# New curriculum equips Greater Manchester youths with life skills to tackle post-pandemic pressures



A new life-skills curriculum, aimed at addressing the gap in essential soft skills for people aged 16 to 25, has been launched in Greater Manchester. The nine-module programme, introduced by the non-profit organisation Higher Health in partnership with Unesco, is designed to equip young people with vital tools including empathy, financial literacy, and the ability to recognise misinformation online. With a goal to reach 10,000 participants by September, the initiative will be rolled out across various educational institutions, including sixth form colleges and apprenticeship hubs.

The programme arrives amid heightened concerns about the workforce readiness of Generation Z, expected to comprise 27 per cent of the UK workforce in 2023. Often portrayed in the media as lazy or anxious, the generation faces misconceptions that overlook the unique challenges they have encountered. Professor Sandeep Ranote, a child psychiatrist involved in the curriculum's development, pointed out that the environment for today’s youth has been shaped by factors she categorises as the “five Cs”: Covid-19, climate change, cost-of-living, cyberspace, and conflict.

Speaking to the Independent, Ranote suggested that these factors have contributed to a lack of essential social skills among young people. “I’m calling the programme pre-prevention, because it’s giving young people a broader toolkit and skills for life at a really important transition time,” she stated. According to research commissioned by Higher Health, communication skills, particularly in face-to-face or phone conversations, were highlighted as areas in which young people struggled.

The nine modules cover various topics, including gender equality and money management, delivered through a mix of peer-to-peer and online learning formats. Among the techniques taught, one module focuses on mindfulness, while another aids participants in recognising deepfake videos. This range of content aims to provide students with practical skills for navigating the complexities of contemporary life.

The challenges facing Generation Z are not just theoretical. Individuals like Dhruwi Mistry, a 22-year-old master's student in climate change at the University of Manchester and a co-creator of the curriculum, have noted a significant decline in social interactions among peers since the pandemic. Mistry stated, “Covid definitely changed a lot of people’s confidence,” and reflected on how the programme helped her confront her own anxiety issues.

Similarly, 19-year-old Georgia Atkins, a participant and co-creator, found the digital literacy module particularly enriching as it addressed how to assess the credibility of information on social media. “It’s great, because it starts a conversation and you can talk to your friends,” she remarked.

Tom Bolton, a 17-year-old fashion diploma student, expressed concerns over the adequacy of his previous education in preparing him for job applications, highlighting the need for financial literacy and communication skills. “People just speak online rather than meeting up, and the lack of socialisation worries me,” he said, noting the pervasive impact of digital communication on his generation.

Critics might argue that the younger generation lacks resilience, yet many, including Becca Hutson, editorial director of The News Movement, assert that Gen Z is merely responding to a world shaped by significant disruptions. “They’ve inherited some pretty difficult circumstances from the rest of us,” Hutson explained, stressing the need for understanding rather than disparagement.

Ranote emphasised the importance of context, noting that the landscape in which young people live and communicate has drastically changed. Higher Health's spokesperson highlighted that the programme could potentially benefit individuals beyond the target age group, suggesting broader implications for enhancing communication skills across all generations.

As the curriculum seeks to provide young adults with the tools necessary for adapting to societal changes, it is an effort to cultivate a more informed, capable workforce amidst ongoing challenges. The initiative is seen not just as a response but as a proactive measure to better prepare young people for their futures in an increasingly complex world.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

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* <https://www.the-independent.com/life-style/gen-z-work-study-anxious-mental-health-b2743176.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data