

COMMUNITY LEARNING AND SKILLS

Annual Accountability Statement 2025/26



Purpose

The purpose of Kent County Council's (KCC) Community Learning and Skills Service (CLS) is to provide and secure learning opportunities for Kent's residents which will:

- engage and build confidence, preparing them for further learning and employment
- improve essential skills in areas such as English, ESOL, maths, digital skills
- equip parents/carers to support children's learning, and improve health and wellbeing to develop strong, integrated communities

This together with our strategic Aims are our 'Intent' as per the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF).

Strategic Aims



To reflect these strategic aims, our curriculum provision is aligned under the delivery areas:

- Employability, Skills and Career Progression (Adults)
- Family Learning
- Health, Wellbeing and Personal Development (Adults)
- Apprenticeships
- Study Programmes

Within Kent's provider base, CLS positions itself very much as an 'anchor' service, re-engaging learners who are furthest from the labour market and building confidence, before progressing to further learning and higher-level courses, often through colleges.

This is a position we will continue to take, whilst year-on-year developing our offer of re-engagement, entry and first level courses, particularly in sectors identified as having local and national skills shortages. Where appropriate we will also extend our offer of higher-level courses.

We also intend to work increasingly closely with Medway Unitary Authority across Kent and Medway as the Strategic Functional Economic Area.

Context and Place

Community Learning and Skills contracts with the Department for Education to annually deliver learning opportunities to all parts of the County, through our programmes for adults, Apprenticeships and Study Programmes.

Through our brands Kent Adult Education and Kent Training & Apprenticeships we aim to serve five main groups of people:

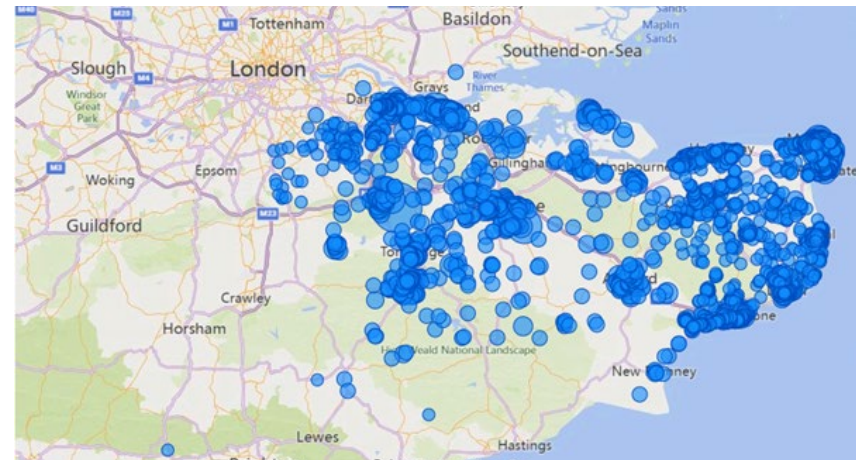
1. Young people entering the world of work or progressing to further learning
2. Adults seeking skills for employment or for progressing to further learning
3. Organisations seeking to improve the skills and potential of their staff
4. Adults learning for personal development, health and wellbeing
5. Families, especially those in Kent's disadvantaged neighbourhoods

Centres and Learners

CLS delivers courses in all 12 local authority districts in the County, ranging from dedicated Adult Education Centres to delivering from community venues, Family Hubs, schools and faith centres. In 24/25 academic year it is expected we will have delivered 2,926 courses across 305 venues and we intend to grow this model over academic year 25/26.

Learners travel from across the County and neighbouring authorities to access our services.

Postcode mapping of CLS learners 2024/25



Circles denote postcodes of learners.

(© 2025 TomTom, © 2025 Microsoft Corporation, © OpenStreetMap)

Geographical Area

Kent is divided into 12 local authority districts, with Medway Unitary Authority located within it.

Kent borders London boroughs, which has implications for workforce travelling to work in London, and is the Gateway to Europe.

The majority of Kent & Medway residents drive to work (49%), which is 3.9% above the average for England & Wales, with the area having a slightly lower propensity to work from home (30.3%) compared to the England & Wales average (31.2%).

Travel to Work Patterns

Work mainly at or from home	Underground, metro, light rail, tram	Train	Bus, minibus or coach	Taxi	Motorcycle, scooter or moped	Driving a car or van	Passenger in a car or van	Bicycle	On foot	Other method of travel to work
30.3%	0.2%	3.5%	2.1%	0.4%	0.5%	49.0%	4.0%	1.1%	7.7%	1.0%

Less than 2km	2km to less than 5km	5km to less than 10km	10km to less than 20km	20km to less than 30km	30km to less than 40km	40km to less than 60km	60km and over	Work mainly at or from home	Works mainly at an offshore installation, in no fixed place, or outside the UK
10.6%	10.7%	9.0%	10.2%	5.5%	2.4%	2.3%	1.8%	30.3%	17.2%

(Source: 2021 Census for England & Wales, the South East region, Kent, Medway unitary authority and each of the 12 local authority districts within Kent)

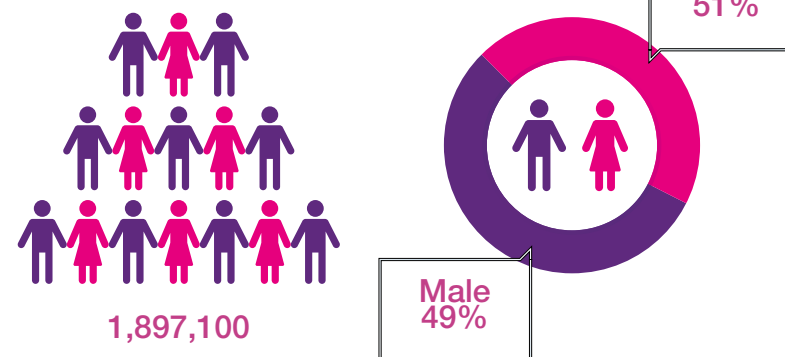
Kent & Medway residents typically travel further to work with those travelling 20km or more to work 3.6% higher than the average for England & Wales.

Data taken from the Mid-Year Population Estimates as published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in January 2025 shows Kent & Medway's total population is 1,897,100, with 51% being female and 49% male.

Year on year, Kent & Medway has seen more births than deaths and more people moving in to area than leaving. The result has been steady population growth in the County by 20,000 between 2022 & 2023.

Kent & Medway has a working population (16 – 64) = 1,151,231 of which 79.1% are economically active.

Resident Population



Social and Economic Characteristics

Economic Activity

Data from the Kent & Medway Economic Dashboard shows unemployment in Kent & Medway is 3.6%, which is an increase of 5.2% year on year. Youth unemployment (18 – 24 year olds) has seen the largest rise year on year, increasing by 10.1% to 5.8%.

Thanet has the highest unemployment rate in the area at 5.6%, with youth unemployment in the district 10.2%.

Qualifications

Kent & Medway have a lower proportion of its working population having the highest level of qualifications compared to the rest of Great Britain, being 5.1% lower. The percentage of people having no qualifications is also marginally higher than the national average by 0.1%.

Kent & Medway does however, have a higher percentage that have obtained RQF1 to RFQ3 qualifications.

RQF = Regulated Qualifications Framework

RQF1 = GCSE grades 1-3 (G-D)

RQF2 = GCSE grades 4-9 (C-A*)

RQF3 = A level

RQF4+ = Certificate of higher education, level 4 diploma or level 4 NVQ and above

Qualifications of population aged 16-64

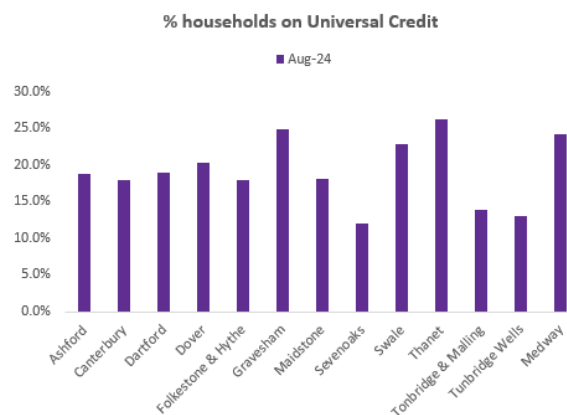
	Kent & Medway	Great Britain
No Qualifications	6.6%	6.5%
Other Qualifications	2.4%	4.6%
RQF1 only	3.5%	2.5%
RQF2 only	21.1%	18.7%
RQF3 only	24.2%	20.6%
RQF4+	42.2%	47.3%

(Source: Kent & Medway Economic Dashboard – January 2025)

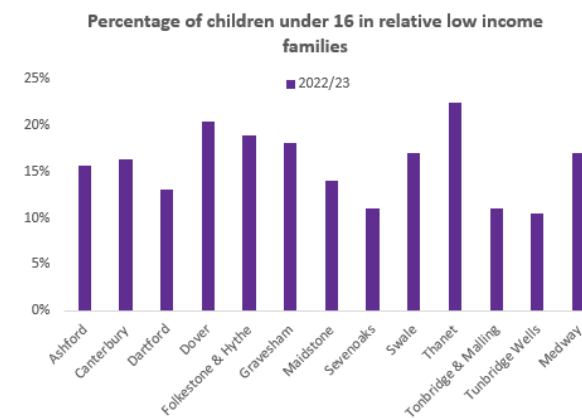
Financial Hardship

Kent has 4 districts (Swale, Medway, Gravesham and Thanet) that are above the national average (21.4%) for the number of households on Universal Credit.

Thanet along with Dover also ranks above the national average of 19.8% for the percentage of children under 16 in low income families.



(Source: DWP)



(Source: DWP Stat Xplore)

Business and Employment

According to the Kent & Medway Economic Dashboard, the number of enterprises in Kent & Medway is 73,495.

The construction industry accounts for the largest proportion of businesses in Kent (18.3%) providing 44,000 jobs. This proportion is significantly higher than Great Britain (13.9%).

The professional, scientific and technical industry has the second highest number of businesses based in Kent (10,185) accounting for 15.8% of all enterprises in the County.

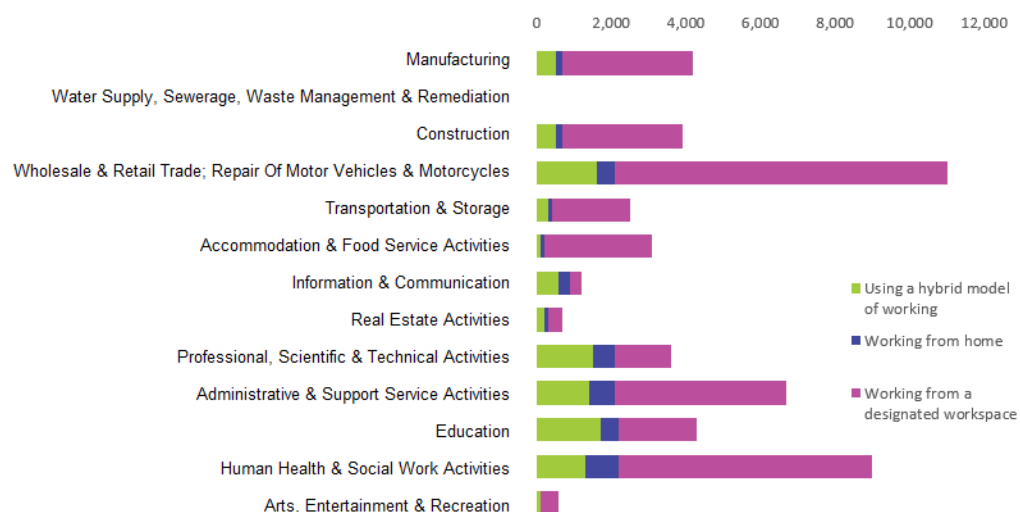
Kent & Medway has a high proportion of micro businesses with 89.9% employing less than ten people. Medium and large enterprises employing 50 or more employees account for 1.8% of all businesses in Kent & Medway.

Kent businesses in the wholesale and retail trade have the largest proportion of employees (16.2%) followed by 14.8% working in human health and social work activities and then 9.3% in education.

Number of enterprises by sector



Number of employee jobs by sector



(Source: Kent & Medway Economic Dashboard – January 2025)

Approach to Developing the Annual Accountability Statement

The aims, objectives and targets identified in this statement are the result of a high degree of engagement and interaction between KCC CLS and key stakeholders across the County.

It complements and underpins the priorities identified in KCC's Strategic Statements as in Framing Kent's Future and Securing Kent's Future, as well of those of its constituent directorates for Adult Social Care and Health; Children, Young People and Education; Growth, Environment and Transport as well as Chief and Deputy Chief Executive's Departments.

It has also actively engaged and interacted with a wide range of stakeholders external to the Council. These include local schools and colleges, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, third sector agencies operating in the County and agencies such as HOLEX and the Department for Work and Pensions.

Furthermore, it is also the product of widescale engagement with Kent's residents, as employers and employees, trainees, apprentices, parents, volunteers and its past, present and future learners.

Finally, it supports the overall direction of travel identified by the Department for Education, Ofsted (in its Education Inspection Framework) and national governmental priorities, including the Get Britain Working white paper.

The Need for Skills

The Government's white paper 'Get Britain Working' set out an ambition to achieve 80% employment rate and build an inclusive and thriving labour market where everyone has the opportunity of good work, and the chance to get on at work. It outlined 3 pillars to achieve this:

- a modern Industrial Strategy and Local Growth Plans – to create more good jobs in every part of the country
- improving the quality and security of work through the Plan to Make Work Pay
- the biggest reforms to employment support for a generation, bringing together skills and health to get more people into work and to get on in work

The paper also highlighted 6 key issues that require tackling:

- too many people are excluded from the labour market – especially those with health conditions, caring responsibilities or lower skill levels
- too many young people leave school without essential skills or access to high-quality further learning, an apprenticeship or support to work so that they can thrive at the start of their career
- too many people are stuck in insecure, poor quality and often low-paying work, which contributes to a weaker economy and also affects their health and wellbeing
- too many women who care for their families still experience challenges staying in and progressing in work

- too many employers cannot fill their vacancies due to labour and skills shortages, holding back economic growth and undermining living standards
- there is too great a disparity in labour market outcomes between different places and for different groups of people

At local level, The Kent and Medway Economic Framework set out three overarching objectives to support the development of an economy that is more “productive, sustainable and inclusive”.

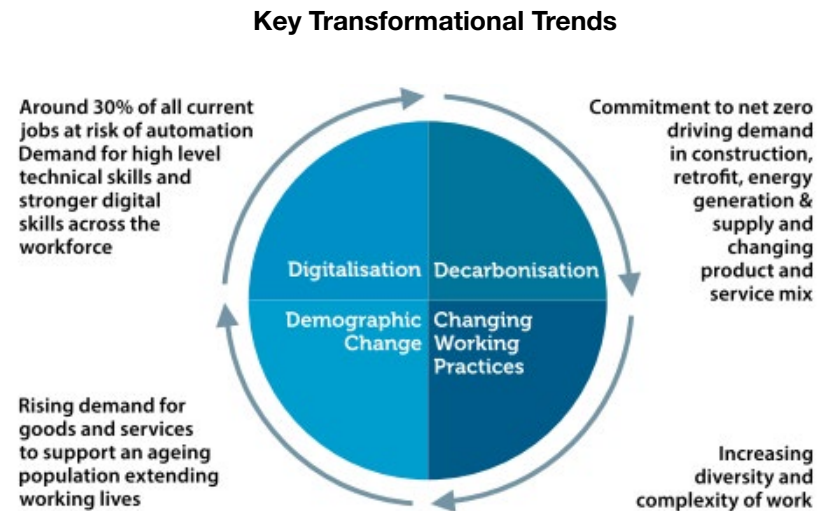
Longer term, key transformational trends identified were:

- decarbonisation and the route to net zero
- digitalisation
- demographic change
- impact of changing working practices.

The Kent and Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan (August 2023) identified the following sectors key to Kent & Medway skills needs:

- Construction
- Manufacturing & Engineering
- Fresh Food & Food Production
- Health & Social Care
- Education

Alongside these, the sectors Transport & Logistics and Creative Industries will have future skills needs.



(Source: The Kent and Medway Economic Framework)

Community Learning and Skills: 2025-26

Strategic Priority and Aims

Measurable Outcomes

Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills

CLS will continue its core delivery including Essential Skills courses; programmes to support skills gaps across Kent and Medway, including through sub-contracted delivery; a growing Study Programme offer for NEET young people and a small Apprenticeship offer. For academic year 25/26, CLS will focus on the priorities identified below.

A Kent wide focus for growth will be 'RESPONSE' provision which delivers locally based courses working in close partnership with community groups and national organisations.

Strategic Priority 1a: Support the Kent Economy

- Increase delivery of Study Programmes for Young People across Kent, including those with EHCPs and UASC, to reduce NEETs and provide positive progression into FE or employment. Offer high quality sub-contracted delivery where appropriate.

300 NEET learners complete Study Programmes which include employability skills, English, Maths and a work experience placement. Positive outcomes include employment, Connect to Work, a traineeship, apprenticeship or a college placement.

100 learners with EHCPs will complete Supported Internships or other appropriate programmes, including appropriate work experience.

100 UASC will complete ESOL study programmes which support language development to progress to further learning and/or other positive outcomes.

KCC Priority (Framing Kent's Future 2022-26): Levelling Up Kent:

To support the Kent economy to be resilient and successfully adapt to the challenges and opportunities it faces over the coming years, work with partners to develop a skills system for Kent that delivers skills that are resilient to changing workforce needs and opportunities and supports people to higher level skills.

Kent & Medway Integrated Care Strategy

- Support and grow our workforce

Pathways for All

- Make a concerted effort to improve the outcomes for young people from our post-16 provision
- Enable a wider range of provision to be locally accessible
- Improve provision below Level 2 and provide good pathways into further learning at higher levels
- Support young people's mental health

Strategic Priority 1b: Support the Kent Economy

- Using funding, including Tailored Learning funding, work with local partners including DWP, Chamber of Commerce, NCS, providers, Housing Associations and 3rd sector to increase delivery to those furthest from the labour market, to support positive steps towards employment and other positive outcomes, with particular focus on LSIP priorities. Offer high quality sub-contracted delivery where appropriate.

2,260 learners will complete RESPONSE courses as a step towards improving their lives and life chances.

2,000 unique learners (5000 aims) will complete Essential Skills courses.

2,030 learners will complete employability programmes which move them closer to, into or up in work.

50 adult learners with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) will complete bespoke Independent Living courses to develop independence, skills and confidence.

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Kent & Medway Integrated Care Strategy

- Support and grow our workforce.

Kent & Medway Skills & Employment Group Plan

Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan

Strategic Priority 2: Family Learning

- Utilising Tailored Learning funding, in conjunction with other KCC departments, schools and Family Hubs, deliver a programme of family learning to increase parents/carers' skills, their understanding of how their children are educated and appropriate parenting. Increase the number of courses which support understanding of particular Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). Increase the number of men accessing courses.

2,150 parents, guardians, children and other family members from schools and other community partners, focusing on identified areas of deprivation, benefit from family learning programmes.

Additionally, **1,250** adults benefit from Parenting Courses in particular courses to support children and young people with additional needs.

KCC Priority: New models of care and support

To support the most vulnerable children and families in our county, ensuring our social work practice supports manageable caseloads, reflective learning, joined up safeguarding and effective corporate parenting arrangements.

Kent & Medway Integrated Care Strategy

- Give children and young people the best start in life.

Strategic Priority 3: Health and Wellbeing

- Utilising Tailored Learning funding, work with Public Health and other relevant local partners to increase health, wellbeing and resilience outcomes for Kent's residents.

This provision focuses on 5 key outcomes:

1. Supporting learners who are not in work due to health and/or wellbeing needs
2. Reducing employee absenteeism due to health and wellbeing needs
3. Extending working lives e.g. knowledge and exercise for construction workers to ensure back strength
4. Health and wellbeing support during times of change
5. Understanding how to maintain healthy lifestyles

1,300 learners benefit from programmes designed to improve resilience, mental and physical health and/or wellbeing.

500 learners, including older learners, develop Essential Digital Skills and attend other IT courses which reduce isolation, help them access services, develop skills for work and stay safe online.

80 learners will complete community Arts projects to develop community cohesion and promote further learning.

KCC Priority: Infrastructure for Communities

To work with our partners to hardwire a preventative approach into improving the health of Kent's population and narrowing health inequalities.

Kent & Medway Integrated Care Strategy

- Tackle the wider determinants to prevent ill health
- Support and grow our workforce
- Grow our skills and workforce

Public Health Framework ambitions:

- Starting well, living well, aging well
- 5 ways to wellbeing.

Annual Accountability Statement

On behalf of Kent County Council, it is hereby confirmed that the plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education on 27th June 2025.

The plan will be published on the Council's website within three months of the start of the new academic year and can be accessed from the following link: www.communitylearningandskills.co.uk

Supporting Documents

Framing Kent's Future:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/framing-kents-future>

Securing Kent's Future:

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s121235/Securing%20Kents%20Future%20-%20Budget%20Recovery%20Strategy.pdf>

Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan:

<https://kentemployersskillsplan.org/kent-medway-lsip-2023/>

Kent & Medway Integrated Care Strategy:

<https://www.kmhealthandcare.uk/about-us/vision-and-priorities/kent-and-medway-integrated-care-strategy>

Get Britain Working White Paper:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-britain-working-white-paper/get-britain-working-white-paper>

CLS Ofsted Report 2024:

<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/42/52836>

Kent & Medway Economic Dashboard:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-kent>

DWP Data:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/about/statistics>

Mid-Year Population Estimation Toolkit:

https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/excel_doc/0007/158902/Interactive-population-estimates-toolkit.xlsm

Financial Hardship Toolkit:

https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/excel_doc/0009/122598/Financial-hardship-toolkit.xlsx

2021 Census Travel to Work Patterns:

https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/excel_doc/0011/148484/2021-Census-tables-method-of-travel-to-work.xlsx

https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/excel_doc/0007/148480/2021-Census-tables-distance-travelled-to-work.xlsx

Kent & Medway Economic Framework:

<https://www.kmep.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/03/Kent-Medway-Economic-Framework-Web-Version-March-2024.pdf>

Education Inspection Framework:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/education-inspection-framework>

Pathways for All:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/college-sixth-form-employment-and-training/kent-16-to-19-review-pathways-for-all>

Kent and Medway Skills and Employment Group Plan:

https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/116706/Kent-and-Medway-Employment-Plan.pdf

Public Health Framework:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-health-outcomes-framework>

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AND SKILLS**



kta
&
kent training and
apprenticeships

