

MEDWAY ADULT EDUCATION
ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT 2024/25

1. Mission & Purpose

Medway Adult Education's mission is: *To be a high quality learning organisation for adult learning & skills 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 priorities in the Council Plan are:

Benefitting from good education, quality jobs and a growing economy

Enjoying clean, green, safe and connected communities

Improving health and wellbeing for all

Living in good-quality affordable homes

Medway Adult Education has a key part to play in a number of sub priorities but notably:

- Supporting adults to lead successful lives, and secure employment opportunities.
- Develop Medway's reputation as a home for creative, cultural, and green industries.
- Empowering people to achieve good health and wellbeing through prevention.

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, 32% 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, 36% 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, 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 cooking, 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 and healthy. 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

OUR POPULATION

279,800 PEOPLE LIVING IN MEDWAY



61,725 ARE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 0 TO 16

174,674 ARE WORKING AGE ADULTS (16-65)

42,157 ARE OLDER PEOPLE (65+)



Medway is home to **10.3 PEOPLE** per football pitch sized piece of land compared with 9.7 people in 2011.

Medway is in the **TOP 40%** most densely populated local authority areas.

ONS data forecast a **STEADY INCREASE** in the proportion of the Medway population **aged 65 or over** up to 2027.



Medway is becoming more diverse, 15.7% of residents identified as being from **ethnic minority** backgrounds.



This is lower than England and Wales where 18.3% of residents identified as being from **ethnic minority** backgrounds.



5.6% of residents identified as being **Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African**, the largest increase of any ethnic group.

EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESSES

MEDWAY'S ECONOMY IS WORTH



14,000 BUSINESSES

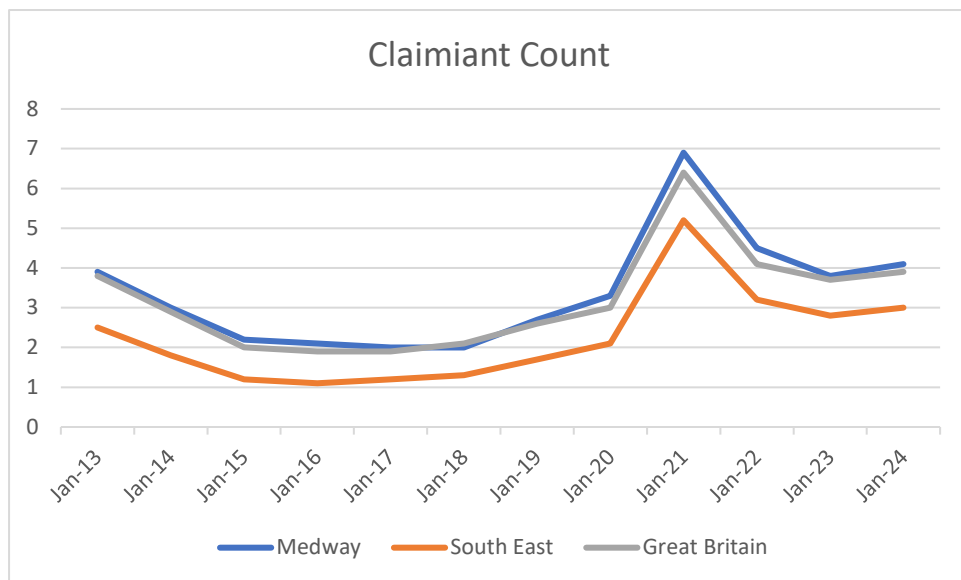
91% of businesses have ten employees or fewer



UNEMPLOYMENT FELL FROM 9.6% IN 2013 TO 4% IN 2023

16.8% RESIDENTS are economically inactive

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.



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).

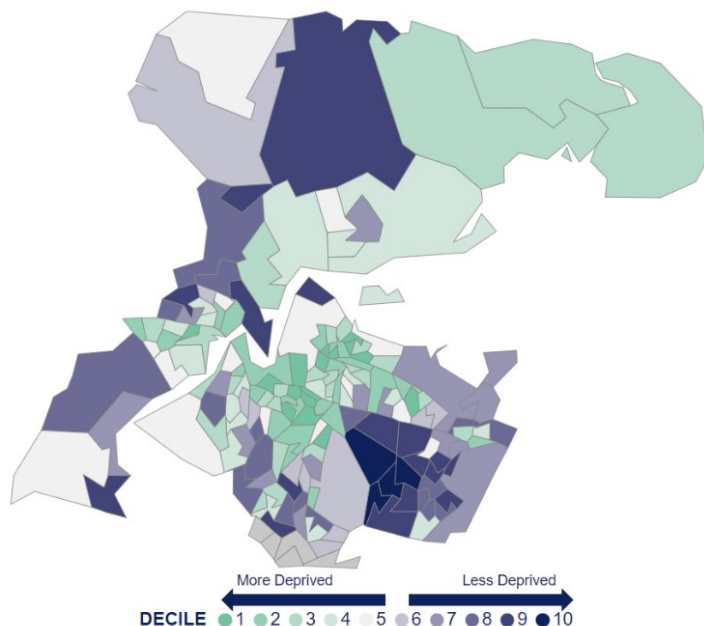
This meant that the 'jobs density' (the number of jobs per person of working age) also increased over time, from 0.56 to 0.64 over the same period. Despite a positive record in job creation, we still have fewer jobs per person than the UK overall (0.65 jobs per

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 – and mostly in line with the rest of the UK. At lower and intermediate qualification levels, Medway’s performance is comparable with the rest of the UK: about 66% of the working age population is qualified to NVQ3 (equivalent to A Level), which is just under 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 7,900 people of working age in Medway without any formal qualifications). But at higher level, there is still a significant ‘deficit’ 39.7% are qualified to NVQ4 and above, compared with 47% 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.

LSOAs BY DECILE FOR DOMAIN: IMD - Overall Deprivation



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, with 24% of our ESOL learners coming from 10 highest deprivation areas.

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
- Medway Council Post 16 Education Review
- Kent County Council Post 16 Education Review
- Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth (2022)
- Literacy Trust
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)

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.

The most recent LSIP document takes a deeper dive into the key sectors, and we are engaged with the solutions panel and range of LSIP activities.

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 in the way we delivered a 50+ employment programme designed for the local JCP. 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. 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 & Federation of Small Businesses
- Business representatives and employers
- Voluntary sector partners including homeless charities, housing associations, faith groups, disability groups, food banks
- 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, including the recent Medway Business and Skills Showcase, 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 Organisations and will signpost employers to other providers where we can't meet a need. We work collaboratively to increase apprenticeships in Medway.

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.

Other Adult Education Providers

We share best practice around quality and delivery of curriculum with other south east adult education providers, this has helped us inform curriculum design and continuous professional development for staff.

Health & Wellbeing

We work closely with public health departments and other health related organisations to ensure our delivery supports people with a wider variety of health conditions, offering an inclusive environment and developing awareness of non-visible disabilities. 19% of our learners declared a disability or learning difficulty in 22/23.

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 has left its Rochester Campus in August 2023, which created a gap for people looking to develop their creative talents, obtain accreditation and support with employability in this field. Therefore, we have offered 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 to support economic regeneration.

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

Strategic aims and objectives	Measurable outcomes	Contributions towards national, regional and local priorities
Provide high quality education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain or improve Ofsted grading and Matrix accreditation • Qualification Achievement Rate is 84% or higher • Maintain quality processes to improve tutor CPD • Maintain learner satisfaction at 98% either satisfied or very satisfied 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet ESFA national benchmarks • More people achieve and succeed in learning • More people with the necessary literacy and numeracy skills to engage in society and employment • More people with the right digital skills to access online services
Improve mental and physical wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor learner feedback about improved mental and physical outcomes • Attendance and retention rate, maintain or better 85% attendance, 90% retention • 1000 learners benefitting from programmes designed to improve mental and physical wellbeing • Embed enrichment activities into curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced loneliness and social isolation • More people successfully engaging with society • Reduced pressure on wider services • Encouraging and fostering diversity • Contribute to public health outcomes

Enabling participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 800 enrolments from top ten deprived wards • 400 enrolments of learners with disabilities • 100 outreach activities • 10 enrolments from learners who are care leavers • Engaging with events with under-represented groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased education levels in Medway • Increase in economic activity • Support employers with talent management and retention • More people engaged in education, creating better life opportunities
Supporting economic activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase employment as a destination measure to 15% • Increase the number of employers as partners • Further promote DLSF, enabling 75 learners to utilise • Increase our apprenticeship delivery by 5% • Support employers to further understand apprenticeships • 600 enrolments for unemployed learners seeking work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More people economically active • Businesses developing a more inclusive workforce • More people take the first step towards employment through learning • More apprenticeship starts in Medway

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 4th June 2024.

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](#)

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](#)