# Greater Manchester to trial 'halls of apprentice' for young learners



In a significant initiative aimed at enhancing opportunities for apprentices in Greater Manchester, Mayor Andy Burnham has announced plans to trial a new concept known as 'halls of apprentice'. This initiative seeks to provide young individuals engaged in apprenticeships with a university-like experience, thereby promoting an equal alternative to traditional academic routes for those who do not pursue higher education.

The announcement follows Burnham’s commitment in his election manifesto last year, where he emphasised the importance of creating parity between academic and technical education. The proposal envisions housing solutions for young apprentices that would facilitate their move from home, fostering independence similar to that experienced by university students.

Details surrounding the pilot programme, referred to as 'Our House', are still in development. Co-operatives UK is spearheading the initiative and is actively engaging younger people through surveys and focus groups in Greater Manchester to assess their needs and desires regarding accommodation while undertaking apprenticeships.

Rose Marley, CEO of Co-operatives UK, shared insights while speaking to the Manchester Evening News at Loreto College, where a focus group was held. "What we're trying to do with Our House is recognise that going to university isn't just about what you learn," Marley noted. "It's about meeting new people and experiencing different cities and learning to use the washing machine, how to cook for yourself and all those things you suddenly learn when you haven't got your mum and dad there doing it all for you. You know, those are the kind of really important things you learn at uni. They're life skills."

The current stage of the project is exploratory, with Mr Burnham indicating that a pilot could be launched before the completion of his term in 2028. In his manifesto, the mayor articulated the concept as "living accommodation for young people who wish to move across the city-region to take up apprenticeship opportunities." He further expressed that it is essential for all young people to experience independence at the age of 18, regardless of their chosen life paths.

If successfully implemented in Greater Manchester, the model could be extended nationwide, facilitating apprenticeship opportunities for young individuals throughout the UK. A roundtable discussion is scheduled for May, hosted by the Co-operative Bank, to delve into the specifics of the initiative following the analysis of survey results.

While it is expected that apprentices participating in the 'Our House' project will bear the costs of rent, similar to university students, there are indications that the accommodation may receive subsidies, though the final financial arrangements have yet to be confirmed.

Mr Burnham also remarked on the establishment of the Greater Manchester Baccalaureate (MBacc), which aims to provide a prestigious alternative to university and promote technical education, including apprenticeships. He expressed optimism about the potential of the 'halls of apprentice' concept to facilitate young people's transition into independent living while pursuing their career pathways. "We know that when we bring people together, we can and do find solutions, and we're grateful to Co-operatives UK and The Co-operative Bank for spearheading this research work," Burnham stated, underscoring the collaborative effort involved in this ambitious project.

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