

Cooperative Approaches to Post-16 Transition

Co-op Councils'
Innovation Network
Project Delivery Plan

February 2026 - update



Oldham
Council



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL



Liverpool
City Council

GMCA GREATER
MANCHESTER
COMBINED
AUTHORITY



Scene Setting

ONS – estimates 987,000 young people aged 16-24, or 13.4% were NEET between October – December 2024.

Youth Employment UK – In February 2024, the ONS Labour Market Analysis showed the youth unemployment rate at 11.6% compared to 3.8% of all age ranges. In addition, the economic inactivity rate for young people sits at 42.1%, almost double the rate of the all working age group of 21.9%.

DfE – Identify and support young people at risk of being NEET guidance

Sector considerations

- Cohort increases
- Funding landscape
- Qualification reform
- Devolution
- UKSPF following ESF
- CEIAG & P16 choice
- Skills for Life
- Support needs & transition

National Landscape

- Curriculum & Assessment review
- Ofsted Consultation
- Youth Guarantee

The Policy Lab

Looking at Post-16 transition across LA boundaries to reduce the size of NEET cohort and better target resources and address sufficiency challenges - focuses on utilising existing research to support local interventions and linking to the impact of long-term socio-economic factors affecting households influencing post-16 destination choices, particularly those most affected by poverty, worklessness and low-level educational qualification attainment. Including looking at data sharing as one of the issues to address, with the intention of aiding a quicker understanding of post-16 destinations, reducing the NEET cohort quicker and ensuring an increasingly stretched resource is best served in areas of need.

This is an area of work where many Cooperative Councils will have similar challenges – and where developing an ecosystem of good practice can provide innovative approaches to help maximise the effectiveness of this work – leading to better outcomes for both young people and councils delivering services.

1. Peer-learning sessions between different parts of the country, through study visits to each local authority.
2. Cross-LA workshops to knowledge share on cross-border transition and sufficiency planning activity developing an in-depth model for how to knowledge share.
3. Developing a digital toolkit and approach to knowledge sharing to help develop an eco-system of best practice and collaboration. The approach to the knowledge base will be developed out of the workshops, and in particular, to ensure that the use of the toolkit can be valuable to those council's working in this area. We will look at how we sustain this work going forward.

The Policy Lab

The Policy Lab will have a focus on the following as specific areas of interest:

i NEET Tracking - focus on NEET unknowns and processes in-place that support this across the country - particularly re: information sharing and the use of internal services/external stakeholders to support this.

ii NEET Prevention - Implementation of the DfE's Identifying and supporting young people at risk of NEET guidance and how this influences practice at local levels - particularly re: Yr 7 intervention upwards.

iii Service Design - Commissioned services v in-house/traded offers - positives and negatives to these approaches.

iv Post-16 Sufficiency - Developing a consistent model of post-16 place-planning and amplifying the voice of non-traditional Post-16 education and training provision.

v Youth Voice - Consideration of how young people influence NEET prevention & reduction strategies across involved areas.

Plan on a Page

Aim

Looking at Post-16 transition across LA boundaries to reduce the size of NEET cohort and better target resources and address sufficiency challenges - focuses on utilising existing research to support local interventions and linking to the impact of long-term socio-economic factors affecting households influencing post-16 destination choices, particularly those most affected by poverty, worklessness and low-level educational qualification attainment.

Delivery Model

- Grant funded project through the CCIN.
- Partnership based delivery.
- England wide local authority engagement.
- Valuing collaboration, sharing practice & youth voice.

Partners & Resource

- £20,000 over 2 years
- Manchester City Council - Lead
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- Tameside Borough Council
- Oldham Council
- Plymouth Council
- Liverpool City Council
- Birmingham City Council

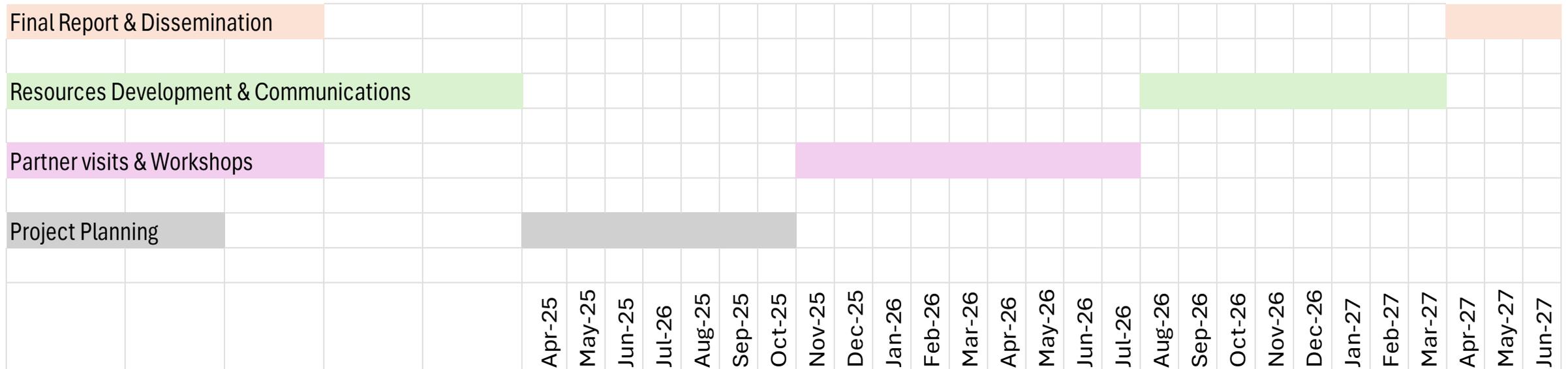
Project Planning Phase
April 2025 – October 2025

Partner visit workshops
November 2025 – July 2026

Resources Development &
Communications
August 2026 – March 2027

Final reporting
April 2027 -July 2027

Project Delivery Plan



Partner meetings will occur every 6 weeks (one per half-term within the academic year).

Each stage of the project will be completed prior to moving onto the next stage.

February 2026 - update

- The project is currently on track in accordance with the project plan.
- In the first part of the project we want to understand the shared experiences of the partner councils through a series of study visits. These in-person visits allow staff to get away from their day job, to have extended overviews of the key activities in each local authority, and also to take place, where possible, close to the delivery of the services, enabling tours of facilities or the attendance of local providers or stakeholders.
- Initial project discussions were not about “discovering” the challenges that councils face in Post-16 transition but sharing our understanding of what are our priorities, and confirming their relevance across the various councils.
- The study visits provide an opportunity to go deeper into the organisational and delivery models in the councils. For instance, in Manchester, Post-16 Transition within Children’s services, whilst in other councils it may sit within Work & Skills or Inclusive Economy Teams
- The first visit took place to Greater Manchester in November 2025, first day in Manchester, second at Oldham College, with presentations from GMCA, Manchester, Tameside and Oldham, attended by Policy Lab councils.

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- Next Policy Lab will take place over 2 days in Plymouth – with sessions on the afternoon of the first day, and morning of the second day, to enable travel. It will take place in city centre
- As per the project plan the final 2 study visits – Birmingham & Liverpool will take place after Easter, before the end of the summer term.
- Partner organisation has been approached for support in toolkit/framework development. The intention is to develop shared view of the areas of focus from all LA visits prior to agreeing how this should proceed. This will have a broad view on sufficiency/place-planning and transition, with some key and shared challenges already identified in the first round of visits.
- Included in the Plymouth visit – targeted intervention for YP with SEND/EHCP, relationship development with local FE providers, risk of NEET indicator process and NEET prevention pre-16 and in-year provision design.
- Catch up meeting taken with Project Sponsor, Paul Bell.
- Budget currently on-track with no amends at this time.
- All partners remain engaged and contributing to the project as intended

Some Key Learnings

- Our approaches to place planning need to always be in partnership as we don't control the budgets, but we have a statutory responsibility.
- This can mean working with colleges and other providers to understand the needs and the skills gaps.
- Manchester has a specific interest in “cross-border” transfer as we are a net-importer of Post-16 students, into our system, so that working closely with neighbouring local authorities and GMCA is vital.
- We have access to data via our schools that can enhance and be more locally accurate than national datasets and bringing these together can help with planning.
- It's not just ensuring there are enough places, but enough places at the right level. For those who have left the system at 16, supporting Independent Training Providers as well as colleges, to provide a range of courses is important – but this is often with less funding than was previously available.
- Re-engaging with students from different backgrounds, and SEND pupils, requires more bespoke support – and courses that are able to be accessed throughout the year, not just in September.
- Using our existing networks and local “youth voice” groups to test any ideas with and involve in developing a meaningful framework that can be easily used across the sector