

# Inspection of Manchester City Council

Inspection dates: 20 to 23 June 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Adult learning programmes	<b>Good</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Information about this provider

Manchester City Council (MCC) manages its community learning and adult skills provision within the council's adult education service, MAES. Learners study a range of accredited and non-accredited, long and short courses, funded by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the Education and Skills Funding Agency. MAES works with eight subcontractors, two of which provide education to learners with high needs. At the time of the inspection, six subcontractors provide community learning provision to 286 hard-to-reach learners. Learners attend centres located within their local communities across Manchester.

At the time of the inspection, MAES had 3,381 adult learners and 44 learners with high needs aged between 16 and 25. Most learners study courses at level 1 or below. The remaining learners follow courses at levels 2 and 3. Around two thirds of learners study adult skills courses, and one third follows community learning provision. Most learners study courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), digital skills, English, mathematics, early years, and health and social care. Twenty-three learners with high needs study one of three pathways with MAES where they work towards independent living skills or further training and employment. The rest study personalised programmes with the subcontractors Manchester Young Lives and Pure Innovations Limited.

## **What is it like to be a learner with this provider?**

Learners enjoy the respectful and inclusive environment in which they study. They feel a sense of belonging at MAES. Most learners attend regularly and are on time to their lessons. They appreciate the enthusiastic tutors, who are supportive and encouraging. Learners are happy at MAES and are proud of their achievements.

Adult learners develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to progress in their personal lives, communities, work and further learning. They develop their communication skills and grow in confidence on their course. Learners following digital skills programmes learn how to write and send an email to an employment agency. In health and social care, learners develop group facilitation skills, which they use in the community, such as leading art classes in a homeless centre.

Learners with high needs take part in high-quality programmes at MAES and with the subcontractors. They make good progress in working towards achieving the outcomes set out in their education, health and care plan. Learners benefit from personalised programmes, including community learning for learners with more complex needs. Learners develop their independence through group projects and meaningful work experience - for example, working in local shops, cafes and animal care centres.

Learners feel safe and know how to report any concerns they have. Adult learners have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe online, such as following safe banking practices. Level 1 learners with high needs develop an understanding of consent and sexual health. However, those working below level 1 struggle to remember what they have learned.

## **What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?**

Governors, leaders and managers are passionate about their provision. They promote a culture of compassion and care through an inclusive and ambitious curriculum. Leaders and managers align and adapt their curriculums to meet the strategic skills priorities of GMCA and MCC. They have introduced a range of courses for learners who are asylum seekers or refugees. Leaders provide ESOL classes, including for Afghan and Ukrainian learners with little knowledge of the English language. They design a responsive and flexible curriculum for learners with high needs, particularly those who face significant challenges to participation in education and training.

Leaders have a clear rationale for their subcontracted provision. They collaborate with their subcontractors, who provide high-quality education through a curriculum that meets the needs of learners. For example, leaders at one subcontractor specialise in training hard-to-reach adult learners, such as ex-offenders and those who have experienced mental ill health, to participate positively within their communities. Leaders at MAES hold subcontractor staff to account for the quality of

teaching that learners receive. They identified the need for leaders at one subcontractor to improve the use of starting points for adult learners so that all learners follow a challenging curriculum.

Most learners benefit from high-quality education and training. Tutors are well qualified and hold relevant professional qualifications. They attend useful training, such as in cognitive load, metacognition and retrieval practice, to develop their teaching skills. Most tutors use their knowledge well to deliver training that is informative and varied. Learners are engaged and motivated. They value the experience and knowledge that their tutors possess.

Leaders and tutors plan the curriculum in a logical order. Adult learners on health and social care programmes study equality and diversity first, followed by safeguarding. They move on to communication and the principles of working in the care sector. Learners with high needs start by building their confidence, including working with their peers. They move on to developing a range of skills, such as counting money, reading instructions and travel training. Learners then apply the skills they learn when they take part in group projects and volunteer in the community. Most learners make good progress.

Tutors teach the curriculum in a way that allows most learners to transfer key knowledge into their long-term memories. They repeat topics and check learners' understanding frequently. Adults studying community learning courses with a subcontractor share their knowledge of recycling and how this has influenced their use and disposal of plastic. Learners with high needs practise counting through a range of activities, including playing cards, using money and participating in board games. Most learners benefit from useful feedback from their tutors, which helps them to improve. They know more and can do more because of their learning.

Adult learners develop their English skills on their programmes. For example, ESOL for work learners improve their written skills. They use conjunctions, tenses and a range of vocabulary accurately. Learners with high needs improve their English and mathematical skills through taught sessions. Tutors set individual English and mathematics targets, which learners practise in activities such as cooking sessions and community work.

Learners benefit from a range of opportunities that help them to develop their personal and social skills. ESOL learners attend speaking clubs, where they practise speaking English with their peers. Learners on digital skills courses use the skills they have learned to help their children produce homework charts and carry out research using the internet. Learners with high needs take part in enrichment activities, including a community football programme and charity work with a local food bank. Learners demonstrate high levels of respect and tolerance towards their peers and staff.

Leaders have an accurate oversight of the progress that learners make from their starting points. Most tutors use their assessment of learners' initial starting points effectively to set challenging targets. On adult 'Talk English' courses, tutors use a

bespoke application to track and monitor the progress of learners. Team leaders have routine meetings with tutors to discuss individual learner's progress and any areas of concern. They agree interventions to support learners to catch up. Currently, most learners are on target in their learning.

Leaders and managers have developed a comprehensive careers strategy across MAES provision. As part of the 'Make it Happen' careers programme, most learners benefit from careers guidance and opportunities that help them to progress on to their next steps. Leaders have rightly identified that there is further work to do to ensure that they fully embed the offer across all curriculums and centres so that all learners experience a planned careers guidance programme.

The large majority of learners progress on to employment or further learning after finishing their courses. Adult learners studying health and social care go on to study nursing or move into work roles such as care assistants. The majority of learners with high needs know what they want to do when their course ends, such as moving on to further study or into volunteering or supported internships. However, leaders have not put in place suitably robust plans to help learners who are transitioning out of MAES. Consequently, a few learners are unclear about what actions they need to take to prepare for their next steps.

Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses at MAES. Leaders and managers provide a range of high-quality information, which governors use to monitor closely the areas that need improving. Governors hold leaders to account to make the necessary changes to improve the quality of education. They ensure that leaders align the curriculum to meet local priorities, such as sustainability and improving learners' digital skills.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers promote a culture of safeguarding and protection at MAES. Tutors benefit from attending training in, for example, anxiety management, mindfulness and trauma informed practice. A few staff are mental health first aiders. Learners learn about safeguarding, mental health and well-being on their programmes.

Most learners know about the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. However, a few learners with high needs and adult learners who are studying functional skills English and digital courses find it difficult to recall this topic. Leaders have rightly identified that this is an area for improvement, particularly learners' understanding of the local risks where they live and work.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Leaders and managers should ensure that learners develop a good understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism and how it applies to them in their personal lives and at work.
- Leaders should ensure that they fully embed their careers guidance programme across all curriculums and centres so that learners receive independent information, advice and guidance that helps them to make informed career choices.
- Leaders should put in place suitably robust plans to help learners with high needs who are transitioning out of MAES know what actions they need to take to prepare for their next steps.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	53230
<b>Address</b>	PO Box 532 Manchester M60 2LA
<b>Contact number</b>	0161 234 5000
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.manchester.gov.uk">www.manchester.gov.uk</a>
<b>Head of service</b>	Brian Henry
<b>Provider type</b>	Community learning and skills
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27 and 28 February 2017
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Back on Track Manchester Ltd Impact for All Ltd Manchester Young Lives Proper Job Theatre Company Pure Innovations Limited Reform Radio Community Interest Company Sonder Radio Sow the City

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the area adult education manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

### Inspection team

Alison Cameron Brandwood, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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