

ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING ESSEX (ACL) DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

2022 - 2025



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 Ball, Essex County Council's Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability

Improving lives through learning and why we need a new strategy

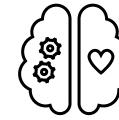
The new Essex County Council administration, as well as its 20 key commitments in [Everyone's Essex](#), has launched a [Levelling Up plan](#) which gives a long-term commitment to connect people to opportunities and support aspiration across Essex. ACL is well-positioned to support the levelling up agenda as it offers learning opportunities that inspire people to achieve, progress and gain good jobs.

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.

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 qualification. Low literacy and numeracy skills continue to be a challenge.



Working Families

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



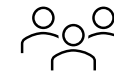
Low income

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



Digital Inclusion

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



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 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:

Inclusive – treating others with respect and kindness and embracing the diversity of our communities.

Friendly – being kind to each other, acting with integrity and being considerate of each other's feelings.

Inspiring – looking to achieve our personal best and help others to achieve theirs. We have the courage to have a go.

Ambitious – believing everyone has the capacity to achieve what they set out to do and more and we support each other to do our best regardless of skill level.

Sustainable – making green choices so that we leave a smaller impact on our environment and working toward an environmentally friendly lifestyle.

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.

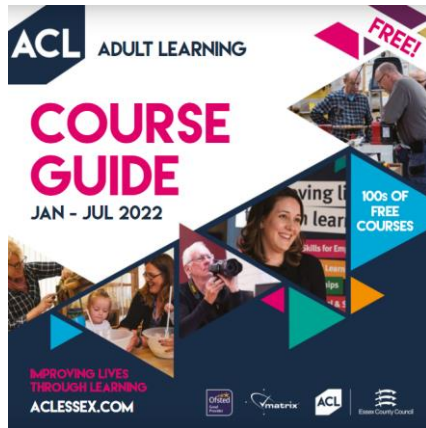
For health and wellbeing, learners can access our mental health and wellbeing provision as well as creative and cultural classes.

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 find jobs in the sector.

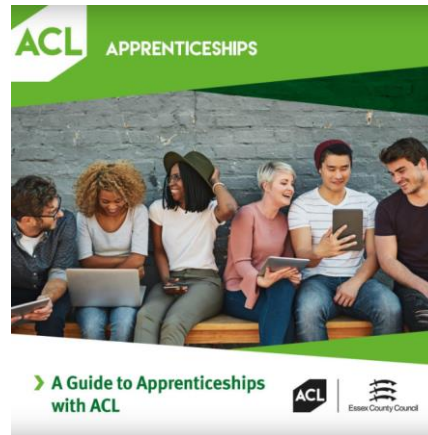
Many of our courses have been adapted to be delivered online so learners can join us from home.

- [Creative & Cultural](#)
- [Qualifications and Skills for Employment](#)
- [English, Maths, Science & Digital](#)
- [Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Apprenticeships](#)
- [Community & Family Learning](#)
- [Supported Learning](#)

[*These links will be updated on a regular basis to reflect the current offer](#)



[General course guides](#)



[Apprenticeship guides](#)



[Supported Learning 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 disadvantaged groups and 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 disadvantaged groups and communities

Extension of a refugee response programme for those arriving in Essex

Economy

Our Goals

Deliver courses that improve the mathematics, 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

Examples of initiatives

Creation of a 'Get the basics right' programme to include Multiply, Years of Reading and Maths

Extension of the inclusive employment programme for adults with learning difficulties

Promotion of Nightingale Bursary programme to create opportunities for health and social care workers

Support the development and implementation of an employer led Skills Plan for Essex

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 that the people of Essex can access services and remain connected to friends and family

Adult learners with learning difficulties will lead more independent lives

Examples of initiatives

Prototype provision aimed at combatting loneliness in rural 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

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

Examples of initiatives

Establish Retrofit Academies in Tendring and Harlow

Develop a roadmap to sustainability, including being part of Race to Zero, the largest ever coalition of education providers

Embed sustainability in our courses

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 are supported to look after their own wellbeing

Examples 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 adults
- Develop a continuous improvement programme to instill lean working methods
- Create new safeguarding promotion materials and communications plan

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

Examples of initiatives

- Working with Public Health colleagues, develop a social prescription model so residents can access learning to improve their health
- Promotion of the Early Years settings to potential learnings
- Set up a support programme to help learners to move onto the next opportunity

Supporting achievement and success



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)

Examples 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 sites for skills provision

Environment plans for each learning space are developed

A plan for hybrid classrooms and skills hubs is developed

Commercial

Goals

Have a financially sustainable model, making best use of funding, increasing fee income and generating alternative sources of funding

Increase participation to reach key groups, localities and employers

Work with employers and partners at Essex County Council for the benefit of the residents of Essex

Examples of initiatives:

Creation of financial models based on future funding and fee sources

Development of website, marketing and communication channels to widen participation

Employer and partner engagement plans are developed to build mutually beneficial partnerships

Outcomes

By 2025, we want to be able to say that we have contributed to levelling up:

- 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

The measures of success and targets will be in operational plans which will sit underneath the strategic plan.



This information is issued by: ACL Essex

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The information contained in this document can be translated, and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.

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