



**N Brown Group**  
(“N Brown” or “the Group”)

## **N Brown partners with Greater Manchester Youth Network to drive forward social mobility**

- Greater Manchester Youth Network (GMYN) has been selected as N Brown’s next charity partner
- The funding provided by N Brown will enable GMYN to pilot ‘Level Up’, a new 12-week youth employability programme providing skills, training and advice to young jobseekers in Greater Manchester
- N Brown’s partnership with GMYN is a core part of the business’s focus on social mobility in the local Manchester community

MANCHESTER – N Brown, the inclusive fashion retail platform, has selected Greater Manchester Youth Network (GMYN) as its charity partner following a company-wide decision process by colleagues. Funds raised by N Brown will enable the organisation to pilot their first ‘Level Up’ youth employability programme.

GMYN’s selection as N Brown’s charity partner is the latest of the Group’s social mobility initiatives. As well as working with GMYN, the Group is planning additional activity to foster greater social mobility within N Brown as well as encouraging other businesses to consider how they can support people of all backgrounds to succeed in their workplaces.

### **The case for greater social mobility**

It’s estimated that the UK is missing out on £19bn GDP growth every year as a result of a failure to promote social mobility<sup>1</sup>, and the vast majority of business leaders said that they felt promoting social mobility would help them attract and retain staff<sup>1</sup>. However, the ability of young people to thrive in the workplace is being hindered by what employers are seeing as a lack of workplace readiness in jobseekers.

Currently, the majority of UK employers (52%)<sup>2</sup> don’t feel that young people are generally well prepared for work, and almost two-thirds (64%) believe young people lack the social skills to perform their roles well. GMYN’s ‘Level Up’ programme is designed to tackle these issues head on by providing young people with bespoke training built around careers they are passionate about.

Matthew\* is an 18-year-old jobseeker who has been supported by Greater Manchester Youth Network. He said that *“there are loads of barriers in the way for people of my age trying to find work, and that became so much worse after lockdown because we were held back for so long from socialising and working. Personally, I found readjusting back to things really challenging, especially speaking to new people and being in a different setting. My confidence was really knocked. Working with Greater Manchester Youth Network has done a lot for building up my confidence and skills again. It’s also helped take the fear out of entering a workplace.*

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<sup>1</sup> Demos and the Co-op, [The Opportunity Effect](#), 2024

<sup>2</sup> CIPD, [Changing Face of the Youth Labour Market](#), 2024

*"I really feel that we, as young people, have qualities that employers should value and look for. I'd love to see all businesses take the time to get to know young people and what they can bring to work - like what GMYN does - rather than pre-judge us based on our age or circumstances."*

The 'Level Up' programme will include 25 hours of paid training covering essential skills like financial literacy, resilience and workplace expectations as well as a 4-week paid work placement tailored to the interests of the participants. GMYN will also provide support and guidance for both young people and employers as well as one-to-one support for job applications and future pathways.

Natalie Rogers, Chief People and Sustainability Officer, N Brown Group said: *"As a Manchester-based business founded over 160 years ago, N Brown's success is a testament to the work of generations of people from all backgrounds. Partnering with Greater Manchester Youth Network is part of our commitment to continuing this legacy of social mobility, by ensuring that today's young people have the tools they need to excel in their careers."*

Alex Fairweather, Founder and CEO of Greater Manchester Youth Network said: *"It's an extremely challenging time for young people looking to take their first step on the career ladder. It's clear from both employers and the job seekers themselves that new starters are not always arriving with the preparation they need to succeed, and more urgent work needs to be done to get young people excited and ready for work."*

*"We're extremely proud to have been selected as N Brown's charity partner, and grateful for the support they are providing for our 'Level Up' programme. As a major employer in Greater Manchester, they recognise the importance of ensuring the next generation feel comfortable and confident in the workplace, so that Manchester businesses can continue to thrive."*

N Brown has committed the funding needed for 10 young people to participate in the 'Level Up' 12-week programme, due to begin in September 2025.

**- ENDS -**

\*Some names have been changed.

Greater Manchester Youth Network case study

### **Hatch**

Hatch was an **employability programme** run by Greater Manchester Youth Network in partnership with UK Youth and The KFC Foundation aimed at young people aged 16 to 24 who are ready to enter the workplace but just need a little extra support. Participants completed a pre-employability workshop and then 4 weeks of paid work experience.

### **Matthew**

18-year-old Matthew recently moved back to his hometown, Manchester, after living in care in Halifax for several years. Matthew struggled for a long time to find work in the city. Negative stereotypes of young people combined with the impact of the pandemic hit his confidence and put up barriers to him being able to access employment. Taking part in GMYN's Hatch programme has helped him build skills and confidence and given him a workplace 'family' that supports him. Today he is on a youth panel with GMYN, where he helps explain what employment barriers 16–24-year-olds face and what more job centres can do to support young people. Matthew now has a full-time job at KFC.

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### **About N Brown Group**

N Brown is a top 10 UK clothing and footwear digital retail platform, with a home proposition, headquartered in Manchester and employs around 1,400 people nationwide. Through our strategic retail brands including JD Williams, Simply Be and Jacamo, we exist to make our customers look and feel amazing and take great pride in passionately championing inclusion and serving the under-served. Our customer-first shopping experience, supported by our innovative financial services proposition, is designed to deliver choice, affordability, and value to our customers, and allows us to be truly inclusive and accessible.