

MEDWAY ADULT EDUCATION ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

1. Mission & Purpose

Medway Adult Education's mission is: *To be an outstanding provider for adult skills and community learning and to be the place of choice for all residents to realise their aspirations.*

Medway Council's overall Council Plan is the starting point strategically for Medway Adult Education. The three priorities in the Council Plan are:

GROWTH - Maximising regeneration and economic growth

PEOPLE - Supporting residents to realise their potential

PLACE - Medway: A place to be proud of

Medway Adult Education seeks to be the place of choice for all residents to realise their aspirations. This can be achieved through:

- Improving basic skills and re-skilling to meet the demands of the economy
- Improving and maintaining mental health and wellbeing
- Reducing social isolation
- Re-engaging with learning across a broad range of subjects
- Inspiring residents to reach their creative potential
- Having fun

Medway Adult Education works to help make Medway a great place to live, work and most importantly learn.

MAE is a provider that works closely with a wide variety of partners, helping to strengthen our work and support the work of others. We are passionate about providing opportunity and removing any and all barriers to learning. Our key service plan objectives are:

- To deliver a responsive diverse curriculum that meets the needs of the community through quality teaching.
- To provide a positive and impactful learning experience to enable progression and achievement.
- To work across Medway with others in partnership to develop new opportunities for growth.
- To attract, retain and develop high performing staff.
- To support the framework of action in the Skills & Employability Plan for Medway.

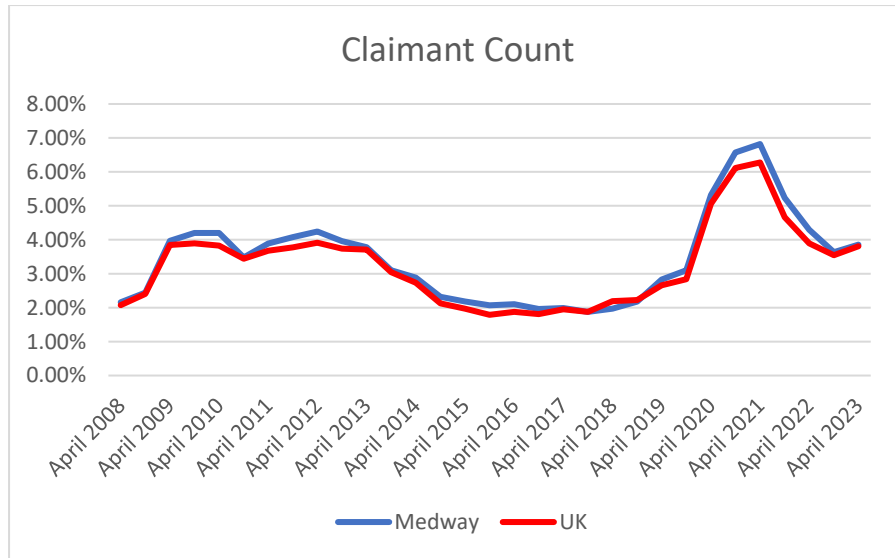
2. The Communities We Serve

Medway Adult Education (MAE) serves the residents of Medway, focusing largely on lower-level skills development and helping residents engage with education, often for the first time in many years, 24% of learners on Adult Skills funded courses declared having no qualifications or entry level qualifications at point of enrolment. Our largest curriculum area is ESOL, 25% of starts in 22/23, which serves our diverse range of communities within Medway. We provide English and maths classes to adults from Pre-entry Level to Level 2, including GCSEs, and an English and maths family learning offer that is provided in the community to help parents and carers support their children to learn.

MAE offers accredited courses from Entry Level to Level 4 in a range of vocational sectors to support learners into employment and equip them with knowledge and skills in areas including counselling, supporting teaching and learning, childcare, business administration and digital skills. We also offer courses for adults with special educational needs (SEN) to develop everyday life skills and support learners' in exploring their interests and talents.

MAE recognises that the first steps back into education can be daunting. To address this MAE offers a vibrant and dynamic mixture of courses that enable adults to engage in learning and to have fun in doing so. We provide a safe and welcoming learning environment in our education centres and in settings within the community where learners can explore their creative talents, make new friends and develop skills to support their health and well-being.

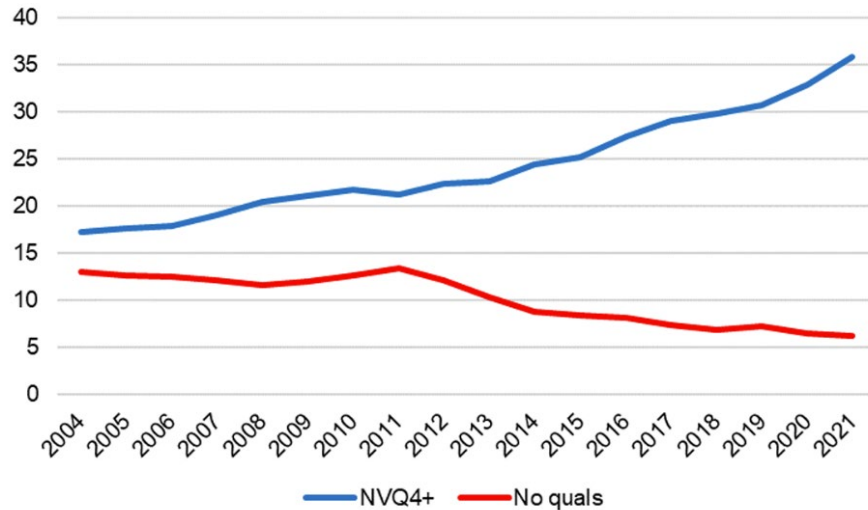
Our community learning offer is designed in conjunction with local community groups and partners to enrich the lives of Medway residents. The curriculum includes a targeted low cost and free offer that is created to meet the needs of the community in areas of Medway where Age UK has highlighted Medway residents are at increased risk of social isolation. By providing a range of courses including arts and crafts, Tai Chi, yoga and gardening, MAE seeks to not only reduce social isolation but to create cohesive communities and help people to remain active. Sport England has highlighted being active has positive effects on mental health too. Furthermore, making learning accessible and taking it into the community will help to support Medway residents to navigate the challenges of the cost of living crisis, by helping them to develop the skills and resilience required. Our excellent close partnerships working with stakeholders, both internal and external, ensures we can signpost learners to further support where needed.



Medway the Place

Medway was historically a major industrial centre, today there is a diverse and dynamic economy with important strengths in manufacturing and construction, a growing digital, creative and health-related capability, with a growing service sector and access to economic opportunities across the Thames Estuary and into London. As shown by the Greater North Kent Workforce Skills Evidence Base (March 2022). Our current economic strengths, opportunities and challenges provide the starting point for our approach to curriculum design.

% of population aged 16-64 qualified to 4+ and without qualifications (3-year rolling average)



In recent years, Medway has had a strong record of job creation. In 2020, there were 112,000 jobs in Medway – an increase of 15.5% since 2010 (slightly ahead of the national average).

This meant that the ‘jobs density’ (the number of jobs per person of working age) also increased over time, from 0.56 to 0.64 over the same period. Despite a positive record in job creation, we still have fewer jobs per person than the UK overall (0.65 jobs per working age resident, compared with 0.87 nationally). This partly reflects the importance of out-commuting: at the time of the last census, just under half of all Medway residents also worked in Medway, with large outflows to London and other parts of Kent.

Our workforce qualification rates are improving – but there is still some way to go to catch up with the rest of the country. At lower and intermediate qualification levels, Medway’s performance is comparable with the rest of the UK: about 61% of the working age population is qualified to NVQ3 (equivalent to A Level), which is the same as the UK average. The number with no formal qualifications has also fallen steadily over time and is now below the UK average (although there are still 7,500 people of working

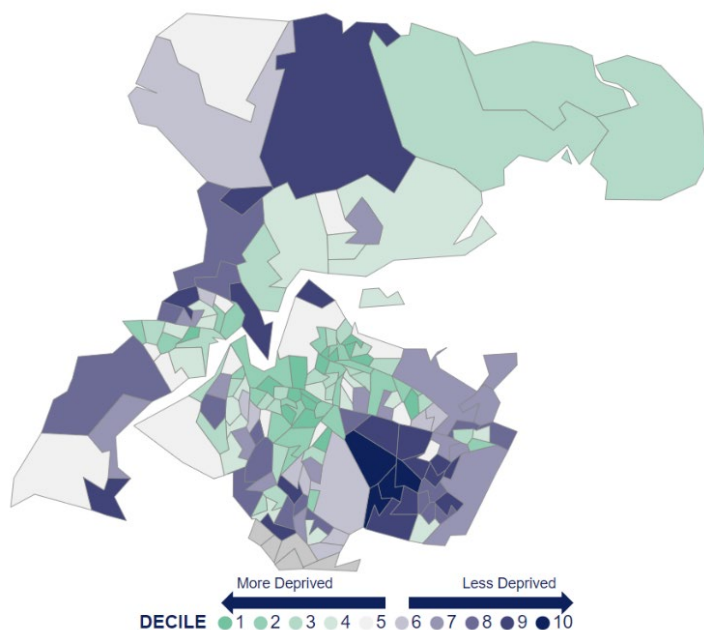
age in Medway without any formal qualifications). But at higher level, there is still a significant 'deficit' 38% are qualified to NVQ4 and above, compared with 43% nationally.

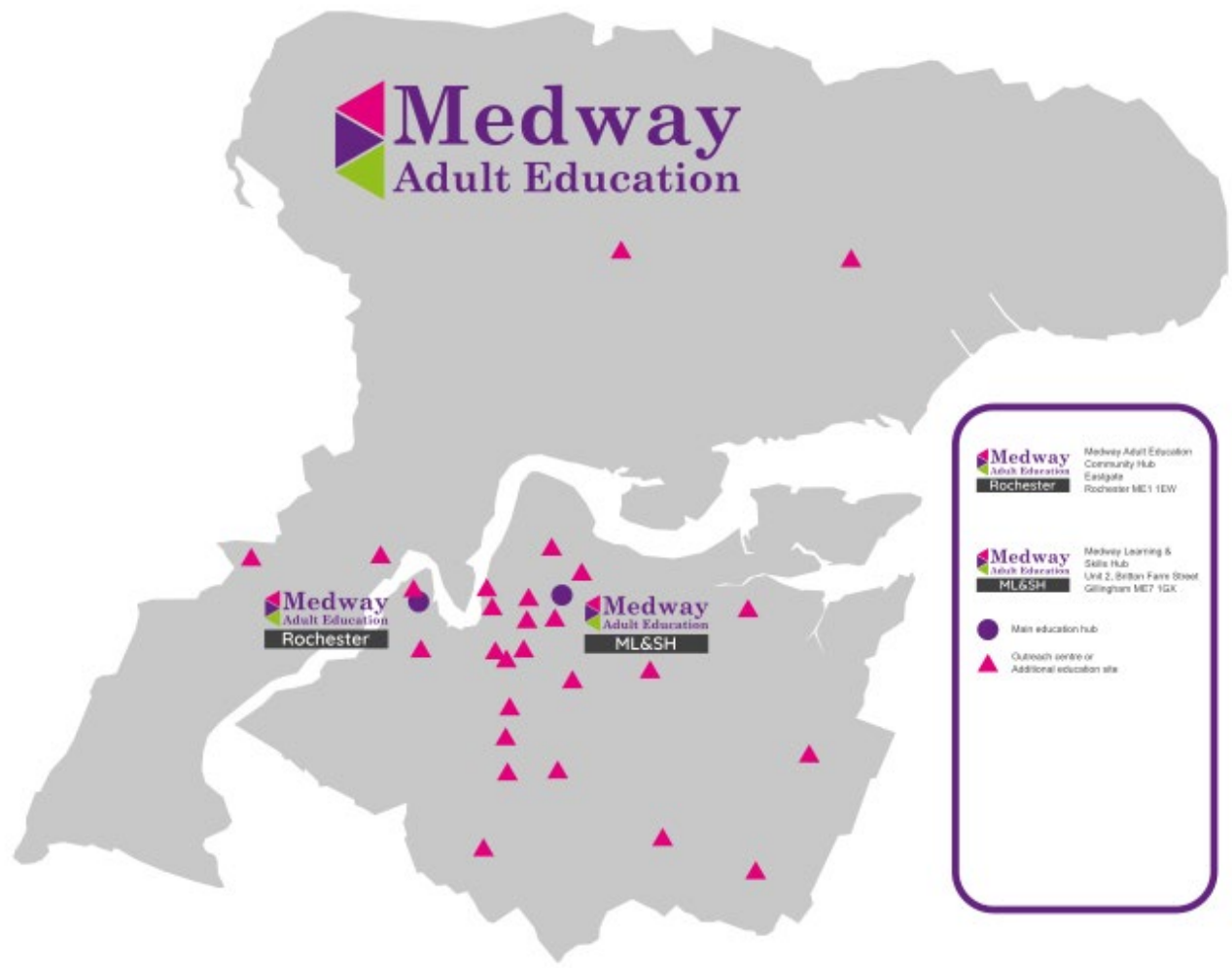
Although not all skills translate directly into formal qualifications, this gap matters: on average, higher qualifications command higher pay, and projections for future employment growth suggests that growth will be especially strong in those professional and technical occupations that require higher-level skills.

MAE has a centre in Rochester and Gillingham, providing good access from any of Medway's five towns. We also have delivery in a wide variety of community venues across Medway.

Our outreach is carefully designed to be accessible to residents in our areas of higher deprivation.

LSOAs BY DECILE FOR DOMAIN: IMD - Overall Deprivation





3. Meeting national, regional and local needs

This accountability statement is written in line with the Medway Council Plan, Skills & Employability Plan for Medway alongside our MAE Service Plan and MAE Business Plan. These plans outline our core strategic aims and objectives. All the mentioned documents are in line with national, regional and local needs and themselves draw on a wide range of supporting documentation, including:

- Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan
- Kent & Medway Workforce Skills Evidence Base
- Greater North Kent Workforce Skills Evidence Base
- MidKent College Strategic Plan
- Kent County Council Post 16 Review
- Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth (2022)
- Literacy Trust
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022)

MAE uses this evidence base during the curriculum planning process, which is designed to consider local need in some detail. As part of the process, we review the curriculum offer from other providers, notably MidKent College, to ensure there is limited overlap and that funding is used strategically in Medway as much as possible. As part of the robust curriculum planning process, curriculum teams are required to provide clear analysis as to how the programme meets community need, what research has been undertaken and from what sources and how the curriculum will make impact in these areas. Only when this work has been completed will the curriculum be approved.

The Local Skills Improvement Plan is key to how we ensure we are meeting local, regional and national needs. In particular we are supporting the following key priorities:

- Invest in soft transferable skills – we embed vital soft skills into all of our courses, and we have paid particular attention to including soft skills development in our 50+ programme and our Multiply courses.
- Upskills & re-skill the existing workforce – we are working with and meeting local employers, seeking ways to deliver courses at times convenient to them, and on their premises where possible.
- Better communication – we have invested in staff to enable better outreach and engagement with employers and wider partners.

Our strategic partnership with Medway Job Centre Plus is another key way in which we ensure local and regional need is being met. This is demonstrated through the new 50+ employment programme designed for the local JCP when they identified that a large cohort of people aged 50+ were struggling to find work. We also altered and expanded our ESOL curriculum at the request of the Job Centre, to meet ESOL demand.

We are planning to increase our apprenticeship provision, and as part of this work we will closely review in gaps in delivery across the Kent & Medway region and consult with employers and employer bodies, to ensure any new provision meets demand.

We are also increasing our Family Learning provision with particular focus on English and maths. The Literacy Trust indicates 1 in 6 adults in England have low levels of literacy and Government statistics suggest 49% of adults in England have the numeracy level of primary school children, which the Financial Times (Nov 2021) suggested was holding adults back in terms of their employment and the wider UK economy.

MAE recognise that developing learners' levels of literacy, numeracy and digital skills are essential to enabling learners to access everyday life and work. Therefore, we deliver these subjects as courses to address the national issue of low levels of literacy and numeracy. Elements of English, maths and digital skills are also embedded into programmes highly successfully along with information on how learners can keep themselves safe both inside the classroom and beyond.

Climate change awareness is a key area for development that all MAE staff are keen to promote and embed into learning. Medway Council is committed to tackling climate change in Medway. By embedding wider social issues such as climate change, managing in the cost-of-living crisis, safeguarding, health awareness and current affairs into course delivery we can prepare learners for changes in society and the labour market. It is anticipated that increasing learners' confidence and skills in these areas will have a positive impact. We focus on removing barriers to learning, and as such our approach is always evolving to help us meet the needs of learners.

4. Key Stakeholders

MAE works closely alongside a wide variety of partners from across Medway and beyond. MAE prides itself in holding genuine and meaningful partnerships that benefit the wider community. These partnerships include:

- Wider Medway Council departments
- Job Centre Plus
- Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce
- South East Local Enterprise Partnership
- Business representatives and employers
- Voluntary sector partners, notably food bank charities
- Kent County Council

MAE also works closely with other education and training providers across Medway. Where possible relationships are meaningful and strategic, ensuring focus on local need.

FE College

MAE work closely with the local FE College in a wide variety of ways, collaborating on our Medway Skills Stakeholder Board, co-planning skills events and we have begun strategically reviewing our adult learning curriculums. Together we represent the bulk of Adult Education Budget in Medway.

Independent Training Providers

We are active members of the Kent Association of Training Providers and will signpost employers to other providers where we can't meet a need.

Schools

We work closely with a wide variety of primary and secondary schools, with a focus on providing family learning or supporting parents to understand their children's learning.

Creative sector

MAE has strong links with partners in Medway's creative community and participates in networks, festivals and exhibitions. This includes hosting exhibitions at the Rochester Centre's community café, Jaspers, for students and local creatives.

The University of Creative Arts is leaving its Rochester Campus in August 2023, which creates a gap for people looking to develop their creative talents, obtain accreditation and support with employability in this field. Therefore, we plan to offer a Level 2 BTEC qualification to ensure people in the Medway community continue to have access to careers in the creative sector.

MAE is also represented on a wide variety of strategic boards across Kent & Medway. Crucially we are represented on the Kent & Medway LSIP solutions panel, providing us the ability to support the strategic work of the LSIP and develop our delivery in response. We are part of the Kent & Medway Employment Taskforce, which has led regionally on employment and skills related issues in response to COVID-19.

Our Skills Stakeholder Board brings together businesses, schools, further education, higher education, DWP and voluntary sector partners together, to help decide priorities, deliver initiatives and provide insight. Alongside this is also our own sector specific Medway Health & Social Care Skills Board, which provides focus in an important and challenging national priority area.

5. Strategic aims and objectives

Medway Adult Education Strategic Aims	Priorities impacted and reason for objective
Delivering a learning programme to boost local skills level for those furthest from employment.	This programme is focused on providing essential skills in English, maths and digital in line with the national priorities. We will work to ensure those who need these skills the most can access them with as few barriers as possible. These courses also provide vital progression routes to higher level learning and employment opportunities. We will work closely with JCP to be responsive to demand and meet claimant needs. We will aim to grow our work skills provision 10%.
Developing the skills of people in priority groups e.g. adults over 50 years of age who are seeking employment or a career change.	This programme is designed to support increasing numbers of adults aged 50 and over in Medway, access employment opportunities, including national priority areas with high vacancy levels. The courses on offer will also provide pathways to higher levels of learning. We will work with our community partners to identify provision that will benefit priority groups. We will be responsive to demand and aim to increase learners referred from JCP by 10%.
Expanding the apprenticeship provision to work with Medway businesses	This is a national priority, and one that ensures continued skills development for the workforce. We will ensure a high quality, employer focused apprenticeship offer. We will aim to deliver 30 new external apprenticeships.
Introducing a Level 2 creative arts qualification offer to support progression into the new Medway School of Arts and/or employment.	Creative industries are nationally identified areas of growth and are a huge part of the local Medway economy. This offer will act as a clear pathway to higher levels of learning in the new Medway School of Art. We will pilot this course this year, and grow this provision based on lessons learnt.
Embed fuel poverty, energy and climate change awareness into programmes.	This is crucial to reduce significant barriers to learning that many residents in Medway face, it will also help residents continue in learning, gain vital basic skills and support future employment ambitions. We will aim to achieve this across 20% of our courses.
Transform our services, using digital to improve the learner experience.	We want learning to be as accessible as possible, improving our digital experience for learners, ensuring that engaging with learning is easy. This will also support our journey to become more sustainable. We will aim for 50% of community learning and ESOL learners to apply for courses online. We will aim for 100% of tutors to be marking registers and accessing learner details digitally. 80% of studios will have new digital equipment installed to make teaching and learning more accessible and engaging.

6. Corporation Statement

On behalf of Medway Council, it is hereby confirmed that the plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by Cabinet on the 8th August 2023.

The plan will be published on the Council's website within three months of the start of the new academic year.

7. Relevant Supporting Documentation

Medway Skills & Employability Plan [link](#)

Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan [link](#)

Kent & Medway Workforce Skills Evidence Base [link](#)

Greater North Kent Workforce Skills Evidence base [link](#)

SELEP Skills Strategy [link](#)

Medway Council Economy Statistics [link](#)

A plan for an adult skills lifelong learning revolution [link](#)

Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth [link](#)

OECD Skills Matter study [link](#)