

Exchange	SEND
Date of Meeting	26/01/2026
Location	Microsoft Teams
GMLPN Staff	Charlotte Jones, Chloe Forrest, Hannah Bolsher
Chair	Sally Green – Tameside College
Speakers:	Anthony Turner – Manchester City Council Sean McLaughlin – Career Connect Mari Saeki – National Autistic Society (GM Autism Consortium)
Attendees:	Alex Barker (MMU), Hannah Eyre (University of Salford) Joanne Wale (TMP College), Val Jones (Cogent Skills), Joanne Hatton (Bury Adult Learning Service), Nadya Murray (Damar Training), Aisling Rafter (GMP), Josh Harper (Rochdale Training), Christine Edwards (Creating Excellence), Sean MacLaughlin (Career Connect), Hayley Johns (Alliance Learning), Paul Rogers (NowSkills), Anna Clarke (Rochdale Training), Amanda Noon (Pure College), Caroline Lamb (??), Paula Courchene (University of Salford), Lorna Fegan (Tameside College),
Key Themes / Discussion Points	
GMLPN Network - Continued focus on Exchanges as safe, peer-to-peer spaces for collaboration. - Ongoing impact measuring via pre/post confidence surveys. - Development of a new Exchange resource hub on the GMLPN website – coming soon! GM Skills Awards 2026 - Nominations close: 13 February 2026 - Nominate Here GM Skills Awards - Awards evening: 2 July 2026 – ticket sales open w/c 30th March 2026 Manchester City Council & Career Connect: SEND and NEET Landscape What the Data Shows - Significant growth in SEND, particularly SEMH, mirroring national trends. - Rising post-16 cohort in Manchester (~15,000 young people and growing).	

- SEND young people make up over one-third of the NEET cohort, with SEMH the most common primary need.
- Transition from mainstream school to FE is a key risk point for NEET.

Local Response

- Fortnightly Joint SEND+NEET EHCP Panels: ~100 cases presented, ~70 successfully placed.
- Strengthened Career Connect support for both NEET and at-risk young people.
- Expansion of Supported Internships, including new SEMH-focused pathways.
- Work underway with GMCA around supported apprenticeships and reform at foundation levels.

Challenges Highlighted

- Transition information sharing between schools and FE remains inconsistent.
- High need for more employer-ready pathways and earlier work experience needs to be compulsory rather than optional.
- Ensuring provision is not only sufficient in volume but suitable and sustainable for diverse needs.

GM Autism Consortium & NiON

GMAC Offer

- Free advice, resources, workshops, and peer support for autistic individuals and families.
- Co-produced resources including education videos, LGBTQ+ and women/girls guides.
- Current NEET research project focusing on neurodivergent young people without EHCPs—providers invited to contribute case studies.

NiON (Neuro-Inclusive Organisation Network)

- 150+ employers (and growing), including many neurodivergent staff.
- Focus on real-world workforce inclusion, reasonable adjustments, and culture change.

- Linked to the BeeNeuro-Inclusive Code of Practice (Good Employment Charter).

Ofsted Inclusion: What Providers Need to Know

What Strong Practice Looks Like

- Early, accurate need identification (not relying solely on self-disclosure).
- Flexible, graduated support that builds learner independence.
- Skilled staff with targeted, ongoing CPD.
- Effective employer and specialist partnerships.
- Leaders evidencing impact, not intentions.

Common Areas for Development

- Support plans not regularly updated or reviewed for impact.
- Generic SEND CPD lacking depth or alignment to actual cohorts.
- Insufficient employer engagement in learner support.
- Weak data use around risk, early warning, and progression.

Provider Reflections & Good Practice Shared

- Increasing need to separate SEMH-specific pathways where mixed cohorts aren't working.
- Strength of outcomes tied closely to local authority partnership quality.
- Simple universal design tweaks (e.g., off-white slides, dyslexia-friendly fonts) make a meaningful difference "*inclusion by design*".
- For staff - Peer coaching/in-class modelling often more impactful than one-off CPD. Experience of recent Ofsted Inspection – demonstrating the impact and implementation of staff CPD
- Trust-building with learners and parents remains essential.

Resources / Links Shared

- [Addressing needs of young people with SEMH conditions is vital in driving down NEET figures - Career Connect](#)
- For details of the Manchester Preparing for Adulthood Net work or SEND Employment Forum please email: julie.hicklin@manchester.gov.uk
- [Just Ask Me - GMAC](#)
- [GMAC - Everything you need about autism and more.](#)
- [Growing-Up-A-Guide-to-Female-Puberty-for-Autistic-people.pdf](#)
- [A Young Person's Guide To Being Neurodivergent & LGBTQ+ - The Proud Trust](#)
- [Bi-Fold Leaflet_v1](#)
- [Neuro-inclusive Organisations Network \(NiON\) - GMAC](#)
- <https://www.gmgoodemploymentcharter.co.uk/resources/bee-neuroinclusive-resource-hub/>
- [Home - SENDCode](#)
- [Mental health support for learners](#)
- Blurb about NEET project - shared separately in the follow up
- Sean McLaughlin- Careers Connect - Transition Toolkit - tbc

Actions

- Providers invited to contribute to GMAC NEET case study project – get in touch with emma.roberts@nas.org.uk
- Suggestions for the next Exchange agenda to be sent to Charlotte (charlotte.j@gmlpn.co.uk) and Sally (sally.green@tameside.ac.uk) by 27th Feb
- GMLPN actions:
 - Consider session on “CPD done differently”
 - Discuss peer visits between providers at the next SEND Exchange
 - Ensure Supported Apprenticeships are included in GMCA’s development of the GM Apprenticeship Strategy

Next Steps

Next SEND Exchange

 26 March 2026 (Online)

Agenda suggestions welcome!

Other Exchanges coming up:

- [GMLPN Safeguarding Exchange Tickets, Thu, Jan 29, 2026 at 10:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)
- [GMLPN CEIAG Exchange Tickets, Fri, Feb 13, 2026 at 10:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)

- [GMLPN Audit Exchange Tickets, Thu, Feb 26, 2026 at 1:00 PM | Eventbrite](#)
- [GMLPN Business Development Exchange Tickets, Thu, Mar 5, 2026 at 10:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)
- [GMLPN Apprenticeship Assessment Exchange Tickets, Mon, Mar 9, 2026 at 2:30 PM | Eventbrite](#)