

ESSEX YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY



Directory



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Introduction

We are proud to be launching the Essex Year of Opportunity. This campaign will help develop essential skills, to help children, young people and adults plan their next steps.

Essex is an ambitious, innovative county. We know opportunity is fundamental for people, communities and economic growth. This is why we are supporting residents, businesses and education providers with adapting to the changes in the workplace.

This campaign builds on the success of the Essex Year of Reading and the Essex Year of Numbers. These initiatives supported young people with growing their literacy and numeracy skills at school and at home. These skills remain vital for employability, career development and learning.

During the Essex Year of Opportunity, we will open doors for residents and business. All people of all ages will get help to improve their skills, careers and employability. Exciting projects and events will be added to this directory throughout the year.

Visit the Essex Year of Opportunity website for more resources and information about the campaign www.essexyearofopportunity.co.uk/essex-year-opportunity.

Join us and make this year your Year of Opportunity.



Cllr Tony Ball
Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning & Employability



Foreword

A Foreword from Roy Blatchford CBE, Chair of the Essex Education and Training Task Force

A little bit of history to begin.

March 2025 saw a sombre anniversary: five years have flown by since the dark days of the onset of a global pandemic.

As society and schools eventually opened back up in the spring of 2021, Essex County Council was quick off the mark. We allocated an initial budget of £1.5 million to support recovery for the education sector.

Four years on, we have invested £3.8 million to date into improving outcomes for children and young people, to build on all the great work we see in schools and colleges every day.

Readers of this latest directory will know the great successes of the Essex Year of Reading and the Essex Year of Numbers. Those have seen a rich array of projects and activities across the county. These were in nurseries, in schools, in colleges, in parks, in libraries, in sports centres, in care homes. All of them focused on promoting the joy in learning across the varied communities of the county.

Essex does nothing by halves. During the “Years Of” campaigns, we have learned:

- people love working together to go beyond expectations
- small amounts of money kick start great projects
- collaboration amplifies impact

And the legacy of those years of reading and numbers lives on.

Now we are launching the Essex Year of Opportunity, a year where we promote skills, careers and employability.

During the campaign, we will build essential skills all young people and adults need to flourish. There are already exciting projects planned involving schools across the county and engaging with residents.

There are a number of projects planned for the coming eighteen months which involve primary and secondary children developing their employability skills. A new Careers Magazine is to be published, there will be STEAM events and Careers Festivals.

The events draw on the phrase: “you cannot be what you cannot see”. We will inspire children and young people to aspire and imagine themselves in roles and careers they had not thought of.

Importantly, the Essex Year of Opportunity will work with local businesses and employers too. We will carve out new, vibrant relationships with employers. These include the Essex Chamber of Commerce, Essex’s universities and adult learning providers.

One of the great challenges of our age is the number of young people not in education and training. The numbers nationally and in Essex are too high. We are determined to reduce those numbers through excellent partnership working and engaging creatively with those young people.

We know from experience that new, local projects will stem from communities. If you have an idea, wherever you are in the county, let us know. Email us and we will see if we can find a way to support you! Please send ideas to essex.yearofopportunity@essex.gov.uk.

All of us who have seen the past initiatives have been excited to see other counties following Essex’s lead. We are confident that the Essex Year of Opportunity will be a great success too, and will be shaped by the people of Essex.



Roy Blatchford CBE
Chair of the Essex Education and Training Task Force

Skills

Developing an Essex Skills Framework

For all ages

Unlike other countries, England is missing essential skills building in the national curriculum. This leads to gaps, as young people do not have equal access to developing their skills.

This needs tackling; research shows that essential skills shape young people's life outcomes.

This is why we will develop the Essex Skills Framework. The Framework will highlight the key attributes, employability and life skills Essex employers value. We will explore how these skills are important for the local and national economy.

By working with teachers and employers, the Framework will identify ways of enhancing the curriculum. Then, during the Essex Year of Opportunity, we will deliver projects to grow residents' essential skills.

About Skills Builder

Skills Builder provide research, tools and resources to support teaching essential skills. Their tools unlock learning in the classroom and success in the working world.

These are external opportunities, but highly relevant. The Essex Year of Opportunity signposts to resources that build transferable skills.

Skills Builder Accelerator Programme

For primary, secondary and Further Education (FE) teachers

Every year, Skills Builder launch their flagship free UK Accelerator Programme. This offers bespoke consultancy on embedding a strategic approach to building essential skills.

This is available for schools, colleges and specialist education settings. Only 200 national places are available, applications for 2025 - 2026 are open now.

For further information and to check your eligibility please visit www.skillsbuilder.org/uk-accelerator

Skills Builder Benchmark

For all ages

How skilled are you? The Skills Builder Benchmark will assess your skills and areas for development. Start your self-assessment here www.skillsbuilder.org/benchmark

Skills Builder Launchpad

For all ages

Build your essential skills using Skills Builder Launchpad. Complete online modules for essential skills including teamwork, staying positive and problem solving.

Start your online learning here www.skillsbuilder.org/about-launchpad

Skills Builder Hub

For teachers and tutors (of all stages)

For teachers and tutors who want to build their learners essential skills, use the Skills Builder Hub. This includes hundreds of teaching resources and teacher training modules.

Use the resources here www.skillsbuilder.org/hub


Skills Builder Homezone

For parents and carers

For parents and carers who want to build essential skills in their family, you can use the Skills Builder Homezone. This features practical activities you can do at home.

Use the resources here www.skillsbuilder.org/homezone

Essential skills shape young people's life outcomes.



➔ Functional Skills – Pathways to Success

**For residents with Level 1 or no qualifications
For Children in Need**

For those on the Child Protection register

Over 25% of Essex residents have Level 1 qualifications, or none at all. A Level 1 is a broad concept, but generally are qualifications below a grade C or 4 at GCSE level. For these individuals, accessing entry-level apprenticeships or further learning is challenging. This can lead them to being Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or facing long-term employment.

To break down barriers, we are commissioning Functional Skills Level 1 and Level 2 programmes. Courses will empower residents and grow their confidence in learning. This will help them progress into employment, education and training.

The Essex Year of Opportunity will share new chances, with our Functional Skills Programmes.

How to get involved

Residents can enrol in Functional Skills courses, to enhance your career prospects. This will especially help adults and school leavers.

Schools and Social Services can refer eligible children and young people. We will work with [the Essex Virtual School](#), to make sure no child is left behind.

More information and contact details to follow.

➔ KS3 Maths Intervention

For secondary schools looking to boost Year 7 pupils numeracy skills

Led by teachers, we have a pack to support Year 7 pupils who are not ready to achieve a grade 4 or above in their GCSE. Both specialist teachers and wider staff can deliver this brand-new intervention.

The pack includes free resources and lessons plans. There are 11 modules, which can be standalone 15-minute sessions. Modules cover key parts of the maths curriculum.

Don't miss out on this exciting opportunity to make a real difference to your pupil's maths skills.

Topics covered include:

- Fractions, Decimals and Percentages (FDP) conversions (key conversions and multiples of 100)
- adding and subtracting decimals
- fractions of amounts
- mixed numbers calculation

How to get involved

Email essex.yearofopportunity@essex.gov.uk for a link to download the full pack.

➔ GCSE Maths resit intervention (post-16)

For Further Education (FE) colleges and sixth forms

This intervention pack will support students who need to re-sit their GCSE Maths at college or sixth form. This pack will support teachers, who may not be Maths teachers at all or usually focus on A-Level Maths.

This resource will help teachers understand the KS3/4 way of teaching. Pupils will work towards achieving a pass in GCSE Maths, growing their career opportunities.

How to get involved

This will be available from September 2025. Email essex.yearofopportunity@essex.gov.uk to register interest and see some preview materials.

➔ After-school family maths events

For parents and carers of secondary school pupils

Join an interactive, teacher-led event, to see how year 7 and year 8 learn maths. Teachers will show parents teaching approaches, this will help parents and carers feel more confident about helping their children at home.

Each session will be after school, over two hours. Parents can take part in hands-on activities.

How to get involved

Host a Family Maths event at your school. The Essex Year of Opportunity team will be in touch to provide resources and advice. Email essex.yearofopportunity@essex.gov.uk to register your school's interest.



“

It's really empowering to learn these skills for yourself. I feel more skilled in being able to help with homework, plus working out loans, things like mortgages. It's a good starting point for finding out where to learn more about maths in everyday life.

Parents Feedback

”



➔ HSBC UK Financial Education Certificate

For secondary schools and Further Education (FE)

Managing personal finances is an essential life skill, HSBC are supporting pupils to learn more. Volunteers from local HSBC branches and their central team, are sharing financial education.

Aimed at KS4 and KS5, every pupil that completes the course receives a certificate. Schools and colleges will receive a HSBC UK Smart Money award for every year they onboard too.

The free training programme covers 14 lessons, including four technical sessions delivered by HSBC UK staff.

Complete the booking form

Find out more details on all modules using this link schools.essex.gov.uk/pupil-support-and-wellbeing/essex-year-numbers-financial-certificate

This also has the booking form which needs to be completed and emailed to educationteam@hsbc.com.

➔ Thinking Reading

For secondary school teachers

During the Essex Year of Reading (2022 to 2023), schools adopted the Thinking Reading programme. Through the programme young people have improved their reading age and learned to read fluently.

After seeing how effective this has been, the Essex Year of Opportunity will continue this. Strong reading skills improve life chances and are key to unlocking opportunities.

Access the free online training course

Email enquiries@thinkingreading.com to register your school's interest in the training course.

➔ Train the Trainer (with Anglia Ruskin University)

For secondary schools (who are helping disadvantaged pupils increase their GCSE grade in Maths and English)

Partnered with Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), the Essex Year of Opportunity will help teachers with their pupil's GCSE attainment. Five programmes are available, which link to the GCSE curriculum.

Every programme includes:

- **Six in-school sessions (focused on attainment)**
Sessions will concentrate on building the core skills needed for success at GCSE level English or Maths.
- **An ARU campus visit**
Participating pupils and teachers will visit an ARU campus, to learn the links between GCSEs and Higher Education. The visit will help them understand university life and realise their own academic potential.
- **A celebration evening at an ARU campus**
Participating pupils and their families will come together at an ARU campus to celebrate their achievements. This will inspire a sense of community and sharing each others success.

How to get involved

ARU will invite schools to train together. Teachers will learn how to embed one or more programmes into their own curriculum. Training sessions will be in June 2025. Then programmes can be delivered between September 2025 and March 2026.

To express interest please contact essex.yearofopportunity@essex.gov.uk

Five Amplify your Talent programmes are available:

1. Cook Up Your Maths

Making maths relatable with real-world applications, tying to GCSE Maths curriculum.

- numbers (measuring ingredients, scaling recipes)
- ratio, proportions and rates of change
- geometry and measures (calculating areas, volumes and conversions between units)
- problem solving by applying mathematical reasoning
- statistics and data handling (tracking cost of ingredients, analysing nutritional information)

2. Finance Your Future

Introducing financial literacy with real world numeracy skills.

- numbers (percentage calculations, interest rates, decimals)
- ratio, proportion and rates of change (understanding tax, exchange rates, financial products)
- statistics (analysing and interpreting graphs financial data and trends in spending/saving)

3. Dynamic Debating

Building confidence through structured debates. This links to the English Language Paper 2 (writers viewpoints and perspectives).

- critical thinking
- comparing perspectives
- constructing arguments

4. Success With Shakespeare

Growing analytical and literary skills through classic texts. This links to the English Literature Paper 1 (Shakespeare and the 19th century novel). Students learn to interpret themes, character development, and language use.

5. Compelling Storytelling

This programme focuses on enhancing communication and narrative skills. Linking to English Language Paper 1 (creative reading and writing). Focusing on narrative structure, character development and use of descriptive language.

➔ Eco Refill shops

For primary schools (but can go wider)

During the Essex Year of Numbers (2024 to 2025), the Eco Refill **project launched with Pupils Profit**. Primary school children set up their own Eco Refill shops on school premises. The Essex Year of Opportunity will extend this to help pupils learn employability skills too.

As part of the project, pupils are given an enterprise training toolkit and learn:

- how to write their business plans
- applying for job roles within their shop
- evaluating the impact of their business

Find out more about the **Eco Refill project**.

How to get involved

For further information and to express interest please contact essex.yearofopportunity@essex.gov.uk



➔ Essex Green Skills Hub

For residents, secondary schools and further education settings

The Essex Green Skills Hub shares information on skills, careers, jobs and resources in sustainable roles.

What are green skills?

Green skills are the knowledge and skills that support carbon reduction and climate resilience. Green jobs are opportunities to reduce our environmental impact, conserving resources and sustainability.

Green jobs can span various sectors

Green skills help the environment but are great for personal and professional growth too. It is estimated that there will be a need for almost 16,000 green jobs in Essex by 2030, up to almost 28,000 by 2050.

The Essex Sector Development Strategy identified five key growth sectors for Essex linked to Green skills:

- construction
- clean energy
- advanced manufacturing
- digi-tech
- life sciences (including med-tech and care-tech)

View resources on green skills and green jobs on **the Essex Green Skills Hub**.

It is estimated that there will be a need for almost **16,000 green jobs in Essex by 2030, up to almost 28,000 by 2050.**



Careers

→ The My Future Programme

For primary schools

The My Future programme is designed to provide primary school children with early exposure to the world of work, aiming to raise aspirations, broaden horizons and challenge stereotypes.

We will connect local key employers with pupils, schools and families. In collaboration with Skills Builder, the programme encourages building skills for future employment. This will raise awareness of local growth sectors and skills shortages too.

The free programme schedules sessions on Tuesdays (for 8 to 11 year olds) or Thursday afternoons (for 5 to 7 year olds). This helps teachers with consistency, and integrating sessions into their school day.

The My Future programme will feature:

- An interactive guest session with three employees. This is a chance for children to learn more about different roles and experiences.
- A focus on an industry theme every half term. For example, STEM, the arts, health and happiness.
- Interactive resources to enhance learning at home and in the classroom. This helps children, their parents and teachers build their skills and discover more about the showcased industries.

What are the goals of the My Future programme?

Raising aspirations by showing children what is possible. This is motivational, children will realise how important their skills and knowledge are.

Children can be **more aware of potential careers and industries**. They can build greater awareness of the opportunities in their area and region they live in. Children start to perceive the wider motivations for choosing a career including the joy of the role and job satisfaction. Children are shown links between roles and that there are many roles within the same company/field/industry e.g. the NHS and construction.

Challenging stereotypes by being inclusive and representative. Children will see “someone like me can do anything too”. The programme will emphasise how place, race, gender and disability doesn't limit your potential.

How to get involved

The programme is available for all primary schools in Basildon, Tendring and Southend. Email essex.yearofopportunity@essex.gov.uk to express your interest. During the Essex Year of Opportunity, we will grow the programme in other areas too. **Watch this space for details.**

Children start to perceive the wider motivations for choosing a career including the joy of the role and job satisfaction.





➔ Step into STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Arts and Maths) events

For year 6 pupils

The Essex Year of Opportunity will hold fun, hands on events for year 6 pupils to meet local STEAM employers. This will raise awareness of local STEAM opportunities. Plus, pupils will look forward to the pathways they can follow during their transition to secondary school.

How to get involved

Watch this space for the locations and dates and how to sign up.

➔ Primary Careers Magazine - Inspiring Young Minds!

For year 5 and year 6 pupils (and their parents and carers)

The Primary Careers magazine sparks curiosity and ambition across almost 500 primary schools. It focuses on residents aged under 11 years old, encouraging early careers engagement. Families can find out about learning courses too.

How to get involved

Schools can distribute the magazine to your pupils and their parents.

Families can engage with the content and take part in family learning courses, to support your child's future.

More information to follow.

➔ Primary Career Resources Platform (from the Careers Enterprise Company)

For primary school teachers and leaders

For primary school teachers and leaders

The [free platform from the Careers Enterprise Company](#) can help you build an approach to broadening your pupil's horizons. Available resources are from a range of providers.

A [quiz tool can help](#) you structure an approach to career-related learning for your classroom and school.

➔ Engineering a Career course

For primary school leaders and teachers

This short course will encourage teachers to introduce pupils to the exciting world of engineering. The engineering industry is diverse, offering a huge variety of job roles. Teachers can learn how to develop children's skills, talents and interests for their future careers.

Designed by experienced teachers, the course has five modules. Each module has a seminar and supporting classroom resources available too.

The fully funded course:

- delivers 15 online modules (needing one hour a week from you)
- is CPD accredited with 15 CPD points
- aligns with 1 to 6 of the 8 Gatsby Benchmarks for good career guidance

How to get involved

You and your team can find more information [and sign up for this opportunity here.](#)

➔ Essex Careers Festival Programme - Discover Your Future!

For pupils in year 10 (and up), residents and employers

Our Essex Careers Festival Programme is a celebration of opportunities, designed to inspire and connect. We're delivering three all-age festivals in the summer term of 2025/26, enabling 85% of Year 10/11 students and 3,000 residents to engage with 250 employers. These festivals support the opportunity to 'stay local and go further,' showcasing the vibrant career paths available in Essex.

The annual Essex Careers Festival is a celebration of opportunities, designed to inspire and connect. Three festivals are running in the summer term of 2025 to 2026. The festivals will connect over 3,000 residents and 85% of Essex's year 10 to 11 pupils with 250 employers.

The festivals will showcase vibrant career paths in Essex, sharing opportunities to stay local and go further. Sessions are open for both children and parents and will bring roles to life. The festival will connect communities to employment, work experience, apprenticeships and more.

Also, the festivals will offer networking opportunities for businesses. We will maximise impact for employers and residents.

How to get involved

Schools should register your students for the festivals

Employers can take part as exhibitors and connect with potential future employees.

More information to follow.



➔ Essex Careers Magazine

For secondary schools, Further Education settings (FE) and residents

The Essex Careers magazine is suitable for all ages. It is here to help you find a new role or secure a new training opportunity in Essex. Each issue shares information about key sectors and areas in Essex.

Download the latest issue here
www.essexopportunities.co.uk/essex-careers-magazine

➔ Essex Opportunities website

For secondary schools, Further Education settings (FE) and residents

Essex Opportunities is a one stop shop for information and advice on jobs, careers, skills and training. Funded by Essex County Council, this portal has everything you need to help build a career.

How to get involved

Use this portal to search for jobs, courses and apprenticeships based in Essex:
www.essexopportunities.co.uk

➔ The Careers & Enterprise Academy

For secondary schools, special schools and Further Education settings (FE)

This is the new online home of careers leadership for Careers Leaders and all those who work with them to plan and deliver strategic, progressive careers programmes. This is where online CPD modules for Careers leaders, senior leaders, governors and teachers can be found:

www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/educators/the-careers-enterprise-academy

Formal funded flexible Careers Leader training from the Careers Enterprise Company can be found here: www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/educators/careers-leaders/careers-leader-training

➔ Greater Essex Careers Hub

For secondary schools, Further Education settings (FE)

For Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) school leaders

For school governors

For employers

The [Greater Essex Careers Hub](http://www.greateressexcareershubs.co.uk) is here to make sure every young person receives outstanding careers education. Local employers share their support to bridge the gap between education and employment.

Schools and colleges can access high quality, inspirational careers programmes for their pupils.

What resources are available on the Greater Essex Careers Hub?

Resources for employers

- guidance on how to help build aspiration around future pathways, jobs and opportunities greateressexcareershubs.co.uk/employers-volunteers
- The Employer Standards are a clear framework to maximise the impact of employer engagement with young people. www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/employers/employer-standards

Resources for senior leaders

- Driving continuous improvement with careers education through The Careers Impact System. This is a clear set of standards helping education leaders to link careers to school and college improvements. www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/educators/careers-impact-system
- Other guidance for senior leaders, including a breakdown of statutory guidance, can be found here: greateressexcareershubs.co.uk/schools-colleges/slt

Resources for subject leaders and teachers

Use resources to highlight the relevance of your subject to future careers and opportunities. There are resources covering 27 subjects, for KS3 up to post 16 education. Access resources from My Learning and My Future. resources.careersandenterprise.co.uk/my-learning-my-future

Resources for school governors

Access guidance on statutory responsibilities, tips and resources greateressexcareershubs.co.uk/schools-colleges/governors-trustees



➔ Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ)

For secondary school teachers and leaders

Evaluate how effective your careers education is. Use the Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ). The results help identify gaps in pupils' knowledge of careers and recruitment processes.

The FSQ also asks how confident pupils are with their essential skills and what their next steps are. This tool helps you support those who are at risk of not making successful transitions.

Five key versions of the FSQ are available to support pupils from year 7 up to year 13.

How to get involved

Access the CEC guide on FSQ including an implementation guide

[Future Skills Questionnaire | CEC Resource Directory](#)

Access further information (including student and parent guides)

[Future Skills Questionnaire – The Careers & Enterprise Company \(zendesk.com\)](#)

➔ Make Happen Academy

For secondary schools, Further Education (FE) and adult learners

The Make Happen Academy offers impartial information about further and higher education.

The academy is part of the Office for Students' Uni Connect programme and based at university campuses in Chelmsford, Colchester and Southend. It offers activities and advice on going to college, university or taking a degree apprenticeship.

How to get involved

Further details can be found here:

www.makehappen.org/academy

➔ University of Essex (resources for students and teachers)

For secondary schools, Further Education (FE) and adult learners

The University of Essex has offered resources to help build study skills.

What is available for students?

Free online courses and resources can support you with many things including:

- planning for your future
- time management and study skills
- mental health and wellbeing
- completing an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) or another research project

www.essex.ac.uk/schools-and-colleges/student-resources

What is available for teachers?

Free online courses and resources can support you with many things including:

- curriculum support materials
- study skills
- supporting university applications

www.essex.ac.uk/schools-and-colleges/teacher-resources

➔ Skills Builder Careers Explorer

For all

The [Skills Builder Careers Explorer](#) is an interactive online tool that compares the essential skill profiles of job roles and careers.



➔ TechSheCan

For primary and secondary schools

TechSheCan is a project passionate about improving the journey for women in technology. They provide free resources including live/on demand videos, lesson packs and role model videos.

Access resources here www.techshecan.org

➔ The Schools' Aerospace Careers Programme

For Secondary Schools

Can you host an inspiring day for year 10 and over in your area? For further details of this excellent roadshow please visit:

aerospacecareersprogramme.co.uk/school-presentations-roadshow

You can also express an interest in hosting by contacting:

info@aerospacecareersprogramme.co.uk

➔ Careers and the Creative Industries

For all

Monday 17 to Friday 21 November is the Creative Careers week. The Essex Year of Opportunity will be working with our cultural ambassadors on a range of opportunities – **watch this space** and hold the dates in your diaries.

Employability

➔ Health Careers Programme – Building Healthier Futures!

For residents, care leavers and health sector employers

The Health Careers programme transforms lives and creates opportunities in the health sector. With learning for pupils in year 10 to 13 and employment support for adults, residents will learn the skills they need.

We aim to provide over 500 full time roles (and 10 part time roles) for care leavers. Plus, the programme will create over 100, 000 meaningful employer encounters.

The programme will support:

- families in disadvantaged areas
- residents with physical disabilities
- those with SEND and education, health care plans (EHCP)

How to get involved

Residents can enrol in the programme and start your journey towards a rewarding career in the health sector.

Employers can offer career opportunities and engagements.

More information to follow.

➔ Essex Apprenticeship Hub

For residents, secondary schools and Further Education (FE)

Use the Essex Apprenticeship Hub to help you find out more about apprenticeships. Register with the hub to find opportunities:

www.essexopportunities.co.uk/apprenticeship-hub



This information is issued by:
Essex Year of Opportunity

Contact us:
essex.yearofopportunity@essex.gov.uk

www.essexyearofopportunity.co.uk/essex-year-opportunity

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