

Essex Skills Plan 2022

An employer led partnership approach to local skills delivery

This is a draft of the Essex Skills Plan, further to the earlier draft being signed off at the 27th June Skills Roundtable.

The Essex Skills Roundtable is chaired by Councillor Tony Ball with the specific remit to develop an externally facing Essex Skills Plan. Members include local employers, providers, further and higher education representatives, local authorities and sector bodies. Engagement has also taken place with key partners such as the Essex Anchor Network, sector bodies, National Careers Service and Job Centre Plus.

This plan is deliberately light touch due to emerging skills policy nationally including a potential forthcoming [Local Skills Improvement Plan \(LSIP\)](#) for Essex, Southend and Thurrock with the Department for Education (DfE) and which will provide further detail on local economy requirements for skills. This plan has been produced in the interim to articulate Essex priorities in the immediate term and will therefore feed into the LSIP. It will be updated regularly to align with policy and developments.

A full evidence base (with district and sector sections) is also in development and will also added soon and updated regularly, also utilising and contributing to [Essex Open Data](#).

As an early 'win' and area of action, an Essex Careers magazine is due to commence development soon and for all ages to showcase local opportunities, sectors and support.

Pending any final comments (and the addition of final case studies as indicated), this plan will be produced as a designed copy for publication by October 2022.

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Foreword from Councillor Tony Ball

It's a significant time for the skills agenda. With national policy cementing the key role of skills in the economy and with unprecedented growth coupled with sector shortages locally, it is vital that we collectively support employers and individuals in Essex to gain the skills they need.

This plan represents a consensus across the public and private sector as to what is required to bring about change. We have brought together a partnership of employers, further and higher education, training providers, third sector, industry bodies and local authorities. As one of the biggest counties in England, we hope to illustrate to local and national partners and government our shared commitment and aspiration to deliver real results.

Essex is home to nearly 77,000 enterprises, 99.7% of which are small and medium sized, as well as some household names such as Ford, Leonardo UK, Konica Minolta and Stansted airport. Some of the largest infrastructure projects nationally will be located here, as well as new Freeports. Our 1.5 million population is as large as countries such as Estonia. Famous for its entrepreneurial spirit, Essex is a diverse geography with coastal, rural, urban, wealthy and deprived areas. Proximity to London brings opportunities and challenges, with high levels of out-commuting. Skills levels, although improving, remain below the national average. Data and employer feedback confirms that many sectors are struggling to recruit.

We are also living through a period of immense change and with factors such as the digital revolution, changing work patterns, net zero, cost of living and population growth impacting locally. We have an excellent foundation on which to build and with much work underway already. Essex is an ambitious area and with committed partners who will ensure that we rise to the challenges set out in this plan. This is the only the first step, to share a headline consensus on what is needed. We intend to build upon and update this regularly as very much a 'live' document and we will check our progress in a years' time.

Councillor Ball, Chair of Essex Skills Roundtable group and Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability

Skills vision statement and priorities

Vision:

To help deliver a flourishing and inclusive economy across Essex by equipping employers, adults and young people with the skills, conditions and aptitudes required for significant and clean growth today and tomorrow.

Priorities:

- **Increase apprenticeships and industry relevant qualifications for *all ages*, particularly in priority sectors *and at all levels***
- **Simplify the landscape for employers and individuals**
- **Build a diverse and inclusive economy and reduce polarisation**
- **Raise awareness of jobs and growth across Essex and the area's size, scale, national and international significance**
- **Foster and support the spirit of pride, entrepreneurship innovation and enthusiasm across Essex to bring about change**

General principles

In developing the Essex Skills Plan, partners have agreed to work to five general principles which apply to all aspects of the Skills Plan and its delivery:

- 1) Inclusive growth creating opportunities for all
- 2) Developing and maintaining a partnership approach, with education partners, local authorities, employers, business representative organisations and sector bodies
- 3) An employer led approach to be at the forefront of the Skills Plan in conjunction with other work such as the Strategic Development Fund
- 4) A commitment to working together to address the findings of the Skills Plan
- 5) A joined-up voice to share the Essex perspective with government, national bodies, funders and key stakeholders

Further information on the general principles is provided in the appendix section.

Background and rationale– the national context

As reflected in the foreword, it is a period of significant change. As well as new areas of government policy which are explored below, the impacts of Covid-19 are reducing but still being felt, there are significant labour market shortages across all sectors impacting on recruitment and working patterns have changed. Added to this, the digital revolution is providing opportunities such as virtual work and training as well as challenges such as digital poverty and automation placing entry level jobs at risk. As well as major projects, housing and population growth will increase the skills need and external factors such as global economic patterns, climate change and food security are having very real local impacts.

The Department for Education (DfE) has also trailblazed new Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) in eight areas of the country, including in Kent and Sussex which are within the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) geography and which Essex is also located within. Learning from these trailblazer areas has been shared with the Essex Skills Roundtable to inform development of this plan. Developed by Employer Representative Bodies, LSIPs are part of a suite of reforms launched in the government's Skills and Post-16 Education Act that aim to put employers more firmly at the heart of the skills system. Expressions of interest were submitted in June 2022, for the first tranche of LSIPs nationally. The Levelling Up White Paper also included a Skills Mission, with further information on how this would impact on current and future policy, with headlines below and in the appendix section.

There are also Thurrock and Southend Skills Plans in development which the Essex Plan aligns with alongside SELEP's Skills Report, which is produced for the DfE. The vision and priorities above are consistent with the LEP's. This plan is also aligned to the Essex Sector Development Strategy and Green Infrastructure Plan.

In the context of national and local developments, partners agreed that an Essex Skills Plan was required to build a consensus on how to respond to this change and align with (and maximize benefit from) emerging government policy on skills, as set out below:

Impact of the Government's new and existing skills policy nationally for Essex (further information in appendix section)

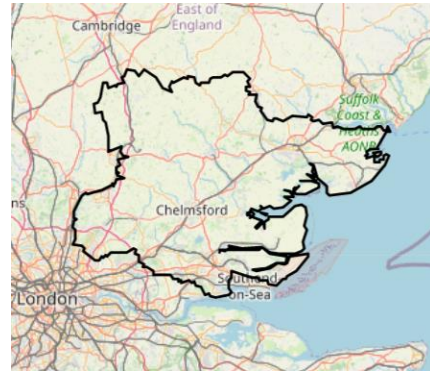
New Policy	Skills Mission: By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high-quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.	
	Future Skills Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new Unit for Future Skills will be formed.
	New HE Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased access to HE particularly in towns, cities and rural locations without access to this provision.
	IoT's and IoT royal charter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further 9 Institutes of Technology (IoT's) announced and proposal that IoT's may apply for Royal Charter status
	DfE/DWP pathfinder projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Pathfinder areas aim to bring greater alignment to DWP and DfE interventions working with local government to match local employment sectoral demand via upskilling (Blackpool, Walsall and Barking and Dagenham)
	UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)/Multiply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Firm ringfence of Multiply (support to adults with Maths skills) within the UKSPF as a DfE programme. For the non-Multiply portion of UKSPF, funding will be delivered through lower tiers or MCAs.
Skills Devolution and Adult Education Budget (AEB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New devolution framework for England with accountability devolved to local leaders through devolution deals with clear accountability Devolution of AEB 	
Existing Policy	Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21/22 Skills Accelerator piloting new employer-led Local Skills Improvement Plans and supporting providers with Strategic Development Funding to help shape technical skills provision to better meet local labour market needs
	Funding and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reforms to embed local employers at the heart of the system enabling providers to respond to local skills needs
	Skills Bootcamps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announced at Spending Review 21 to ensure acute national and local skills shortages can be addressed at speed (e.g. HGV driving) through specialist training
	T Levels and Apprenticeships, HTQs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) to be rolled out from September 2022, enhanced apprenticeship recruitment service for SMEs and T Levels with employer input
	16-19 Free Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will open new 16-19 free schools for talented children from disadvantaged backgrounds to have access to a college, school sixth form or 16-19 academy, with a track record of progress on to leading universities, targeted at areas where they are most needed t
	Lifelong Loan Entitlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2025 will transform student finance system, to deliver parity between FE and HE
	FE Capital Transformation Programme (FECT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £1.5bn FECT Programme to invest and transform college estate in England
	HE Role, new provision and access and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering (NMITE), Higher Education and Research Act (HERA), Office for Students (OfS), and refocussed Access and Participation plans focussed on true social mobility
Lifetime Skills Guarantee (LSG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LSG announced in September 2020 to enable individual's to access flexible support to train, retrain and upskill throughout their lives plus free approved L3 qualification infer Free Coursed for Jobs programme and expanded trial for high value L3 qualification for free 	

Essex headlines

- Essex engagement underway with **Unit for Future Skills** & dashboard
- Institute for Technology** for South East LEP area led by South Essex College and local employers
- Multiply programme** due to roll out (led by Essex CC)
- Devolution discussions** underway
- This plan to help inform **LSIP and Strategic Development Funding**
- Engagement with **Skills Bootcamps** underway
- Supporting employers and providers with **apprenticeships and T Levels** including through the Essex Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Service

An overview of Essex

Essex is one of the largest counties in England, working with Southend and Thurrock also across what is known as the ‘Greater Essex’ geography. It is a diverse area, with one of the longest coastlines, rural and urban areas and some of the wealthiest and most deprived parts of the country. Proximity to London is clearly significant with high levels of out-commuting or home-based working for London based employers. Similarly, border areas such as Cambridge, Hertfordshire and Suffolk are a factor in both out and in commuting to jobs. Skills levels have improved but are still generally below the national average although there are variations at district level, which the evidence base will explore more fully. Collaboration between the public and private sector is already strong, with a flourishing SME sector and some internationally renowned employers already working to support skills in a variety of ways. Essex partners are clear on the importance of skills to economic growth and to prospects of individuals.



There are also geographically focused economic corridors in Essex:

South Essex – work is being led by the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) representing Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford, Thurrock and Southend

The UK Innovation Corridor – stretching from London to Cambridge by the M11 motorway and including Harlow, Uttlesford and Epping Forest

North Essex – with work being led by the North Essex Economic Board and including Colchester, Chelmsford, Braintree, Tendring, Maldon and Uttlesford

At a glance – key facts and figures

The forthcoming evidence base will expand on and regularly update these statistics

	Essex	Southend	Thurrock	Region	UK
Population (2020)	1,497,800	182,800	175,500	6,269,200	65,185
Working age population (16-64) (2020)	903,800	111,200	110,200	60.6%	62.4%
Workless Households (and as % of all households) (2020)	58,700	4,900	4,500	234,000 (12%)	2,772,600 (13.6%)
In employment (16-64) (2021)	76.2%	79.0%	76.5%	77.1%	74.6%
Self-employed (16-64) (2021)	10.1%	13.2%	11.0%	10.3%	9.5%
% Working age with qualification level 1 and above (2021)	88.7%	88.4%	82.7%	88.8%	87.7%

% Working age with qualification level 2 and above	74.4%	76.1%	68.5%	77.0%	78.1%
% Working age with qualification level 3 and above	53.5%	56.1%	45.1%	58.0%	61.3%
% Working age with qualification level 4 and above	35.4%	37.9%	26.8%	39.3%	43.1%
% Working age with no qualification	4.9%	5.6%	7.1%	5.6%	6.4%
Weekly earnings (residence based) (2021)	£634.80	£664.80	£670.60	£628.603.5	£613.10
Weekly earnings (work based) (2021)	£583.90	£555.80	£613.60	£601.90	£612.80
Out of work benefit claimants (2022)	3.5% (31,925)	4.7% (5,205)	4.0% (4,405)	3.6%	4.4%
Jobs density (2020)	0.77	0.72	0.74	0.85	0.84

Source: Official Labour Market Statistics (Nomis)

Business and sector make up in Essex

Although there are a number of high-profile large employers locally, the overview below illustrates the large presence of small and micro-businesses locally and which it is important to engage with and support. Essex has a slightly larger proportion of micro-businesses than the regional average -with 90.2% of all employing fewer than nine people and 99.7% of all companies being in the SME category. Small businesses often require additional support to engage with the skills system and to provide opportunities such as apprenticeships. Businesses overall have shown steady growth in Essex, from 51,600 in 2011 to 66,715 in 2021.

UK Business Counts (2021)

	Essex	Southend	Thurrock	Region
Micro (0-9)	60,205 (90.2%)	6,350 (91.3%)	6,475 (92.1%)	244,435 (90.1%)
Small (10-49)	5,405 (8.1%)	510 (7.3%)	450 (6.4%)	21,890 (8.1%)
Medium (50-249)	920 (1.4%)	75 (1.1%)	85 (1.2%)	3,955 (1.5%)
Large (250+)	180 (0.3%)	20 (0.3%)	15 (0.2%)	965 (0.4%)
Total	66,715	6,955	7,030	271,240

Source: Official Labour Market Statistics (Nomis)

Employee Jobs (2020)

Essex has a total of 582,000 jobs overall, of which 65.4% are full-time; slightly below the national average of 67.9%. The table below captures the higher than average construction, health & care and retail sectors. All sectors are experiencing high vacancy rates and difficulties recruiting, illustrated also through vacancy data. With

the population growth set out above, shortages are likely to continue so supporting people into these sectors is vital. Jobs are projected to grow in the next few years.

	Essex	Southend	Thurrock	Region	UK
Employee jobs	582,000	64,000	73,000		
Full-time	375,000 (64.4%)	39,000	48,000 (65.8%)	65.6%	67.9%
Part-time	206,000 (35.4%)	25,000	25,000 (34.2%)	34.4%	32.1%
Jobs by industry					
Manufacturing	35,000 (6%)	3,500 (5.5%)	3,000 (4.1%)	7.1%	7.9%
Electricity, Gas, Steam & Air Conditioning Supply	500 (0.1%)	40 (0.1%)	200 (0.3%)	0.3%	0.3%
Water Supply, Sewerage, Waste Mgt	7,000 (1.2%)	125 (0.2%)	1,250 (1.7%)	0.9%	0.7%
Construction	49,000 (8.4%)	3,000 (4.7%)	6,000 (8.2%)	6.4%	4.8%
Wholesale & Retail trade, repair of vehicles	100,000 (17.2%)	10,000 (15.6%)	16,000 (21.9%)	16.1%	14.9%
Transportation and Storage	34,000 (5.8%)	1,500 (2.3%)	17,000 (23.3%)	5.6%	5.1%
Accommodation & food Service activities	41,000 (7.0%)	6,000 (9.4%)	4,500 (6.2%)	7.0%	7.2%
Information & Communication	20,000 (3.4%)	1,500 (2.3%)	1,000 (1.4%)	3.9%	4.5%
Finance & insurance	16,000 (2.7%)	1,750 (2.7%)	600 (0.8%)	2.3%	4.5%
Real Estate Activities	9,000 (1.2%)	1,000 (1.6%)	600 (0.8%)	1.4%	1.8%
Professional, Scientific and technical activities	48,000 (8.2%)	5,000 (7.8%)	2,250 (3.1%)	9.0%	8.7%
Admin & Service Support Activities	51,000 (8.8%)	6,000 (9.4%)	6,000 (8.2%)	10.8%	8.8%
Public Admin & defence	18,000 (3.1%)	3,500 (5.5%)	2,500 (3.4%)	3.4%	4.6%
Education	49,000 (8.4%)	6,000 (9.4%)	5,000 (6.8%)	9.0%	9.0%
Health and social work	80,000 (13.7%)	12,000 (18.8%)	6,000 (8.2%)	12.8%	13.6%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	12,000 (2.1%)	2,000 (3.1%)	900 (1.2%)	2.0%	2.2%
Other service activities	10,000 (1.7%)	1,000 (1.6%)	800 (1.1%)	1.9%	1.9%

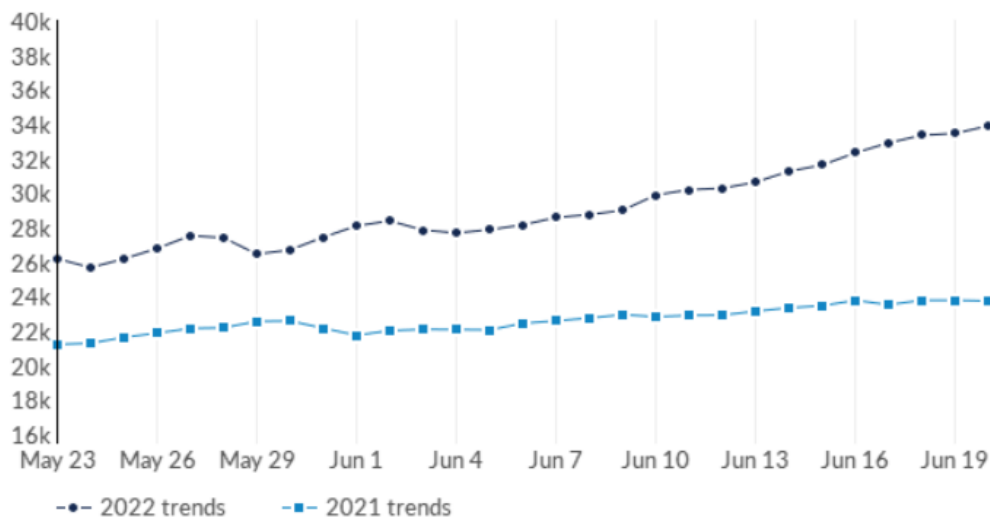
Source: Official Labour Market Statistics (Nomis)

Vacancies and growth

Vacancies in Essex continue to reflect the key sectors and general labour market shortages. Of over 195,000 vacancies posted across Greater Essex from May 2021 to May 2022, top posted vacancies included care workers, nurses, sales related occupations and customer service roles. Top skills sought included communications, management, customer service, sales, planning, leadership, teaching, operations and problem solving. Highest numbers for vacancies by location were in Chelmsford, Colchester, Basildon, Harlow, Southend and Braintree. As the graph below illustrates, levels of vacancies are also significantly above those at the same

period last year. Further information on vacancies will be included in the evidence base to support this plan.

Job vacancies in Greater Essex in May / June 2021 and May / June 2022



A number of additional factors and projects will impact upon future jobs and which could be used as a hook to engage local communities. This includes nationally significant infrastructure projects such as the Lower Thames Crossing. A recent report undertaken for the South East LEP by Mace Group includes some preliminary figures in terms of potential additional job requirements resulting from these projects. This estimates that a workforce of over 76,000 is needed by 2024 with a peak demand of 117,000 in the period between 2025 and 2028. The report also states that there are significant challenges in meeting these skills and labour demands and particularly in the context of existing shortages. The report also breaks figures down into south Essex, Southend and Thurrock with estimated demand as below. Due to the nature of projects and changing timescales, it will clearly be important to continue monitoring this. The Mace report also makes a series of recommendations, which are reflected in the action plan section below.

South Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock – three projects

- Approximately 2,700 between now and 2024
- Approximately 23,600 between 2025 and 2028
- Approximately 11,300 between 2029 and 2038
- Approximately 600 from 2039 onwards.

North Essex – three projects

- Approximately 21,800 between now and 2024
- Approximately 25,700 between 2025 and 2028
- Approximately 5,500 between 2029 and 2038
- Approximately 20 from 2039 onwards.

The following are just a few examples of projects and developments that will impact on skills and employment needs:

The proposed Lower Thames

Crossing: part of the biggest investment in the country's road network for a generation, this will be the longest road tunnel in the UK.

On the south side of the River Thames, the new road would link to the A2 and M2 in Kent. On the north side, it would link to the A13 in Thurrock and M25 in Havering. The tunnel crossing would be located to



the east of Gravesend on the south side of the river and to the west of East Tilbury on the north side. Although not all jobs will be local, it is clearly important to ensure as many people locally can benefit as possible and through meeting the skills needs of constructing the tunnel which will include tunnelling, earthworks, road resurfacing, drainage, earth works and signage. There is also potential for a National Skills Academy with the Construction & Industry Training Board.

Thames Freeport: DP World and Forth Ports are bidding for a Thames Freeport, with London Gateway, the Port of Tilbury and Ford's Dagenham engine plant at the centre. This highlights the role of the River Thames and the proposal includes a Thames Freeport Skills Accelerator. Proposals included 20,000 new jobs.

Freeport East: a partnership between Hutchison Ports, Harwich Haven Authority New Anglia LEP, South East LEP and local authorities, this will be centred on the Port of Felixstowe and Harwich International Port.

Bradwell B: a proposed new nuclear power station which would be built at Bradwell-on-Sea. Proposals are for a twin reactor power station, able to generate 2.2GW of low carbon electricity, enough to power around four million homes. Such a power station would employ tens of thousands of people with over 9,000 at peak construction. It is also important to note the development of Sizewell C in Suffolk and which will have impact on Essex in that there may be some out-commuting (particularly from North Essex) to jobs at the power station.

UK Health Security Agency (previously Public Health England) relocation to

Harlow: a public health science campus at Harlow, Essex. This involves the construction and development of a world leading national Science Hub, bringing together key public health science and research capabilities. With the UKHSA superseding Public Health England, its strategy will continue to develop over the coming months and as the UK looks to put the pandemic behind us. Harlow's place in that strategy, and how the future site will work with the wider organisation, will be assessed and assured but under current plans the first staff are scheduled to move in the 2026/2027 financial year. First recruitment will include facilities management, IT and some hyper-scientists designing and implementing science tech for a full move in 2033.

Garden Communities: plans for garden communities are developing across Essex including Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, Tendring and Colchester Borders Garden Community and Uttlesford District Council garden communities in their local plan. ASELA is also developing a blue-print for new homes, jobs and infrastructure through a joint infrastructure and strategic plan.

Sector snapshot and future outlook

The following is a snapshot overview of all sectors in Greater Essex, with headlines in terms of the picture now and future growth. Current skills provision will be mapped against these to explore any gaps further and reports will be produced for each sector as part of the evidence base.

The [Essex Sector Development Strategy](#) has also identified five sectors for growth; construction and retrofit, clean energy, advanced manufacturing and engineering, Digi-tech and life sciences.

Sector	Essex Picture now	Future outlook / pandemic impact
Construction PRIORITY AND GROWTH SECTOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 58,000 employee jobs – above national average Ageing workforce Disproportionately male workforce Competition from London Vacancies include quantity surveyors, bricklayers, architects and carpenters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued growth – housing growth across Essex Large infrastructure projects, such as Lower Thames Crossing Growing need for green and low carbon, retrofit skills, digital practices in sector Public perception hindering new entrants Large requirements for 'off site' jobs
Health and Care PRIORITY AND GROWTH SECTOR (Med-Tech and Care Tech)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 98,000 employee jobs Disproportionately female workforce (particularly Care) Occupations and vacancies include care workers, nurses, social workers and residential care managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population growth & ageing population will impact on sector Public perception of sector (particularly care) hindering recruitment but good opportunities to progress Opportunities to use digital technologies Increased vacancies through pandemic. Some reduction of EU and overseas care workers. Pandemic raised the profile of the sectors
IT, Digital and creative PRIORITY AND GROWTH SECTOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 37,400 employee jobs IT disproportionately male Creative sector has a lot of freelancers - lack capacity to engage in traditional skills models (e.g., apprenticeships) Vacancies include software developers, coders, IT support, graphic designers and programmers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital roles required across all sectors given the 'digital revolution' Games, Entertainment and cultural part of sector likely to see growth IT jobs resilient and saw growth through the pandemic. Creative sector - negative effect with high levels of furlough (70%+) & lack of income.
Finance KEY SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18,350 employee jobs Strong relationship to London-high commuting to finance jobs Occupations and vacancies include insurance underwriters, finance analysts, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trend for some finance companies in London relocating Growing need for IT (software) skills due to online nature of industry Potential risk of jobs moving elsewhere in Europe or beyond

	sales related roles and financial managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued operation through pandemic as move to home working. Longer-term could see a shift in the London focus.
Manufacturing and engineering PRIORITY AND GROWTH SECTOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 41,500 employee jobs – below national average Disproportionately male workforce Ageing workforce Occupations and vacancies include mechanical engineer, production manager, engineering manager, test engineer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public perception hindering recruitment Ageing workforce likely to impact on skills needed – high need for technical skills Impact of digital and robotics on future skills requirements Reduction in employment overall projected but replacement of ageing workforce, the need for digital skills and competition from other sectors means skills shortages still likely
Transport and Logistics PRIORITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 52,500 employee jobs – above national average Disproportionate male workforce Of national significance: international and national gateways Vacancies include HGV driver, forklift truck driver, warehouse manager, transport manager and depot manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact of digital and robotics on future skills requirements (e.g. automated warehousing) Thames Freeport Parts of sector (e.g. HGV driving) saw huge increase in demand through pandemic One of top sectors recruiting during pandemic
Education PRIORITY FOR SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60,000 employee jobs Reported difficulties recruiting and retaining staff Vacancies include education teaching professionals, teaching assistants, primary and nursery education teaching professions, FE and HE tutors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Largely public sector so reliant on public funding but a continued need given population growth General challenge in schools, colleges and universities to recruit to sector specialisms especially where there are shortages in the sector itself Impact of pandemic in adapting to online learning and potential risk if future lock downs.
Energy & Utilities, water and waste PRIORITY AND GROWTH SECTOR (CLEAN ENERGY)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9,115 employee jobs – above national average Occupations and vacancies include water and sewerage operatives, engineering technicians and business sales executives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sector reports requirements in engineering and experiencing similar shortages to the engineering sector Likely future need for intelligent energy systems that track usage as well as skills around technologies such as solar, wind and carbon capture
Accommodation, Food, hospitality, and tourism KEY SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 51,500 employee jobs Links to agriculture and land-based Occupations and vacancies include restaurant manager, bar staff, hotel manager Staff shortages currently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued adaptation of the market through trends such as Airbnb Growth of jobs through new restaurants, hotels and bars High employee turnover rate Huge impact from pandemic with high rates of staff furloughed (70+%). Recovering now & with shortages
Wholesale and retail trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 126,000 employee jobs – above national average Large concentrations such as 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heavy reliance and inter-relation with transport and logistics sector Impact of online retail impacting jobs, IT side of retail likely skills need

KEY SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupations and vacancies include store manager, sales executive and retail salesperson 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significantly impacted by the pandemic and with high proportions of people furloughed (70%+). • Likely to see long-term impact with increased move to online retail.
Agriculture and land-based KEY SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7,478 people employed locally • Increase of sector locally and projected to grow • Occupations include farmers, managers in Agriculture and animal care services occupations • 74.4% of workforce male (nationally) • Vacancies include landscaper, veterinary nurse and farm estate worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to food security and climate change – potential for more UK production if imports become too costly • Misconceptions of sector • Innovations in areas such as wine production could lead to further need – increasing presence of local vineyards • Growing need for farm based R&D and response to climate change • Increased demand through pandemic and spotlight on sector
Sport and Physical activity KEY SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18,901 jobs • 59% of workforce is aged under 35 • Almost even split of female / male workforce (54% male / 46% female) • Occupations and vacancies include; personal trainer, lifeguard, sports coach, activity coordinators and fitness instructor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public perception of sector hinders recruitment (student, part-time, not seen as a career) • Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport & Physical Activity (CIMSPA) supporting development of traditional skills models to tackle barriers • High employee turnover rate • Huge impact from pandemic with large numbers furloughed - recovering but still shortages • A clear opportunity to support the health and care sector with population health and well being

Showcasing success

Essex is an ambitious area with a strong track record already of galvanizing partners, committing to action and bringing about change. This is clearly an excellent foundation upon which to deliver against this Skills Plan and to provide confidence in its success. Various programmes of support and leading-edge facilities with education and employer partnership at the core are already in place. Just some examples are as follows:

HEALTH - TENDRING

Pathways to Diagnostic Trailblazer Project – Colchester Institute and ESNEFT



This innovative partnership project (funded by the UK Community Renewal Fund) was designed by East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust (ESNEFT) and Colchester Institute (CI) to provide Tendring residents with the opportunity to acquire requisite skills to access local job opportunities at the new Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC) at Clacton Hospital.

The CDC requires a significant number of skilled recruits to meet its strategic intent over the next five years. A thriving CDC will greatly support the levelling up agenda in a deprived community; not only will Tendring residents have direct local access to diagnostic procedures, but job creation will lead to improved economic wellbeing leading to improved health outcomes that follow on from gainful employment.



The first of six participant cohorts started in December 2021 and by May 2022, when the fourth cohort commenced, 168 trainees had engaged with the programme. The twelve-week programme consists of initial IAG, clinical masterclasses, rotational work placements,

online learning, and individual support. For some students an introductory qualification in the Health Professions, or qualifications in literacy and/or numeracy are also part of the fully funded package. Distinct programme elements are delivered by staff from both organisations, which concludes with a guaranteed interview for suitable vacancies within the Trust.



With the option of pursuing either a clinical or non-clinical route into NHS employment, and with some participants having already secured roles in both administrative and support functions, the project is well on the way to achieving the target conversions of 50 local residents into employment by the end of the scheme. Such is the success of the project, the delivery partners are already looking to potentially replicate the scheme for other areas of the Trust's activities.

Leading with Virtual Reality (VR) and Artificial Reality (AR) Technologies

USP College have paced their digital innovative journey, from the creation and implementation of immersive classrooms, which remove geographical limitations accessing high quality curriculum, through to opening of their own state of the art digital technology centre, XTEND Digital.

XTEND Digital (funded by Essex County Council and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership) specialises in Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, Extended Reality and Immersive Education. The College, partnered with industry experts have achieved a career focused, workplace style environment that offers real time employer engagement and live briefs. Using the centre's available technologies, our E-Sports, Games Development & Creative Media students are able to deliver real products and solutions offering a direct pipeline into industry, a unique opportunity not otherwise accessible. This is delivered and supported through the onsite College Company.

The centre has welcomed and continues to collaborate with a number of high profile employers including Pearson, NHS, Essex Police, Midlands Police, DLALA Studios, HDS Securities, Lower Thames Crossing and more.



Emerging Technologies

Test and engage in new and emerging technologies
Video wall, Motion simulator, Teslasuits, & VR headset experiences



Volumetric & Photogrammetry

Large green screen
Volumetrics (holographic capture)
Photogrammetric 3D
Scanners: for perfect 3D data and capture of assets



Motion Capture Studio

Studio with a state of the art 20-camera OptiTrack PrimeX22 system
Capacity to track body, facial and fingertip movement of up to four people at one time, wearing full body suits



Immersive Environment

Immersive education
Linked immersive learning
Seamless and engaging live teaching experience
Multiple locations

Kickstart in Essex – there were a range of Kickstart programmes across Essex and just one example of how this has made a difference to someone in the creative sector – The Kickstart Scheme was created by the government during the pandemic to provide young people aged 16-24, who were in receipt of universal credit, with a fully funded 6-month work placement. Essex County Council set up a Kickstart Gateway to enable SMEs to participate in the scheme and provide a breadth of opportunity for young people in Essex.

Blossom Thwaites started a Kickstart placement with Basildon based Chic Media Limited in September 2021 with no prior experience in photography other than taking snaps of her daughter on a mobile phone. Fast-forward eight months and Blossom has not only completed her placement but has developed such strong media and photography skills she has secured a permanent position with the Basildon company.

Blossom found formal education settings challenging and fell into, rather than chose, an apprenticeship in hairdressing when she left school. She says, “School was difficult and when I left I had to do a one day placement. The only option available was hairdressing, but I soon decided it just wasn’t for me.” Something that Blossom did love doing was taking pictures of her young daughter on her phone. She explains, “I would do mini shoots of my daughter and it was something I really enjoyed. But I had no experience of using a proper camera.”

After leaving her hairdressing apprenticeship, Blossom explored various options with her DWP job coach. “I told my coach that I really liked photography,” Blossom says. “But she said that entry level jobs in creative media didn’t come up very often. Then she found this Kickstart position with Chic Media and I was thrilled that such a great opportunity existed.”

Blossom applied and interviewed for the job and her application was successful. She believes that the placement has provided her with all the necessary skills she needs to work in the photographic industry. “I have learnt a lot, such as how to use a camera properly. I now know how to edit footage and photos and I have done a course on how to effectively light shots.”

Just as importantly, her time with Chic Media Ltd has enabled Blossom to develop her soft skills. “I’ve become even better at listening to clients and understanding their needs and wants,” she says. “I’ve also gained experience in a work environment and learnt how to work with and alongside people. My favourite shoots to do are with babies as I know how to get the best out of them.”

Moving forward, this hugely successful Kickstarter participant is focused on a bright (and very well lit) future. “The role has given me the motivation to want to do better and I now have lots of available paths to progression. I am more confident and have more self-belief. I eventually want to manage my own studio.”



To add:

Stansted Airport College (NB a range of photos provided)

Leonardo UK – STEM Programme / Make UK and Engineering UK

Morgan Sindall – virtual work experience

Public sector and anchors – Anchor Network

Various anchor institutions in Essex are significant employers in their own right, offering a range of opportunities and able to show leadership in areas such as apprenticeships and inclusive growth. These include local authorities, universities, colleges, hospitals and care homes. There is an existing Essex Anchors Network which encompasses Southend and Thurrock and is starting to develop an approach to employment also and showcasing working in the public sector.



The Essex Skills Plan - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth and jobs in large number • Strong employer engagement and partnership working already in place • Existing programmes, facilities and resources in place as foundation to deliver 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour market shortages particularly in logistics, care, construction, health, education • Lack of awareness of sectors and range of roles on offer • Complex landscape confusing employers and individuals
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New jobs created by big projects – a useful hook to showcase sectors • Virtual and flexible working could help address shortages • Green and net zero changing job roles in sectors like construction 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out-commuting to London still high • CV19 continuing to impact on sectors such as hospitality and future variants could pose risk • Digital change and automation of jobs, especially elementary • Changing demographics – ageing population • Global threats such as food security, climate change and competition from elsewhere • Lack of tutors particularly in key sectors and emerging areas such as green and digital

Emerging Action Plan and Quick Wins

Given that there are significant shortages in some sectors locally and set to increase, it makes sense to focus on these in the short-term but also to assess ongoing or future priorities. These are just a starting point and a full action plan will be produced to support the delivery of this Skills Plan.

Initially, there are also some **quick wins** which could be taken forward immediately and in advance of a full action plan being developed:

- ✓ **Work with the major projects and build a shared approach to their skills** needs to ensure maximum opportunities locally
- ✓ **Support the Local Skills Improvement Plan** and share this Skills Plan (when finalised) with the Department of Education to illustrate commitment and readiness to deliver
- ✓ **Launch this Skills Plan and key headlines / data locally to ensure awareness of local skills needs**
- ✓ **Share Skills Plan and emerging action plan with government and local MPs**
- ✓ **Raise awareness of employability and soft skills common to all employers**
- ✓ **Secure some commitment statements from local employers**
- ✓ **Publish information on programmes and support already available** - such as Bootcamps
- ✓ **Work with the Strategic Development Network to localise resources for SMEs on the skills system and programmes on offer**
- ✓ **Raise awareness of local sectors for all ages (e.g. production of a careers magazine, information on Essex Opportunities)**
- ✓ **Produce regular labour market information and policy updates**
- ✓ **Engage in the UKSPF and Multiply projects**

Based on emerging priorities and government policy along with the SWOT analysis above, an emerging action plan includes the following. These are a starting point only for partners to contribute to on an ongoing basis:

Essex Skills Plan Priority: Increase apprenticeships and industry relevant qualifications for all ages, particularly in priority sectors and at all levels

ACTION	TIMESCALE / OWNER
Set a shared target for apprenticeship numbers to increase	
Maximise Essex Opportunities to showcase range of apprenticeships and T Levels available locally	
Develop materials setting out local apprenticeships and with case studies	
Develop LMI information for schools and colleges setting out jobs / roles on offer now and in the future	
Work with SELEP and other stakeholders on the tutor shortage issue	

Work with the Institute for Technology and South Essex Technical University	
Lobby and make the case for flexible, modular training for employers where required	
Maximise funding opportunities and programmes – e.g. DfE Bootcamps	
Maximise apprenticeship and training opportunities arising from new building and developments	

Essex Skills Plan Priority: Simplify the landscape for employers, stakeholders and individuals

ACTION	TIMESCALE / OWNER
Maximise Essex Opportunities as a location for individuals to access information on skills – adding in new initiatives and support where apt	
Develop materials to set out support available – working with the Strategic Development Network to localise	
Explore potential for funding (e.g. UKSPF/ Future Skills Unit to support this	
Hold a Skills Summit to launch this plan / support on offer for employers?	

Essex Skills Plan Priority: Raise awareness of jobs and growth across Essex and the area's size, scale, national and international significance

ACTION	TIMESCALE / OWNER
Build on information on Essex Opportunities	
Working with anchor institutions and major projects to showcase their job roles	
Utilise existing programmes and resources – e.g., Enterprise Adviser Network, STEM Ambassador, SELEP Careers resources	
Supporting people into key sectors - including working with existing programmes such as ESF and Restart	
Skills Summit to set out the needs of the economy and support on offer	
Address and showcase cross cutting skills needs – e.g. leadership, management, communication	

Essex Skills Plan Priority: Build a diverse and inclusive economy and reduce polarisation

ACTION	TIMESCALE / OWNER
Support and set targets for initiatives such as Disability Confident	

Conduct equality impact assessments for work underway to ensure an inclusive approach	
Ensure that materials and case studies are reflecting local communities	

Foster and support the spirit of pride, entrepreneurship innovation and enthusiasm across Essex to bring about change

ACTION	TIMESCALE / OWNER
Hold session for SMEs and micro-businesses to set out the support on offer (including for existing staff) and to encourage them to consider T-Levels / Apprenticeships etc	
Utilise strong partnership approach and existing work underway to build momentum and sign up – e.g. ‘become an Enterprise Adviser, Governor, work with your school or college’ – could build a tick list for SMEs to engage locally	
Be a single voice when engaging with government and articulating any barriers – e.g. tutor shortages, complex landscape	
Share the collective ambitions set out in this plan with government – a copy of the Skills Plan to all MPs and key stakeholder locally / launch of the plan	

Supporting information

Appendix 1: The general principles for the Skills Plan

ONE: Inclusive growth creating opportunities for all
<i>Partners are committed to ensuring that growth leads to opportunities for everyone and that individuals are given extra support where required. This includes cohorts such as care leavers, homeless people and people with disabilities. This is also a commitment to supporting a diverse workforce, providing opportunities for all regardless of gender, race, age, ethnicity, physical abilities, sexual orientation and religion.</i>
TWO: Developing and maintaining a partnership approach, with education partners, local authorities, employers, business representative organisations, and sector bodies
<i>This plan has been developed in partnership and is not 'owned' by any single organisation in Essex. Maintaining a partnership approach and enabling new organisations to contribute will be vital to success.</i>
THREE: An employer led approach to be at the forefront of the Skills Plan in conjunction other work such as the Strategic Development Fund
<i>This plan is focused on what local employers need now and in the future to help ensure that individuals can be supported into careers and to provide local educators with a clear view of the economy to best respond to this.</i>
FOUR: A commitment to working together to address the findings of the Skills Plan
<i>In order to deliver against this plan, it is essential that partners commit to working together to deliver.</i>
FIVE: A joined-up voice to share the Essex perspective with government, national bodies, funders and key stakeholders
<i>The Skills Plan is intended to provide a clear consensus from public and private sector partners as to what Essex looks like and what it requires. This will enable all partners to articulate this at a national level where possible and to be in a good position for any funding opportunities.</i>

Appendix 2: Further information on key policy developments

The Skills and Post-16 Education Act: <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2868>

The Levelling Up White Paper and supporting documents:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

- **A Future Skills Unit** to bring together information and data relating to skills and jobs and to better understand skills gaps, providing data and evidence. The Unit will work with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Work and Pensions to bring information together. Clearly, this aligns well with the focus of this Skills Plan on future growth in Essex and should ensure more accessible data to help inform activity locally.
- **Further devolution of Adult Education Budget (AEB)** – the Levelling Up White Paper includes a mission that by 2030, every part of England that wants a devolution deal will have a devolution deal. Devolution of AEB is already in place in Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) areas and the DfE has committed to this for new devolution deals.
- **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and 'Multiply'** – the UKSPF will provide £2.6 billion of new funding, rising to £1.5bn by March 2025, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation from the Fund. This will replace the European Social Fund. Some pilots have been underway through the Community Renewal Fund. Focus for UKSPF will include:
 - Supporting disadvantaged people to access the skills they need to progress in life and into work
 - Supporting local areas to fund local skills needs and supplement local adult skills provision

- Reducing levels of economic inactivity and move those furthest from the labour market closer to employment through investment in bespoke employment support tailored to local need

In addition, existing skills reforms will continue to roll out, including:

- **Skills Bootcamps** - these are already underway for many geographies and sectors and providing free, flexible training for adults to get skills required for careers. Roll out will include sector focuses including green, digital and construction as part of up to an additional £550 million to expand. SMEs will provide 10% of training existing staff (previously £30%). South Essex College is running a Bootcamp, supporting individuals to gain free driver qualifications to respond to shortages of HGV drivers.
- **Apprenticeships** - will continue with funding increasing by £2.7 billion by 2024-25. This includes an enhanced recruitment service for SMEs, as well as making it easier for large employers to transfer their Apprenticeship Levy to SMEs to further support apprenticeships in disadvantaged areas.
- **Higher Technical Qualifications** – the DfE is working with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education to roll out higher technical qualifications (HTQs) from September 2022, which have been approved against employer-led standards as providing learners with the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for a given occupation
- **Institutes of Technology (IoTs)**– Nine new IoTs are being launched in England, which will take the total to 21 in England. **This includes a new IoT for the SELEP area, led by South Essex College** and working with further and higher education partners across the geography. The SELEP IoT includes employer partners such as DP World (London Gateway), Port of Tilbury, Princess Alexandra Hospital Group, Leonardo, Morgan Sindall and Megger Instruments. Training will be provided in higher technical skills including transport and logistics, engineering and manufacturing, health science, construction and the built environment.
- In addition, other areas of continued policy will include further roll out of T-Levels, Lifelong Loan Entitlements and a £1.5 billion FE Capital Transformation programme to invest and transform college estates in England. The Lifetime Skills Guarantee will also continue, enabling access to flexible support to train, retrain and upskill at any age plus free approved Level 3 qualification and expanded trial for high value Level 3 qualification for free.

As further detail emerges regarding the above, it will be important for Essex partners to engage as well as ensuring maximum engagement and take up of the existing initiatives outlined.