

# Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

Essex, Southend  
and Thurrock

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## Annex A: Local Strategic Context

This is a supporting report to the Essex LSIP. Annex B sets out the background to the LSIP and methodology.



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*All images used within this report are of local educational facilities (supplied with permission for use by the Federation of Essex Colleges).*



## 1. Summary of the local strategic context and priorities

### **The Essex LSIP includes the local authority areas of Essex, Southend and Thurrock covered by Essex Chambers of Commerce.**

Administratively, this area is covered by Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock Unitary Authorities. Within the County Council area, there is a two-tier system, whereby there are 12 district, borough and city authorities. These are Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, Castle Point, Colchester, Chelmsford, Epping Forest, Harlow, Rochford, Maldon, Tendring and Uttlesford.

**Partnership working in Essex has always been strong, but the LSIP has made this even stronger.**

Essex is also covered by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) which covers Essex, Southend, Thurrock, Kent, Medway and East Sussex. The LEP area therefore includes two additional (trailblazer) LSIPs in Kent and Medway & Sussex and has facilitated the sharing of best practice and joint working. The LEP currently has an employer-led Skills Advisory Panel which the Essex LSIP Lead is a member of. The LEP's Accountable Body is Essex County Council and some co-working has already commenced between the two and specifically in support of the LSIP development. It is important to note that LEPs nationally are under review by

government and this could bring about changes to the SELEP involvement in skills and other areas of work locally. The partnership approach already evidenced and underway will mitigate any impact from this change and help to ensure that alternative arrangements are in place, where necessary, and most prominently through the proposed Essex Employment and Skills Board.

The local further education and training landscape includes 8 colleges and a network of independent training providers. There is co-ordination of both through the Essex Federation of Colleges (FEDEC) and Essex Provider Network (EPN). Adult education is provided by the county and unitary authorities.

All stakeholders have worked together in recent years to establish skills priorities (illustrated in section three of this annex report), through the reports, strategies and programmes already in place. Notably, the LEP, local authorities and colleges have worked together to ensure the right industry-led facilities are in place through significant capital investment. Stansted Airport College is an excellent example of this partnership working in action. As is set out in Annex B, the LSIP Board includes members from these stakeholders as well as companies such as DP World (London Gateway), Stansted Airport and Rose Builders.

The LSIP is therefore building on a strong foundation of collaborative working and has made this even stronger through the leadership provided by Essex Chambers of Commerce and the reach into businesses locally that this ensures. A joint approach for some of the LSIP work has been particularly beneficial, with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) in Essex facilitating an LSIP workshop as a notable example.

There are good relationships with other key organisations locally, such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), National Careers Service (NCS) and Careers Enterprise Company (CEC). This is further reflected in the membership of the LSIP Board, which is described more fully in the Annex B report.

As the LSIP report sets out, skills shortages and recruitment challenges are a key issue for Essex, particularly given the level of growth that is forecast. There has been a long-standing challenge with perception and awareness of many sectors, such as construction. This is coupled with a shortage of tutors aligned to these sectors. Much work is already underway to address these challenges and it is the intention to work in partnership to maximise the benefits of this work and build on them, to deliver against the LSIP priorities.



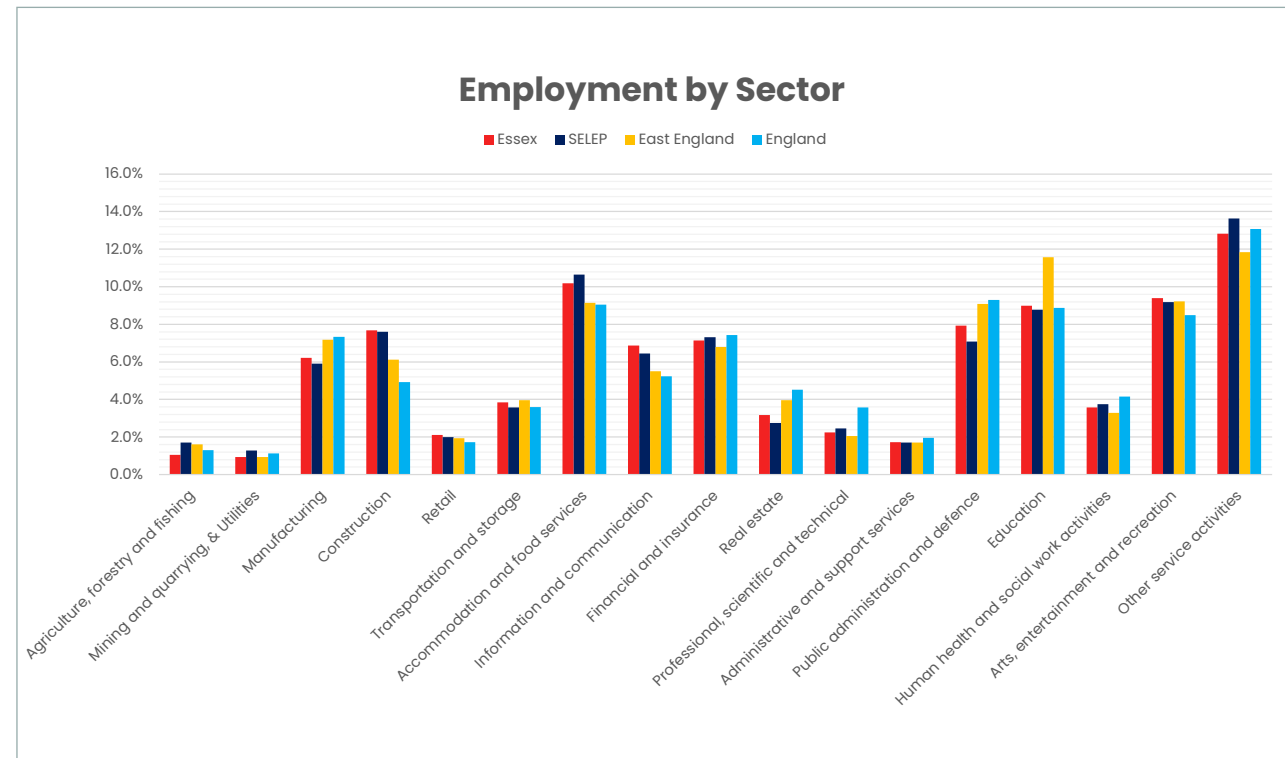
## 2. Introducing Essex – further information

**The main LSIP report includes some of the key facts and figures about Essex, Southend & Thurrock and sector information. The supporting data and intelligence pack includes further data & information and some further context is provided here in terms of headlines:**

There are 731,000 people in employee jobs across Essex, of which 64.9% are full-time (slightly below the national and regional averages of 68.1% and 66.9% respectively). As the chart (right) illustrates (from the ONS Business Register and Employment Survey), there are higher than average working in construction, health & care and retail sector jobs. All sectors locally are experiencing high vacancy rates and difficulties recruiting. With population growth, figures show shortages in sectors like health & care are likely to continue, so supporting people into these sectors and associated roles is vital. Additionally, factors such as projected population growth means that jobs are likely to grow in turn. Therefore, sectors such as construction and health & care are set to continue growing.

The data annex information supporting this report explores geographical differences in more detail and illustrates some areas

where certain sectors are more dominant. For example, in Southend, retail accounts for a higher proportion of jobs and in Thurrock, transportation and storage is significant. Across all areas, certain sectors are large employers – such as construction and health & care.



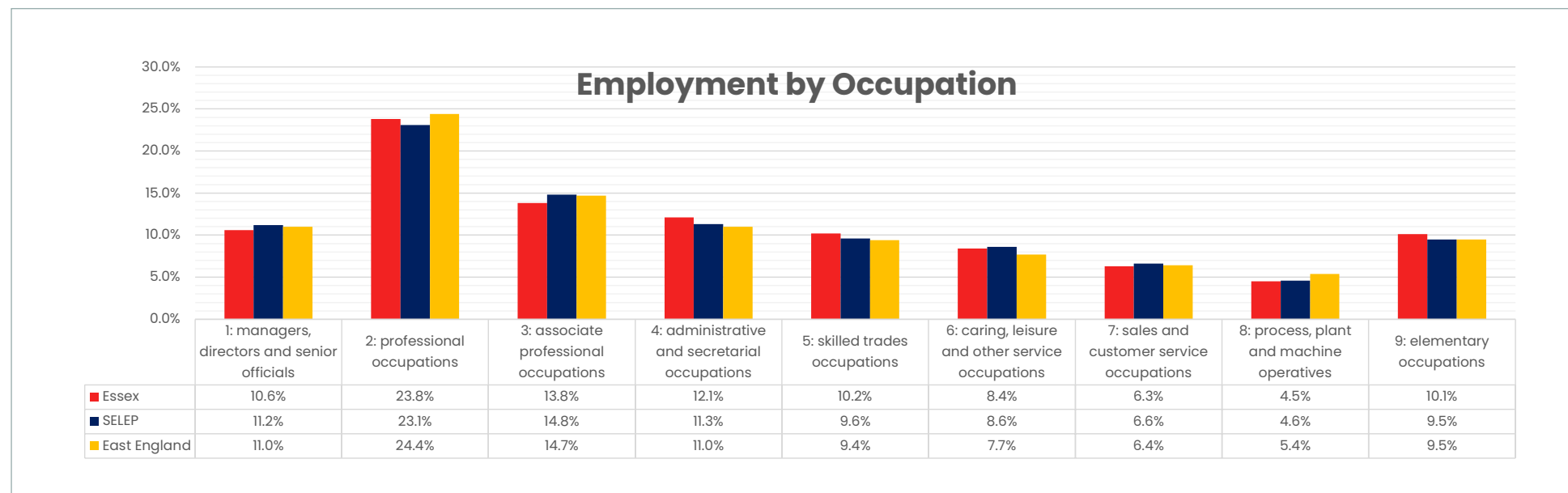


## 2. Introducing Essex – further information

As per the chart below (from the ONS Annual Population Survey), when looking at employment by broad occupation categories, Essex has the greatest number of jobs sitting within professional occupations, but the smallest number of jobs sit within the process, plant and machine operatives' occupations.

Local vacancies reflect the current shortages and of over 231,000 vacancies posted across Essex from February 2022 – February 2023 most frequently posted vacancies included home health aides,

care workers, nurses, administrative, sales-related occupations and customer service roles. Top skills sought included communications, management, customer service, sales, planning, leadership, teaching, self-motivation, operations and problem solving. This was further highlighted in the survey and roundtable events. Of the 14 district, borough, city and unitary areas in Essex, Chelmsford, Colchester, Basildon, Harlow, Southend and Braintree saw the highest number of vacancies.



### 3. Priorities for change

**In March 2023, following a series of employer and provider roundtable events, a survey and data and intelligence gathering exercise, a set of priorities were agreed.**

These are therefore reflective of information gathered from employers and stakeholders from across Essex, coupled with detailed analysis of labour market information. The LSIP report which this annex report supports, provides information on the next steps and how these priorities will be delivered against in the form of actionable priorities.

All references to 'Essex' within these documents include the areas of Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock.

The skills priorities and skills system priorities which were agreed are as follows to the right. These are described more fully along with Essex Sectors and Technical skills in the Emerging Priorities [document](#) and the [updated June 2023 document](#).

#### Skills priorities:

- Soft skills and behaviours.
- Basic English, Maths and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages).
- Digital skills and 'Digitech'.
- Green skills.
- Leadership and Management skills.

#### Skills system priorities:

- Skills planning system for Essex.
- System access and flexibility.
- Information, Careers Advice and Guidance.
- Tutor shortages and capacity of providers to respond.
- Inclusive employment.
- Barriers to engagement.



## 4. Supporting information and reports

### The Strategic Development Fund in Essex

The Strategic Development Fund (SDF) was made available by the Department for Education (DFE) to enable areas to reshape their teaching and training provision and update their facilities in preparation for the rollout of local skills improvement plans.

Essex, Southend and Thurrock received £2,749,795 for 2022–23. Delivery partners included Chelmsford College, Colchester Institute, Harlow College, South Essex College, USP College, Writtle University College, EPN and Essex Chambers of Commerce. The sectoral focus for the funding in Essex was digital, engineering and advanced manufacturing, green construction, green energy, life sciences. This therefore provides an excellent foundation for the LSIP work to continue in Essex and with these sectors continuing to be important.

The SDF's Knowledge Exchange project was an innovative technical programme which supported 45 new or inexperienced teachers, the majority of whom had come from industry. They were paired with experienced Advanced Practitioners, 45 in total. Both the new teachers and advanced practitioners were given on average 3.5 hours per week to be part of the project.

Harlow College led the development and delivery of "The Teaching Project" to support the new teachers and advanced practitioners through live sessions and the development of a teachers' toolkit. The advanced practitioners provided coaching throughout the project and this, combined with the live sessions and toolkit, has helped to address issues of retention, with more of the new teachers likely to stay in post. Surveys undertaken throughout the project and vlogs posted by both the new teachers and advanced practitioners show the positive impact the project has had. One college staff member commented that the project had provided so much support alongside the advanced practitioner that he felt he could now increase his hours working from 2 days to 5 days – something he never thought he would be able to manage.

Recruitment and retention funding was available to partners which has allowed partners to either advertise in specific journals and improve their marketing around a job vacancy or offer 'golden hellos' or salary uplifts to encourage the recruitment and retention of staff from shortage areas such as engineering or electrical.

Furthermore, the project supported individuals to undertake industry

placements and CPD in the priority sectors of construction and retrofit, clean energy, advanced manufacturing and engineering, digitech and life sciences and health. In total, 34 teaching staff undertook industry placements totalling 372 hours, with 35 employers providing placements. 24 staff from employers also undertook placements in FE settings. 93 staff undertook CPD through external training. 119 teaching staff delivered cascade training or provided peer-to-peer support to 527 colleagues. All of this was achieved in a six-month period.

Further information on SDF allocations is available [here](#).





## 4. Supporting information and reports (continued)

- SELEP's Skills Report and Data Report - <https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2022/03/Skills-Report-Executive-Summary-March-2022.pdf> and <https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2022/03/Skills-Report-Annex-A-March-2022.pdf>
- The Essex Skills Plan - [https://www.essex.gov.uk/sites/default/files/migration\\_data/files/assets.ctfassets.net/knkzaf64jx5x/19UHHcwrISSpNXXY6qIChC/9cb2eb82acf58042cf0afc7eeclD0cc7/Essex\\_Skills\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.essex.gov.uk/sites/default/files/migration_data/files/assets.ctfassets.net/knkzaf64jx5x/19UHHcwrISSpNXXY6qIChC/9cb2eb82acf58042cf0afc7eeclD0cc7/Essex_Skills_Plan.pdf)
- Southend Skills Strategy - in development and due to be published soon.
- Thurrock Skills Plan - not available online but utilised to inform this report.
- Greening the UK's Skills - [https://www.nocn.org.uk/Data/Products\\_Downloads/GreeningUKskillsreport.pdf?date=12/05/2023%2012:59:03](https://www.nocn.org.uk/Data/Products_Downloads/GreeningUKskillsreport.pdf?date=12/05/2023%2012:59:03)
- Federation of Essex Colleges - <https://www.federationofessexcolleges.org/>
- Essex Provider Network - <https://essexprovidernetwork.com/>

### **Examples of capital projects responding to industry need and including investment from SELEP and Essex County Council:**

- Stansted Airport College - <http://www.stanstedairportcollege.ac.uk/> and <https://www.southeastlep.com/stansted-airport-college-celebrates-official-opening/>
- USP College Xtend Centre - <https://www.uspcollege.ac.uk/life-at-college/our-campus-xtend-digital/> and <https://www.southeastlep.com/project/usp-college-centre-of-excellence-for-digital-technologies-and-immersive-learning-benfleet/>
- Colchester Institute Centre for Health and Care - <https://www.colchester.ac.uk/2021/11/05/new-centre-for-health-and-social/>
- Braintree STEM Innovation Centre - <https://www.colchester.ac.uk/stem-innovation-centre-braintree/>
- Centre for Digital Technologies, Basildon (South Essex College) - <https://www.southessex.ac.uk/new-state-of-the-art-campus-in-basildon>



## 5. Devolution in Essex

**Since Autumn 2022, Leaders and Councillors from councils across Greater Essex (the Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea City Council and Thurrock Council areas) have been discussing the merits of an offer from the Government to discuss what a devolution deal might look like here, and how local communities could benefit.**

Devolution is the transfer of money and powers down from central government to local level. It gives powers to local people and local places, putting them in charge of deciding where and how money is spent.

For Essex, this could mean more funding and greater control over fundamental issues such as health, planning, transport, skills, economic growth, employment and infrastructure. Based on similar deals in other areas, it could also mean as much as £1 billion in new Government money and include Department for Education and Department for Work and Pensions budgets.

The Leaders of Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea City Council and Thurrock Council, along with Leaders of district, borough and city councils, and the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner, have been debating the shape and content of a draft 'Expression of Interest' (EOI). This document is an initial approach to the Government and sets out the key principles and areas that Essex partners wish to explore. At this stage, it doesn't commit Essex to anything and is simply the start of conversations with Government to fully understand how local people, businesses and communities could benefit from a devolution deal. It is also shared with the Cabinets of Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea City Council and Thurrock Council (as the Councils leading the discussion in Essex) to seek their agreement before submitting this 'Expression of Interest' document to the Government. The Expression of Interest document is available to read [here](#).

The EOI includes skills as a priority and ambitions to boost skills and productivity. This echoes some of the priorities within the LSIP, such as equipping people to work in key sectors and unlocking opportunities in areas such as digital, low carbon and net zero. This also includes utilising existing funding such as the Apprenticeship Levy and working together to achieve maximum benefits from pots such as Levelling Up. The document also notes the importance of the LSIP and supporting this. Clearly, a devolution deal which includes a strong skills element could offer a strong opportunity to extend and expand the work of the LSIP through further partnership working, resources and funding to deliver the best skills outcomes in Essex.





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