Skills Essex

Winter 2025/2026

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Local Skills Improvement Plan

EGA Grow for it.

The new Essex Growth Agency – unlocking skills opportunities,

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• Putting skills top of the Essex agenda •

Why the Local S (LSIP) matters



Joanne Giles, Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Executive Director, explains the vital importance of reshaping the skills landscape across the county.

AT Essex Chambers of Commerce, we are proud to be leading a bold and collaborative movement to reshape the skills landscape across our county.

Working in close partnership with a wide range of employers Further Education (FE) colleges, independent training providers and the local authorities, we have spent the past three years building a dynamic and responsive skills ecosystem, one that is designed to meet the needs of today's economy while preparing for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

At the heart of this transformation is the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). More than just a strategic document, the LSIP is a living blueprint for change. It reflects the voices of hundreds of employers, educators, and community stakeholders. It is grounded in evidence, shaped by real-world insight, and focused on delivering long-term impact. The LSIP is not just about skills, it's about people, productivity, and prosperity.

A shared vision for Essex



Essex is a county of diversity and ambition. From the bustling towns of Basildon and the cities of Southend, Chelmsford and Colchester to the rural communities of Uttlesford and Tendring, our economic landscape is rich and varied. We are home to thriving sectors such as logistics, advanced manufacturing, health and social care, construction, digital technology, and the emerging green economy.

But to unlock the full potential of these sectors, we need a workforce that is skilled, agile, and future-ready.

The LSIP provides a shared vision for how we achieve this. It brings together employers, educators, training providers, and local authorities in a unified effort to align skills provision with economic need. It is a plan built on collaboration, and its success depends on the strength of our partnerships.

Listening to employers, responding to needs

One of the defining features of the LSIP is its employer-led approach. Through extensive engagement, including surveys, interviews, roundtables, and sector-specific workshops, we have gathered detailed insights into the skills challenges facing businesses across Essex.

Employers have told us:

- they struggle to recruit candidates with the right technical and soft skills
- training provision is often too rigid or outdated to meet current needs
- there is a disconnect between education and the realities of the workplace
- more support is needed for upskilling existing staff and attracting new talent
- digital skills are increasingly essential, even in traditionally non-digital roles.

These insights have shaped every aspect of the LSIP. They have informed our priorities, guided our recommendations, and inspired new approaches to curriculum design and delivery.

The changing world of work

The pace of change in the workplace is accelerating. Digital transformation, automation, artificial intelligence, and the net-zero transition are reshaping industries and redefining job roles. Essex must be ready to meet these changes head-on.

We know that:

- digital literacy is now a core competency across all sectors
- the green economy is creating new roles in energy, construction, and transport
- health and social care faces ongoing recruitment and retention challenges
- advanced manufacturing requires new technical skills and innovation
- soft skills communication, adaptability, problem-solving are more important than ever.

The LSIP continues to focus on ensuring that our training provision reflects these realities. It helps us anticipate future trends and prepare our workforce accordingly.

Creating a future-ready Essex is not about isolated interventions, it's about building a cohesive and collaborative ecosystem where every part of the skills landscape works in harmony. This means:

- employers who are actively involved in shaping training and curriculum
- educators who are empowered to innovate and respond to industry needs
- learners who are supported to succeed, regardless of background or circumstance
- communities that benefit from inclusive growth and opportunity.

kills Improvement Plan more than ever

Local Skills Improvement Plan

Business Driven Employer Led

This ecosystem is already taking shape. Across Essex, we're seeing new partnerships, new investment, and new energy. The LSIP has become a catalyst for change, sparking conversations and collaborations that will have lasting impact.

Empowering providers to innovate

Our FE colleges and independent training providers (ITPs) have shown remarkable agility and commitment. They have:

- developed new courses aligned with employer needs
- more support is needed to invest in cutting-edge facilities and equipment
- we need to build stronger links with industry through placements and apprenticeships
- FE and employers need to further embrace flexible delivery models to reach more learners
- employers need help to prioritise inclusivity and accessibility.

This innovation is critical. It ensures Essex remains competitive and that our learners are equipped with the skills they need to thrive.

One of the strengths of the LSIP is its foundation in data and evidence. Through labour market analysis, employer feedback, and regional intelligence, we've built a detailed picture of Essex's skills needs. This evidence base allows us to:

- identify priority sectors and emerging opportunities
- target investment where it will have the greatest impact
- monitor progress and measure outcomes
- adapt and evolve the plan as new challenges arise.

This data-driven approach ensures that our actions are strategic, effective, and accountable.

At the heart of the LSIP is a commitment to people. We want every person in Essex to have access to high-quality training that leads to meaningful employment. This includes:

- young people making career choices and entering the workforce
- adults looking to upskill, reskill, or change careers
- underrepresented groups who face barriers to education and employment
- employers who want to invest in their workforce and drive productivity.

The LSIP is helping to create pathways that are inclusive, flexible, and responsive. It is about unlocking potential and creating opportunity.

Driving economic growth and resilience

Skills are not just a workforce issue; they are a strategic lever for economic growth. A skilled workforce attracts investment, drives innovation, and enhances productivity. It enables businesses to grow, compete, and adapt. It strengthens communities and builds resilience.

The LSIP is helping Essex to:

- respond to economic shocks and structural changes
- support key sectors and clusters
- foster entrepreneurship and innovation
- build a more inclusive and sustainable economy.

This is about more than jobs, it's about prosperity, wellbeing, and long-term success.

While the LSIP is focused on Essex, its implications are national. It demonstrates what is possible when local stakeholders come together with a shared purpose. It shows how employer-led planning can drive meaningful change.



Essex is leading the way. Through the LSIP, we are showing that local leadership, informed by local insight, can deliver national impact.

While we are proud of the progress made, we know that the journey is far from over. The LSIP is a living plan, designed to evolve as new challenges and opportunities emerge. In the coming months and years, we will:

- continue to engage with employers to refine and update our priorities
- work with providers to innovate and expand provision
- monitor outcomes to ensure that our interventions are delivering impact
- advocate for Essex at regional and national levels to attract investment and support
- explore new models of delivery, including digital and hybrid learning
- strengthen links between education, employment, and enterprise.

We are committed to keeping the LSIP relevant, responsive, and ambitious. It is our roadmap for a stronger, smarter Essex.

To truly realise the vision of a future-ready Essex, we need everyone to play a part. Whether you're an employer, an educator, a policymaker, or a community leader, your voice matters. The LSIP is a collaborative effort, and its success depends on continued engagement and shared ownership.

We invite you to:

- get involved in shaping the next phase of the LSIP
- share your insights and experiences to inform our work
- partner with us to deliver innovative training and support
- champion skills development in your organisation and community
- support learners through mentoring, placements, and opportunities.

Together, we can build a county that is not only prepared for the future, but leading it.

Final thoughts

The Local Skills Improvement Plan is more than a strategy, it's a movement. It represents the best of Essex: our ambition, our collaboration, and our commitment to progress. At Essex Chambers of Commerce, we are proud to be leading this work alongside our partners in FE and independent training. We believe in the power of skills to transform lives, drive growth, and shape a better future for all.

Let's keep building. Let's keep innovating. Let's make Essex future-ready.

Essex's £10m skills surge: powering growth, unlocking potential

AS part of the Essex Year of Opportunity, Essex County Council and its partners are making a bold, forward-looking commitment to employment and skills with over £10 million of investment in the 2025/6 financial year directly from the County Council and external funding secured to supercharge skills in the County.

But this isn't just a funding announcement; it's a rally for businesses, residents and communities to seize the moment and shape their futures.

Backed by £1.3 million of Essex County Council, this is the Essex Year of Opportunity. Running to September 2025 this dynamic, countywide initiative will unlock potential, tackle inequality, and create better outcomes for everyone. The year of Opportunity is about making opportunity visible, accessible, and real for all residents, from 10-year-olds in schools, to older adult career changers, Whether that's through better jobs, stronger skills pathways, or targeted support for communities.

"The Essex Year of Opportunity is Essex saying: we're backing our people, our places, and our businesses to thrive. This investment marks a major milestone and is part of our ongoing commitment to encouraging lifelong learning and skills development," said Councillor Tony Ball, Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability at Essex County Council.

One of the most exciting developments is the launch of Essex's first-ever locally commissioned Skills Bootcamp programme. These bootcamps are free, flexible training courses lasting up to 16 weeks, designed to equip residents with job-ready skills in high-demand sectors, including a guaranteed interview with an employer.

What makes this programme stand out? Essex County Council has worked directly with businesses to co-design the offer, ensuring every course is tailored to real workforce needs. It's skills with purpose—and impact.

Bootcamps are available across a wide range of growth sectors, including:

- **Digital & Digitech** – coding, data analytics, cybersecurity
- **Construction** – site management, specialist trades
- **Green Skills & Renewables** – sustainable technologies and energy
- **Health & Social Care** – frontline care roles
- **Transport & Logistics** – HGV driver training, supply chain
- **Engineering, Manufacturing & EVs** – advanced technical skills
- **Creative & Cultural Industries** – media, design, arts
- **Childcare, Education & Security** – essential community services

For SMEs, bootcamps offer a low-cost way to upskill staff or recruit new talent. For residents, it's a fast-track to a new career, promotion, or fresh start.

Explore the full programme, search: www.essexopportunities.co.uk/skills-bootcamps/skills-bootcamps-in-essex/

Essex is doubling down on apprenticeships with an enhanced Apprenticeship Support Fund. SMEs can access up to £2,000 per apprentice, helping cover costs and remove barriers to hiring.

Alongside this, the Apprenticeship Hub offers expert guidance, brokerage, and coordination—making it easier than ever for businesses to find, hire, and support apprentices. It's a one-stop shop for growing your team and investing in future talent.

The Council's flagship Backing Essex Business service is being supercharged with a dedicated skills support element. Businesses can access tailored advice, training connections, and strategic workforce planning to help identify gaps and build resilience.

Whether you're scaling up, recruiting, or adapting to new technologies, this service is designed to help you succeed—with the right people, in the right roles, at the right time.

Need funding to grow, innovate, or train? The Ambitious Essex Funding Finder is your go-to platform for discovering grants, loans, and investment opportunities. It's built for SMEs, startups, and community organisations—making it easier to find the support you need to take your next step.

What's next – even more opportunity ahead

This £10 million investment is just the beginning. As the Essex Year of Opportunity gathers pace, more initiatives are on the horizon, including:

- **Functional Skills Courses** – helping residents improve literacy, numeracy, and digital confidence, especially for those returning to work or changing careers
- **Essex Careers Festival** – a high-energy event connecting young people with employers, training providers, and career pathways across sectors
- **Health Careers Programme** – promoting pathways into NHS and care sector roles, with targeted outreach, training, and employer engagement to build a sustainable health workforce

These programmes will ensure Essex remains a place where talent is nurtured, opportunity is accessible, and businesses are supported to thrive.

"With significant investment by the County Council in the Year of Opportunity and the extended Ambitious Essex Growth Agency Team I couldn't be prouder of our commitment to raise aspirations so that businesses and residents in Essex have the chance to succeed regardless of their background." Councillor Louise McKinlay, Deputy Leader Essex County Council.

Whether you're a business looking to support the development of your staff, or a resident ready for your next move, the Essex Opportunities portal is your gateway to apprenticeships, jobs, and training courses across the county. It's free, easy to use, and packed with opportunities waiting to be discovered.

Essex is investing in you. Now's the time to invest in yourself and your business.

Essex Growth Agency launches to power the county's economy



Johnathon Cuthbertson



Tristan Smith

THE Essex Growth Agency (EGA) has officially launched — a strategic move to drive investment, scale enterprise, and build high-impact collaborations between public and private sectors to drive growth and unlock opportunity, innovation, investment and skills for business and residents.

So, what does the EGA do for businesses and residents?

The EGA is a strategic growth platform; a single, unified entry point for business support and a mechanism for aligning public and private sector efforts to stimulate innovation, build workforce capability, and attract investment.

It works by:

- **Business & Resident Support Services:** EGA delivers practical support through initiatives like Backing Essex Business—helping local enterprises scale, win new contracts, and access expert advice. It also signposts residents to training, jobs, and career pathways aligned with employer needs.
- **Insight-Driven Strategy:** EGA provides deep economic and labour market intelligence to help businesses make smarter decisions and shape policy that reflects real market needs.
- **Skills and Training Partnerships:** It connects employers with training providers to build talent pipelines that match business demand.
- **Policy Influence:** EGA leads strategic engagement with national stakeholders to unlock funding and shape policies that benefit Essex businesses.
- **Innovation & Sector Growth:** Through collaboration with universities and R&D hubs, EGA supports the development of high-growth sectors and adoption of new technologies.
- **Place-Based Investment:** It enables targeted investment in infrastructure, enterprise zones, and regeneration projects through strategic partnerships.
- **Access to Funding:** EGA acts as a connector, helping businesses tap into grants, growth programmes, and investment opportunities.

This is about creating the right environment for businesses to thrive, whether through better access to talent, smarter infrastructure, or stronger networks.

EGA is built on the principle that growth is a shared endeavour. It brings together local authorities, colleges, universities, training providers, and employers to co-design solutions that reflect the unique needs of Essex's diverse economy.

From advanced manufacturing in Harlow to logistics in Thurrock, digital in Chelmsford to tourism in Southend—the EGA ensures that local strengths are harnessed and amplified.

It also plays a key role in place leadership, helping shape local economic strategies and investment plans that reflect real business needs and community priorities.

While the EGA is business-led, it also plays a vital role in connecting residents to opportunity. By aligning employer demand with local skills provision, it helps residents access apprenticeships and job opportunities, training and upskilling programmes, and careers advice and sector-specific pathways

By aligning employer demand with local skills provision, the EGA ensures that residents can access meaningful, future-focused opportunities—supporting inclusive growth and social mobility across Essex.

Innovation is at the heart of the Essex Growth Agency's mission. By working with sector leaders, universities, and research bodies, the EGA helps businesses tap into new technologies, adopt digital solutions, and explore new markets.

It also acts as a connector for investment, helping unlock funding for infrastructure, skills, and enterprise. Whether through government programmes, private capital, or collaborative bids, the EGA is positioned to bring resources into Essex that fuel long-term growth.

The launch of the Essex Growth Agency marks a shift in how Essex County Council approaches economic development. It's about strategic enablement, not just service delivery through a human and digital experience; not just a website but expert support guidance and feedback mechanisms delivered by our expert teams.

"The Ambitious Essex Growth Agency is about creating the right conditions for businesses to scale, innovate, and compete. By connecting companies to talent, infrastructure, and investment, EGA is driving long-term growth and positioning Essex as a destination for enterprise," said Tristan Smith, Head of Business Growth and Inward Investment, EGA

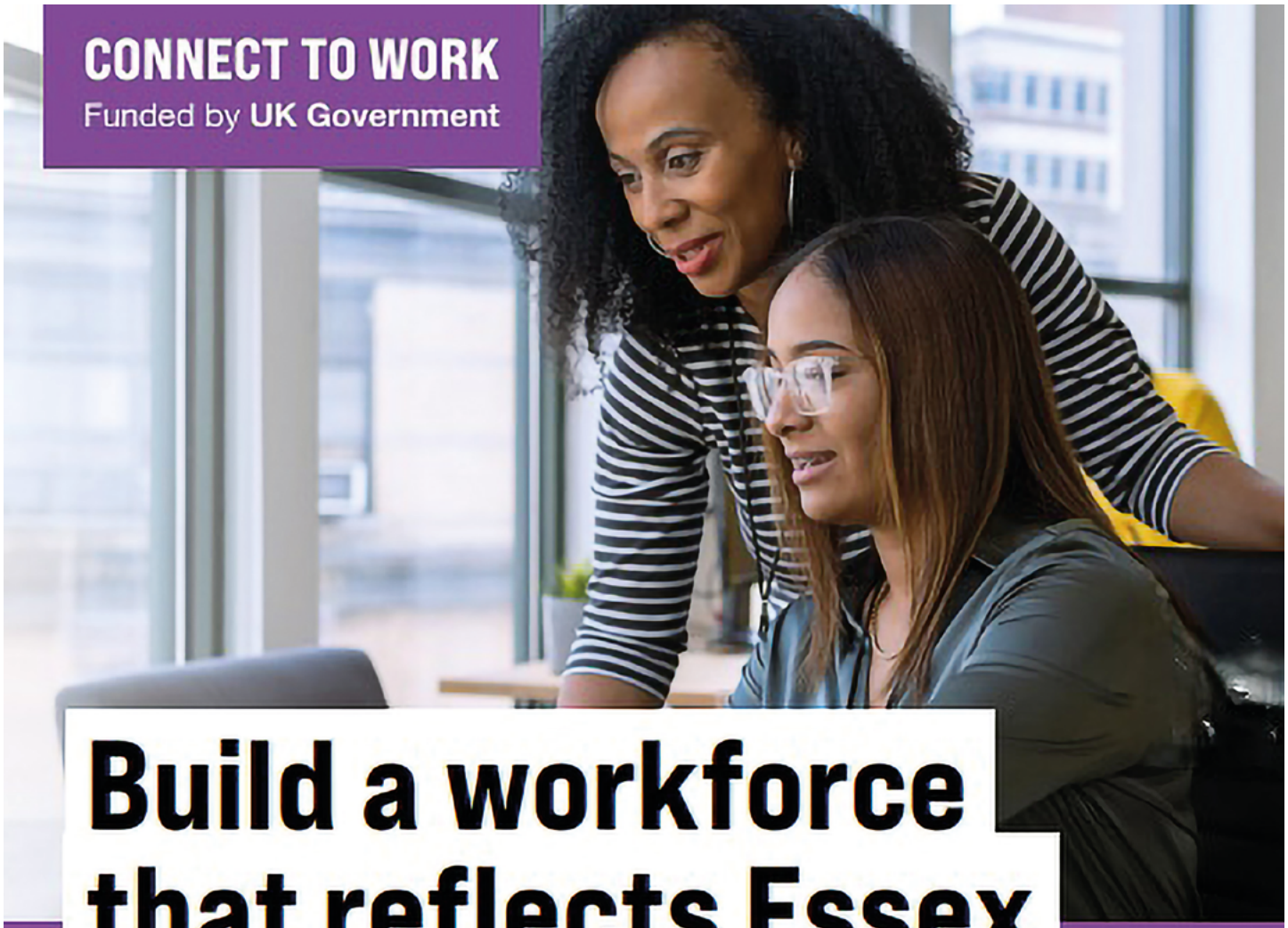
EGA is also about partnership, not just provision. For Business, this includes a dedicated contact within the Growth Agency who understands the organisation and can assist with pulling the leavers of growth, be that signposting to services or opening doors to lobbying and investment opportunities. This deep partnership extends into education, skills, and employment. EGA will work across the system to connect businesses with Essex's talent pipeline and energise the skills system - ensuring our young people are equipped and inspired to seize the great jobs on offer.

"For me, the most exciting thing about the Growth Agency is how we re-imagine the relationship between Local Government, Business and Residents so it fosters a strong partnership for growth, leading to more meaningful collaborations and creating opportunities where residents and businesses can thrive," said Johnathon Cuthbertson, Head of Strategy and Commissioning, EGA.

The EGA is already working with partners to shape future investment, support sector development, and align skills provision with employer demand. Over the coming months, it will expand its reach, deepen its partnerships, and launch new tools to help businesses and residents navigate the support landscape more easily.

It's a bold step forward—and a clear signal that Essex is serious about growth. If you're a business looking to grow, innovate, or invest—or a resident seeking your next opportunity—the Essex Growth Agency is your gateway to progress. Search 'Ambitious Essex Growth Agency' or connect with us on LinkedIn.

Essex is building the future. The Essex Growth Agency is your strategic partner in making it happen.



Build a workforce that reflects Essex

Connect to Work helps you recruit inclusively and responsibly. Tap into local talent, boost your social value and meet your sustainability goals – all while growing a stronger, more diverse team.

Visit www.essexopportunities.co.uk/connect-to-work to get involved.

Working in partnership:

Southend-on-Sea City Council

thurrock.gov.uk

Essex County Council

Active futures: powering Essex through skills, movement and opportunity

AS Essex prepares for transformative change through devolution and Local Government Reform, the sport and physical activity sector is stepping up — not just to get people moving, but to build a resilient, skilled, and future-ready workforce.

Active Essex is proud to lead the Sport and Physical Activity sub-sector group within the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), ensuring our sector is embedded in strategic planning and workforce development across the county. Through partnerships with CIMSPA and Essex Chambers of Commerce, we've launched the Essex Sport & Physical Activity Skills Advisory Board — an employer-led body driving the development of people, culture, and skills in our sector.

This strategic alignment is helping to shape a sector that's not only great to work in, but also vital to the health, wellbeing, and economic prosperity of Essex.

Collaborating for Impact

We're working closely with employers, educators, and health leaders to co-create solutions that meet local needs. Our sector supports the NHS Long Term Plan by delivering community-based, prevention-focused interventions — particularly around mental health, MSK conditions, and long-term health challenges.

Through initiatives like the Essex Learning Arena, career events, and training pathways, we're building a resilient, skilled workforce ready to meet the demands of tomorrow.

Volunteering: a gateway to growth

Volunteering is a cornerstone of our sector — offering real-world experience, confidence-building, and progression into paid work. From peer mentoring to community coaching, volunteers are helping deliver preventative health interventions, support mental wellbeing, and engage those furthest from the labour market.

For young people, the Move With Us Leaders Academy is a standout initiative. It empowers 12–18-year-olds to take on leadership roles in sport and physical activity, gaining essential life skills while making a difference in their communities.

Careers Hub: pathways into the sector

The Active Essex Careers Hub is a central resource for anyone exploring careers in sport and physical activity. It offers guidance on qualifications, job roles, and volunteering opportunities, alongside a growing library of video profiles showcasing real career journeys. Visit www.activeessexfoundation.org/work-with-us/





Whether you're a student, job seeker, or someone looking to change careers, the Careers Hub helps you understand the pathways available and how to get started.

A Year of Opportunity: reflections and momentum

2024 marked Essex's Year of Opportunity, and the Active Essex team embraced it by championing inclusive growth, youth engagement, and community resilience. From career events and skills diagnostics to storytelling campaigns that highlighted real lives transformed through movement, the sector demonstrated its power to connect, uplift, and inspire.

We've seen increased activity levels among underrepresented groups, more young women getting active, and a growing recognition of the sector's role in tackling long-term health conditions. These stories — shared through our digital impact reports and community platforms — are shaping the narrative of what's possible when we invest in people and place.

Get involved: volunteer today

Volunteering is a gateway to personal growth, professional development, and community impact. Whether you're looking to gain experience, build confidence, or make a difference — there's a role for you.

- **Explore youth volunteering through the Move With Us Leaders Academy**
- **Discover career pathways at the Active Essex Careers Hub**
- **Find local opportunities at Volunteer Essex**

Together, we're building an Active Essex — where movement powers opportunity, and skills shape the future.

For further information, contact Hollie Wood, Relationship Manager - North Essex People, Culture, Skills Lead, hollie.wood@activeessex.org

SOUTH ESSEX COLLEGES GROUP

Variety from award-winning college

SOUTH Essex Colleges Group (SECG) is the largest provider of vocational and technical qualifications in Essex. We are working with local employers such as the Lower Thames Crossing, Thames Freeport, Basildon Westgate development, the NHS, Essex Chamber of Commerce, Balfour Beatty and Sharp.



Basildon College consists of three campuses: *Basildon Town Centre* offers a range of Digital and Creative Media courses run in close partnerships with industry specialists such as Sharp and Microtill designed to meet the demand for future digital skills; *Luckyn Lane* has specialist facilities offering engineering courses and Apprenticeships in Engineering, Plumbing and Electrical; *Stephenson Road* features industry-standard facilities that offer Construction courses, Motor Vehicle courses including Apprenticeships.

In recognition of its outstanding training programmes, in 2025, we won the Innovation in Training Delivery award at the annual Apprenticeship and Training Conference (ATC). The award, presented to Marine Engineering tutor Simon Lofting, celebrates the college's pioneering work in maritime training.

Thurrock College offers a diverse provision of courses and Apprenticeships to young people and adults. Service Industries offers courses including Hair and Beauty, Hospitality and Catering, Travel and Tourism, Business, Health and Care and Early Years, Multi-Skills, Carpentry, Plumbing and Electrical installation. The college also offers a range of A-Levels aligned to career pathways in Medicine, Engineering and Computing.

Southend City College offers a variety of courses including Health and Social Care, Early Years Education, Creative and Sport.

SEGC also provides courses at Level 4 and Level 5 in key specialisms of Engineering, Construction, Health and Digital.

Courses have all been designed with employers to enable students to gain the skills needed for the future. Each curriculum works closely with employers to ensure that training is fit for the workforce of the future and provides work experience for students. SEGC are also working with the National Talent Agency to offer the students a qualification in Essential Work Skills, providing learners with the softer skills that are required by employers.

At SECG, we have also embraced AI and innovative learning technologies, including immersive suites and augmented reality tools within Metaverse learning.

SECG's driver training schools in the Midlands and Basildon offer driver training in all classes of vehicles funded through Skills Bootcamps and commercial delivery. Logistics apprenticeships are also offered in International Freight Forwarding, Warehouse and LGV driving.

SECG offer a range of adult courses in preparation for work in a number of sectors including Security, Health & Social Care, Construction, Forklift & Warehousing, Teaching Assistants, IT, Business Administration & Office Skills. We are utilising innovation and tailored learning funding to offer bespoke courses for employers to enable them to upskill their staff, including welding, pre-team leading, power tool awareness, sales courses and IT skills for the workplace.



Our commercial offer includes green skills in Electric/Hybrid course in Boats, Installation of EV chargers and Compex qualifications

SEGC also offer Wave 6 Skills Bootcamps funded through Essex County Council in HGV driving, Warehouse, Construction skills, Coded Welding and Electric/Hybrid Vehicles.





Jayne Sheehan, Vice Group CEO at SECG, said: "We actively work with employers and the local skills improvement plan to offer the courses designed to support local employers with the skills that are needed, whether this is study programmes for young people, adult courses as well as bespoke courses designed in conjunction with employers to upskill their staff."

To find out more about South Essex Colleges Group, visit: www.southessex.ac.uk



Chelmsford College stays ahead in the evolving skills landscape

WITH a dedication to equipping learners with industry-ready skills, Chelmsford College proudly contributes to the evolving skills landscape.

Based in the heart of the city, Chelmsford College offers full-time, part-time apprenticeship and adult learning programmes, identifying different areas where adaptation according to industry can be applied. Through working with employers and continually updating curriculum content, Chelmsford College meets the needs of both learners and stakeholders alike. Although committed to the different provisions, retrofit stands out among the college's specialist sectors and area of expertise.

Chelmsford College intentionally focuses on specialising in retrofit as this supports both the evolving skills landscape as well as the Local Skills Improvement Plan's priority areas of clean energy and construction. The college has its own pathway designed to advance skills that can lead to sustained employment within the industry. The first course is a Sector Work Academy Programme (SWAP) that focuses on clean energy retrofit, which is ideal for beginners and those without prior qualifications. Leading on from this is a Retrofit Insulation Installer Skills Bootcamp, which is a perfect follow-on from the SWAP and a great option for employers looking to train their existing employees. Chelmsford College recognises that, due to retrofit being a continually advancing sector, there isn't enough supply to keep up with demand, leading to a clear skills gap. In answer to this, the Skills Bootcamp includes rendering, allowing the college to help meet this need and play a role in closing the gap.

Although that specific pathway is just for those aged 19+, the college ensures learning about sustainability is built into all its courses for 16–18-year-olds too, helping learners understand its importance and its direct link to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. As a result, learners gain the knowledge, skills and opportunities needed to succeed in an evolving clean energy economy.

With the government and local councils placing a regional focus on clean energy, Chelmsford College regionally collaborates with employers to help meet this requirement. The college's engagement with employers takes form in various ways; the SWAP is a leading example as it's a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) product meaning Chelmsford College is in constant communication working with DWP. This further highlights how the college provides evolving skills to a wide range of people. As well as those already employed and studying through the Skills Bootcamp, the college works with the DWP to support unemployed individuals and newcomers to the industry, helping bring more people to this in-demand sector.

Another form of engagement is the college's Stakeholder Knowledge Exchange events where employers meet with college staff to discuss thoughts, industry needs and how these can be met through the curriculum. Through hosting a Retrofit Stakeholder Knowledge Exchange, various employers such as CHP, Eastlight Community Homes and Peabody now support Chelmsford College to find learners and opportunities.

Although retrofit is a specialist sector, this important work with employers takes place across all of Chelmsford College's departments. The college has employed more Stakeholder Engagement Advisors to support these efforts, with each advisor focusing on a dedicated area and hosting Stakeholder Knowledge Exchanges specific to their department. These events are vital to Chelmsford College's approach to co-design. Through listening to employer feedback, the college and stakeholders collaborate to make positive changes across all provisions. As a result of working with CIMSPA and Billericay Town Football Club (BTFC), the sports courses at Chelmsford College now include CIMSPA-accredited CPD modules and a first aid qualification to meet industry needs, as well as a sports physio course specifically for Chelmsford College learners based at BTFC.

Through this comprehensive approach, Chelmsford College remains committed to contributing to the evolving skills landscape across industries helping both future and current workforces meet demands.

David Warnes, the Principal and CEO at Chelmsford College, states "we believe that strong partnerships with businesses are key to shaping a workforce ready for tomorrow. We invite employers to engage with us on curriculum co-design and co-development through our stakeholder knowledge exchange programme or through industry insights, masterclasses or demonstrations with our innovative 'Pass-It-On' programme.

Businesses are key to helping our learners gain relevant, practical skills through placements, site visits or work experience. Whether you're looking to upskill your team via our Skills Bootcamps or influence future talent pipelines, your involvement helps us deliver education that meets your needs. Together, we can close skills gaps, drive innovation, and support economic growth across Essex. Let's build a future where education and industry work hand in hand."

If you're an employer interested in working with Chelmsford College, please email employers@chelmsford.ac.uk. To find out more about Chelmsford College, please visit www.chelmsford.ac.uk





Colchester Institute: building Essex's future construction workforce

COLCHESTER Institute is the largest provider of high-quality education, professional development and technical training in North Essex.

With more than 148,000 new homes planned by the mid-2030s, the College is preparing the next generation of construction professionals to power growth and support Essex County Council's Building Ambitious Essex programme.

From school leavers taking their first steps into the trade to experienced workers progressing to higher-level qualifications, Colchester Institute delivers programmes designed around employer needs. Learners leave with the skills, confidence, and connections to thrive in one of the UK's fastest-growing sectors.

The College offers one of the widest ranges of construction training in the region, covering trades, engineering, and professional pathways. Students can progress from entry-level study through to higher education, with routes including full-time courses, apprenticeships, T Levels, HNCs, HNDs, and degrees. All programmes are taught in modern workshops replicating real industry environments, ensuring learners gain practical skills alongside theory. Flexible study options also allow employers to recruit, retain, and train their workforce.

Employer collaboration is central to the College's approach. Partnerships with companies such as Davonport, Kier Group, Collier & Catchpole and PGM Carpentry Contractors enrich learning through apprenticeships, guest lectures and donations. More than £130,000 of equipment and materials has been secured through industry support in the past year.

Colchester Institute was also one of only 10 colleges nationwide chosen for the DeWalt Grow the Trades initiative, receiving a £15,000 donation of tools and equipment. Initiatives like this ensure students are industry-ready and confident when they enter the workforce.

Chris Coe, Area Head for Trowel Trades and Wood Occupations, has led much of this work. He said, "Strong relationships with employers are key to preparing our students for the future. These partnerships give learners valuable industry insight, build their confidence, and ensure they leave us ready to succeed in the workplace."

Colchester Institute is working closely with Latimer by Clarion Housing Group on the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community. This is set to be the largest planning application ever submitted in Essex and is located just five miles from the Colchester campus. The College is aligning its curriculum with the project's focus on sustainable and modern construction methods, including energy efficiency and self-generation. This partnership ensures students gain the skills needed for the future of green construction and community development.

Teaching is delivered by 38 staff members who all have industry backgrounds. To keep their knowledge current, the College runs a Back to the Floor initiative, sending staff back into industry to refresh skills and bring up-to-date insights back into the classroom. This ensures the curriculum reflects the latest industry practices while giving students opportunities to engage with employers directly.

Alison Andreas, Principal and Chief Executive, said, "Construction is central to Essex's growth, and at Colchester Institute we are dedicated to training a workforce ready to deliver it. With the support of employers, we can ensure our learners are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed and help shape the future of our county."

To support Colchester Institute , please visit our website: www.colchester.ac.uk/get-involved

Adapting for the future: skills, responsibility and opportunity at The Sixth Form College Colchester

AS the UK navigates a rapidly evolving skills landscape, the shared responsibility to adapt falls on educators, employers, and communities alike. At The Sixth Form College Colchester, we embrace this challenge by preparing students not only for academic success but for meaningful futures in a changing world.

The Sixth Form College Colchester is the primary provider of A Level programmes for Colchester and much of North Essex. Operating within a collaborative tertiary system alongside Colchester Institute, the College plays a vital role in ensuring that all local young people have access to high-quality academic education.

With approximately 3,300 students aged 16–19 on full-time Level 3 programmes and a smaller cohort on Level 2, the College is continuing to grow—reflecting strong local demand for broad academic post-16 study. Our student population is diverse, with a fifth coming from deprived areas. This inclusivity is essential to meeting local skills needs and ensuring that all young people—regardless of background—can access opportunities for personal and academic growth.

Colchester is growing faster than the rest of Essex, with projected job growth concentrated in professional services and management roles—sectors that rely heavily on graduate-level skills. Yet the proportion of Colchester residents who are graduates remains slightly below the national average. The East of England, however, leads the UK in graduate retention, with 41% of graduates returning and securing employment locally. Our students are tremendously successful at university, staying on their courses and achieving higher degree classifications than students from all other post-16 sectors.

We also ensure that our students are ready to meet employer expectations. Through our Careers Programme, students receive guidance on progression routes, CV writing, interview preparation, and university applications. We also invite guest speakers, including professionals and alumni, to share insights into various career paths.

Our focus on STEM subjects supports the local demand for skilled professionals in science and technology. Our arts and media programmes align with the creative economy, while our emphasis on communication and critical thinking prepares students for careers in law, journalism, and public service.

Employer feedback consistently emphasises the importance of soft skills and work-ready behaviours, which are often underdeveloped in young recruits. There is a pressing need for communication, leadership, planning and problem-solving skills, all of which are embedded in the College's curriculum and pastoral provision.

Whether students are pursuing subjects like Electronics, Computer Science, Psychology, or Classical Civilisations, they are developing analytical and transferable skills that align with the needs of employers. Our emphasis on independent learning, research, and structured debate ensures that students leave us not only with qualifications, but with the ability to apply their knowledge in dynamic and professional settings. Perhaps even more importantly, they leave us with the confidence and resilience to cope with their next steps, thanks to the expert support they receive from us.

One of the College's most distinctive features is our **Additional Studies programme,** which offers students a fourth course alongside their academic subjects. This programme, shaped by student interest and emerging trends, is a cornerstone of our approach to personal development and employability.

Students can choose from over 100 options, including:

- **Pre-Teaching and Pre-Medicine programmes,** which provide early exposure to professional pathways.
- **Financial Studies,** giving students a grounding in personal finance and economic literacy.
- **Sports Coaching and Leadership,** which build teamwork, communication, and organisational skills.
- **Creative and Performing Arts,** including music ensembles, drama productions, and dance clubs, fostering creativity and confidence.



- **Work Experience placements and Enterprise groups,** allowing students to gain insight into real-world environments
- **Storm Radio,** where students develop media, broadcasting, and technical skills.
- **Digital Skills Academy** for students to develop their expertise in IT, ready for the workplace

These opportunities are not just extracurricular—they are integral to our educational offer. They help students build portfolios, CVs, and personal statements that reflect a wide range of competencies, from leadership and initiative to collaboration and time management.

Principal Jo Cadman said: "At The Sixth Form College Colchester, we believe education is about more than qualifications—it's about preparing young people to thrive in a complex and changing world. Our students develop not only academic knowledge but also the skills, values, and experiences that employers and communities need.

"We invite businesses, universities, and community partners to connect with us. Whether through guest talks, work experience opportunities, or collaborative projects, your involvement can help shape the next generation of thinkers, leaders, and professionals. Together, we can ensure that our students are not only ready for the future—they are ready to shape it."

New City Trade Skills

Department for Education

Specialist training for a better future



Whether you are just starting out, experienced or an allied tradesperson, we can help you find the right course and get you qualified.

- Specialists in delivering commercial and professional trade qualifications
- Need to renew your CSCS? Gain a recognised NVQ qualification without coming to college, in as little as 14 weeks
- Free training needs analysis
- Tailored training at your premises

COURSES ›

Ofsted Outstanding Provider

www.ncctradeskills.co.uk

0330 135 9000

Partnering with employers to power the workforce of tomorrow.



At USP College, we know that businesses are only as strong as the people who power them. That's why we've built education around employer collaboration, ensuring our students graduate with the skills, knowledge and professional mindset to meet real industry needs.

USP College specialises in developing future talent across key sectors critical to the Essex economy. We focus on four sectors because they offer our students incredibly exciting career opportunities, are popular and engaging, but they also reflect the biggest employment opportunities in Essex and London.

Medical Technologies & Life Sciences

Creative Industries

Sport & Healthcare Professionals

Financial & Professional Services

"We are delighted to be working in partnership with USP College. We work with six placement students in our Ofsted 'Outstanding' nursery setting. Many of the students have joined us on a permanent basis after completing their course, and we always find both the College and students a pleasure to work with."

Pippa Drew, HR Director, Seymour House Day Nursery Schools

Could you help mentor, coach, inspire, motivate and nurture the next generation?

Through our sector boards, employers guide and influence curriculum development, helping us shape qualifications, such as T-Levels, that are directly relevant to local and national business priorities. This approach guarantees that our learners are not just employable, but equipped to add value from day one.

A partnership model for employers

"Collaboration with employers is vital," says Clare White, Principal of USP College. *"By working together across these specialist sectors, we are ensuring Essex has a workforce with the right skills, the right attitudes, and the ability to grow with the economy. Education aligned with local employment needs - USP College is proud to be at the forefront of that mission."*

Here's just some of the ways that you can work with the College:

- **Sector Boards** – Work with our curriculum teams to ensure learners skills, knowledge and understanding meets the ever-evolving employment landscape, through supporting our curriculum design and sharing your knowledge through co-delivery.
- **College Companies** – Set a live working brief and let our students come up with creative solutions to your business problem.
- **Host a student** – Could your company host a student for work experience, or a T-Level industry placement? Access a pipeline of work-ready, future-focused talent tailored to your business needs.
- **College CPD Days** – Run workshops with our students and inspire the workforce of the future.

USP College is redefining learning through digital innovations. Virtual Reality, Immersive Theatres and simulation classrooms give students the power to step inside subjects, and gain skills for the future in a fully interactive environment.

For more information, visit uspcollege.ac.uk/employers

USP College

Ofsted Good Provider



HARLOW COLLEGE and Stansted Airport College: first-rate engagements aplenty

AT Harlow College, we have several areas of specialism, including: The Harlow Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Centre (HAMEC), an exciting joint venture to grow the high technology skillset of local engineering and manufacturing businesses; our electric and hybrid vehicle training centre, a £100k Essex Country Council investment in new electric vehicle repair and maintenance courses; air source heat pumps and our commitment to Net Zero in our Renewable Energy Training Centre; and our on-campus South East Institute of Technology, which comes fully equipped with Metaverse Labs and virtual training areas for staff and learners.

Our HAMEC facilities and teaching benefit from the interactions and forum events we hold with our key manufacturing employers such as GSK, Moulton Brown, Ocado and also from relationships with visiting academics from ARU and University of Hertfordshire.

In partnership with Harlow College, Stansted Airport College has a first-rate engagement programme and hosts regular meetings with our key employers, such as MAG, Ryanair and other key carriers. This allows us to help tailor teaching delivery to meet the growing local skills needs and this works seamlessly with employers' recruitment. Work experience and Industry insight days held at the college showcase to young people the many and varied and high-value routes to employment and career success and also to Higher Education.

In the environmental and Net Zero space, we collaborate with key employers such as Mitsubishi Electric and those shaping local policy, such as Essex County Council, to understand the changing landscape for domestic and commercial energy conservation. Our air source heat pump training programmes have helped staff and local heating engineers and social housing providers, such as Qualis, to upskill their staff, ready to meet 2030 targets.

We have worked with national organisations such as IMI to develop and deliver industry standard training, up to Level 4, for the maintenance and repair of electric vehicles. We expect this work to be developed to encompass commercial vehicles driven by electricity and also hydrogen in the next five years.

Harlow College are members of FEDEC, a coalition of Essex Colleges who share inspiration, ideas and improvement models as well as staff and members of our SLT who contribute to conferences, forums and work groups from the Association of Colleges, Education Training Federation and other important bodies.

Our work with Access to Medicine and other health care roles is a wonderful illustration of how we work with regional health providers to understand the local workforce needs and to help adults to develop their skills and qualifications, often while still working in caring roles. Our successful graduates can be found having moved onto Nursing and Midwifery Degree Apprentiships with PAH where they go on to have rewarding careers.

Our sports graduates are now successful physiotherapists, while our former science students are dieticians, doctors and radiographers.

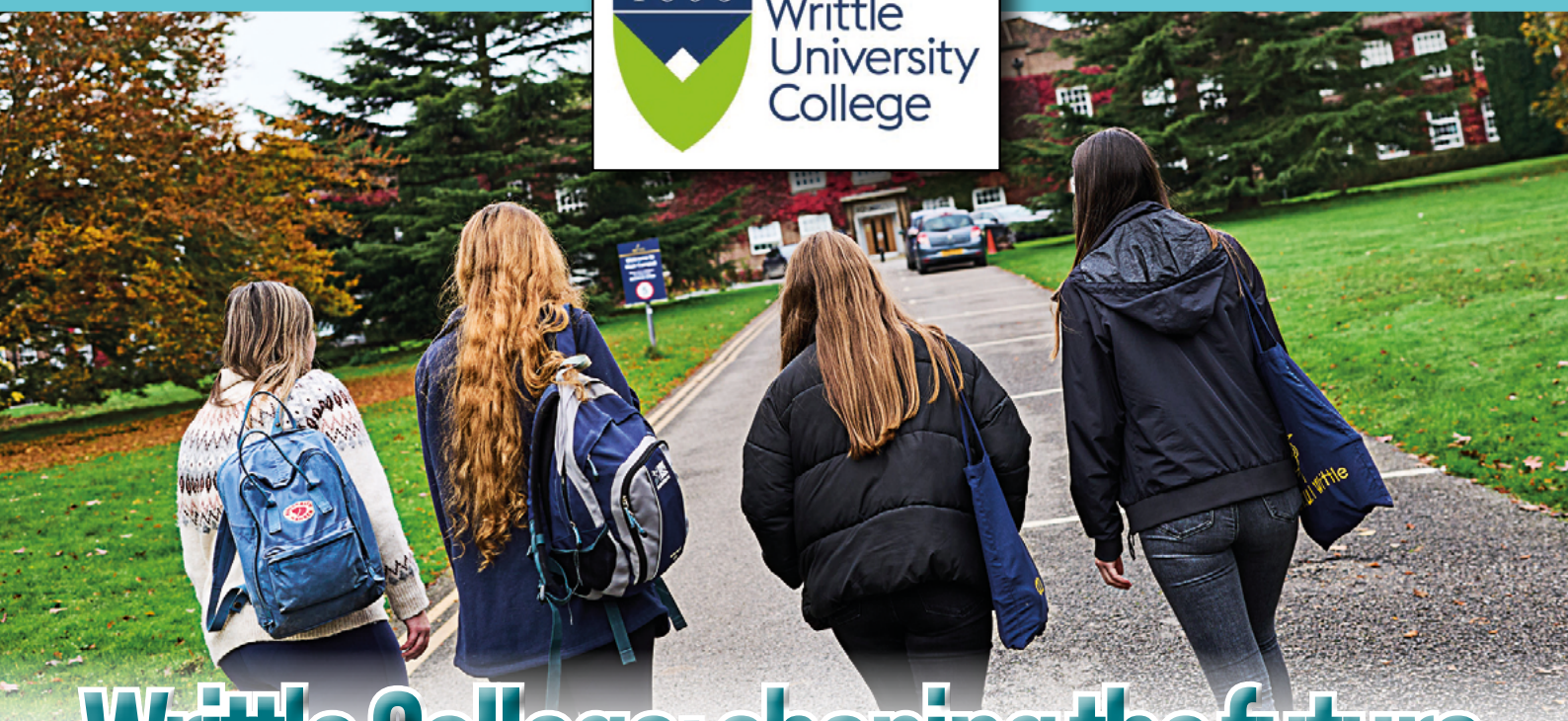
Harlow College has a growing future vision shared with the leadership and recruiters of PAH to grow local care and medical talent to meet local needs. T Level placements at the hospital allow our learners to gain insights into daily working life as a care giver and develop some of the softer human communication skills, which are so vital for care givers. Our partnerships also extend into dentistry, where we are delivering Level 3 and 4 Oral Health and Dental Nurse apprenticeship training, to meet overwhelming local needs.

Karen Spencer, Principal and CEO of Harlow College and Stansted Airport College, said: 'At Harlow College, we are proud to work hand in hand with employers, universities and local partners to deliver a truly career-led curriculum. From engineering and green technologies to healthcare and aviation, our focus is on equipping learners with the skills, experiences and confidence to succeed in high-value careers that meet local and national needs.



Together with Stansted Airport College and our Institute of Technology, we are shaping opportunities for the future and ensuring our students are ready to thrive in a rapidly changing world.'

For more information, visit: www.harlow-college.ac.uk and www.stanstedairportcollege.ac.uk



Writtle College: shaping the future of land-based education in Essex

LOCATED in the heart of Essex, Writtle College has been a cornerstone of land-based education for over a century. As a proud member of the Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) family, the College continues to evolve its portfolio to meet the priorities outlined in the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), with a strong focus on green skills, agri-tech, land-based industries, and leadership and management.

Expanding our T Level offer:

Writtle College is expanding its suite of T Levels in Animal Management, Animal Science, and Agriculture, complementing our existing Level 2 and Level 3 programmes for school leavers and adult learners.

These innovative qualifications are designed to meet the demands of modern industries, equipping 16–18-year-olds with the knowledge and practical experience needed to thrive in their chosen careers. Each T Level includes a substantial industry placement, representing around 20% of the course, giving students invaluable real-world experience and employers the opportunity to engage with emerging talent.

The remaining 80% of the programme is split between a common core element, which builds broad sector knowledge and business skills, and an occupational specialism, which develops the technical expertise required for specialist roles.

- Animal Management & Science: Focused on animal welfare, behaviour, health, and nutrition—ideal for careers in animal care and veterinary services.
- Agriculture: Emphasising sustainable farming, crop production, soil science, and agri-tech innovation.

Apprenticeships aligned with industry needs;

Writtle College is committed to supporting local and regional employers through apprenticeships that reflect LSIP priorities. These programmes are developed in collaboration with industry to ensure relevance and impact.

- Veterinary Nursing: Comprehensive training in animal healthcare, anatomy, and clinical practice.
- Land-Based Service Engineering: Focused on agri-tech, machinery maintenance, and repair.
- Horticulture: Covering plant cultivation, landscaping, and environmental design.
- Conservation: Conserving all elements of the countryside
- Equine: Riding, Breeding, Nutrition, and Physiotherapy

These apprenticeships not only support workforce development but also offer progression opportunities for learners seeking higher-level skills and qualifications.

Flexible short courses to support employability skills and the hobbyist:

In addition to our core education programmes, Writtle College offers a wide range of short courses—either as standalone options or tailored solutions co-designed with employers. Topics include:

- Land-based machinery
- Arboriculture
- Gardening and landscaping
- Welding and technical skills
- Art for wellbeing

Writtle College also provides conferencing and corporate away day facilities, with bespoke packages focused on wellbeing at work, sustainability, greener business practices, and personal development.

Philip Grant, Principal of Writtle College, says, "At Writtle College, we are deeply committed to working to deliver high-quality education and training that responds to the evolving needs of both learners and local employers. Through a diverse portfolio of college courses, T Levels, apprenticeships, and short courses, we empower individuals and businesses to unlock their potential and achieve meaningful progress."

For further details, prospective students are encouraged to visit the college's website at www.aru.ac.uk/writtle-college , attend an upcoming open day, or contact the college directly to discover more about the opportunities available at Writtle College.

Lifelong learning: a vital pathway to personal and professional growth



by Joanne Giles, Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Executive Director

IN today's rapidly evolving world, the concept of lifelong learning has emerged as a cornerstone of personal development and professional success. No longer confined to the early stages of life or formal education, learning is now recognised as a continuous journey, one that spans an individual's entire career and life.

As industries transform and new technologies reshape the way we work, the ability to adapt, upskill, and reskill has become essential.

The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) also emphasises the importance of lifelong learning and continuous professional development. As careers become less linear and more dynamic, individuals will need to upskill and reskill throughout their working lives.

Creating a culture of lifelong learning, supported by flexible and accessible training options, will help individuals remain competitive and adaptable, while also supporting business innovation and growth.

Gone are the days when a single qualification could sustain a career for decades. Today's workforce faces constant change, driven by automation, artificial intelligence, globalisation, and shifting market demands. This transformation means that traditional career paths are being replaced by more fluid, non-linear trajectories. Workers may change roles, industries, or even professions multiple times throughout their lives.

In this context, lifelong learning is not just a luxury, it's a necessity. It enables individuals to stay relevant, seize new opportunities, and navigate change with confidence. Whether it's acquiring digital skills, learning a new language, or developing leadership capabilities, continuous learning empowers people to shape their own futures.

Benefits for individuals

For individuals, lifelong learning offers a multitude of benefits, including:

- career resilience: by continually updating skills, workers can better withstand economic shifts and industry disruptions
- personal fulfilment: learning fosters curiosity, creativity, and a sense of achievement, contributing to overall well-being
- increased employability: employers value candidates who demonstrate a commitment to growth and adaptability
- confidence and independence: gaining new knowledge builds self-esteem and opens doors to new possibilities.

Moreover, lifelong learning is not limited to formal education. It encompasses informal learning, online courses, workshops, mentoring, and experiential learning. This diversity allows individuals to tailor their learning experiences to their unique goals and circumstances.

Benefits for businesses

From a business perspective, fostering a culture of lifelong learning is a strategic imperative. Companies that invest in employee development are more likely to innovate, retain talent, and maintain a competitive edge. As the LSIP highlights, supporting continuous professional development helps drive business innovation and growth.

Organisations that encourage learning benefit from:

- a skilled workforce: employees with up-to-date skills contribute to higher productivity and better performance
- employee engagement: learning opportunities enhance job satisfaction and reduce turnover
- agility and innovation: a learning culture promotes experimentation and creative problem-solving
- leadership development: ongoing training prepares future leaders and strengthens succession planning.

To achieve these outcomes, businesses must provide flexible and accessible training options. This includes leveraging technology to offer online learning, creating mentorship programmes, and supporting time for professional development.

Building a culture of lifelong learning requires collaboration between individuals, employers, educators, and policymakers. Here are some key strategies:

1. Accessible Learning Platforms: online courses, mobile apps, and virtual classrooms make learning more convenient and inclusive.
2. Recognition of Informal Learning: valuing skills gained outside traditional settings encourages broader participation.
3. Supportive Work Environments: employers should allocate time and resources for learning and celebrate achievements.
4. Government and Community Initiatives: public policies and local programmes like LSIPs can guide and fund lifelong learning efforts.
5. Personal Motivation and Goal Setting: individuals must take ownership of their learning journeys, setting clear goals and seeking opportunities.

Consider the example of a mid-career professional in marketing. As digital platforms evolve, they may need to learn data analytics, SEO, or AI-driven tools to remain effective. Through online courses, webinars, and peer learning, they can acquire these skills without leaving their job. Similarly, a factory worker might reskill in robotics or logistics to transition into a more tech-driven role.

These examples illustrate how lifelong learning enables people to adapt to change, pursue new interests, and contribute meaningfully to their communities and workplaces.

Lifelong learning is more than a trend it's a transformative mindset. In a world where change is constant, the ability to learn continuously is the key to resilience, relevance, and growth.

As the LSIP rightly emphasises, cultivating a culture of lifelong learning supported by flexible and accessible training options is essential for both individuals and businesses.

By embracing lifelong learning, we not only prepare ourselves for the future we shape it.

Thurrock Adult Community College

Delivering courses to meet all needs

Thurrock Adult Community College (TACC) is based in Grays at The Old Courthouse, Orsett Road, Grays RM17 5D. The college is easily accessible by public transport and is just a few minutes walk from Grays train and bus stations. Although TACC's main campus is in Grays the college delivers courses and training across the borough

TACC offers a wide range of workshops and courses for adult learners, providing accessible, flexible education. Courses include skills training for work, employee CPD, maths, English, ESOL, digital and employability skills. TACC supports individuals to build confidence and self-esteem, find work, enhance their careers or change professions.

Vocational qualifications are available in AAT Bookkeeping, Counselling, Health & Social Care, Retail, Cybersecurity, Early Years and Learning Support Assistants in school.

In the last academic year 96% of learners completed their course and 96% achieved their goals and qualifications.

Many of the courses are free, even for residents who are employed.

Part-time, evening, and online classes allow learners to balance education with work and family commitments. Enrolments take place throughout the year.

Many learners have school-age children and so all courses start and finish at times to allow for school drop offs and pickups.

All learners have access to personalised career advice and guidance (IAG) which enables them to make informed choices about their journey into the labour market or as they advance in their career.

Many residents are not quite ready to enter higher education and study at level 4 and above. A significant proportion of Thurrock's residents have no qualifications at all.

TACC provides a stepping stone to the higher-level courses, building on essential skills, study skills, confidence and introductory courses in the chosen sector.

TACC works closely with local employers and community partners to develop tailored learning programmes which align with job market needs and the priority sectors identified in the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

These include childcare and health and social care.

Childcare (Levels 1 and 2) and the **Level 3 Diploma in Early Years Educator**

These courses are designed to equip learners with the practical skills and knowledge needed to excel in these essential fields.

Highlights of the programme include:

- Work Placements: Valuable, hands-on work experience in collaboration with local schools and nurseries, helps learners to develop the real-world skills required to succeed as early years educators.
- Support with DBS Checks: TACC staff guide learners through the process of obtaining their Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, a crucial requirement for working with children.
- Job Placement Assistance: Through TACC's partnership with a specialist recruitment agency, learners are helped to secure employment which fits their skills and career goals.
- Additional CPD elements e.g. Autism Awareness and ADHD Awareness, Paediatric First Aid

Learning Support Assistant (LSA) qualifications at Levels 1 and 2.

These courses are designed to prepare learners for support roles within schools, providing practical placements to reinforce the skills necessary for a successful career in education.

Support for Learners includes:

- Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG): TACC provide personalised guidance to help learners make informed decisions about their career paths and educational progression.
- Integrated Skills: Employability skills, digital literacy, and essential English and maths are embedded into all courses to ensure learners are fully prepared for today's workplace.
- Financial support with travel costs and childcare (subject to eligibility)
- Loan of digital equipment whilst studying at TACC (subject to eligibility)
- Community and Safeguarding Focus: TACC's programmes emphasise the importance of safeguarding and community engagement, contextualising these topics within the learners' field of study to ensure a well-rounded educational experience.
- Additional CPD elements e.g. Autism Awareness and ADHD Awareness

New this Year - Skills Bootcamps – Childcare and Health and Social Care

TACC are delivering Skills Bootcamps in Childcare and Health and Social Care, supporting Thurrock's residents to take advantage of the many career opportunities available in Thurrock.

Skills Bootcamps are free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills with a guaranteed offer of an interview with an employer upon completion.

Why Choose TACC

TACC's unique value lies in the **voluntary placements** offered, alongside **comprehensive support throughout the learner's journey.** From gaining practical experience to finding the right employment, TACC supports learners every step of the way.

Each learner has a pre-enrolment interview and assessment of skills to ensure they are placed on the best course for their needs and are with other learners of similar abilities.

TACC is committed to providing educational support to Thurrock residents so that they can develop new skills to help fulfil their potential and achieve their personal and career related goals. There are so many new and exciting job opportunities due to arrive in Thurrock now and in the coming years, TACC is privileged to be part of that journey and to support local people to achieve their ambitions.



Essex County Council

Unlocking potential: the benefits of inclusive recruitment

IN today's evolving workplace, diversity and inclusion are not just values, they're strategic imperatives.

While progress has been made in areas like gender, race and age, there remains a significant opportunity to improve recruitment practices for individuals with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), neurodiverse conditions, and other disabilities. This includes people with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, physical impairments, sensory disabilities, mental health conditions and chronic illnesses.

By embracing inclusive hiring strategies, organisations can unlock untapped talent, foster innovation and build more resilient, empathetic teams.

The Inclusive Stakeholder Alliance brings together key partners to champion inclusive employment. Through collaboration, sharing best practices and developing resources, it aims to ensure individuals with SEND, physical impairments, learning disabilities and/or autism have equal access to meaningful work.

Traditional recruitment methods often unintentionally exclude people with a wide range of additional needs. Standardised interviews, rigid job descriptions and fast-paced assessments may not reflect their true capabilities. By adapting recruitment practices, such as offering alternative interview formats, providing accessible job descriptions and allowing reasonable adjustments, employers can access a pool of highly skilled, motivated and loyal candidates who are often overlooked.

Many individuals with disabilities possess exceptional strengths, including:

- autistic candidates who may excel in roles requiring precision and focus
- people with dyslexia who often bring innovative thinking and strong verbal communication
- individuals with physical disabilities offer unique perspectives on accessibility and design
- those with sensory impairments who may demonstrate heightened attention to detail
- candidates with mental health conditions who often develop resilience and emotional intelligence.

Recognising these strengths leads to better job-role alignment and improved performance.

Inclusive teams bring diverse perspectives to problem-solving and decision-making. Cognitive and experiential diversity encourages fresh thinking and challenges conventional approaches, especially valuable in industries that rely on innovation.

Inclusive recruitment fosters a culture where different ways of thinking and living are not just accepted but celebrated. This can lead to breakthroughs in product development, customer service and strategic planning. Diverse minds often see connections others miss, offering insights that give organisations a competitive edge.

Inclusive recruitment sends a powerful message about an organisation's values. It shows a commitment to fairness, respect and social responsibility. When employees see their workplace supports individuals with disabilities and neurodiverse conditions, it fosters a culture of empathy and understanding.

This cultural shift benefits everyone. Teams become more collaborative, communication improves and employees feel safer expressing their needs and ideas. Inclusive environments also reduce stigma and promote mental well-being, key to employee satisfaction and retention.

Employees who feel supported are more likely to stay. Individuals with disabilities often demonstrate high levels of dedication and reliability when placed in roles that suit their strengths and when given the right support. Inclusive recruitment and onboarding practices reduce turnover and build a more stable workforce.

Retention is not just about keeping employees, it's about helping them thrive. Mentorship, flexible working arrangements, assistive technologies and ongoing training ensure disabled and neurodiverse employees can grow and contribute meaningfully over time.

In the UK, the Equality Act 2010 requires employers to make reasonable adjustments for individuals with disabilities. But beyond legal compliance, there's a moral imperative to ensure equal access to employment.

Inclusive recruitment demonstrates ethical leadership and social responsibility. It shows a company is committed not just to profit, but to making a positive impact. This enhances brand reputation and attracts customers, partners, and investors who value inclusivity.

Organisations can take several practical steps to support candidates with SEND, neurodiverse conditions, and other disabilities:

- review job descriptions to focus on essential skills and avoid jargon
- offer alternative application formats (e.g., video submissions, work samples)
- train hiring managers on disability awareness and inclusive interviewing
- provide interview questions in advance to reduce anxiety
- create sensory-friendly environments for interviews and workspaces
- ensure physical accessibility (e.g., ramps, lifts, accessible toilets)
- use assistive technologies (e.g., screen readers, captioning, sign language)
- offer flexible working arrangements, including remote work
- establish mentorship and peer support programmes
- include disability representation in recruitment marketing.

These adjustments are often simple and cost-effective but can make a profound difference in attracting and retaining diverse talent.

Changing recruitment practices to support individuals with SEND, neurodiverse conditions, and other disabilities is not just fair, it's smart. Inclusive hiring unlocks hidden potential, drives innovation, strengthens workplace culture and builds loyalty. As the future of work evolves, organisations that embrace disability inclusion will be better equipped to thrive.

By making recruitment more accessible and supportive, we don't just change lives, we change the way we work for the better.

For more information on how you can hire with confidence please visit www.essexopportunities.co.uk/welcome-to-the-bridge/ or contact Joanne Giles, Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Executive Director, at joannegiles@essexchambers.co.uk



How ACL Essex is supporting businesses through skills development

AS the world of work continues to evolve, so must the skills of the workforce. From digital transformation to changing demands and shifting workforce expectations, businesses across all sectors are being asked to do more, with greater agility, resilience, and innovation.



At ACL Essex, we believe that adapting to this new landscape is a shared responsibility. As a leading adult education provider, we work closely with employers to understand their challenges and co-create training solutions that build real capability, confidence, and career progression.

Supporting Growth Where It Matters Most

ACL Essex focuses on four key sectors, when working with employers, where we see the greatest demand for skills development and career progression:

Business & Management

Our leadership and coaching programmes help businesses build confident, capable managers who can lead through change and drive performance.

Health & Social Care

With a growing need for skilled professionals in care settings, we offer qualifications and CPD opportunities that support recruitment, retention, and progression in this vital sector.

Early Years & Education

We support schools, nurseries, and childcare providers with training that enhances quality, supports compliance, and nurtures the next generation of educators.

Digital Skills, Maths & English

Foundational skills remain essential. We help employers upskill staff in digital, literacy, numeracy, and communication, boosting productivity and confidence across the board.

Working in Partnership with Employers

Our approach is rooted in collaboration. We don't just deliver training, we listen, adapt, and build programmes that reflect the real needs of local employers.

Our sector specialists work directly with businesses to identify skills gaps, design tailored learning pathways, and support staff development at every level. Whether it's a single workshop or a full apprenticeship programme, we ensure training is relevant, flexible, and aligned with business goals.

We also support employers with navigating funding options, including the Apprenticeship Levy and government co-investment, making high-quality training more accessible than ever.

Co-Design and Regional Collaboration in Action

We're proud to work with a wide range of partners to deliver impactful, co-designed training.

One recent example is our bespoke coaching programme for Southend City Council, developed in partnership with SEATS. This tailored course introduced coaching principles to over 70 staff, supporting a culture of empowerment, reflection, and continuous improvement.

We've also delivered functional skills training in Maths and English to staff in the NHS and Essex and Kent Police, helping frontline teams build confidence and capability in essential areas.

These collaborations demonstrate our commitment to regional growth and our ability to respond quickly to emerging needs.

Maximise Your Investment in Staff Development

One of the biggest barriers to staff development is the perceived cost but with ACL Essex, that doesn't have to be a concern. We have many funding options available, meaning employers can access high-quality training at little to no cost.

Apprenticeship Funding

If your organisation pays into the Apprenticeship Levy, you already have funding available to invest in staff training. However, unused levy funds expire after 24 months, so it's important to use them before they're lost.

Even if you don't pay the levy, the government will cover 95% of the training cost. Alternatively, ACL Essex can help arrange a levy transfer to cover the full amount, making the training completely free for your business.

Course and Workshop Pricing

Our workshops are competitively priced and designed to deliver immediate value. They're a cost-effective way to support managers with targeted development, without committing to a longer programme.

Sector Specific Bursaries

The majority of our Health & Social Care and Early Years courses are fully funded through the Nightingale Care Bursary and Poppins Early Years Bursary, meaning they can be studied at no cost to the employer or learner.

Whichever route you go down, you are guaranteed to find no hidden costs or complex paperwork. ACL Essex provides end-to-end support, helping you navigate funding, enrolment, and programme delivery. We make it easy to invest in your team's growth, without disrupting operations.

Lisa Jarentowski, Adult Community Learning Principal, said: "At ACL Essex, we're proud to be part of the skills solution for our region. We know that businesses are facing complex challenges, and we're here to help. Whether you're looking to develop future leaders, improve essential skills, or respond to sector-specific needs, our team is ready to work with you. I invite employers and partners to connect with us, explore what's possible, and be part of a shared journey toward a stronger, more skilled Essex."

Let's Build the Future, Together

The skills landscape is changing, but with the right support, businesses can not only keep up, they can also thrive.

Explore how ACL Essex can support your organisation and book a no-commitment call with our team to discuss your goals: www.aclessex.com/employers We are here and ready to support you!

ESSEX Provider Network

EPN: taking the collaborative approach to skilling

THE Essex Provider Network (EPN) is representative of the majority of local and national Independent Training Providers (ITPs) operating in Essex, all Essex FE/ Adult learning colleges, Higher Education Institutes (HEI's), plus a variety of awarding bodies and influential associate organisations, all of which contribute to a collaborative approach towards the development of a cohesive skills delivery objective for Greater Essex.



The EPN is fortunate to have in place strong strategic partnerships pan-Essex, allowing its members to capitalise on the uniquely progressive collaborative approach across the skills delivery sector. Strong trusted working relationships, built between the Federation of Essex Colleges (FEDEC) the Local Skills Improvement planning team (LSIP) led by the Essex Chamber of Commerce and the three local authorities within Greater Essex, has over the past few years ensured that the Independent Training sector are fully immersed in skills delivery planning. The Independent sector interests are represented at Essex Skills & Business Board (ESBB) level, as well as LSIP sector skills groups, each one of these sector specific groups report directly into the (ESBB) and contribute towards intelligence submitted to Skills England.

Work undertaken alongside LSIP leads, has facilitated introduction to teams working towards the various large infrastructure projects planned for the county. The EPN has facilitated member inclusion in a series of education and provider roundtables – the key purpose, to share high-level skills demand data, key supply chain roles, and indicative dates supportive of skills delivery planning towards peak demand.

The three local authorities across Essex, plus district councils are also members of the network. The EPN also enjoys strong working relations with colleagues at the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) holding particular relevance, as DWP colleagues, plan new working practices in light of the Get Britain Working agenda and the transference of from the Department of Education of the Apprenticeship Directorate to DWP, which will create a new "Labour Market and Skills Directorate", placing our members at the forefront of skills and workforce development.

EPN supports our members, by maintaining weekly newsletters and regular Government policy up-date bulletins, ensuring that all members are fully aware of financial support initiatives from both local and national agencies. We hold bi-monthly network meetings, gaining highly positive feedback from members. We have built a strong relationship with our regional Lead Ofsted HMI who regularly presents at our network meetings.

At regional level EPN represent our membership on the East of England Skills Delivery Group, tasked with reporting to the Skills All Political Party Group (APPG), towards a strategic framework for levelling up skills in the East of England. Meetings take place termly, offering insight into employers' requirements across neighbouring counties.

The EPN membership is fully committed to the anticipated advent of a Greater Essex Mayoral Combined Authority, with the ability to make local strategic decisions, further joining the public and private sectors together around a unified vision for skills and economic growth. Building on existing collaborative working across skills delivery partnerships, the EPN in representing our wider membership is committed to fully engage in decisions of strategic significance reflective of the needs of Essex businesses now and for the future, with the ultimate objective of maximising the growth potential of the Essex economy and that of the wider East of England.

For further information, visit www.essexprovidernetwork.com

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Driving economic pros strategic skills reform

by Joanne Giles, Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Executive Director

THE Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) sets out a bold vision: to secure the region's economic future through targeted skills development and workforce planning. As industries evolve and technology reshapes the employment landscape, aligning education and training with employer demand is not just beneficial, it's essential for long-term resilience, competitiveness, and inclusive growth.

Without proactive reform, Essex risks falling behind in critical sectors such as advanced manufacturing, digital technologies, health and social care, and green industries. These sectors are not only regional growth drivers but also central to national priorities like net zero, digital transformation, and public health. Equipping the local workforce with the right skills, qualifications, and competencies is a strategic imperative.

The LSIP highlights existing skills gaps and shortages that are already impacting business performance. These constraints hinder innovation, reduce efficiency, and limit growth. To address this, the LSIP proposes targeted interventions, apprenticeships, bootcamps, modular training, designed to close gaps and unlock new opportunities.

This is not optional reform. The LSIP provides a clear, evidence-based roadmap, shaped by employer engagement and stakeholder input. It outlines priority actions, investment needs, and measurable outcomes to ensure accountability. By embedding these changes into local policy and practice, Essex can build a future-ready workforce that drives productivity, attracts investment, and supports sustainable development.

Why Essex Must Champion AI: A Call to Lead the Future of Industry

Artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer a distant concept, it's a transformative force reshaping industries, economies, and communities. In Essex, a region built on innovation and enterprise, the time to lead is now. AI must be embraced not just as a tool, but as a strategic priority. LSIP 2.0 will recognise AI as central to the region's future prosperity.

The Essex Opportunity

Home to nearly 81,000 businesses across sectors like manufacturing, logistics, health, creative industries, and digital technology, Essex is one of the largest LSIP areas in the UK. Its diverse landscape, urban, rural, coastal, and economically varied, makes it a microcosm of national challenges and opportunities.

AI offers Essex the chance to:

- future-proof its workforce
- boost productivity
- drive inclusive growth.

To unlock this potential, Essex must move from passive interest to active leadership, through investment, collaboration, and strategic action.

Recent data from the East of England reveals:

- 61% of businesses see AI as a key growth driver
- 92% of adopters report increased productivity
- 87% see improved profitability.

These are real gains from Essex firms already using AI to streamline operations, analyse data, and enhance customer service. Yet many businesses remain hesitant, concerned about cost, complexity, and skills gaps.

The LSIP's intention is to make AI accessible, understandable, and actionable for every business.

LSIP's Three-Stage Strategy for AI Adoption

1. Awareness – Building Confidence

LSIP will create an ecosystem to help demystify AI through workshops, webinars, and engagement events. The University of Essex, a national leader in AI research, plays a key role. Its AI Summit, attended by councils, NHS trusts, and police forces, showcased how AI is already improving services across the region.

2. Adoption – Turning Interest into Action

Awareness must lead to implementation. LSIP is working with providers and local authorities to deliver:

- Hands-on training
- Pilot projects
- Sector-specific support

For SMEs, LSIP will aim to develop toolkits to simplify adoption. Whether automating customer service or analysing market trends, AI is being positioned as a practical solution, not a luxury.

3. Strategic Leadership – Embedding AI into Business DNA

The ecosystem of providers and funding must support executive-level training in AI ethics, governance, and planning. Leadership forums and curriculum reform are helping embed AI into long-term strategy. The proposed Essex Employment and Skills Board will provide oversight and ensure alignment with broader economic goals.

Empowering Colleges and Training Providers

As Essex leads the AI transformation, colleges and training providers must evolve to meet the moment. The future of work is digital, and education must reflect that reality.

Empowering Educators

AI is changing how we teach and support learners. Colleges must invest in:

- Staff training to apply AI tools in teaching
- Professional development in AI ethics and digital pedagogy
- Platforms for educators to share best practices

sperity through

Empowered educators ensure teaching remains relevant and aligned with industry needs.

Transforming Training

AI is reshaping job roles across sectors. Colleges are embedding AI and digital skills into vocational pathways, co-designing curricula with employers, and offering flexible training for lifelong learning. This isn't just about creating AI specialists, it's about preparing every learner to thrive in a tech-driven world.

A Call to Action

Colleges and Independent Training providers are the bridge between aspiration and opportunity. By embracing AI, they can help future-proof our workforce, enhance outcomes, and strengthen ties with employers. LSIP is committed to supporting this journey through partnerships and investment.

Essex: A Model for National Impact

Essex is gaining national recognition. By championing AI, it isn't just preparing for the future,it's shaping it. With employer-led planning, inclusive training, and strategic investment, Essex is emerging as a trailblazer in the UK's AI transformation.

Conclusion: The Time Is Now

AI is not a trend, it's a turning point. For Essex, the question is no longer if we should adopt AI, but how boldly we choose to lead. Through LSIP, businesses and educators have a trusted partner ready to guide them from awareness to strategic leadership.

Join the movement. Champion AI.

- Invest in skills
- Embrace innovation
- Future-proof your workforce
- Help Essex lead the UK's industrial transformation

The future is here. Essex is ready. Are you?

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