



ACL

**ADULT COMMUNITY
LEARNING ESSEX (ACL)**

STRATEGIC PLAN

2022 - 2025



Essex County Council

FOREWORD

Essex County Council recognises the vital role that Adult Community Learning (ACL) plays in meeting its key ambitions as set out in Everyone's Essex.

Lifelong learning supports sustainable economic prosperity and health and wellbeing. Our purpose is to provide our residents with the opportunities to succeed, wherever they are in the county. To be there in communities across Essex, to make a difference to residents and employers, so they can make a difference for themselves and to the places that they live in.

We have developed a new ACL strategy because lifelong learning matters. It is a way of telling the ACL story, with a clear focus on who we are supporting, where we are doing it, and how we deliver our courses. As a service we need to be ambitious, sustainable, and continue to make a difference to people's lives.

Our strategy has a strong focus on levelling up which is important to us for financial and economic reasons, but there is also a strong argument that a person's potential should not be defined by where they live or their past academic experiences. We believe that individuals can define their own destiny, and that ACL plays a role in helping people do that.

Our learners have many different backgrounds and experiences and come to ACL for many reasons. For some it's a second chance, whether that is to get a job with newly acquired skills

or an apprenticeship or gain the qualifications they need to progress in their current workplace or start a new career. Learners also come to ACL because they want to improve their health and wellbeing and connect with others in their communities.

ACL is not just about second chances; it is about helping learners to achieve the goals they have set their sights on. As well as skills and qualifications, ACL is also about making sure that learners flourish. This means their health, wellbeing and independence, their sense of community belonging, and their confidence and belief in themselves. ACL also supports the development of a green and environmentally friendly community.

Our three-year strategy represents the next phase of our ACL journey – a journey which I hope you'll join us on.

Cllr Tony Bail,
Essex County Council's
Cabinet Member for
Education Excellence,
Lifelong Learning and
Employability



OUTCOMES

By 2025, we want to say that we have contributed to levelling up. Success measures and targets include:

- ▲ More people on lower incomes have increased their earning potential through entry into employment, better jobs and self-employment
- ▲ More parents have engaged in their own and children's learning
- ▲ The number of adults who are digitally included and improved digital skills is increased
- ▲ More adults with learning difficulties have been supported into employment
- ▲ More adults have gained maths and English qualifications
- ▲ Young people are given opportunities to enter the world of work through apprenticeship and traineeship programmes
- ▲ Fewer adults need to access services as a result of improved health and wellbeing
- ▲ Our learners tell us that they don't feel lonely and isolated



WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Our success measures and targets will be developed in the ACL operational plans.

IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH LEARNING AND WHY WE NEED A NEW STRATEGY

The new Essex County Council administration, as well as its 20 key commitments in Everyone's Essex, has launched a Levelling Up plan which gives a long-term commitment to connect people to opportunities and support aspiration across Essex.

ACL is well-positioned to support the levelling up agenda as it offers learning opportunities that inspire people to achieve, progress and gain good jobs. ACL believes in equality of opportunity.

In the last two years, as a result of Covid-19, there has been an impact on health and wellbeing, and we are continuing living with the effects of this. Lifelong learning, particularly the wellbeing courses, is recognised for having a positive impact on people's mental health so we will continue to support this agenda.

At the start of the pandemic, in order to continue to offer high quality learning, ACL moved its delivery model to online and, although we are now delivering much more face-to-face, we have seen the benefits for some people of a digital model.

We will aim to continue with a hybrid delivery model moving forward but will constantly review to ensure the model is correct for our learners.

It is likely that national funding mechanisms may change in the next year. There is currently a national consultation of Adult Education Budget and how it is going to be structured moving forward from 2023/24. We need to be prepared for new funding mechanisms and model our provision according to need.



To effectively impact on the people of Essex, in a sustainable way, we need to understand some of the current skills, health and economic needs. We also need to understand how the cost-of-living increases are impacting on our residents.



MENTAL HEALTH

1 in 7 people experience mental health problems in the workplace. Women in full-time employment are nearly twice as likely to have a common mental health problem as full-time employed men (**19.8% vs 10.9%**).



SKILLS

76.6% of the Essex Population are educated to **GCSE level or higher**; **4.9%** of the population have **no qualifications**. Low literacy and numeracy skills continue to be a challenge.



DIGITAL INCLUSION

167,000 households are located in areas likely to have where individuals have **limited or no interaction with the internet**.



WORKING FAMILIES

Families that are experiencing **multiple pressures** including childcare and housing costs, whilst trying to work to support their children.



LOW INCOME

28% of households across Essex (**163,000**) are low-income households.



SOCIAL ISOLATION

It is estimated that in Essex there are **89,000 residents** who are likely to be lonely which can lead to health issues.



LEARNING DISABILITIES

Nationally only **17.6%** of adults with a learning disability are in employment.

ACL'S PURPOSE IS TO IMPROVE LIVES THROUGH LEARNING

OUR VISION:

Giving Essex residents the opportunity to be the best they can be and achieve their goals

OUR MISSION:

To provide a high-quality learning offer that makes a positive difference to the lives of residents and businesses of Essex

OUR VALUES:

- ▶ **Inclusion** – treating each other with respect and kindness, and embracing the diversity of our communities
- ▶ **Respect** – being kind to each other, acting with integrity and being considerate of each other's feelings
- ▶ **Inspiring** – a sense of purpose and responsibility, to create positive change
- ▶ **Ambitious** – helping colleagues and learners to realise their potential and overcome barriers to reach their goals
- ▶ **Sustainable** – making green choices so that we leave a smaller impact on our environment now, and don't compromise the needs of future generations
- ▶ **Collaborative** – pulling together as a team so everyone can learn and succeed



This strategy is written for learners, ACL employees, Essex employers, our partners, and Essex County Council colleagues.

The purpose of the strategy is to clearly show ACL's intent, how it will be implemented, and the positive impact it will have.

It sets out our ambitions, why they are important to us and our response to local, regional, and national challenges. It sets out our goals and examples of initiatives over the next 3 years.

Our aims align with the key commitments of Essex County Council. This will ensure we can work with others towards our common goals.

ACL aims to deliver a great service, being ambitious for its learners and staff. It will be imaginative and open to new ways of doing things to meet the needs of the Essex people.



“ This time a year ago, I decided to go back to college on a whim after seeing a leaflet coming through the door. A year later and I’m nearly trained and never imagined being able to know half as much as I do now. ”

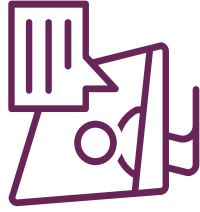
ACL English learner

OUR OFFER

To support the skills agenda, ACL offers a wide range of maths, English, digital and vocational courses, professional qualifications and apprenticeships.

For health and wellbeing, learners can access our mental health and wellbeing provision as well as creative and cultural classes.

Adults can return to learning via our family and community learning provision and we have a new range of environment courses for those who are interested in the green agenda or want to find jobs in the sector.



Many of our courses have been adapted to be delivered online so learners can join us from home.

Qualifications & Skills for Employment

Apprenticeships

English, Maths, Science & Digital

Creative & Cultural Learning

Supported Learning

Mental Health & Wellbeing

Family Learning



General course guide



Supported Learning guide



Apprenticeship guide

LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE

THERE ARE 4 STRANDS TO OUR OFFER:



Communities and families



Economy



Health, wellbeing and independence



Environment

We aim to improve chances for increased prosperity, improved health, wellbeing and independence, and create a greener and more sustainable Essex

We want our offer to inspire, create a love of learning and bring a sense of achievement and pride

We want our offer to create opportunities for progression and improved destinations

COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES



► Our Goals

- Support families to access learning that promotes aspiration and resilience for themselves and their children
- Reach underrepresented and /or disadvantaged groups to support progression towards learning opportunities
- Widen participation in areas of disadvantage by working in partnership with families, community groups, providers and Essex County Council colleagues

► Example of initiatives

- Development of a Parent Ambassadors' programme across Essex
- Development of an Essex Learning Partnership group to extend the reach to under represented and/or disadvantaged groups and communities
- Extension of a refugee response programme for those arriving in Essex

ECONOMY



► Our Goals

- Deliver courses that improve the maths, English, and digital skills of adults in Essex
- Deliver inclusive skills and employability courses so residents can gain skills, find good jobs, and improve social mobility
- Provide a curriculum that meets the skills needs of Essex employers and gives consideration for the jobs of the future

► Example of initiatives

- Creation of a 'Get the basics right' programme to include Multiply, Years of Reading and Numbers
- Extension of the inclusive employment programme for adults with learning difficulties
- Targeting the Nightingale Care Bursary programme to create opportunities for health and social care workers in areas of skills shortage
- Support the development and implementation of an employer led Skills Plan for Essex and produce an Accountability Agreement

HEALTH, WELLBEING AND INDEPENDENCE



► Our Goals

- Support residents to lead healthy and socially included lives thereby reducing loneliness and dependency on health services
- Increase digital inclusion so the people of Essex can access services and remain connected
- Adult learners with learning difficulties will lead more independent lives
- Support residents who are recovering from mental illness and who are mentally frail

► Example of initiatives

- Prototype provision aimed at combatting loneliness in rural and coastal communities of Essex
- Extend the digital champions programme to reach cohorts who are digitally excluded
- Promote the independent living provision to reach a wider group of adults with learning difficulties
- Develop the wellbeing programme to reach those who require mental health and wellbeing support

ENVIRONMENT



► Our Goals

- Respond to the skills needs of the new green sectors
- Encourage a greener future and work towards Net Zero
- Embed sustainability in all aspects of our delivery to raise awareness of environmental issues
- Reduce travel by developing an online learning offer

► Example of initiatives

- Establish Retrofit Academies in Tendring and Harlow
- Develop a roadmap to sustainability, including being part of Race to Net Zero, the largest ever coalition of education providers
- Embed sustainability in our courses
- Develop hybrid classrooms in key ACL learning spaces



**LEARNING
FOR THE
FUTURE**

SUPPORTING SUCCESS

THERE ARE 4 UNDERPINNING STRANDS THAT SUPPORT SUCCESS:



Quality



Learning and financial support



Learning spaces



Commercial

We are ambitious for learners, employers and staff by setting high quality standards for our teaching and our learning spaces. We support our learners to achieve by removing barriers

We want ACL to be at the heart of our communities and be a provider of choice for learners and employers

QUALITY



► Goals

- Our staff are qualified and skilled to deliver a high-quality and responsive service
- Learners are well informed about their learning and work choices and supported to progress
- Our staff and learners understand how to keep themselves and others safe and to look after their own wellbeing
- Recruit and retain staff

► Example of initiatives

- Staff development programme to include approaches to teaching in hybrid settings and how to embed green practices and sustainable choices
- Development of an improved Information, Advice and Guidance service for ACL learners
- Create new safeguarding promotion materials and communications plan
- Development of a positive and straightforward customer journey process

LEARNING AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT



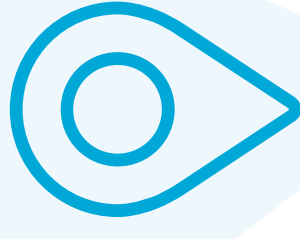
► Goals

- Barriers to learning such as income, health and childcare are reduced through financial support and our early years settings
- Learners with additional needs can achieve their full potential
- More learners progress into work and in work as a result of progression support

► Example of initiatives

- Working with Public Health colleagues to develop a social prescription model so residents can access learning to improve their health
- Promotion of support available to remove barriers to learning
- Set up a support programme to help learners to move onto the next opportunity
- Develop a fee and pricing structure that generates income and prioritises groups whose health would benefit through a social prescription model

LEARNING SPACES



► Goals

- Our learning spaces are safe, inclusive, accessible and welcoming
- Our learning spaces are well equipped, have limited impact on the environment and classrooms are digitally enabled for hybrid teaching
- Spaces will be well-positioned and well-used through partnership work and co-location opportunities (eg libraries)

► Example of initiatives

- Development of a Community Partnership plan to include co-location with similar services
- Colchester Town Bid and Levelling Up funds are used to develop spaces for skills provision
- Environment plans for each learning space are developed
- Continuation of property review to consider usage of current and future spaces, including hybrid classrooms and skills hubs

COMMERCIAL



▲ Goals

- Have a financially sustainable model, making best use of funding, increasing fee income and generating alternative sources of funding
- Raise the profile of ACL and significantly increase participation with key groups, localities and employers
- Work with employers and partners at Essex County Council for the benefit of the residents of Essex

▲ Example of initiatives

- Creation of financial models based on future funding and fee sources
- Development and targeting of website, sales, marketing and communication channels to raise the profile of ACL and widen participation
- Employer and partner engagement plans are developed to build mutually beneficial partnerships

SUPPORTING ACHIEVEMENT AND SUCCESS

