

MEDWAY ADULT EDUCATION

ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT 2026/27

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 (MAE). 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 potential

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.
- To attract, retain and develop high performing staff.
- To support the framework of action in the Skills & Employability Plan for Medway.

We also aim to implement our community values at all times:

MAE community values:

- People Focussed - We will care for and support our learners and staff. We respect each other and our individuality and provide a safe space for people to learn and grow.
- Communication - We recognise that we work for our learners. We need to communicate effectively, proactively, and appropriately. We listen and will make time for learners and each other.
- Positive and Proactive - We respond enthusiastically about changes in demand and respond with a solution focussed approach.
- Pride - We are passionate about our service and the impact it has on others. We celebrate this through sharing successes and achievements.

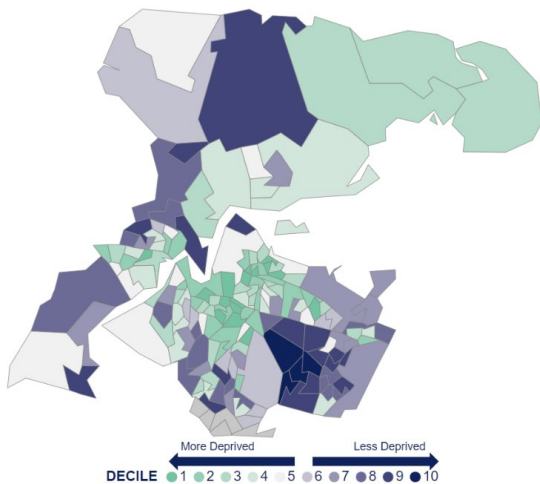
MAE recognises that the first steps back into education can be daunting. To address this MAE offers a vibrant and dynamic mixture of courses that enable adults to engage in learning and to have fun in doing so. We provide a safe and welcoming learning environment in our education centres and in settings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

Context and Place

Medway has a population of 280,000, it is the largest conurbation in the south east outside London. We expect our population to grow to 320,000 over the next 20 years, with 30,000 new homes being developed and 17,000 new employment opportunities over the same period. 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. Our current economic strengths, opportunities and challenges provide the starting point for our approach to curriculum design.

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 7,500 people of working age in Medway without any formal qualifications). But at higher level, there is still a significant 'deficit' 39.8% are qualified to NVQ4 and above, compared with 47% nationally.

LSOAs BY DECILE FOR DOMAIN: IMD - Overall Deprivation



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. Medway has just under 35,000 residents who are economically inactive, less retired people and students. The Get Kent & Medway working plan provides detailed information and an action plan that MAE is contributing towards.

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, 40% of learners on Adult Skills funded courses declared having no qualifications or entry level qualifications at point of enrolment. 24% of learners declared a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or health problem. 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 delivers Adult Skills Fund, Tailored Learning, apprenticeships and level 3 free courses for jobs. 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.

Medway the Place

Our population

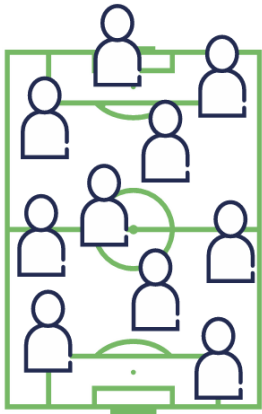


279,800 people living in Medway

57,016 are children and young people aged 0 to 15

176,703 are working age adults (16 to 64)

46,054 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.

Languages

The most common language of residents whose main language is not English is Romanian followed by Polish and Punjabi.



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 £6.3 billion. There are 14,000 businesses of which 91% have 10 employees or less. Unemployment fell from 9.6% in 2013 to 4% in 2023.

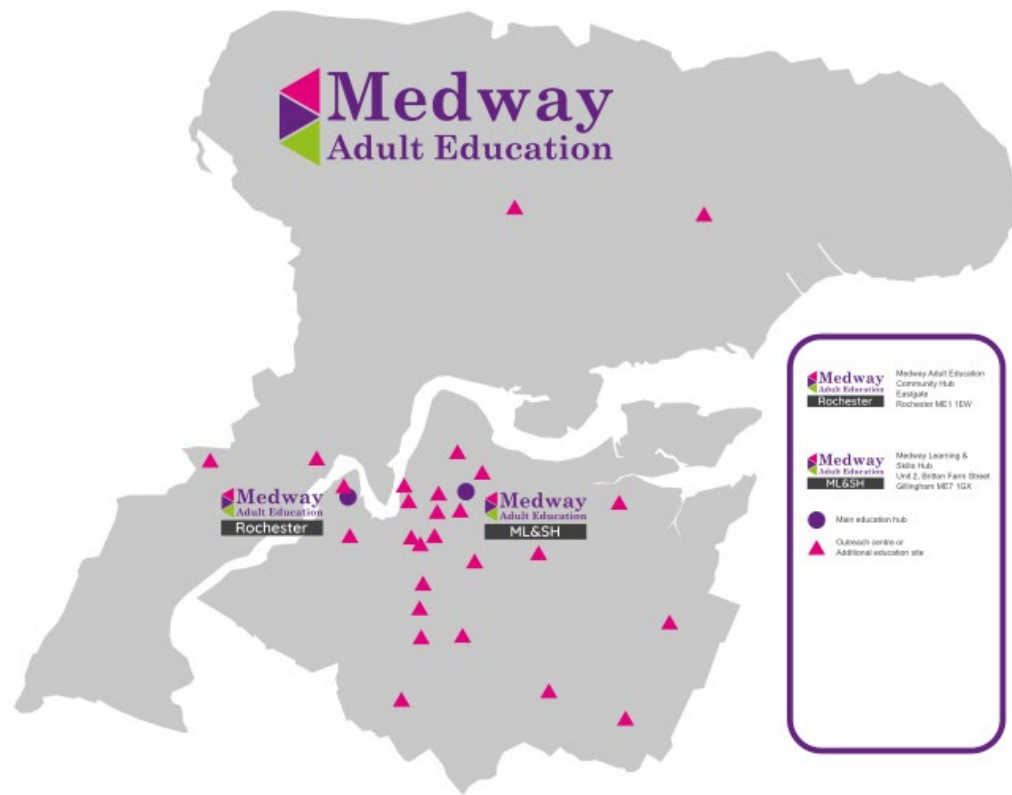


16.8% residents are economically inactive.

Medway is well connected, it's only 34 minutes to London by high speed train.

Health in Medway

- 45.2% described their health as very good, this is up from 42.1% in 2011
- 5.6% report their health as bad or very bad
- 17.4% of residents have a disability or long term illnesses, this is up from 16.4% in 2011.



Medway Adult Education Rochester
 Medway Adult Education Community Hub
 Edgelye
 Rochester ME1 1EW

Medway Adult Education ML&SH
 Medway Learning & Skills Hub
 Unit 2, Sirhan Farn Street
 Gillingham ME7 1GX

● Main education hub
 ▲ Outreach centre or Additional education site

Approach to developing our Accountability Statement

Our Accountability Statement has been developed through a collaborative and evidence-based process that reflects Medway Adult Education's strong partnership ethos and commitment to meeting the needs of the community we serve. The development approach combined internal strategic planning with extensive engagement across our local network of partners, employers, community groups and education providers.

To shape the statement, senior leaders worked closely with curriculum managers, the data and funding team, quality leads and wider Medway Council departments to ensure alignment with organisational priorities, DfE requirements and local strategic objectives. Drafts were reviewed internally through leadership and governance processes to ensure accuracy, compliance and coherence with our improvement plans.

A key part of our approach involved drawing on the depth and breadth of MAE's external partnerships. We consulted with Medway Council colleagues, Job Centre Plus, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, voluntary sector partners (including homeless charities, housing associations, disability groups, food banks and faith groups), and employers from across the area. Feedback from these stakeholders informed our understanding of local labour market needs, community challenges and ongoing opportunities to support residents through adult learning.

We also worked closely with other education and training providers across the region, including the local FE College, Independent Training Providers via our participation in the Kent Association of Training Organisations, and a wide range of primary and secondary schools. These relationships supported a shared approach to planning progression routes, reducing duplication and reinforcing relevance. Collaborative work with FE colleagues ensured that our priorities reflect the collective strategic responsibilities of Adult Skills Fund organisations in Medway.

Input from the wider adult education community — including providers across the south-east — helped shape our curriculum development and CPD planning through shared best practice discussions. Engagement with public health teams and health-related organisations ensured our approach reflected the needs of learners with a wide range of health conditions and contributed to inclusive curriculum design for the 24% of learners who declared a disability or learning difficulty in 2024/25.

We also engaged extensively with the creative sector. The departure of the University for the Creative Arts from Medway informed our decision to offer a Level 2 BTEC qualification to maintain clear pathways into creative careers and ensure continued opportunities for local people to develop their creative skills. Our relationships within Medway's creative community, including exhibitions and community-based arts activity, also shaped our wider priorities. The Creative Sector is a new priority for the Local Skills Improvement Plan, demonstrating the need for MAE to deliver creative courses.

MAE is represented on several key strategic groups across Kent and Medway. Crucially, this includes our involvement with the Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Advisory Panel, the Kent & Medway Employment Taskforce and the Kent & Medway Employment & Skills Group. Through this engagement, and in accordance with DWP expectations, MAE actively engages with its designated Employer Representative Body (ERB) to ensure our planning aligns with local economic priorities and employer-validated skills needs. This involvement has strengthened our evidence base and ensured that our approach is responsive to local labour market intelligence.

Our planned expansion of employer engagement also informed the development of this statement. Through collaboration with Skills & Employment colleagues, attendance at networking events, delivery of our own events, and programmes such as Connect to Work, we ensured that our approach strengthens opportunities for contextualised learning and progression.

MAE is working to embed the Marmot principles by giving adults the knowledge, confidence, and practical skills they need to help reduce health inequalities. By widening access to learning, it supports fair employment through upskilling, improves healthy living by improving awareness, and enhances community engagement by helping people participate more fully in learning and social life. MAE also reduces social isolation, boosts mental wellbeing, and creates pathways into better-paid, more secure work, in line with Marmot's focus on the social determinants of health.

Overall, this Accountability Statement has been shaped by a holistic and partnership driven process, grounded in evidence and reflective of MAE's commitment to enriching the lives of Medway residents. Our collaborative approach enables us to proactively address social isolation, support community cohesion and design learning that is relevant, inclusive and impactful.

Meeting National, Regional and Local priorities

MAE's 2026–27 curriculum has been designed to respond to a combination of national priorities, regional workforce needs identified through the Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), and local Medway labour market challenges. Bringing these together ensures a coherent, employer responsive and learner centred offer that supports skills development, progression, and economic growth.

Core Skills and Foundational Learning

Across national policy, regional LSIP evidence, and local Medway analysis, there is a clear and consistent need to strengthen adults' English, maths, ESOL and digital skills.

- The LSIP highlights employer concerns about gaps in communication, English/literacy and digital capability across priority sectors.
- The LSIP is also exploring the important theme of workforce sustainability depending on progression and capability-building, not just recruitment.
- Local analysis and the Get Kent & Medway Working Plan shows increasing demand for ESOL due to demographic change and a high number of adults not currently participating in the labour market.
- National priorities emphasise essential skills as fundamental to productivity, employment and progression.

MAE's Response

- High quality delivery of ESOL, Entry level English and maths, and GCSE pathways.
- Continued growth of Essential Digital Skills and embedding digital literacy across employability and vocational courses.
- Progression routes clearly mapped from community learning, accredited learning, employment or apprenticeships.

Employer Responsive Vocational Provision

National skills priorities, LSIP employer insights and local employer feedback all identify shortages in technical skills, employability, work readiness and sector specific competencies. These relate particularly to areas such as health & social care, construction, engineering, business support roles, and food production.

MAE's Response

- Strengthening of vocational and preemployment pathways aligned to health and social care and business support.
- Expansion of short, sector aligned employability programmes supporting adults returning to work, those with caring responsibilities, and people affected by long term health issues.

- Continued collaboration with employers and the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce to ensure provision reflects current workforce needs.

Digital, Technology and Innovation Skills

Digital capability is highlighted consistently at national, regional and local levels as a critical skill gap. Employers report rising demand for digital literacy, productivity tools, and sector specific digital competencies across all industries.

MAE's Response

- Continued expansion of digital pathways from beginner to advanced, including Essential Digital Skills, digital employability content and applied digital skills within vocational areas.
- Introduction of digital awareness and AI readiness content.
- Integration of digital productivity skills into business, management, creative and employability courses.

Creative, Cultural and Green Skills

Creative industries are a priority within Medway Council's economic development plans, while the LSIP emphasises sustainability, green skills and low carbon practices across all sectors. National priorities also encourage growth in creative and green sectors as part of future skills development.

MAE's Response

- Expansion of creative skills pathways (e.g., ceramics, signwriting, graphic novel creation, visual arts) that support Medway's cultural and creative ambitions.
- Green skills and sustainable practices embedded across creative, vocational and community learning provision.
- Enhanced progression routes into creative careers and higher level training through the Medway School of Art.

Business, Administration and Professional Services

Professional and business services feature strongly in regional employer engagement networks and national shortage lists. Employers consistently highlight a need for improved customer service, communication, organisation, administration and digital business skills.

MAE's Response

- Strengthening employability and business administration programmes supported by ASF funding.
- Delivery of employer demanded apprenticeships such as Business Administrator, Customer Service Practitioner and Teaching Assistant.
- Flexible short courses covering administration, leadership, customer-focused skills and digital business tools.

Flexible Learning and Re-engagement

All national, regional and local evidence sources point to the importance of flexible, accessible and reengagement provision:

- The LSIP recommends more short, flexible and modular learning for adult workforce development.
- The Get Kent & Medway Working Plan shows high numbers of adults not in work due to caring responsibilities or long term illness.
- National policies encourage widened participation and adult re-engagement.

MAE's Response

- Wider use of evening and online delivery.
- Expansion of community and family learning supporting wellbeing, confidence, parenting and early progression pathways.
- Short courses designed to help adults re-enter education or employment gradually.

Planned Offer for 2026–27

ASF provision

- Essential skills (English, maths, ESOL, digital) meeting national and regional priority gaps
- Employability, work skills and business administration programmes aligned to LSIP employer feedback
- Creative and cultural courses supporting local economic and national priorities
- Green and sustainability content woven into curriculum areas

Apprenticeships

- Business Administrator
- Customer Service
- Teaching Assistant

All selected in response to local employer demand and LSIP identified business support needs.

Community and Family Learning

- Programmes addressing barriers to participation, supporting wellbeing, building confidence and helping individuals move toward accredited learning or employment.
- Family learning to improve parents' confidence and skills particularly in English and maths whilst supporting children's learning and progress.

2026–27 Actions and Outcomes

Actions

- Be ready to expand ESOL and entry level essential skills provision by at least 10%, if additional funding provided
- Identify and apply for at least three supplementary funding streams and secure £100,000 to sustain core adult skills provision.
- Establish or formalise partnerships with 5 local employers across LSIP-identified priority sectors and co-design 2 employer-aligned programmes.
- Support 20 creative-sector learners to progress into enterprise, accredited courses, or higher-level training.
- Ensure 50% of programmes incorporate digital and sustainability learning outcomes.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased learning and employment participation by 10% among adults who are out of work or have low skill levels.
- Increased progression from Entry/Level 1 into Level 2/3 courses or apprenticeships by 10%.
- Increase employer engagement activity and alignment with workforce needs by 25%
- Deliver at least 5 new or enhanced courses aligned to creative, digital and green LSIP priorities, with 30 learners achieving related skills or progression outcomes.

Local Needs Duty

As part of the Local Needs Duty review, MAE has assessed how well its curriculum meets Medway's identified skills needs and community priorities. Key findings include:

- Strong alignment with entry level and community provision but a need for increased level 2–3 pathways to support progression.
- Increased demand for ESOL provision due to demographic changes.
- Employer feedback indicates shortages in digital literacy, customer service, and health and social care skills.
- We contribute effectively to the health and wellbeing of residents in Medway, both mental and physical health. There is a continued need to support the prevention agenda, helping residents to stay healthy for longer reducing requirement on services.

- Close ties to the Job Centre Plus ensure we are supporting residents into work, with unemployment, particularly youth unemployment rising, there is a need to tie services in with programmes such as Connect to Work and align with the Local Skills Improvement Plan and the Get Kent & Medway Working Plan.

MAE's ability to meet local needs has been hampered by the recent reduction in ASF, in 2025/26 we are over delivering above and beyond funding levels, with local need still being left unmet. Medway Council has sourced funding this financial year to support needed delivery.

Oversight Board Statement:

This document satisfies the statutory local needs duty and is *approved by Cabinet on xx/xx/xxxx*

Supporting Documentation

- Kent & Medway LSIP. *Local Skills Improvement Plan*: <https://kentemployersskillsplan.org>
- Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce. *LSIP Overview*. <https://www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk/our-services/skills>
- Kent & Medway LSIP. *LSIP 2023 (Approved Version)*. <https://kentemployersskillsplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/LSIP-2023-Kent-and-Medway-FINAL.pdf>
- Kent & Medway LSIP. *Progress Report 2025*. <https://kentemployersskillsplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/LSIP-Kent-and-Medway-Progress-Report-2025.pdf>
- Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce. *Kent & Medway Strengthens Skills Vision – LSIP Update 2025*. <https://www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk/news/kent-medway-strengthens-skills-vision-with-new-2025-lsip-update>
- Kent County Council. *Get Kent and Medway Working Plan (2025)*: https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/220381/Get-Kent-and-Medway-Working-Plan.pdf
- Kent & Medway Economic Partnership. *Local Growth Plan Evidence Base*: <https://www.kmep.org.uk/app/uploads/2026/02/Final-Local-Growth-Plan-Evidence-Base.pdf>
- Medway Council. *Skills & Employability Plan (Appendix)*: <https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgconvert2pdf.aspx?id=46502>
- Gov.UK. *Occupations in demand*: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/occupations-in-demand/2025>