

Levelling Up Essex Update for Corporate Scrutiny

Cllr Louise McKinlay

**Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Levelling Up, Communities
and Business Engagement**

November 2023

A Year of Levelling Up Essex

A YEAR OF LEVELLING UP ESSEX

£10 million committed over the next four years to support economic growth and skills in Essex
£11 million of additional levelling up funding made available by Essex County Council

74 New Literacy areas created in libraries across Essex

Engaging spaces equipped with books and resources to support children and adults with reading and writing in a relaxed environment, with trained literacy advisers.

24,000 Children took part in this year's Summer Reading Challenge

The Essex Year of Reading
Launched in 2022 featuring 100s of author events, literacy sessions, and reading challenges.

60,000 new library members
150,000 NEW reusable library cards

15,000 downloads of our new library app in just 6 months!

Invested £100k in a new **Training centre at Harlow College** providing professional qualifications in electric vehicle repair, a major growth sector and key to supporting carbon net zero.

11,573 Residents Currently being supported by ECC in learning new skills.

9,829 residents joined our 5 virtual job fairs in 2022.

Launched 'Multiply' A new initiative to offer 14,000 residents free access to maths and finance training.

New partnership with HSBC UK, running financial literacy workshops online and in person.

250 New Jobs Created through our Social Value Scheme

Launched the **Essex Opportunities Website** for flexible job roles. In its first year, the website has had over 90,000 visits and 6,500 clicks to apply for jobs.

Kickstart is a government scheme, providing high-quality work placements. We arranged **284 Kickstart placements** across 129 different employers.

With 142 of those placements in Levelling Up areas. 84% of placements gained a further role and the placements brought 1.5 million into the Essex economy.

Our Working Families Programme connected with to provide support to those seeking information on upskilling or retraining.

960 families

The Essex Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Service

helped create 240 new apprenticeships across Essex businesses. Our new Essex apprenticeship hub will expand on this to create a further 300 apprenticeship opportunities in 2023.

New Adult Community Learning Hubs
opened in Jan 2023 in Harwich and Canvey Island

Almost **£2 million** boost to social care under our Nightingale scheme

Which will support people from our most deprived communities to achieve social care qualifications and support existing care workers to achieve further qualifications.

30+ Major employers signed up to our new **family friendly charter** a commitment to ensure working practices offer the flexibility required to support Essex families.

Free games and activity sessions for all ages launched in **16 local parks**
16,000 attendances so far and launching in more areas in 2023!

130,000 Children and young people supported at Essex Outdoors sites, learning a range of skills through outdoor pursuits.

Beat the Street GPS walking game launched to support physical activity. An incredible 3,613 people have joined and most are still active six months later.

PEDAL POWER SCHEME
600 free bikes in Clacton and Jaywick leading to **20,000** new bike journeys and better access to employment and the community.

12,000 more homes & businesses connected to **Superfast broadband**

ECC Donated 6,600+ devices To schools to help get students online and enhance learning. We also provided our Ukrainian guests fleeing war with 335 devices.

£18 million bid for transport improvements in Tendring
Including the rollout of DigiGo, a fully electric, on demand minibus service, and cycling route improvements in Harwich and Dovercourt to help residents access services and jobs.

Clacton, Colchester and Harlow bids backed by ECC **Secured £60 million** from the governments **Levelling Up Fund** to transform town centres in 3 priority Levelling Up areas. The funding will allow major upgrades to community and commercial facilities, creation of new learning spaces and a new culture-led project.

Investing £2 million

Into new business units in Jaywick, bringing jobs and investment to a part of the county that urgently needs it. The project will see the creation of a new covered market including 25 affordable business spaces, a community garden and 10 covered market pitches bringing **45 New Jobs**.

650+ Jobs Created and safeguarded through our 'Backing Essex Business' service providing access to over £1.6m investment by providing finance, advice and social lending.

Expanded our **Free holiday activity and food programme ActivATE** provided 500,000 free meals since 2020 and supported 30,000 young people 100% of whom are from low income working families or other vulnerable groups. Not only supporting children's development but also providing free childcare to working families.

4 Physical Activity Hubs

Created in Basildon providing physical activity classes and volunteering opportunities for around 2000 regular participants, as well as creating routes into employment.

20 new Community Challenge Projects funded including transport for socially isolated residents, community cafes, wildflower sowing, youth clubs, sensory play equipment, and improving community gardens.

3 New Community Supermarkets in Basildon and Jaywick offering quality food at very low prices.

We are committed to ensuring there is one in every district!

The Levelling Up Essex - One Year On: Impact Report was launched at a Parliamentary Event in March 2023.

Levelling Up Essex programme reach and impact

(August 2023)

136,391

The expected number of people who will be directly impacted by projects in the Levelling-up project portfolio, over the life of the projects.

This includes circa 9000 children, and 1500 NEET.

61,125

The number of people impacted by projects in the levelling-Up portfolio to August 2023.

Evaluation: an example

Essex Pedal Power in Clacton and Jaywick

This project loans bikes to residents for 12 months. If, by the end of the year, the resident has used the bike frequently, they get to keep the bike. Participants in the project are also offered cycling lessons, bike maintenance classes and the opportunity to join a cycling group. By giving people a bike the project aims to encourage residents to do more exercise, give residents a way of accessing local services and work and improve their well-being. The project is run, in part, by volunteers. It started in May 21.

A full impact evaluation is underway and involves surveys, interviews and using satellite technology to track participants' bike journeys. Key provisional findings include:

- 800 bikes have been handed out since May 2021.
- Bike recipients have made 63,000 trips covering 170,000 km.
- 60% of participants report using their bikes for leisure or to meet family or friends.
- Participants' weekly car usage dropped from 6.5 journeys a week to 5.7.
- More participants report good physical health (up 10%) and being active (+20%).
- Data on participants' journeys has informed the location of 11 new cycle parks.

[Pedal Power Video](#)

Levelling Up Essex: 2023 Priorities

Delivering on our commitments

- Continued delivery in places (i.e. Braintree; Harlow Futures)
- Countywide & thematic delivery (i.e. Year of Numbers; Literacy Initiatives)
- Mobilising delivery for cohorts (see slides)

Measuring our impact

- Project Evaluation / Impact
- Understanding Programme / Investment Impact
- Strategic tracker for outcomes in places

Using our assets to support LU

- Social Value for NEET's
- Summer of Volunteering
- Aligning our strategies and policies to support levelling up

Working in partnership to deliver Levelling Up Outcomes

- Working with partners in places to align priorities, join up activity and co-invest in shared outcomes (i.e. MSE Anchors)
- Business / private sector partnerships – Essex Business Community Pledge



Levelling Up Essex Priority Cohorts

Working Families

Access to affordable, flexible and convenient childcare is limited for low income working families. This means parents have fewer options to access opportunity, and children miss out on the benefits childcare provision can provide in their early years.

The intention is to invest £990k in the Poppins Bursary to improve recruitment and retention within the early years workforce by encouraging residents to consider early years as a career, and upskilling existing staff. The initiative has been designed to build upon the extensive work that has already taken place under the Essex Plan for Working Families, and the Early Years and Childcare Strategy

Children accessing Free School Meals

41,000 Children in Essex are eligible for FSM; 19% of all pupils in primary years education. These children are more likely to attain lower than their non-FSM peers across all key stages. These impacts can last into adulthood, with children that access free school meals 3 times more likely to be in receipt of unemployment benefits by age 27.

There is no single 'answer' for this cohort. Delivery has, and will continue to, focus on reducing the likelihood of children on FSM's falling behind across education, health and careers. Countywide initiatives such as the Holiday Activity Clubs and Community Supermarkets have already benefitted 17,000 children accessing free school meals, and work to further identify investment is underway.



Levelling Up Essex Priority Cohorts

Young people aged 16-25 not in employment, education or training (NEET)

The levelling up work for the NEET's cohort is focused on 3 priorities to deliver targeted impact: early intervention, reducing barriers to apprenticeships, and employment opportunities for young people at highest risk of becoming NEET in the future.

We have invested £516k in 6 projects designed to deliver impact against these priorities. These include careers events for Yr 10/13 students; STEM ambassador outreach for Yr 9/10 students; Enhanced Education for Yr 10 students at risk of becoming NEET; delivery of school-based apprenticeship roadshows in the highest NEET producing schools; skills offers for Yr 11 students and targeted support for 16-18 yr olds with 'soft skills' such as interviewing. Wider investment, such as investment in the MSE Foundation Trust skills agenda will also deliver impact for NEET's.

People with MH, SEND and LD

There are ambitious strategies in place for each of these levelling up cohorts. Levelling Up is focused on how to add value to existing work underway through investment and wider connections that can increase the scale and impact of existing work, ensuring there is no duplication across portfolios.

Delivery encompasses both discrete proposals (for example a not-for-profit enterprise that will employ and train people with LD, enabling them to gain further employment opportunities) and embedding delivery for these cohorts within existing projects (for example the recently launched Harlow Futures is purposefully targeting improved mental health and wellbeing for young people).

[Harlow Futures launch video](#)



Levelling Up Essex Wider Updates

Business Community Pledge

Developed the Essex Business Community Pledge which has been designed with businesses to increase the engagement and impact of the private sector on levelling up outcomes. This was successfully launched at a construction event with the skills Minister, RT Hon Robert Halfon MP in September in which major businesses including Morgan Sindall, Ringway Jacobs and Kier were some of the first organisations to make a pledge.

[Business Community Pledge video](#)

Community Supermarkets

Launched 6 community supermarkets across the county, with plans for every district in Essex to have a community supermarket in place by 31st March 2024. The first two community supermarkets in Basildon and Jaywick have ensured 450 residents can access affordable food and ECC investment has leveraged an additional £400k investment in this programme.

Continued delivery and implementation

Continued delivery and implementation of the projects launched in priority places and countywide initiatives. In addition to the targeted investment to date in places and for cohorts, LU has invested £2.7m in initiatives that are delivering across the whole of Essex on areas including literacy, skills, employability and health – all of which are critical to levelling up.

Measuring our reach and impact

61,000 people have been impacted by levelling up projects to date (including 17,000 children on free school meals) and over 136,000 residents are projected to be positively impacted by the current portfolio of levelling up projects and investments.

Harlow

- **2,495** young people supported through Holiday Activate Clubs (HAF) - **38,570** meals provided
- **£100k** investment into Harlow Electric Vehicle Training Centre to fund 50 training places to develop Electric Vehicle Skills
- **£500k** Harlow Futures Programme Launched – an initiative that supports the mental health of children and young people
- **3** Community Challenge Fund project funded to provide Creative sessions for adults with learning disabilities, music sessions for SEND children and support Rainbow Services
- **£4.7k** through the locality fund to establish a Read Easy Group
- **£20m** Levelling Up Funding secured for creating an Arts and Cultural Quarter in Harlow Town Centre. Part of the funding will be for a new library

Basildon

- **6,854** young people supported through HAF - **83.934** meals provided
- Building on the success of HAF, BBC will soon be funding additional HAF sessions in Billericay, delivered by Active Essex (AE) – fantastic example of LU cross-council working
- **7** Literacy Areas opened in libraries
- The first two community supermarkets in Basildon and Jaywick have ensured 450 residents can access affordable food
- AE have created a free low-cost activity booklet for residents of Basildon and Billericay, to support residents to socialise and get more active
- **4** physical activity hubs (linked to schools) created in targeted estates in Basildon that provide both physical activity classes and volunteering opportunities for local people, that create routes into employment. The ATF run hub have almost 2000 regular participants across their programmes and activities.
- Roll out of pedal power underway
- Enhanced Education Project early intervention programme for year 10 students identified as likely to disengage with school,
- **486** ParkPlay sessions delivered, supporting **12,124** residents

Tendring

- **£550.5k** funding to support children and young people's development outcomes in Tendring
- **£19.96m** Levelling Up Funding secured for Clacton Library Project (new library, relocation of ACL and UoE Centre for Coastal Communities)
- New ACL Hub opened in Jan 2023
- **5,684** young people supported through HAF - **52,836** meals provided
- **7** Literacy areas opened in libraries
- Over **1,200** free bikes provided to residents in Clacton as part of our Essex Pedal Power scheme - leading to almost 20,000 new journeys
- **£2m** into new business units in Jaywick, including the creation of a new 9,500 sq. ft covered market
- **£100k** funded through ECC LU fund to extend the offer of the Harwich Community Hub
- **£6m** Levelling up Fund awarded to make improvements to existing library and create a second floor to accommodate two classrooms for ACL delivery

Braintree

- **1,887** young people supported through HAF - **24,210** meals provided
- **7 literacy areas in libraries**
- **£200k** committed to a Community Engagement Exercise to develop co-produced, community led initiatives to support levelling up in Rural Braintree
- Next week we have our third and final community engagement event in Rural Braintree. The first two events have been really successful at building collaboration and getting both internal and external colleagues behind the levelling up agenda.
- Supporting the delivery of **Digigo** – an on-demand electric minibus service

Maldon

- **5 Literacy areas** opened in libraries to help people have the right environment to read and learn
- **HAF Programme** (15,752 meals provided in 2022 through this in Maldon and 1,347 people supported through the clubs)
- £55k granted to **4 Climate Action projects**
- In talks for the next **Community Supermarket**
- Next year we will be running a **Get Sorted careers events** for Years 10-13 students who have no confirmed post-16 destinations in Mid-Essex (supporting NEETs in Braintree, Chelmsford and Maldon)
- Maldon is one of the locations for the joint skills proposal with the NHS to drive **up recruitment in the health and care sector**.

Brentwood

- **HAF Programme** (21,530 meals provided in 2022 through this in Brentwood and 962 people supported through the clubs)
- £13,520 through the **locality fund in 22/23**
- **Over 1000 young people supported through HAF**
- **Lego in Libraries**
- **£13,520** through the **locality fund** to support literacy workshops, the creation of a community social area and supporting people with mental health needs
- **New library at Shenfield**
- **3 Literacy areas** opened in Brentwood, Shenfield and Ingatestone libraries to help people have the right environment to read and learn

Colchester

- Successful Library Improvement Fund secured a total of **£337,500** plus an additional £112,500 from ECC to create new childrens' library and imagination area
- **£50k** funded to support Colchester children achieving a good level of development
- **3,244** young people supported through HAF - **49,390** meals provided
- **5** Literacy areas opened in libraries
- **8** Community Challenge Fund Projects funded including group sessions for adults with learning disabilities and a budget food project
- Roll out of pedal power underway
- **£146k** granted to 10 Climate Action projects
- **£19.66m** Levelling Up Funding secured for St Botolph's roundabout/plaza scheme and Britannia Street Car Park and Vineyard Gate redevelopment
- **£19.66m** Levelling Up Funding secured for St Botolph's roundabout/plaza scheme and Britannia Street Car Park and Vineyard Gate redevelopment

Rochford

- 4 literacy areas opened in libraries
- **1,986** young people supported through - **26,470** meals provided
- New Community Connector about to start covering the Billericay and Wickford area
- AE have created a free low-cost activity booklet for residents of Wickford, to support residents to socialise and get more active – activities include a new cycle group and Move it or lose it (a weekly session engaging and supporting elderly residents)
- **£25k** through the locality fund to fund youth wellbeing and peer support group sessions
- A new ParkPlay area opened at Rayleigh Grange community Centre to support residents to become active
- **205** ParkPlay sessions delivered, supporting **4,048** residents to become active over **4** locations

Epping

- **8** Literacy areas in libraries opened to help people have the right environment to read and learn
- **£20k** through the locality fund to support the provision of counselling of students.
- **1,698** young people supported through HAF - **16,750** meals provided
- Epping is one of the locations for the joint skills proposal with the NHS to drive **up recruitment in the health and care sector**.
- The library scheme at Loughton was granted planning permission two weeks ago – in the future residents will be benefiting from a brand new, purpose built library

Castlepoint

- **1,231** young people supported through HAF - **20,344** meals provided
- **£60k** Active Essex – Ready 4 School and Flying Start and Beyond physical literacy projects launched to support children to concentrate better in schools, improve interaction with other children and support achievement of GLD.
- **£50k** funding for Early Years Best Start at Schools. Project launched to support pupils to achieve a good level of development (GLD) at the end of their reception year. All relevant schools and settings on Canvey Island engaged – 8 schools, 8 settings, 7 childminders and 1 family hub. Impact over the year on language and communication of approximately 400 children, 30 teaching staff and parents of children.
- **£25k** through the **locality fund** to support youth wellbeing and mentoring
- New ACL Hub opened on Canvey Island in Jan 2023
- **64** apprenticeships created through the apprenticeship levy
- Focussed programme of activity working with the community with outcomes expected early next year

Chelmsford

- **2,348** young people supported through - **41,618** meals provided
- The new St. Francis Pop Up Community Food Store (Community Supermarket) is open to local communities in Ford End and Melbourne in Chelmsford on a weekly basis. The team have a growing group of volunteers who support the sessions each week – they have over 50 members signed up, which is increasing every week.
- **£55k** through the locality fund to support training for NEETs and for setting up Independence Clubs
- Chelmsford is one of the locations for the joint skills proposal with the NHS to drive **up recruitment in the health and care sector**.
- Programme of focussed AE activity in Melbourne, including a Mental wellbeing project in collaboration with Mind, working with Chelmsford City FC to grow their engagement with women and girls, develop female coaches and create a hardship fund, as well as working with EMAN, with support and funding, to run activities for women of Asian heritage who lived in multigenerational homes and don't traditionally engage.
- **£95,000** granted to 8 Climate Action projects funding the Gaia artwork, creating EV charge points and setting up a programme of engagement with children around farming
- **9** Literacy areas opened in libraries to help people have the right environment to read and learn
- Chelmsford Reach Every Generation - Working with the Active Essex Foundation (AEF) they have delivered sports-based intervention programmes for young people at risk of anti-social behaviours and criminality. These sessions include physical activities, mentoring, life skills and themed workshops around youth crime prevention.

Uttlesford

- **1,148** young people supported through HAF - **14,592** meals provided
- **4** Literacy areas opened in libraries
- **£17k** granted to 3 Climate Action projects including solar panels for a community group and greening of an outside community space
- **£67k** granted to **5** Climate Action projects including hosting an Essex Green Festival weekend and a climate action festival for students 11-13
- Supporting clubs through the Find Your Active funding, such as 3Food4U, who offer social and warm spaces that are open four times a month to locals in the area, providing a variety of activities for those living in social isolation. 3Food4U received funding and support from Active Essex to expand their classes and offer.