

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Economy Scrutiny Committee – 10 February 2022

Subject: Manchester Adult Education Service

Report of: Director of Inclusive Economy and Head of MAES

Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide information on MAES performance in 2020/21, the response to COVID-19 and the skills challenges in the city.

Recommendations

Members are recommended to consider and comment on the information in the report.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city
MAES has a sustainability plan to raise awareness and promote behaviour change with staff and learners. It includes actions across the course programme and in MAES venues to reduce energy use and increase recycling in our centres and the community.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	MAES provision enables residents to contribute to and benefit from a good quality of life as active citizens and ensures that Manchester's businesses have the skills and talents they need to prosper, contributing to a more inclusive economy.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	MAES provision is focused on improving skills to enable learners to progress to employment and/or higher-level skills and careers. It is a fundamental building block to enable more of our residents to begin their skills pathways.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	MAES provision assists residents who are disadvantaged in obtaining work because of low skills & language barriers. MAES supports residents into sustained and healthy work with opportunities for in work progression. The service course offer and enrichment activities also play a

	fundamental part in improving integration and developing greater community cohesion.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	MAES provision is embedded in communities, making it an accessible and sustainable offer and MAES is working to embed carbon literacy as part of its learning offer.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Improving the digital skills of Manchester residents is a key contribution that MAES can make to this theme ensuring that more of our residents are connected.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

Manchester Adult Education and Skills Plan 2019-2025

Manchester Adult ESOL Strategy 2016

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information on MAES performance in 2020/21, the response to COVID-19 and the skills challenges in the city.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 MAES is part of the Work and Skills team in the Directorate for Inclusive Economy. Its provision makes an important contribution to the Greater Manchester priorities and the Manchester Local Industrial Strategy with its focus on People, Place and Prosperity. MAES has a key role in improving the skills and qualifications of Manchester residents so that they can access employment and benefit from and contribute to economic growth.
- 2.2 In 2020 MAES continued to work with other key providers and stakeholders to Support the Manchester Adult Education and Skills Plan which was launched in November 2019. Its ambitious vision is that by 2025 Manchester will be the best city in the UK for adult education and skills, which will be integral to the growth of the city, the integration of our communities and the prosperity of our residents.
- 2.3 The vision for MAES continues to be: **To deliver inspirational adult education that connects Manchester's adults to their potential, their community and their future.**

Four objectives:

- Connecting to potential – enable individuals to build on their strengths & develop the skills and mindset they need to succeed
- Connecting to community – equip learners with the skills and confidence they need to engage with and contribute to their community
- Connecting to futures – empower learners to progress with determination and clarity about their next steps
- Connecting to employers – provide employers with access to a skilled and resilient workforce and the opportunity to shape MAES provision

These were agreed for the period 2020 – 23 and as a result a review will take place in academic year 2022-23.

- 2.4 Leaders and managers have aligned MAES provision with Manchester's plans and priorities to promote an organisational culture which is ambitious for what learners can achieve. This focused provision enables learners to develop skills and behaviours and achieve their goals and qualifications.
- 2.5 MAES provides agile and flexible provision which contributes to the achievement of the Manchester Work and Skills plan priorities, Working Well and Early Years and Early Help strategies. Our unique selling point is a community-based model of informal/first step learning and qualification courses delivered in 7 adult learning centres and over 50 community venues. We work with partners and stakeholders to co-design and deliver services to

meet individual, employer and community needs and to support the city's strategic priorities.

- 2.6 MAES has a unique role to play in the city's neighbourhood approach to 'bring services together' to share expertise, avoid duplication and plug gaps in local provision. As a provider of community learning each MAES centre meets local priorities with optimum impact for local people.
- 2.7 MAES expertise and niche is in delivering both qualification courses (Adult Skills) and non-qualification courses (Community Learning) with the largest cohort aged 25-50. We also deliver a small programme for 19–24-year-olds with learning difficulties. Adult Skills programme includes Maths and English up to GCSE, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and Care and Education. The Community Learning programme includes Everyday English, Preparation for Work, Digital Skills, Family Learning and commissioned projects and engagement activities as a preparation for further learning, work and to improve health and wellbeing.
- 2.8 MAES learners include those who have left compulsory education with no or low qualifications, highly skilled immigrants who have poor English language skills and residents who have had long periods of unemployment or no work history, many with mental health issues. The provision enables residents with low skills and complex dependencies the opportunity to improve the skills, qualifications, attitudes and behaviours they need to secure and progress in work and become less dependent on public services. Our employed learners come to improve their skills and qualifications in order to secure sustainable employment and progress at work. Most of the job outcomes are in the education, health, care, retail, hospitality and facilities sectors.

3.0 Covid impact: January 2021

- 3.1 All learners were contacted on New Year's Day to notify them that at least the first two weeks of their course would be online only, following DfE advice. When the new national lockdown was announced, we closed all our centres and moved all our courses to online delivery. The exceptions were programmes for learners with special educational needs and essential digital skills courses.
- 3.2 Significant numbers of learners, particularly those on lower-level courses, were not able to continue their learning. Barriers included poor digital skills, childcare and work responsibilities. Of those who did continue, the majority identified the learning as excellent or good. Two metre social distancing in classrooms was maintained until the end of the academic year in July 2021.

4.0 New Programmes

- 4.1 MAES have added three level 3 (A-level equivalent) courses to the programme for 2022/23; the Level 3 in Understanding Mental Health, the Diploma in Adult Care and the Level 3 in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools. These qualifications became fundable in April 2021, along with a

suite of others which are regarded as being 'high value' for the needs of the labour market. The qualifications are suitable for residents who are in employment in front line roles but looking to progress their careers further, as well as those who want to gain higher level skills before beginning their careers in these sectors. MAES have recruited 38 learners to these courses in this pilot year and intend to build on provision at this level.

- 4.2 Sector based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) whereby a learning provider collaborates with a recruiting employer and DWP to train residents for specific vacancies, have been a significant growth area for MAES. Since September 20/21, 375 individuals have attended MAES SWAPS. These have been delivered for organisations such as Costa Coffee, GSTS (security company), the Flava People, the Department for Work and Pensions, Duerr's Jam and the Co-op.
- 4.3 Employers have been enthusiastic to work with MAES since the programmes have been successful in filling vacancies whilst also enabling them to recruit in a more inclusive way. An example of this is the Co-op SWAP in which there were 7 vacancies which had been unsuccessfully filled for 6 months prior to the course. These were administrative vacancies within the business's HR function. MAES delivered a two-day course for 18 participants who were then interviewed by the Co-op. All of the vacancies were filled and MAES offered additional training and guidance to those who were unsuccessful. Job outcomes from SWAPs are tracked regularly and currently stands at 60% of participants moving into employment.

5.0 Performance and Funding 20/21

- 5.1 For the teaching year 20/21, both GMCA and the ESFA confirmed that MAES (and all other grant funded providers) would be paid at the level of the original contract against the agreed profile. This has meant that we have been able to pay our CLF commissioned providers and other supply chain partners e.g., nurseries, childminders, and community venues if they agreed to a similar undertaking to last year not to furlough staff. The GMCA and ESFA retained a lighter touch in relation to performance management requirements but not the requirement for the submission of the performance returns, the Individual Learner Record (ILR)

As was reported to the February 21 meeting of this committee in relation to 19/20 performance, MAES performance has again been impacted by the pandemic in terms of lower overall recruitment, smaller class sizes, lower attendance, learner retention issues and lower achievement levels. The GMCA and ESFA both recognised that though performance has been impacted by the pandemic it is likely that costs for organisations had remained the same. And therefore, developed a methodology to support the continuing stability of the sector. MAES Grant Funding has two basic components the first Community Learning is a cost-based grant claim, the second is a formula-based methodology that supports Skills and accredited provision. As Community Learning is cost based claim the support given was a recognition

that reductions in participation would not lead to reduced spending but a higher cost per enrolment and this would have no penalty. For the formula funded component of the contract the GMCA recognised the impact on recruitment, retention, and achievement had been lower because of the pandemic and therefore have allowed up to 10% of funding to be claimed as covid support. For providers who fell below 90% of contract value there was the additional safety net of supplying a business case demonstrating that funds had been spent or that unspent funds could be retained for a mutually agreed purpose. Because MAES performance level was 88.5% we submitted and had approved a business case to retain funding based on our costs.

5.2 Targets and key performance indicators are set each year and performance is monitored monthly by senior managers. For the Teaching year 20/21 we were asked to plan on the basis that there was not a pandemic which has the impact of making the targets look incongruous when 19/20 actuals are considered and subsequent performance in 20/21 Service levels performance indicators are detailed in the table below. For

MAES Performance Indicators	Actual 19/20	Targets 20/21	Actual 20/21	Actual % of Target
Adult Skills Formula Funding	£3,275,822	£3,478,110	£3,089,806	88.84%
Learners No (All Streams)	9,276	10,500	9153	87.17%
Adult Skills Learner No	2,861	3,000	3382	112.73%
Community Learning No	6,415	7,500	5771	76.94%
Adult Skills Enrolments*	5,746	6,110	6616	108.28%
Community Learning Enrolments*	11,011	13,659	10349	75.76%
National Qualifications Achieved	2633	3420	1915	55.99%

*An enrolment is a start on a course therefore a learner can have multiple enrolments.

MAES Performance Indicators	Actual 19/20	Targets 20/21	Actual 20/21	Percentage point Variation to target
Adult Skills Retention Rate	88.50%	95.80%	89.80%	-6%
Community Learning Retention Rate	87.40%	90.50%	90.60%	+0.10%

Adult Skills Achievement Rate	83.10%	89.80%	74.70%	-15.1%
Community Learning Achievement Rate	87.10%	87.90%	88.00%	+0.10%

- 5.3 In 20/21 the impact of Covid meant that the service reached 92.85% of its recruitment targets for the year. (12535 learners against a target of 13,500) Performance varied depending on the type of provision. The participation rate for Adult Skills provision was 112%. Achievement rates were 74.71% a reduction from 83.10% in 2019/20. Achievement rates are a combination of factors, retention (if a learner stays on course) and pass rate when a learner achieves the qualification.
- 5.4 The total numbers of national qualifications achieved by MAES learners also reduced from 2633 in 19/20 to 1915 in 20/21, a reduction of 28% on the previous year.
- 5.5 Overall performance against the funding target was 88.84%. (£3,089 million as against a target of £3.478 million). Because MAES overachieved its funding target in 18/19 this equates to almost an 20% drop on pre pandemic levels.
- 5.6 Community Learning recruitment continues throughout the entire year and therefore has been more significantly affected. Overall performance was 76.94% of Target (5771 learners against a target of 7,500). This included 893 'harder to engage' learners, on programmes delivered by our Community Learning providers. This was significantly lower than the 1,615 learners engaged in this programme in Pre pandemic.
- 5.7 ESFA Funded 19-24 High Needs Funding participation figures were slightly underachieved 46 against a Target of 47 however the financial target was overachieved by some 29% because of the volume of learning within the programme. Learners on this programme attended face to face classes in MAES Centres throughout the year with additional funding provided through the local authority to ensure covid safe travel patterns.

6.0 Enrolment/Recruitment Term 1 September to December 21

- 6.1 The table below shows a breakdown by curriculum areas of MAES performance for Term 1 September to December. There were 5373 enrolments against a target of 6379 which is 84.22% of target. (See table below)

Curriculum Area	Actual No of enrolments Sept to Dec	Target number for enrolment Sept to Dec	% Target
English	1019	1223	83.32%
Maths	858	1214	70.68%

ESOL	1922	1800	106.78%
Community Interpreting	172	240	71.67%
Vocational & ER	416	771	53.96%
Community Learning	105	117	89.74%
Digital Skills	643	734	87.60%
Prep for Work	215	256	83.98%
STEPS	23	24	95.83%
Total	5373	6379	84.22%

6.2 We are taking further actions in term 2 and 3 to ensure that that current shortfall is recouped/minimised. This includes Infilling into existing provision where appropriate, selective additionality and additional recruitment campaigns for new courses.

6.3 Performance to date of CLF partners is as follows.

Community Learning Fund Commissioned Provision	Actual No of enrolments Sept to Dec	Target number for enrolment Sept to Dec	% Target
Back On Track	833	711	117%
Impact for All	285	187	152%
Proper Job	116	75	154%
Reform Radio	88	108	81%
Sonder Radio	33	60	55%
YES CIC	2	32	6%
Sharks Community Trust	6	40	15%
	1363	1213	112%

6.4 Impact for all, Proper Job and Back on track have recruited particularly strongly against profiled targets. Both Yes CIC and Sharks Community Trust, both new providers, started later than originally planned and therefore are significantly behind the original profiled numbers.

The Service has performance review meetings scheduled for each partner in w/b 24th January to identify areas of concern and any remedial action that will be required to ensure that the contractual targets are met.

7.0 MAES External Review April 21 to June 21

7.1 As a result of MAES overspending in the 2020/21 financial year and significantly eating into its reserves, FE associates was commissioned to carry out a review of MAES. Its purpose was to make recommendations on the future shape of MAES, to ensure that it is financially sustainable, agile and can respond to current & future need and opportunities. The report set out 11 recommendations some of which are focused on a longer term reset to ensure

that strategic options for change are considered and that national, GMCA and MCC policy objectives are successfully aligned.

8.0 ESOL and ESOL Advice Service

8.1 Manchester ESOL Advice Service was established by MAES in July 2019 in partnership with The Manchester College (TMC) with £197k funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MCHLG). MAES, TMC and GMCA committed resources to continue the Service in 20/21 and 21/22.

- It provides a **single gateway** for adults with English language needs in Manchester to access the learning that is right for them
- It is a **partnership between 23 providers** in Manchester including the WEA, community ESOL organisations and training providers
- A **centralised waiting list** is at the heart of this approach. Providers no longer hold their own, separate waiting lists and do not carry out their own assessments for ESOL after their open enrolment

The mapping of ESOL provision and establishment of regular communication between the ESOL providers in Manchester, has led to a better understanding of the provision available and enabled us to work collaboratively to address the gaps and ensure a more effective use of existing resources.

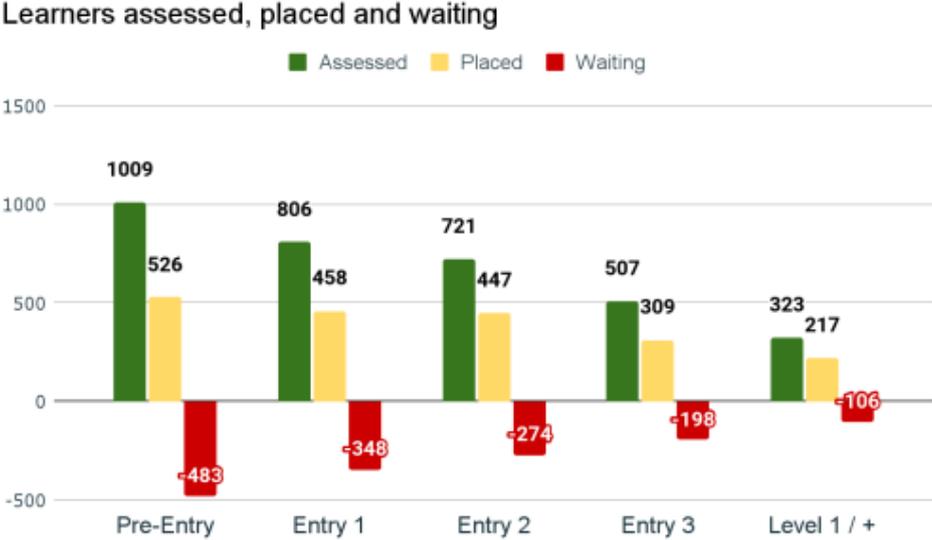
Providers can maximise the use of existing spaces on courses quickly and efficiently with the referrals made through the ESOL Advice Service. Learners are contacted and offered a place only if they met eligibility requirements for each course and were assessed at the level required to join the course. Comprehensive data reports on the demand and unmet need and custom reports have been created and shared with ESOL providers and stakeholders to inform their planning and delivery.

8.2 We have been leading six other Greater Manchester local authorities (Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford) to develop a Greater Manchester ESOL Advice Service, funded through GMCA. We are hoping to extend this to the remaining three Greater Manchester local authorities in 21/22. Local ESOL hubs deliver assessments for people resident in their areas and run a referral service to ESOL provision in their local authority area, including the management of one waiting list per area that serves all local providers. Manchester is providing central coordination, including cross-area placements where it meets the learners' needs, and has supported the development of the local ESOL hubs including constructive and practical assistance such as editable tools and templates, relevant training and support for data collection and evaluation activities.

8.3 We have further developed our website at www.gmesol.org with clear and useful information for learners, stakeholders and ESOL providers including a bank of links to resources by level to support delivery, including online learning during COVID-19.

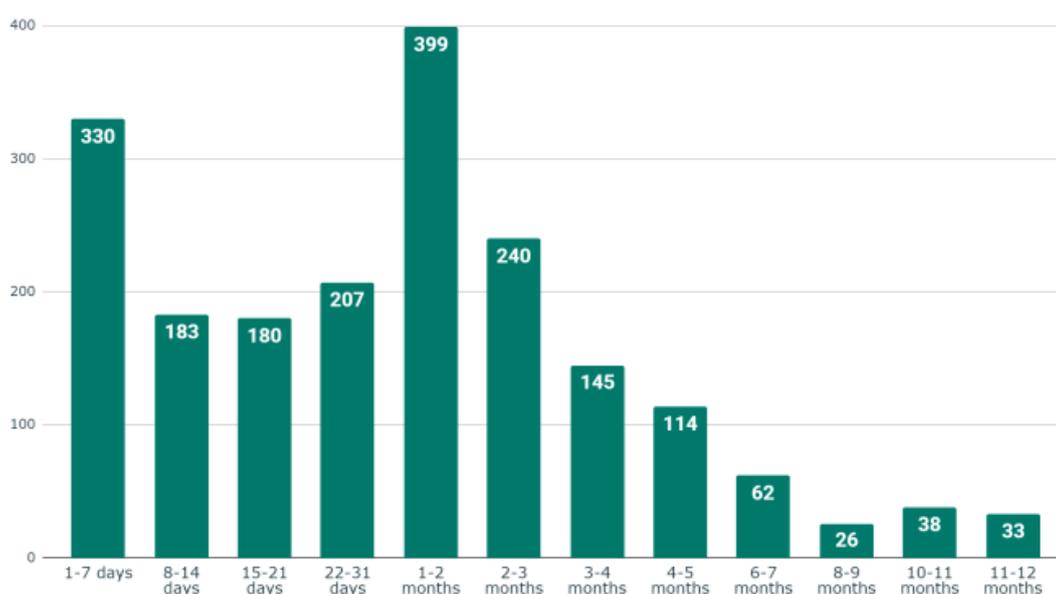
8.4 **August 2020 – August 2021**

In 20/21, the Manchester ESOL Advice Service completed a total of 3,953 assessments, 3,579 (90.5%) were online and phone assessments. A total of 1,957 (58.1%) learners were placed on a suitable course. 1,409 learners remained on the waiting list.



A large proportion of learners (66.3%) joined a course within two months of being placed on the centralised waiting list. 330 of these learners were offered a learning opportunity at the time or within a week of their assessment. The breakdown of average waiting times from assessment to joining a class in the chart indicates that the likelihood of joining a course decreases with the time on the waiting list - only 21.3% of all learners who were placed (418 individuals) accepted the offer of a course after they had been on the waiting list for over 3 months.

Average waiting times from assessment to class



In 2020-21, Manchester ESOL Advice Service achieved a number of positive outcomes for learners, ESOL providers and stakeholders and the wider impact on a strategic level through collaborative work on the Greater Manchester ESOL Advice Service.

The key outputs include:

- Comprehensive data reports on the demand and unmet need and custom reports. Bi-monthly reports shared with ESOL providers and stakeholders have led to optimising provision, i.e. helping fill the gaps quickly and efficiently and setting up new provision based on the evidence of need which created additional 273 spaces at Pre-Entry- Entry 2 levels as well as ESOL and digital skills courses
- Establishing clear referral routes for stakeholders looking for ESOL provision for their customers has led to an increase in referrals, particularly from JCP offices
- 58.1% of all assessed learners (1,957 individuals) have joined a suitable course following an assessment. Learners have access to and are made aware of a greater number of options than if they registered with one provider and 74.5% of all assessed learners have been offered at least one course or learning opportunity.
- Starting to address the need for digital inclusion by collating evidence of needs through assessments and working with providers to offer suitable learning opportunities. As a result of this work, new ESOL and Digital Skills courses have been set up in 2020-21 and 2021/22 offering 270 places.
- Identification of priority groups for placements on courses, which included learners who remained on the waiting list in 2019-20, furloughed workers and those who lost their job during the pandemic. We have also continued to give priority to learners referred to assessments by stakeholders, such as DWP and organisations who support vulnerable people with 51.4% of DWP customers securing a place on a course following an assessment.

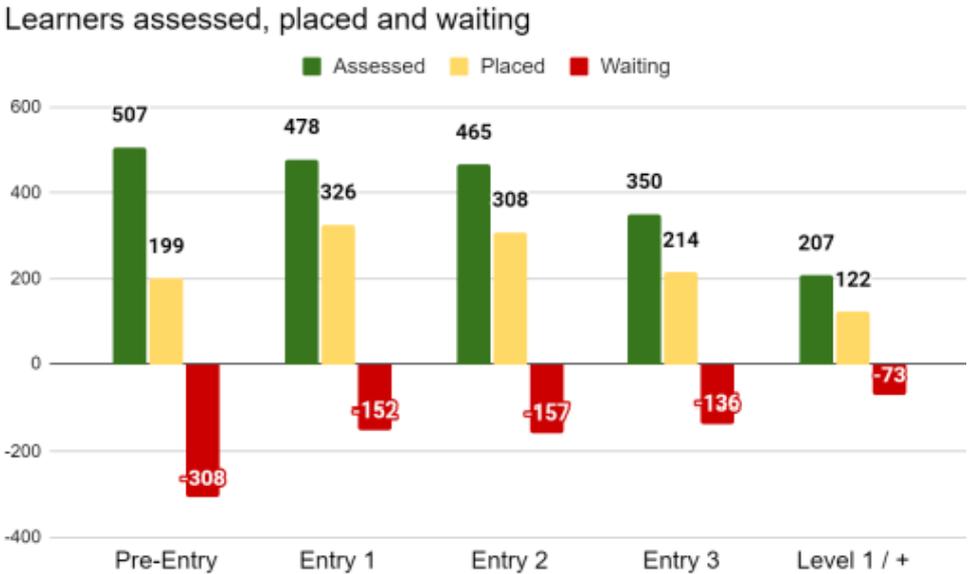
8.5 **September 2021 – January 2022**

There has been a continuing demand for ESOL courses across Manchester, despite the various disruptions caused by the pandemic. Although most assessments have continued to take place online and over the phone, a number of MAES and The Manchester College venues have continued to deliver weekly assessments, with other providers staffing additional sessions on an ad hoc basis. The Workers Education Association (WEA), Migrant Support and Golden Centre of Opportunity have also allocated staffing time to help meet the demand for ESOL assessments in Manchester.

From September 2021 to January 2022, 2,147 assessments have been completed. 1,712 (79.3%) of these were completed as online and phone assessments and 445 (20.7%) completed face-to-face. A total of 1,169 (58.2%) learners have been placed so far. An additional 235 places have been offered by providers in response to identified needs. There has been an increase of 45.9% in the number of referrals from organisations, including Job Centre Plus, refugee support organisations, housing associations, care services and community organisations.

The majority of Manchester residents looking to join an ESOL course have been assessed at low levels, ranging from Pre-Entry to Entry 2 (72%). The main deficit of places is at Pre-Entry level in all areas of Manchester (ranging from 54.6% of Pre-Entry learners living in central areas of Manchester waiting for a class, to 70% in the North). The demand for Entry 1 courses is also high in East Manchester, with 48 learners still waiting for a course, and 43 learners in the central areas.

Learners assessed, placed and waiting



9.0 Priorities for the current academic year

For the service to continue to support the priorities of Manchester and the wider community, it must successfully return to a position of financial stability where it provides a high-quality service to residents. It is important that the service focuses on the following priorities for the remainder of the current academic year:

- Implement a recovery plan which is monitored regularly. This recovery plan aims to ensure that income from funding is maximised and shortfalls in recruitment are addressed.
- implement more rigorous curriculum performance monitoring which aims to:
 - Improve headline achievement rates to meet national rates, (potentially between 87% and 89%)
 - Improve headline pass rates on adult skills programmes to 95%
- Continue to work on the future shape of MAES, to ensure that it is financially sustainable, agile and can respond to current & future need and opportunities.

The priorities outlined above will allow MAES to emerge from the Covid environment as a service that is a financially sound, high-quality provider of Adult Education and Skills.