



LEVELLING UP  
GOALS



Essex County Council

LEVELLING UP IMPACT REPORT





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# 01: Foreword

## **Rt Hon Justine Greening**

**Founder of the Levelling Up Goals  
and former Education Secretary**

The role of local authorities in levelling up the UK cannot be overstated.

Councils drive social mobility, raise prospects in areas where opportunities might otherwise be limited and enable career progression built on talent, skill and attitude, rather than connections or background.

As well as a conduit for inward investment, and the development of infrastructure that enables access to the careers of today and the future, they are also mass employers and a gateway to brighter prospects.

The levelling up challenge requires a coordinated effort, and local authorities are a powerful force in bringing together the many parties needed to address the opportunity gap.

They have direct reach into the most challenged communities, and an ability to unite industry partners, educators, community groups, learners, developers and investors – all under the common goal of opportunity creation and access.



**Local authorities are uniquely positioned to intervene, encourage and support throughout the key life moments that determine whether an individual is able to achieve social mobility.**

For too long the opportunity gap has prevented people in disadvantaged communities from fulfilling their potential and getting on in life.

Local authorities are uniquely positioned to intervene, encourage and support throughout the key life moments that determine whether an individual is able to achieve social mobility.

The fallout from the coronavirus pandemic continues to threaten progress made in terms of social mobility in recent years. It has widened the opportunity gap and made job creation in sectors where well-paid and fulfilling careers are possible, more challenging.

The prospect of building back better must not be lost in the months ahead amid fatigue over the pandemic's lingering threat. Creating a level playing field in the UK means a more successful Britain globally, and more prosperous communities and a fairer share of wealth within.

Under the leadership of Cllr Kevin Bentley and Cllr Louise McKinlay Essex County Council is taking a proactive approach to levelling up a county that has specific challenges. Leadership like this, which puts tackling issues front and centre, is exactly what Local Government is for; it really demonstrates the impact Councils can have on levelling up in their communities. The work of Essex County Council is truly groundbreaking.

In taking part in this process, Essex County Council is providing a transparent view of its work in this area, offering valuable insights and also identifying areas for improvement.

I hope other local authorities will follow its lead and join the growing number of organisations stepping up when their contribution to the levelling up agenda is needed more than ever.

# Foreword

**Cllr Kevin Bentley and Cllr Louise McKinlay**

Leader and Deputy Leader, Essex County Council



Essex is prosperous. We enjoy a £40bn economy, support 700,000 jobs and are home to nearly 75,000 businesses. However, there are gaps in how and where this prosperity is experienced with disparities in opportunity across the county.

In the most productive societies talent is efficiently matched to opportunity. But that doesn't happen all the time, everywhere, automatically. In places that are hot-beds of social mobility – for example many parts of London – you are much more likely, if you are from a relatively poor family, to go on to higher education than you are if you are from other parts of the country. That is not right and we are determined to change it in Essex.

In focusing on levelling up, our interest is to spread opportunity, not to constrain it. No one benefits from putting a ceiling on ambition and we all benefit when people have the chance to fulfil their potential. In some parts of Essex and for some parts of our population it is more difficult to do that. There are approximately 123,000 people in the county living in the most deprived 20% of places in England. There are also some parts of our population - for example, children on free school meals, people of all ages with mental health conditions, SEND or learning disabilities, and young people unemployed for a significant period of time - who require more support to ensure that they can seize opportunities to get on in life.

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We see the role of public services as responding to the needs of these places and people – and the role of the local authority to lead this approach. It is both a moral imperative that no one should be disadvantaged as a result of circumstances over which they have no control, and an economic one, that everyone should be able to rise as high as their talent and hard work can take them. The levelling up agenda seeks to identify ways to support this ambition.

We also believe that climate change and protecting the environment are a vital part of the levelling up agenda and will be essential to ensuring a sustainable future for our residents. That's why we established the Essex Climate Action Commission, an independent body to advise the Council on how best to tackle the climate challenge and become a net zero emissions county. We know that climate change can disproportionately impact people on lower incomes or living in deprived areas, but the transition towards a carbon neutral future also offers new opportunities within the growing 'Green Economy'. It is essential that we help residents gain the skills, qualifications and experience necessary to access these new economic opportunities.

We understand that addressing levelling up and achieving greater social mobility will not be easy or short-term. We are committed to this work for the long-term and we are delighted to be working with Justine and ThisisPurpose to help shape our thinking. We are pleased that this audit showcases some of the work we are already doing in this area. There is a lot more to come.

# 02: The Journey to the Levelling Up Goals

In 2015, as Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening MP led the UK delegation to the United Nations (UN). Along with 184 international partners, she helped to establish the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In 2017, the SDGs were made more 'actionable' by a UN resolution adopted by the General Assembly which identified specific targets for each goal, along with indicators used to measure progress towards each target.

These 17 interlinked, global goals were designed to be 'a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all'.

They marked a shift from the previously established Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000.

In contrast to the MDGs, the SDGs were nationally-owned, country-led and targeted wealthy, developed nations as well as developing countries.

The SDGs emphasised the interdependent environment, social and economic aspects of development by centralising the role of sustainability. As Secretary for State, Justine recognised how useful a common set of accessible but ambitious objectives could be in galvanising action to effect change.

Since then, the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated many of the problems relating to social inequality in the UK. The recovery is a chance for the United Kingdom to address these issues and level up but that requires updated and specific goals in order to outline, inspire and measure progress.

The Purpose Coalition, of which Essex County Council is a key member, aims to improve social mobility in the UK and has responded to this challenge with the launch of their own Levelling Up Goals in February 2021.

These new Goals build on the foundations laid by the UN's SDGs by outlining 14 clear goals and draw on expertise provided by academia and businesses which has been applied to the unique challenges facing the UK in levelling up.





They focus on key life stages and highlight the main issues that need to be resolved in order to create a level playing field for all in this country. The Levelling Up Goals are intended to guide how the urgent ambition to level up the UK can actually be achieved. The impact of the work carried out to do this can, and should, be measurable.

Sub-goals with quantifiable targets and measurements against which progress can be charted within the 14 goals are being developed by the Purpose Coalition in partnership with Purpose Coalition organisations like Essex County Council and led by Professor Kiran Trehan at the University of York.

This will create a more transparent and measurable framework with which to monitor and subsequently address problems of social mobility and inequality. The Levelling Up Goals are designed to look at the outcomes of CSR strategies and measures that organisations operate.

Many organisations are doing outstanding work and making important contributions to society but are still measuring this via inputs – a measure that focuses on pounds, pennies and numbers rather than real impact on human lives.

Crucially, these Goals are a shared framework. Justine and the wider Purpose Coalition believe that with a common understanding and objectives, there can be action that drives change on the ground.

Distinct entities, including universities, businesses, policymakers, communities and public sector organisations, can work together, with the shared Goals being a uniting and motivating foundation for progress.

As the problems which cause social inequality in the UK are interlinked, it seems that the response to these problems must also be collaborative.

The Purpose Coalition has encouraged businesses and universities to share their own best practice with other organisations so they are not only demonstrating their own commitment, but creating a shift towards purpose-led organisations.

The Goals can encourage an extension of this co-operative exchange of information which can be used to help level up Britain.

# 03: Essex County Council's approach to levelling up

Essex County Council influences the lives of around 1.8 million residents and some 12,000 employees (including maintained schools). It therefore has immense potential as a driver of levelling up, much of which has already been realised, while efforts are being increased to unlock more.

The authority's work to deliver quality of life for people in Essex spans the key areas of the economy, the environment, children and families and the promotion of health and wellbeing for all ages.

Embedded throughout, including in its strategic plan, Everyone's Essex, is a commitment to addressing inequalities and supporting residents past the many barriers to achievement.

It aims to target the root causes of disadvantage, and support Essex residents in accessing opportunities that enable social mobility and getting on in life generally.

Its activities ensure continual improvement in education, and an ongoing focus on the challenges which hold communities and households back.

Its strategic aims are to achieve:

- Strong, inclusive and stable economy.
- High quality environment.
- Health well-being and independence for all ages.
- A good place for children and families to grow.

And written through these strategic aims are twenty commitments, including specific levelling up commitments in relation to each strategic aim.

Internally, the authority is committed to diversity and inclusion, open and fair recruitment and progress; and understands the challenges in the lives of its employees which may hinder opportunity access.

In terms of its approach to personnel, it recognises the impact of external challenges and pressures, and is adapting rapidly to the changes to working life brought about by the global pandemic.

Essex County Council is also committed to ensuring a better quality of life by conserving, developing and promoting a healthy, safe, diverse, clean and attractive environment.

It is currently working towards a number of environmentally focused targets, to minimise its adverse impact and maximise its positive influence on the world.

By measuring itself against the Levelling Up Goals, the authority hopes to further enhance its contribution to closing the opportunity gap.

Essex County Council has committed to unlocking its full potential as an agent of levelling up.





The organisation has a broad span of strategies and activities which deliver levelling up in many ways. Their positive impact can be seen throughout the life stages of the residents it serves.

Because of its wide remit and significant influence in Essex, the authority is measured against all 14 Levelling Up Goals in this process.

In each key area, examples of programmes and approaches which are delivering tangible change can be seen.

This work begins in early years, via a strategy which aims to remove all barriers preventing children from realising their full potential; and extends right through to later life, including through its commitment to innovation around helping ensure older people can live independent, comfortable and connected lives for longer.

Its close relationship with schools enables the raising of aspirations among young people in the county, and eases access to fulfilling and exciting careers.

By working closely with industry partners too, its efforts are closely aligned to the needs of industries which are ripe with the opportunities that enable social mobility.

The local authority is understanding of the personal, financial and household challenges which may prevent social mobility – it has recently created a financial well-being programme – recognising the challenges that many households face. This knowledge, combined with its reach into Essex's most challenged communities, is used to great effect in delivering levelling up.

Health challenges, financial difficulties, education gaps and cultural challenges are among the many focus areas of the authority's approach and the County Council has demonstrated through its innovative ActivAte holiday food and activity and its increasing focus on the arts new ways to address these issues.

Essex County Council also has significant influence on the generation of new opportunities within Essex. Not only do they come within its own offices and facilities, but also through its role as a lightning rod for inward investment and infrastructural development. It also works extensively to encourage entrepreneurialism in the county, catalysing longer term opportunities among startups and SMEs.

The authority is also fully committed to meeting zero carbon and other environmental targets which are essential for a future prosperous world.

This report sets out the specifics of its approach against each of the 14 Levelling Up Goals.



## 04: Assessment of Essex County Council in the context of the Levelling Up Goals

Many organisations have strong commitments to traditional Corporate Social Responsibility and the ESG agenda. This section of this report will map several of Essex County Council's specific initiatives against the Levelling Up Goals, to track where progress is being made and where efforts could be redirected or better targeted.

Below is a list of the Levelling Up Goals, their definitions, and our team's assessment of how Essex County Council is currently meeting them. These have been assessed through a document review process; we then map the amount of activity done by Essex County Council across each of the Levelling Up Goals.





### **Close the early years development gap by delivering the best possible start for every child.**

Essex County Council's early years strategy sets out a vision for Essex to be a place where there are no barriers to children growing up to be the very best they can be.

#### **To achieve this vision, the council has six aims:**

- Children and their families achieve their potential with support from an effective and connected early years system that has a clear vision, purpose and direction
- All children have a positive journey through their early years and are well supported in the transition to reception and in starting year one.
- Children who may be at risk of poor outcomes are prioritised for high quality targeted support.
- Children's early learning and development is expertly supported by a strong, skilled and knowledgeable early years and childcare system workforce.
- Parents can access sufficient, high quality and fully inclusive childcare places that support early learning and childcare needs.
- Families are enabled to be the best they can be.

#### **The council's early years system is built around 11 principles:**

- Targeted – at those in greatest need.
- Codesigned – with children, young people, parents, carers and partners.
- Whole system – considering opportunities and challenges from the perspective of the whole system rather than in isolation.
- Early intervention – ensuring families receive the right help at the right time as early as possible.
- Innovation and flexibility – encouraging staff and partners to take new and experimental approaches.
- Place-based – an understanding of the resources, assets and challenges of different localities and tailoring the approach accordingly.
- Strengths-based – focusing on the strengths and assets in families and communities.

- Evidence informed – developing approaches based on an understanding of what works.
- Family focused – putting the lived experience of families at the heart of activities and approaches.
- Childhood first – valuing and promoting the importance of early years in everything it does.
- Inclusive – developing solutions which take account of the needs of all.

#### **4.1.1 School readiness**

The authority works extensively to understand and address the broad spectrum of determinants of school readiness.

As part of the council's focus on lifelong learning, its earliest interventions are focused on narrowing gaps between disadvantaged and other children, in areas such as literacy and vocabulary.

The TLC (Talk, Listen and Cuddle) initiative, for example, encourages parents to read to their children.

The council also utilises research to inform future school readiness approaches. One recent study focused on a disadvantaged community at a localised level, harnessing predictive analytics to explore the factors which shape school readiness. It investigated whether children at age two could be identified as having school readiness challenges at age five – and what measures could be put in place to prevent them.

Family hubs, an initiative pioneered by Essex five years ago in a shift away from the traditional children's centre model, are also an influencing factor here. They bring together family workers, health visitors and school nursing teams to provide a more holistic approach to family needs.

#### **4.1.2 Early years activities in libraries**

The council works to engage young children in active learning via its network of libraries. As well as offering seasonal reading challenges, preschool visits and awareness raising sessions for parents, libraries also host sensory experiences and other enriching activities for babies and young children, for example baby rhymetimes, baby weigh in sessions, Bookstart for Babies packs, which all aim to encourage a love of books, stories and rhymes in children from an early age. Additionally the Essex libraries will be working with BookTrust to implement a new early years targeted offer from June 2022.



## Every child successfully achieving their potential in attainment and development.

Approximately 22 per cent of the Essex population is aged under 18. Although a relatively affluent area, pockets of high deprivation exist in the south and north of the county. Approximately 14.1 per cent of Essex children and young people live in poverty. Meanwhile, more than 12.4 per cent of primary and 9.5 per cent of secondary pupils are entitled to free school meals. Essex is home to over 550+ schools and academies.

Against this backdrop, Essex County Council takes a lead role in shaping successful school years for the young people in the communities it serves.

### 4.2.1 Collaborative working

The council takes a lead role in delivering the Essex Children and Young People's Plan, which brings together the county's various agencies, including schools, working with children, young people and their families.

Although the plan has continued to evolve since its formulation in 2016, an overriding aim is to encourage resilient children and young people. Emotional resilience is critical in enabling children and young people to cope with, and adapt to, stressful situations and recover quickly from difficulties. It is nurtured via the plan through a combination of wide-ranging support, good pathways and an early-as-possible approach to interventions.

Another focus area of the plan, highlighted in its 2020 update, is the importance of stable and thriving families. The partners involved in the plan, including the council, work together to protect children and young people against the threats to a stable and supportive home life. Financial difficulties, conflicts between family members and domestic abuse are among the many factors that can impact the wellbeing of children, as well as affecting their educational progression.

Other focus areas include building inclusive and supportive schools and communities, and safe and accessible neighbourhoods. A 2020 update to the plan

also identifies the importance of collaborative working in better supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). It also sets out the need to collaborate across the system to provide good quality and accessible support for children and young people experiencing emotional wellbeing and mental health difficulties.

### The goals of the plan are delivered via four guiding principles:

- Understand the problem based on the evidence before action.
- Prevent things getting worse by working to the principles of early intervention.
- Protect the most vulnerable by using all the powers available and taking collective action to safeguard those most at risk.
- Connect as partners to support each other, share assets and align funding in the pursuit of common goals.

### 4.2.2 Making school years a priority

The council's Everyone's Essex strategy sets out its 20 commitments to levelling up. Within this, school years, and the wider influences which impact on them, feature prominently.

It sets out the council's ambition to create a good place for children and families to grow through excellent education outcomes, family resilience and stability, safety and positive outcomes for vulnerable children.

It commits to achieving educational excellence and high standards for all children and young people as the UK recovers from the coronavirus pandemic. It aims to do this by working in partnership with early years providers, schools, colleges and universities, and by building greater coherence across the system; plus engaging businesses, communities and the arts in supporting education outcomes.

Family resilience and stability are again noted in this strategy, as is the importance of improving outcomes for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups including children in care, care leavers, children with SEND and children from BAME communities.

### 4.2.3 Risk-Avert

This is a schools-based behavioural programme which seeks to build resilience and self-efficacy in young people identified as engaging in risky behaviours.



#### 4.2.4 SEND clubs and activities

Essex County Council supports an extensive network of community-based clubs, and a busy programme of events and activities for children and young people with special educational needs and physical disabilities.

#### 4.2.5 Essex ActivAte

This project aims to engage, support and build relationships with low income families. It is a holiday activity and food programme for families eligible for free school meals. The council works with local partners to deliver holiday programmes which tackle the issues of holiday hunger and inactivity.

#### 4.2.6 Essex Outdoors

The council operates four sites: Harlow, Danbury, Mersea, and Bradwell. These outdoor education centres offer high quality provision to young people. Activities here are tied to the curriculum, and young people aged eight to 14 are able to access them. Over 57,000 participants attended the centres in 2021 despite the Covid-19 restrictions in place for much of the year.

#### 4.2.7 Library activities

Via the Holiday Activity Fund, lower income families are able to engage in library-based activities which support education and health and wellbeing for young people in various ways. Activities include seasonal reading challenges and activities, author visits, computer coding courses, Summer Reading Challenge volunteering for children over the age of fourteen and the opportunity to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Libraries also offer 'in-library' workshops to schools.

#### 4.2.8 Place-based approach

Essex County Council focuses closely on the differing needs of the communities within the county. An example of this, in terms of supporting young people in education, is the Harlow Heroes project. This programme is aimed at ensuring Harlow is not left behind through an ambitious collective impact strategy targeting young people and their families. The collective of organisations, including the council, work together to improve educational experiences, achievement and employment opportunities for younger people in Harlow.

#### 4.2.9 Encouraging reading

The Year of Reading 2022 initiative is in response to the impact Covid has had on children and young people's attainment – the focus on reading should mean that children catch up quicker. It is designed to ensure that every child in Essex leaves school able to read at their

age level or better. The project will soon be extended to also support parents with literacy challenges, better enabling them to aid their own children's progress.

#### 4.2.10 Online learning during school holidays

The council recently commissioned a remote teaching specialist to run online learning sessions during the school holidays to support education catch-up which is now the focus of the Education Task Force.

#### 4.2.11 Social worker supervision in schools

This trial project has been established to help support safeguarding leads in schools with a view to improving outcomes for vulnerable children who may experience external challenges and pressures that impinge on their school performance.

#### 4.2.12 Extracurricular activities that support good school years

Essex County Council's approach here is perhaps best encapsulated by the 'Its My Life' festival. This is aimed at children and young people who are receiving services from the council's children and families team. They include children in care, care leavers, children with disabilities and unaccompanied young asylum seekers. The festival gives them an opportunity to make new friends and enjoy a range of fun, stimulating and creative activities during the summer holidays.

#### 4.2.13 Sharing best practice

The Tending Twinning Project is a Department for Education-funded initiative which encourages the sharing of innovation and best practice in education between different localities with similar issues. The overall aim is to improve outcomes from education.

#### 4.2.14 Future Ready programme

This has been developed to work with children who have fallen behind in terms of education attainment and attendance following the pandemic. The programme supports emotional wellbeing and seeks to get learning back on track.

#### 4.2.15 Trauma perceptive environments

The council is working with schools to enable their transition into trauma perceptive environments; places where trauma in the lives of young people is identified and acted upon by supporting their emotional wellbeing. This work involves engagement from all staff within the school, encouraging them to act with kindness and compassion towards children who may be struggling. The programme is currently being rolled out to all schools in the county.



**Every young person and adult to have the choice of a high quality route in education, employment or training.**

While local authorities do not have a direct remit from central government to support post-16+ progression, Essex County Council influences this vital element of levelling up in a number of ways as set out below.

**4.3.1 Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Scheme**

Developed by the council, this enables businesses to transfer their unspent apprenticeship levy to fellow employers in the county, instead of it being returned to the Treasury. This helps to develop more post-16+ options via funded apprenticeships. To date £2m has been transferred via the scheme.

**4.3.2 Supported accommodation**

Developing independence and life skills is pivotal to the success of young people in the early years of their careers. Through Essex County Council, this is partly enabled via its supported accommodation programme for young people aged 16 to 25.

**4.3.3 Sport as a prevention tool**

Working in partnership with the Active Essex Foundation Charity and Essex Violence and Vulnerability Board, the council is using sport to help prevent youth violence.

The scheme utilises sport and physical activity to engage and support young people who are either involved in, or at risk of becoming involved in, the criminal justice system.

**4.3.4 The Plan B programme**

This is a 10-week initiative which aims to maximise young people's potential and prepare them for the future. It runs throughout Essex.

**4.3.5 Kickstart programme**

Essex County Council works with the Department for Work and Pensions to identify entry-level placements

for young people aged 18 to 24 on Universal Credit. Annually the council creates around 600 entry-level placements, supporting young people into meaningful employment and, potentially, successful careers in the public sector.

**4.3.6 Maximising the positive impact of libraries**

The Council is consulting on a new library service plan which proposes to expand the role of library services to better support residents in accessing advice and support services. This additional support includes that which is offered to post-16+ individuals looking for guidance in navigating the world of work for the first time. The library service also offers a wide range of volunteering opportunities.

**4.3.7 Connecting schools to local businesses**

Work is underway at the council to develop a systematic approach to businesses visiting schools to raise aspirations and career awareness among school leavers.

**4.3.8 Addressing gender-based disparities**

The Ambitious Women in Essex programme is a network which enables business women to talk about potential opportunities and share good practice. A key feature, however, is also its impact in presenting role models of successful women in Essex to inspire young women as they pursue their chosen career. Seminars, workshops and videos help to show real-world examples that post-16+ women can aspire to.



**Access to the right advice and experiences at the right time to unlock opportunity throughout a person's life.**

**4.4.1 Supporting working families**

In October 2021, Essex County Council published its new plan for working families. Partly, this set out a commitment to providing information, advice and guidance for working families. Measures within, in relation to this focus area, include the development



of a hyper-local advice tool for parents, the provision of earlier information on childcare to parents, better signposting to family mentoring services and a new working families 'stakeholder forum'. Other steps identified are the implementation of a working families reference group, and an exploration of how working families can better take advantage of country parks and libraries within the county.

The report underlines some of the challenges which prevent working families from accessing the advice and experiences which can help them to progress in life - time constraints and financial pressures being the most prevalent. The council also aims to provide time-poor working families with increased awareness of support available to them and swift access to the right information, advice and guidance they require.

#### **4.4.2 Changing Futures**

This is a funded programme which is developing and evaluating new approaches to supporting individuals with multiple and complex needs.

#### **4.4.3 Essex Family and Child Wellbeing Service**

This is a countywide service offering family support, bringing together health visitors, school nursing and family interventions with school readiness a particular target.

#### **4.4.4 Early intervention support for families**

Delivered via the Family Innovation Fund, this approach provides coaching and mentoring which encourages good emotional wellbeing, stability and resilience among families.

#### **4.4.5 Local Linked Support**

This service is working in Colchester, Braintree and Harlow to provide support to adults with learning disabilities and autism, as well as their carers and the County Council is currently planning to extend this support to cover other areas of need across Essex. Local Linked support is an early intervention that seeks to use community-based solutions to care needs and reduces the long-term costs to the authority whilst improving outcomes for its users.

#### **4.4.6 Use of apps for better signposting**

Essex County Council utilises apps to improve its provision of advice and guidance. An example is the TellJo app, a digital service which signposts families to a range of support services centred around their

specific needs. It also enables the council's children and families service to engage them directly when appropriate.

#### **4.4.7 Job fairs**

Job fairs provide an opportunity to present careers within the authority as appealing and achievable. Essex County Council is an 'anchor institution', meaning its long-term sustainability as a large-scale employer and purchaser is tied to the wellbeing of the population it serves. It, therefore, seeks to recruit from communities across the county. Job fairs are an important intervention in the 'right advice and experiences' element of its levelling up contribution. This financial year will see 10 jobs fairs hosted by the council, with the first three already attracting 5,000+ participants.

#### **4.4.8 Adult community learning**

This service provides skills training to 11,000 Essex residents each year, with a particular focus on disadvantaged communities. Activities include CV writing, including for people made redundant during the pandemic.

#### **4.4.9 Tailored programmes for at-risk groups**

The council runs the Good Man project, a five-week male mentoring programme for boys and young men who are at risk of entering into abusive relationships in the future and/or are at current risk within an abusive relationship.

It is delivered on either a group or one to one basis, depending on need. The project aims to educate young people about the value of respect and the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships. It equips participants with the necessary skills to develop and maintain healthy relationships, recognise how to break up in an appropriate way when necessary and maintain appropriate open lines of communication.

Similarly, Sisters In Strength is a five-week mentoring programme for girls and young women who are at risk of entering into an abusive relationship, becoming a potential perpetrator within a relationship or are currently in an abusive relationship.

#### **4.4.10 Support from Libraries**

There are a wide range of face to face advice and support sessions offered from libraries including job clubs, Councillor surgeries, and advice sessions from local organisations and community groups.



**Careers and professions open to people of all backgrounds through transparent, accessible and open recruitment practices.**

#### **4.5.1 Opening up opportunity to all**

Everyone's Essex, the council's levelling up plan published in October 2021, details its ambition for a strong, inclusive and sustainable economy. Generating "good jobs" and making them accessible, including through open recruitment practices, is key to this. It is doing this internally, and externally by supporting business recovery and building a stronger economy for the future in the aftermath of the worst of the pandemic.

The plan commits to levelling up the Essex economy by addressing the drivers of socio-economic inequality - including income, education, employment, health and housing - based on the foundation of good jobs and a higher skilled and healthier workforce.

It also identifies the importance of enabling people to build the skills they need to be part of the recovery; and of working alongside Essex businesses to help reduce barriers to employment for disadvantaged groups. This further contributes to the authority's impact as a driver of open recruitment.

#### **4.5.2 Skills focus**

The council is currently developing a comprehensive skills strategy underpinned by two dominant themes - agility and continuous learning.

The strategy will set out how an agile workforce, which continues to develop new skills and knowledge, can be fostered via interventions that are informed by robust analysis and strong evidence, based on industry needs.

At the time of writing, the strategy is being updated to reflect impending and future needs.

#### **4.5.3 Opportunity access for parents**

The council is developing a 'parent ambassadors volunteer programme' which supports parents in further developing their skills. It will enable them to take up voluntary positions within schools and community settings; which can, in turn, be a springboard into employed opportunities.

#### **4.5.4 Ensuring opportunities are visible to everyone**

The Essex Opportunities Portal provides online and telephony support to working families seeking jobs, careers, skills or training information and advice. Between its launch in March 2021 and December 2021, it attracted 65,000 views and applications from 5,000+ people.

#### **4.5.5 Joining forces for greater impact**

The Essex Anchors Network brings together all public sector bodies in Essex. Current endeavours include a collective commitment to providing employment opportunities to underrepresented groups.





## **Opportunities for career advancement for all based on ability and potential, not connections.**

### **4.6.1 Accessible skills development**

At the heart of the council's programme of work is a recognition that accessible and ongoing skills development is critical for fair career progression.

It commits to improving skills across Essex by closing the gap between the needs of employers and the choices learners make.

Key multi-agency partnerships lead this work across the county, directing local public-private funding to shape local skills programmes in addressing skills gaps and increasing employment.

### **4.6.2 A new charter for family friendly employers**

The pressures of raising a family can put individuals at a disadvantage when competing for promotions or new roles in their career.

As part of its commitment to making Essex family friendly, the council is launching a 'Family Friendly Employers Charter'. This will highlight the policies and practices which enable parents and carers to progress at work, unhindered by barriers relating to their family responsibilities.

The charter aims to address a culture, in some organisations, that disadvantages people who require flexible or part-time hours to suit family needs.

### **4.6.3 Location-focused programmes**

For example, the 'You Can' adult learning project delivered in partnership with the NHS helps residents in Tendring to gain the skills needed to access a career in the health and social care sector.

### **4.6.4 Supporting progression within Essex County Council**

Essex County Council's People Plan (2021 to 2025) documents the key themes of its approach as an employer.

Among them is a commitment to creating the right conditions, through an effort to identify and remove any barriers that may stand in the way of progress.

It aims to be "brilliant at the basics", utilising efficient and effective processes, technology and business insights. Importantly, these are designed to be accessible and easy to understand, and are backed up by support services.

The council also aims to enable productivity and enhance performance, by seeking to understand and address critical factors which may prevent this. There is a continual striving for the best performance as individuals, teams and as an organisation. The council believes it is important to create healthy places of work – and to focus on the future of work, and future readiness to ensure recruitment and development can respond to new priorities, services, practices, skills needs and capabilities.

In terms of career progression, perhaps the most relevant key theme of its people plan is its commitment to enabling growth and development. The council says in its report: "We want to continue the journey we started in the last three years focusing on making the learning part of what we do all the time and for that we will prioritise embedding learning in the flow of work."

The remaining two key themes are "becoming more connected" and "our strength lies in diversity", the latter referencing the council's desire to have an inclusive culture where everyone has a chance to thrive by being themselves. It recognises that having a diverse workforce and an inclusive culture enables greater diversity of thought across the organisation, leading to more innovation and empathy with service users.

The council's pay and reward structures are also designed to be fair and equitable, based on a mutual understanding of what is expected from staff and as an employer.





## **Widening access to responsible credit and closing the savings gap.**

### **4.7.1 Financial wellbeing**

Essex County Council strives to help residents overcome financial difficulties, including those caused as a result of the pandemic. It does this, not through a prescriptive approach, but rather by helping service users better understand their relationship with money and where their financial habits come from. These interventions are aimed at giving individuals the space and time to think about their financial behaviour and its impact on their health and wellbeing.

### **4.7.2 Energy bill management**

Essex Energy Switch is a county-wide collective energy switching campaign designed by the council to help residents reduce their gas and electricity bills.

The local authority also delivers advice that enables better energy bill management. The Community Energy programme, for example, provides advice tailored for vulnerable residents.

### **4.7.3 Household budgeting**

The council will soon launch a household budget campaign to help working families save money on household costs and become more financially resilient.

The campaign will follow a small number of families and highlight their personal journey from financial worries to being able to manage their budgets, as well as producing tools, tips, and guidance for others on how to save money and where to find help.

### **4.7.4 Social supermarkets**

The social supermarket is a concept which enables customers to make a reduced contribution to their food and household items; avoiding the stigma or embarrassment they may feel from receiving free groceries via a food bank. Customers are able to access a non-judgemental, community-owned service backed by the council. The Council is planning on trialing an approach in several sites across Essex in 2022, with a longer-term plan to expand their function to also serve as community hubs.



## **Improving mental and physical health at all ages to boost overall well-being to allow people to fulfil their potential.**

Alongside family, the environment and the economy, health is one of four pillars in the council's 2021 to 2025 levelling up plan.

It aims to increase the proportion of people able to live healthy lifestyles by embedding a "community-first approach, by helping people to overcome social isolation, mental ill health and substance misuse, and by helping people to live fit and active lifestyles".

It also promotes independence, stating: "[We] will enable residents to live independently by assisting them to access suitable accommodation, supporting access to employment and meaningful activities, and enabling independence at home through reablement, care technology, and market shaping to ensure strong domiciliary support, and investment in housing."

Another important factor in its approach is "place-based working". This means "joining up care and support with local partners in a place," including with district councils, health partners and the local voluntary and community sectors."

Better supporting carers is also identified as an important step in levelling up the county. The report commits to a "step change in the advice, guidance and support we provide to support wellbeing and independence, and by targeting it at those who need it most".

Overall, the council aims to reduce health inequalities by bringing together partners and communities to address the socio-economic drivers that underpin poor health outcomes, such as poor housing, poverty, economic insecurity and low skills.

The Council is also a lead partner in Active Essex the Sport and Physical Activity Partnership for Greater Essex which aims to make sport and physical activity accessible to all residents. Recent activities have included the Sport England funded Physical Activity

Local Delivery Pilot which takes a community development approach to enable residents to get more active, a new 10 year physical activity strategy, new funds to support community groups and clubs, and delivery of the Essex ActivAte school holiday and food scheme for children from low income households.

#### **4.8.1 Supporting active travel choices and activities**

The council has reallocated road space for walking and cycling in Colchester, Braintree, Wickford, Chelmsford and Brentwood. The Council also operates two park and rides, supports bus services in Essex, including passenger transport and home to school transport, and is running an e-scooter trial in a number of locations throughout the county.

The council's Green Infrastructure Strategy provides a clear plan to guide the future planning and delivery of green infrastructure in Essex in light of increased population growth. Other green infrastructure measures are further encouraging more outdoor activity which promotes good health and wellbeing. These include the creation of a 350-mile coastal path, planting 375,000 trees, opening wild green spaces owned by the council to the public and "greening out" streets and verges to create connected green infrastructure that not only improves health and wellbeing but also contributes to the management of severe weather events.

#### **4.8.2 Prevention and enablement focus**

The council is currently undertaking a "test and learn" project which seeks to understand how physical activity can be used to enable adults with disabilities and long-term health conditions to be more active, and improve their overall wellbeing.

#### **4.8.3 Library-based health and wellbeing activities**

Libraries are central to the delivery of Essex County Council's health and wellbeing-focused interventions. For instance, they host reading activities related to dementia, baby weigh-ins, support for people with hearing loss and group sessions for people suffering from isolation; alongside a wide range of other activities targeted at long-term health and mental health challenges faced by children, adolescents and adults. They also give access to self-help through booklists such as Reading Well.

#### **4.8.4 The power of parks**

ECC operates eight Country Parks throughout Essex

which welcomed record number in 2020/21 as residents sought safe outdoor space to visit through the pandemic. The Country Parks Team are focused on the environmental management of the parks, balancing the need for play activities (including the bike trails at Hadleigh), and the need to manage nature, with the park at Cudmore Grove providing important habitat for birds. Danbury Country Park delivers Family Forest School sessions, woodland play sessions aimed at the under fives, and sessions for home educators which include forest crafts.

#### **4.8.5 ShelfHelp**

This is a mental health and mindfulness programme delivered jointly by the council's library services and its Active Essex arm. The project aims to promote mindfulness resources in the library alongside virtual and in-person meditation and relaxation sessions delivered by Active Essex.

#### **4.8.6 Changing behaviours**

'Find Your Active' is a year-long behavioural change programme supported by a £1.25m fund enabling hundreds of local clubs and organisations to provide activities for "physically deconditioned" people.

#### **4.8.7 Essex Care Technology Service**

This supports people with care needs in accessing the latest technology to help them live as independently as possible and to improve their quality of life. Activities operated through the programme also include investigating how technology can be used to help children on child protection plans; for example by helping parents/guardians to develop healthier routines. Essex's Care Tech approach will benefit over 2500 people this year.

#### **4.8.8 Mental Health Symposium**

This brings together the council and its partners in drawing up a mental health strategy aimed at strengthening delivery, with particular focus on prevention and early intervention.

#### **4.8.9 The Essex Recovery Foundation**

Currently in development, this programme will seek to better support people experiencing substance misuse issues. The council has also created an arm's length charity to support efforts to curb substance abuse in Essex. Crucially, it is led by former addicts and is more grounded in local communities than previous approaches to the problem.

#### 4.8.10 Rethinking obesity

In 2019/20 Public Health England estimated that 22.3% of children in Reception Year, 33.1% of children in Year 6, and 63.8% of adults in Essex were overweight or obese. Tackling obesity requires working with communities as they are best placed to understand their own needs and challenges, but also how to design and deliver services that will work for their specific area or group. The council recently shifted the focus of its obesity approach to make it more community led – developing an approach that will deliver at scale, sustainably and making the best use of resources.

#### 4.8.11 Culture, the Arts and Tourism

Tourism in Essex is worth over £3 billion to the Essex economy. Many of the roles within this industry are seasonal and are located in the coastal areas where there are high levels of deprivation and low levels of opportunity – therefore support for this sector through Visit Essex is critical.

The County Council is also looking to strengthen its engagement with the arts and culture sector across Essex to develop opportunities for residents. Traditionally those from deprived backgrounds are least likely to engage in culture and the arts, but as Firstsite, winners of the 2021 Museum of the Year Award have shown, there is an important role for arts organisations to play in leading the engagement with their local communities and developing activities and outreach programmes which reflect the needs and interests of local places – Essex County Council is working closely with these organisations to build this approach to culture-led levelling up into its DNA.

Essex Music Education Hub aims to provide high-quality, diverse, sustainable music education opportunities for all children and young people and is funded by ECC, the DfE and Arts Council England. Essex Music Service has a team of over 220 tutors providing 1-to-1, small group, ensemble and workshop provision across the county. This team includes highly skilled and experienced teams of string, woodwind, brass, percussion, vocal, rap, keyboard, music technology tutors, and specialist teachers for whole-class instrument teaching, ensembles, SEND, and Inclusion work.

ECC's Culture, Heritage and Green Spaces

service has developed a cultural programme in response to vulnerable members of the community experiencing pronounced isolation in the face of Covid-19. Working with the Essex Wellbeing Service, The Alzheimer's Society, Carer First and Dementia Action Alliances across the county, the programme has delivered music and dance activities to the community and within care settings connecting residents, their carers and arts organisations.



#### Extending private enterprise and entrepreneurship to all people and communities.

Essex County Council recognises the vital importance of entrepreneurialism in supporting levelling up and closing the opportunity gap. There are a number of specific programmes and approaches which support enterprise delivered by the organisation.

#### 4.9.1 Funding for SMEs

Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE) II is a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) project for SMEs in Essex, Kent and East Sussex. Its aim is to help businesses become more competitive and profitable while protecting the environment.

#### 4.9.2 Town centre focus

Working with district councils and external partners, Essex County Council is leading a range of town centre regeneration initiatives which are supporting enterprise.

Its High Street Business Summit, meanwhile, brought together representatives from a range of sectors to share ideas on the future proofing of Essex's high streets and town centres.

#### 4.9.3 Supporting businesses

The Essex County Council Business Support Service, delivered in partnership with Let's Do Business Group, is focused on short term support for businesses



impacted by COVID-19. Further support comes through the provision of affordable business space, including that at the recently refurbished Ongar Business Centre, which provides space for up to 30 businesses and supports 150 to 200 jobs.

The council is also delivering business adaptation grants to support SMEs in making necessary adjustments in response to COVID-19.

#### 4.9.4 Business accelerators

To support existing businesses to grow and adapt, Essex County Council funded a new online business accelerator programme for new and existing businesses. The programme takes place over 11 weeks to help bridge the gap between being in employment and running a business by providing foundational skills to support starting-up a new enterprise or help to further develop an existing business.

#### 4.9.5 Supply chain

Social value is an approach to procurement that looks beyond the financial cost of a contract and considers how the services we commission and procure might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being for the residents of Essex. Our budget and related procurement processes directly supports the local economy with £900million annually being spent directly with Essex based businesses, whilst in 2021 we have rolled out our new social value framework to help our businesses identify where they can generate additional wider benefits local residents and communities when bidding for contracts with us.

The Harlow Local Procurement Portal project was recently awarded £476k from the Government Community Renewal Fund. The project, delivered by Harlow District Council, will support Harlow-based SMEs in supplying larger companies in the district, increasing local purchasing and supply of services to grow the district economy.

#### 4.9.6 A champion of female leadership

The aforementioned Ambitious Women in Essex programme, which inspires young women to pursue well paid and fulfilling careers, also helps to drive female entrepreneurs to success. A number of projects within the programme enable the sharing of ideas, advice and connections which support female led start-ups and SMEs towards their goals.



### Closing the divide in technology access, skills, opportunities and infrastructure.

The council's approach to the digital divide combines investment in infrastructure, making technology accessible and providing advice and guidance.

#### 4.10.1 Digital inclusion

The council's Adult Social Care department recently gifted over 1,100 Samsung tablets to community groups to help tackle digital exclusion among vulnerable people.

The organisation is also developing an approach to ensure that technology is consumable to all members of society; and identifying and implementing approaches that enable everyone to develop their digital skills.

During the pandemic the council also introduced a free laptop scheme for learners without access to a computer for remote learning. This effort now includes the sourcing of unwanted laptops from businesses and overseeing their reconditioning.

#### 4.10.2 Vital infrastructure

As part of the government's BDUK programme, the council is working with two network operators, Openreach and Gigaclear, to make superfast and ultrafast broadband available to as many homes and businesses across Essex as possible.

Furthermore, the Digital Skills Transformation for Essex's High Streets project recently received £756,560 in funding from the Government Community Renewal Fund for pilots in Harlow and Tendring.

This project, delivered by Maybe Solutions Limited, will provide accelerated digital learning for staff of independent High Street businesses.

#### 4.10.3 Supporting tech literacy

The council's library service provides free digital skills support, as well as coding clubs for young people. All residents can access free internet and IT services, including free WiFi.



### **Developing the physical infrastructure that connects people and places to opportunity.**

Developing the physical infrastructure that connects people and places to opportunity. Essex County Council has an extensive range of infrastructure projects and initiatives underway or in the planning phase aimed at improving the county as a place to live and work. Some of these are supported by bids made through the Community Renewal Fund and Towns Fund.

#### **They include:**

- Harlow sustainable transport corridors - the provision of four sustainable transport corridors across Harlow.
- Bus service improvement plan - providing an improved bus network across the county.
- Essex Pedal Power - a scheme offering bikes to people on low incomes to facilitate their access to work or education.
- Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan - developing high quality walking and cycling routes across the county.
- Rapid Transit (Colchester and Harlow) – future provision of rapid transit (bus) in West Essex (Harlow) and Colchester (with possible extension to Tendring).
- Housing Infrastructure Fund - In 2019 Essex County Council secured over £300million from the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund for rail and road improvements to support new homes. The two successful Essex bids include £218 million for the Beaulieu Station and North-East bypass in Chelmsford and a further £99.9 million for the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community bid to deliver a new single carriageway link road and works to unlock up to 7,500 homes. As well as delivering crucial infrastructure for the future, this investment will also help drive economic recovery from Covid-19 by supporting thousands of construction jobs in Essex.

- Housing Infrastructure Grant – a £172m investment removing constraints to development and bringing forward new homes, jobs and infrastructure in which ECC partners with Harlow.
- E-scooter pilot – e-scooter trials in Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, and Colchester.
- Enhanced Bus Partnership - a collaboration with Essex bus operators to make legally binding commitments on how bus travel is delivered in Essex to transform the bus network over the coming years.
- Numerous highway schemes - to meet future needs or address current problems.
- Park & Ride – ECC operates two park and ride sites in Chelmsford and Colchester to support people to make more sustainable travel choices to reduce congestion and the resultant pollution in town centres.



### **Creating affordable quality homes so people can live in safe and sustainable communities.**

The council is committed to sustainable communities to meet housing needs in line with environmental targets and pressures through the work it is doing, with partners, on Garden Communities and through the direct delivery of interventions through Essex Housing.

#### **4.12.1 Long term vision**

Sustainable development in Essex has been guided for almost 50 years by a landmark document called the Essex Design Guide. This is a key source of support for designers, planners and developers on how to build high quality places where people want to live.

#### **The guide, updated in 2018, identifies how good health and wellbeing can be encouraged and improved by:**

- Supporting community leadership and participation through high-quality planning, design and management of the environment.



- Promoting high-quality local employment, affordable housing, sport and recreation facilities, environmental sustainability and skill development.
- Providing convenient local healthcare services with options for (and incentives towards) self-care.
- Providing interesting and stimulating open spaces and natural environments to encourage people to be physically active including active design principles.
- Ensuring developments embody the principles of lifetime neighbourhoods and promote independent living.
- Promoting access to healthy and locally sourced food.
- Encouraging active travel, most particularly cycling and walking.
- Creating a safe and accessible built environment with well-designed public spaces that encourage community participation.
- Embracing the Smart Cities concept by incorporating and future proofing for new technology.
- Ensuring that all work, educational or public spaces are sufficiently well designed to promote active and healthy lifestyles.

#### **4.12.2 Sustainable housing schemes**

The council's housing schemes are typically at least 20 per cent more efficient than required building regulations and a number of projects are underway to further improve its sustainable development performance. Among them is a trial net-zero development of 10 residential units at Hargrave House in Great Baddow.

Other developments include Purford Green, in Harlow, which will feature air source heat pumps, solar PV panels, electrical vehicle charging points

and a woodland walk designed to create a biodiversity net-gain.

#### **4.12.3 Housing support**

The council commissions services to support individuals and families at risk of homelessness; and to provide specialist supported accommodation for single people and families with additional needs.

#### **4.12.4 Solar Together Essex**

This is a collective purchasing scheme to help residents and small businesses purchase high quality solar panels at an affordable price from trusted suppliers.

#### **4.12.5 Net zero school pilots**

Essex County Council has undertaken a pilot programme to expand three secondary schools using construction methods designed to deliver net-zero school buildings.

#### **4.12.6 Women's Safety Advisory Group**

In 2021 the council launched a new Safety Advisory Group to explore the issue of public safety in Essex with a particular focus on the safety of women and girls. The Advisory Group has undertaken a range of surveys, online polls, partnership events and focus groups, with thousands of residents to get the public's views on safety. The group is currently developing a detailed programme of work that is now being finalised ready for launch in February 2022.

#### **4.12.7 Violence and vulnerability**

The council is working with the Office of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to support work around violence and vulnerability.





### **Ensure that the energy transition is fair and creates opportunities across the UK.**

The council's 2021 to 2025 levelling up plan, Everyone's Essex, sets out its ambition to create a high quality environment via a net zero approach, green communities, sustainable transport, minimal waste and "levelling up the environment".

It commits to working across the county to hit net zero targets, by ensuring it significantly reduces its carbon footprint, while also supporting "an acceleration in the progress towards sustainable housing and energy, and active and alternative forms of travel across the county".

The council is also aiming for a "step change" in sustainable travel, by growing passenger transport and active travel.

It seeks to further minimise environmental impact by supporting residents and businesses in reducing waste and increasing the amount of items recycled. It will also work with others "to deliver a more circular economy whereby we better protect our natural resources through the efficient and ongoing reuse of materials". An example of this is the Essex Library of Things where residents can borrow items such as DIY tools, camping equipment, home appliances, musical instruments and cake moulds free of charge which avoids people purchasing equipment that they may only use rarely.

The organisation provides advice to empower local action on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building climate resilience

It is also focused on building resilience against flooding, heat stress and water shortages, by enhancing the county's green infrastructure and reducing air pollution.

#### **4.13.1 Making the energy market accessible**

Empower 2.0 and LECSEA are two projects which encourage Essex residents to take an active role in



the energy market by helping them to produce, store and use their own energy from renewable energy sources and create their own 'energy communities'.

#### **4.13.2 Schools engagement**

The 2Impreza Energy Challenges for Schools programme is aimed at implementing energy saving measures in existing school buildings which reduce costs and increase comfort.

#### **4.13.3 Green homes grants**

The Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (GHGLAD) Scheme Phase 1a aims to raise the energy efficiency of low income and low energy performance homes; with funding at an average of £10,000 per property for insulation and low carbon heating measures.

The council is also leading the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (GHGLAD) Scheme Phase 2 and Sustainable Warmth Competition. Delivered via the Greater South East Energy Hub initiative, and in partnership with managing agent Warm Works, this has enabled £5.2m of grants to low income, low EPC homes across Essex. Additional funding of £17.3m has been applied to extend the scheme to benefit residents living in fuel poverty.

#### **4.13.4 Green energy procurement**

A feasibility study has been launched by the council into green energy procurement and investment in renewable energy.

#### **4.13.5 Online resources**

The council recently relaunched its WarmHomesEssex.org.uk website to offer a one-stop-shop for all things domestic energy efficiency and to help residents access fuel poverty schemes.

#### **4.13.6 Climate Action Challenge Fund**

This is a new £500k fund supporting community action on climate change. The fund offers grants of up to £20,000 to support voluntary and community projects tackling climate change in the county.



#### **Creating a level playing field on opportunity for all, to fully unleash Britain's potential for the first time.**

A commitment to diversity and inclusion is evident throughout Essex County Council's departments and activities. It is recognised both internally as a cornerstone of successful public sector leadership and externally in levelling up the communities it serves.

##### **4.14.1 Tackling health inequalities**

The West Essex Health Inequalities project involves work on seven urgent actions set by NHS England in terms of tackling health inequalities.

Also underway is the Active Essex Local Delivery Pilot, a seven-year (2018-2025) trial of new approaches to population-levels of physical inactivity in Essex's most deprived communities.

Active Essex also delivers the Tackling Inequalities Fund from Sport England. It focuses on groups disproportionately affected by the pandemic in terms of hindering their ability to be physically active. These groups include ethnically diverse communities, lower socio-economic groups, disabled people and individuals with long term health conditions.

##### **4.14.2 Essex Pedal Power**

This is a programme which seeks to level up cycling participation through the distribution of quality new bikes to citizens living in disadvantaged areas who are mainly inactive and do not own a bike.

The scheme plans to distribute over 5,000 bikes, with additional support provided in terms of learning to ride a bike, maintenance, organised bike rides and community cycling groups.

##### **4.14.3 Inclusive Library Books and Resources**

Essex Libraries gives access to a wide ranging and inclusive stock of books and regularly celebrates events and activities to promote an inclusive culture – with booklists for Black History month, LGBTQ+ History month for example.



LEVELLING UP  
GOALS



Essex County Council