

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee - 8 October 2024

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

Report of: Strategic Director - Children and Education Services

Summary

This report provides an update on work done by the Council to increase the number of young people accessing Education Employment Training (EET) opportunities in the city, aligning with the city's economic priorities. It also outlines the plans for this work moving forwards, specifically with the Department for Education and Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

NEET - not in education, employment or training

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:-

- Consider and comment on the progress of the work undertaken to date and planned for the current academic year.
 - Suggest additional considerations or approaches in the light of the challenge of insufficient capacity in the post-16 sector in Manchester now and into the next decade.
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Wards Affected: All wards

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 (currently in review for refresh). As such, relevant impact is measured through the existing KPIs of this specific plan.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments	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 vulnerable groups as part of workstream 3 and the education sector at large as part of workstream 4.

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 / UNICEF Child Friendly City / UNESCO City of Lifelong Learning and the opportunities within the education, employment and training sectors.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

N/A

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Background Documents (available for public inspection):

Our Manchester Strategy – Forward to 2025	Manchester Education Strategy	Our Manchester Youth Strategy	Marmott Review
Work & Skills Strategy	Manchester Inclusion Strategy	EET Strategic Plan 2022-25	Anti-Poverty Strategy

1.0 Background

- 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. Re-engagement provision for NEET young people funded via UKSPF is regarded as RPA compliant activity.
- 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 The Post-16 Lead is based within the Children and Education Services Directorate, whilst working within a matrix management model within the Growth and Development Directorate and the Work & Skills Team. The role is a conduit to Education, Work & Skills and wider MCC teams, with strategic oversight, co-ordination and steering of activity within this area to maximise opportunities for young people post-16.
- 1.4 A Post-16 Sufficiency Report, commissioned by MCC and published in 2022 looked at a range of data sets including ONS data, Manchester Forecasting Model and school census data and worked with post 16 providers operating in the City. It concluded that a substantial increase in demand for 16-18 education and training by young people living in Manchester or travelling into Manchester to study is underway and that this will outstrip the ability of providers to meet this demand.
- 1.5 With a peak in growth in 2028, assuming increased growth in places as currently planned and that cross-border travel and new arrival volumes remain consistent, there will be a shortfall of circa 1300 places for Manchester resident, with cohort growth continuing beyond current levels into the next decade.
- 1.6 This issue has been widely reported including in a paper to the Council's Executive in June 2024 and regular meetings with the DFE. As a consequence of this, Executive supported the recommendation that Manchester should submit an application to the DFE formally declaring a projected gap in post 16 provision which included a costed plan to respond to this gap. This was submitted in July 2024.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Manchester has a strong Post-16 sector, where the vast majority of education providers are judged by Ofsted to be good or better and where young people, and their families have a choice. There is a healthy offer of Post-16 pathways across all available routes, and there is an expanding partnership where Post-

16 providers remain committed to working well together and with the City Council.

- 2.2 This report summarises the actions taken by the Council to increase the number of young people accessing EET (Education, Employment & Training) opportunities and reduce the number of NEET young people aligning with the city's economic priorities. It outlines the plans for this work moving forwards, specifically with the Department for Education and Greater Manchester Combined Authority and provides an update on the reform of technical qualifications and education nationally and in Greater Manchester.

3.0 Post-16 Sufficiency

- 3.1 Manchester is now home to around 35% more people than at the turn of the millennium. Our economy has grown substantially over the same period, with Manchester's labour market expanding from 350,000 jobs in 2015 to 426,000 in 2022 and the city's economy continues to grow. A young, diverse and skilled workforce is a key underpinning factor of this economic growth, and our growth sectors have not only a requirement for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths) and computing/digital but technical talent across the full breadth of the City's economy.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 This issue of projected demand exceeding supply of post 16 places has been anticipated for a number of years and has been raised formally with the DFE since summer 2022 following the recommendations of an independent report commissioned by the Local Authority in 2022 which 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.
- 3.4 Manchester's cohort of 16- to 17-year-olds rose from 10,753 in October 2018 to 14,533 in October 2023, an increase of 3,780 (35%) of young people, considerably greater than regional or national increases. Prior to that between 2013 and 2018, the post 16 cohort was relatively stable. In June 2024, the cohort size was 14,629, representing an increase of 14.4%, or 1,843 individuals from June 2022 when the cohort size was 12,786.
- 3.5 Over the last 2 years, this growth has impacted upon post-16 providers of education and training and has resulted in almost all post-16 providers within Manchester operating at, or very near to, full capacity. Projections based on Manchester's pupil population show that post 16 numbers will not peak until 2028.

- 3.6 Further review of updated data available, using the 2028 figure as the maximum number of places needed as this is the growth peak (16,108), and assuming our place numbers do not grow beyond those planned for 2025 (15,870) this represents a shortfall of 238 places. When considering GM travel - based on 42% of Manchester places being taken by non-Manchester residents and a loss of 35% of Manchester residents to non-Manchester settings, a 7% difference is an estimated 1,110 places. There are well-established travel to learn patterns across GM and because of its position in the conurbation core and the quality of provision, Manchester is a net importer of young people at post-16 and there is a pattern of in-year growth due to net migration and children educated at home pre-16 who will join the post-16 cohort.
- 3.7 As such, our gap in 2028 would then be an estimated at circa 1300. This is caveated due to the complexities in data collation in this area and does not include the number of young people who remain at college at academic age 18, in-year arrivals, educated at home children who require post 16 provision and those attending Independent Schools – all of whom will add to the number of places required.
- 3.8 The split between young people accessing an academic and technical offer is roughly 50%. In terms of the % share of the cohort, based on May 2024, the LTE Group has 19.7% (2502), with Loreto College, Xaverian College and Connell Co-op College a combined 31.5%, together making 51.2%. The rest of the cohort is split between school sixth forms, independent training providers and out of area settings/provision.
- 3.9 Circa 35% 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 in recent years. However, neighbouring authorities are likely to experience increased demand from their own areas in future years.
- 3.10 There has been some growth in the sector, with the addition of Didsbury High School Sixth Form and expansions at Connell Co-op College and Access Creative College, however, other partners are restricted by a lack of space and funding to manage growth in their offer. In addition, as a result of national post 16 capital funding bids and the previous Government's free school process some additional provision has been secured as follows:
- Expansions of Loreto and Xaverian Colleges
 - A new 6th form free school provided by Dixons Academy Trust in Wythenshawe.
- 3.11 All the planned expansions will increase more generally, the academic pathway and/or blended academic and vocational pathway with the majority of courses at level 3. There has not been the opportunity to increase technical provision level 3 courses (T levels and other level 3 technical qualifications), or level 1 and 2 courses and we are aware that there is currently a shortage of

places on courses where there is high demand in the Labour market such as construction, creative & digital, computing and science.

- 3.12 In Spring 2024, the Chief Executive of the Council convened and chaired a task and finish group and includes CEOs from some of our post 16 providers and the Chair of Manchester’s Post 16 strategic group. All post 16 providers have been consulted as part of this work. Our high-level plan includes a declaration of a gap in post provision to the DfE with the submission outlining a proposal which was submitted in July 2024. This included a costed plan to:

Expand technical and level 1	Expand sixth form provision in the North	Expand the digital offer in City Centre
Consolidate provision of EAL courses	Expand the SEND offer	

- 3.13 Manchester has not yet received a response to this request although we are aware the DfE are considering our proposals. In addition, Cllr John Hacking has written to the Secretary of State to highlight these issues and request urgent intervention to help resolve them. Cllr Hacking has received a response from the Secretary of State, outlining what has already been done by the DfE and making a commitment to work with us in the short and long term.

4.0 Young people not in Education, Employment or Training

- 4.1 This year, for the first time in 2 years we are starting to see an impact of the pressures on post 16 capacity on our numbers of young people post 16 who are not in education, employment or training (known as NEET).
- 4.2 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 (fig.1) looks at an average of NEET and Unknown figures that are submitted for December, January and February, with the July 2024 performance also provided (fig.2). After two years of best performance, these increases provide evidence of the challenges faced in the sector.

(fig.1) Academic Year	NEET Known	NEET Unknown	NEET Combined
2020/21	3.9%	3.8%	7.6%
2021/22	2.9%	2.7%	5.6%
2022/23	3.4%	2.2%	5.6%
2023/24	5.3%	2.3%	7.6%

(fig.2) Academic Year	NEET Known	NEET Unknown	NEET Combined
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2022/23	4.2%	1.0%	5.2%
2023/24	5.3%	1.4%	6.8%

4.3 Figures submitted at end of July to the DFE regarding our NEET cohort show an increasing number and percentage of young people are NEET compared to submissions in July 2023. Additionally, over the academic year, Manchester has moved from a higher performing LA in terms of NEET & Unknown young people in relation to our statistical neighbours, core cities and GM in 2023 to mid-point performance in relation to statistical neighbours and core cities and towards the bottom of the table for GM in 2024.

4.4 A further indicator of the impact of the challenges noted above is when viewing the year-on-year performance in July (chosen as the closest end point of the academic year that we have confirmed data for). This is shown below:

Year	Combined NEET total	NEET Unknown	NEET Known
2024	6.8%	1.4%	5.3%
2023	5.2%	1.0%	4.2%
2022	4.8%	1.3%	3.5%

4.5 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/linked staff with partners and agencies including:

Youth Justice	Endeavour Federation	EHCP Team	Attendance & Exclusions
MSPRU	Care Leaver Service	Virtual School	Social Care (Sep 24 onwards)

4.6 In Summer 2023, the Council was passported £870,000 from GMCA to build capacity in existing contracts and further prevent and reduce NEET for 458 15-18 year old Manchester residents as part of the devolved UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). This covers the period September 2023 to March 2025, with Career Connect being the grant funded delivery partner. Additional provision is now integrated into our current NEET service delivered by Career Connect.

4.7 The UKSPF grant has allowed 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 the hyper-local

NEET support which will complement the co-location approach successfully developed by Career Connect.

- 4.8 This funding has also been used to commission 7 local providers to deliver a range of provision allowing young people to take the first step on their pathway to further EET activity.
- 4.9 The existing offer has seen sustained impact in Manchester and the volume of young people in education and/or training settings has not exceeded pre-pandemic levels. There do however remain areas of the city where NEET numbers remain disproportionately higher, e.g. North Manchester. 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 are a key feature of the UKSPF program.

The Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI)

- 4.10 In 2019, the Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI) was introduced to Manchester 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.
- 4.11 In April 2024, out of a total cohort of 6792 Year 11s, 655 young people were assessed as being high risk with multiple risk indicators and 696 medium risk with one risk indicator. This represents 19.9% of the overall cohort as being at risk and broadly inline with a four-year period however in terms of the number of young people this percentage represents, there are an additional 329 individuals to support compared to last year
- 4.12 This increase is best represented in the table below which provides a breakdown of the Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI) cohorts from 2020. 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.

Year	Year 11 Cohort	RONI High Risk	RONI Medium Risk	RONI Total	%
2024	6792	655	696	1351	19.9%
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%

- 4.13 November data indicated that of these most at risk young people who were discussed at NEET Prevention Panels throughout the year with schools,

73.5% successfully transitioned into a positive post-16 destination, which compared similarly to the pilot project outcomes despite scaling up the program. The impact of year 3 of this project will be available in November 2024.

5.0 Bringing together schools and employers (BREE)

5.1 Employers have a key role in the support of children and young people in relation to understanding the world of work, inspiring the future workforce and in addressing skills gaps. However, many have told us that they often find it challenging to contact the right people in schools who can orchestrate their social value or corporate social responsibility objectives.

5.2 Manchester employers can offer a range of support such as;

Work experience placements	Curriculum development
Employee involvement in careers education, information, advice and guidance.	Strategic support such as becoming a Governor.

5.3 Employers have also highlighted the importance of being more involved in careers information advice and guidance that will help to support the awareness of some of the key growth sector. Employers are very aware that they need to grow their own future talent and have said they would benefit from a menu of options that explain how they might engage more meaningfully with schools and would greatly benefit from some kind of support to broker and shape this. A number of employer forums have taken place alongside several strategic conversations with businesses and there is a consensus by employers that whilst they may already deliver levels of school engagement, they are keen to develop more strategic relationships with schools to influence objectives, curriculum and the City's priorities.

5.4 Over the past nine years, schools have generally taken ownership of their own engagement with employers to fulfil their duties regarding employer encounters for their students. This includes employer activities and talks in school, mock interview sessions, careers fairs and work experience placements. Schools have indicated anecdotally that there is not a shortage of opportunities, however, the lack of mandated duties, the flexibility of careers curriculum, staffing resources and responsibilities, quality assurance and safeguarding are often barriers to developing long-lasting relationships with employers. However, through our termly city-wide CEIAG Networks, attended by schools, college and training providers, education partners highlighted that they are keen to develop more strategic relationships with key businesses in the city. In developing this they believe some kind of 'matchmaking service' would be hugely beneficial in engaging with employers with the Local Authority's acting as a broker and coordinator.

5.5 Through our Post-16 youth voice projects, in speaking with young people about work experience their responses were mixed, as some young people had gained work experience mainly by arranging it themselves or through

connections with the parents/networks etc. However, many young people have not fully benefited from gaining a quality work experience partly due to the changes in the working environment that makes arranging work experience is more difficult.

- 5.6 Consequently, in Summer Term, Council officers developed a mechanism to link employers to Manchester high schools and colleges. This was done with consultation with internal and external partners. This brokerage process enables strategic relationships to be forged, between education settings and the employer, ensuring young people have access a variety of employer activities.
- 5.7 By July 2024, this project had seen 42 opportunities with 14 employers matched with 27 education settings and are currently being monitored by Council officers.

Skills for Life

- 5.8 Manchester’s Skills for Life approach, which launched in November 2019, 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.
- 5.9 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 key skills for life that young people require for adulthood and which employers also identified as young people needing to be successful in the workplace. One of the key concepts was to agree a common set of key skills using the same agreed language which would be used across our settings, school and colleges and by employers.
- 5.10 Education providers can and do use a range of different approaches to teach these skills but there would be consistency about the language used. These skills could also be identified and promoted when young people engaged in activities outside of schools which would enable young people to start to build up portfolios and evidence to demonstrate acquisition of each skill. The 5 skills are:

Problem solving	Communication	Self-belief	Self- management	Team working
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- 5.11 With the continued gap between the education curriculum which is ‘knowledge rich’ and employers who want to see young people with more advanced skills for life, emphasised in Our Local Skills Improvement plan (LSIP) written by Chamber of Commerce and approved by the DFE, this amplifies the need for young people with the skills identified in our Skills for Life framework.
- 5.12 Examples of this in practice include Melland High School and DISC – Digital Independent Specialist College.

- 5.13 Melland High School have fully adopted the Skills for Life framework and based their SEN curriculum on the 5 skills. This includes theoretical lessons delivered, employability and reflection activities as well as utilising the online Kloodle platform to record evidence to bridge between theory and real-life experiences. Learners on Kloodle are managed in classes, years and groups so that teachers can support with evidence or set tasks, create action plans or upload activities evidencing their progression and staff can monitor progress on an individual basis or as a whole group.
- 5.14 DISC utilise Skills for Life and Kloodle to aid in assessment and personal development activity, creating a series of skills-based classroom assessments students accumulate. These are then shared with external modifiers and employers to aid routes into employment.
- 5.15 Skills for Life is one of the threads through the Education Strategy published in July 2024 and would be one of the 'guarantees' for children and young people educated in the City. Governance of this strategy will sit with Strategic Education Partnership (SEP). Bi-annually SEP has a joint meeting with Work and Skills Board which includes employers, and this would also provide an opportunity for Skills for Life to sit with governance which brings together education and employers and to ensure that the approach continues to meet needs of both sectors and young people.

6.0 Post 16 Qualification Reform and MBACC

6.1 Long-standing qualification reforms set out by the previous Government included the roll out of T-levels and the phasing out of equivalent BTEC qualification 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. Consequently, there were significant concerns raised across the post 16 sector and nationally about the impact of this change to qualifications on the pathways of Level 2 students particularly those without the academic requirements to undertake a T-level.

6.2 In total, there are 20 approved T-Level pathways covering the areas noted in the table below:

AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ANIMAL CARE	CATERING AND HOSPITALITY (Sep 2025)	CREATIVE AND DESIGN (Sep 2024)	EDUCATION AND EARLY YEARS	HEALTH AND SCIENCE	SALES, MARKETING AND PROCUREMENT (SEP 2025)
BUSINESS AND ADMINISTRATION	CONSTRUCTION	DIGITAL	EDUCATION AND EARLY YEARS	LEGAL, FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING	

6.3 In Manchester, the LTE Group (The Manchester College) are the only approved provider of both T-Levels and the T-Level Foundation course. T-

Level pathways are promoted via the city-wide CEIAG Network as specifications become available, feedback from Careers Leads includes a concern that 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.

- 6.4 However, numbers of young people completing T levels are small compared to other technical qualifications – 124 achieved a T level in 23/24. As new T-levels are rolled out, it will take a number of years to build them up but T-Levels in key sectors such as construction, creative & digital computing and childcare are over-subscribed. The withdrawal of level 2 qualifications in these vocational subjects, which had been proposed by the previous Government, would potentially leave a gap in onward qualification for a significant number of young people post 16.
- 6.5 The new Government have made a decision to pause the planned defunding of some Btech qualifications at level 3 and this is welcomed. However, the ongoing uncertainty regarding the long-term qualification landscape continues to cause apprehension across the sector as future pathways are unclear. This pause is only in relation to courses that were to be defunded in August 2024, and the plan to defund AGQs in 2025 and 2026 remain in-place. This uncertainty, coupled with the pressure of post 16 vocational places presents a significant risk to a further increasing the numbers of young people who will be NEET particularly for those young people more vulnerable in transition and for whom a T-Level pathway is not suitable.
- 6.6 There is broad support for the GM Mayor’s bold ambition to create parity and clarity between technical and vocational pathways and academic ones and acknowledgement that the current landscape is difficult to navigate for young people, parents and employers. This was formally launched in 2023 under the term – MBACC (Manchester Baccalaureate).
- 6.7 As part of the Trailblazer Devolution Deal, GMCA has further oversight of post-16 technical skills, allowing local leaders to better shape how the city-region supports the one in three young people who do not want to go to university and match them into the skilled jobs being created in the local economy. As such, whilst not a qualification to attain, the MBACC is proposed to be a genuine and equal alternative to the university route and one that young people are informed of through their career curriculum at school:

Academic Pathway	Technical Pathway
EBacc	MBacc
A Levels	T-levels/BTEC/Apprenticeship
Degree	Apprenticeship Degree/HTQs

- 6.8 Currently, almost two-thirds of 16-year olds in Greater Manchester do not study a grouping of 5 GCSE subjects which are collectively known as the EBACC (English Baccalaureate), often seen as being a pathway to post-16

academic study and university. The MBACC intends to address this and guide young people towards a collection of GCSE subjects, with some of them sitting outside of the EBACC, such as art, media, design, engineering, drama which will maximise their chances of getting a good job in the regional economy.

6.9 In simple terms, the EBacc is designed to maximise young people’s chances of a good university place, while in comparison the MBacc is designed to maximise their ability to get a good job or apprenticeship in the growing success story of the Greater Manchester economy without ruling out the option of higher levels of learning.

6.10 GMCA has worked with education and business leaders as well as young people to design seven MBacc gateways – each linked to a sector that is growing in Greater Manchester.

6.11 It is proposed that the GCSEs which make up the MBacc are tailored towards the Greater Manchester economy, and feature 7 ‘gateways’ which are:

Health & Social Care	Engineering & Manufacturing	Construction & the Green Economy	Creative, Culture & Sport
Digital & Technology	Financial & Professional	Education & Early Years	

6.12 In the next academic year, the focus on the MBacc approach will be on the development and implementation of:

MBacc Gateway Toolkit -resource available to support conversations, curriculum planning and awareness of the Gateways.	MBacc Employers on GMACS – 1000 new T-Level industry placements across the Gateways.	Testing Innovation to Deliver Digital Skill – Raspberry Pi piloting the GM designed Applied Computing Certificate & launch of an exclusive Manchester pilot to develop digital agency.
Equalex Framework – 50 hours of high-quality workplace experiences tailored to each Gateway from years 9 – 11.	Annual Festival of Technical Education – showcasing post-16 technical opportunities across GM colleges.	

6.13 Whilst the MBacc has progressed since its launch in 2023, this remains a long-term plan of delivery and there are a number of complexities to address. That said, the Council remains committed to contributing to the development and implementation of the program, maximising the benefits for Manchester’s young people.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 Manchester continues to have a strong partnership with education and training providers across the city and this collaboration in the post-16 sector is a pivotal aspect of the Council helping to coordinate, influence and expand the offer. The council's involvement with the Post-16 Strategy Group (education partners) and NEET provider groups (education engagement, employability and training providers) are central to this approach and underpins the Manchester Post-16 Pathway Partnership.
- 7.2 It is important to note that the success seen in 2021/22 and 2022/23 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. However, 2023/24, whilst starting positively, as the year progressed, monthly data indicated that we are starting to see the impact of the challenges faced across the sector and their reflection in the number of young people who are NEET.
- 7.3 Challenges remain, specifically with regards to sufficiency, and whilst the Council continues to work closely with our partners, the DfE and GMCA to create places, this remains an area of risk, which will require additional capital and revenue investment.
- 7.4 In addition, challenges also remain with the current uncertainty about reform of Post-16 education qualifications and the adapted offer across the city.
- 7.5 2024/25 will see the development and implementation of the final years delivery of our ambitious EET Strategic Plan 2022/25 and the ongoing offer to young people through Career Connect, both in terms of the NEET Prevention & Reduction Service and UKSPF offer which will help to ensure that our young people can access employment, education or training at post 16. The work to link together employers and schools through BREE and strengthening our approach to Skills for Life will also ensure that our young people have access to high quality work experience and employer encounters, can access right information and develop skills to enable them make choices and put them in a stronger position to progress to the right destination for them at post 16.
- 7.6 Continuing to work with GMCA to influence and develop the MBACC approach and DfE to increase the offer of technical places in the City will also ensure that young people who want to pursue a technical route have clear information about these pathways and the opportunities available to them.

8.0 Recommendations

- 8.1 The Committee is recommended to:-
- (1) Consider and comment on the progress of the work undertaken to date and planned for the current academic year.

(2) Suggest additional considerations or approaches in the light of the challenge of insufficient capacity in the post-16 sector in Manchester now and into the next decade.