

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** Economy Scrutiny Committee – 9 March 2023

**Subject:** Manchester Adult Education Service Performance Update

**Report of:** Director of Inclusive Economy  
Head of MAES

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**Summary**

The purpose of this report is to provide information on MAES performance in 2021/22 and the skills challenges in the city.

**Recommendations**

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

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**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

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information on MAES performance in 2021/22 and the skills challenges in the city.
- 1.2 MAES is a successful service that delivers core provision aligned to the strategic skills priorities for GMCA (Our People, Our Place) and Manchester City Council (Our Manchester) to develop a more inclusive economy and ensure all Manchester residents have access to the skills they need to participate. The provision, both for adult skills and community learning include vital components of the skills required for routes into employment, well-being, inclusion, and community cohesion, such as ESOL, English, Maths and Digital proficiency. Operating from centres geographically spread across Manchester, the MAES provision is accessible and provides adults with learning opportunities at the heart of their local community.
- 1.3 In 2021/22, the majority of learners made good progress and achieved qualifications and/or personal learning goals.
- Good achievement of Community learning goals at 88.6%
  - Good achievement rate for Adult Skills at 86.3%
  - Outstanding achievement of GCSE high grades 4-9 in Maths (77.9%)
  - Good achievement of GCSE high 4-9 in English (62.5%)
- 1.4 MAES like all Adult Education providers has not had its funding increased with inflation for more than a decade. This required MAES to rely on the use of its reserve and limited efficiency gains to ensure a balanced budget, in 2021/22 the Service completed a significant restructure with the aim of putting it on a secure financial footing resulting in an overall net zero draw on reserve. This was largely successful however there are still significant cost pressures within the system which has resulted the Service needed to plan based on the use of some reserve.
- 1.5 In some areas the MAES estate has improved, for example, use of the newly opened Gorton Hub. However, other MAES venues such as Greenheys (Moss Side), Newton Heath and Withington are in need of urgent attention.

## **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 2021/22 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 – 2023 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 8 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. The Adult Skills programme includes Maths and English up to GCSE, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and Vocational courses in Health & Social Care and Childcare & Education. The Community Learning programme includes Everyday English, Preparation for Work, Digital Skills, Community Interpreting, Talk English plus a programme of short courses promoting healthy living and improving access to health information and advice. MAES also commissions 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, recent immigrants who have poor English language skills, some of whom are highly qualified in their country of origin 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 Current Projects**

3.1 In collaboration with the Work and Skills Team, MAES have initiated a sustainability project which began in November. The aims of the project are:

1. To establish a whole-service approach to carbon literacy training and awareness raising at MAES which enables learners on all courses to develop their skills and knowledge.
2. To identify and establish a range of opportunities and community projects through working with key partners, which will enable adult learners to develop their understanding of carbon literacy.
3. To create and deliver a discrete MAES Carbon Literacy curriculum for delivery in Manchester communities.

A project manager has been appointed to lead on this work. She has devised a training programme which equips teachers to deliver content on carbon literacy and sustainability to learners across the breadth of MAES courses. To date, this first half of this training has been delivered to 95 teachers and 10 Climate Champions have been trained from among MAES' teaching staff. A baseline assessment on environmental issues has also been sent to all MAES learners so that project content can be pitched appropriately.

The project manager has initiated a [newsletter](#), so that partners, staff and learners can stay up to date with progress of. She is also currently planning a range of environmental opportunities for learners to participate in, including sustainability fairs that will take place at MAES centres in February and March.

3.2 Cost of Living – MAES has been working with Learning and Development and will deliver a series of 1-hour webinars on Teams around supporting residents with the cost-of-living crisis. They will be attended by front line staff from various council departments and to other organisations such as NHS. We have delivered two workshops so far which have been very well received. We are also planning to deliver the programme to VCSE organisations from April.

### **4.0 New Programmes**

- 4.1 MAES expanded its Level 3 (A-level equivalent) provision for 2022/23; adding Leadership and Management, Counselling Skills, Health and Social Care and Mathematics in Context to the offer. In the first term, 108 learners enrolled on these courses.

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 intends to continue to grow its provision at this level in the next academic year as these qualifications enable residents to access quality employment in a range of sectors.

- 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, continue to be delivered successfully by MAES. In the last 12 months, the service has delivered these programmes in collaboration with the Civil Service, Virgin Media and Premier Inn. Around 70% of participants have secured employment as a result of participating in a MAES SWAP, a 10% increase on the previous year.

## **5.0 Performance and Funding 21/22**

- 5.1 For the teaching year 21/22, both GMCA and the ESFA confirmed that there would be a return to the pre pandemic performance and management rules this meant that MAES (and all other grant funded providers) were paid on an agreed profile up to the contractual value. However, at the end of the contract year (Nov 22) a reconciliation process would take place which would determine if there were any unspent/unearned funds which would need to be returned to the funder. MAES therefore returned £58k to the GMCA less than 1% of contract value. This is a positive position as MAES was still experiencing a residual impact of the pandemic which impacted on overall recruitment, and lower attendance levels in the early part of the year when the omicron variant was impacting.
- 5.2 Targets and key performance indicators are set each year and performance is monitored monthly by MAES senior leaders. Headline Service level performance indicators are detailed in the table below.

MAES Performance Indicators	Actual 20/21	Targets 21/22	Actual 21/22	Actual % of Target
Adult Skills Formula Funding	£3,089,806	£3,558,733	3,507,461	98.55%
Learners No (All Streams)	9153	10,000	9,865	98.65%
Adult Skills Learner No	3382	3,000	3,098	103.26%
Community Learning No	5771	7,000	6,767	96.67%
Adult Skills Enrolments*	6616	4,769	7,562	158.56 %
Community Learning Enrolments*	10349	11,776	11,036	93.72%
National Qualifications Achieved	1915	2,500	3330	133.20%

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

MAES Performance Indicators	Actual 20/21	Targets 21/22	Actual 21/22	Percentage point Variation to target
Adult Skills Retention Rate	89.80%	95%	95.2%	0.20%
Community Learning Retention Rate	90.60%	91%	91.2%	0.40%
Adult Skills Achievement Rate	74.70%	86%	86.3%	0.30%
Community Learning Achievement Rate	88.00%	88%	88.6%	0.60%

- 5.3 In 21/22 the service reached 98.65% of its recruitment targets for the year. (9,865 learners against a target of 10,000) this compares favourably with the Covid impacted year of 20/21 where performance was 87.17%. Performance varied depending on the type of provision. The participation for Adult Skills provision was 103.26% of target. Achievement rates were 86.3% an increase of 11.6 percentage points over the covid impacted 2020/21. 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 increased from 1915 in 20/21 to 3330 in 21/22, an increase of 74% on the previous year.
- 5.5 Overall performance against the formula funding target was 98.55%. (£3,507 million as against a target of £3,558 million). A substantial improvement on the Covid impacted 20/21 Academic year when funding was 88.84% (£3,089 million against a target of target £3,478 Million).

- 5.6 Community Learning recruitment continues throughout the entire year and overall performance was 96.67% of target (6767 learners against a target of 7000) this compares favourably with the Covid impacted year of 20/21 where MAES achieved 76.94% of target. This included 1241 'harder to engage' learners, on programmes delivered by our Community Learning Fund Partners (CLF).
- 5.7 ESFA Funded 19-24 High Needs Funding participation figures were slightly under 46 against a target of 47 however the financial target was overachieved by some 2.45% because of the volume of learning within the programme.
- 5.8 MAES also piloted a small amount of Level 3 provision through the national/regional skills fund. The pilot performed well in terms of participation – 107.69% (84) learners against a target of 78, however, some of the recruitment took place later in the year which had an impact on funding levels and therefore overall performance against the financial target was 82.10%. The success of this pilot has meant that the MAES has been able to offer a larger level 3 programme in 22/23 as can be seen in the new programmes section above.

## 6.0 Enrolment/Recruitment Term 1 September to December 22

- 6.1 The table below shows a breakdown by curriculum areas of MAES performance for Term 1 September to December. There were 5171 enrolments against a target of 5051 which is 100.23% of target. (See table below)

Curriculum Area	Target Course Enrolment Sept to Dec 22	Actual Course Enrolment Sept to Dec 22	% Target
English	748	706	94.38%
Maths	708	694	98.02%
ESOL	1664	1887	113.40%
Community Interpreting	210	175	83.33%
Vocational & ER	696	503	72.27%
Community Learning	496	720	145.1%
Digital Skills	386	323	83.67%
Prep for Work	96	124	129.16%
STEPS	47	39	82.97%
Total	5051	5171	100.23%

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



new courses. We are working with colleagues from MCC and our subcontracted partners to increase referrals to the STEPS programme.

6.3 MAES has commissioned provision from six community partners in 2022/23. These include:

Back on Track	Run a range of courses, activities and volunteering opportunities with unemployed adults going through a period of recovery or rehabilitation, having experienced problems with alcohol or drugs, offending, homelessness and mental health.
Impact for All	Run courses aimed at raising self-confidence, improving skills and motivation, tailored for local unemployed Longsight residents and the barriers they face to gain employment.
Proper Job	Run courses which use drama with psychotherapy-based approaches to empower unemployed individuals, raise confidence and lead to positive change.
Reform Radio	Run courses which focus on personal development and employability through social media training for young adults aged 19-30.
Sonder Radio	Run courses that promote wellbeing, reduce isolation, advocate digital inclusion and support unemployed people aged 50+ into work, volunteering and further learning.
Sow the City	Run courses in foraging and growing and cooking food from scratch, to support sustainable living and help with cost of living.

6.4 Performance to date of CLF partners is as follows.

Community Learning Fund Commissioned Provision	Target Course Enrolments Sept to Dec 22	Actual Course Enrolments Sept to Dec 22	% Target
Back On Track	933	1042	111.6%
Impact for All	200	250	125%
Proper Job	140	175	125%
Reform Radio	105	96	109%
Sonder Radio	48	41	85.41%
Sow The City	80	32	40%
	1506	1636	108.63%

Impact for All, Proper Job, Back on Track and Reform Radio have recruited particularly strongly against profiled targets. Sow the City the new provider, has struggled to recruit to its innovative courses and is therefore struggling against original profiled target.

The Service held performance review meetings with each partner in December to identify areas of concern Sow the City were asked to consider reducing the contractual targets and consequent funding we have now agreed a revised level of funding that we and the provider believe is achievable.

## 7.0 MAES Review of the Quality of Education

7.1 MAES are in scope for a full Ofsted inspection by the end of 2025. In order to measure the progress made since the last inspection, a review of the Quality of Education was commissioned and carried out by an external organisation.

7.2 The review concluded that MAES has the following strengths:

- Leaders plan and sequence an ambitious curriculum to ensure that it reflects well the needs and priorities of learners and employers
- Curriculum meets needs well including through careful consideration and selection of partner organisations
- Well selected and committed governors understand and align with the provider's values and priorities
- Leaders and staff promote and implement digital skills so that learners acquire these well and can apply the knowledge and skills they have gained in their wider lives
- Staff are well qualified
- Learners' behaviours and attitudes are excellent. Staff have high expectations of, and ambition for, learners, and as a result classrooms are calm and orderly, and learners demonstrate a strong commitment to learning
- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) are strong
- Service self-assessment report is well written and is sensibly evidenced

7.3 The review highlighted that MAES has the following areas for improvement:

- Sharing of practice
- The use of ILPs
- Staff preparation for inspection
- Review of work placements

## 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 one-off £197k funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MCHLG). Based on its initial success MAES, TMC and the GMCA committed resources to continue the Service in 20/21, 21/22 and 22/23.

- 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 period in August/September

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 meet eligibility requirements for each course and are assessed at the level required to join the course.

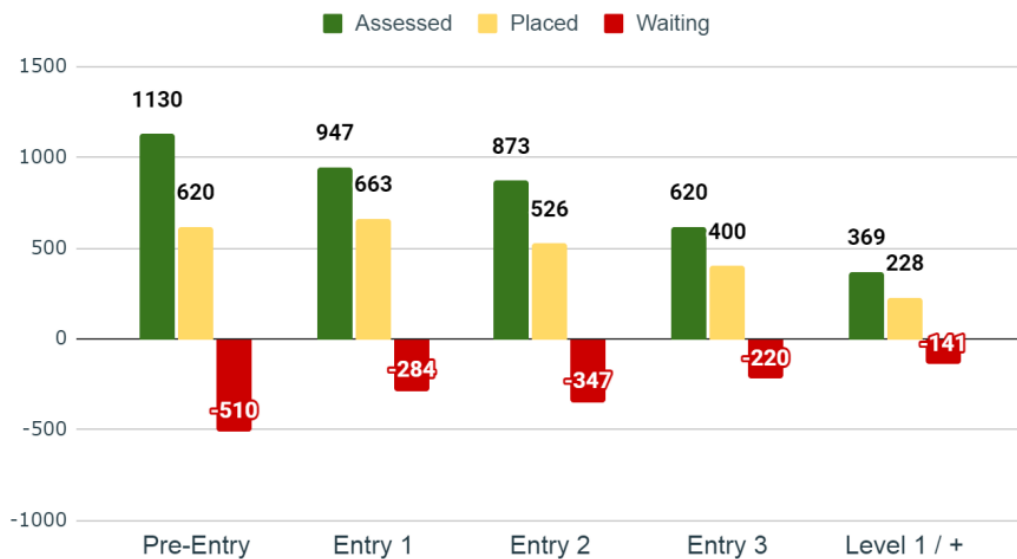
Comprehensive data reports on the demand and unmet need and custom reports have been created and shared with ESOL providers and stakeholders to inform their planning and delivery.

- 8.2 We have been leading the other 9 Greater Manchester local authorities to replicate the model in their areas. This work is supported financially by GMCA who were keen to see the Manchester model operating across Greater Manchester. So far 7 of the other local authorities are up and running and further work is being done to get the remaining two operational. 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](http://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. There are links to online learning for learners to use independently where possible while they are waiting for a place. We have also developed a referral pathway on the website, whereby an organisation, a professional or a friend can refer a learner, with their consent. Both parties are then contacted with details of the assessment date and outcome. This has been welcomed by referrers, from DWP to Ukrainian sponsors.

#### 8.4 **August 2021 – August 2022**

In 21/22, the Manchester ESOL Advice Service completed a total of 4,385 assessments (an increase from 20/21 of 12%). 2,349 (53.6%) were online and phone assessments and the rest took place face-to-face. We are moving further away from online and phone assessments this year, as we have found face-to-face to be more effective and accurate.

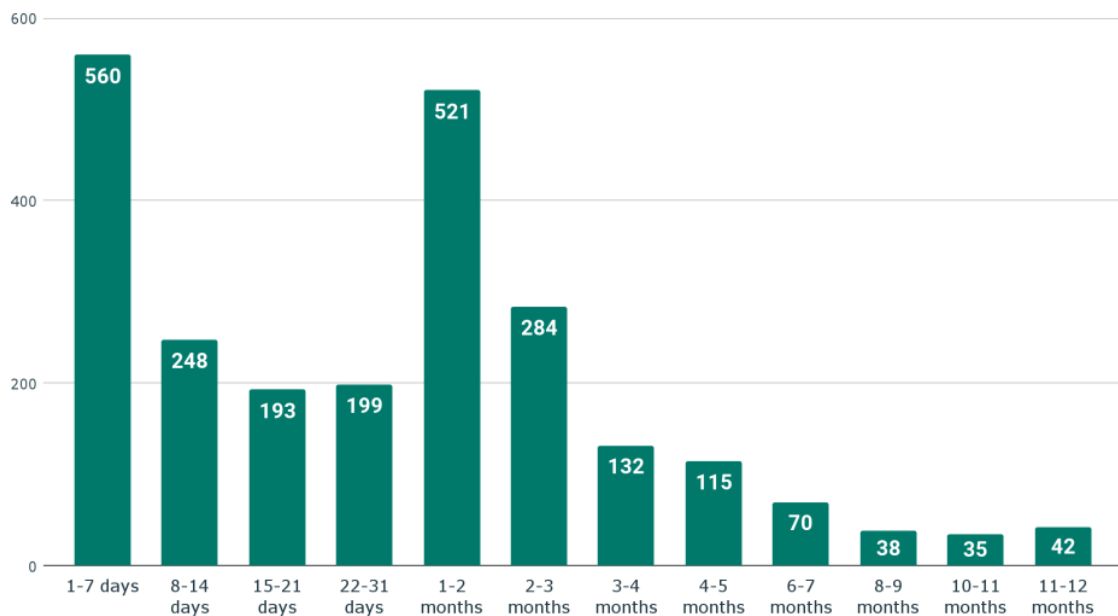
## Learners assessed, placed and waiting



A total of 2,347 (61%) learners were placed on a suitable course. This is an increase of 390 more residents being offered places compared to 2020/21. 1,502 learners remained on the waiting list. However, 809 (53.9%) of all learners on the waiting list have been contacted with an offer of at least one suitable course.

A high proportion of learners (70.6%) joined a course within three months of being placed on the centralised waiting list. 560 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 17.8% of all learners who were placed (300 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 2021/22, 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 136 spaces at Pre-Entry-Entry 2 levels, as well as ESOL and digital skills courses, and bespoke learning programmes for learners with BNO visas and their dependants.
- Establishing clear referral routes for stakeholders looking for ESOL provision for their customers, which has led to a steady increase in referrals, particularly from JCP offices. The service has run bespoke assessment sessions for Job Centre referrals, including in Mosley Street and Rusholme JCP offices. ESOL awareness sessions were held with Job Centre work coaches to promote the ESOL Advice Service and to highlight the referral process. The data has demonstrated that these measures have had a positive impact, as there has been a 33% increase in the conversion rate of referral to assessment since January 2022, with 1,026 JCP customers having been assessed overall.
- 61% of all assessed learners (2,437 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 82.4% of all assessed learners have been offered at least one course or learning opportunity.

- Collaborating with other local authorities in Greater Manchester and supporting new local ESOL Hubs (Oldham and Stockport) based on the Manchester model and developing agreements and processes to enable collaborative working between the participating areas.
- Developing and maintaining the website at [www.gmesol.org](http://www.gmesol.org) with clear application and referral processes, as well as useful information for learners, stakeholders and ESOL providers across seven local authorities in Greater Manchester, including a bank of links to resources by level to support online learning.

## 8.5 September 2022 – January 2023

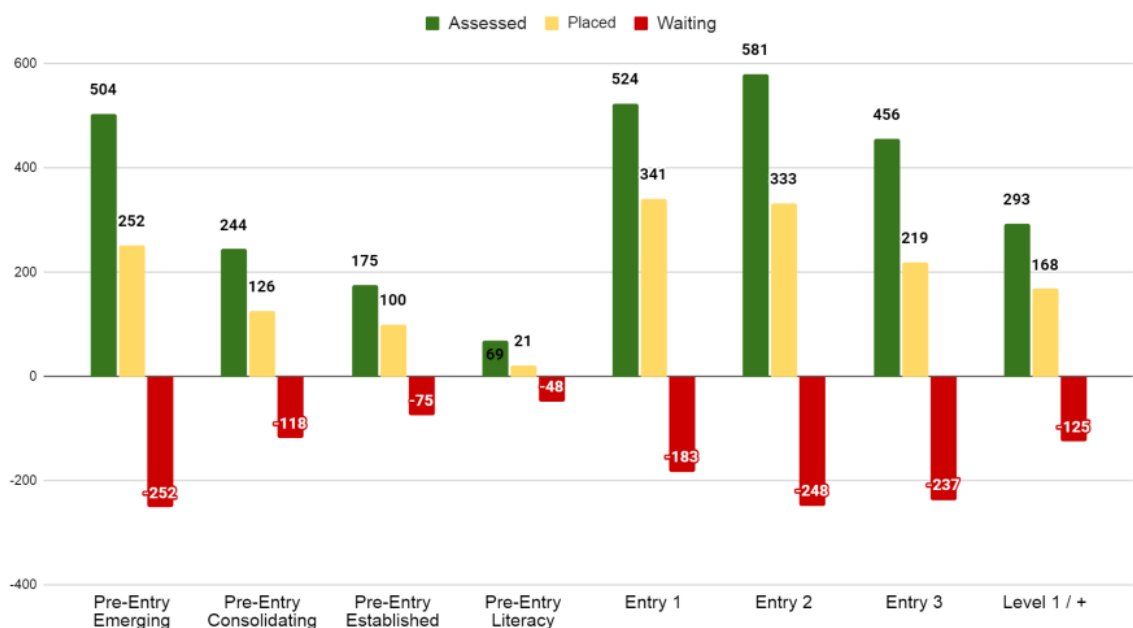
There has been a continuing demand for ESOL courses across Manchester. Since August 2022, face-to-face assessments have been delivered in the following venues:

- 5 MAES venues - weekly
- 4 Manchester College campuses - weekly
- 2 Job Centres - bi-weekly
- Migrant Support, Caritas Refugee Education and Impact 4 All - as needed.

From September 2022 to January 2023, 2,983 2,147 assessments have been completed. This is an increase of 836 (39%) on this point last year.

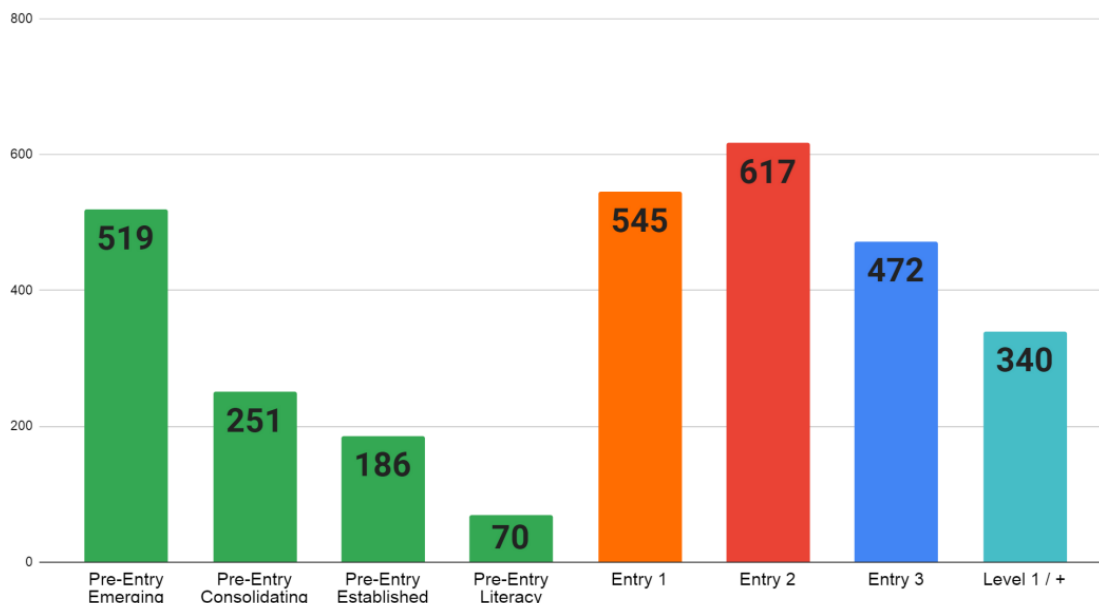
A total of 1,565 (54.8%) learners have been placed on a suitable ESOL course following an assessment so far in 22-23. An additional 414 learners have been placed from the 2021-22 waiting list. 1,286 remain on the 2022-23 centralised waiting list, 622 of the learners who remain on the waiting list have been offered at least one learning opportunity.

Learners assessed, placed and waiting



Overall, the majority of Manchester residents looking to join an ESOL course have been assessed at low levels, ranging from Pre-Entry to Entry 2 (73%). In the updated 2022-23 screener, the Pre-Entry level has been subdivided to ensure that low level learners can be placed in a provision that is suitable for their individual needs. The data clearly demonstrates that the highest demand is courses for the lowest level- Emerging Pre-Entry (519 learners). Waiting lists are the longest at Pre-Entry in each area, particularly in the East of Manchester with 131 learners still waiting for a place.

### Levels of learners



## 9.0 Priorities for the current academic year

9.1 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 new curriculum planning process. This plan aims to ensure that the efficient use of resources is maximised therefore shortfalls in recruitment and funding are addressed.
- Improve headline achievement rates to meet national rates, (potentially between 88% and 92%)
- 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.

9.2 The priorities outlined above will allow MAES to continue to exist as a service that is a financially sound, high-quality provider of Adult Education and Skills.