

Meaningful Employment of Autistic People

Research report

March 2019

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Summary

The economy of Salford will continue to grow rapidly, especially its key growth industries. However, Greater Manchester's labour market will increasingly be an 'hourglass economy', with growth in both high-skill jobs and low-skill jobs, but much lower growth at intermediate skill levels.

In response, the strategic priorities for both Salford and Greater Manchester are: young people equipped for life and work; and adults in good jobs with opportunities to progress and develop.

Employment will change by 2030. Although it is uncertain what will happen to most jobs, many of the jobs likely to experience a fall in employment are low-skilled or medium-skilled in nature.

In all future industry scenarios, the key skills likely to be required by employers will be: interpersonal skills; higher-order cognitive skills; system thinking skills; and broad-based knowledge as well as specialised features needed for specific occupations. Key personality attributes will be: agility and resilience; creativity and critical thinking; empathy and emotional intelligence; and commitment to continuous learning.

The data on the prevalence of autism and the number of autistic people is variable and unreliable. The estimated number of autistic adults in Salford ranges between 1,671 and 2,543 people (median = 2,107), rising to between 1,965 and 3,051 people by 2037 (median = 2,508). The estimated number of adults with Asperger's syndrome in Salford is 316, rising to 343 in 2027 and 372 in 2037.

Autistic people are not all the same and do not all have the same abilities, so there is a risk of nullifying individual personality and qualities. In general, however, the particular strengths of autistic people include: intense focus; attention to detail; thinking differently with different insights; reliability; commitment; and diligence. For employers, neurodiversity offers both a new pool of talent, and greater diversity of thought within a workforce and teams.

Just 16% of autistic adults are in full-time employment, and another 16% are in part-time employment, even though at least 70% want to work. This suggests that there may be as many as 1,250 autistic people in Salford who are unemployed and want to work, including at least 200 people with Asperger's syndrome.

Key barriers to employment for autistic people are: recruitment and selection processes; lack of confidence; employer ignorance of autism; employer attitudes and prejudices on autism; failure to make reasonable adjustments; inappropriate support to move into and retain employment; and difficulties with social skills and issues.

Key barriers to employers taking on autistic people are: lack of awareness and understanding of the skills and talents of autistic people; worry about getting things wrong for autistic people; not knowing where to seek advice about employing an autistic person; belief that it costs more to employ an autistic person; use of traditional recruitment and interview processes.

A common theme is communication between stakeholders (from schools to higher education, and from training providers to employers), who often find themselves at cross-purposes, delivering what they can individually, but collectively missing the mark. We therefore need to find a whole-system approach that matches the availability of skills with the demands of employers and the expectations of local people.

The Greater Manchester Autism Strategy seeks to ensure that: "All autistic people and their family members are given the right information to prepare for adulthood and that those autistic adults who are able to work can access the support they need to find and maintain work, including from employers who understand them."

Key principles for any action are: personalised actions; choice and control; addressing inequalities; and a life-long perspective.

Key elements of support for employment of autistic people are: employer awareness and understanding of autistic people and their strengths; practical-based recruitment; reasonable workplace adjustments; and support starting and during employment. Employers and colleagues would benefit from both information and guidance, and learning on working with autistic people. Self-employment should also be considered as an option.

In practical terms, the main areas to address are: recruitment and selection; induction and onboarding; inclusive workplace environment; and managing a neurodiverse team.

Other complementary provision includes: Access to Work; Disability Confident; supported employment; apprenticeships; work experience, placements and internships; and digital support.

Around the world, the main approach adopted is autism-focussed employers. Other approaches are employers with specific employment programmes for autistic people, and employment preparation. Only one example of a 'recruitment agency', matching employers and autistic people, has been identified.

There appear to be skills gaps amongst local employers with a realistic 'supply' of autistic people with the talents to fill them, and experience elsewhere that programmes for mainstream employment of autistic people are viable.

1. Project implementation

The practical work to date (November 2018 to February 2019) has been focussed on stage one: ideas generation and research and development of a practical delivery plan. This has included research and comparison of employer demands / needs and the realistic 'supply' of local autistic people in Salford.

In summary, the work in this first stage has involved:

- creating a contact list of autism organisations, local growth industries and data analysts
- creating survey questionnaires and briefing sheets for autism organisations, autistic people, employer organisations, individual employers and data analysts¹
- running the five surveys online and, where requested, in person – including:
 - a pitch at Action for Business Salford (Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce) on 5 December, 2018
- a workshop with the Greater Manchester Autism Consortium adult advisory group on 14 December, 2018 creating a contacts database
- analysing both quantitative and qualitative data
- gathering and reviewing relevant reports and guides
- liaison with officers in statutory agencies in Salford and at Greater Manchester Combined Authority working on employment of autistic people
- searching for any existing models elsewhere in the world for learning
- writing a draft project proposal
- circulating and consulting on the draft project proposal – including:
 - an outcomes-based accountability workshop about improving employment pathways and outcomes for autistic young people in Salford on 7 February, 2019
- redrafting project proposal

This work has produced a practical learning resource to establish a business case and to inform the rest of the project.

2. Economic context

2.1. Economy

Salford

In the last ten years, Salford has experienced exceptional levels of growth, well above Greater Manchester and national averages.²

¹ Contacts list at Appendix 1.

² Salford City Partnership (2017), [Salford Employment and Skills Strategy 2017-2020](#)

- The population grew by 24,000 – growth of 11%, which was above the Greater Manchester (+7%) and national (+7.4%) averages.
- Gross Value Added (GVA - a measure of the value of the economy) increased by over £1 billion – growth of 23.1%, well above the Greater Manchester (+13.9%) and national (+16.5%) averages.
- Employment (the total number of jobs in Salford) - increased by 14,000, 11% growth, above the Greater Manchester (+8.1%) and national (+7.7%) averages.
- The business base increased by almost 1,600 companies - growth of 20.3%, outstripping Greater Manchester (+16.5%), although slightly behind the national average (+22.2%).
- Private sector investment increased by £2.6 billion.

2.2. Young people

Greater Manchester

The Mayor of Greater Manchester has made work/life readiness one of his four main priorities. **Young people equipped for life** is a priority in the Greater Manchester Strategy³, with the ambition that “All our young people will successfully transition out of secondary school life ready, equipped for work and life-long learning.” It includes this statement:

“We need to ensure that there is a clear pathway for all young people to follow to reach their full potential. This will mean working in a more integrated manner between educational institutions, business, local authorities and residents. Schools, colleges and training providers need to prepare people for the world of work; this will mean that the current focus on qualifications needs to be enhanced with the core competencies required to succeed in the workplace. School curricula need to be enriched by experience of the world of work, including providing all young people with encounters with business through work placements, business mentoring or real life business projects. We will work with schools and businesses to develop the best approach to delivering this in Greater Manchester.”

Salford

As the Greater Manchester and local economy has grown, youth unemployment levels have fallen significantly. Most young people in Salford successfully participate in education and training and make a positive transition into further learning or employment, and there has been a decrease in the number of young people claiming unemployment benefits.

³ Greater Manchester Combined Authority (2017) [Our People, Our Place. The Greater Manchester Strategy](#)

Challenges remain, however, with regard to connecting young people to education, training and employment. There are still significant numbers who do not fulfil their potential, and fail to gain skills and qualifications that help them to succeed and progress into the world of work.

Salford has the highest rate of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Greater Manchester and the third highest in the country, although when combined with the destination 'not known' measure, the picture for young people compares more favourably with many local authority areas.⁴

Salford also lags behind when it comes to progression into higher education, with only 48% of young people progressing to a UK higher education institution after completing Key Stage 5, compared to 51% across the region.

Salford is, however, performing well in terms of apprenticeships, with rates of people aged 16-17 moving into apprenticeships higher than seen at Greater Manchester and national levels.

Young people achieving and progressing in education and work is one of the three strategic priorities in the *Salford Employment and Skills Strategy 2017-2020*.⁵

It is critical that a strategic approach is taken to increasing the participation and attainment of young people in suitable and meaningful education and training that leads to progression in to further learning or work. This approach should empower local partners to deliver more effective and targeted interventions, while encouraging stronger collaboration between public services, schools and learning providers to ensure young people benefit from more effective and responsive support and provision.

Employers should also have a more integral role in helping to raise the aspirations of Salford's young people, by playing a more strategic role in shaping and developing the offer to ensure it is appropriate and responsive to the needs of the local labour market and its employers.

This will be achieved by influencing policy and programmes, co-ordinating activity and delivering local action:

Influencing policy and programmes

- Work with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and other appropriate commissioners to ensure

⁴ Salford City Partnership (2017), [Salford Employment and Skills Strategy 2017-2020](#)

⁵ Salford City Partnership (2017), [Salford Employment and Skills Strategy 2017-2020](#)

the planning and commissioning of local and sub-regional programmes and initiatives for NEET and vulnerable young people (such as the European Social Fund) meet the strategic needs of the city.

- Work with Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Careers and Enterprise Company to encourage more employers to better connect with schools and young people through effective curriculum developments, improved careers guidance and an increase in apprenticeships and other work-related learning opportunities for marginalised young people.
- Work with the city's schools and post-16 education providers to ensure they are complying with their statutory responsibilities for raising participation, increasing attendance and improving the long-term outcomes for all of their learners.
- Encourage more local employers to engage with curriculum development, by offering more apprenticeships and work-related learning opportunities to local young people, including those that are considered to be most at risk of becoming NEET and/or marginalised from the labour market.

Co-ordinating activity and delivering local action

- Develop an appropriate education and training offer, which complies with the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) and helps more young people to obtain the skills and qualifications needed to progress into higher education and skilled employment.
- Ensure the support and provision offered by local, national and sub-regional programmes of support for targeted and vulnerable young people helps to address gaps, meets local needs and does not duplicate or displace existing services and initiatives that are already working effectively with young people in the city.
- Support the role of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector in delivering volunteering, training, work experience and routes into employment for young people.
- Support the identification and tracking of all young people who are NEET, or at risk of becoming NEET, so they are known to the local authority and in receipt of an appropriate offer of support and/or provision, which enables them to re-engage in suitable education, employment or training.
- Ensure the delivery of high quality and consistent careers information, advice and guidance in local schools and colleges helps raise career aspirations and supports learners to make well-informed and realistic decisions about their future careers.
- Maximise the support provided to local employers to encourage them to shape and influence the curriculum offer, including the provision of appropriate and realistic careers information, advice and guidance offered to young people in local schools and colleges.
- Increase connectivity between employers and learning organisations, helping to improve and influence the curriculum offer, including the

provision of appropriate and realistic careers information, advice and guidance offered to young people in local schools and colleges.

- Widen participation and awareness of university and higher education opportunities.

It is notable that, in their *North West Education and Skills Charter*⁶, large employers identify as one of the two critical success factors for the region's economic success: careers inspiration – ensuring young people are exposed to relevant and aspirational careers advice to inspire them to choose the core subjects in school, college and – where appropriate – university, which support the region's core growth sectors.

2.3. Adults

Greater Manchester

Good jobs, with opportunities for people to progress and develop

is a priority in the Greater Manchester Strategy⁷, with the ambition that: "all residents (in and out of work) will have the opportunity to progress into all levels of technical and academic skills provision, ensuring our people are life-ready, and employers will offer high quality employment with clear progression routes." It also has the aspiration that "Greater Manchester will be the place in the UK leading the way in ensuring we have the most integrated approaches and systems possible to develop good jobs and progression." It includes this statement:

"Good quality, well-paid work – and connecting our residents with those jobs – is critical for the economic and social success of Greater Manchester. Age, gender, sexual orientation, race, disability or socio-economic background should be no barrier to success in Greater Manchester."

*Salford*⁸

There is a real risk that many local people, especially young people and those from more disadvantaged communities, will not be linked to or benefit from economic development, resulting in a more unequal city.

While there has been a slight decrease in the proportion of people claiming out-of-work benefits, Salford continues to experience unemployment and out-of-work benefit rates higher than those experienced regionally and nationally.

⁶ North West Business Leadership Team, Institute of Directors, Confederation of British Industry (2017) [North West Education and Skills Charter](#)

⁷ Greater Manchester Combined Authority (2017) [Our People, Our Place. The Greater Manchester Strategy](#)

⁸ Salford City Partnership (2017), [Salford Employment and Skills Strategy 2017-2020](#)

Nearly 19,000 people in Salford (11.7% of the working age population) are claiming out-of-work benefits. This is significantly higher than the national average (8.4%) and higher than both the Greater Manchester (10.3%) and North West average (10.1%), with some areas of Salford experiencing rates of nearly 20% (Broughton, Langworthy and Little Hulton).

Within this, there is a significant proportion of people out-of-work due to health reasons, with 8.6% of Salford's working age population in receipt of health-related benefits. This is also significantly higher than that seen nationally (6.1%).

Salford has seen an improved skills profile over recent years. There remains, however, a significant proportion of local people with low or no qualifications.

30.3% of Salford's working age population have a qualification at NVQ Level 4 or above, but this falls behind the national rate of 38.2%. At the other end of the skills spectrum, Salford has a higher proportion of people with no qualifications at 10.1%, compared to 8.0% seen nationally.

Adults connecting to, and progressing in, employment and training is the second of the three strategic priorities in the *Salford Employment and Skills Strategy 2017–2020*.⁹

Having no or low skills is one of the main reasons for worklessness and is widely acknowledged as one of the main barriers preventing unemployed people returning to the labour market.

A significant proportion of Salford people are under skilled compared to the rest of the country, and more than half of the jobs being created across Salford and Greater Manchester will require qualifications at Level 3 or above.

A strong skills base, relevant to the needs of the economy, is therefore essential if Salford is to continue to attract and retain good quality job opportunities.

A system is needed that ensures all local people are able to access a programme of learning that will allow them to gain, sustain, and progress in work.

This would ensure that people have the basic skills that employers require as a minimum, and have the ability to connect people to higher level skills

⁹ Salford City Partnership (2017), [Salford Employment and Skills Strategy 2017-2020](#)

training, ensuring that local people have the right skills needed to effectively compete in the labour market.

The growth in both Salford and Greater Manchester provides major opportunities for local people but, despite this, many people still face major challenges to access and progress in employment. Indeed, some people face multiple barriers to work linked to issues such as skills, long-term health conditions, disability, debt, child care, housing and transport.

It is therefore critical that economic development helps to address, rather than exacerbate, the situation for these people and that the actions identified are linked to wider Salford and Greater Manchester strategic priorities. It will be important that people are connected to a broader offer of support where appropriate e.g. health and well-being services, to enable people to access and sustain employment.

This will be achieved by influencing policy and programmes, co-ordinating activity and delivering local action:

Influencing policy and programmes

- Ensure that the commissioning of employment programmes through Greater Manchester Devolution is responsive to Salford's needs e.g. Working Well Expansion, Work and Health, Universal Offer.
- Ensure the design and integration of GM adult skills (including the re-design of further education) and employability provision is aligned to meet the needs of Salford's residents and employers.
- Work with the GM Team to influence the Jobcentre Plus estates review and the development of a universal support offer.
- Ensure skills provision is aligned with the needs of business and key growth sectors to equip people with the skills required to access opportunities.

Co-ordinating activity and delivering local action

- Ensure the integration of national initiatives, GM employment programmes e.g. Helping Families, Working Well Expansion, Work and Health and Skills for Employment, and other commissioned employability programmes e.g. Motiv8, into Salford's local employment and skills delivery structure.
- Maximise the role, connectivity and impact of Salford's local employment and skills partnership infrastructure.
- Ensure a coordinated approach to the delivery of quality information, advice and guidance across the city so that local people are better equipped to make informed decisions about pathways to learning and employment choices (including self-employment).

- Ensure a skills pathway that provides progression routes from first steps community learning through to employability, vocational, further and higher education and employment.
- Provide high quality information, advice and guidance for adults with complex needs.
- Ensure access to basic English, maths and language (ESOL) skills is available.
- Help more people to adjust to the digital world and learn more about technology.

3. Demand

3.1. Future demand for occupations

One comprehensive study¹⁰ mapped out how employment is likely to change by 2030. It found that:

- around 10% of the workforce are in occupations that are likely to grow as a proportion of the workforce
- around 20% of the workforce are in occupations that will likely shrink (such as retail, and repetitive work that can be automated)
- around 70% of people are currently in jobs where it is not certain what will happen, although occupation redesign coupled with workforce retraining could promote growth in these occupations
- an expectation of buoyant demand for some - but not all - professional occupations, reflecting the continued growth of service industries, such as creative, digital, design and engineering occupations, alongside architectural and 'green' occupations
- in general, public service occupations - with some exceptions - feature prominently and are predicted to see growth, including in education and health care
- many of the jobs likely to experience a fall in employment are low-skilled or medium-skilled in nature, but not all are likely to face the same fate; as well as non-tradable services (such as food preparation, elementary services and hospitality) growing in importance with job redesign and skills upgrading, those with more varied patterns with likely pockets of opportunity include agriculture, skills trades and construction

3.2. Growth industries - Salford

There continues to be significant economic development in Salford, with many people moving in from outside to live and/or work in the city, especially in the areas adjacent to Manchester city centre.

¹⁰ Bakhshi H. et al. (2018) [The Future of Skills. Employment in 2030](#), London: Pearson and Nesta

The key industries most likely to grow in the future are¹¹:

- business, financial and professional skills
- construction
- digital and creative
- health and social care
- hospitality, tourism and sport
- logistics and manufacturing

In the next ten years, Salford's exceptional level of growth is forecast to continue at more or less the equivalent rate of the past decade. Based on the current development pipeline, a further £3.9 billion private sector investment is forecast with 18,000 new homes and 1.6 million square metres of employment floor space developed.

There are a significant number of projects under way or planned that will have major long-term impact on Salford, creating thousands of new business, employment and training opportunities for local people.

Current developments include the expansion of Greengate, MediaCityUK, Port Salford, RHS Garden Bridgewater and Salford Central, which have the potential to create a combined total of 36,000 new jobs over the next 15 years.

3.3. Employment

The hourglass economy

The Greater Manchester Forecasting Model¹² suggests Greater Manchester's labour market will increasingly take on a pattern sometimes called 'the hourglass economy', with growth in both high-skill jobs and low-skill jobs, but much lower growth at intermediate skill levels.

This trend might already be reflected in the fact that, while Greater Manchester has experienced a growth in the economy, low wages continue to be a feature of its labour market. Nearly a quarter of jobs pay less than the real Living Wage, and a growth has also occurred in 'flexible' forms of employment, such as the 'gig economy'. For example, self-employment increased by almost 32% and temporary employment by over 23% in the period March 2008 to June 2015.

The Greater Manchester Forecasting Model indicates that, in terms of changes in qualification required by Greater Manchester employers by 2033:

¹¹ Salford City Partnership (2017), [Salford Employment and Skills Strategy 2017-2020](#)

¹² Greater Manchester Combined Authority (2017) [Economic Forecasts for Greater Manchester](#)

- 245,000 more jobs will require NQF (National Qualification Framework¹³) Level 4+
- 105,000 fewer jobs will require NQF 3
- 52,000 fewer jobs will require NQF 2
- 15,000 more jobs will require NQF 1
- 28,000 more jobs will require other qualifications
- 47,000 fewer jobs will require no qualifications

3.4. Skills

One detailed study¹⁴ has outlined the implications for skills from likely changes in employment. It found:

- a strong emphasis on interpersonal skills (including teaching, social perceptiveness and coordination), higher-order cognitive skills (such as originality, fluency of ideas and active learning) and systems skills
- a particularly strong relationship between higher-order cognitive skills and future occupational demand
- skills related to system thinking (the ability to recognise, understand and act on interconnections and feedback loops in sociotechnical systems, such as judgement and decision making, systems analysis and systems evaluation) also feature prominently
- the future workforce will need broad-based knowledge (areas such as English language, history, philosophy and administration and management) in addition to the more specialised features that will be needed for specific occupations

What skills, abilities and knowledge will be in demand in 2030?

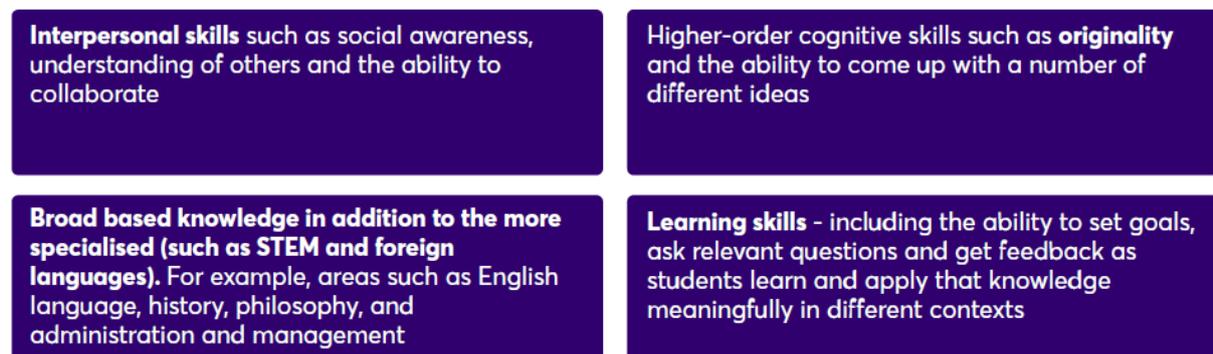


Figure 1: What skills, abilities and knowledge will be in demand in 2030?¹⁵

The *North West Education and Skills Charter*¹⁶ emphasises that technical skills can be taught in work. It does, however, highlight a series of

¹³ HM Government - [What qualification levels mean](#)

¹⁴ Bakhshi H. et al. (2018) [The Future of Skills. Employment in 2030](#), London: Pearson and Nesta

¹⁵ Nesta, Speakers for Schools (2018) [What skills will today's young people need to be successful in the future world of work?](#) [The Future of Skills: a briefing for teachers]

¹⁶ North West Business Leadership Team, Institute of Directors, Confederation of British Industry (2017) [North West Education and Skills Charter](#)

personality attributes and soft skills that will enable young people to flourish and further develop in the workplace:

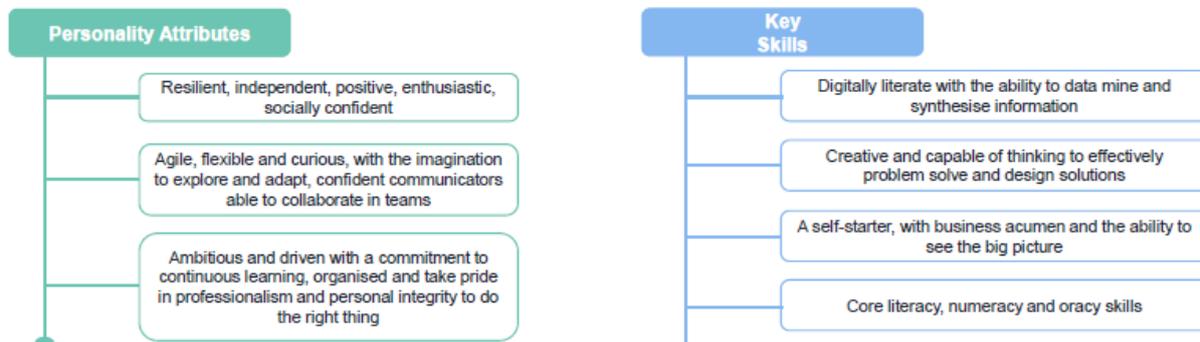


Figure 2: What business needs – personality attributes and key skills¹⁷

This view was reinforced by research on future skills for Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce.¹⁸ Its key message is that, in all future industry scenarios in ten years' time, the common factor is that certain soft skills are crucial:

- Agility and resilience: the pace of transformation and continued uncertainty means individuals will need to deal with change effectively and positively.
- Creativity and critical thinking: as technology accelerates, new design solutions will be needed to ensure humans and machines are connected. Workers will be high level problem solvers and creators.
- Empathy and emotional intelligence: all future work will be focused on the end user – humans. Designing machines or providing a public service, workers will need to really understand people, which may get harder as human to human contact diminishes.

As a more specific example, Project Oxygen was run by Google in 2013 to test the most important qualities for its employees. It was shocked that expertise in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) came last. The seven top characteristics of success were all soft skills:¹⁹

- being a good coach
- communicating and listening well
- possessing insights into others (including others' different values and points of view)
- having empathy toward and being supportive of one's colleagues
- being a good critical thinker and problem solver
- being able to make connections across complex ideas

¹⁷ North West Business Leadership Team, Institute of Directors, Confederation of British Industry (2017) [North West Education and Skills Charter](#)

¹⁸ Joint the Dots (2018), *Future of Skills 2028* (unpublished, for Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce).

¹⁹ Strauss V. (2017) [The surprising thing Google learned about its employees – and what it means for today's students](#), *Washington Post* (20 December, 2017)

There are consistent messages coming from industry/business about skills gaps and shortages,

The online survey²⁰ of employers in and employer organisations covering Salford suggested that key skills gaps in the local economy are:

- soft skills (such as problem-solving)
- interpersonal skills
- digital skills

There is particular focus on digital skills (such as coding, programming and social media marketing), which are relevant to all of the local growth industries (and others):

In their *North West Education and Skills Charter*²¹, large employers identify as one of the two critical success factors for the region's economic success: digital literacy - at every stage of life, but most particularly for the success of the thriving tech and digital sector in the region.

"Every one of our members in digital/creative/tech will have skills gaps." (Jon Monk, Development Manager, The Business Group Salford – email, 8 May, 2018).

"There has been a lot of news recently regarding the lack of digital skills across the north of the country²², with things like Google's digital garage popping up in order to help rectify the skills shortage. ... It seems to me like there is an opportunity there, as these types of skills require certain mind sets typically suited to conditions like autism and Asperger's. These skills are in high demand and this is only likely to increase." (Alex Davies, Research Analyst, Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce – email, 9 May, 2018).

4. Supply

4.1. Autism - definitions

Autism is "a lifelong condition that affects how people communicate and interact with others. Autism affects people in different ways. But most autistic people see, hear and experience the world differently from people without autism."²³ "Autism is a spectrum condition. All autistic people share certain difficulties, but being autistic will affect them in different

²⁰ Detailed survey report in Appendix 3.

²¹ North West Business Leadership Team, Institute of Directors, Confederation of British Industry (2017) [North West Education and Skills Charter](#)

²² Roue L. (2018) [Government-backed campaign tackles digital skills challenge facing the north](#), *Manchester Evening News* (21 March, 2018)

²³ NHS - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/> [accessed 4 March, 2019]

ways. Some autistic people also have learning disabilities, mental health issues or other conditions."²⁴

"People with Asperger syndrome are of average or above average intelligence. They don't have the learning disabilities that many autistic people have, but they may have specific learning difficulties. They have fewer problems with speech but may still have difficulties with understanding and processing language."²⁵

High-functioning autism is a term applied to autistic people who are deemed to be cognitively 'higher functioning' than other autistic people.²⁶
²⁷ The amount of overlap between high-functioning autism and Asperger syndrome is disputed.²⁸

4.2. Autism prevalence

There is no source of reliable data in the UK for the number of autistic people. The lack of firm estimates is because: some very able people have learned strategies to overcome any difficulties; others have been misdiagnosed with different types of mental health problems; while there are also inconsistencies of definitions over time and between services. Prevalence estimates are therefore used to indicate the size of population.

Compared with a previous estimate of 1.0% prevalence of autism in England²⁹, the best estimate of the overall prevalence of autism in England was 1.1% (taking account of the higher rate of autism amongst people with learning disabilities)³⁰.

One in 68 young people (1.47%) are now identified as autistic, with many more likely to be living without a 'diagnosis'. The generally accepted ratio is 4:1 male-to-female, but recent research suggests there may be more unidentified women than unidentified men. There is a growing awareness

²⁴ National Autistic Society - <https://www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/asd.aspx> [accessed 4 March, 2019]

²⁵ National Autistic Society - <https://www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/asperger.aspx> [accessed 4 March, 2019]

²⁶ Sanders J.L. (2009). [Qualitative or Quantitative Differences between Asperger's Disorder and Autism? Historical Considerations](#), *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. 39 (11): 1560–1567

²⁷ Carpenter L.A., Soorya L., Halpern D. (2009). [Asperger's Syndrome and High-Functioning Autism](#), *Pediatric Annals*. 38 (1): 30–5.

²⁸ Tsai L.Y. (2013). [Asperger's Disorder will be Back](#), *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. 43 (12): 2914–2942

²⁹ Brugha T. et al. (2009), *Autism Spectrum Disorders in adults living in households throughout England. Report from the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2007*, England: The NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care

³⁰ Brugha T. et al (2012) [Estimating the Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Conditions in Adults: Extending the 2007 Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey](#), England: The NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care

that autism manifests differently and, in some ways, can present more subtly in females. Nevertheless, even studies that better account for under-recognition still show a 2–5:1 male predominance.³¹

Autistic people from black and minority ethnic communities are less identified than white autistic people. They may also face discrimination in accessing and engaging with support.³² There is little evidence about this.

More specifically, for Asperger’s syndrome, prevalence estimates vary enormously: one review concluded that the ratio of autism to Asperger’s syndrome averages 5:1³³, suggesting indirectly that the prevalence of Asperger’s syndrome might be around 0.2-0.3%.

4.3. Demography - Salford

The 2017 school census³⁴ for England showed that, in Salford, there were 363 children with autism as their primary special education need and a further 86 children with autism as their secondary need. The rate of 1.0% is significantly lower than that for England (1.35%). Anecdotal evidence suggests that the levels of autism in Salford are high, but the recording is inconsistent and does not match with published figures.

	Number	% of children with a SEN	% of all school aged children
State-funded primary schools	169	3.9%	1.0%
State-funded secondary schools	70	3.8%	
Special schools	124	22.7%	
Total	363	5.4%	

Table 1: Children with autism as the primary special educational need (SEN) in school aged children, Salford 2017³⁵

The projections for the estimated number of autistic adults (using prevalence figures of 1.5% for males and 0.2% for females) suggests that there could be 1,782 men and 223 women by 2037.³⁶

³¹ Meng-Chuan Lai et al. (2015) [Sex/Gender Differences and Autism: Setting the Scene for Future Research](#), *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, volume 54, issue 1: 11-24

³² Perepa P. (2005) [Invisible Families. Experiences of minority ethnic families](#), London: National Autistic Society

³³ Fombonne E., Tidmarsh L. (2003) [Epidemiologic data on Asperger disorder](#), *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, volume 12, issue 1: 15–21. PMID 12512396

³⁴ Department for Education (2017), [Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2017](#)

³⁵ Department for Education (2017) [Special educational needs in England: January 2017](#) [accessed 17/08/2017]

³⁶ Salford City Council (2019) *Autism Needs Assessment*

**Estimated prevalence of ASD in adults aged 18 years and over,
Salford,
2017 to 2037**

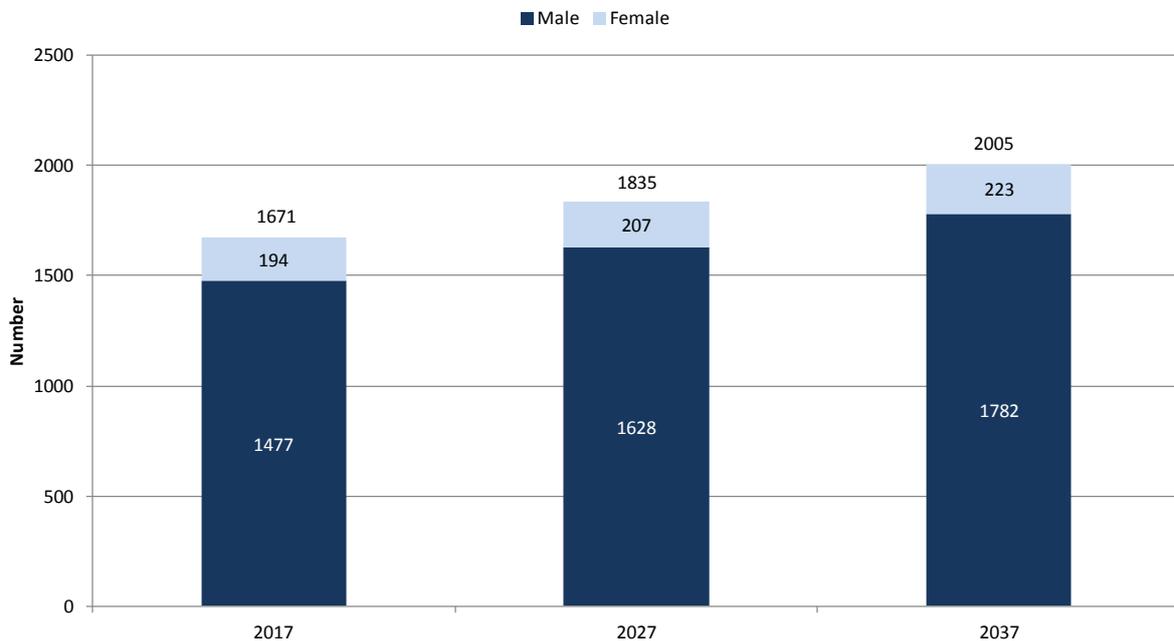


Figure 3: Estimated prevalence of autism in adults projected to 2037, by gender, Salford³⁷

It is predicted that the number of autistic adults in Salford will increase by approximately 17.6-20.0% between 2017 and 2037.³⁸ It should, however, be noted that applying a higher prevalence rate gives a difference of nearly 1,000 adults.

	2017	2027	2037
Aged 18-24 predicted to have ASC	323	330	363
Aged 25-34 predicted to have ASC	572	550	579
Aged 35-44 predicted to have ASC	425	523	501
Aged 45-54 predicted to have ASC	418	405	487
Aged 55-64 predicted to have ASC	332	396	381
Aged 65-74 predicted to have ASC	260	288	347
Aged 75-84 predicted to have ASC	150	190	220
Aged 85 and over predicted to have ASC	62	77	113
Total	2,543	2,759	2,992

Table 2: People aged 18 and over predicted to have autism, Salford 2017-2037³⁹

³⁷ Salford City Council (2019) *Autism Needs Assessment*

³⁸ Salford City Council (2019) *Autism Needs Assessment*

³⁹ NHS Digital (2014) [Chapter 6: Autism, Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2014](#) [accessed 21 August, 2017] applied to Office for National Statistics (2014) [National Population Projections: 2014](#) [accessed 21 August, 2017]

The vagaries of prevalence data are reflected in this map produced by the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership in late 2018:

Autistic Population data

Key: (figures rounded to the nearest 5)

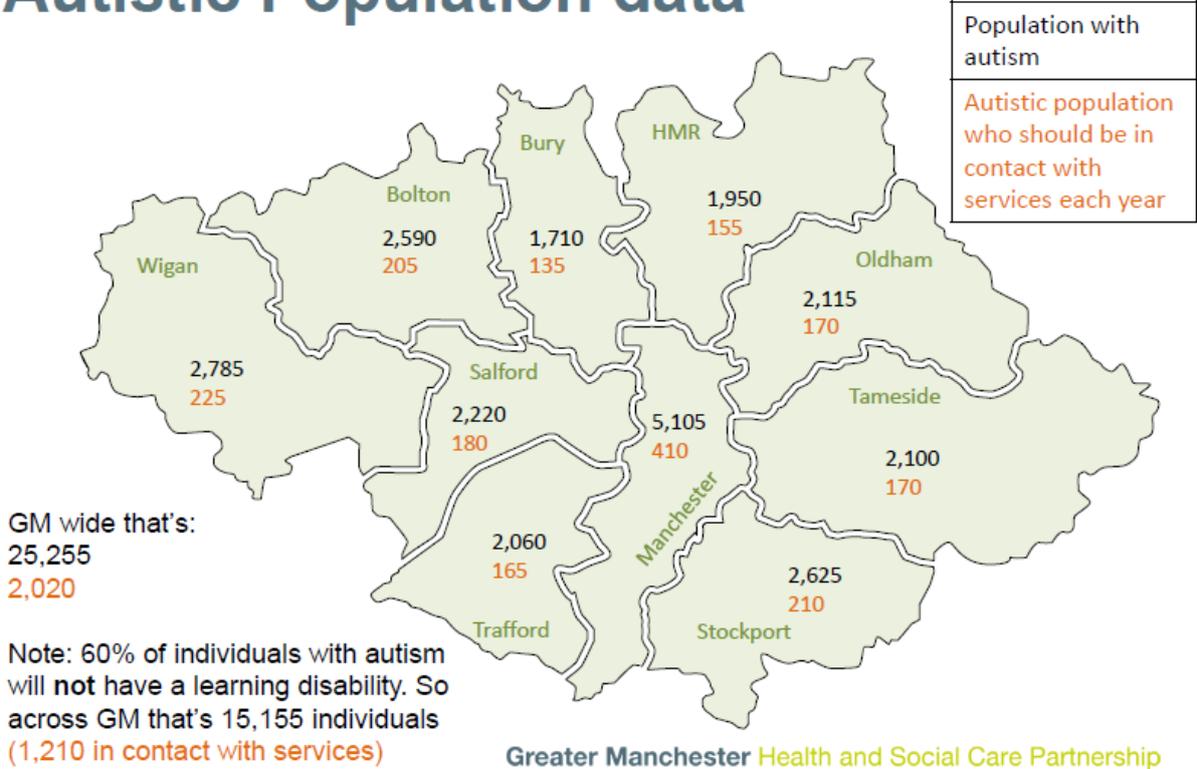


Figure 4: Autistic population, Greater Manchester, 2018

It is therefore possible to give the number of autistic adults in Salford as a range between 1,671 and 2,543 people (median = 2,107), rising to between 1,965 and 3,051 people by 2037 (median = 2,508).

If the prevalence of Asperger’s syndrome (autism without intellectual impairments) is around 0.2%, the number of people in Salford with Asperger’s syndrome is calculated to be:

	0-17 years	18-64 years	65+ years	Total
2016	110	316	252	678
2027	119	343	273	735
2037	129	372	296	797

Table 3: Number of Salford population (all ages) predicted to have Asperger’s syndrome applied to mid-year 2016 population, and projected to 2037 ^{40 41}

⁴⁰ Fombonne E., Tidmarsh L. (2003) [Epidemiologic data on Asperger disorder](#), *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, volume 12, issue 1: 15–21. PMID 12512396

⁴¹ Office for National Statistics (2016) [Mid-year population estimates](#) [accessed 17 August, 2017]

4.4. Strengths / offer

When you have met one autistic person, you have met one autistic person. Autistic people are not all the same and do not all have the same abilities, so there is a risk of nullifying individual personality and qualities. There are, however, some characteristics that tend to be more common amongst autistic people.

In the right environment, autistic people can demonstrate particular strengths, such as intense focus and attention to detail, resulting in higher productivity in comparison to the neurotypical population.^{42 43} They may also perform well in socially isolated or repetitive jobs often avoided by others⁴⁴ (although this should be a personal choice). The potential value of autistic employees has recently been recognised by some high-profile companies, such as Microsoft, launching recruitment campaigns specifically targeting autistic people.

At the workshop with the adult advisory group of the Greater Manchester Autism Consortium, some strong themes emerged around the strengths and skills of autistic people:⁴⁵

- commitment and diligence
- attention to detail
- focus
- questioning current methods and speaking up when there is a better way
- seeing underlying patterns
- speaking up when something is wrong or unfair
- insight
- reliability

The online survey⁴⁶ of autistic people in and autism-related organisations covering Salford suggested that particular strengths and skills that autistic people offer to employers are:

- dedication
- focus
- ability to think differently
- in-depth knowledge of specific subjects
- discipline
- reliability
- eye for detail

⁴² Wehman P., Smith S. (2009) [*Autism and the Transition to Adulthood: success beyond the classroom*](#), Baltimore: Brookes Publishing Company

⁴³ Hendrie D. et al. (2016) [*Autism in the Workplace: maximising the potential of employees on the autistic spectrum*](#). Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre

⁴⁴ Knapp M., Romeo R., Beecham J. (2009) [*Economic Cost of Autism in the UK*](#) *Autism*, 13, 317-336

⁴⁵ Detailed workshop report in Appendix 2.

⁴⁶ Detailed survey report in Appendix 3.



Autism: the positives



Understanding, embracing and celebrating different ways of thinking and doing can release the true power of the autistic mind. Here we look at the positive features of autism.



Attention to detail

- Thoroughness
- Accuracy



Methodical approach

- Analytical
- Spotting patterns, repetition



Deep focus

- Concentration
- Freedom from distraction



Novel approaches

- Unique thought processes
- Innovative solutions



Observational skills

- Listen, look, learn approach
- Fact finding



Creativity

- Distinctive imagination
- Expression of ideas



Absorb and retain facts

- Excellent long term memory
- Superior recall



Tenacity and resilience

- Determination
- Challenge opinions



Visual skills

- Visual learning and recall
- Detail-focussed



Accepting of difference

- Less likely to judge others
- May question norms



Expertise

- In-depth knowledge
- High level of skills



Integrity

- Honesty, loyalty
- Commitment

Remember

Every experience of autism is **unique**. No one person will identify with every positive feature of autism. We all have **individual** skills, attributes and characteristics that are as unique as our personalities – this is the **power of neurodiversity**.

Harriet Cannon
Disability Services, February 2018

Icon designed by Freepik from www.flaticon.com


UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Figure 5: Autism – the positives⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Cannon H. (2018) *Autism: the positives*, Leeds: University of Leeds

As one early years worker wrote at a consultation workshop, “I’m used to working in early years autism, but now will view some of these youngsters as potential of the future.”

4.5. Neurodiversity⁴⁸

Neurodiversity is, ultimately, a biological fact of the infinite variety of human neurocognition. It is now also being used to represent a fast-growing sub-category of organisational diversity and inclusion that seeks to embrace and maximise the talents of people who think differently.

Neurodiversity is moving up the organisational agenda for two reasons:

- With the business case for diversity as a whole now accepted, employers aiming to be truly inclusive cannot exclude such a significant demographic as neurodivergent people. To do so risks missing out on talent, and compromising on productivity and customer trust.
- More pertinently, the business case for diversity has highlighted the importance of ‘diversity of thought’ – get people with different perspectives, backgrounds and experiences in a room, and a team will be more innovative and creative. In a sense, neurodiversity may be one of the most challenging areas within diversity and inclusion – complex, nuanced, and often invisible – yet it offers a business upside in this context: given that neurodivergent people *literally think differently*.

For an employer, given the overall prevalence of neurodivergent people, there are clear risks of not taking steps to ensure inclusion:

- What will it cost you not to get the most out of your employees in terms of productivity, or to lose talent to more inclusive, attractive employers?
- What will it mean for your product innovation to miss out on the ‘diversity of thought’ that neurodiversity can deliver, and that other firms are setting themselves up to benefit from?
- What might not understanding the needs of your customers cost in terms of lost revenue, and even brand reputation?

The full benefits of neurodiversity inclusion are still being explored and understood, but it is increasingly clear that it can have benefits both internal and external. One clear advantage is in attracting new talent – talent that has so historically been substantially overlooked.

Neurodivergent people represent, as a whole, a vast, high-potential available talent pool for organisations to tap into and leverage. For example, autistic people often bring strengths to their work such as

⁴⁸ CIPD (2018), [Neurodiversity at Work](#)

analytical thinking, focus, and attention to detail. Some industries, such as cyber security, have already started to recognise this.^{49 50}

Less well understood is the potential for neurodiverse teams to work together to deliver greater performance and innovation. Diversity of thought creates learning, stimulates innovation and actively demonstrates respect. Equally, understanding and appreciating neurodiversity is likely to benefit co-worker collaboration.

Now that neurodiversity is better understood as the reality of natural variation in human neurocognition, it is time to take a more balanced – and more optimistic – view. While neurodivergent people may face their own, specific challenges in the workplace environment, or with particular tasks, they can bring unique and valuable strengths to their work. The potential for organisations to build a greater understanding of people’s neuro-differences – and to find ways of attracting and optimising the full range of human perspectives – seems limitless. Neurodiversity inclusion is an area where ‘doing good’ is clearly good business.

5. Challenge

It is extremely difficult to find useful data on autistic people and employment. *“I’m increasingly finding that data regarding people with mental health issues, disabilities, social issues etc. very often just doesn’t exist, and especially when it comes to the matter of skills and employment. ... If it is out there, it is not easy to find. This is an issue which warrants exposure all of its own.”* (Alex Davies, Research Analyst, Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce – email, 9 May, 2018).

5.1. Autism employment gap

In the UK, just 16% of autistic adults are in full-time paid employment. This situation has been virtually static for over a decade (15% in 2007). A similar number are in part-time employment, giving an overall employment rate of 32%.⁵¹ (This total compares with about 80% for non-disabled people and 47% for disabled people as a whole⁵²). 40% of those autistic people working part-time feel underemployed.

Unemployment is both widespread and long-term. Among autistic people out of work, 59% do not believe or do not know if they will ever be employed. Among autistic adults aged 55 or over, 41% have been

⁴⁹ Cyber Neurodiversity Group - <https://www.neurocyber.uk/>

⁵⁰ Information Assurance Advisory Council, Cyber Security Challenge UK (2017), [Autism and Careers in Cyber Security: a short guide for employers](#)

⁵¹ National Autistic Society (2016), [The Autism Employment Gap](#)

⁵² Office for National Statistics (2016) *Dataset: A08: Labour market status of disabled people* (20 July 2016). London: Office for National Statistics

unemployed for more than ten years.⁵³ One study found that, while males and females were working at similar rates, females were more likely to say that their unemployment was a result of choosing to withdraw from the labour market.⁵⁴

Employment will not be right for all autistic people. But, in a National Autistic Society survey, 77% of unemployed autistic adults, or people responding on their behalf, said that they want to work.⁵⁵ This level of interest was mirrored in a separate survey that found 70% of autistic people without learning disabilities want to work, as do 65% of people with learning disabilities (including autistic people).⁵⁶

Using the prevalence rate of 1.47%, data from the most recent Census (updated to 2016)⁵⁷ and employment rates found by the National Autistic Society⁵⁸ suggests that, in Salford:

Age	16-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Female	5,435	9,312	21,395	15,492	15,766	12,006
Female autistic	32	56	130	95	94	73
Male	5,514	9,587	22,809	16,647	16,246	12,752
Male autistic	129	222	520	378	377	290
Total autistic	161	278	650	473	471	363
Employed full-time	26	44	104	76	75	58
Employed part-time (<i>under-employment</i>)	26 (10)	44 (18)	104 (42)	76 (30)	75 (30)	58 (23)
Not employed (<i>want to work</i>)	109 (84)	189 (146)	442 (340)	322 (248)	320 (246)	247 (190)

Table 4: Estimated employment, underemployment and unemployment of autistic adults in Salford

To give an approximation for Greater Manchester, the figures above may be multiplied by a factor of ten.

⁵³ Bancroft, K. et al. (2012) *The Way We Are: Autism in 2012*, London: National Autistic Society

⁵⁴ Taylor J.L. et al. (2019). [Sex differences in employment and supports for adults with autism spectrum disorder](#), *Autism*, 1362361319827417

⁵⁵ National Autistic Society (2016), *The Autism Employment Gap*

⁵⁶ Townsley, R. et al. (2014) *Employment and Young People with Autistic Spectrum Disorders: An Evidence Review*, Cardiff: Welsh Government

⁵⁷ <https://beta.ons.gov.uk/filters/ab71f019-2f33-4279-866a-d022d8e5e8df/dimensions/geography/search?q=Salford>

⁵⁸ National Autistic Society (2016), *The Autism Employment Gap*

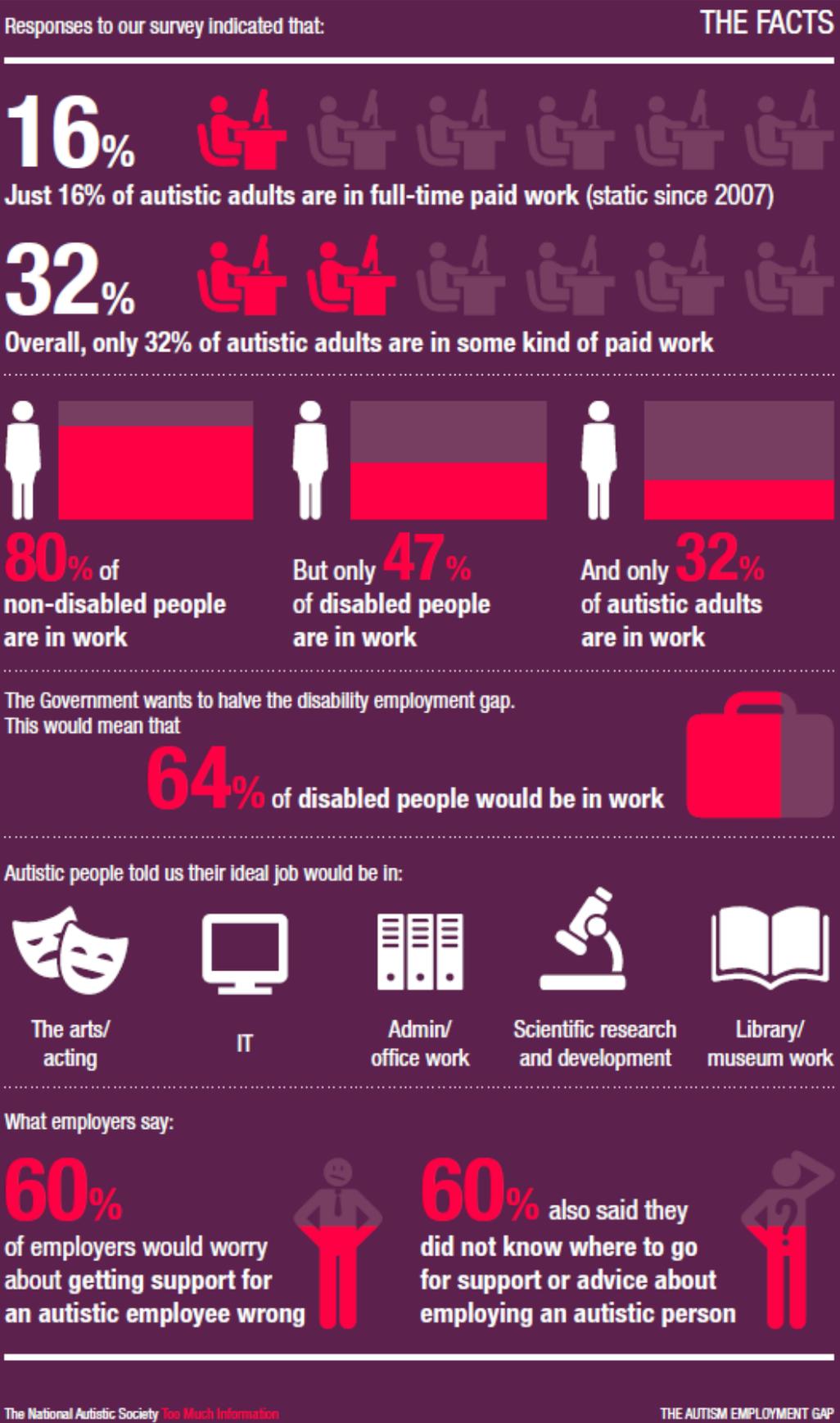


Figure 6: Autism employment gap survey headlines⁵⁹

⁵⁹ National Autistic Society (2016), [The Autism Employment Gap](#)

5.2. Barriers

A systematic review⁶⁰ identified a number of factors which lower the chances of good work outcomes for autistic people: severity of 'diagnosis'; co-morbidities; lower IQ; language and speech difficulties; maladaptive behaviour; social impairments; level of education; lack of drive; family involvement; and institutionalisation. Often it is a combination of these factors that leads to limited employment outcomes.

Autistic people's perspectives

The most common reason given by autistic people for not being in or looking for work is a lack of confidence. Some 23% of respondents to a National Autistic Society survey said that this is an issue.⁶¹ One respondent to our consultation suggested that, for some young people, the outlook of parents/carers for them may be problematic. Another relayed, however, "as an adult/family we have felt completely alone and overwhelmed; struggling to try and find work for him and maintain any confidence/self-esteem."

One study found that similar percentages of males and females reported receiving some form of benefits or family support, but of those receiving benefits/family support, males received more than females.⁶²

Autistic people may experience challenges in accessing employment, such as difficulties in understanding nuances in job advertisements and interviews.^{63 64}

Many autistic people feel that, rather than their strengths and abilities, employers see their autism (in a problematic sense). This is perhaps not helped by what one respondent to our consultation described as "the 'supported employment' culture" often relating to autistic people.

While a large majority of autistic people want to work, they report assumptions by services and employers that they want employment that

⁶⁰ Holwerda, A. et al. (2012), [Predictors for Work Participation in Individuals with an Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Systematic Review](#), *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 22(3): 333-352

⁶¹ National Autistic Society (2016), [The Autism Employment Gap](#)

⁶² Taylor J.L. et al. (2019). [Sex differences in employment and supports for adults with autism spectrum disorder](#), *Autism*, 1362361319827417

⁶³ Forsythe L., Rahim N., Bell L. (2008) [Benefits and employment support schemes to meet the needs of people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder](#), London: National Audit Office

⁶⁴ Baldwin S., Costley D., Warren A. (2014) [Employment Activities and Experiences of Adults with High-Functioning Autism and Asperger's Disorder](#), *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 44(10), 2440-2449

is solitary, technical or requires attention to detail. Autistic people actually want to work in a wide variety of jobs across all sectors.⁶⁵

When receiving support in seeking employment, most autistic people rely on generic disability employment programmes, which may not be well suited to their needs.⁶⁶

A major reason why autistic people do not disclose their autism on job applications is that the reasonable adjustments people want are usually not available. Most jobs currently require an interview. In a National Autistic Society survey, only 11% of those who disclosed their autism on their application were offered an adjustment for their interview, and just 3% of respondents were offered an alternative interview process.⁶⁷

Autistic people can also find maintaining employment problematic. Around 90% of job losses for disabled people relate to social skills deficits, which are a particular problem for autistic adults⁶⁸, affecting the ability to socialise. Autistic people may experience multiple challenges in maintaining employment, such as difficulties in travelling to work because of sensory overload, lack of support before and during work, and sensory issues in the workplace, as well as employer discrimination.^{69 70}

At the workshop with the adult advisory group of the Greater Manchester Autism Consortium, some strong themes emerged around barriers to employment (in order of priority):⁷¹

- employer ignorance and attitude
- the 'benefits trap' – moving from benefits into work
- recruitment and selection processes
- employer failure to make reasonable adjustments
- social issues – making understanding the 'rules of the game' and group activities difficult
- lack of confidence and assertiveness
- disclosing autism to potential employer
- work place design

⁶⁵ National Autistic Society (2016), [The Autism Employment Gap](#)

⁶⁶ Forsythe L., Rahim N., Bell L. (2008) [Benefits and employment support schemes to meet the needs of people with autistic spectrum disorder](#), London: Inclusion Research and Consultancy

⁶⁷ National Autistic Society (2016), [The Autism Employment Gap](#)

⁶⁸ Strickland D., Coles C., Southern L. (2013) [JobTIPS: a transition to employment program for individuals with autism spectrum disorders](#), *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 43, 2472-2483

⁶⁹ Forsythe L., Rahim N., Bell L. (2008) [Benefits and employment support schemes to meet the needs of people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder](#), London: National Audit Office

⁷⁰ Baldwin S., Costley D., Warren A. (2014) [Employment Activities and Experiences of Adults with High-Functioning Autism and Asperger's Disorder](#), *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 44(10), 2440-2449

⁷¹ Detailed workshop report in Appendix 2.

The online survey⁷² of autistic people in and autism-related organisations covering Salford suggested that key things that prevent autistic people gaining employment are:

- employers' lack of knowledge and understanding of autism
- employer perception and prejudices on autism
- recruitment processes
- inflexibility and lack of reasonable adjustments by employers
- autistic people's lack of confidence

One skills and work professional also suggested, in response to our consultation, that "there is a big gap for linking people to supportive placements/work/employers."

While not specific to autistic people, recent research on hidden young people in Salford⁷³ (not in education, employment, education or training and not claiming benefits) found some common themes also likely to apply to young autistic people:

- limited awareness about support available – in terms of both wider local opportunities and the benefits system
- a lack of a clear pathway to opportunities (especially in vocational routes), due to a lack of effective careers information, advice and guidance, alongside meaningful accountability measures offered by schools and post-16 education providers
- poor perceptions of Jobcentre Plus – made worse by the recent introduction of the Youth Obligation
- the need for services and support to be available to those young people who do not engage with the social security system

Employers' perspectives

The Future of Skills 2028⁷⁴ is a campaign by the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce. It has found that a common theme is communication between stakeholders (from schools to higher education, and from training providers to employers), who often find themselves at cross-purposes, delivering what they can individually, but collectively missing the mark when it comes to the success of the system overall. This applies even more acutely for autistic people.

Some 60% of employers are worried about getting things wrong for autistic employees. The same proportion do not know where to seek

⁷² Detailed survey report in Appendix 3.

⁷³ Jones K., Martin P., Kelly A. (2018) [*Hidden Young People in Salford. Exploring the experiences of young people not in employment, education or training \(NEET\) and not claiming benefits.*](#) Salford: University of Salford, Salford City Council

⁷⁴ Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce – [Future of Skills 2028](#)

advice about employing an autistic person⁷⁵, although there are now good guides for employers, such as the CIPD's *Neurodiversity at Work*⁷⁶.

Employers have other reservations about employing autistic people, particularly the belief held by 40% that it costs more to employ an autistic person.⁷⁷

The online survey⁷⁸ of employers in and employer organisations covering Salford suggested that what most prevents employers from employing autistic people are:

- employers' lack of awareness and understanding of the skills and talents of autistic people
- use of traditional recruitment and interview processes

One employer wrote in response to our consultation: "It is not just autistic people that struggle with the interview process - and questions are now being asked as to whether interviews as an assessment tool are actually right to be used any more."

"We don't have any data on this but it's an area I'm particularly interested in. I'd be happy for you to present something at The Landing huddle ... I'd also be interested in helping you to shape something innovative in this area for recruitment." (Jon Corner, Chief Executive, The Landing – email, 29 April, 2018).

6. Conclusions - current and prospective situations

From all of the intelligence gathered, we can conclude that the economy of Salford will continue to grow rapidly, especially its key growth industries. However, Greater Manchester's labour market will increasingly be an 'hourglass economy', with growth in both high-skill jobs and low-skill jobs, but much lower growth at intermediate skill levels.

In response, the strategic priorities for both Salford and Greater Manchester are: young people equipped for life and work; and adults in good jobs with opportunities to progress and develop.

Employment will change by 2030. Although it is uncertain what will happen to most jobs, many of the jobs likely to experience a fall in employment are low-skilled or medium-skilled in nature.

In all future industry scenarios, the key skills likely to be required by employers will be: interpersonal skills; higher-order cognitive skills;

⁷⁵ National Autistic Society (2016), [The Autism Employment Gap](#)

⁷⁶ CIPD (2018), [Neurodiversity at Work](#)

⁷⁷ National Autistic Society (2016), [The Autism Employment Gap](#)

⁷⁸ Detailed survey report in Appendix 3.

system thinking skills; and broad-based knowledge as well as specialised features needed for specific occupations. Key personality attributes will be: agility and resilience; creativity and critical thinking; empathy and emotional intelligence; and commitment to continuous learning.

The data on the prevalence of autism and the number of autistic people is variable and unreliable. The estimated number of autistic adults in Salford ranges between 1,671 and 2,543 people (median = 2,107), rising to between 1,965 and 3,051 people by 2037 (median = 2,508). The estimated number of adults with Asperger's syndrome in Salford is 316, rising to 343 in 2027 and 372 in 2037.

Autistic people are not all the same and do not all have the same abilities, so there is a risk of nullifying individual personality and qualities. In general, however, the particular strengths of autistic people include: intense focus; attention to detail; thinking differently with different insights; reliability; commitment; and diligence. For employers, neurodiversity offers both a new pool of talent, and greater diversity of thought within a workforce and teams.

Just 16% of autistic adults are in full-time employment, and another 16% are in part-time employment, even though at least 70% want to work. This suggests that there may be as many as 1,250 autistic people in Salford who are unemployed and want to work, including at least 200 people with Asperger's syndrome.

Key barriers to employment for autistic people are: recruitment and selection processes; lack of confidence; employer ignorance of autism; employer attitudes and prejudices on autism; failure to make reasonable adjustments; inappropriate support to move into and retain employment; and difficulties with social skills and issues.

Key barriers to employers taking on autistic people are: lack of awareness and understanding of the skills and talents of autistic people; worry about getting things wrong for autistic people; not knowing where to seek advice about employing an autistic person; belief that it costs more to employ an autistic person; use of traditional recruitment and interview processes.

As one consultation respondent wrote: "there needs to be a stronger recruitment model/system in place to ensure the number of autistic people can work."

A common theme is communication between stakeholders (from schools to higher education, and from training providers to employers), who often find themselves at cross-purposes, delivering what they can individually, but collectively missing the mark. We therefore need to find a whole-system approach that matches the availability of skills with the demands of employers and the expectations of local people.

7. Solutions

7.1. Introduction

Autistic people are more likely to be employed if: they come from households with a higher family income; have higher parental education; are male; have higher social skills; do not have a learning disability; have higher educational qualifications; received career counselling in school; and had post-secondary vocational training.^{79 80}

Local people and growth industries need to be brought together in a structured way if the people – especially those from disadvantaged communities – are to be equipped for employment or entrepreneurship, and an even more unequal economy and society is to be avoided.

With its Future of Skills 2028⁸¹ campaign, the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce wants not only to gather the best knowledge available but also, most importantly, to get the various stakeholders to listen to each other and view the system as a whole, working together to adapt to the changing needs of business. In this way, the aim is to find solutions to ensure that the availability of skills in ten years' time matches up to the expectations of business and the aspirations of local people and workers. This need is even more acutely for autistic people.

7.2. Greater Manchester Autism Friendly Strategy⁸²

Greater Manchester Autism Consortium (GMAC) has been in place since 1993, and is managed by the National Autistic Society. Its first task under a new three-year funding model agreed in 2017 was to produce an autism strategy for Greater Manchester.

Making Greater Manchester Autism Friendly is the first regional strategy of its kind, co-produced by autistic people, professionals and families. This was formally approved through Greater Manchester governance routes in January 2019.

With regard to employment and transition (including employment and transition into adulthood for autistic and family members), the strategy

⁷⁹ Walsh L., Lydon S., Healy O. (2014) [Employment and Vocational Skills Among Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder: predictors, impact and interventions](#), *Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 1: 266-275

⁸⁰ Chiang H.M. et al. (2013) [Factors Associated with Participation in Employment for high School Leavers with Autism](#), *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 43, 1832-1842

⁸¹ Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce – [Future of Skills 2028](#)

⁸² Greater Manchester Autism Consortium (2019), *Making Greater Manchester Autism Friendly 2019-2022*

recognises that “Greater Manchester will not be autism friendly unless we tackle the autism employment gap.”

The vision is that: “All autistic people and their family members are given the right information to prepare for adulthood and that those autistic adults who are able to work can access the support they need to find and maintain work, including from employers who understand them.”

Amongst actions identified to realise this vision are:

1. Compliance with statutory duties regarding transition by localities.
2. Promoting and using *Growing up in Greater Manchester – A Guide for Young People with Autism and their Supporters*⁸³ and share good practice.
3. Roll out a transition workshop programme for parents (if funds are secured).
4. Reconstitute the autism and transition group and invite extra stakeholders to identify gaps in transition across Greater Manchester.
5. Develop a framework for a transition review for 14-year-old autistic young people on Special Educational Need support, and roll this out from the 2020-2021 school year.
6. Work with the Mayor’s office on the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter and ensure that autistic people are included in this.
7. Establish a task and finish group on employment by the end of 2019. This will develop a plan for improving the support available across Greater Manchester, including standards for employment support, working with Jobcentre Plus, ensuring employment is part of local autism strategies, identifying actions around self-employment, and looking at preparation for work. If common gaps across Greater Manchester are identified, the task and finish group will develop a business case.

7.3. Principles

Through considering the wide range of possible interventions in areas such as education, health, social care and employment, the National Autism Project⁸⁴ identified consistent themes or principles that underlie the challenges most commonly faced by autistic people and potential solutions to them:

- Principle 1 - personalised actions:

⁸³ Greater Manchester Autism Consortium, [Growing up in Greater Manchester – a guide for young people with autism and their supporters](#) [based on material originally co-produced by Salford with young autistic people]

⁸⁴ Iemmi V., Knapp M., Ragan I. (2017), [The Autism Dividend. Reaping the rewards of better investment](#), London: National Autism Project

- recognising people's specific characteristics and circumstances, different needs and individual preferences
- Principle 2 - choice and control:
 - balancing the wish of many autistic people for greater autonomy with effective support structures to meet their needs
- Principle 3 - addressing inequalities:
 - providing support and building better understanding and tolerance of difference to address inequalities in access to health care, education and employment
- Principle 4 - a life-long perspective:
 - ensuring early identification and evidence-based interventions during childhood or adolescence, and at all stages of life

7.4. Support

When asked what would most help them into employment, 50% of autistic people identified support, understanding or acceptance.⁸⁵

At the workshop with the adult advisory group of the Greater Manchester Autism Consortium, some strong themes emerged around the support needed by autistic people to gain employment:⁸⁶

- support starting and during employment
- easier and less punitive route from welfare into work
- identifying and matching skills to appropriate employment
- improved employer awareness and understanding of what autistic people can bring
- reasonable workplace adjustments

The online survey⁸⁷ of autistic people in and autism-related organisations covering Salford suggested that what would most support autistic people to gain employment are:

- employer understanding of autism
- employer knowledge of reasonable adjustments
- practical-based recruitment
- work trials and work placements before employment
- external support for autistic people

The online survey⁸⁸ of employers in and employer organisations covering Salford suggested that what would most support employers to employ autistic people are:

⁸⁵ National Autistic Society (2016), [The Autism Employment Gap](#)

⁸⁶ Detailed workshop report in Appendix 2.

⁸⁷ Detailed survey report in Appendix 3.

⁸⁸ Detailed survey report in Appendix 3.

- awareness and knowledge of autism
- understanding the strengths of autistic people
- information and guidance
- learning and training on working with autistic people

These may equally apply to colleagues of autistic people.

Practical suggestions included: a myth-busting fact sheet on autism for employers; and case studies of autistic people who have been an asset to their employers (perhaps including examples of well-known national figures in successful careers).

7.5. Practicalities

Autistic people

There are nine areas of practical issues for autistic people seeking employment: good working practice for professionals; understanding autism; choosing a suitable role; applying for roles; interviews; finding work experience; communication and social skills; managing anxiety; and preparing for the workplace.⁸⁹

To help address these issues, the National Autistic Society offers *Finding Work*, a job searching and employment preparation workbook for autistic people⁹⁰, as well as a web page with advice about work.⁹¹

Employers

Employers can play their part by:

- receiving advice and tips in order to make the reasonable adjustments autistic people may need for recruitment and the workplace (including job carving and support from Access to Work)
- offering apprenticeships, work experience, volunteering opportunities, internships and mentoring to autistic people
- increasing their managers' and employees' understanding of autism and making their workplace autism-friendly
- becoming leaders in their sector on autism and employment and sharing their experiences with others

⁸⁹ National Autistic Society (2016) [Finding Work. A job searching and employment preparation workbook for autistic people](#)

⁹⁰ National Autistic Society (2016) [Finding Work. A job searching and employment preparation workbook for autistic people](#)

⁹¹ National Autistic Society - advice about work - <https://www.autism.org.uk/about/adult-life/work.aspx>

There is a small number of guides available to employers about recruiting and employing autistic people.^{92 93 94 95} These make the case for neurodiversity and employing autistic people.

In practical terms, the current guides focus on:

- **recruitment and selection** – including role descriptions, job adverts, candidate filtering and selection, disclosure of autism / neurodivergence, interviews and alternative assessments
- **induction and onboarding** - including before the first day, getting started, and probation
- **inclusive workplace environment** – including the ‘hidden curriculum’, sensory issues, executive dysfunction, championing by senior leadership, staff awareness, language, reasonable adjustments (including flexible working and location, such as home working)
- **managing a neurodiverse team** – including neurodiversity smart management (person-centric management styles), sensitive but direct feedback, regular performance review, support and mentoring strategies, progression, and reassurance in stressful situations

7.6. Self-employment

Self-employment is an alternative and popular option for some autistic people. It offers the possibility of working in your own way, without needing to conform to traditions and conventions, such as long meetings, always working in teams or the structures of the normal working day and working week. Many who would like to be self-employed would need ongoing support to do this, for instance to structure their time or manage their finances.

As well as working independently or freelance, some autistic people become entrepreneurs, such as Adam and Guy Mackey of Niche Comics⁹⁶, an independent book, comic, board-game and gift shop in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire.

7.7. Other provision

- **Access to Work:**⁹⁷ A publicly funded employment support programme in England, Scotland and Wales that aims to help more disabled people

⁹² Department of Work and Pensions, National Autistic Society (2011), [Untapped Talent. A guide to employing people with Autism](#)

⁹³ Scheiner M., Bogden J. (2017) [An Employer’s Guide to Managing Professionals on the Autism Spectrum](#), London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

⁹⁴ CIPD (2018) [Neurodiversity at Work](#)

⁹⁵ Feinstein A. (2018) [Autism Works. A Guide to Successful Employment Across the Entire Spectrum](#), London: Routledge

⁹⁶ Niche Comics – <http://www.nichecomics.co.uk>; story at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-46236942>

⁹⁷ Access to Work - <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

start or stay in work. It can provide practical and financial support for people who have a disability or long-term physical or mental health condition. Support can be provided where someone needs help or adaptations beyond reasonable adjustments. An Access to Work grant can pay for practical support to help a person stay in work, or to support a person who is self-employed.

- **Disability Confident:**⁹⁸ A national scheme that is designed to help employers to recruit and retain disabled people and people with long-term health conditions for their skills and talent. It supports employers to make the most of the talents disabled people can bring to the workplace. The scheme is voluntary and access to the guidance, self-assessments and resources is free.
- **Supported employment:**^{99 100 101} A way of providing assistance to disabled people who need extra support to move towards and into work. The model uses a partnership strategy to enable disabled people to achieve sustainable long-term employment and businesses to employ valuable workers. This includes: customer engagement; vocational profiling; employer engagement; job matching; in-work support; and career development. Analysis suggests that supported employment schemes for autistic adults are cost-effective compared with standard care.¹⁰²

In contrast to earlier 'train and place' employment programmes, in recent years the trend has been towards 'place and train' approaches involving on-the-job training and support. Many display these common features¹⁰³:

- consideration of the person's strengths and interests when matching employers and employees
- vocational training involving structured techniques such as behavioural therapies, natural support or simulation
- a job coach to provide personalised training and workplace support
- involvement of families, partners, carers, employers and colleagues to provide long-term, comprehensive support and follow-up to ensure job retention

⁹⁸ Disability Confident - <https://disabilityconfident.campaign.gov.uk/>

⁹⁹ Supported employment is often described as individual placement and support (IPS) when it is used to support people with long-term mental health needs. In IPS, there is an additional emphasis on the co-location of employment and clinical staff.

¹⁰⁰ British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) - <https://www.base-uk.org/>

¹⁰¹ Melling K., Turner S. (2018) *An Employer's Guide to Supported Employment*, Bath: National Development Team for Inclusion

¹⁰² Mavranezouli I. et al. (2014). [The cost-effectiveness of supported employment for adults with autism in the United Kingdom](#), *Autism*, 18(8), 975-984

¹⁰³ Westbrook J. et al. (2012) [Effectiveness of adult employment assistance services for persons with autism spectrum disorders](#), *Campbell Systematic Review* 5, 1-67

Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership are planning to increase specialist employment service provision in Greater Manchester to 2023. This work is being done with local authorities, NHS clinical commissioning groups and the Department of Work and Pensions. It includes supported employment for autistic people, aiming to support 154 and creating 77 job starts. This is based on a cost-per-job outcome and ongoing support of £8,000 and that 50% of people start paid employment.



Figure 7: Towards a Greater Manchester Working Well system (Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership, 2017).

- **Apprenticeships:**¹⁰⁴ An apprenticeship gives a person hands-on experience, a salary and the opportunity to train while they work. An apprentice will work alongside experienced staff, gain job-specific skills, earn a wage, and get time for study related to their role (usually one day a week). Depending on their level, apprenticeships take one to five years to complete.

Greater Manchester Combined Authority is exploring options to have a small pilot project for provision of apprenticeships for autistic people, probably within the public sector.

- **Work experience / placements / internships:** Work trials and work placements can give both employer and potential employee a more meaningful opportunity to find out if they are right for each other.

¹⁰⁴ The National Apprenticeship Service, part of the [Skills Funding Agency](#), is the government agency that co-ordinates apprenticeships in England.

An internship is a (paid or unpaid) period of work experience offered by an organisation for a limited period of time. Often arranged by a third party, internships are typically done by people looking to gain relevant skills and experience in a particular field. Employers can benefit from placements by recruiting the best interns as employees, already knowing their capabilities, while the person is familiar with the employer. There is a lack of standardisation and oversight of internships, and they are less rigorous than apprenticeships.

- **Digital support:** New digital solutions and support are becoming available. For example, Brain in Hand¹⁰⁵ is an on-demand support system that gives people (including autistic people) access to detailed personalised support from their smartphone, putting the individual more in control of their own support.

7.8. Examples elsewhere

Organisations specifically recruiting and employing autistic people in the UK and other countries ¹⁰⁶ reflect several different approaches:

- Autism-focussed employers:
 - Aspiritech - software testing, United States
 - Auticon - IT consultancy, Germany / international
 - Autism Bricks UK - Lego-related services, UK
 - Harry Specters – chocolate manufacturing, UK
 - Passwerk - software testing, Belgium
 - People Like Us - brewing, Denmark
 - Specialisterne - software testing, programming and data entry, Denmark / international
 - ULTRA Testing - software testing, United States
- Employers with specific employment programmes for autistic people:
 - Deutsche Bank – banking, UK
 - DXC.technology - IT services, Australia
 - Ernst and Young - professional services, Philadelphia, United States
 - GCHQ – intelligence and security, UK
 - Israel Defense Forces - military
 - Microsoft - IT, United States / international
 - SAP - enterprise application software, Germany / international
- Employment preparation:
 - Coding Autism - coding academy, United States
 - Exceptional Minds - digital animation and visual effects, United States
 - NonPareil Institute - game and app development, United States
 - The Specialists Guild - training, United States

¹⁰⁵ Brain in Hand - <http://braininhand.co.uk/>

¹⁰⁶ Detailed descriptions of organisations employing autistic people are in Appendix 4.

- Matching employers and autistic people:
 - The Spectrum Careers - United States

8. Conclusions - solutions

The Greater Manchester Autism Strategy seeks to ensure that: “All autistic people and their family members are given the right information to prepare for adulthood and that those autistic adults who are able to work can access the support they need to find and maintain work, including from employers who understand them.”

Key principles for any action are: personalised actions; choice and control; addressing inequalities; and a life-long perspective.

Key elements of support for employment of autistic people are: employer awareness and understanding of autistic people and their strengths; practical-based recruitment; reasonable workplace adjustments; and support starting and during employment. Employers would benefit from both information and guidance, and learning on working with autistic people. Self-employment should also be considered as an option.

In practical terms, the main areas to address are: recruitment and selection; induction and onboarding; inclusive workplace environment; and managing a neurodiverse team.

Other complementary provision includes: Access to Work; Disability Confident; supported employment; apprenticeships; work experience, placements and internships; and digital support.

Around the world, the main approach adopted is autism-focussed employers. Other approaches are employers with specific employment programmes for autistic people, and employment preparation. Only one example of a ‘recruitment agency’, matching employers and autistic people, has been identified.

9. Contact

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- Jack Loughlin - Programme Manager (Life Readiness), Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- Gavin Owen - Community Partner for Learning Disability and Neurodiversity, Greater Manchester District, Department for Work and Pensions
- Tim Rumley - Integrated Youth Support Services Senior Youth Work Manager, Children's Services, Salford City Council
- Mari Saeki - Project Lead, Greater Manchester Autism Consortium and National Autistic Society
- Anna Twelves – Principal Manager (Employment), Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Appendix 1

Contacts list

Note: for reasons of anonymity, neither individual people nor individual employers are listed.

- 42nd Street
- ADHD Foundation
- Autism Spectrum Conditions Forum Salford
- Autistic Society for the Greater Manchester Area (ASGMA)
- Autistic Spectrum Support for People (ASSP)
- Beis Yaakov High School
- Business Group Salford
- Canterbury Centre
- Career Connect
- Chatsworth High School and Community College
- Clifton Centre
- Community Social Inclusion Network (CSIN)
- Connexions
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Disability Rights UK
- Greater Manchester Autism Consortium
- Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership
- Langdon College
- Learning Support Service – ACE Team
- Manchester Metropolitan University
- National Autistic Society
- Neural Diversity Network
- New Park Academy
- North West Employers
- Oakwood Academy
- Salford Action for Autism
- Salford Autism
- Salford Autism Friendly Environments (SAFE)
- Salford City College
- Salford City Council – adult services, children’s services
- Salford City Council – business, careers, skills and work teams
- Salford City Council – public health
- Salford Clinical Commissioning Group
- Salford CVS
- Salford Foundation
- Salford Parent Voice
- Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust
- Seetec
- The Business Group
- The Growth Company
- The Landing
- United Response
- University of Salford

Appendix 2

Greater Manchester Autism Consortium adult advisory group

Workshop at 12.00-14.00, Friday 14 December, 2018
Z Arts, 335 Stretford Road, Hulme, Manchester M15 5ZA

[9 autistic people participated]

1. What strengths and skills do autistic people offer to employers?

Commitment and diligence

- commitment
- more diligent
- stick to deadlines
- good task and finishers
- perseverance
- would rather work than gossip

Attention to detail

- eye for detail in ways that seem 'unique' e.g. data, patterns, fluency with IT
- detail orientation
- attention to detail
- attention to details

Focus

- focus on task
- stick to task in hand and fully concentrate on it
- focussed
- it is our ability to prioritise things over others that may be considered an asset

Questioning current methods and speaking up when there is a better way

- question why things are done in a certain way
- different way of thinking for neurotypicals
- less group think
- speaking up when there is a better way

Seeing underlying patterns

- spotting flaws
- more able to see underlying truth or pattern
- able to reason through with practical solutions

Speaking up when something is wrong or unfair

- speaking up when something is wrong
- strong sense of justice and fairness

Insight

- visionary insight
- insight

Reliability

- reliability
- loyalty

Other

- honest
- creativity
- able to follow procedures and protocols
- same but different because of behavioural impact of autism
- organised
- suited to challenge

2. What prevents autistic people from gaining employment?

Employer ignorance and attitude

- prejudice from employers
- employers have little knowledge: will stereotype
- lack of acceptance by employers
- employers scared of employing people who are different, people who think or learn differently
- inflexible employers
- it challenges their styles of management because BS is not acceptable to us

'Benefits trap' – moving from benefits into work

- benefits 'trap'
- how to end benefit reliance and start on the path to employment and/or self-employment as the benefits system is practically designed to prevent people getting into work
- current welfare reform benefits system makes it difficult to move into work
- rules with ESA/permitted earnings/part-time hours
- DWP and British government

Recruitment and selection processes

- recruitment practices/methods
- the interview process relying a set formal verbal process
- lots of hidden assumptions and common sense testing in job applications
- interviews are a test of neurotypicality

Employer failure to make reasonable adjustments

- it is too much trouble to put adjustments in place
- our disability is invisible to employers, they can't see that we need adjustments

- autistic people likely to look like hassle for employers (why would I bother?)

Social issues

- we tend to follow our own rules this makes us less inclined towards group things
- social deficit > rules of the game
- social issues

Lack of confidence and assertiveness

- lack of confidence
- anxiety
- limited assertiveness – not pushy enough

Disclosing autism to potential employer

- the presumption of you asking for any support to the interview process – “disclosure before employment”
- autistic people wary of disclosing their autism and potential employer’s reaction

Work place design

- open plan environment
- difficult environment/badly designed buildings

Other

- no additional support when young children transitioning into employment from school
- too honest for own good
- [need] moral support
- training may be awful
- difficult to manage

3. What would support autistic people gaining employment?

Support starting and during employment

- support once you’re in a job – helping colleagues understand you and you understand them
- liaison once autistic person is in employment between employer and employee possibly from third party
- staged start to job (not big bang)
- support meeting the terms
- support clarifying objectives

Easier and less punitive route from welfare into work

- advice on how to navigate the welfare benefits system and implications of working

- an easier route and a less punitive route, from employment, so that claimants wanting to work do not instantly lose money when starting to work: what a disincentive!
- changes to DWP protocol
- more generous work allowance

Identifying and matching skills to appropriate employment

- help identifying skills that they have
- help being steered towards job that fits skills and interests
- guidance around matching skills and experience to jobs
- guidance on narrowing job search; conversely, guidance on broadening job search when autistic person only searches relating to their specific interest

Improved employer awareness and understanding of what autistic people can bring

- autistic led training for employers
- realisation from employers what skills autistic people can bring to their workplace
- engage large employers: more likely to have 'social conscience' programme and more likely to have (hidden) autistic employees

Reasonable workplace adjustments

- clearer understanding of reasonable adjustments and them promoting the conversation as the employer
- crowdsource a catalogue of successful reasonable adjustments
- better understanding of sensory sensitivity

Other

- the penalties (financial or otherwise) are not sufficient to make employers change
- sell it as a management development challenge to large org
- get employers to ditch interview and do work task exercise 4 mgt. eval.
- don't wait for it to go wrong when they are an adult; look for early support in school (11-16 year olds) to ensure positive transition with support to college, job, uni., etc. (especially if they don't have an EHCP)

4. Supported employment service proposal

Discussion following presentation by Anna Twelves (Principal Manager – Employment, Greater Manchester Combined Authority) and Gavin Owen (Community Partner for Learning Disability and Neurodiversity - Greater Manchester District, Department of Work and Pensions)

Key points raised by participants:

- Discussion around where funding was coming from and how it would be distribution across Greater Manchester. (It was clarified that funding is included specifically for autistic people.)
- The service model will be around people with more complex needs.
- Individual placement support and support programmes available.
- Need evidence around best types of service models.
- Access to Work will be a requirement.
- Lawyer support due to prejudice and discrimination from employers.
- It's the responsibility of autistic person to manage self and responsibility of the 'system'.
- People in general don't have any concept of support needs of autistic people e.g. reasonable adjustments in work should be a given, not a fight.
- [In certain situations] you aren't autistic enough.
- Needs to identify supportive employers and ongoing support between employer/employee.
- Manager's attitude would keep you in a job if they are a good employer.
- Specific advocacy for autistic people.
- A colleague to provide moral support, such as in one-to-one supervision.

Appendix 3

Online survey results

Autism organisations [8 survey responses]

1. What particular strengths and skills do autistic people offer to employers?

Themes: Autistic people tend to be dedicated, focussed and have the ability to think differently, often with in-depth knowledge of specific subjects.

- conscientious
- dedication
- persistence
- perseverance

- concentration
- focus
- task focussed

- unique outlook view of any given subject
- able to think differently around problem solving
- practical and logical thought process

- an in-depth knowledge of specific subjects
- detailed factual knowledge

- data handling
- data analysis

- attention to detail

- complete repetitive work

- organisational skills

- ability to work independently

- good memory

- ability to identify errors

- wanting to please

- loyalty

- character
- reliability
- honest
- rule abiding
- fewer social inhibitions

2. What prevents autistic people gaining employment?

Themes: Inflexibility and lack of reasonable adjustments by employers, recruitment methods, employer perception and prejudices on autism, and autistic people's lack of confidence.

- lack of reasonable adjustments around lighting, sound and noise in workplace
- onus on employee rather than employer to come up with reasonable adjustments
- interpretation of reasonable adjustment by employers
- inflexibility of employers around routines and procedures
- employers unwillingness to adapt employment
- incompatible way of operating
- inflexibility

- complex and obscure recruitment advertisements, processes and interview questions
- divergent interpretations of what is said to/asked of them in an interview
- answering questions to the point in interviews and not giving the wider context
- NTs unable to establish a relationship with autistic interviewees (which is a key part of most final interviews)
- lack of flexibility from employers to change recruitment methods
- lack of professionalism in individuals involved in the recruitment process

- perception of the condition
- prejudice of employer
- lack of patience and understanding
- lack of understanding of autism amongst recruiters, employers, managers, supervisors and fellow workers
- pre-conceived views because they are considered *different*

- lack of self-belief
- lack of confidence
- learned self-doubt

- current or previous conflicts with co-workers or managers
- bullying
- fear of other people and their behaviour of how they treat special needs adults
- barriers relating to communication
- autistic people wary of disclosing their autism
- isolation
- unsure about what is expected of them in workplace
- inability to adapt to NT environments
- the autistic individual's perceptions and expectations
- the benefits trap
- potential over protectiveness of carers
- lack of a gateway/support in accessing employment

3. What would support autistic people gaining employment?

Themes: Employer understanding of autism and reasonable adjustments, external support, and practical-based recruitment.

- an understanding of autism by employers
- a more open attitude from employers
- compassionate employers to make reasonable adjustments
- reasonable adjustments
- workplaces adapted for needs of autistic people
- an understanding of and flexibility around autistic characteristics and social aspects of working with other people
- support from third-party organisations to help autistic people seek, gain and retain employment
- mediator type role
- having a support worker
- need for job coaches
- a designated transition person - to aid steps into feeling comfortable in a new environment
- task/practical based interviews rather than verbal interviews
- support with interviews
- training for autistic people on how to approach recruitment process

- job roles and person specifications being more accurate
- clear tasks and explanations of job role
- job sharing
- job carving
- work trials
- supported work experience/training
- employers recognising skills of autistic people
- employers willingness to think differently and engage with potential employees who think differently
- mechanism to connect skill-based needs of employers with autistic people who supported in recognising and selling their skills
- time to get to understand what those special needs [of employers] are and allowing the person to be of service and to develop their skills
- confidence building and mentoring
- support with work related tasks initially
- identification of job roles that autistic people could do

4. What else might it help us to know for this project?

- make use of one-page profiles, ask the individual what they would like and listen to the individuals' requests
- as an employer we'd find it useful to have a myth-busting factsheet on ASC
- case studies of individuals with autism who have been an asset to their employers (+ maybe a few examples of well-known national figures in successful careers)
- ask autistic people and employers!
- liaise with the Autism and Learning Disability strategy group as they are developing the local autism strategy and employment is a key feature of this
- need people who are willing to be patient and allow the person to give of their best and depending of their level of competency not to expect too much
- ensure staff are autism aware and accepting of diversity

- not all autistic people are the same and have the same needs and abilities
 - the projects need to continually celebrate the strengths of the neurodiversity population and the benefits some employers like Microsoft and Google have gained from employing ND people
 - other schemes available from DWP and Skills & Work team
-

Autistic people (individuals) [4 survey responses]

1. What particular strengths and skills do autistic people offer to employers?

Themes: Autistic people are disciplined, reliable and have an eye for detail.

- determination to complete a task
- discipline
- commitment
- passionate about doing the job as best as possible
- good work ethic
- reliable
- trustworthy
- loyalty
- accuracy
- eye for detail
- not interested in office gossip
- less time wasters
- focus
- knowledge
- honest

2. What prevents autistic people gaining employment?

Themes: Employers' lack of knowledge and understanding of autism, and recruitment processes.

- employer lack of knowledge of autism
- employer lack of understanding of autism

- assumption from NTs autistic people are unsociable and don't like interaction
- apprehension of the unknown
- apprehension of difference
- recruitment processes that are not strengths based
- interview skills
- poor communication between autistic person and employer
- lack of life skills of autistic person

3. What would support autistic people gaining employment?

Themes: Work trials before employment, and knowledge of reasonable adjustments.

- more apprenticeships
- more work placements
- a 'try before employ' which works both for employers/employees
- autistic person to know what reasonable adjustments they require
- employer knowledge of reasonable adjustments
- meeting with an autistic (sic) training group
- mentors for support until ready to work unsupported
- more life skills taught to young people before adulthood

Employer organisations [2 survey responses]

1. What are the key skills gaps in the local economy?

Themes: Soft skills.

- soft skills like problem solving
- not having a qualification alongside commercial experience

2. What prevents employers employing autistic people?

Themes: Employers' lack of awareness and understanding of the skills and talents of autistic people.

- understanding the scope of abilities under the ASC umbrella
- lack of awareness preventing employers recognising true talent
- fear of the unknown
- being uncertain about appropriate support

3. What would support employers to employ autistic people?

Themes: Information and guidance, and understanding the strengths of autistic people.

- information on the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)
- guidance on recruitment practices
- guidance on reasonable adjustments
- case studies
- understanding the benefits and skills autistic people offer
- communication
- knowledge of whether or not to integrate person into the team

4. Do you have any examples of good practice on employing autistic people?

- knowledge of examples of amenable employers
- supporting people with learning difficulties into employment

Employers (individual) [5 survey responses]

1. What are the key skills gaps that you experience?

Themes: Digital skills, and interpersonal skills.

- candidates for IT jobs
- clinical coders (digital)
- interpersonal skills
- customer service skills
- qualified nurses and construction trades

2. What prevents you from employing autistic people?

Themes: Use of traditional recruitment and interview processes.

- job descriptions quite detailed
- person specifications are a barrier by the way they are written
- interview process not a natural route for an autistic person
- Disability Confident not publicised enough to encourage autistic applicants

3. What would support you to employ autistic people?

Themes: Awareness and knowledge of autism, learning and training on working with autistic people.

- knowledge of necessary adjustments
- knowledge of how to support autistic people in the workplace
- accreditations around autism to raise awareness
- learning through experience of working alongside autistic people
- staff training to understand ASC and how best to work with autistic people
- better understanding of recruitment issues
- recognising talents and skills
- advice on overcoming health and safety concerns
- supported internships

4. Do you have any examples of good practice on employing autistic people in or near Salford?

- support plans
- supported internships
- supported work placements
- Disability Confident accreditation
- staff training
- Prince's Trust *Get Into* programme

Appendix 4

Organisations recruiting and employing autistic people

Aspiritech¹⁰⁷ - Aspiritech empowers individuals on the autism spectrum to fulfil their potential through meaningful employment combined with social opportunity. Based in Illinois in the United States, Aspiritech provides a meaningful career track for adults on the autism spectrum by employing well-supervised, highly skilled and trained individuals to deliver exceptional software testing and other quality assurance services to a growing number of satisfied companies.

Auticon^{108 109 110} - Founded in 2011, Auticon is an international IT service provider and the first company in Germany to exclusively employ people on the autism spectrum as IT consultants. It is extremely proud of its autism-positive work culture, recognizing each employee for their individual strengths and talents and delivering outstanding quality to its customers. Auticon consultants are assigned to client projects that match their skills and expertise and work in the client's project team. Auticon's experience with autistic and non-autistic professionals in mixed project teams opens new perspectives and often significantly improves work performance. All Auticon consultants and its clients are supported in their daily work by its specially trained job coaches and project managers.

Autism Bricks UK¹¹¹ - a social enterprise supported by Specialist Autism Services, working exclusively for and with autistic adults. ABUK lives and breathes all things Lego. It sells new and preloved bricks through an online shop, restoring them to their former glory so that people can continue to enjoy them. It offers a range of Lego-related services, including selling specific bricks, renting custom Lego sets or designing bespoke projects. All profits are reinvested to fund the support of and provide meaningful work experience opportunities to autistic adults.

Coding Autism¹¹² - An online education company with a purpose, based in California, Coding Autism is building the first autism specialised coding academy, pairing online coding education, community, and an autism-savvy support team to help transition autistic talent into its technology workforce.

¹⁰⁷ Aspiritech - <https://aspiritech.org/>

¹⁰⁸ Auticon - <https://auticon.co.uk/>

¹⁰⁹ Harris J. (2017) [How do you solve the trickiest problems in the workplace? Employ more autistic people](#), *The Guardian* (9 October, 2017)

¹¹⁰ Bacchi U. (2019) [No social skills required: autistic staff help IT firm thrive](#), *Thomson Reuters Foundation News* (15 January, 2019)

¹¹¹ Autism Bricks UK - <http://www.specialistautismservices.org/autism-bricks-uk/>

¹¹² Coding Autism - <https://www.codingautism.com/>

Deutsche Bank¹¹³ - An internship for autistic graduates in Deutsche Bank, UK, with Autistica¹¹⁴, the UK's national autism research charity.

DXC.technology¹¹⁵ - DXC.technology is an end-to-end IT services company. First piloted in Adelaide, Australia, in 2014, the DXC Dandelion Programme is an initiative designed to build valuable information technology skills and careers for people on the autism spectrum. The goal of the programme is to provide higher education students with the opportunity to take part in technical work experience and improve their confidence, technical and team working skills to increase their employability. The DXC Dandelion Programme is part of a research programme being done with the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre at La Trobe University.

Ernst and Young¹¹⁶ - The multinational professional services firm EY specialised through a neurodiversity initiative by setting up in Philadelphia, United States, a Centre of Excellence, where a team of EY office-based professionals handles some of the most time-consuming, repetitive tasks for a number of client engagements across various areas of the business.

Exceptional Minds (EM)¹¹⁷ - a non-profit vocational school and working studio in Sherman Oaks, California, that prepares young adults on the autism spectrum for careers in digital animation and visual effects. The first and only school of its kind, EM is a dynamic answer to the high unemployment and social isolation characteristic of today's young adults with ASD as they age out of the public school system. It provides customised instruction in visual effects, digital animation and work-readiness to prepare this underserved population for lifelong careers. Its full-time, three-year vocational program offers a bridge between high school and meaningful employment by building on the strengths of the individuals. EM also offers private tutoring, small group instruction, and summer workshops for autistic young people interested in exploring careers in the digital arts.

¹¹³ Deutsche Bank - <https://network.autism.org.uk/good-practice/evidence-base/internship-autistic-graduates-deutsche-bank-uk> and Remington A., Pellicano E. (2018) [Sometimes you just need someone to take a chance on you: an internship programme for autistic graduates at Deutsche Bank, UK](https://www.autistica.org.uk/downloads/files/Internship-Programme-for-Autistic-Graduates_June2017_FullReport_web.pdf), *Journal of Management & Organization*, 1-19. doi:10.1017/jmo.2018.66 [also at https://www.autistica.org.uk/downloads/files/Internship-Programme-for-Autistic-Graduates_June2017_FullReport_web.pdf]

¹¹⁴ Autistica - <https://www.autistica.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-corporate-partner/employing-autistic-people>

¹¹⁵ DXC.technology - http://www.dxc.technology/au/ahp/142235-the_dandelion_program

¹¹⁶ Ernst and Young LLP - <https://www.ey.com/us/en/careers/ey-navigator-fall-2017-article-01>

¹¹⁷ Exceptional Minds - <http://exceptionalmindsstudio.org/>

GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters)¹¹⁸ – GCHQ has a dedicated Neurodiversity service to enable people with neurodiverse profiles to have successful careers within GCHQ and to foster a culture where differences are embraced and barriers to progression are overcome. It puts in place support systems that allow such staff to perform at their best and aim to do this without the need for formal 'diagnosis' or the 'labelling' of employees. The principle is to recognise the positives, maximise the potential, address the challenges that present in the workplace and meet staff needs through advice, discussion and appropriate adjustments.

Harry Specters¹¹⁹ - Harry Specters is dedicated to crafting delicious chocolates that create employment for autistic young people. They are involved in every aspect of the business – from making and packaging the products to administration, design and photography. The chocolates have won numerous awards for their taste and hundreds of autistic young people have a brighter future. The vision is to create hundreds of jobs for autistic young people in the UK by providing them with employment and training to produce award-winning chocolates.

Microsoft¹²⁰ - Microsoft has an autism hiring programme that hires autistic adults for coding, software programming and math jobs. The goal of this programme is to attract talent and build an inclusive approach to support individuals on the autism spectrum that will contribute to the way that Microsoft works as a company in building and servicing its products.

Israel Defense Forces - Ro'im Rachok¹²¹ is a programme designed to train young adults on the autism spectrum in professions required by the Israel Defense Forces and the civilian market. Qualified young adults who want to volunteer for service in the IDF or integrate into the job market are taught professions for which they have a comparative advantage. It currently trains people for professions like software quality assurance, information sorting electro-optics and electronics. People serve in more than ten units in the Israeli intelligence community, Israeli Air Force and more. In 2016, the programme ran with around 50 individuals. The programme is operated in cooperation of Beyond the Horizon (a charitable company) and Ono Academic College.

NonPareil Institute¹²² - A company that currently serves over 200 autistic adults within two training sites in Plano and Houston, Texas. Those training and working at NonPareil have built market competitive products,

¹¹⁸ GCHQ - <https://www.gchq-careers.co.uk/knowledge-hub/gchq-dedicated-to-diversity.html>

¹¹⁹ Harry Specters - <https://www.harryschocs.co.uk/>

¹²⁰ Microsoft - <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/diversity/inside-microsoft/cross-disability/hiring.aspx#coreui-heading-sp7tqgo>

¹²¹ Ro'im Rachok - <https://www.roim-rachok.org/english>

¹²² NonPareil Institute - <http://www.npitx.org/>

while also gaining the skills to become more independent, self-sufficient, and contributing members of the community. As NonPareil expands to new cities across the United States, its programme continues to evolve, engaging market demands and seeking to meet the needs of those it serves. NonPareil has published over ten games and apps. It delivers technical training to people while engaging with work-readiness skills training that will guide them through building their own better future. NonPareil is focused on providing opportunity to adults across the autism spectrum within a safe and accommodating community.

Passwerk¹²³ – Passwerk is a Belgian company that does software testing and other quality assurance work. Passwerk employs the qualities of autistic people, with normal ability, in software testing activities. Passwerk combines its business with a social dimension and offers this as an added value to its customers. Passwerk is in the “convergence market”. The Passwerk organisation adapts to the profile of its employees and not the other way round.

People Like Us¹²⁴ - Based in Copenhagen, People Like Us is a Danish brewing company founded in 2016 and run by people from socially marginalised groups, and supported by Mikkeller. People Like Us is a socio-innovative business, working on developing and spreading new social business understandings. A for-profit company, People Like Us brews craft beer. People Like Us is a platform. Besides the brewing company, it has multiple projects and business-legs developing and running.

SAP¹²⁵ - A market leader in enterprise application software, SAP helps businesses to streamline processes and to use real-time data to predict customer trends. As an employer, SAP focuses on skills and strengths. It has an Autism at Work programme, launched in 2013, employing more than 140 people in 12 countries. SAP believes that, by embracing differences, it helps to help spark innovation.

Specialisterne¹²⁶ - Specialisterne (“The Specialists” in Danish) is a socially innovative company where the majority of employees are on the autism spectrum. Employees work as business consultants on tasks such as software testing, programming and data entry for the public and private sectors. Specialisterne harnesses the special characteristics and talents of autistic people and use them as a competitive advantage, and as a means to help autistic people secure meaningful employment. Specialisterne has operations in numerous locations around the world. The Specialisterne Foundation owns Specialisterne Denmark and the

¹²³ Passwerk - <https://passwerk.be/en>

¹²⁴ People Like Us - <https://peoplelikeus.dk/>

¹²⁵ SAP - <https://www.sap.com/corporate/en/company/diversity/differently-abled.html>

¹²⁶ Specialisterne - <http://specialisterne.com/>

Specialisterne concept and trademark. The foundation works to enable one million jobs for autistic people and similar challenges through social entrepreneurship, corporate sector engagement and a global change in mind set.

The Specialists Guild (TSG)¹²⁷ - a social enterprise in San Francisco, California, that provides training for individuals with developmental social and communication challenge, such as autism, to contribute to society in line with their intelligence and abilities and support them to develop meaningful and self-supporting careers.

The Spectrum Careers¹²⁸ - Rangam Consulting Inc. and Autism Speaks created The Spectrum Careers, based in Somerset, New Jersey. This is a programme that matches employers with workers on the autism spectrum.

ULTRA Testing¹²⁹ - Founded in 2013 by two MIT engineers, ULTRA Testing is a New York-based technology company that provides highly flexible, high quality software testing services. Its teams include individuals on the autism spectrum who can have heightened abilities that are an exact match for software testing. Its mission is to prove that neurodiversity is a competitive advantage. To empower its neurodiverse teams to do their best work, ULTRA Testing re-designed every aspect of a traditional workplace, including data-driven recruiting to identify and screen talent, customised communication tools to facilitate efficient interactions, and transparent management practices to promote feedback and learning. It has team members working across 12 states, 75% of whom are on the autism spectrum.

¹²⁷ The Specialists Guild - <https://tsgteam.org/>

¹²⁸ The Spectrum Careers - <https://www.thespectrumcareers.com/>

¹²⁹ ULTRA Testing - <http://ultrateesting.us/>

Appendix 5

Outcomes and targets for skills and work – Salford and Greater Manchester

Outcomes and targets – Greater Manchester¹³⁰

Priority 2: Young people equipped for life

Outcomes:

- All young people in education, employment or training following compulsory education.
- Improved skills levels.

Targets:

- By 2020, the number of 16-17 year olds who are NEET (not in education, employment or training) will be below the national average in all Greater Manchester districts, as will the number whose activity is not known to the local authority.
- By 2020, the number of unemployed 16-19 year olds will have fallen from 13,300 in 2016 to 12,000, a reduction of 10% over the period.

Priority 3: Good jobs, with opportunities for people to progress and develop

Outcomes:

- Increased number of Greater Manchester residents in sustained, 'good' employment.
- Improved skills levels.

Targets:

- By 2020, there will be 70,000 more Greater Manchester working-age residents with Level 4+ (degree level or equivalent) qualifications, an increase from 34.6% of the working-age population in 2016 to 38.3%.
- By 2020, there will be at least 50,000 fewer Greater Manchester working-age residents with qualifications below Level 2, a reduction from 27.7% of the working-age population in 2016 to 24.6%.
- By 2020, more than 40,000 Greater Manchester residents per annum will start an apprenticeship, and the achievement rate for apprenticeship programmes will reach 75%. This compares to 30,379 apprenticeship starts in 2015/16, and an achievement rate of 66.4%.

Key measures of success - Salford¹³¹

Young people:

¹³⁰ Greater Manchester Combined Authority (2017) [Our People, Our Place. The Greater Manchester Strategy](#)

¹³¹ Salford City Partnership (2017), [Salford Employment and Skills Strategy 2017-2020](#)

- Reduce the proportion of young people aged 16-17 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- Increase the proportion of young people aged 16-17 participating in compliant education and training.
- Increase the proportion of young people achieving a Level 3 qualification by age 19.
- Increase the number of young people aged 16-18 starting an apprenticeship.
- Increase the proportion of young people progressing to university / higher education.
- Increase the number of young people accessing high quality careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG).

Adults:

- Reduce the number of people who are out of work and in receipt of benefits.
- Reduce the number of 18 to 24 year olds claiming out of work benefits.
- Reduce the number of people who are claiming Universal Credit unemployed component.
- Increase the number of people undertaking work experience placements.
- Increase the number of people aged 19 to 24 years accessing apprenticeships.
- Reduce the number of people with no qualifications.
- Increase the number of people with a level 3 qualification.
- Increase the number of people who are competent in English, Maths and ICT.

Appendix 6

Consultation on draft research report

Respondents (31):

• autistic people / carers	2	• skills and work	6
• autism organisations	2	• university	2
• education	1	• voluntary sector	2
• health and social care	4	• unknown / anonymous	5
• industry / employers	7		

1. What do you think of our assessment of the economic and employment situation in Greater Manchester?

1. It seems plausible. But it mirrors what you thought before you did the research.
2. I am not an expert on this but looks good.
3. No comment regarding digital development, programming, networking systems, social media marketing and other information technology related areas
4. Accurate predictions, considers the proximity of Media City to Salford, creating opportunities
5. Accurate and well-articulated.
6. The Assessment seems fair and accurate.
7. It is beneficial to assess the current climate and to be able to predict the outlook for future employment.
8. As no specific data is available I feel the data provided isn't reliable – could be more/less.
9. Data needs to be based on actual numbers which can only happen through consistent and sustained studies.
10. No mention of engineering and science, but maybe this accurate?
11. As indicated during the session NOT accurate.
12. Highlighted how disjointed services/support is for young person with autism.

13. No response.
14. It highlights a big problem in relation to one group of individuals not being included or even being given a chance to work or bring new skills/ideas to Salford.
15. Think the gap in the market is correct and agree as an estimate as due to under-diagnosis the numbers are probably higher.
16. Include: Creative sector, VCS like watch the planet etc. Horticultural sector –RHS. Council-ICT
17. It is well researched and the evidence is there so it's accurate.
18. No response
19. It seems to be the same as I am hearing from across other groups!
20. This has been a learning curve for me today, I'm used to working in early years autism but now will view some of these youngsters as potential of the future.
21. Ok - is the project aimed at supporting autistic people living in Salford with Salford employers or could it reach GM employers
22. Fair
23. I think it was fair, but functions on an implied fixed 'job' model with an implication of little social mobility. It's true though that GM has poor social mobility across its sectors. I agree with your assessment that low-skilled or roles that involve repetition and simple systems are likely to disappear.
24. It is a very interesting assessment that is thought provoking. Manchester will most certainly continue to change and grow economically and we do need to be prepared to move with it. With the changes in technology and uncertainty of the Brexit situation, having the right skill sets available to meet demand is essential.
25. It looks like a cohesive plan, makes sense
26. An accurate reflection of the current situation/problem.
27. I agree with the skills shortages analysis and the need for certain skill set that is currently in short supply.

28. Figures massively out because targeting Salford area. You need to take into account how it impacts family as well as Autistic person. New diagnosis (ASD) pooled into one thing so figures are squiffed. Salford not a good area to diagnose compared with other places. Not enough detail in the competition analysis e.g. specialisturn[?], older people not diagnosed.
 29. A very interesting glimpse into the future in terms of employment in GM and reinforces the need to look at new and different ways of attracting and recruiting our future workforce. Useful facts and figures to make our own business cases within the org!
 30. I would agree this is a good assessment
 31. Seems accurate enough though I don't believe the 'hourglass' metaphor is helpful/accurate as it doesn't account for high churn in 'low-skilled' jobs.
-

2. What do you think of the summary of the situation concerning autistic people in relation to employment?

1. yes, again based on my experience it seems reasonable
2. Very good. Comprehensive
3. It relates to people diagnosed as autistic. There may be many more high functioning individuals employed
4. Agree with the 16% in employment vs 70% who would like to be, this reflects stats from the NAS and the real-life experiences of people with ASD
5. Illuminating and useful for local strategic plans
6. The trend is worrying. I would be a bit concerned about restricting eligibility – although I accept with commercial pressures this may be justified.
7. It is beneficial that this research is looked into. However the summary demonstrates that there needs to be a stronger recruitment model/system in place to ensure the number of autistic people can work and accurate data used.
8. Concerned if data correct.
9. Very poor and a fantastic resource which is being ignored.

10. It is very sad that many autistic people just want to work which is a normal expectation.
11. See estimation
12. Worrying.
13. No response.
14. I think that it is a shame that Salford employers are not utilising the unique talents of people with ASC.
15. Very good.
16. Do we know enough about the numbers of 'high functioning' vs other autistic people.
17. Again it's well researched and accurate as you've spoken to a wide range of stakeholders including autistic people.
18. As good as it can be given data recording re. people with autism in Salford is poor. Agree that anecdotally many people in Salford with autism are motivated to work.
19. Seems about right but we need to make sure the right specialist support is there across the board and we are ensuring ongoing in work support to create sustainability. These people who are supported in work may need ongoing support so they don't drop out of work.
20. An eye opener for me as have been fascinated in the area of autism and employment.
21. good bit of detail
22. Good but would like it to be run by an academic to see if findings stand up
23. enlightening and positive
24. The way that employers recruit people is in serious need of a rethink. It is not just autistic people that struggle with the interview process - and questions are now being asked as to whether interviews as an assessment tool are actually right to be used anymore. Whilst a face to face conversation can be difficult for many when branded as an interview, perhaps paid work trials for all are better methods of testing someone's capability? We recognise the benefits of

diversifying the workforce and tapping into those skills that suit the needs of the business. We would support any initiatives to enable attracting and employing people who need reasonable adjustments

25. They do face barriers into employment because employers don't make their views on diversity easy to find, if at all
26. Clearly highlights a growing problem that urgently needs research attention and action.
27. Autistic spectrum is very wide and the impact on individuals is varied, it is important to acknowledge that high functioning autisms and employability/skills is different to people suffering with severe autism/behaviour/learning difficulties. I am concerned about how some the data is presented e.g. autism = highly analytical skills, that's not always the case. This is very individual and there is a lot of variables and inter dependencies.
28. Missing a lot of the target. Asperger's are only a minority and are easier to get into full time employment. There are other people on the other end of the spectrum. A buddy system in the workplace is needed. It's not one size fits all – individual approach. The situation is dyer, results in severe impact on NHS, Council, people not getting the right support resulting in depression impacting mental health and costing the economy even more.
29. Recognise this and again this is useful intelligence when making the case about how we can tap into a potential local workforce with many strengths
30. Agree with summary
31. I have no knowledge on the numbers nor on the strengths of autistic people but think the assessment on employers support and employment processes seems accurate.

3. Have we identified the key barriers to employment of autistic people? Is there anything we have overlooked?

1. You have only spoken about the strengths of the ASD people. You seem to have ignored the potential for a meltdown, very low tolerance of sensory changes etc. that happen daily in any office. What about a worker coming in wearing a new perfume
2. Not that I can see

3. Lack of training in managing/communicating/dealing with autistic people
4. Consideration for dual-diagnosis?
5. As far as my limited knowledge goes I feel like you have identified the key barriers.
6. Largely yes. Maybe focus on preparing for work
7. Parent/carers outlook on young peoples' barrier to employment
8. Yes, people's perceptions.
9. Lack of support around social, emotional and communication skills in the workplace. There is also a vast spectrum to autism.
10. Yes most barriers. For me there is a big gap for linking people to supportive placements/work/employers. Young people can fall off a cliff at 21/22 when further education (or earlier).
11. What is the definition of autism? Autism Spectrum Disorder is a spectrum, who are you identifying?
12. Yes.
13. Recruitment process, social phobias, unfamiliar places. Key is adjustments, pre-interview visits, pre-seen questions, work trials.
14. Yes, we offered free training to businesses in local area and we had the Marriot Hotel engage with this.
15. Environment? Although different work locations is a very good idea. Transport.
16. No response.
17. Socialising at work is an issue (from employee/employer perspective) that sees some people leave their role early. Autistic people also [like] the problematic issue of moving from benefits to employment. Autistic people fear of disclosing their autism in case of an adverse reaction from prospective employer.
18. Yes, it's important that ongoing support is offered to sustain employment.
19. To ensure there is support in for coping mechanisms for people. Ongoing support for employers – we can get employers on board and

we know people want to work but sometimes people can struggle with the change work brings. People need ongoing support.

20. Yes definitely key barriers have been highlighted and identified, made me think hard about a subject I've not known much about.
21. Doesn't appear to be
22. Recognition of autistic learning styles and support Interview companion for the person with autism
23. I've employed people with autism before and understand that behaviour and overt signifiers can vary greatly from person to person. In other words, by grouping under the label, is there a danger of nullifying 'personality' and individual qualities that would be a natural element of any employment process. So is a "key barrier" the implied homogeneity of the grouping.
24. Key barriers were identified.
25. Employers not understanding the need for a diverse workforce & providing disability awareness training to all staff, it doesn't Take long, but it definitely changes attitude
26. Yes absolutely.
27. Lack of understanding of the condition and the way people operate, the need of employers to understand diversity and working well with difference (unconscious bias). For example we employ people with high functioning autism, the roles were 'carved' and adjusted to suit the individual and the company, these are however not generic roles. This may not be available to smaller employers as it may not be commercially viable/costly in terms of management time and possible duplication.
28. Education system throughout. Job Centres. Group situations, 121's not one size fits all. Job interviews are too social – handshakes, small talk, eye-contact are things that autistic people find overwhelming. Interview questions need to be very specific. Employers don't have money for resources for autistic people around reasonable adjustments. HR have a complete lack of awareness.
29. Very comprehensive
30. Again agree with summary
31. Not sure if there was anything on 'role models'/'ambassadors' nor if flexible approaches to home-working/times were mentioned.

4. Have we identified the key elements to enable the employment of autistic people? Is there anything we have overlooked?

1. Yes. It is cruel to say but, many companies are worried about their corporate image. Some autistic people present as looking slightly different to accepted norms. In the world at large this may well deter employers, especially in placing such a person in the front office or in the public eye
2. No
3. Perhaps a kite mark/standard that is easily recognisable as autistic friendly employer
4. All considered
5. Again key elements identified but have limited knowledge of employing people with autism.
6. Locality of employment. How easy is it to access/travel to.
7. NA
8. Yes, but needs clear definition of who you are taking about.
9. No response
10. Definitely agree recruitment process is very important.
11. I believe they have been identified but yet again there is no definition so the key elements may have been covered for some of the population on the spectrum but not all.
12. Yes.
13. Need a central hub of information for employers including support they can call on and how to access it.
14. Getting young people to engage.
15. No.
16. No response.

17. Job carving. Matching skill sets to the role and then identifying other employees to do part of the job that may not suit the autistic employee.
18. I feel you've targeted a group of people with 'high functioning' autism however it's important to consider those who may be less able and require more support.
19. Not sure if you have or haven't!? Awareness for employers. On-going in work support for both person and employer. A person centred process of getting to know person with autism to build trust and knowledge.
20. Yes.
21. Doesn't appear to be
22. Not sure sensory issues have been addressed re interviews and in office
23. Seems clear enough
24. Key elements were identified.
25. Engaging with local independent employers is the way forwards. It's a lot more difficult to engage with national companies, it's doable but takes time.
26. Nothing overlooked. However, I wonder if gender could be highlighted as well given a recent research paper... Taylor, J. L., Smith DaWalt, L., Marvin, A. R., Law, J. K., & Lipkin, P. (2019). Sex differences in employment and supports for adults with autism spectrum disorder. Autism, 1362361319827417. Please see link:
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1362361319827417?casa_token=qNG_k84Z1MkAAAAA:tg39XiBx08wNkIAzxV0yIF9r9Ts3sK9Ic91Ao0D5XNkIz1cfGXiZ8fUVB4OYCve9U1leibOqSG3s
27. In my view yes, please see answer in point 3
28. Someone to support you in a 121 for emotional stability. Open plan offices are a massive no-no they are designed for people to be sociable the environment is too overwhelming and is not productive. Not to be put around other autistic people. Flexible working hours.
29. No response.
30. I think you have

31. I think so.

Outcome Based Accountability Workshop, Salford, 7 February, 2019 - Improving employment pathways and outcomes for young people with autism in Salford

24 participants (local people and professionals)

Ideas:

- Hub-central autism: hub in Salford; employer visit; volunteers run it with young person; zones – information, media, relocation; age range 0-25+ ?above.
- In-house training: increase awareness of opportunities i.e. networking, coffee mornings parents/carers and young person; developing person centred profile – passport.
- Collaborative working - social/value added.
- Supported employment going to Education, Health and Care Plan.

No-cost / low-cost ideas:

- Voluntary group/network volunteers: free venue/virtual group; focus on helping to prepare/get into work.
- Work place champion (transition support home visit).
- App-based support – Brain in Hand.
- Alternative interview process – e.g., job trial.
- Creating stronger links between education, employment, local offer.
- More awareness of support and advice.
- Have employment support in the Education, Health and Care Plan.
- Skill matching.

Off the wall ideas:

- Sell yourself – video/online, what got to offer: TV character, positive/fun message e.g. marketing company; residential – creative opportunities.
- National Insurance subsidy for employers.
- Empatrika embroke watch.
- Clear public sector duty (quotas).
- Self-employment fund.
- Procurement.
- Invite employers into schools.
- Should be in control – diverse range of skills.
- Put it in the commissioning contracts; if they need sub-contract.
- Salford need to recommission employment support services for Special Educational Needs, Learning Disability, Autism Spectrum Condition.
- Work experience.