



GC Employment: Handbook



The Growth
Company

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Welcome to GC Employment

Here at GC Employment, part of The Growth Company, we help to make a lasting difference to the lives of people throughout the North of England. We aim support you to gain meaningful employment; a foundation on which to improve your and your family's quality of life and support your local communities.

We believe everyone can benefit from work, regardless of their circumstances - and therefore everyone should be offered the right type of support, at the right time, so you can realise your potential.

Last year our services enabled:



17,325

Unemployed people to find work



8,353

People to obtain new skills or qualifications



£657m

Of additional Gross Value Added (GVA)



5,000

Tonnes of carbon saved



11,456

New businesses to start trading



10,832

New jobs to be created

For more about the Growth Company you can find us here:

-  www.growthco.uk
-  0161 288 1111
-  info@growthco.uk
-  @growthcouk
-  @growthcouk
-  The Growth Company

Supporting you every step of the way

We offer a comprehensive support package delivered by our friendly team of experienced staff. These are just some of the ways in which we can help empower you to achieve your ambitions and goals:



We understand that sometimes things can be more challenging, which is why we have a network of specialist support services to help you. Contact your Advisor for more information.

Our Quality Approach

Here at GC Employment, we are committed to continually improving our services with you in mind. To ensure you are receiving the best support available we carry out a range of activities to assure the quality of our services.

Our approach to quality assurance includes:



Customer Feedback

During your time on one of our programmes you will be given an opportunity to have your say and feedback on your experiences. We value your opinion and will try to improve our services based on your response.



Observations

We have a fully trained team of observers who are responsible for making sure your sessions are of a good quality. You may be asked to consent to having a session observed, this will enable us to assure the Advisors are providing you with the high quality of service we pride ourselves in.



Telephone Interviews

The Quality Team conduct regular interviews with participants across all our programmes, we use your views and opinions to inform our service delivery and continuous improvement plans.



Case Studies

We may ask to use your recent experiences with us as an example of the hard work and dedication you demonstrated on programme. We will always seek your consent before we use your story in any way, and you can remove your permission at any time.


Code of Conduct

As a participant with the Growth Company’s employment service, we always ask you to follow our Code of Conduct, whether you’re attending a meeting with your work coach, attending a course at one of our centres, on a work placement or in paid employment as an apprentice.


The Growth Company operates within the ‘law of the land’ and expects all staff and participants to obey UK laws on theft, fraud, graffiti, damage to property, violence, substance abuse, the carrying of offensive or dangerous weapons, intimidation, possession/use of drugs and alcohol, and intent to supply drugs.

We are also proactive in carrying out our responsibilities under the Prevent Duty (our duty to prevent people being drawn into terrorism) and are keen to promote a culture in which all participants recognise the importance of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, tolerance, and mutual respect.


In the workplace you will be expected to:



Always follow company rules



Treat work colleagues and all other staff with courtesy and respect












Always follow the company’s health and safety guidelines



Maintain excellent standards of attendance and punctuality and make sure you follow the company’s absence reporting procedures



When attending one of our centres you will be expected to:

 <p>Attend all sessions on time and follow the programmes procedures for reporting absence</p>	 <p>Always follow health and safety guidelines and procedures</p>	 <p>Respect all equipment provided by GC Employment</p>
 <p>Actively take part in all sessions to ensure you get the most from your programme</p>	 <p>Treat staff, other participants and anyone within the office with courtesy and respect</p>	 <p>Avoid language or actions that could offend others such as swearing, being disruptive or behaving in a discriminatory way</p>
 <p>Not bully or harass anyone, including not using sexualised language or displaying sexualised behaviours</p>	 <p>Follow the rules of the Acceptable Use of IT Policy</p>	 <p>Only smoke/vape in designated smoking areas</p>
 <p>Not use your mobile phone during sessions unless otherwise instructed by your Advisor</p>	 <p>Not take food and drink into group sessions</p>	 <p>Not wear caps or hoods other than for religious or medical reasons and dress appropriately for the day</p>

Please be aware that if you fail to meet the standards and expectations set out in this Code of Conduct (or those of your off-the-job provider if not the Growth Company), you will be subject to the Growth Company disciplinary procedure which could ultimately lead to dismissal from your programme.

Keeping you safe

Throughout your time with us it is important that you are and feel safe. We take our duty of care very seriously and believe that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. The health and wellbeing of our participants is paramount, and we believe that everyone has a right to protection from abuse whatever their age, ethnicity, religion, sexual identity or gender identity.



Whenever you share information with us that suggests you are at immediate risk of harm, our advisors will turn to our safeguarding champions for advice on the best way to protect you including via signposting and referrals to other agencies.

Safeguarding issues

A safeguarding issue is a serious risk of abuse and can include:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Domestic
- Financial
- Extremism
- Forced marriage
- Female genital mutilation

It can also include anything else that can cause significant harm, whether this be online or offline.

More information can be found within our [Safeguarding Policy](#). You can also find a range of support organisations on the next page that can provide specialist advice and guidance tailored to your individual needs.

Reporting a safeguarding issue

If you feel that you are at any kind of risk or experiencing any kind of distress please speak to your Advisor or any of our staff, they will then escalate this to our safeguarding champions.

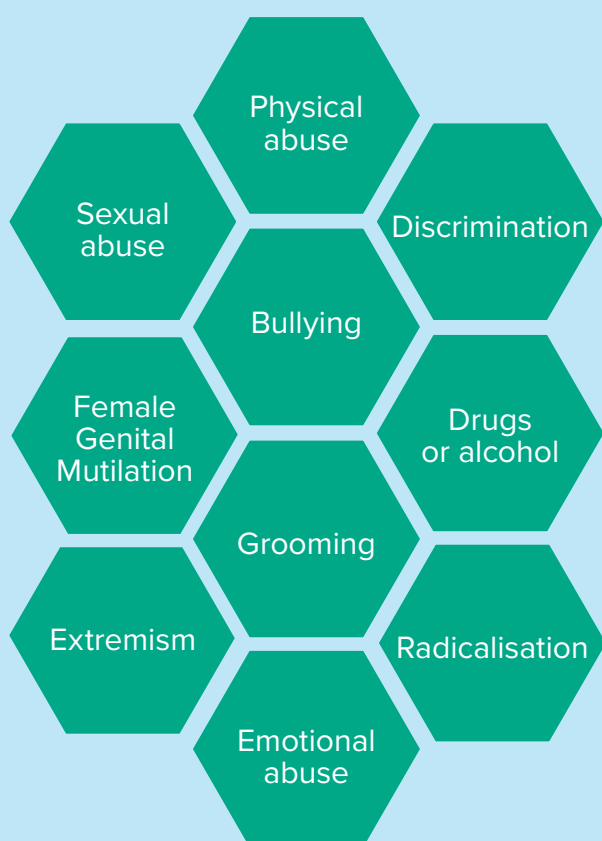
Third party disclosure

We adopt a whole family approach and as such our duty of care extends to your loved ones and wider circles. Again, if you have any concerns regarding their health or wellbeing, please speak to a member of our staff and they will provide support accordingly.



Keeping You Safe

Throughout your time with us it is important that you are and feel safe. We take our duty of care very seriously and believe that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. A safeguarding issue is a serious risk of abuse and can include:



Reporting a safeguarding issue:

It can also include anything else that can cause significant harm, whether this be online or offline. More information can be found within our Safeguarding Policy. We have a team of designated safeguarding officers you can report any issues or concerns to. Please contact your advisor or if you are an Apprentice, your Line Manager

Emergency services
Police/Fire/Ambulance
999

Shelter
Homelessness
(Freephone)
0808 800 4444

Sexual health
Manchester Centre
for Sexual Health
0161 276 5200

Drugs
UK National Drugs
Helpline
0300 123 6600
Narcotics Anonymous
0300 999 1212
Nar-Anon Family
Groups UK (concerned
about a person's drug
taking)
0207 498 4680
Talk to Frank
0300 123 6600

**Family issues advice,
parenting etc.**
Family Lives
(Freephone)
0808 800 2222

Child protection
NSPCC
0808 800 5000
Childline
0808 1111

**Counselling
(young people)**
42nd Street
0161 228 1888

Forced marriage
Helpline number
(or ring GM Police
Forced Marriage Unit)
0800 141 2994

Suicidal thoughts
Samaritans
08457 116 123
NHS App
**www.nhs.uk/
apps-library/distract/
Mind**
0300 123 3393

Alcohol concerns
Drinkline
0300 123 1110
Alcoholics Anonymous
(AA)
0800 9177 650
Al-Anon (affected by
someone else's drinking)
0207 403 0888

Mental health issues
Mind (Text 86463)
0300 123 339

**Non-emergency
Health Service**
NHS
111

Debt advice
Debt helpline
(Step Change)
0800 138 1111
England Illegal Money
Lending Team (stop loan
sharks)
0300 555 2222

Bereavement
Cruse Bereavement
Care
0800 808 1677

Domestic abuse
Action on Elder Abuse
(Hourglass)
0808 808 8141
Domestic Violence
Helpline (Freephone)
0808 2000 247
Respect (male and
young people domestic
violence)
0808 801 0327

Victim of crime
Victim support
0808 168 9111

Gambling concerns
GamCare
0808 8020 133

Older people
The Silver Line (support
for older people)
0800 470 80 90

Our PREVENT Duty

Prevent Duty explained

The Prevent Duty is a government initiative aimed at stopping people from becoming involved with (radicalised) or supporting violent extremism.

What is Radicalisation?

The government defines radicalisation as a process by which an individual or group comes to adopt an extreme political, social, or religious ideas and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo or reject and/or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice.

What is Extremism?

Extremism is defined as “vocal or active opposition to British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs”. We share and promotes these values across our community.

British Values

GC Employment follow the Government’s principles across all our locations, these include:

Liberty

- The freedom to live as you wish and go where you want
- Helping you to make informed choices
- Taking responsibility for your choices and exercising them safely
- Making sure you know your rights

Justice – Rule of Law

- Fairness in the way people are dealt with
- Exploring the laws that govern and protect us
- Understanding the consequences if these rules are broken
- Considering that these may be different from religious laws

Democracy

- The belief in freedom and equality between people
- A broad general knowledge & respect of public institutions and services
- Helping you to influence decision-making through the democratic process
- Explaining the advantages and disadvantages of democracy

Respect – Mutual Respect

- Tolerance of those with different respects and beliefs
- Understanding how your behaviour has an effect on your own rights and those of others
- Respecting other people’s differences, other cultures and ways of life
- Challenging prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour

For more information about the Prevent Duty and British Values, visit:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance

Using Our IT Facilities



The Growth Company is committed to providing you with safe access to Information Technology (IT) to support your learning or programme and to help you to develop the digital skills you will need to be successful in your endeavours.

This policy applies to all participants of The Growth Company. In accessing our IT equipment and facilities, you will be deemed to have accepted the terms of this Acceptable Use policy.

If you have any questions about this policy or would like more information, please contact your Advisor

Printing

The company is committed to reducing the environmental impact of its activities, including the use of paper for printing. All participants are asked to support this aim and only print out documents when essential. You should therefore only use printing facilities with the agreement of your Advisor.

Using Our IT Facilities



Acceptable Use

We provide access to IT equipment and systems to support your learning and to enable you to complete work set by your Advisor.

Personal use of the company's IT is permitted provided you use the facilities responsibly and that your personal use does not prevent other participant from using IT to support their studies. The Growth Company reserves the right to withdraw permission for personal use at any time or restrict access at our discretion.

If you are at all unsure about whether you can use the IT at a given time, please ask your Advisor.

Our IT equipment and facilities must not be used for commercial purposes such as running a business or selling goods or service



Prohibited Use

Misuse of IT will be dealt with through our normal disciplinary processes, but you need to be aware that misuse of the internet can in some circumstances may be a criminal offence.

Inappropriate use of the internet includes any of the following:

- x Pornographic material (for example, the sending and receiving of nudes, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature)
- x Online bullying of any nature
- x Offensive, obscene or criminal material
- x Material aligned to grooming
- x Material which is liable to cause embarrassment to The Growth Company, other participant or clients, our partners or stakeholders
- x Information which could be subject to provisions of counter-terrorism legislation
- x A false or defamatory statement about any person or organisation
- x Material, which is discriminatory, offensive, derogatory, or may cause embarrassment to others (including material which breaches our Equality and Diversity policy)
- x Confidential information about The Growth Company or any of our staff or participant
- x Any other statement which is likely to create any criminal or civil liability (for you or us)
- x Material in breach of copyright

Any such action will be treated very seriously and could result in your removal from your programme.

Where evidence of misuse is found we may undertake a more detailed investigation in accordance with our disciplinary processes. Any information obtained may be handed to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.

Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at GC

Our services cover a wide and diverse participant base, to ensure we are representative of the communities we serve GC employment have a focused Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) team committed to ensuring our service delivery meets the needs of our participants

Our aim is to provide an inclusive and welcoming environment, promoting equality, and embracing diversity within our organisation and the participants we support.

EDI Awareness

We also have a network of Mental Health First Aiders, and there are mandatory training modules Advisors undertake to ensure we operate within the Equality Act 2010, but also with the best interests of our participants in mind. All Advisors will have completed the following training modules:

- Equality Diversity and Inclusion
- Disability Awareness
- Mental Health Awareness
- Over 50's Employability

Connecting Communities

The EDI team is especially focused on improving our service delivery to ensure it meets the needs of our participants. To ensure we can support all participants equally and inclusively we have a dedicated team that facilitate our Connecting Communities Initiative. The initiative receives feedback from participants through our survey after which you can then be invited to a panel – *costs for attending are reimbursed and all participants who attend the panel will receive a love2shop voucher.*

To find out more, complete the survey or be invited to a panel please email: connectingcommunities@gcemployment.uk

You can also use this inbox for suggestions or improvements to our sites regarding equality, accessibility, diversity, and/or inclusion. *Please note this inbox is not for complaints, if you have any complaints the standard complaints policy for your programme must be followed.*



Accreditations

Here at we GC we demonstrate our commitment to fostering an equal and inclusive culture by achieving the following accreditations:

All Equals Charter

'Good Practice' level within 6 months of having achieved 'foundation' level

Race at Work Charter

Where we commit to seven calls to action to ensure racial equity in the workplace with the most important being: ensuring that supporting equality in the workplace is the responsibility of all leaders and managers and committing at board level a zero-tolerance approach to harassment and bullying (See our Dignity at Work policy for more information)

Armed Forces covenant

Defence Employer Recognition scheme Bronze Status – enabling us to recognise, understand and support those who serve (or have served), as well as family members of the armed forces, to ensure fairness and accessibility to our services

Disability Confident Scheme

We are Disability Confident Leaders, meaning we are committed to challenging perceptions, operating within the social model of disability, and ensuring equal accessibility to our services for all. We are experienced in supporting disabled individuals back into work or training

Reinforcing this responsibility to EDI through our Dignity at Work Policy - this policy covers staff and participants in terms of expectations of behaviour, language and accessibility ensuring our sites are free from harassment, bullying and discrimination.

If you wish to view this policy, ask your advisor/key worker also if you aware of a matter that violates this policy, please follow the complaint process highlighted on [page 19](#).



Health and Safety

Your safety and health is a top priority for The Growth Company whilst you are on the programme. Our staff have all received health and safety training, and we are constantly thinking about how we can ensure our offices and programmes are as safe as they can be. Each site will have slight differences in the way it operates, which will be explained to you when you sign up, but you can expect the following:



There are trained first aiders in all our sites to help in the event of an accident or medical emergency



There are trained fire wardens in each site who will help in the event of a fire



Smoking and vaping is not allowed inside any of our premises



Please do not plug any personal items in, such as vapes or mobile phones

If you have any medical conditions which may affect you whilst you are involved with a Growth Company programme, please do let us know. We will use this information to make sure we put in place measures to ensure your safety while you are with us.

If you have any questions, or spot anything which you don't think is safe, talk to any GC member of staff or contact the Health and Safety team by emailing: hs-info@growthco.uk



Sustainability

The Growth Company has been Carbon Neutral since 2019 and has set an ambition to be Net Zero by 2035 across all three scopes*. This means that we'll work to reduce our carbon emissions across all our areas of work and, where we're unable to do so, will offset our equivalent carbon emissions through accredited off-setting schemes. GC has been working with the Gold Standard carbon offsetting scheme, using our carbon credits to support projects which focus on reducing carbon emissions, the development of renewable energy projects and carbon abatement through community forest and biodiversity projects.

At GC, we have implemented measures and controls to reduce our significant environmental aspects and impacts. This includes policies on the Environment, Sustainability Waste Disposal, Travel and strengthening existing Health and Safety, Agile Working and Confidential Waste policies and procedures to include relevant environmental considerations. In addition, we also have environmental awareness training and a GC Employee Green Team which helps to champion and advocate environmental issues which are open to all employees.

How we help others?

Our action doesn't stop internally, through our business activity we strive to support others on their net zero journey, enabling individuals, businesses and places across the United Kingdom to understand what Net Zero means to them and adopt more environmentally sustainable business practices. Details of how we support businesses become more sustainable can be found [here](#).

To upskill individuals we provide qualifications and training for green skills, including EV charging stations, EV awareness, smart meter installation, combined source heat pumps and fenestration. We also have the ambition to establish a Green Skills Academy in 2023.



Sustainability

Our Impact



The Growth Company's commitment to sustainability has been part of the service offering for over 20 years with business advisors consistently delivering energy reduction services.



Since 2012 GC Business Growth Hubs Net Zero specialists have helped SMEs in Greater Manchester save 2m tonnes of carbon and £500m in energy, materials and waste costs.



Between 2015 and 2021 GC's ERDF funded Carbon Reduction Programme has provided over £1.2m of grant funding to support carbon savings in SMEs.



Since 2016 the Green Tech and Services team have supported 348 businesses in the Green Tech Sector. This business support has seen the introduction of 17 new green tech products, an increase in green tech sales of over £6m and the creation of 99 green tech jobs.

Further details of our commitments can be found in The Growth Company's Environmental Policy [here](#).

Details of our current carbon footprint, initiatives we have already taken, and future projects can be found in our Carbon Reduction plan [here](#).

** We are committed to moving from our current position of Carbon Neutral across our scope 1&2 activities to Net Zero (Scope 1-3) with residual GHG offset through neutralisation measures as per SBTi guidance by 2035.*

Information Security



Our aim is to foster a quality culture and to provide all our customers and interested parties with a consistently outstanding service and experience. Our ambition is to become a key enabler to growth and inclusion nationally and be a high performing organisation that is the delivery of choice in target markets.

Information and data are assets that we have a duty and responsibility to protect. The confidentiality, integrity and availability of our information and data is essential to GC Employment functioning in an efficient manner, complying with applicable legal requirements and to providing products and services to our customers. We recognise, therefore, that the correct and lawful treatment of personal data will maintain confidence in the organisation and ensure successful business operations. Protecting the confidentiality and integrity of information and data is a critical responsibility that we always take seriously, and we are open and transparent about how we handle and use confidential information and data.



Our Integrated Management Systems Manual outlines the framework for the quality and information security management.

GC Employment is formally certified to ISO 9001 (Quality Management), ISO 27001 (Information Security Management) and ISO 14001 (Environmental Management) by a UKAS Accredited Certification Body. This means our systems and processes have been independently verified and are compliant with internationally recognised criteria from a quality, information security and environmental perspective. This demonstrates our commitment to not only provide an excellent, quality service to all our customers, but to also safeguard the information and data we process, comply with applicable legal requirements and to ensure the impact of our activities on the environment is minimal, and constantly measured.

Talk to us about your data

If you have a question or a complaint about the way your personal information is processed, you can contact us:

By email: DPOfficer@growthco.uk

By post: Data Protection Officer, Lee House, 90 Great Bridgewater Street, Manchester M1 5JW

You also have the right to make a complaint at any time to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the UK supervisory authority for data protection issues. Go to ico.org.uk/concerns to find out more. We would, however, appreciate the chance to deal with your concerns before you approach the ICO so please contact us in the first instance.

Complaints



GC Employment's vision, mission and values emphasise our commitment in providing a high-quality service to all our customers, participants, learners, service users and stakeholders. We actively encourage a culture of continual improvement by monitoring and reviewing our performance and services in a systematic manner. This includes seeking out the views of customers, participants, learners, service users, partners and stakeholders with whom we engage.

We are committed to establishing and implementing a complaint handling process for managing, responding to and monitoring complaints. As part of this process, we ensure that all intimations of an individual or organisations dissatisfaction and/or complaint(s) are investigated fully, impartially, confidentially and in a timely manner and that all customers, participants, learners, service users and stakeholders are treated fairly throughout the process. Where a customer, participant, learner, service user or stakeholders has cause to complain, the complaints handling procedure will be followed in every instance and a record will be made of the complaint and details to help improve our services and minimise the occurrence of similar complaints.

Our complaints policy is clear and we ensure that any individual can raise a

complaint in a variety of formats and be supported in doing so, where necessary. In line with the Equality Act 2010, we ensure that all complainants are treated fairly and equally and that we will provide adjustments to the procedure as required to ensure that the process is inclusive. Steps we may take is to change the format of our responses to best suit the individual and to ensure that complainants are not disadvantaged because of their Protected Characteristics.

We treat each complaint seriously and endeavour to reach a swift resolution for all parties involved. All complaints are logged centrally, and any trends identified are highlighted and addressed appropriately.

Our complaints policy and supporting procedure supplements our quality processes, procedures and forms part of our integrated management system.

A copy of our full complaints policy can be found [here](#)

Due to the nature of our delivery there are instances where a partnering organisation's complaints policy will apply, please check your programme handbook or welcome pack for more information.



The Growth
Company