

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 6 December 2023

Subject: Post-16 Education Employment Training Strategic Plan 2022-25 – Progress Update

Report of: Strategic Director of Children and Education Services

Summary

This report provides an update on work done by the Council which has had a positive impact on increasing the number of young people accessing Education Employment Training (EET) opportunities in the city over the last 2 years. It also outlines the plans for this work moving forward which align with Our Manchester Forward to 2025 Strategy and Manchester Inclusion Strategy 2022-25.

The report outlines how the cohort of young people post 16 is set to increase year on year which is causing significant pressure on places across the post 16 sector. Plans are in place to expand existing provision and to open new provisions however, there is no planned growth of places for technical courses. Projected continued growth of the post 16 cohort in the next few years as well as the planned reform of level 2 technical education may adversely impact on the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training going forward.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:-

- (1) Read and consider the progress of the Post-16 EET Strategic Plan 2022-25 recognising the impact in relation to the approach to support young people into a Post-16 destination.
 - (2) Consider and explore challenges in responding to creating sufficient places as a result of the growing population.
 - (3) Recommend any aspects of consideration, amendment or clarification.
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Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment -the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city	The Post-16 EET Strategic Plan includes within workstream 4, alignment with the Education Green Climate Action Plan 2022-24. As such, relevant impact is measured through the existing KPI's of this specific plan.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in	This Post-16 EET Strategic Plan is applicable to all young people of secondary and college age and their settings' with a specific reference to

meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments	vulnerable groups as part of workstream 3 and the education sector at large as part of workstream 4.
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Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The reduction of the number of young people within the raising participation age who are not in education, employment or training.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Implementation of robust quality assurance frameworks for post-16.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Inter-agency collaboration and partnership working to focus on identified intervention for vulnerable young people.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Supporting the post-16 education sector in reducing carbon emissions and developing sustainable school and college environments that provide opportunities for young people to benefit from the green economy.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Embedding social value / Our Year and its opportunities with education, employment and training.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

N/A

Contact Officers:

Name: Amanda Corcoran
 Position: Director of Education
 Telephone: 0161 234 4314
 E mail: amanda.corcoran@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Anthony Turner
 Position: Post-16 Lead
 Telephone: 07814228539
 E-mail: anthony.turner@manchester.gov.uk

Background Documents (available for public inspection):

Our Manchester Strategy – Forward to 2025
 Work & Skills Strategy
 Manchester Inclusion Strategy

Our Manchester Youth Strategy
Marmott Review

1.0 Background/Context

- 1.1 From September 2013 the Department for Education (DfE) raised the participation age (RPA). This means that all young people are required to be enrolled in some form of accredited education or training until at least their 18th birthday, with the Council having the statutory duty for this. This can include full-time college courses, apprenticeships, traineeships, study programmes, supported internships and volunteering combined with part-time study.
- 1.2 In fulfilling this duty, the Council provides support to schools and post-16 education, training and engagement providers to ensure our young people make a successful post-16 transition to a destination of their choice.
- 1.3 Career Connect were awarded the NEET Prevention & Reduction Service contract in April 2023 and are commissioned to deliver this service until March 31st 2025. This contract includes providing direct support to young people.
- 1.4 The Post-16 EET Strategic Plan 2022-2025 details five identified workstreams as the key priorities. This provides an over-arching view of the opportunities, pathways and outcomes for young people in Manchester who are of raising participation age (RPA) and provides a consistent focus for partnership working that aligns to the broader strategic aims of the city.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Manchester has a strong post-16 sector in Manchester, where the vast majority of education providers are judged by Ofsted to be good or better and where young people and their families have choice. The post 16 sector including academic, technical and vocational providers work as a partnership and are highly committed to working with the City Council.
- 2.2 The Post-16 EET Strategic Plan 2022-25 was developed in partnership with the sector and is aimed at supporting the sector in maximising the opportunities available to young people in transition from pre-16 compulsory education on to the next stage of their pathway to further education, training and/or employment. The strategic plan focuses on a three-year period to coincide with the Our Manchester Forward to 2025 Strategy; the Manchester Inclusion Strategy 2022-25 and the Work & Skills Strategy 2022-27, with identified workstreams that align with the city's strategic objectives.
- 2.3 These workstreams are:
 - Education, Employment and Skills
 - Quality Assurance
 - Support for Vulnerable Young People
 - Social Value
- 2.4 Career Connect were awarded the NEET Prevention & Reduction Service contract in April 2023 and continue their offer in the city as the Council's

commissioned service, for NEET young people aged 16 to 18 (up to 25 for SEND and care leavers). The service offers support to young people in relation to engagement with education, training and employment opportunities; tracking of young people whose destination is not known; outreach and community-based delivery; support for young people at risk of becoming NEET upon leaving school. As well as operating a city-wide service, the service also has co-located staff with partners and agencies including:

- Youth Justice
- Manchester Secondary Pupil Referral Unit
- Care Leaver Service
- Endeavour Federation
- EHCP Team

There are also specific linked advisors to the following teams:

- Virtual School
- Attendance & Exclusions
- Social Care (this is pending within the UKSPF structure)

3.0 Progress to date

This section of the report describes the landscape of the post-16 sector in Manchester, the previous year's achievements and the priorities in year 2 of the EET Strategic Plan 2022-25. Specific examples of actions and projects can be found in Appendix 1.

3.1 Young people not in Education, Employment or Training

- 3.1.1 It is pleasing to note that Manchester and its partners have supported young people through the two-year post-pandemic period, ensuring that the number and rate of NEET and unknown has not been exacerbated.
- 3.1.2 The efforts of the Council and of stakeholders is clear in NEET data from the previous academic year. In July 2023, the number of young people who were NEET unknown was 137 (1.0%). This is significantly lower than July 2021 which was submitted at 408 (3.4%). In comparison, the number of NEET known was 568 (4.2%). This is slightly higher than July 2021 where it was submitted at 484 (4.0%). Overall, the combined NEET known, and unknown figures were 705 (5.2%) in July 2022, which is a reduction from 892 (7.4%) in July 2021. This, in relation to performance against national figures, Statistical Neighbours, Core Cities and Greater Manchester, is best evidenced in the table below:

Combined NEET & Unknown Table

National Average (Combined NEET and Unknown)			67,441 5.4%		
Statistical Neighbours		Greater Manchester		Core Cities	
Wolverhampton	201 3.1%	Stockport	249 3.8%	Manchester	705 5.2%
Manchester	705 5.2%	Bolton	326 4.2%	Nottingham	430 6.2%
Portsmouth	237 5.5%	Trafford	278 4.7%	Birmingham	2068 6.4%
Nottingham	430 6.2%	Manchester	705 5.2%	Bristol, City of	690 7.6%
Birmingham	2,068 6.4%	Bury	261 5.7%	Newcastle upon Tyne	486 8.1%
Salford	360 6.5%	Wigan	473 6.3%	Sheffield	1,083 8.7%
Bristol, City of	690 7.6%	Salford	360 6.5%	Leeds	1612 9.0%
Newcastle upon Tyne	486 8.1%	Rochdale	411 7.1%	Liverpool	941 9.1%
Southampton	412 8.3%	Tameside	387 7.4%		
Sheffield	1,083 8.7%	Oldham	519 7.8%		
Liverpool	941 9.1%				

3.1.3 The table below shows the NEET and Unknown figures that were submitted to the DfE for the 3-month average for each year and have been published. The 3-month average looks at an average of NEET and Unknown figures that are submitted for December, January and February. This evidences the journey that the Council has been on in this sector, and the variance as impacted by the pandemic.

Academic Year	NEET Known	NEET Unknown	NEET Combined
2022/23	3.4%	2.2%	5.6%
2021/22	2.9%	2.7%	5.6%
2020/21	3.8%	3.8%	7.6%
2019/20	3.6%	3.3%	6.9%
2018/19	3.2%	4.5%	7.6%
2017/18	3.4%	5.3%	8.8%

3.1.4 Through our various networks and social-value partners, we continue to work actively to create more education, employment and training opportunities for young people and are specifically targeting sectors that will recover and grow beyond the pandemic, including construction, health and social care, digital, creative industries and the green economy. In 2022/23 the Council will receive £870,000 from GMCA to further prevent and reduce NEET for 458 15-18 year old Manchester residents as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) covering the period September 2023 to March 2025. This additional provision will be integrated into our current NEET service delivered by Career Connect.

3.1.5 The UKSPF grant will allow for more focus with schools on young people age 15+ and so offering earlier intervention and a focus on better transition, with a specific focus on those identified as high risk of NEET through the RONI (Risk of NEET Indicator) process. It will also strengthen NEET support which will complementing the co-location approach successfully developed by Career Connect.

3.1.6 The existing offer has seen sustained impact in Manchester and the volume of young people in education and/or training settings has continued to be above pre-pandemic levels. There do however remain areas of the city where NEET numbers remain disproportionately higher, eg North Manchester and some identified vulnerable cohorts continue to be a source of focus for targeted approaches and intervention including those young people at risk due to poor

attendance, care experienced young people, those with SEND and those with English as an additional language (EAL), which will be a key feature of the UKSPF program.

3.2 Post-16 Provision

- 3.2.1 Manchester is now home to around 35% more people than at the turn of the millennium. This rise in population has resulted in a significant increase in demand for primary and secondary education places in the city since 2008 and these larger cohorts of children are now reaching the end of their education in school. To put into context that has resulted in the City opening 8 new secondary schools with 2 more planned plus expansions of most of our existing secondary schools in recent years. This growth is impacting upon post-16 providers of education and training with the sector informing the Local Authority that they are experiencing high demand for places with most currently at capacity.
- 3.2.2 A post-16 Sufficiency Report, commissioned by the Local Authority 2 years ago, provided a 10-year outlook on the potential impact of this growth coming through the secondary sector in the City, on the existing post 16 sector and the Council's capacity to meet our statutory duty to provide sufficient opportunities for young people post 16. The report stated that the post 16 cohort is set to peak around the end of this decade and will be 20-30% larger than it is now. It recommended that the Council work with its 16-18 provider base, DfE and other stakeholders (including those in neighbouring boroughs) to increase the supply of post-16 places.
- 3.2.3 It is noted that monthly tracking systems detect a fluidity in the cohort volume due to residents moving into and out of the City. That said, when comparing the cohort volume between the 2022/23 academic year and 2021/22 academic year, Manchester saw an increase of 803 in the 16 – 17 year old cohort. This population is set to grow fastest in the north of the city although the majority of Manchester's post-16 academic education provision, is concentrated in the south central part of the city.
- 3.2.4 Many young people travel within Greater Manchester for their post-16 education and given the quality of provision and facilities in Manchester, we are a net importer of young people which further increases the demand for places. Some of Manchester's young people travel to provision in nearby boroughs and given that their population increases are a few years behind ours, this has provided some capacity. However, neighbouring authorities are likely to experience increased demand from their own areas in future years. The implementation of GM's Our Pass has supported young people post 16 to travel to access the right course for them and this has meant that disadvantaged young people have access to a wide range of options post 16.
- 3.2.5 Whilst there has been growth in the sector, with the addition of Didsbury High School Sixth Form and growth at Connell Co-op College and Access Creative College, as noted in the Post-16 Sufficiency Report, all other partners are restricted by a lack of space and funding to manage growth in their offer.

3.2.6 The Council has been in dialogue with the DfE as well as the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to raise this issue. In September 2022 the DfE launched a capital funding round for post 16 education providers linked to growth in demand. In addition, the DfE opened a further round of free school applications which included 6th form provision. In recognition of the evidence and the case Manchester made for additional post 16 places, the DfE awarded the highest points for need for all Manchester colleges that bid. As a result of the post 16 capital funding bids and the free school round additional provision has been secured as follows:

- Loreto and Xavarian Colleges successfully bid for £4m each to expand their provision. Both colleges are investing significantly more of their own funding than the match funding required. The DfE capital is conditional on the buildings being completed by Sept 2024 which is challenging. However, planning applications have been approved for both.
- DfE approved the opening of a new 6th form free school provided by Dixons Academy Trust to be located in Wythenshawe. There is not yet a site allocated for this.

3.2.7 However, there has not been a clear or financially viable route for increasing places for technical post 16 provision alongside our academic offer. This means that there is continued and growing pressure on access to technical courses in the City.

3.3 The Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI)

3.3.1 In 2019, the Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI) was introduced to high schools, including the Pupil Referral Unit, special schools and alternative providers, to identify Year 11 learners most at risk of becoming NEET. This enabled schools to provide additional support and interventions to ensure their students at risk of becoming NEET had a secure and appropriate post-16 destination and the additional support to make a successful transition into further education, training or work.

3.3.2 In February 2023, out of a total cohort of 6285 Year 11s, 579 young people were assessed as being high risk with multiple risk indicators and 667 medium risk with one risk indicator. This represents 19.8% of the overall cohort as being at risk and broadly inline with a four-year period.

3.3.3 The table below provides a breakdown of the Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI) cohorts for 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 leavers. Please note that the cohort total does not include those who were educated or home or not registered in education and is reflective only of the children on the school roll at that time.

School Leavers	Year 11 Cohort	RONI High Risk	RONI Medium Risk	RONI Total	%
2023	6285	579	667	1246	19.8%
2022	6460	607	685	1292	20.0%
2021	5816	566	607	1173	20.2%
2020	5611	472	550	1022	18.2%

3.3.4 To provide earlier intervention and support for schools and young people, it was agreed that following the successful NEET Prevention Panel pilot in 2021/22 which was co-designed with schools, this would continue into 2022/23 and be extended to begin earlier in the academic year. Schools were invited to discuss the most significantly high-risk young people from their cohort with a panel of statutory officers from relevant teams, and Career Connect. This led to over 13% of the RONI cohort specifically targeted for intervention and support in partnership with statutory services, Career Connect and/or external support agencies.

Number of YP discussed: 162

% of total RONI cohort: 13%

North: 64 YP

South: 85 YP

Central: 13 YP

3.3.5 November data indicates that of these most at risk young people, 73.5% are now in EET, which compares similarly to the pilot project outcomes despite scaling up the program. This will now be further developing into a third year, with more schools engaging as the project has progressed.

3.4 Qualification Reform

3.4.1 As T-levels are rolled out, equivalent BTEC qualification will be phased out across the 2024-25 and 2025-2026 academic years. Currently, at the Manchester College, over 47% of students study a BTEC or T-level at level 3. Students need good GCSEs including English and Maths to complete a T-level. The change to qualifications will impact on the pathways of Level 2 students particularly those without the academic requirements to undertake a T-level.

3.4.2 There are 4 pathways being developed for post-16 technical pathways at level 2, and the specifications are not yet available or understood. Depending on the routes available and chosen by young people, there is a risk that fewer young people will achieve L3 qualifications and more will become NEET at 17. Once the specifications are available, there is a need to enhance career guidance for young people and schools.

3.4.3 Furthermore, the numbers of young people completing T levels are small compared to other technical qualifications – 124 achieved a T level in 23/24 and as new T-levels are rolled out, it will take a number of years to build them up. The proposed withdrawal of level 2 qualifications in these vocational

subjects will potentially leave a gap in onward qualification for a significant number of young people post 16.

3.4.4 There have been a few recent other policy announcements from the Government about the future of post 16 education including that young people continue to study Maths until 18; increasing hours of study and most recently the development of an Advanced British Standard which would replace both T levels and A levels and would increase the number of subjects young people study post 16. The latter will be developed over a ten-year time frame and we will need to see more detail before we can determine our position and its implications for young people in Manchester.

4.0 Business Engagement & Skills for Life

4.1 Many Manchester employers currently offer schools and colleges a range of support such as:

- Work experience placements;
- Employee involvement in careers education, information, advice and guidance, including involvement in activities to broaden young people's understanding of the world of work.
- Strategic support such as becoming a Governor.

4.2 With the government's reforms to technical education and skills there will be an increasing need for schools and colleges to work in partnership with employers, careers advisers, local authorities and other education and training providers to support students to prepare for the workplace and to make informed choices about their next step in education or training. Furthermore, there is evidence that a strong career curriculum, embedded within the wider curriculum and with links to work-related activity and experiences, can be one factor amongst others in preventing NEET; in supporting personal and employability skill development; inspiring and raising aspiration; enhancing CVs and college/university/job applications; raising attainment and engagement; increasing student satisfaction and addressing equity and disadvantage

4.3 Following engagement with business leaders in the City who would like to do more work with our schools and some of our school leaders, the Council is planning to pilot a brokerage process which will match the offers from the business sector to our schools with the aim of enabling schools and businesses to develop longer term strategic relationships.

4.4 This work will link to Manchester's Skills for Life approach, which was launched in November 2019 and was developed in response to young people consistently voting for a curriculum for life as their top priority in the annual Make Your Mark survey. The approach was coproduced with young people, school leaders and in consultation with business leads and it was piloted in a number of schools across the City. The concept changed from a 'curriculum' to identifying the common set of key skills for life that young people required

for adulthood and which employers also identified as young people needing to be successful in the workplace.

The 5 skills are:

- Problem solving
- Communication
- Self belief
- Self management
- Team working

4.5 Often young people do not recognise the skills that they have acquired and are not always able to articulate or demonstrate these well to employers. This common framework based on an agreed set of Skills for Life will be used to set standards and outcomes for work experience opportunities and employer encounters.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 Following from the success seen in 2021/22, 2022/23 was another positive year for Manchester in relation to its NEET figures, with consistent improvements from previous years, and therefore more young people finding their pathway and remaining engaged throughout the course of the year. Those that required additional support, were able to do so via the Council's commissioned service, Career Connect, and we saw an increase in training/engagement provision on offer. The Post-16 Pathway Partnership has become more embedded and the collaboration with invested partners, keen to work together and with the Local Authority continues to increase opportunities and pathways for young people into employment.

5.2 2023/24 has started in relative positive manner. Our September data indicates a reduction to 19.3% from 22.4% for the comparative period of the last academic year, and that we continue to focus on bringing this figure down quickly to maximise resource for those most in need of support. This is a significant achievement given the continued, above projected, increase in the volume of post-16 young people in the city compared to the previous academic year and we have a further opportunity to shape intervention and support through UKSPF moving forward.

5.3 Challenges remain, specifically with regards to sufficiency, and whilst the Council continues to work closely with our partners, with the DfE and GMCA to create places, this remains an area of risk as the population increase rises as projected in the 2022 Post-16 Sufficiency Report and more young people seek to study in Manchester whilst living in neighbouring boroughs.

5.4 In addition, challenges also remain with the ongoing reform of Post-16 education qualifications and the adapted offer across the city – additionally impacted by this being felt across Greater Manchester and the North-West region.

5.4 Nevertheless, we are confident that through the development and implementation of this revised and ambitious EET Strategic Plan 2022/25; revisions to the NEET Prevention & Reduction Service with Career Connect, UKSPF investment and further enhancing of the Post-16 Partnership with schools and Post-16 settings, we can continue to build from the momentum created and show further impact in relation to increasing the number of young people in EET.

6.0 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:-

1. Read and consider the progress of the Post-16 EET Strategic Plan 2022-25 recognising the impact in relation to the approach to support young people into a Post-16 destination.
2. Consider and explore challenges in responding to creating sufficient places as a result of the growing population.
3. Recommend any aspects of consideration, amendment or clarification.