental health crisis, addiction, trauma and recovery – and need support with mentoring, self discovery, peer support and confidence building.

Once onboarded and support plans in place, the Academy provides training, employability coaching, guaranteed interviews, placements, and in-work support.

What have you achieved?

We developed the Training Academy via a new programme of health and social care delivery resources, including 'Introduction to Health and Social Care' and 'Introduction to Working with Children' courses. Fifteen individuals participated in a range of training, learning and support

opportunities. And we also looked at options for removing childcare barriers for potential staff. Overall, we've gained a lot of value from learning and evaluation.

What does the future hold?

We hope to be able to further develop a business case for a community benefit society to be set up in 2025, delivering a Childminding from Home scheme.

We see this as a very important project that helps the hardest to reach and most vulnerable people in parts of Greater Manchester.

great
places
HOUSING GROUP



Borrow* Manchester is a creative, circular solution to reducing single use packaging for drinks and takeaways.

Victoria Robertshaw, Founder, talks about Green Street Pioneers' reusable cup and food box scheme for Manchester's independent hospitality sector.

Green Street Pioneers

greenstreet.org.uk

Why did you apply?

We were piloting a reusable scheme in Bradford, addressing the issue of single use packaging for food and drink. The majority of reusable schemes are based in the south and we wanted to extend ours to another northern city.

The funding encouraged innovation and was perfect for our proposal to carry out research with Manchester businesses and consumers, and understand what already existed to address these needs.

Tell us about the project

Single use packaging is deeply embedded in our society; currently in the UK, 10.8 billion pieces of disposable packaging are used just to eat lunch on the go, and the average length of use of those items is 15 minutes.

We have to start changing systems

and encouraging businesses and communities to work together on innovative reusable solutions.

Our project researched and developed a simple, innovative reusable cup and food box scheme for cafes and takeaways in Manchester, providing them with an alternative to single use packaging for their customers.

What have you achieved?

The study exceeded expectations with regard to the insights gained. Our research enabled us to understand Manchester's independent businesses and their priorities around packaging.

We also gained valuable discoveries into the preferences, values and habits of Manchester consumers, and how these compare with other UK areas.

For example, 52% of Manchester consumers are likely to buy three

or more takeaway hot drinks a week, which is twice the UK figure.

Using this research we developed Borrow* Manchester, an innovative scheme for independent food and drink businesses, whereby cups and takeaway packaging are borrowed by customers, returned, washed and used again and again. Borrow* customers receive discounts on their drinks and a free entry to a monthly prize draw.

What does the future hold?

We would love to be able to implement Borrow* Manchester in the city and grow it to a sustainable scheme which can be rolled out across the north.

Borrow*
Manchester



Happy Linen Co.'s development of an internal logistics tool for micro and SME businesses will allow for simplified logistics and operations.

So says Phillip Schikora, Head of Ecommerce, who wants to bring an end to manual tasks and disconnected spreadsheets.

Happy Linen Co.

happylinencompany.co.uk

Why did you apply?

We needed support with delivering an innovative system for micro and SME retailers, which allows them to better forecast inventory, manage stock and place orders. Off-the-shelf tools exist for individual tasks, but there's nothing for this size of business that connects the entire logistics and operations process, and provides actionable insights.

The grant would allow us to deliver the project with less risk to the ongoing business, which was really important to us.

Tell us about the project

Similar to us, many micro and SME-sized businesses are unable to maximise the efficiency of their logistics operations, as all off-the-shelf software is targeted to organisations with much bigger financial resources. We're rethinking how these retailers approach product resourcing and

retail operations, developing an all-in-one internal tool that operates on ecommerce platforms and across marketplaces.

The tool allows retailers to effectively manage and forecast stock levels, create orders with current and new suppliers, onboard new products quicker, and list them on platforms and marketplaces much more efficiently.

Finally, the system will provide an analytics suite that pulls in data from all relevant channels and gives a holistic business performance overview.

What have you achieved?

We were able to successfully implement a prototype version of our system in two phases. We originally developed an Excel version using Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) to refine logic and functionality. We then

transferred this to a web-based application, which we now use on a daily basis to manage our operations.

We were also able to hire a new member of staff to implement the system, who has remained onboard full-time to manage our supply chain and logistics.

What does the future hold?

As a traditionally B2C organisation, the project has helped us expand our B2B operations. We have ambitious growth plans and would like to scale our solution, offering it on a subscription basis to other merchants and retailers.

Happy Linen Co.



Ladybird Childcare is on a mission to provide a graduated pathway to employment in the early years and childcare sector.

Supporting the recruitment crisis, the aim is to open up opportunities to parents who lack confidence and skills, says Settings Lead Donna Robinson.

Ladybird Childcare

ladybirdchildcarehazelgroveltd.com

Why did you apply?

Recruiting staff into the early years child care and education sector is a national challenge, which has worsened since Covid.

We wanted to address this, by offering training opportunities to local parents who are not currently in employment, giving them a graduated pathway into work. Such training can be transformative, equipping parents with the skills, confidence and experience to enhance their employability within the sector.

Tell us about the project

It aims to cultivate a generation of educators who are empowered, skilled and passionate about nurturing the seeds of lifelong learning in every child they encounter. Parents of children accessing Ladybird Early Years Childcare and Education are offered the chance to join a course

called Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities. Upon completion, they are not only equipped with valuable childcare skills, but are also empowered to confidently pursue employment within the sector.

Alongside this, a group of Ladybird staff have been trained in a National Children's Bureau programme called Making it REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy). This helps practitioners to build parents' knowledge and confidence, so that they can help their children's early language and literacy development, and create a positive early home learning environment.

What have you achieved?

Twelve parents signed up for the comprehensive training course, which enhanced their understanding of both their own parenting and of early childhood education, instilling the confidence

needed to contribute meaningfully to the field. In addition, 20 of our staff have received Making it REAL training, an important investment in their continuous professional development.

What does the future hold?

The project has proved that it fosters a practical and first-hand approach that prepares parents to embark on fulfilling careers within the childcare sector, positively impacting their professional journeys and the wellbeing of both their own children and those under their care.





Made By Mortals challenges the audience to take a walk in someone else's shoes.

Paul Hine, CEO, gives the lowdown on a novel approach to upskilling the workforce within the social care sector, empowering staff to become better and happier in their jobs.

Made By Mortals

madebymortals.org

Why did you apply?

We wanted to explore how immersive theatre could be used in training sessions and conference event workshops for the health and care sector.

How could a training and events offer like this could address the challenge of retention of social care staff, empowering them to become better and happier in their jobs, and better at caring for people in Greater Manchester suffering from health inequalities?

Tell us about the project

Health and social care staff can, under the pressures they face, find themselves losing sight of why they entered the profession in the first place – to care for people and to make a difference.

The training offered to them can often be dry and uninspiring. Staff want to learn from people with

lived experience, and from health and social care research, but lack the time and space to read long reports or case studies and then reflect on how they adapt their practice accordingly.

Our sessions, on the other hand, are very accessible. They are co-produced by 'real people', and supported by health and social care research findings.

What have you achieved?

We have designed immersive learning experiences in collaboration with our in-house team, health and social care practitioners and commissioners, and a steering group of people with lived experience of domestic abuse. These have been delivered to health and social care practitioners in Oldham and Tameside.

The use of drama, storytelling, film and music really created space

for staff to feel, as well as think, and enabled them to reflect with colleagues on the challenges individuals face and how together they may support people to better overcome them.

What does the future hold?

We'd like to develop the initiative, to ensure we can offer training on a range of health and care themes.

To maximise the impact, reach and scale of our approach, we want to establish a 'train-the-trainer' and remote offer, and promote the offer more widely to health and social care leaders, creating a customer database and lead generation funnel.

**MADEBY
MORTALS**



Alice Mason, Chief Executive Officer, talks about a new tech portal created by Manchester Care and Repair.

The innovation makes it easier for hospital discharge staff to discharge patients to the most appropriate 'home from hospital' service from the commissioned voluntary sector providers.

Manchester Care and Repair

careandrepair-manchester.org.uk

Why did you apply?

We wanted to explore ways to improve the quality of support that people receive through the hospital discharge process. As part of a group of VCSE organisations providing hospital discharge services, we wanted to test out a new idea to help direct more relevant referrals to the best places.

It can be difficult in the current economic climate to get these ideas off the ground without external support, and this funding was exactly what was needed for us to test out innovative ways of delivering services to a higher standard.

We'd already been discussing new ways of working with our network in the GM VCSE Hospital Discharge Alliance, and this fund allowed us to develop ideas in a short space of time.

Tell us about the project

There is a clear and known problem among VCSE providers regarding the difficulty in getting referrals from hospital staff. Currently, each Home from Hospital Service has its own referral method; this may be via telephone, in person, at hospital discharge meetings, by email, by webform, and so on.

The project explored the feasibility of creating a single referral portal for all hospital discharge staff in Greater Manchester hospitals to use, enabling them to easily connect with, and refer to, these service providers.

What have you achieved?

We designed, tested and launched a VCSE Hospital Discharge 'SupPortal' that is now in use at North Manchester General Hospital. This helps hospital staff there to make better referrals for their patients, to the most

appropriate home service, quickly and easily.

What does the future hold?

SupPortal has been developed with an eye on future expansion, whereby we could introduce more VCSE services and/or extend into other hospitals across Greater Manchester.

We're encouraging more service providers to become partners. We're also looking to create a dedicated website which will host the webform and make it easier for referrers to learn about what VCSE groups can offer.

Manchester
care&repair



Marketing Manchester tested a new approach to recruitment and employment amongst hospitality, leisure and tourism businesses.

It's part of a drive to support resilience in the sector's workforce, says Fern Goddard, Head of Sales at the Growth Company: Employment.

Marketing Manchester

marketingmanchester.com

Why did you apply?

The UK's hospitality industry is continuing to experience rising worker shortages in all roles and at all levels, with inaccurate perceptions about the sector causing younger workers to look elsewhere for employment.

The funding would allow us to consult hospitality, leisure and talent businesses and look at how current recruitment methods could be improved. It would also enable us to further develop our Tourism and Hospitality Talent Hub website, which received the Innovation Award at the Employment Related Services Conference for its pioneering approach within the employment support market.

Tell us about the project

We wanted to understand how we could develop a pilot approach to recruitment and employment challenges amongst a cluster of

hospitality, leisure and tourism businesses in Salford Quays.

The aim was to identify barriers to recruitment and develop appropriate solutions. Working with Salford Council and accommodation providers based around Salford Quays, we investigated whether there were opportunities to share staff across multiple businesses.

What have you achieved?

The scheme enabled us to identify practical solutions to positively impact employers and the local community. Our findings showed that there is little appetite for employers to share staff, due to their employment practices.

Our focus switched to improving perceptions of the industry, engaging directly with a higher number of local candidates and allowing for more candidates to be pre-trained by the Growth

Company and other providers, thereby delivering higher numbers of job-ready employees for local venues.

What does the future hold?

We will carry out activities that will help change people's views of the industry, and also to proactively engage with potential candidates in various settings, including schools, housing associations and local communities, particularly targeting under-represented groups.

These actions will educate and encourage candidates to enter the sector via all applicable routes, and improve perceptions of the industry as an accessible and long-term career option.

[marketingManchester](https://marketingmanchester.com)



Nornir is developing sustainable Community Payback-supported austerity food retail.

Owner Dave Nicholson explains how people on probation are being developed as key workers who help ensure that locally grown food is available for everyone.

Nornir

nornir.co.uk

Why did you apply?

Austerity retail – social supermarkets and other forms of community shops and pantries that offer highly discounted products – is currently organised around the redistribution of surplus and donated food to people in food poverty.

However, the cost of living crisis, together with increased supermarket efficiencies and labour shortages across the food production and retail sectors, mean there is now an increasing demand for austerity retail services. The problem is there's a decreasing supply of surplus food available to meet that demand. This is the issue we needed funding to address.

Tell us about the project

Our innovation is to enlist Probation Community Payback Teams to produce food supplies for donation

to austerity retail. Pantries and the like have an urgent need for regular donations of nutritious ready meals, to supplement their dwindling supplies of surplus food. We therefore focused on growing fresh produce for the production of ready meals, both for donation to the pantries and for sale in commercial markets, generating new income streams for them.

What have you achieved?

We secured trial orders for 200 ready meals per week for Stockport Pantries, plus 100 per week for Chelwood Food Bank Plus in Stockport.

The progress and commitment shown by the Community Payback team has been brilliant; a key positive is the overall sense of responsibility and forward-thinking as they plan out the garden plot, and are able to see progress as the weeks go on.

What does the future hold?

We will continue to develop progression routes into employment for people on probation who are working on the project. And, using this model, we want to mobilise commercial mushroom and plant-based ready meal production. This will subsidise 'austerity food retail' and enable its transition into the more sustainable and resilient 'solidarity food retail'. It also will help address the 'protein gap' that will result from reducing meat production and consumption to achieve low carbon and net zero.





Kat Sowden, Managing Director, discusses the development of a Rising Stars programme to create career progression pathways within the health and social care sector, helping to solve some of the recruitment challenges by proactively upskilling the workforce.

Persona Care and Support

personasupport.org

Why did you apply?

We were focussed on creating career progression pathways to enable people to find fulfilling careers and be retained within the health and social care sector.

This is driven by a 10% vacancy rate and 30% turnover rate in social care, and a situation in health that is no better. We applied for the funding because we saw the need for a different approach, to enable sustainable careers within the sector, but did not have the resources to test it out.

Tell us about the project

Rising Stars is a 12-month training and development programme that equips frontline care workers with the skills and support they need to develop their careers within Persona and beyond.

Social care is a very fragmented sector with multiple providers,

many of whom will have limited progression opportunities within their own organisation.

We aim to proactively identify pathways, talent and aspiration, and then work with the individuals to prepare them a progression opportunity when this becomes available.

Rising Stars is unique in its ambition to span a range of employers in a collaborative initiative that focuses on the greater good, rather than defending individual organisational assets.

What have you achieved?

We've designed the programme, recruited eight existing staff to it, and have already seen one delegate apply for a progression opportunity and be successful.

We've been successful in beginning to engage external

partners in understanding how this could benefit them, though more work is needed in this area.

What does the future hold?

We would like to extend this model to a wider set of care providers and match it up with a corresponding early careers approach in order to build a careers pipeline.

Ultimately, I'd like to see Rising Stars operated across the Integrated Care Partnership.

Persona
We're all about you



Sofia Vrioni, Founder of Poppinz, is building an online marketplace to empower parents looking for early years childcare provision.

The new tool generates instant quotes from childcare providers in Greater Manchester without phoning, emailing or visiting.

Poppinz

poppinz.co

Why did you apply?

I have many years of experience of working in the childcare industry and have come across the same problem that most customers were having. I had an idea how to solve it, but didn't have the financial means or experience to start.

Being selected for the funding meant that I was able to turn an idea into actual product, via the grant and the business support we received with GM Business Growth Hub.

Tell us about the project

The UK has the second most expensive childcare system in the world and, when the average monthly childcare cost is one-third of a family budget, parents can't afford to get it wrong. Unlike other industries, such as tourism, hotels or car insurance, that have been transformed by the internet,

parents are still finding childcare the traditional way: hours of researching, compiling lists of providers, reading Ofsted reports, and asking for recommendations.

I wanted to build an online marketplace to make the process of finding that ideal childcare provision for your child quick and easy.

What have you achieved?

We've created a customer management tool that is free to use and handles customer enquiries – assisting childcare managers and childminders, who otherwise spend a large chunk of their days replying to customer calls, emails and walk-ins.

The smart enquiry form that parents fill in automatically calculates the applicable funding hours entitlement, providing childcare managers with all information they need to calculate

tailored fees and place availability, and ensuring parents get quick and accurate replies to fundamental questions.

What does the future hold?

We're planning to extend the lead management tool into a fully automated quotation tool. Once we have registered a sufficient number of providers in Greater Manchester, we aim to launch Poppinz as a local childcare service finder marketplace.

We will then be looking to expand the services across large cities in England as a paid subscription service.





PossAbilities is lighting up life skills for adults with learning disabilities, through a digital activity library that allows personal assistants to quickly find meaningful activities.

This could bring huge efficiency savings across the industry, says Michael O'Keeffe, Special Advisor.

PossAbilities

possabilities.org.uk

Why did you apply?

The Greater Manchester strategy for supporting adults with a learning disability cites helping them to “enjoy how they spend their time” as a key objective. However, personal assistants often don't have time to plan activities, and so the adult's days become dull; repeating basic tasks that do not lead to fulfilment or progress for either the adult or the personal assistant.

We felt the grant would help us develop our approach around building a digital library of activity ideas that is useful to carers and engaging for adults with learning disabilities.

Tell us about the project

The challenge was to shift our ideas from a physical framework to an online one. We developed an initial website and tested it in a small environment, realising at this

point that we needed to make it much more visual and concise.

So, we produced activity videos that incorporated text and verbal instructions as the basis for our methodology. People with learning disabilities have been included in our development, starring in videos and taking up film crew roles.

What have you achieved?

We now have a dynamic working product that we believe is unique in providing bespoke activities specifically for people with learning disabilities. The activities are colourful, easy to follow, clearly narrated, and offer a wide range of choices.

We've received good feedback from users and from the Open University, which reviewed our work from a research perspective and gave a very positive report, with five recommendations on how we can improve the site.

What does the future hold?

Following a pilot, the website will be launched commercially in early-2025.

We're aiming to support thousands of adults to improve their life skills and lead the lives they choose – and to bring huge efficiency savings across the industry. To the many providers that currently have to create their own, or adapt existing, activities.



Live The Life You Choose



Quic CEO Sandra Baughan is aiming to support quality of life for people with diabetes in residential care, reduce stress for care home staff, and improve collaboration between healthcare professionals and care homes.

Quic

quic.co.uk

Why did you apply?

I applied for the funding to help me connect with clinicians in Greater Manchester, so that I could share my vision for integrating health and social care, and improving the management of long-term health conditions in care homes.

Tell us about the project

It was a pilot implementation of a digital solution to support multi-disciplinary teams providing care to residents with diabetes and other long-term conditions in care homes. The aim was to help assure equitable access to digital advances in care delivery.

People who live in care homes have increasingly complex healthcare needs, which has been recognised by the NHS. To help manage this, GP practices can sign up to the Enhanced Healthcare in Care Homes (EHCH) framework; this provides care

homes with access to advice from a multi-disciplinary team on a weekly basis. As part of the framework, the aligned GP practice has to develop a Person Centred Care and Support Plan within seven to 14 days of a person being admitted to a care home.

The problem is that this duplicates the person-centred care plan that is simultaneously developed by the care home, and leads to the lack of safe co-ordination of care. We aim to harness digital technology as an enabler to overcome this issue, and provide a single source of truth when managing the healthcare needs of this population.

What have you achieved?

We've consulted with a wide range of clinicians, commissioners and care providers, and have a clearer understanding of the barriers that need to be overcome. We've built a community of practice to further

explore how interoperability can be established to support the EHCH framework, and we are exploring research funding opportunities to take the project forward.

What does the future hold?

If research funding can be identified, a powerful think tank of people and organisations from health, social care and the research community will work together to ensure that care homes are no longer siloed when digital innovation is being planned.





Scott Darragh wants to tackle recruitment problems in early years education.

The Social adVentures Chief Executive hopes to change the perception that employment in the sector is only suitable for those coming straight from school or university, while demonstrating the benefits of outdoor education.

Social adVentures

socialadventures.org.uk

Why did you apply?

Early years childcare settings are having to reduce the number of places they offer due to employee shortages. Many have long waiting lists and some are forced to close down due to insufficient staff.

Social adVentures wanted to address these recruitment difficulties and we saw this funding as an opportunity to test an innovative idea we'd had: to use forest school education as a way of delivering childcare differently.

This was something we felt could bring more people into the industry from more diverse backgrounds; not only is it rare for early years nurseries to attract staff who are at a later stage in their career, as it's traditionally a profession that people choose from a young age when leaving school or college, but it is also a female dominated workforce.

Tell us about the project

The funding gave us the chance to test out our theory. We wanted to show potential candidates for a career change that childcare can be done differently outdoors.

As a pilot scheme, we offered a forest school training programme to people in Greater Manchester, with the aim of demonstrating that there are alternative ways of running early years childcare, and highlighting the learning and developmental advantages of teaching outdoors.

What have you achieved?

We had really strong interest in the pilot project, with 31 applications for the Level 2 Forest School Assistant Course and the maximum of 15 places filled.

The course consisted of both practical outdoor sessions in the woods and classroom

based theory sessions, and gave participants the skills required to start a new career in early years via a fully accredited qualification.

What does the future hold?

We would like to train people to Level 3, enabling them to lead groups of young children. If we can do this, we'll be able to provide training to more early years and school groups in Greater Manchester, bringing benefits to increased numbers of people.





"It's really exciting to see money coming from Greater Manchester for Greater Manchester organisations."

Emily Wood, Artistic Director
Cabasa Carnival Arts



Social Sense has created an app that helps older people and their carers to find, record and reflect on the moments in life that matter.

Gary Lovatt, MD, explains how this innovation supports well-being and improves the experience and effectiveness of carers.

Social Sense

linktr.ee/SocialSense

Why did you apply?

There's not much funding that a company like us can apply for, so when this chance came along it was fantastic. We knew that if we were successful, we'd be able to improve our Greater Moments app so that more people could benefit from it.

Tell us about the project

We initially built Greater Moments to better connect people with dementia, and their carers, to local activities and events, because these kinds of connections are known to improve wellbeing.

Thanks to the funding we were able to enhance the app, making it suitable for all older adults. We collaborated with a care home in Salford that was largely paper-based, to trial the app and refine it into an even more useful tool. What we're doing is creating visibility for those activities and experiences

that traditionally haven't been measured before, but which are so important.

What have you achieved?

What really underlined the merit of Greater Moments is when we had a day out with the care home staff and residents at the Imperial War Museum North.

From the data gathered through the app, we could see that the experience of being at the museum and taking part in meaningful activity had a markedly positive effect on their mood – feelings that often stayed with them for the rest of the day.

What does the future hold?

Ultimately, we want to see the app integrated into care home systems across Greater Manchester and nationally, making it easy for staff to instantly record resident activity and measure the wellbeing

of individuals – taking some of the regulatory administration and reporting pressure off care workers, and really enabling them to be present in the moment with their residents.

We want to enhance the sense of purpose and meaning attached to care worker roles, by giving staff proof that what they're doing is making a genuine difference to people's lives. Seeing this working in practice across chains of care homes is what success for this project looks like for us.





The Clever Carbon Company has developed a reusable shower dispenser and wash formula that, says its Director, David Oates, is an environmentally friendly alternative to the current reliance on single-use packaging by the hospitality industry.

The Clever Carbon Company

clevercarbon.co

Why did you apply?

We needed to shore up working capital and boost the business during its first year of operation. It's not an exaggeration to say this funding helped keep the lights on at a time when both capital investment and initial interest in the business were low.

Tell us about the project

This product aims to reduce the enormous global impact of disposable, personal care 'freebies' used largely within the hospitality industry, estimated to account for around nine billion bottles every year. While some hotels use dispensers, these are multi-component, multi-material, complex designs that are rarely, if ever, recycled.

Our dispenser is a new-to-market product that tackles the problem. It is a simple, one-material design, manufactured in 100% recycled

and recyclable material. It can easily be refilled and is designed for repeated use over many years.

It's intended that both the dispenser and formula are made available through an innovative closed-loop logistics system and subscription model. Modelling has shown that this will be highly cost-effective in comparison with existing practices, with typical savings of around 40% over an extended period.

What have you achieved?

A concept was developed to demonstrate the importance of circular business models, where the design, manufacture, use and defabrication of products are shown to be inherently connected.

The initial proof-of-concept was a reusable shower dispenser and associated wash product named NeuTrail. This has been a success, pointing to a significant target

market and an opportunity to develop a range of sustainable products for the mass-market personal care industry.

What does the future hold?

The business's objective is to become financially sustainable within 12 months. We're hopeful that strong relationships will continue to be forged with trusted suppliers and partners. There is broader potential in the janitorial market, such as hospitals, prisons, gyms, corporate premises and schools; and, ultimately, personal consumers via the domestic market.





The Modernist Society promotes 20th century architecture and the built environment.

Jack Hale, Co Founder, explains how the creative heritage organisation is embracing technology to create a free mobile app that guides users to explore Manchester's architecture.

The Modernist Society

modernist-society.org

Why did you apply?

As a non-profit community interest company with a strong focus on cultural and heritage initiatives, we operate within the constraints of limited funds.

Our ability to develop new projects hinges on securing external funding. The GMCA Foundational Economy grant provided us with a unique opportunity: the chance to trial an innovative project without incurring any financial risk.

This endeavour would have otherwise been beyond our means.

Tell us about the project

Our goal was to work with a digital marketing agency to design and launch a mobile app showcasing curated and informative architectural content related to Manchester and its surrounding boroughs.

This app is intended for use by residents, visitors and tourists alike, facilitating self-guided tours and enabling remote access for those who cannot visit the city or have limited mobility.

Recognising an unmet demand for tours that we were physically unable to fulfil, the app complements our existing live tours, while also serving a significantly broader audience.

What have you achieved?

We have engaged an app developer and prepared content, information and images. The app has been designed and gone through the final testing stages, with the launch taking place in August 2024.

What does the future hold?

Initially featuring five curated and themed tours of Manchester city

centre, the app will soon expand to include tours in Salford, Stockport, Trafford, and beyond.

Additional entries and tours will be researched and continue to be added.

With the potential to grow beyond Greater Manchester in the future, the digital nature of this app empowers us to reach a significantly broader audience and customer base, so we're very excited about the future.

**the
modernist**



Usman Aziz and Asad Qureshi are on a quest to revolutionise part-time employment in Greater Manchester.

The ParTimer Co-Founders talk about their plans to make recruitment smooth and affordable, from advert, to interview, to decision.

The ParTimer

thepartimer.co.uk

Why did you apply?

UA: As an early-stage HR-tech start-up, this was an excellent opportunity for us to secure essential funds to build our advanced prototype and move towards pilot testing.

AQ: In a challenging economic climate, where equity-based investments and venture capital have become more difficult to secure for early-stage tech companies, the grant was a major source of support in our roadmap towards market entry.

Tell us about the project

UA: We're building a disruptive technological solution for part-time and flexible recruitment. Both part-time job seekers and their employers face problems in the hiring process. Job seekers lack a dedicated 'go-to' platform that caters to a range of foundational sectors and work experience levels.

AQ: Much part-time recruitment remains 'analogue', relying on CV walk-ins and paper-based applications. Employers struggle to access the right talent and are faced with high fees for digital platforms that do not offer value for money.

Our digital platform offers a dedicated end-to-end solution, integrating all recruitment stages, including the interviews, into a mobile and web application – saving time, money and stress for our customer segments.

What have you achieved?

UA: Our minimum viable product consisted of a basic mobile app, which displayed our intentions for the product but lacked recruitment functionality.

We transitioned this into an advanced mobile app with diverse recruitment functionalities, including a recorded interview

suite. We also built a functional web browser version to correlate with the app, offering job seekers and employers two modes of using our platform.

What does the future hold?

AQ: Following piloting and testing, we aim to formally launch the product in mid-2024, and start serving recruitment in Greater Manchester's foundational economy.

We'll be developing compelling marketing and branding to differentiate ParTimer effectively and emphasise our preference for stable part-time jobs applicable to students and experienced workers.

The ParTimer.



Drew Stafford is committed to reducing the carbon footprint of the brewing industry.

Hear how The Reveller Founder's sustainable craft beer hub will divert a large number of single-use containers from landfills and showcase the best of Greater Manchester's brewing scene.

The Reveller

facebook.com/therevellerromiley

Why did you apply?

I believe that selling craft beer in reusable bottles provides a superior drinking experience in an environmentally friendly way – and that if more people tried it, this would lead to a shift in the way people buy craft beer to a more sustainable model.

Tell us about the project

Our current business has shown that due to their sustainability, superior taste and reduced cost, there is a demand for 'growler fills': beer sold in air-tight glass jugs, which customers can reuse, refill or return for a deposit; or bring their own reusable containers. However, as our shop offers a wider range of items, growler fills get minimal focus.

This project focuses on opening a craft beer unit solely focused on growler fills. For every 50-litre keg sold, approximately 106 cans or

bottles can be saved, and kegs can be reused instead of recycled.

The unit will also prioritise buying from breweries that can demonstrate sustainable practices or are B Corp certified.

The beer is kept fresh by purging the refillable bottles of oxygen and using tubing to fill the bottles from the bottom up, increasing shelf life and enabling storage in the fridge for seven days.

This approach provides a pub-quality draught beer experience, while minimising food miles and supporting local businesses.

What have you achieved?

The main challenge was finding the right premises. That's now been achieved and I am currently in the process of fitting out the shop and buying equipment, as well as marketing the location, identifying a manager to run it, and

liaising with breweries in advance of launching the new venture.

What does the future hold?

Once the new location is trading, I intend to continue to expand the provision by exploring additional distribution channels, such as a mobile dispensing and a home delivery service.

My aim is to encourage more and more people to try drinking beer from refillable bottles and to make them advocates of the service.





Trafford Community Collective is making sure older people's voices are heard.

George Devlin, Chief Officer, talks about building an inclusive approach to age-friendly community infrastructure, that finds new ways to improve the quality of life for residents as they grow older.

Trafford Community Collective

traffordcollective.org.uk

Why did you apply?

This was an opportunity to help us find solutions to some of the challenges older people face, including poor access to housing, health and wellbeing, and low incomes.

The funding helped us to enable older residents to come together with service providers to talk about such issues. It also helped us demonstrate the potential benefits of our approach to individuals, as well as the health and social care system.

Tell us about the project

The approach is part of the Greater Manchester Ageing in Place Pathfinder, and has older people's voices and lived experience at its heart. Through it, we learn – in ways that are comfortable to them – about what older people value, the contributions they make, and the barriers they experience to

ageing well. It engages individuals by listening to them, involving them in decision-making, and doing things together to reflect their involvement and inclusion. It recognises the impact on mental and physical wellbeing due to multiple disadvantages, including poor awareness and access to services, health literacy and poor digital skills.

What have you achieved?

We've employed a Project Delivery Officer to lead on developing relationships with key partners who work and support the over-55s in the Old Trafford community.

We've effectively engaged with older people in the area, to ensure they make up 50% of the steering group, delivered a series of successful community walks and gatherings in the area, and held a community listening event to agree priorities and actions for the future. We've also developed

a good working relationship with the GM Ageing in Place Pathfinder team.

What does the future hold?

We'll continue to deliver multiple activities to engage older people, and the project will be embedded within the Pathfinder's Neighbourhood Action Plan, to reflect the issues raised by older people in Old Trafford.

Ultimately, we want to promote and embed our approach within the community. This will deliver improvements to the physical environment, local services, and other projects and activities, to improve lives.





Salford community benefit society Unlimited Potential is aiming to tackle loneliness in communities through its Spreading Our Net project.

Chris Dabbs, Chief Executive, talks about this innovative, low-cost and sustainable approach to addressing loneliness in the community.

Unlimited Potential

unlimitedpotential.org.uk

Why did you apply?

One of the big attractions was that it is a local opportunity to innovate in a field which doesn't have many opportunities for innovation. There is usually a gap between the early stages of very initial testing, and then getting into that space where you can really take the idea forward – and it can be hard to make that leap. This funding is helping us to bridge that gap.

Tell us about the project

We've repeatedly heard from health and social care professionals that their most difficult problem is the loneliness experienced by many of the people they work with.

Spreading Our Net is a new approach to both reducing the levels of loneliness within communities – and all the associated impacts on mental and physical health – as well as

lowering the demand on frontline health and social care workers.

The project identifies those people experiencing the greatest loneliness, looks at where the strengths and assets are within the community, and creates an environment with more, and stronger, natural connections.

What have you achieved?

The grant has been essential in helping us explore how our non-traditional solution could fit alongside a mainstream public service system.

We've learnt there's a far bigger demand for a low-cost response to loneliness than we'd thought, extending beyond health and social care. We now have a far better idea of how wide our approach could be applied, and how to market it in a way that the system understands, which had been a fundamental problem for us.

What does the future hold?

I'm excited about its potential to become infectious as an approach that spreads all across Greater Manchester.

My ideal is that, once it's up and running, we get to a point where, first of all, local people will tell us to 'get lost' because we are not needed any more and, second, that the cost of maintaining it is either minimal or reduces to zero. In the future, the digital nature of this app empowers us to reach a significantly broader audience and customer base.





Veg Box People supplies Greater Manchester residents with fresh, local and organic produce.

Chris Walsh, one of its founders, says the workers co-op wants to establish an innovative local supply chain solution to lower costs and increase vehicle efficiency.

Veg Box People

vegboxpeople.org.uk

Why did you apply?

We and our partners – local commercial growers, food caterers, artisan food producers and brewers – are struggling with increased fuel costs and staff recruitment, and wish to establish a multi-model supply network.

Some of us have expensive vehicles that are only used a few days a week or are making journeys with sub-optimal loads, whilst others are having to turn down business opportunities because the cost of delivery is prohibitive or staff are not available.

The support from GMCA's FE grant could help us explore solutions to these challenges, and so we co-designed an application to establish a digital portal for our business members to book from a diverse fleet of commercial vehicles, and co-ordinate and share journeys across Greater Manchester.

Tell us about the project

Members could upload the availability of their vehicles and a transparent costing structure would ensure they had access to affordable vehicle hire, while others could generate some additional income from idle vehicles.

In addition to this, partners would be encouraged and supported to coordinate and share deliveries, as many of our producers and manufacturers are supplying the same retailers, hospitality, leisure and tourism businesses.

What have you achieved?

We designed systems and procedures for the sharing of vehicles, and best practice guides for drivers. We scoped and begun work on an IT platform, piloted the sharing of vehicles and combined deliveries. However, we couldn't take the project to a point where we could roll out and embed

because of limitations with the hire agreements we had with our vehicle lease provider and expected additional insurance costs.

What does the future hold?

We're discussing our future fleet needs, as we'd love to find a way to succeed with this project. For example, we are carrying out a cost-benefit analysis of leasing vehicles, looking at whether we can purchase vehicles in partnership with others, jointly owning vans to address the challenges we faced.





Improving employee safety while walking to and from work can help recruitment and retention in the retail and hospitality sector, says Andrew Kay, Chairman of WalkSafe.

The company's innovative app aims to do just that.

WalkSafe

walksafe.io

Why did you apply?

We wanted to develop a version of our WalkSafe app that we could sell to businesses to help their employees' safety walking to and from work. Our research indicates those aged 18 to 30 working in the hospitality sector are particularly concerned about safety, and companies that offer a personal safety app would find it helps recruitment and retention by demonstrating a genuine care for their employees.

Tell us about the project

The funding allowed us to run a research project with a Manchester-based hospitality company, to better understand what employers can do to further support the personal safety of their teams, and test app's capabilities in real-world settings.

Over a three-month period, the WalkSafe for Business pilot allowed

managers to see their employees' live location when travelling to and from work, providing a watchful and supportive eye and ensuring they all safely reached their destinations.

We also explored the associated impact on employee job satisfaction, retention and recruitment.

What have you achieved?

The pilot ran successfully with a chain of Manchester coffee shops that has 100 staff who often work late hours. 100% of managers were supportive, stating that staff members were more confident in their personal safety and felt more encouraged to come to work.

Employee feedback was also very positive. Three key improvements were discovered to optimise the app and we are excited about the next steps.

What does the future hold?

WalkSafe Pro can develop into a fully commercial version and roll out across Greater Manchester businesses.

With the consumer app, WalkSafe+, and this new business version, we can launch Manchester as an official WalkSafe City, bringing together all the exciting safety initiatives across Manchester into a free-to-use safety app for consumers, visitors and employees.

Our ambition is to subsequently sell the product across the UK, making a huge contribution to a prosperous and safer night-time economy.





A new cloud-based software solution has been created to tackle the care sector's complex needs.

Tsitsi Angeline Mtasa, Founder and CEO, details how Wisterias Care Management Software is designed to boost efficiency throughout the industry.

Wisterias CMS

wisterias.co.uk

Why did you apply?

We're aiming to revolutionise social care through the development of innovative care management software for use by nursing and care homes, as well as domiciliary and supported living services, enabling them to manage their services much more efficiently.

The grant empower us to conduct research, collaborate with health professionals, and undertake comprehensive testing to refine and validate the system.

Tell us about the project

Born from the challenges of working in the care sector during COVID-19, it tackles the prevalent challenge of transitioning care providers from paper-based to digital systems, recognising that only 55% currently use digital records.

By streamlining workflow

processes, introducing innovative rostering and care planning tools, and facilitating real-time data-sharing with authorities and multi-disciplinary teams, we want to significantly improve healthcare outcomes and operational efficiency.

The system will ease emergency admissions within the NHS by enabling individuals with care responsibilities to have access to relevant information in real-time, allowing quicker decision-making and leading to more efficiency in the sector.

What have you achieved?

We've achieved remarkable milestones. Key features have been developed, enhancing decision-making and collaboration within the healthcare sector.

Pilot study feedback was systematically translated into test cases, influencing

subsequent development, and user testimonials highlighted the meticulous design, impact and relevance of the software.

What does the future hold?

We've got an unwavering commitment to innovation. Building on the successes to date, and the insights from discussions with AI experts and care providers, we aim to enhance our AI capabilities for predictive analytics and preventative care practices.





Wraparound Partnership works with families who have children aged up to five who are disabled.

The Fair Start project developed a new digital way to match children who have additional needs to childcare providers, as Elizabeth Stanley, Chief Vision Officer, explains.

Wraparound Partnership

wraparoundpartnership.org

Why did you apply?

We had an idea that had been sitting in the background for a long time, but had no funding to develop it. As a socially driven, but private limited, company we couldn't apply for grants for the traditional non-profits, and we've found in the past that we're too small to bid for funding against bigger organisations and charities.

Innovation in the foundational economy is so overlooked, but these are essential services that support our way of life, and we saw the grant as something that would give us time, space, resource and potential.

Tell us about the project

When a baby is born with, or develops, a disability or additional need that requires support, parents usually have multiple difficulties trying to source effective, safe and experienced

childcare. Currently, families have to spend hours looking online and phoning around.

We wanted to produce a wireframe idea for a website that would match families to childcare providers who have experience or training in babies and toddlers with disabilities across Greater Manchester.

What have you achieved?

The grant has given us valuable time to research the challenge.

We spoke with the families of babies and toddlers with disabilities about what would benefit them most, as well as with charity leaders, health professionals, midwives, early years providers, nursery managers and childminders.

This research enabled us to really hone our thinking, and collaborate with web developers to produce

a wireframe for a platform that is eye-catching but easy to navigate and use. The idea is that the technology does all the work.

What does the future hold?

We'd be absolutely delighted if this wireframe became a live website and ultimately allowed families easy access to a search for safe, effective childcare provision for disabled babies and toddlers. We'd love to see babies with disabilities being supported effectively in mainstream placements.





Ged Feeley, Director, has developed a digital service that removes the barriers preventing people from working in the childcare and adult social care sectors – while lowering the cost of staff for employers and increasing the wages for temporary or flexible workers.

YouChooseWork.com

youchoosework.com

Why did you apply?

Having run childcare settings in Greater Manchester, I could see that childcare and adult social care providers have critical daily staffing needs that are extremely difficult to meet. This is due to the poor provision of temporary staffing solutions and the lack of digital channels to access the temporary workforce in the area.

I wanted to create a digital marketplace to facilitate a direct connection between employers and flexible workers in these sectors.

Tell us about the project

The service provided by traditional temp agencies is expensive, inconsistent and usually overwhelmed by demand. This often leads to insufficiently staffed provisions, which affects the quality of the service for users. This doesn't need to be the case,

as there's a growing number of people looking for flexible or temporary work to fit around other commitments.

The project involves creating an app that directly connects childcare and adult social care provisions with the temporary workforce.

The aim was for a fast, digital booking service which improves accessibility for the workforce and, by digitising the process to remove the commission of 'middlemen', generates a better deal for both employers and employees.

The service takes care of the end-to-end employee journey, from vetting and DBS checks to payroll, ensuring a hassle-free experience for all.

What have you achieved?

After developing an enhanced vetting procedure and onboarding

a cohort of 'ready to work' individuals onto the platform, we were able to launch the web application for an 11-week pilot in Stockport. It was great to see it in action, connecting childcare settings with flexible workers, and the pilot saw the booking of 343.5 hours, worked across 50 shifts.

What does the future hold?

The geographical scope is being expanded to include all boroughs or Greater Manchester. We're working on upgrading the MVP into a full mobile application, and aiming to continue growing through customer acquisition activities, with the app fully launching later in 2024.



The Future

The first phase of the Foundational Economy Innovation Fund has helped a wide range of businesses and organisations to increase their confidence, knowledge and capacity to innovate.

The programme has also helped establish a community – projects have collaborated with each other, and the support offered beyond the funding has introduced participants to relevant local expertise.

Greater Manchester remains committed to supporting the foundational economy.

A second phase of Greater Manchester's Foundational Economy Innovation Fund will provide further funding and expert support to help the projects develop further and expand on their impact.

Announced in Summer 2024, the second phase is awarding grants of up to £60,000 to 15 projects.





greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk



businessgrowthhub.com