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## PRESS RELEASE

### **STEP CONNECT2 and EBD OG Announce Landmark Strategic Partnership to Unite MATs and Local Authorities**

STEP CONNECT2 and EBD OG (the Educational Building and Development Officers Group) have formed a landmark strategic partnership to bring Multi-Academy Trusts and Local Authorities closer together on the management and improvement of the school estate. The partnership will make its public debut at Education Estates® 2026.

The collaboration marks a new chapter for a sector in which Multi-Academy Trusts and Local Authorities have too often worked in parallel rather than together. By combining STEP CONNECT2's reach across education infrastructure with EBD OG's national Local Authority membership, the partnership aims to reshape how the school estate is planned, managed and improved.

The partnership will be launched at Education Estates®, the UK's leading event for education infrastructure, held at Manchester Central on 20-21 October 2026. With policymakers, estates professionals, designers and suppliers under one roof, the event offers an ideal stage for the partnership to take shape.

The partnership is built around three core pillars:

- Shared knowledge and best practice across both sectors.
- Joint programmes and dedicated event space where MAT estates leads and Local Authority officers can connect.
- A unified voice on school estate policy when engaging with the Department for Education (DfE).

**Rob Thomas, Chair of EBD OG**, said: *"EBD OG members have always believed that the best outcomes for school buildings come from collaboration, not competition. This partnership gives us the platform to finally have that conversation together and at scale."*

**James Lee, CEO of STEP CONNECT2**, added: *"Education Estates® exists to connect the people who shape our learning environments. Partnering with EBD OG means we can go further than we ever have, bringing MATs and LAs into the same room, with real intent. That's a genuinely exciting moment for the sector."*

Education Estates® 2026 will be the first opportunity to see the partnership in action and to meet the Local Authority and EBD OG professionals driving it forward. Full details and registration are available at [educationestates.com](https://educationestates.com).

## Ends

## Notes to editors

### About STEP CONNECT2

STEP CONNECT2 is an independent event organiser specialising in sector-leading conferences, exhibitions and awards that connect policy, practice and people. Their events bring together government, operational leaders and delivery partners across infrastructure sectors. They organise Education Estates®, the UK's leading event for education infrastructure.

### About EBD OG

EBD OG, the Educational Building and Development Officers Group, is the national body representing Local Authority building and development officers across England and Wales. It provides expert advice to government on education, property and capital planning.

### About Education Estates®

Education Estates® 2026 takes place on 20-21 October 2026 at Manchester Central and is held in partnership with the Department for Education. It comprises a multi-stream conference, an exhibition and an awards ceremony celebrating excellence in the sector. The event focuses on the funding, design, build, maintenance and management of schools, colleges and universities.

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