

Greater Manchester T Level Health & Care Industry Placement Programme

End of Project Report

January 2026

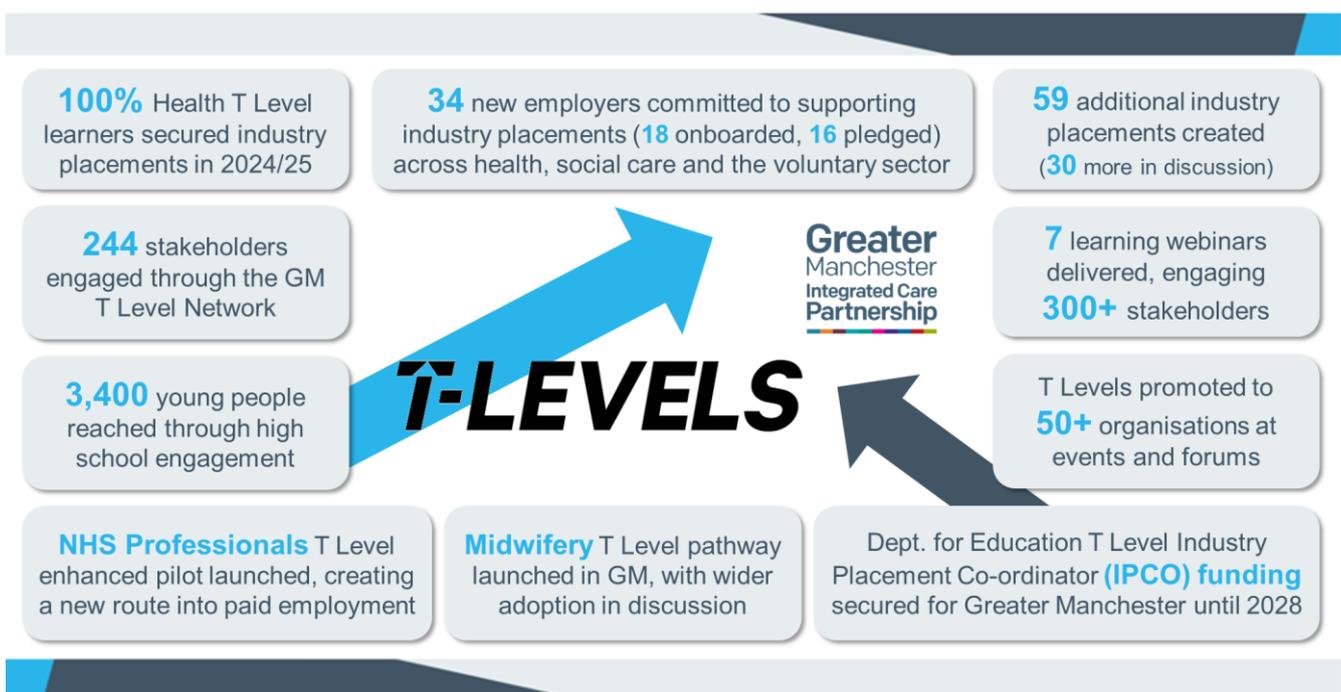
Executive Summary

The T Level Industry Placement Programme aimed to strengthen the quantity, quality, consistency and sustainability of T Level industry placements across Greater Manchester's Health and Care system. Its core ambition was to develop a more coordinated, system-led approach to support learners, education providers and employers alike. This work has been enabled by investment from The Gatsby Charitable Foundation, matched in kind by NHS Greater Manchester and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

Activity centred around unlocking industry placement opportunities in all parts of the sector, in hospital, adult social care, primary care and the voluntary sector. The work upskilled and supported employers and colleges to step up new industry placement opportunities, to enable greater collaboration, and addressing priority gaps in provision across clinical and non-clinical settings. While it was not originally envisaged the programme would deliver large-scale transformation within the 18-month investment window, the scale of change has been '*groundbreaking*' (term used by the Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham). It has helped accelerate placement capacity, build confidence and capability in supporting learners on industry placements and create buy-in and momentum across the system. The programme has repositioned Greater Manchester as a national leader in this space.

This end-of-year report sets out the progress made, highlights key learning from delivery, and captures demonstrable impact and system shift. It also reflects on how this work has laid foundations for continued development including through securing Department for Education Industry Placement Co-ordinator (IPCO) funding to 2028, to support ongoing growth and sustainability.

Key achievements:



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1) Background and Programme Context

The T Level Placement Programme was established to strengthen the quantity, quality, consistency and sustainability of T Level industry placements across Greater Manchester's health and care system. Its core aim was to develop a more coordinated, system-led approach to support learners, education providers and employers alike.

Over the lifetime of the programme, activity has focused on increasing industry placement capacity, strengthening employer readiness and building shared learning across the system. Key ambitions have been to create the conditions for long-term impact, supporting further collaboration, developing scalable models, aligning T Level delivery with wider workforce priorities, and building technical education pathways into employment.

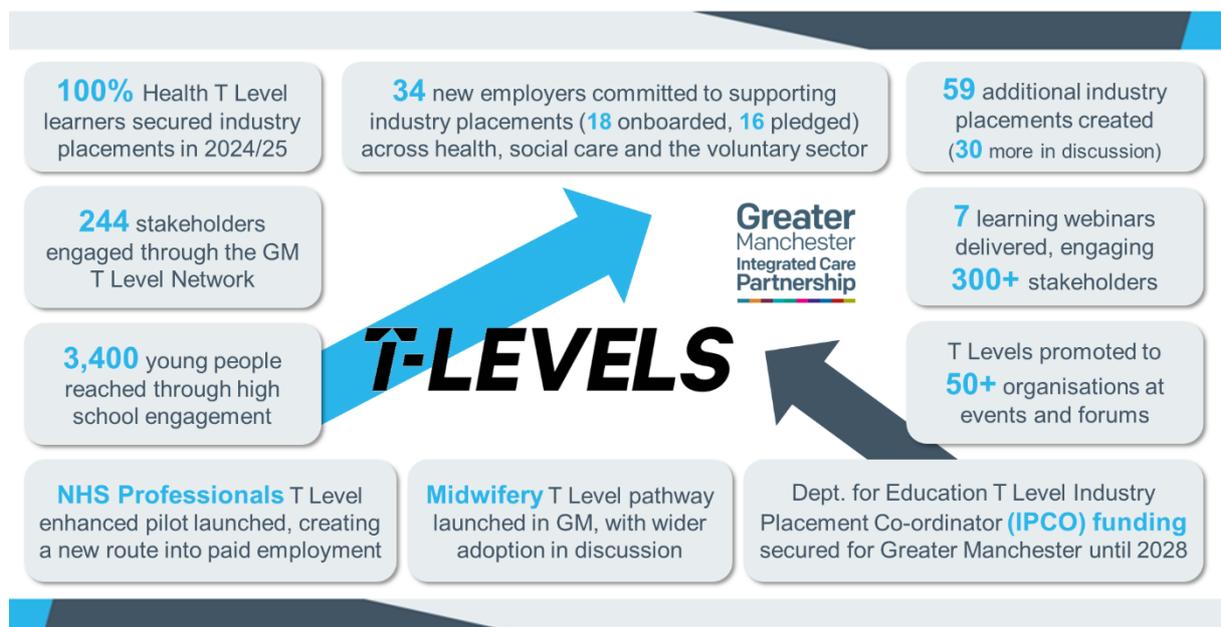
This work has been led by NHS Greater Manchester, funded by The Gatsby Charitable Foundation, and co-funded in kind by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and NHS Greater Manchester, delivered on behalf of the Greater Manchester system.

This document serves as a reflective end of programme review, bringing together learning, insights and observed system shifts. It highlights what has been achieved, what has been learned through delivery and looks ahead to what's next.

2) Approaches and Outcomes

Initially the focus was on achieving placement coverage and quality. Following the scoping phase, once it was clear all students were on track to secure a placement, more strategically targeted activities were undertaken. This included data-informed developments such as prioritising industry placements in areas where workforce planning data indicated were the greatest future workforce need (e.g. midwifery), through to post-qualification pathways into employment. One of the primary aims was to introduce industry placements in a wider range of health and care employers, with a view to increase the range of opportunities for learners and create greater system resilience through shared delivery. The following achievements were delivered during the course of the programme.

Key achievements include:



The following section describes showcased highlights, to demonstrate how far we've come, and sets the direction for where the system can go next.

Ensuring Full Industry Placement Coverage Through System Coordination

Across Greater Manchester, coordinated partnership working has helped ensure that all Health T Level students secured industry placements, particularly focussing where individual colleges experienced local shortages. Where there was a shortfall in industry placement provision, colleges were either connected to newly onboarded employers or supported to utilise already established but unfilled placement offers, aligning demand with available capacity. In part this was supported by facilitating an unprecedented level of collaboration between neighbouring Further Education colleges, 6th Forms, and employers. This approach resulted in 100% of Health T Level students securing industry placements over the last academic year, despite initial variation in placement availability across providers and colleges.

Importantly, this approach supported the development of additional local relationships between colleges and employers. In the following academic year, colleges have been able to secure industry placements independently, even with increased T Level uptake, demonstrating that the approach to strengthened local networks has reduced reliance on system-level intervention over time, creating system sustainability.

Opening Maternity Industry Placements Through Partnership and Trust

The introduction of T Level midwifery placements at the Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust and initiation of the midwifery pathway at Oldham College, demonstrates what is possible when forward-thinking healthcare staff, education partners and system support come together. This could not have been achieved without the commitment of a multidisciplinary team willing to challenge assumptions and local policy, work through perceived risk, and co-design industry placements with the right safeguarding, supervision and boundaries in place. Organisational leadership buy-in and widening participation team support were critical enablers. Their openness created safe, meaningful opportunities for young people to see maternity care first-hand and make a vital connection between classroom learning and clinical practice.

Strategically, midwives are one of the city regions most critically understaffed workforces, and the attrition rate at degree level is particularly high. Earlier pathways into maternity were limited by local policies preventing under 18s from undertaking workplace experiences. The experience shows that, with the right support and shared confidence, even areas once viewed as inaccessible can offer high-quality learning experiences that benefit students, staff and the future workforce.

NHS Professionals Enhanced Pilot: Supporting T Level Students into Paid Bank Work

A partnership between NHS Greater Manchester, the Northern Care Alliance (NCA), and NHS Professionals has launched a groundbreaking pilot to give Health T Level students the chance to gain paid employment as bank staff creating a seamless journey from classroom to career. After completing their 45-day industry placement and Care Certificate, learners will be supported to join the NHS Professionals staff bank, to gain flexible paid work at the Trust.

The pilot aims to provide the following benefits:

- **For Learners:** A clear supported route into NHS employment, to build skills, experience and confidence in a real-world setting

- **For the Trust:** A pipeline of future equipped staff, already familiar with NCA values and environments. Strengthens retention and return on investment from providing student placement opportunities
- **For the System:** Boosts system capacity and provides a scalable flexible staffing model to adapt to future service needs

The enhanced pilot supports workforce pipeline development and flexible staffing capacity with delivery and learning continuing through 2025/26, to inform potential future scaling.

Virtual and Simulation Learning Opportunities to Support T Level Industry Placements

As part of this year's exploratory work on industry placement capacity, NHS Greater Manchester worked with researchers at the University of Manchester on an interdisciplinary project to consider the potential role of virtual and simulation learning opportunities to supplement Health T Level industry placements. 20% of T Level industry placements can be undertaken virtually, so expansion of use could potentially create further placement capacity, greater flexibility and sustainability. This work also supported a higher education intern programme, aiming to upskill early career researchers working across academic boundaries (health and business in this case) to solve real-world problems.

The project reviewed the evidence, potential resources and key considerations around utilisation of digital learning tools. The findings have highlighted both opportunities and limitations in supplementing industry placement provision with digital approaches and has been presented as a thought piece to inform future conversations across key stakeholders. This early work is not yet available online but if you wish to hear more, please get in touch via gm.workforce@nhs.net.

GMACS Careers Platform

GMACS is a Greater Manchester Combined Authority digital careers platform, developed through the Greater Manchester Baccalaureate (MBacc), to support the city region's technical career pathway ambitions. The platform includes the opportunity for employers to [advertise industry placement opportunities](#) to a wide range of students and students/colleges can connect with placement opportunities with new employers.

An increasing number of our health and care partners have used this portal to identify potential matches, although many organisations prefer to continue engaging with FE Colleges directly especially when offering larger numbers of industry placements. As traffic to the web platform builds momentum, it may drive greater utilisation – one to watch. Longer term it also supports greater system sustainability through enabling connection digitally instead of facilitated intervention (such as through this programme).

3) Key Learning and System Change

Building System Shift Through Technical Education: What We've Learned in Greater Manchester This Year

“Over the past year, Greater Manchester has taken significant strides forward towards a more connected and future-ready approach to T Level industry placements across health and care. This programme was never just about increasing industry placement numbers, it was about

shifting mindsets, strengthening relationships, and proving what becomes possible when a system pulls in the same direction. Looking back now, it's clear that we've unlocked something game-changing".

Sue Howard, Head of Workforce Development, NHS Greater Manchester.

One of the biggest lessons has been the importance of visibility and alignment. When colleges, employers, clinical teams, workforce leads and system partners understand each other's pressures, ambitions and capabilities, the conversation changes. Instead of "why it can't be done like this" we've started hearing "how can we make this work?" This shift has opened up spaces like maternity, estates and facilities and finance and in organisations that had initially felt unable to get involved. In every case, the breakthrough came from people being willing to test, iterate and trust in each other. Where it proved most challenging, it required the mix of leadership buy-in, system enablement, and a local champion to push it through.



The above image shows: Left - Phil Pennill, Greater Manchester T Level Programme Manager, Middle - Bassam Kubabi, Management and Administration T Level Student, right – Sue Howard, Head of Workforce Development, NHS Greater Manchester. The team supported the ICS Industry Placement Network (facilitated by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, NHS Employers and Department for Education) at their stand at the NHS Expo in July 2025 to raise awareness of T Levels and local work happening across health and care in Greater Manchester.

The most successful achievements delivered through this programme were developed using an approach that deliberately shifted away from prioritising industry placement volume in the short term, towards effective onboarding and relationship-building to enable longer-term growth. By starting small, learning together and building confidence over time, stakeholders developed a genuine sense of ownership rather than obligation, a critical factor in making this work sustainable at system level. The programme's approach was to onboard many new employers, providing a relatively small number of industry placements each initially, with the intention of enabling future self-sustainable expansion. This paid dividends, almost all newly onboarded employers have continued to support industry placements into the next academic year, and some have increased intake in response to their overwhelmingly positive experiences.

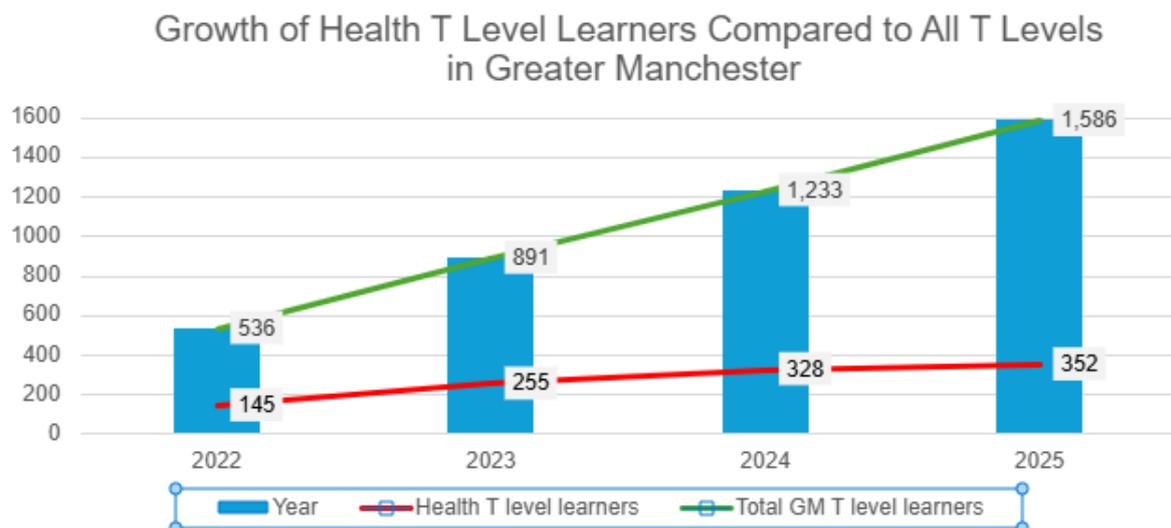
Another key point of learning has been how vital consistent messaging and system-level advocacy truly are. T Levels are still relatively new, consequently awareness and assumptions about technical education are mixed. Therefore myth-busting and targeted information

exchange has been at the core of the programme design to aid shifting perspectives. By raising awareness across networks, aligning with the broader [Manchester Baccalaureate](#) (MBacc) vision and engaging partners at every stage has helped to reposition the T Level cohort as a credible, valuable and strategic workforce pipeline. The energy at events and the enthusiasm from students have shown the social impacts and acted as a reminder of why this matters.

What stands out most, however, is the momentum created. Employers who were hesitant a year ago are asking how they can do more. Further Education providers are expanding provision and specialisms and are engaging in wider pipeline initiatives. Greater Manchester now has a growing and active T Level stakeholder network of over 200 people: championing this work, sharing resources, tackling barriers collectively and amplifying successes across the region. This collective movement is the true achievement of the programme, not just what's been delivered, but what's been enabled for the next phase.

4) T Level Data Insights & Growth

Recent analysis of aggregated data shows Health T Level student numbers have continued to show steady year on year growth, although at a slower rate than initially predicted and compared to other T Levels.



The graph shows that continued growth has been observed in Health T Levels in Greater Manchester, but not at the same rate as other T Level subjects / overall. Some of this growth is due to new subjects being rolled out; the Health T Level was introduced in Wave 2, and over 11 other subjects have been added since then.

As of December 2025, there were, 2,855 T Level students across Greater Manchester, comprising 1,586 Year 1 students and 1,269 Year 2 students. Of these, 352 are enrolled in Health T Levels. Adult Nursing remains the dominant Health T Level pathway.

2025/26 GM Health T Level Data		
Pathway	Year 1	Year 2
Adult Nursing	177	120
Midwifery	5	6
Children and Young People	0	8
Therapy	11	25
Total: 352	193	159

Data flows have become established throughout the T Level Placement Programme and will continue to provide useful insights to inform future system-level planning and targeting of employer engagement activity. Projected figures from early college planning for academic year 2026/27 will be available from Spring 2026. The data analysis does not currently include 6th Form College T level provision, although the numbers are relatively low.

What This Means for Health and Care Placement Provision in Greater Manchester

All 2024/25 academic year students enrolled on Health T Level pathways secured an industry placement with a health and care employer, and the vast majority of 2025/26 students have already secured industry placements for the academic year - indicating sustained employer engagement and industry placement capacity across the system. Plans are in place for the small number outstanding.

The above figures relate specifically to Health/clinical T Levels and do not capture the growing number of non-clinical T Level students who are hosted within health and care organisations in their business administration, finance, digital, estates and facilities departments. This programme has also enabled the growth of these non-clinical T Level opportunities, and this is an area of future potential growth.

We have worked closely with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and The Growth Company to collectively create industry placement leverage over the course of the programme. As part of the Mayor's MBacc (Manchester Baccalaureate) campaign, the ambition was to secure an additional 1,000 T Level industry placements across all sectors – this [target was reached in January 2026](#). This programme has made a significant contribution to achieving this goal.

5) Testimonies and Partner Perspectives

A series of personal statements have been collated from strategic stakeholders to evidence the impact of this programme.

Feedback from the funder, The Gatsby Charitable Foundation: *'GM ICB's (NHS Greater Manchester) approach shows that real, lasting impact comes from investing in the foundations*

– taking the time to build trust, strengthen relationships, and create the space for people to learn together and grow in confidence. By stepping back from short-term targets, they've set the conditions for sustainable, system-wide change.'

Message from Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Greater Manchester: "Greater Manchester is showing what's possible when partners across a whole system work together to open up real opportunities for young people. This year we've seen genuinely groundbreaking progress in health and care - expanding placement capacity, opening up the maternity pathway for the first time in GM, and creating clear routes into paid work and employment. That's exactly what our MBacc is about: giving young people the confidence, skills and support they need to build a future in vital health and care careers, while strengthening the workforce our NHS relies on."

Andy has also [recorded a personal message](#) recognising the vital role this work has played in supporting the Manchester Baccalaureate (MBacc) vision and building the future workforce that Greater Manchester depends on. He highlights that none of this progress would be possible without the commitment of system partners, opening doors, supporting students, and helping create real opportunities for young people across Greater Manchester and thanks the contribution of this programme for helping achieve such positive outcomes.



Picture of Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester.

Richard Caulfield, Senior Policy Manager, Greater Manchester Colleges said: "Colleges and learners across Greater Manchester have benefitted hugely from the T Level Placement Programme. Growing both the number and the breadth of placements requires a highly collaborative approach as exemplified by the programme team who have developed such positive relationships between colleges and across the health system. By developing a system-wide approach, the team have helped ensure there are high quality industry placements available for the benefit of colleges, employers, and learners across Greater Manchester, and that we are in a position to grow the number of T Level students in the health system into the future."

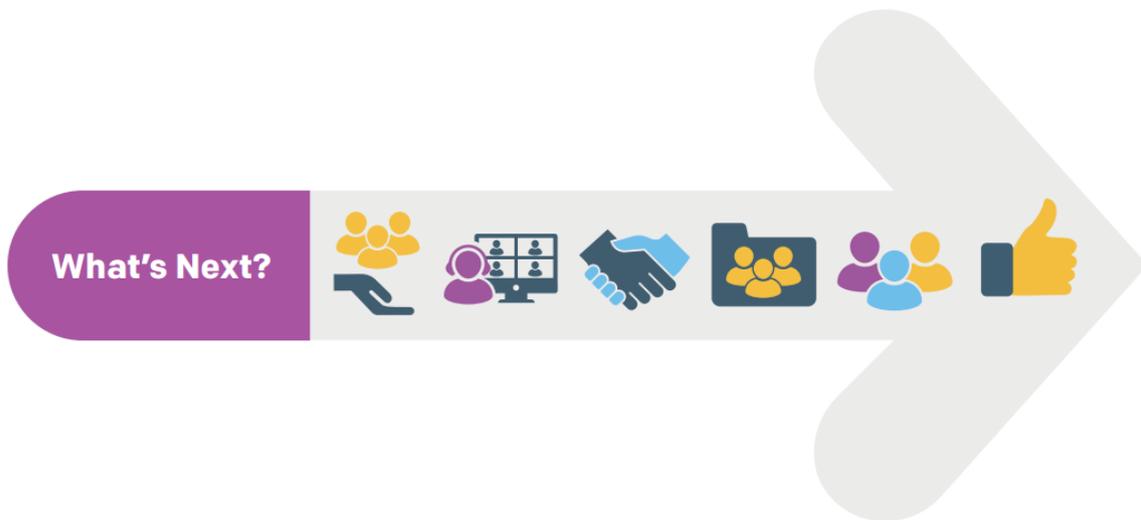
Kat Sowden, Managing Director Persona Care and Support Limited, and member of the Employer Integration Board, said: "Although social care has not always been as visible as NHS-led placement activity for Health T Levels, it has been encouraging to see NHS Greater Manchester recognising the vital role that social care plays within the wider health and care pathway. Their support through the EIB (Employer Integration Board) and ESAN (Employer Supporter Action Network) has helped ensure that the value of social care placements is understood, championed and embedded into the broader conversation about technical education. We are still at the beginning of this journey, but the work so far has demonstrated the real impact that comes from employers and education providers working together differently."

Sharon Smith, Academic Workforce Development Lead, NHS Professionals Academy said: "The NHSP enhanced pilot in Greater Manchester has been a pivotal step in enabling T Level students to directly join the NHSP bank workforce as Healthcare Support Workers for

the first time. The unique collaboration with the GM programme to connect partners, supported us collectively to move this groundbreaking model forward. We see this work as potentially nationally significant, delivering real benefits for Trusts, for NHSP, for students, and ultimately for the future NHS workforce and the quality of care we can provide.”

A selection of case studies from students and professionals are shared in the appendix.

6) What's Next for T Levels in Health and Care in Greater Manchester



As T Level industry placements continue to embed across Greater Manchester's health and care system, the near-term focus is on moving from early expansion to consistent, high-quality delivery at scale. Strong foundations are already in place, including established Greater Manchester network and partnerships, mechanisms for shared learning, and an aligned system approach.

Building on the work of this programme, in 2025 Greater Manchester was successful in securing 2.5 years funding from The Department for Education to support an Industry Placement Coordinator (IPCO) through to Spring 2028. The role will provide continued hands-on delivery support for T Level industry placement growth across Health and Care, enable system-wide improvement, and help embed technical career pathways as a core part of Greater Manchester's future workforce.

6) Strategic Forward View

This period of delivery has coincided with a moment of significant shift in health and care, as well as technical education. Policy direction is increasingly clear: technical routes are no longer a secondary option, but a central pillar of future workforce planning. There is an increasing focus on employer-led skills planning and curriculum design in education. T Levels remain as

the core technical pathway in further education. This creates both opportunity and responsibility for health and care systems. Opportunity, that technical education offers a structured, credible route into a sector facing long-term workforce pressures. Responsibility, because realising that opportunity depends on employers being active partners in shaping, hosting and sustaining these pathways.

Delivery experience across Greater Manchester reinforces that when young people are given meaningful exposure to health and care settings, their perceptions of the sector shift. Industry placements illuminate and demystify roles, build confidence and create early professional identity. For employers, technical students bring curiosity, challenge established ways of working and offer a tangible way to grow future talent from within our local communities. In this context, technical education becomes more than an industry placement offer, it becomes a workforce strategy.

At the same time, scale and sustainability cannot be achieved through enthusiasm alone. Enabling technical education to become a long-term workforce solution requires embedding into governance, consistent employer co-production, adaptive models and clear pathways into employment. It also requires alignment with wider system reform, recognising that education pathways, workforce planning, and service transformation are increasingly interdependent.

Looking forward, the question is no longer whether technical education has a role in the future health and care workforce, but how purposefully and strategically it is integrated. The choices made now, around investment, collaboration and system design, will shape not only who enters the workforce, but how prepared, resilient and representative that workforce will be in the years to come.

7) Acknowledgements and Further Information

The T Level Placement Programme team would like to express grateful thanks to everyone who has contributed, championed and collaborated to this programme. The huge progress made has only been possible with the commitment and collaborative efforts through shared ambition across Greater Manchester's Health and Care partners.

None of this would have been possible without the funders The Gatsby Charitable Foundation, and the support in-kind from NHS Greater Manchester and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

For further information please email: gm.workforce@nhs.net.

Appendix - Case studies

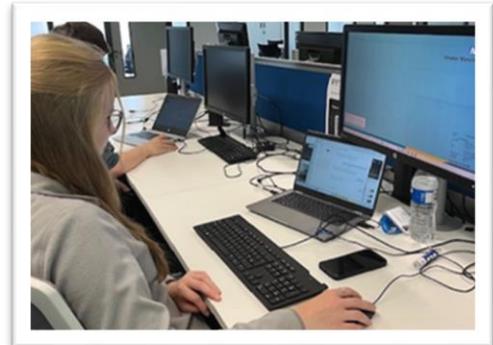
From a system perspective, there is real scope to increase non-clinical T Level industry placements in health and care organisations. Here follows some exemplars.

Student Impact in the Workplace: Finance & Efficient Ways of Working

Ella, Associate Director Finance in Wigan, has introduced industry placements into the NHS Greater Manchester Wigan finance team. She says she “*is a passionate advocate for T Level students and has built strong partnerships with local colleges.*”

She “*values the fresh perspectives students bring, often challenging established practices and highlighting small but impactful efficiency improvements that save time.*”

Industry placements also offer the student an important reality check; while some students may find aspects of the work repetitive, working in a real-world environment helps them gain a clear understanding of what the role truly involves and make informed decisions early about whether their potential future career path is right for them.



Picture shows Sophie Bouch, the current Year 2 Finance T Level student working within the Wigan team.

Progression into Employment Through Engineering for Construction T Level Industry Placements in Estates and Facilities



Picture shows Jack, a T Level learner at Pennine Care.

Two students who completed Engineering T Level industry placements with Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust have since progressed into permanent Agenda for Change band 4 estate and facilities compliances officer roles within the organisation. [Click here to watch the video](#) where Management and Administration student Bassam interviews them at work.

This progression highlights a strong return on investment for the employer, with industry placements supporting retention by creating a direct route into paid work and maintaining a connection to the Trust. It demonstrates how T Levels can deliver job-ready skills while supporting sustainable workforce pathways within the NHS.

Estates and facilities staff are an ageing workforce, so bringing in young people will be critical in maintaining staffing levels.

Flexibility in T Level Industry Placements

Bassam, a Management and Administration T Level student, completed his industry placement within NHS Greater Manchester. As a young carer, his industry placement was designed to be flexible and inclusive, accounting his home responsibilities and learning needs.

Activities on placement were pivoted to play to his strengths in communicating with people, such as engagement events and speaking at meetings, helping him gain confidence and meaningful experience aligned to his interests, skills and future career aspirations.

This demonstrates how adapting industry placements to individual circumstances, rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all model, can widen access, support retention, and enable all students get the most out of their studies.

Bassam talks more about his placement experience [here](#).



Picture of Bassam, a Management and Administration T Level student, speaking to health and care system partners at a large-scale event.

Benefits of Social Care Industry Placements for Health T Levels

Persona Care & Support have demonstrated their commitment by supporting Health T Level students on industry placement within the social care setting. Students reflected that the experience strengthened their communication skills, confidence and understanding of person-centred care, with one noting that it “*showed what care really looks like day to day, not just in a hospital.*” These insights were seen as directly transferable to future health and care careers.

From an employer perspective, Persona views Health T Level industry placements not as a short-term recruitment exercise but as an investment in the wider health and care system. While not all students progressed into social care roles, employers reported benefits including staff development through mentoring, fresh perspectives within teams, and early identification of students aligned to care values, with some progressing into paid roles. Students moving on into NHS careers also left with a stronger understanding of social care, supporting better future integration across services.

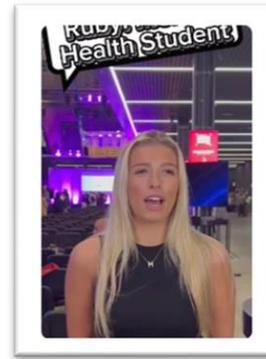


Picture of three T Level students of Persona Care, who explained how much their confidence has grown on the placement, and they felt very welcome.

Student Voices: Hearing Directly from Learners

We value capturing student voices and hearing directly from learners themselves. [This video](#) was taken at an event where Ruby, a Health T Level student specialising in supporting the mental health team, and Charlie, a Health T Level student specialising in supporting the adult nursing team at Wigan College, spoke to a large audience about their experiences as T Level students.

Hearing directly from students is vital in understanding how industry placements work in practice and in identifying how provision can be improved for future learners.



Picture of Ruby, a Health T Level student, specialising in supporting the mental health team. Video web link: www.youtube.com/shorts/SbtsHRVIYsw

Pathway Specialisms

During this programme we undertook focused work around the Healthcare Science T Level and Dental Nursing (which was an occupational specialism within the Health T Level), with the intention of standing up these pathways in Greater Manchester.



Julie Miller, Practice Education Facilitator at the Greater Manchester Pathology Network.

System partner perspective:

“We’ve seen first-hand how T Level students bring energy, curiosity and a genuine willingness to learn into our labs. They aren’t just observing – they’re developing technical skills that will one day support frontline care. If we lose Healthcare Science as a T Level option, we risk cutting off a vital early-entry route into the NHS workforce – at a time when we need it most.”



Picture of Ashleigh, Healthcare Science T Level student.

Student perspective:

Ashleigh’s pathology laboratory placement shows why this remains important: early, hands-on exposure helped her quickly identify biomedical science as the right pathway, giving her the confidence, clarity and practical understanding needed to progress into a Biomedical Science degree. Without industry placements like this, students risk entering higher education and the workforce without a realistic understanding of specialist laboratory roles; with them, the system retains a vital route into the less visible Healthcare Science careers.

Whilst these pathways have recently been retired nationally, the thirst from employers remains to support learning opportunities, and work continues to transform these industry placement pledges into alternative workplace experiences.

Midwifery Industry Placements and T Level Pathway: A First in Greater Manchester

The midwifery pathway and industry placements were introduced in Greater Manchester for the first time, which has been enabled by this programme.

Student perspective:

Health T Level students, specialising in supporting the midwifery team at Oldham College, consistently highlighted the impact of combining classroom learning with real-world maternity placements. As one student reflected, *“Being on placement has helped me understand what it’s really like to work in the NHS and what skills I need... it’s made my goals feel real and reachable.”*



Picture of Malaika, Titi and Evie, midwifery T Level learners.

In a [video case study shared by Oldham College](#), Isabelle reflects on how industry placement experience brings maternity care to life beyond the classroom. She describes observing how midwives support women throughout pregnancy and birth, working as part of a wider maternity team, and gaining confidence through exposure to clinical environments. Seeing maternity care first-hand helped her understand the pace, responsibility and professionalism required, reinforcing her motivation to pursue midwifery as a career. Her experience helps to show that, with the right support, maternity placements can be delivered safely and meaningfully for T Level students; allowing learners to make a vital link between classroom learning and real practice, building confidence and workplace readiness that would be difficult to achieve without direct exposure.



Picture of Isabelle, a Health T Level student, specialising in supporting the midwifery team.



Picture of Jen Hedley, Head of Faculty for Caring Professions at Oldham College.

T Level provider perspective:

“One of the biggest lessons from this pilot has been the power of asking “why not?” rather than assuming the answer is no. Many perceived barriers, like the idea that under-18s can’t enter maternity spaces, were not grounded in actual policy but in outdated assumptions. By simply starting the conversation and exploring options, the team uncovered a workable, safe route forward. Early observational placements were especially effective - not just for students to understand the clinical world, but also for staff to build confidence in the programme. This soft-launch approach provided a critical bridge between vision and implementation and helped secure buy-in for longer-term placement models.”