Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

Essex, Southend and Thurrock

Annex C
Data Report

(This is a supporting report to the Essex LSIP. Annex A & B includes information on the local strategic context and the methodology respectively.)

March 2026 Update

Funded by UK Government

Updates

We will periodically be reviewing and updating the data as new data becomes available.

Update 1	**Page 6**	**Fig 1**	Employment by Sector — Greater Essex, East England, England. Source: Business Register and Employment Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.
Update 2	**Page 7**	**Fig 2**	Employment by Sector and Local Authority — Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, and Castle Point. Source: Business Register and Employment Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.
Update 3	**Page 8**	**Fig 3**	Employment by Sector and Local Authority — Chelmsford, Colchester, Epping Forest, and Harlow. Source: Business Register and Employment Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.
Update 4	**Page 9**	**Fig 4**	Employment by Sector and Local Authority — Maldon, Rochford, and Southend-on-Sea. Source: Business Register and Employment Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.
Update 5	**Page 10**	**Fig 5**	Employment by Sector and Local Authority — Tendring, Thurrock, and Uttlesford. Source: Business Register and Employment Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.
Update 6	**Page 11**	**Fig 6**	Employment by Occupation — Greater Essex and East England. Source: Annual Population Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.
Update 7	**Page 12**	**Fig 7**	Employment Rate and Employment Level — Greater Essex and England. Source: Annual Population Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.
Update 8	**Page 13**	**Fig 8**	Employment Rate by Local Authority. Source: Annual Population Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.
Update 9	**Page 14**	**Fig 9**	Self-Employment Rate by Local Authority. Source: Annual Population Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.
Update 10	**Page 15**	**Fig 10**	Enterprise by Employment Band Size — Greater Essex, East England, and England. Source: UK Business Counts — Enterprises by Industry and Employment Size Band ONS. November 2025.
Update 11	**Page 16**	**Fig 11**	Enterprise by Employment Band Size and Local Authority. Source: UK Business Counts — Enterprises by Industry and Employment Size Band ONS. Updated January 2026.
Update 12	**Page 17**	**N/A**	Enterprise size at a district level.
Update 13	**Page 20**	**Fig 12**	Enterprise Starts by Local Authority — 2019–2023. Source: Business Demography ONS. Updated January 2026.

Updates

We will periodically be reviewing and updating the data as new data becomes available.

Update 14	**Page 21**	**Fig 13**	Enterprise Closures by Local Authority — 2019–2024. Source: ONS, Business Demography ONS. Updated January 2026.
Update 15	**Page 22**	**Fig 14**	Current Price (Smoothed) GVA Per Hour Worked — 2015–2023. Greater Essex, East England & England. Source: ONS, Sub-regional Productivity.
Update 16	**Page 23**	**Fig 15**	Current Price (Smoothed) GVA Per Hour Worked by Local Authority — 2015/2023. Source: ONS, Sub-regional Productivity.
Update 17	**Page 24**	**Fig 16**	Median Gross Weekly Wage for Full-time Workers — 2025. Essex, England & East England (Workplace & Resident). Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings — Resident and Workplace Analysis ONS. Updated January 2026.
Update 18	**Page 26**	**Fig 17**	Population by Age and Local Authority. Source: ONS. Updated January 2026.
Update 19	**Page 28**	**Fig 18**	Qualification Level — 2024. Source: Adult Qualifications, Annual Population Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.
Update 20	**Page 35**	**Fig 24**	HE Qualifiers by Subject — 2024/25. Source: HESA. Updated January 2026.
Update 21	**Page 36**	**Fig 25**	Destinations for KS4 Students, State Funded Mainstream Schools — 2016/17 Compared to 2022/23. Source: DfE. Updated January 2026.
Update 22	**Page 36**	**Fig 26**	KS5 Destinations by Qualification Level — 2022/23. Source: DfE. Updated January 2026.
Update 23	**Page 37**	**Fig 27**	HE Destinations — 2022/23. Source HESA. Updated January 2026.
Update 24	**Page 39**	**Fig 29**	Unique Postings Trend — December 2025. Source: Lightcast. Updated January 2026.
Update 25	**Page 40**	**Fig 30**	Vacancies for Greater Essex — January 2025 to December 2025. Source: Lightcast. Updated January 2026.

Table of Contents

Introduction

The Local Skills Improvement Plan data pack is provided to give in-depth information about Greater Essex.

Greater Essex when mentioned within the report is the local authorities which sit under Essex County Council (as described in the table to the right) and the unitary authorities of Southend-on-Sea (Southend City Council) and Thurrock.

This report pulls data from numerous sources to provide an overview of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges that face Greater Essex.

This report is meant to be read in conjunction with the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

Greater Essex
Essex County Council Local Authorities
Basildon Borough Council
Braintree District Council
Brentwood Borough Council
Castle Point Borough Council
Chelmsford City Council
Colchester Borough Council
Epping Forest District Council
Harlow District Council
Maldon District Council
Rochford District Council
Tendring District Council
Uttlesford District Council
Southend-on-Sea City Council
Thurrock Council

Employment

There are 777,850 jobs across the Greater Essex area. This has seen an increase of 21,850 jobs since December 2024.

Essex is home to 81,065 businesses, split across the nineteen sectors.

Greater Essex demonstrates a broad and mature economic structure, closely mirroring the wider East of England and England overall, but with several distinctive strengths. Wholesale and retail trade is the largest employment sector (15.7%), followed by Human health and social work (13.2%) and Administrative and support services (9.4%). These proportions align with national patterns, though Greater Essex shows a slightly higher concentration in Construction (8.4% vs. 5.0% in England) and Transportation and storage (7.9% vs. 5.1%). This reflects the area's strategic logistics role, supported by major ports and transport corridors.

Manufacturing accounts for 5.8% of employment, below regional and national averages, highlighting a continued shift towards services.

Professional, scientific and technical activities (7.1%) and Information and communication (2.3%) remain comparatively modest, suggesting potential for further growth in high value knowledge sectors.

Education (8.9%) and Public administration (3.7%) broadly match national shares, while Human health employment is slightly lower than the England average (13.2% vs. 13.5%). Overall, Greater Essex's profile indicates a service led economy with strong retail, health, and logistics bases, and targeted opportunities to expand higher productivity industries.

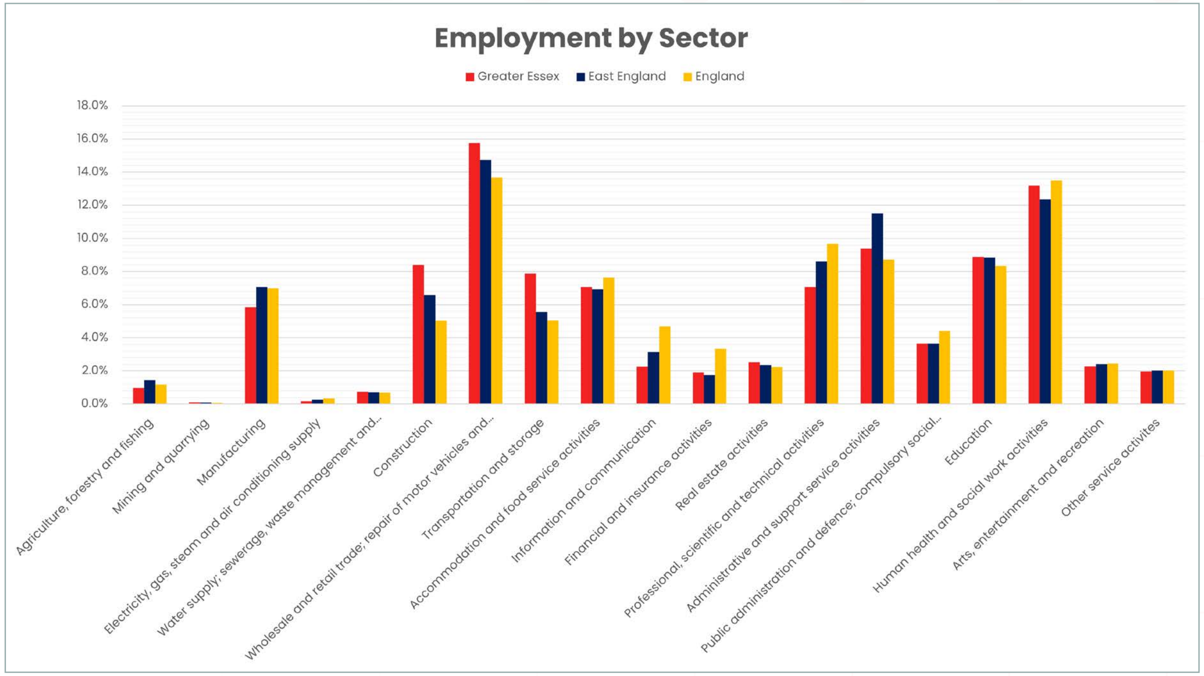


Fig 1: Employment by Sector — Greater Essex, East England, and England. This data uses ONS Standard Industry Classification (SIC) codes 2007 at the section level. Source: Business Register and Employment Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.

Employment (continued)

The employment profiles of Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood and Castle Point reveal distinct local economic identities.

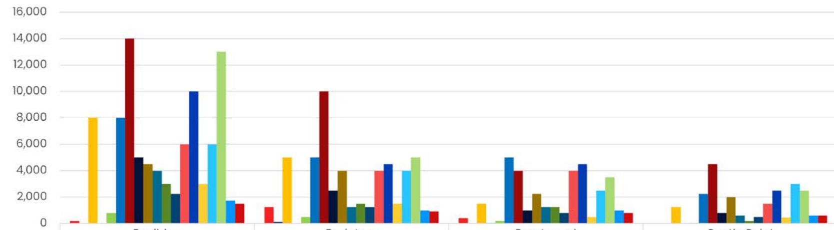
Basildon stands out as the strongest employment centre, with more than 91,000 jobs, almost twice that of Braintree and nearly four times Castle Point. Its economy is broad but notably driven by Manufacturing (8,000 jobs), Wholesale and retail (14,000), and Human health and social work (13,000). This combination of industrial capacity and large public sector employment gives Basildon a balanced and resilient structure. Its relatively high employment in Information and communication (4,000) also indicates a growing digital presence.

Braintree's economic profile is more mixed, with 53,000 total jobs and a distinctive emphasis on Agriculture (1,250) and a mid-sized Manufacturing base (5,000). It maintains steady employment across Retail, Health, and Professional services, but shows a more modest presence in Digital and Financial sectors. This positions Braintree as a semi-rural district transitioning gradually toward service sector growth.

Brentwood displays a service-led economy, with strong employment in Professional services (4,000), Administration and support (4,500), and Information and communication (1,250) relative to its size. Its proximity to London is likely reinforcing higher value service activity, while manufacturing presence is comparatively small.

Castle Point has the smallest employment base, and its economic structure reflects this: employment is concentrated in Retail (4,500), Construction (2,250), and Health (2,500), with limited representation across other sectors. Its small Manufacturing workforce (1,250) and low Professional services employment suggest fewer knowledge-based economy drivers.

Employment by Sector and Local Authority



	Basildon	Braintree	Brentwood	Castle Point
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	200	1,250	400	40
Mining and quarrying	0	125	40	0
Manufacturing	8,000	5,000	1,500	1,250
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	35	35	50	15
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	800	500	200	50
Construction	8,000	5,000	5,000	2,250
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	14,000	10,000	4,000	4,500
Transportation and storage	5,000	2,500	1,000	800
Accommodation and food service activities	4,500	4,000	2,250	2,000
Information and communication	4,000	1,250	1,250	600
Financial and insurance activities	3,000	1,500	1,250	200
Real estate activities	2,250	1,250	800	500
Professional, scientific and technical activities	6,000	4,000	4,000	1,500
Administrative and support service activities	10,000	4,500	4,500	2,500
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	3,000	1,500	500	450
Education	6,000	4,000	2,500	3,000
Human health and social work activities	13,000	5,000	3,500	2,500
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1,750	1,000	1,000	600
Other service activites	1,500	900	800	600

Fig 2: Employment by Sector and Local Authority — Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, and Castle Point. This data uses ONS Standard Industry Classification (SIC) codes 2007 at the section level. Source: Business Register and Employment Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.

Employment (continued)

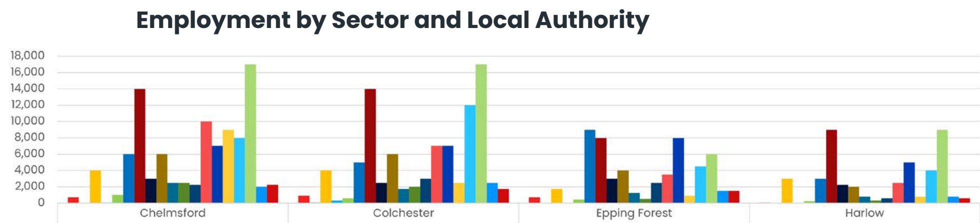
The employment patterns in Chelmsford, Colchester, Epping Forest, and Harlow reveal four distinct local economies, each shaped by different sector strengths, workforce scale, and functional roles within the wider region.

Chelmsford has the largest and most diversified employment base (97,320 jobs), reflecting its role as a major administrative and service centre. It shows high concentrations in Retail (14,000), Human health and social work (17,000) and Professional services (10,000). Significant employment in Public administration (9,000) and Education (8,000) underscores Chelmsford's status as a key hub for regional governance and public services, while strong representation in Information and communication (2,500) suggests a growing knowledge economy presence.

Colchester (89,925 jobs) also demonstrates a broad labour market but with a more pronounced public sector footprint: Education (12,000) and Human health and social work (17,000) together form its largest employment blocks. Retail is equally important (14,000), while Professional services, Wholesale, and Hospitality all contribute sizeable shares. Colchester's profile reflects its identity as a university and healthcare centre with a robust visitor economy.

Epping Forest (57,070 jobs) differs markedly, driven by strong Wholesale activity (9,000) and Administrative and support services (8,000). Retail (8,000) and Transport (3,000) are also significant. Its proximity to London shapes an economy with commuter links, logistics capacity, and service sector activity, though manufacturing and high-value knowledge sectors remain relatively limited.

Harlow (44,070 jobs), despite its smaller size, retains a clear industrial character with Manufacturing (3,000) and a strong Retail base (9,000). Its employment in Human health (9,000) and Education (4,000) adds stability, while Administrative services (5,000) and Professional services (2,500) signal ongoing diversification. Harlow's profile reflects a transitioning new town economy balancing legacy industry with expanding service sectors.



	Chelmsford	Colchester	Epping Forest	Harlow
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	700	900	700	75
Mining and quarrying, & Utilities	45	75	10	0
Manufacturing	4,000	4,000	1,750	3,000
Construction	75	350	10	45
Motor vehicles trade and repair	1,000	600	450	250
Wholesale trade	6,000	5,000	9,000	3,000
Retail trade	14,000	14,000	8,000	9,000
Transportation and storage	3,000	2,500	3,000	2,250
Accommodation and food services	6,000	6,000	4,000	2,000
Information and communication	2,500	1,750	1,250	800
Financial and insurance	2,500	2,000	500	350
Real estate	2,250	3,000	2,500	600
Professional, scientific and technical	10,000	7,000	3,500	2,500
Administrative and support services	7,000	7,000	8,000	5,000
Public administration and defence	9,000	2,500	900	800
Education	8,000	12,000	4,500	4,000
Human health and social work activities	17,000	17,000	6,000	9,000
Arts, entertainment and recreation	2,000	2,500	1,500	800
Other service activities	2,250	1,750	1,500	600

Fig 3: Employment by Sector and Local Authority — Chelmsford, Colchester, Epping Forest, and Harlow. This data uses ONS Standard Industry Classification (SIC) codes 2007 at the section level. Source: Business Register and Employment Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.

Employment (continued)

The data shows clear differences in economic structure across the three areas. Southend-on-Sea stands out as the dominant employment hub, with a total of 65,725 jobs, far exceeding Rochford (24,650) and Maldon (21,775). This reflects Southend's role as the sub-regional centre with a diverse, urbanised economy.

Across all three districts, Retail trade is a major employer. Southend's Retail sector (9,000 jobs) is more than double that of Rochford and Maldon, consistent with its large shopping centres and visitor numbers. Human health and social work is another significant sector, especially in Southend (12,000), driven by major hospitals and care facilities.

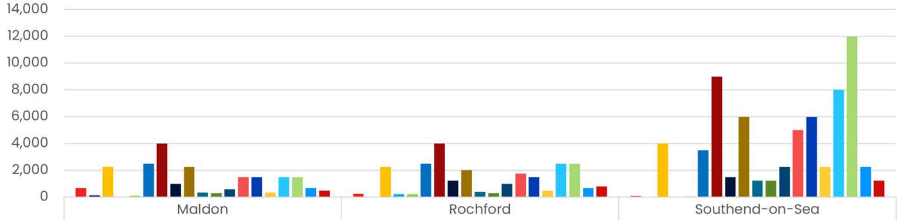
Accommodation and food services also shows a strong concentration in Southend (6,000), highlighting its tourism-driven economy. By contrast, Maldon and Rochford have smaller but still notable Hospitality sectors.

In contrast, sectors like Agriculture, Manufacturing, and Wholesale show more balanced distributions. Maldon has the highest Agricultural employment (700), reflecting its rural character, while Southend's Manufacturing (4,000) greatly surpasses the other districts, suggesting more established industrial activity.

Professional services and administrative support are also heavily weighted toward Southend, indicating a broader service-based economy and the presence of larger organisations.

Public administration, education, and health form a strong public sector base in all areas, but again, Southend dominates due to scale.

Employment by Sector and Local Authority



	Maldon	Rochford	Southend-on-Sea
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	700	250	100
Mining and quarrying, & Utilities	150	0	0
Manufacturing	2,250	2,250	4,000
Construction	0	225	50
Motor vehicles trade and repair	125	225	75
Wholesale trade	2,500	2,500	3,500
Retail trade	4,000	4,000	9,000
Transportation and storage	1,000	1,250	1,500
Accommodation and food services	2,250	2,000	6,000
Information and communication	350	400	1,250
Financial and insurance	300	300	1,250
Real estate	600	1,000	2,250
Professional, scientific and technical	1,500	1,750	5,000
Administrative and support services	1,500	1,500	6,000
Public administration and defence	350	500	2,250
Education	1,500	2,500	8,000
Human health and social work activities	1,500	2,500	12,000
Arts, entertainment and recreation	700	700	2,250
Other service activities	500	800	1,250

Fig 4: Employment by Sector and Local Authority — Maldon, Rochford, and Southend-on-Sea. This data uses ONS Standard Industry Classification (SIC) codes 2007 at the section level. Source: Business Register and Employment Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.

Employment (continued)

The data highlights three districts with notably different economic profiles. Thurrock is the largest employment area with 79,475 jobs, reflecting its role as a major logistics, industrial, and retail hub. Uttlesford follows with 53,575, while Tendring has 42,025, showing a more modest labour market driven by local services and tourism.

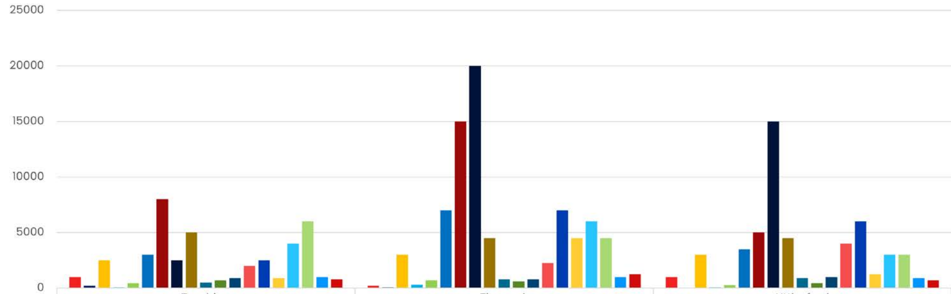
Thurrock's economy is dominated by logistics and retail, with exceptionally high employment in Transportation and storage (20,000) and Retail trade (15,000). This aligns with Thurrock's strategic location along the M25 and its large distribution parks and retail centres. Its Wholesale sector (7,000) and Administrative services (7,000) further reinforce a supply-chain-oriented economy.

Tendring, by contrast, shows strong representation in Retail (8,000), Accommodation and food services (5,000), and Health and social work (6,000), a pattern typical of coastal and visitor-driven economies with older populations. Agriculture (1,000) is also relatively high, consistent with Tendring's rural areas.

Uttlesford presents a distinctive profile shaped by its proximity to Stansted Airport, reflected in high employment in Transportation and storage (15,000) and strong Professional services (4,000). The area also balances this with sizeable Wholesale and Retail sectors (3,500 and 5,000 respectively). Agriculture (1,000) remains significant, showing the district's rural economic base.

Across all three districts, Public services, Education, Health, and Public administration, remain stable contributors, though Tendring has the highest Human health representation relative to population size.

Employment by Sector and Local Authority



	Tendring	Thurrock	Uttlesford
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1000	200	1000
Mining and quarrying, & Utilities	200	75	50
Manufacturing	2500	3000	3000
Construction	75	300	75
Motor vehicles trade and repair	450	700	250
Wholesale trade	3000	7000	3500
Retail trade	8000	15000	5000
Transportation and storage	2500	20000	15000
Accommodation and food services	5000	4500	4500
Information and communication	500	800	900
Financial and insurance	700	600	450
Real estate	900	800	1000
Professional, scientific and technical	2000	2250	4000
Administrative and support services	2500	7000	6000
Public administration and defence	900	4500	1250
Education	4000	6000	3000
Human health and social work activities	6000	4500	3000
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1000	1000	900
Other service activities	800	1250	700

Fig 5: Employment by Sector and Local Authority — Tendring, Thurrock, and Uttlesford. This data uses ONS Standard Industry Classification (SIC) codes 2007 at the section level. Source: Business Register and Employment Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.

Employment (continued)

The data shows significant variation in occupational profiles across Essex, reflecting differences in local economies, industry bases, and workforce skill levels. Professional occupations form the largest employment group overall, especially in areas such as Colchester (35,100), Southend-on-Sea (28,500), and Epping Forest (27,600). This indicates strong knowledge-based sectors, including Education, Healthcare, and Business services.

Managers, directors, and senior officials also show strong representation in several districts, particularly Braintree, Epping Forest, and Basildon, suggesting concentrations of higher-wage leadership roles often linked to established businesses and commuting access to London.

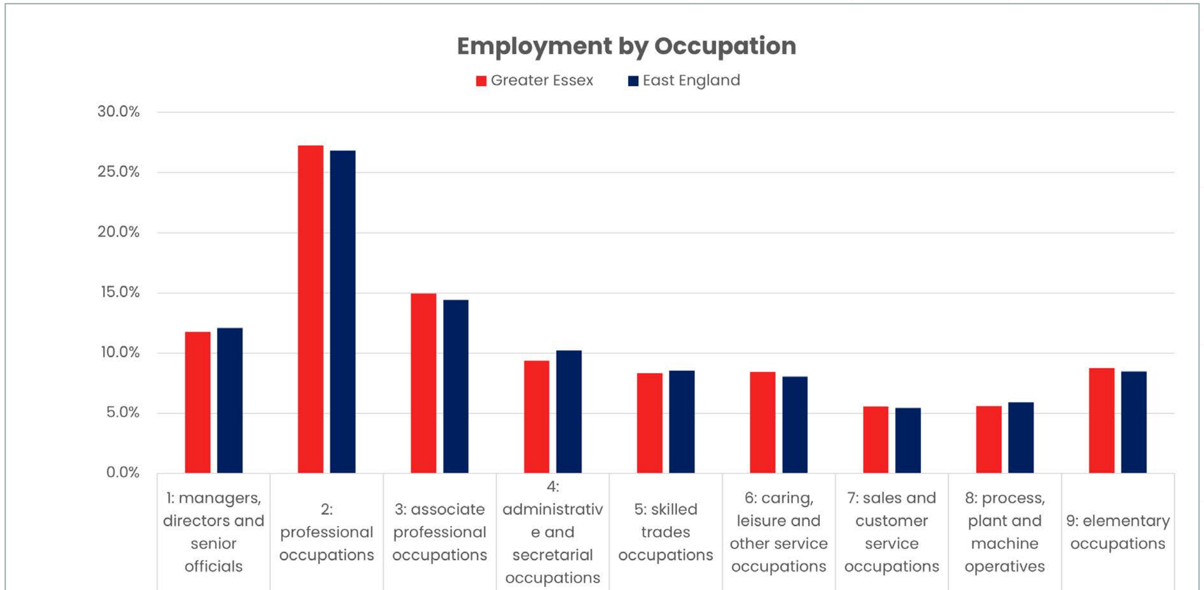
Areas such as Basildon, Thurrock, and Tendring display relatively high employment in skilled trades and elementary occupations, reflecting strong manufacturing, logistics, and service sector activity. Thurrock, in particular, shows high concentrations in process, plant and machine operatives (7,500) and elementary work (11,600), consistent with the district's large logistics and industrial footprint.

Administrative and secretarial roles feature prominently in Chelmsford, Rochford, and Southend, aligning with regional service centres and public sector employment.

Caring and service occupations are prominent in districts with older populations and strong care sectors, such as Tendring (6,700) and Basildon (8,700).

In contrast, some districts show more incomplete occupational distributions, such as Brentwood and Maldon, but still indicate a tilt toward professional and managerial roles, reflecting stronger commuting patterns toward London.

Overall, the data shows a diverse occupational landscape across Essex, with urban centres (e.g. Colchester, Southend) skewed toward professional roles, industrial districts (e.g., Basildon, Thurrock) toward trades and operatives, and rural areas displaying balanced but smaller labour markets.



	1: managers, directors and senior officials	2: professional occupations	3: associate professional occupations	4: administrative and secretarial occupations	5: skilled trades occupations	6: caring, leisure and other service occupations	7: sales and customer service occupations	8: process, plant and machine operatives	9: elementary occupations
Greater Essex	11.8%	27.3%	15.0%	9.4%	8.3%	8.4%	5.6%	5.6%	8.7%
East England	12.1%	26.8%	14.4%	10.2%	8.5%	8.1%	5.5%	5.9%	8.5%

Fig 6: Employment by Occupation — Greater Essex and East England. Source: Annual Population Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.

Updated

Employment Rate & Employment Level

The data shows a period of notable fluctuation across employment, self-employment and employment rates, reflecting shifts in labour demand and workforce behaviour. Total employment begins relatively high in Oct 2023–Sep 2024 (938,500) but drops sharply to 890,300 in the following period. This decline of over 48,000 suggests a temporary contraction in labour demand or seasonal adjustments. However, the trend stabilises and gradually recovers through 2024–25, with employment rising to 905,800, then 916,500, and finally reaching 935,400 in Oct 2024–Sep 2025, almost returning to its starting level. This pattern indicates a short-term dip followed by a measured recovery.

Self-employment shows even more pronounced volatility. After a low point of 126,900, the figure rises modestly to 129,600, then spikes sharply to 159,800 in Apr 2024–Mar 2025. This surge may signal increased reliance on freelance, contract, or gig-based work during labour market uncertainty. However, this peak is followed by a rapid correction, falling to 125,000, before edging back up to 129,500. The dramatic rise and fall suggest a temporary shift toward self-employment, possibly due to short term demand, business restructuring, or workers responding to reduced employee role availability.

The England employment rate remains relatively stable throughout, rising incrementally from 75.59% to 75.85%, indicating modest national improvement. By contrast, the Greater Essex employment rate shows a more dynamic pattern, increasing steadily from 76.46% to a peak of 78.57% before dipping slightly to 78.42%. This suggests the region's labour market remains stronger than the national average, though not immune to wider economic fluctuations.

Overall, the data reflects a labour market experiencing short-term turbulence but demonstrating signs of underlying resilience and recovery by late 2025.

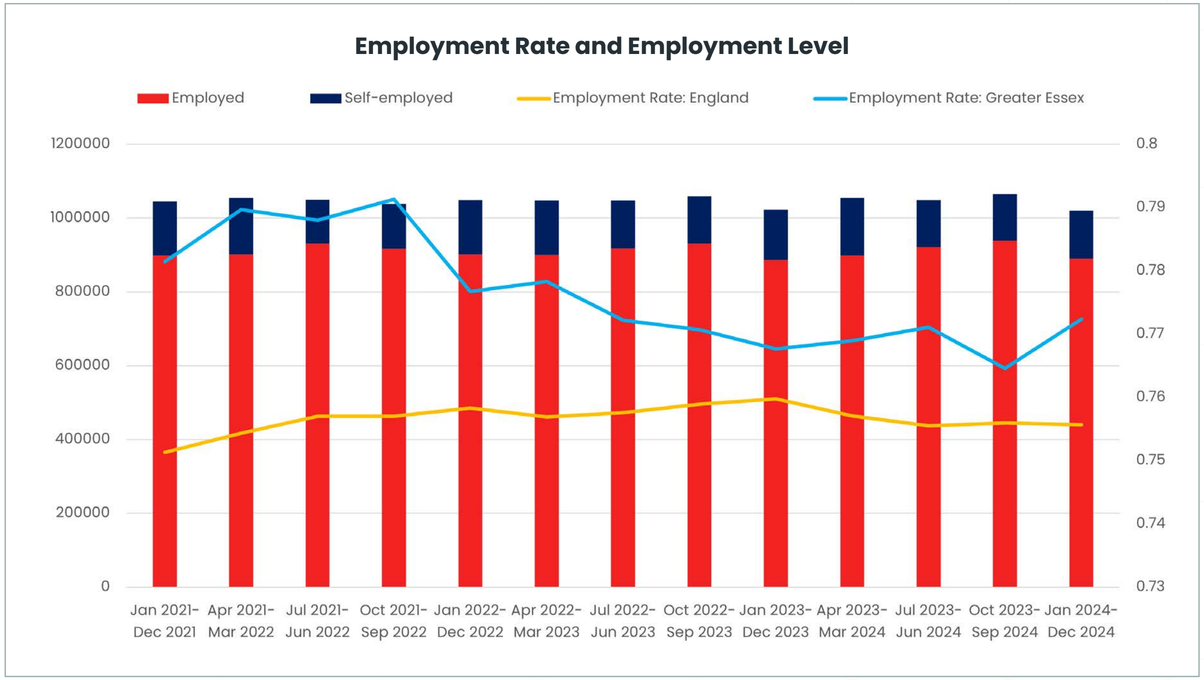


Fig 7: Employment Rate and Employment Level — Greater Essex and England. Source: Annual Population Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.

Employment Rate & Employment Level (continued)

Across the Essex districts, the comparison between October 2023–September 2024 and October 2024–September 2025 shows a mixed picture of recovery, moderation, and divergence. While several areas demonstrate strong improvement in the latter period, others either stabilise or experience marginal decline, reflecting differing local economic conditions and labour market dynamics.

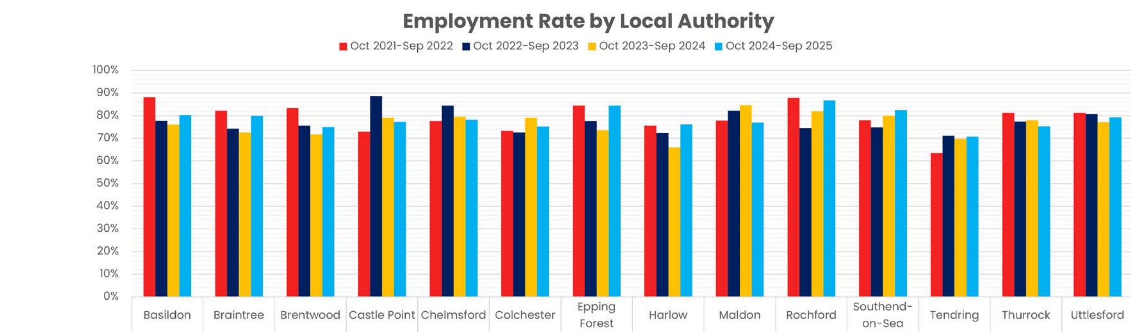
Areas showing clear improvement include Braintree, rising from 72.6% to 79.9%, and Epping Forest, increasing significantly from 73.6% to 84.4%, marking one of the strongest recoveries in the dataset. Southend-on-Sea also strengthens from 80.0% to 82.4%, and Rochford continues its upward trajectory, rising from 81.9% to 86.7%. These districts appear to be experiencing renewed labour market confidence and stability by late 2025.

Some districts show moderate improvements. Basildon increases slightly from 76.0% to 80.3%, while Chelmsford records a small decline from 79.5% to 78.2% but remains broadly stable. Uttlesford also ends higher, moving from 77.1% to 79.3%, suggesting a mild recovery from earlier dips.

A number of districts show declines between the two periods. Colchester falls slightly from 79.1% to 75.2%, indicating some cooling after stronger mid year performance.

Castle Point also declines from 79.1% to 77.2%, and Maldon drops from 84.6% to 77.0% after previously peaking significantly. Thurrock experiences a mild fall from 78.0% to 75.3%, continuing a slow declining trend visible across the preceding periods. Tendring also declines slightly from 69.8% to 70.8%, though the shift is marginal.

Overall, the data shows more districts improving than declining, with several areas, particularly Epping Forest, Rochford and Braintree, showing strong positive movement. While some locations experience softening, the broader pattern suggests gradual strengthening across Essex by late 2025.



	Basildon	Braintree	Brentwood	Castle Point	Chelmsford	Colchester	Epping Forest	Harlow	Maldon	Rochford	Southend-on-Sea	Tendring	Thurrock	Uttlesford
Oct 2021-Sep 2022	88.2%	82.2%	83.4%	72.9%	77.6%	73.3%	84.4%	75.6%	77.9%	87.8%	78.0%	63.5%	81.2%	81.2%
Oct 2022-Sep 2023	77.7%	74.3%	75.6%	88.7%	84.5%	72.6%	77.6%	72.4%	82.2%	74.5%	74.9%	71.2%	77.4%	80.7%
Oct 2023-Sep 2024	76.0%	72.6%	71.8%	79.1%	79.5%	79.1%	73.6%	66.0%	84.6%	81.9%	80.0%	69.8%	78.0%	77.1%
Oct 2024-Sep 2025	80.3%	79.9%	75.0%	77.2%	78.2%	75.2%	84.4%	76.2%	77.0%	86.7%	82.4%	70.8%	75.3%	79.3%

Fig 8: Employment Rate by Local Authority. Source Annual Population Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.

Employment Rate & Employment Level (continued)

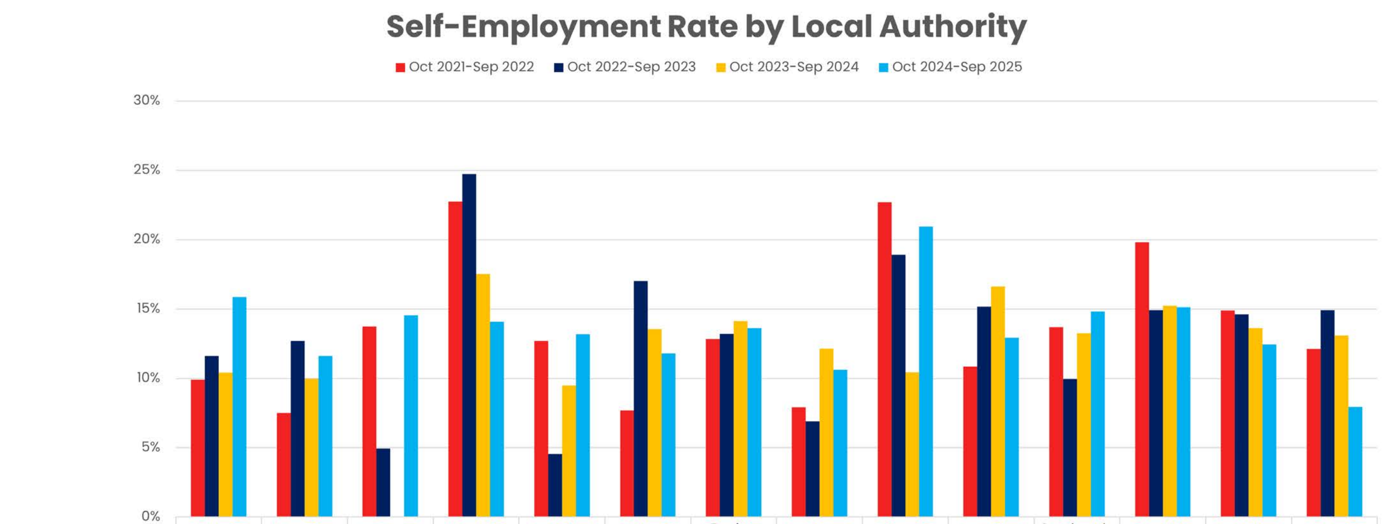
Please note the ONS data suppression for Brentwood where sample sizes are too small to ensure statistical reliability or respondent privacy. All other data meets the required thresholds for a robust analysis.

Between October 2023–September 2024 and October 2024–September 2025, self-employment rates across the local authorities show a mixed pattern of growth, stability, and decline. Several districts experienced notable increases. Epping Forest recorded the most significant rise, increasing by over ten percentage points, indicating a strong shift toward self-employment in the area. Basildon and Chelmsford also demonstrated substantial growth, each rising by around five percentage points. Moderate increases were observed in Braintree, Harlow, Maldon, and Southend-on-Sea, suggesting steady improvement in entrepreneurial activity.

Conversely, several authorities saw declines during the same period. Uttlesford experienced the largest reduction, falling by over five percentage points. Rochford, Castle Point, and Brentwood also reported drops of between three and four percentage points. More modest decreases occurred in Colchester, Thurrock, and Tendring, the latter remaining largely stable with only a marginal decline.

Overall, the data indicates a diverse economic landscape. While some authorities show strong upward momentum in self-employment, potentially reflecting growth in small businesses, freelance work, or remote working trends, others appear to be experiencing contraction, possibly linked to shifts in local labour markets or increased movement into traditional employment.

The combined picture suggests that entrepreneurial activity remains dynamic across the region, with significant variations between neighbouring authorities.



	Basildon	Braintree	Brentwood	Castle Point	Chelmsford	Colchester	Epping Forest	Harlow	Maldon	Rochford	Southend-on-Sea	Tendring	Thurrock	Uttlesford
Oct 2021-Sep 2022	9.91%	7.49%	13.73%	22.75%	12.71%	7.68%	12.85%	7.89%	22.70%	10.85%	13.68%	19.80%	14.90%	12.14%
Oct 2022-Sep 2023	11.62%	12.72%	4.95%	24.74%	4.55%	17.02%	13.20%	6.91%	18.92%	15.15%	9.97%	14.91%	14.61%	14.92%
Oct 2023-Sep 2024	10.4%	10.0%		17.5%	9.5%	13.6%	14.1%	12.2%	10.45%	16.6%	13.2%	15.2%	13.6%	13.1%
Oct 2024-Sep 2025	15.9%	11.6%	14.5%	14.1%	13.2%	11.8%	13.6%	10.6%	20.9%	12.9%	14.8%	15.1%	12.4%	7.9%

Fig 9: Self-Employment Rate by Local Authority. Source: Annual Population Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.

Updated

Business Environment

The latest data confirms that Essex continues to be dominated by micro businesses, with a smaller share of larger employers compared to both the East of England and England overall.

- Micro businesses (0–9 employees) make up 90.1% of all businesses in Essex, slightly higher than the East of England (89.7%) and England (89.2%). This means 9 out of 10 businesses in Essex are very small firms.
- Small businesses (10–49 employees) account for 8.1% in Essex, compared to 8.4% regionally and 8.7% nationally.
- Medium-sized businesses (50–249 employees) represent 1.4% in Essex, slightly below the national average of 1.6%.
- Large businesses (250+ employees) remain rare, at just 0.3% in Essex, compared to 0.4% nationally.

In total, Essex has 81,065 (+265 on last year) businesses, of which 73,080 (+325 on last year) are micro businesses. Only 7,985 (-60 on last year) businesses fall into the small, medium, or large categories combined.

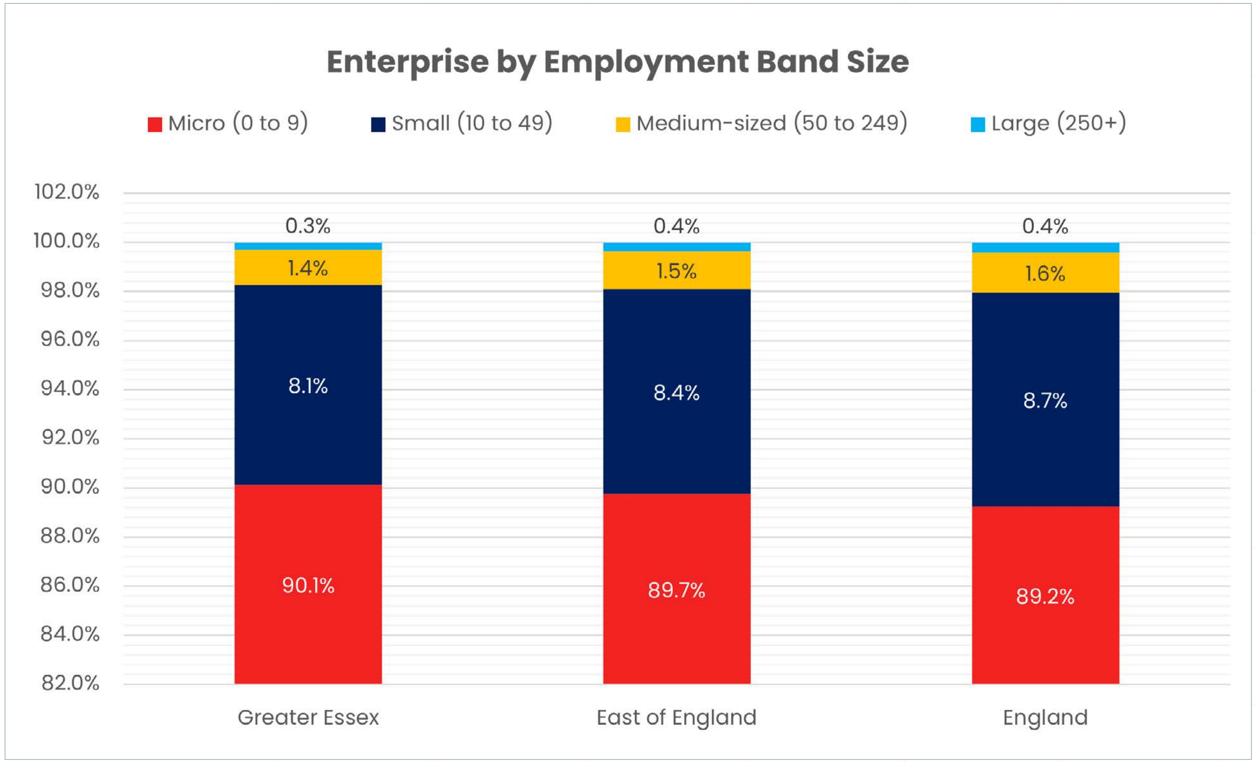
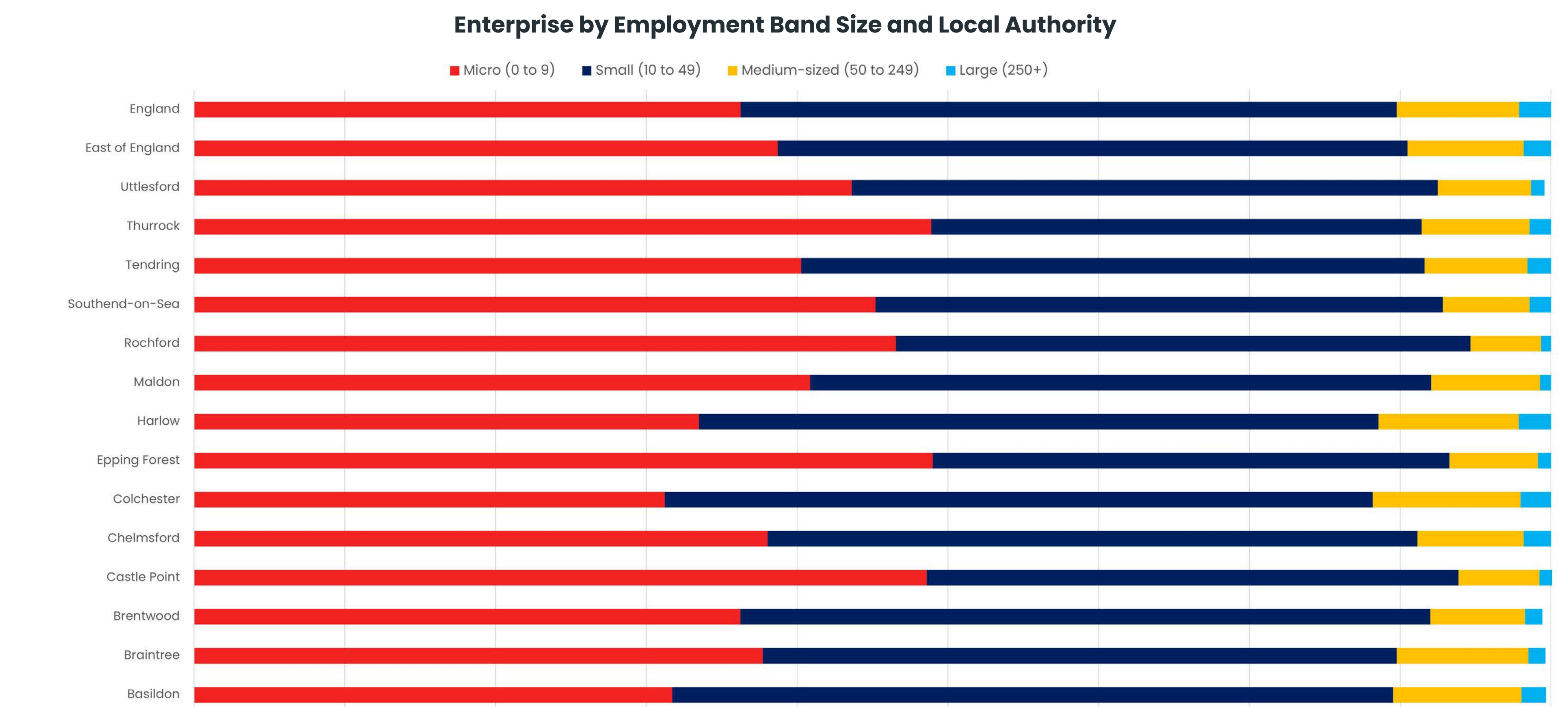


Fig 10: Enterprise by Employment Band Size — Greater Essex, East England, and England. Source: UK Business Counts — Enterprises by Industry and Employment Size Band ONS. November 2025.

Business Environment (continued)



	Basildon	Braintree	Brentwood	Castle Point	Chelmsford	Colchester	Epping Forest	Harlow	Maldon	Rochford	Southend-on-Sea	Tendring	Thurrock	Uttlesford	East of England	England
Micro (0 to 9)	88.3%	89.5%	89.2%	91.7%	89.6%	88.2%	91.8%	88.7%	90.2%	91.3%	91.0%	90.1%	91.8%	90.7%	89.7%	89.2%
Small (10 to 49)	9.6%	8.4%	9.2%	7.1%	8.6%	9.4%	6.9%	9.0%	8.2%	7.6%	7.5%	8.3%	6.5%	7.8%	8.4%	8.7%
Medium-sized (50 to 249)	1.7%	1.7%	1.3%	1.1%	1.4%	2.0%	1.2%	1.9%	1.4%	0.9%	1.1%	1.4%	1.4%	1.2%	1.5%	1.6%
Large (250+)	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.2%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.4%	0.4%

Fig 11: Enterprise by Employment Band Size and Local Authority. Source: UK Business Counts — Enterprises by Industry and Employment Size Band ONS. Updated January 2026.

Business Environment (continued)

When we look at the enterprise size at a district level, we are once again reminded of the diverse landscape of Essex businesses.

The tables below give an estimate for each district of how employment numbers are distributed across enterprises by employment band size. Micro businesses are assumed to have an average of 1.7 employees and Medium-sized businesses an average of 100, based on national level PAYE information from HMRC. Enterprise counts include public sector bodies and over 20% of large enterprises are public sector bodies.

Braintree has a total of 6,610 businesses across the district, with an estimate of 52,000 jobs.

Business size	Number of businesses	Estimate of employment jobs
Micro	5,915	22,152
Small	570	12,808
Medium	105	11,797
Large	20	5,243

Braintree has a total of 6,610 businesses across the district, with an estimate of 52,000 jobs.

Business size	Number of businesses	Estimate of employment jobs
Micro	5,915	22,152
Small	570	12,808
Medium	105	11,797
Large	20	5,243

Basildon has a total of 7,620 businesses across the district, with an estimate of 89,000 jobs.

Business size	Number of businesses	Estimate of employment jobs
Micro	6,730	35,674
Small	735	23,376
Medium	130	20,673
Large	25	9,276

Brentwood has a total of 4,390 businesses across the district, with an estimate of 34,000 jobs.

Business size	Number of businesses	Estimate of employment jobs
Micro	3,920	14,975
Small	405	9,283
Medium	50	5,730
Large	15	4,011

Chelmsford has a total of 8,165 businesses across the district, with an estimate of 97,000 jobs.

Business size	Number of businesses	Estimate of employment jobs
Micro	7,290	40,780
Small	725	24,334
Medium	120	20,138
Large	30	11,747

Business Environment (continued)

Colchester has a total of 7,400 businesses across the district, with an estimate of 87,000 jobs.

Business size	Number of businesses	Estimate of employment jobs
Micro	6,515	33,137
Small	715	21,820
Medium	140	21,362
Large	30	10,681

Harlow has a total of 3,425 businesses across the district, with an estimate of 43,000 jobs.

Business size	Number of businesses	Estimate of employment jobs
Micro	3,045	16,950
Small	305	10,186
Medium	60	10,019
Large	15	5,845

Rochford has a total of 3,670 businesses across the district, with an estimate of 24,000 jobs.

Business size	Number of businesses	Estimate of employment jobs
Micro	3,350	12,504
Small	280	6,271
Medium	35	3,919
Large	5	1,306

Epping Forest has a total of 8,415 businesses across the district, with an estimate of 56,000 jobs.

Business size	Number of businesses	Estimate of employment jobs
Micro	7,725	28,414
Small	575	12,690
Medium	100	11,035
Large	15	3,862

Maldon has a total of 3,465 businesses across the district, with an estimate of 21,000 jobs.

Business size	Number of businesses	Estimate of employment jobs
Micro	3,115	9,713
Small	295	5,519
Medium	50	4,677
Large	5	1,091

Southend-on-Sea has a total of 6,915 businesses across the district, with an estimate of 64,000 jobs.

Business size	Number of businesses	Estimate of employment jobs
Micro	6,285	30,600
Small	535	15,629
Medium	75	10,955
Large	20	6,816

Business Environment (continued)

Tendring has a total of 4,780 businesses across the district, with an estimate of 40,000 jobs.

Business size	Number of businesses	Estimate of employment jobs
Micro	4,290	17,746
Small	405	10,052
Medium	75	9,307
Large	10	2,896

Uttlesford has a total of 5,620 businesses across the district, with an estimate of 51,000 jobs.

Business size	Number of businesses	Estimate of employment jobs
Micro	5,080	23,383
Small	450	12,428
Medium	75	10,357
Large	15	4,833

Thurrock has a total of 7,005 businesses across the district, with an estimate of 79,000 jobs.

Business size	Number of businesses	Estimate of employment jobs
Micro	6,440	38,339
Small	455	16,252
Medium	90	16,074
Large	20	8,335

The East of England has a total of 270,380 businesses, with an estimate of 2,908,000 jobs.

Business size	Number of businesses	Estimate of employment jobs
Micro	242,510	1,232,276
Small	22,755	693,755
Medium	4,120	628,054
Large	995	353,915

England has a total of 2,368,350 businesses, with an estimate of 27,634,000 jobs.

Business size	Number of businesses	Estimate of employment jobs
Micro	2,113,555	11,248,781
Small	206,875	6,606,192
Medium	37,925	6,055,343
Large	9,995	3,723,684

Enterprise Starts & Closures

From 2019 to 2024, the data shows a general pattern of decline across Essex districts, with most areas not yet recovering to pre-2020 levels. While 2021 shows temporary improvement in several districts, the longer-term trend indicates gradual reduction or stagnation.

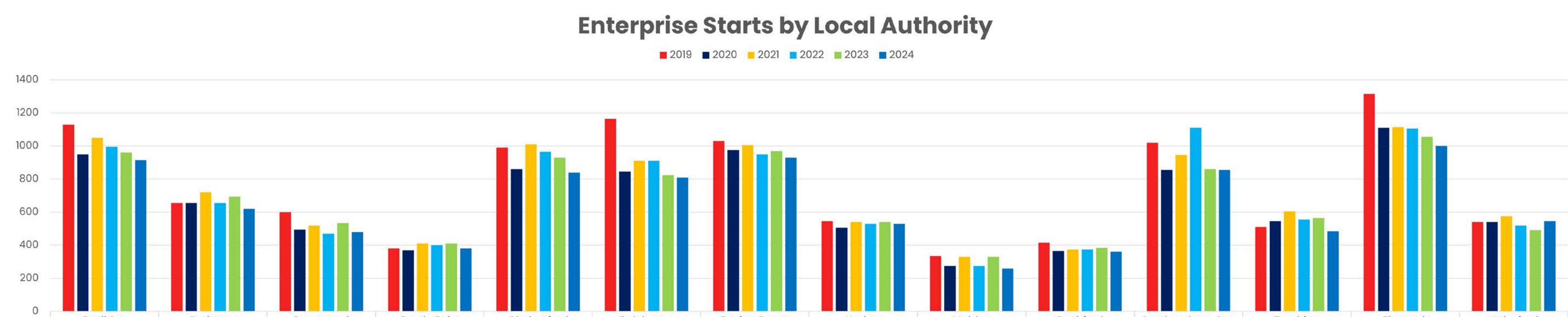
Basildon, Chelmsford, Colchester, and Thurrock, typically higher value districts, show consistent decreases. Basildon falls from 1130 in 2019 to 915 in 2024, while Chelmsford drops from 990 to 840, reflecting sustained downward pressure. Thurrock follows a similar pattern, declining from 1315 to 1000 by 2024.

Some districts show notable volatility, particularly Southend-on-Sea, which dips sharply in 2020 (855), rises strongly in 2022 (1110), then declines again. This suggests sensitivity to short-term external conditions.

Several mid-sized districts, such as Braintree, Harlow, Rochford, and Tendring, show modest fluctuations but end 2024 at or below their 2019 levels. Braintree falls from 655 to 620, and Tendring from 510 to 485, indicating steady erosion over time.

Uttlesford is one of the few areas that returns to near 2019 levels, ending 2024 at 545. This is close to its starting point of 540, showing relative stability.

A clear pattern emerges: 2020 marks a widespread dip, 2021–2022 a partial rebound, and 2023–2024 a renewed softening, with nearly all districts ending the period lower than they began. The overall trend suggests structural pressures affecting district-level performance, with limited evidence of sustained recovery by 2024.



	Basildon	Braintree	Brentwood	Castle Point	Chelmsford	Colchester	Epping Forest	Harlow	Maldon	Rochford	Southend-on-Sea	Tendring	Thurrock	Uttlesford
2019	1130	655	600	380	990	1165	1030	545	335	415	1020	510	1315	540
2020	950	655	495	370	860	845	975	505	275	365	855	545	1110	540
2021	1050	720	520	410	1010	910	1005	540	330	375	945	605	1115	575
2022	995	655	470	400	965	910	950	530	275	375	1110	555	1105	520
2023	960	695	535	410	930	825	970	540	330	385	860	565	1055	490
2024	915	620	480	380	840	810	930	530	260	360	855	485	1000	545

Fig 12: Enterprise Starts by Local Authority — 2019–2023. Source: Business Demography ONS. Updated January 2026.

Enterprise Starts & Closures (continued)

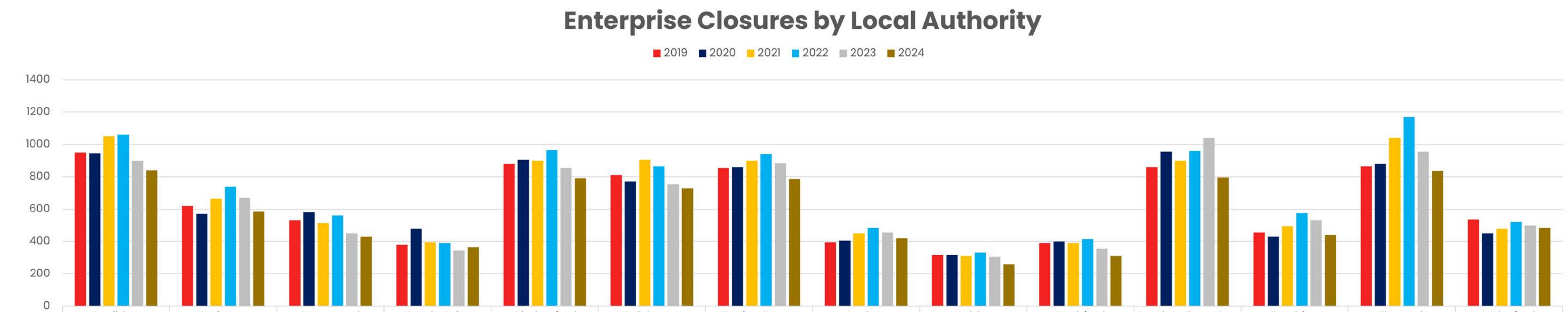
Enterprise closure figures across the local authorities show a mixed but generally stabilising picture between 2023 and 2024. Several areas experienced noticeable decreases in closures, while others saw modest rises, reflecting differing local economic conditions and levels of business resilience.

Most authorities recorded declines in closures, indicating some recovery from the elevated levels seen in earlier years. Notably, Basildon fell from 900 closures in 2023 to 840 in 2024, continuing a downward trend from its 2022 peak. Similar declines occurred in Braintree (670 to 585), Brentwood (450 to 430), Castle Point (385 to 365), and Chelmsford (855 to 790). These reductions suggest improving trading conditions and potentially higher survival rates for small and medium-sized enterprises.

In Colchester, closures dropped from 755 to 730, while Epping Forest decreased from 885 to 785. Harlow, Maldon, Rochford, and Uttlesford also saw reductions, reinforcing a broader pattern of stabilisation across the region.

However, a small number of authorities experienced increases. Southend-on-Sea rose from 1040 closures in 2023 to 1310 in 2024, representing the most significant year on year increase in the dataset. Tendring and Thurrock also showed moderate rises, though still below earlier peaks observed in 2020–2022.

Overall, the 2023–2024 period indicates a regional softening in enterprise closures, with improvements across most districts. The few areas with increases may reflect sector specific pressures or demographic shifts.



	Basildon	Braintree	Brentwood	Castle Point	Chelmsford	Colchester	Epping Forest	Harlow	Maldon	Rochford	Southend-on-Sea	Tendring	Thurrock	Uttlesford
2019	950	620	530	380	880	810	855	395	315	390	860	455	865	535
2020	945	570	580	480	905	770	860	405	315	400	955	430	880	450
2021	1050	665	515	395	900	905	900	450	310	390	900	495	1040	480
2022	1060	740	560	390	965	865	940	485	330	415	960	575	1170	520
2023	900	670	450	345	855	755	885	455	305	355	1040	530	955	500
2024	840	585	430	365	790	730	785	420	260	310	795	440	835	485

Fig 13: Enterprise Closures by Local Authority — 2019–2024. Source: Business Demography ONS. Updated January 2026.

Economic Output

Between 2022 and 2023, GVA per hour worked increased across Greater Essex, East England, and England, continuing the steady upward productivity trend seen in previous years. Greater Essex rose from just under £39 to around £40 per hour, while East England saw a similar increase, maintaining its slight lead over Greater Essex.

England experienced the strongest growth, rising to approximately £43 per hour and widening its productivity advantage. Overall, 2023 reflects strengthening regional performance, though both Greater Essex and East England continue to trail the national average despite year-on-year improvement.

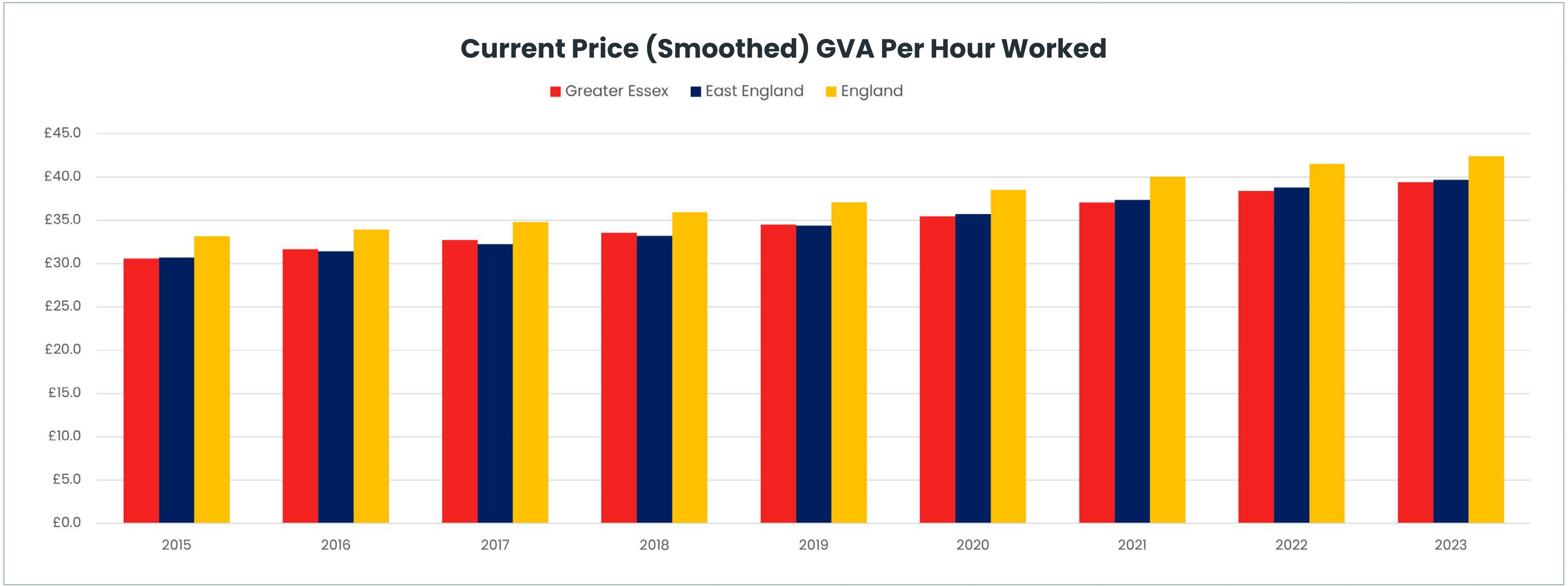
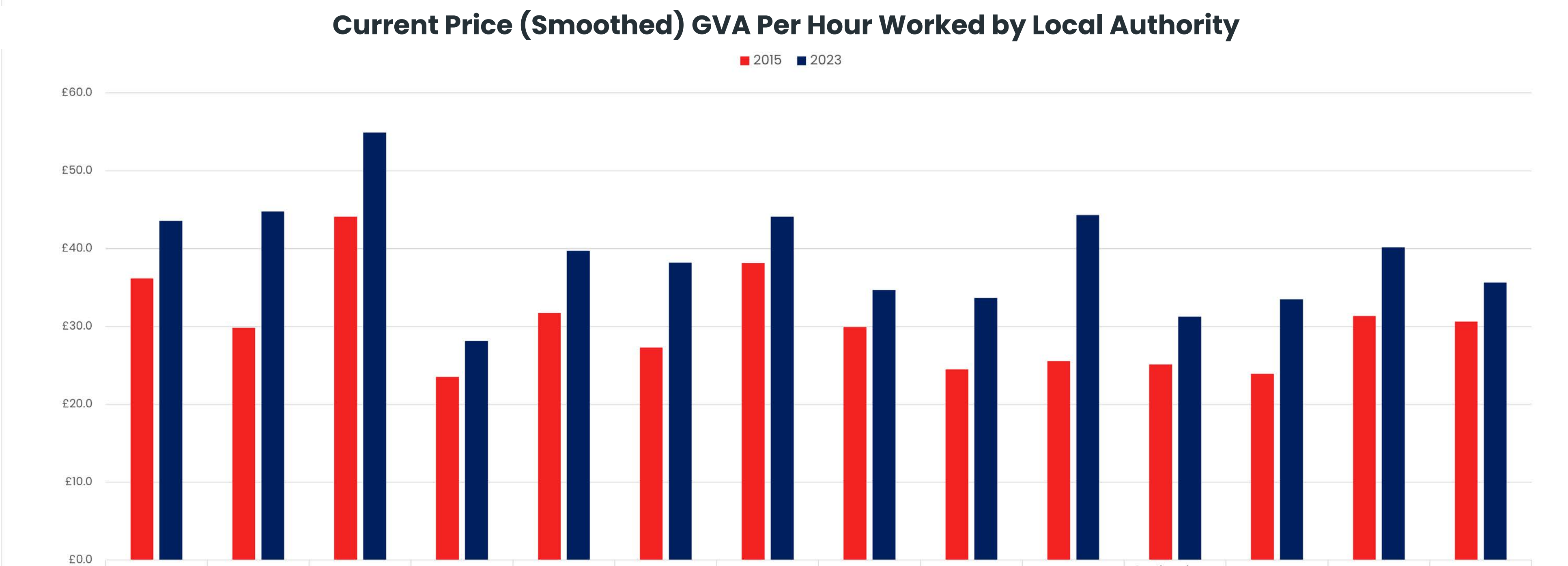


Fig 14: Current Price (Smoothed) GVA Per Hour Worked — 2015–2023. Greater Essex, East England & England. Source: ONS, Sub-regional Productivity. Updated January 2026.

Economic Output (continued)

Between 2022 and 2023, GVA per hour worked increased across every local authority, indicating a broad uplift in productivity. The largest gains were seen in Brentwood, rising from £45.70 to £54.90, and Rochford, increasing from £36.10 to £44.30. Other strong performers included Basildon, Braintree, and Epping Forest, each showing solid year on year growth. Even authorities with previously lower productivity levels, such as Maldon and Castle Point, recorded meaningful improvements. Overall, the data reflects consistent strengthening in economic output per hour across the region, with no authorities experiencing decline between 2022 and 2023.



	Basildon	Braintree	Brentwood	Castle Point	Chelmsford	Colchester	Epping Forest	Harlow	Maldon	Rochford	Southend-on-Sea	Tendring	Thurrock	Uttlesford
2015	£36.2	£29.8	£44.1	£23.5	£31.8	£27.3	£38.1	£29.9	£24.5	£25.6	£25.1	£23.9	£31.3	£30.7
2023	£43.6	£44.8	£54.9	£28.1	£39.8	£38.2	£44.1	£34.7	£33.7	£44.3	£31.3	£33.5	£40.2	£35.6

Fig 15: Current Price (Smoothed) GVA Per Hour Worked by Local Authority — 2015/2023. Source: ONS, Sub-regional Productivity. Updated January 2026.

Economic Output (continued)

Workplace earnings measure the wages of people who work in an area, regardless of where they live.

Workplace earnings across Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock continued to rise between 2022 and 2025, broadly keeping pace with regional and national growth. Thurrock showed the strongest uplift, reaching £790.70 in 2025 after a sharp increase from 2023.

Essex also recorded steady gains, while Southend-on-Sea grew more modestly and remained below the regional average. Overall, the data reflects a positive upward trend in local workplace wages, with Thurrock emerging as the area's fastest growing employment centre.

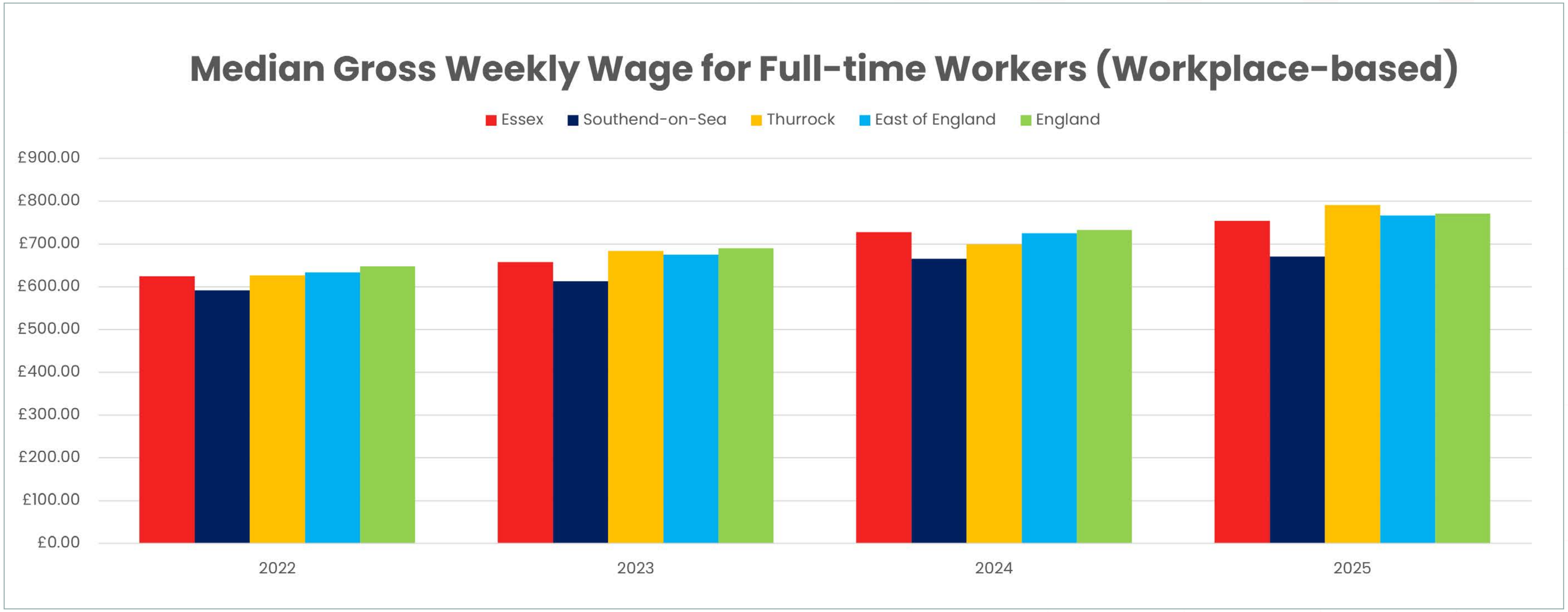


Fig 16a: Median Gross Weekly Wage for Full-time Workers — 2025. Essex, England & East England (Workplace). Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings — Resident and Workplace Analysis ONS. Updated January 2026.

Economic Output (continued)

Resident earnings measure the wages of people who live in an area, regardless of where they actually work.

Median weekly earnings have risen steadily across Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock from 2022 to 2025, outpacing both the East of England and national averages.

Thurrock shows the strongest growth, reaching £852.70 in 2025, while Southend-on-Sea dips slightly after a 2024 peak. Essex maintains consistent year-on-year increases. Overall, the data highlights strong wage growth in the area, reflecting a resilient local labour market outperforming wider regional and national trends.

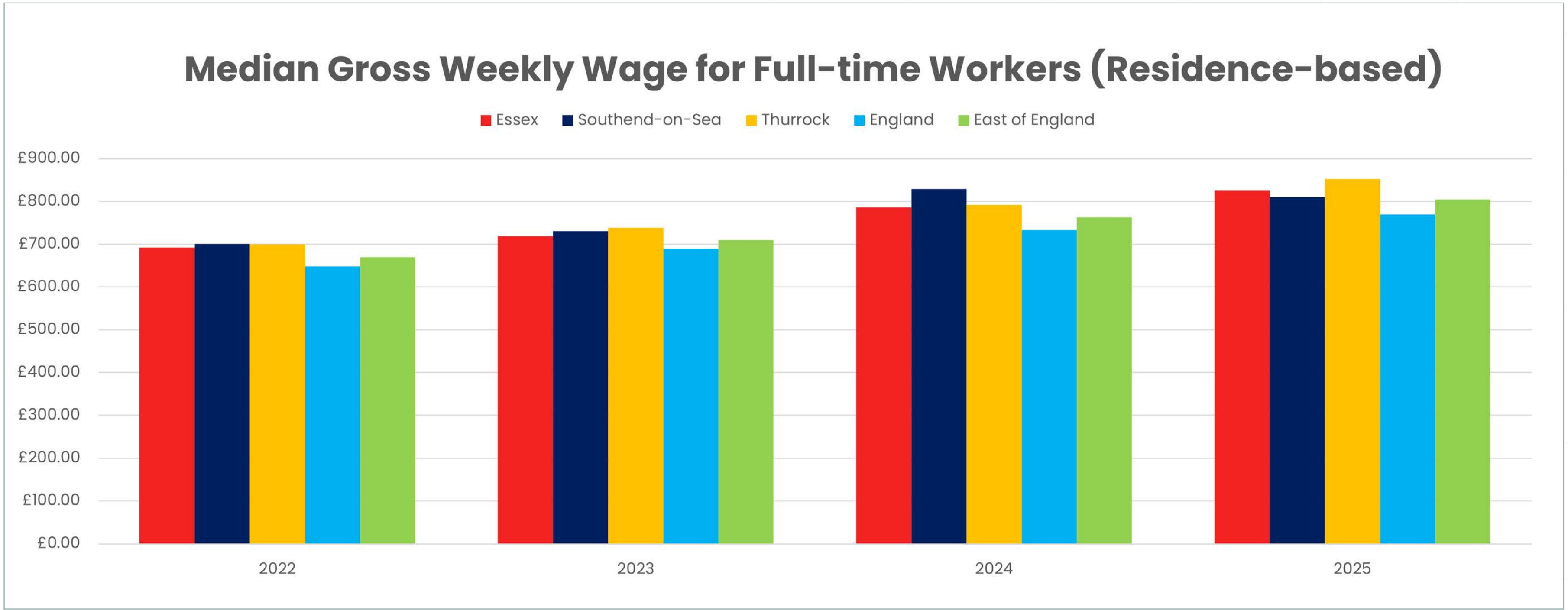


Fig 16b: Median Gross Weekly Wage for Full-time Workers — 2025. Essex, England & East England (Resident). Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings — Resident and Workplace Analysis ONS. Updated January 2026.

Updated

Population Demographics

Essex has a total population of 1.93 million. The age profile across Essex local authorities shows broadly similar patterns, with the largest share of residents aged 50–64 and 65+, highlighting an increasingly ageing population.

Castle Point, Maldon, and Tendring have the highest proportions of older adults, reflecting strong retirement age communities.

In contrast, Basildon, Harlow, and Colchester have larger populations under 35, indicating younger, more economically active demographics.

The 25–34 age group is most prominent in Harlow and Chelmsford, suggesting strong employment or housing appeal. Overall, the variation demonstrates differing local needs, from workforce planning to health and social care demand across the county.

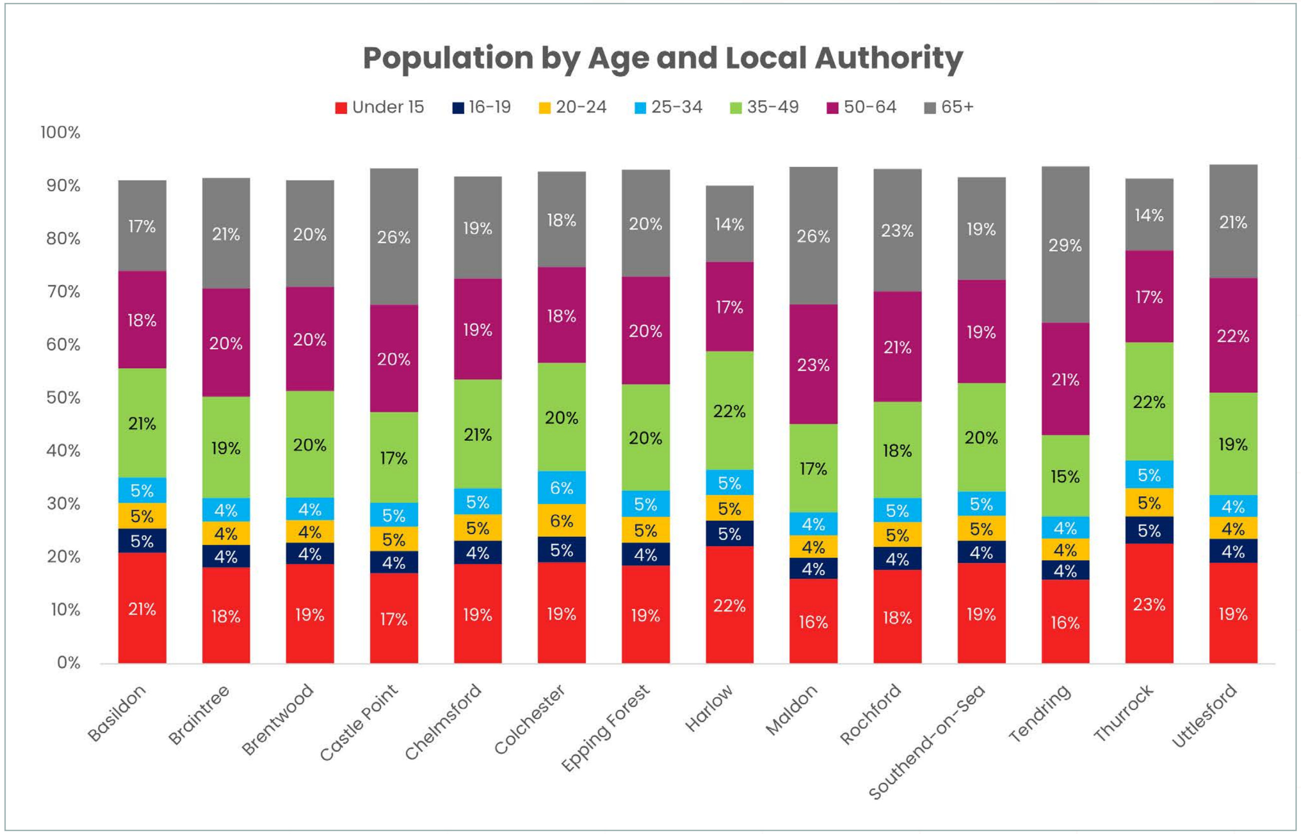


Fig 17: Population by Age and Local Authority. Source: ONS. Updated January 2026.

	All persons	Under 15	16–19	20–24	25–34	35–49	50–64	65–74	75–84	85+
Essex	1,929,610	368,460	85,338	92,983	241,417	379,808	375,418	186,482	145,482	54,222
East of England	6,576,306	1,234,938	294,851	332,427	834,879	1,294,129	1,272,371	640,048	486,664	185,999
England	58,620,101	10,768,248	2,796,606	3,526,018	7,986,715	11,408,505	11,152,917	5,519,950	3,977,130	1,484,012

Population Demographics (continued)

When looking at deprivation within Essex, for this report we have focussed on three of the seven areas of deprivation. These are income, employment, and education, skills, and training.

The figures on the right show the proportion of neighbourhoods in the 10% most deprived nationally.

Essex has a lot of disparity across the region. The level of deprivation in some areas is nil, these areas being Uttlesford, Maldon, Harlow, and Brentwood.

However, there are areas where the level of deprivation is quite high, such as Tendring, Basildon, Castle Point, and Southend-on-Sea.

	Income	Employment	Education, skills, and training	Overall IMD
Basildon	18%	7%	19%	11%
Braintree	0%	0%	5%	0%
Brentwood	0%	0%	0%	0%
Castle Point	5%	2%	14%	2%
Chelmsford	1%	1%	1%	0%
Colchester	1%	1%	6%	1%
Epping Forest	0%	0%	1%	0%
Harlow	0%	0%	0%	0%
Maldon	0%	0%	0%	0%
Rochford	2%	0%	2%	0%
Southend-on-Sea	12%	12%	8%	8%
Tendring	15%	18%	20%	18%
Thurrock	5%	2%	8%	4%
Uttlesford	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Indices of multiple deprivation. Source: MHCLG 2019.

Qualifications

Statistics show that Greater Essex has more people with higher-level qualifications than both England and the East of England. It has the biggest share of people with RQF4+ and strong numbers at RQF3 and RQF2. The East of England is close to the national average but slightly lower at the highest level.

Greater Essex also has fewer people with no qualifications.

Overall, Greater Essex has a stronger skills profile, with more residents holding higher qualifications and fewer with none.

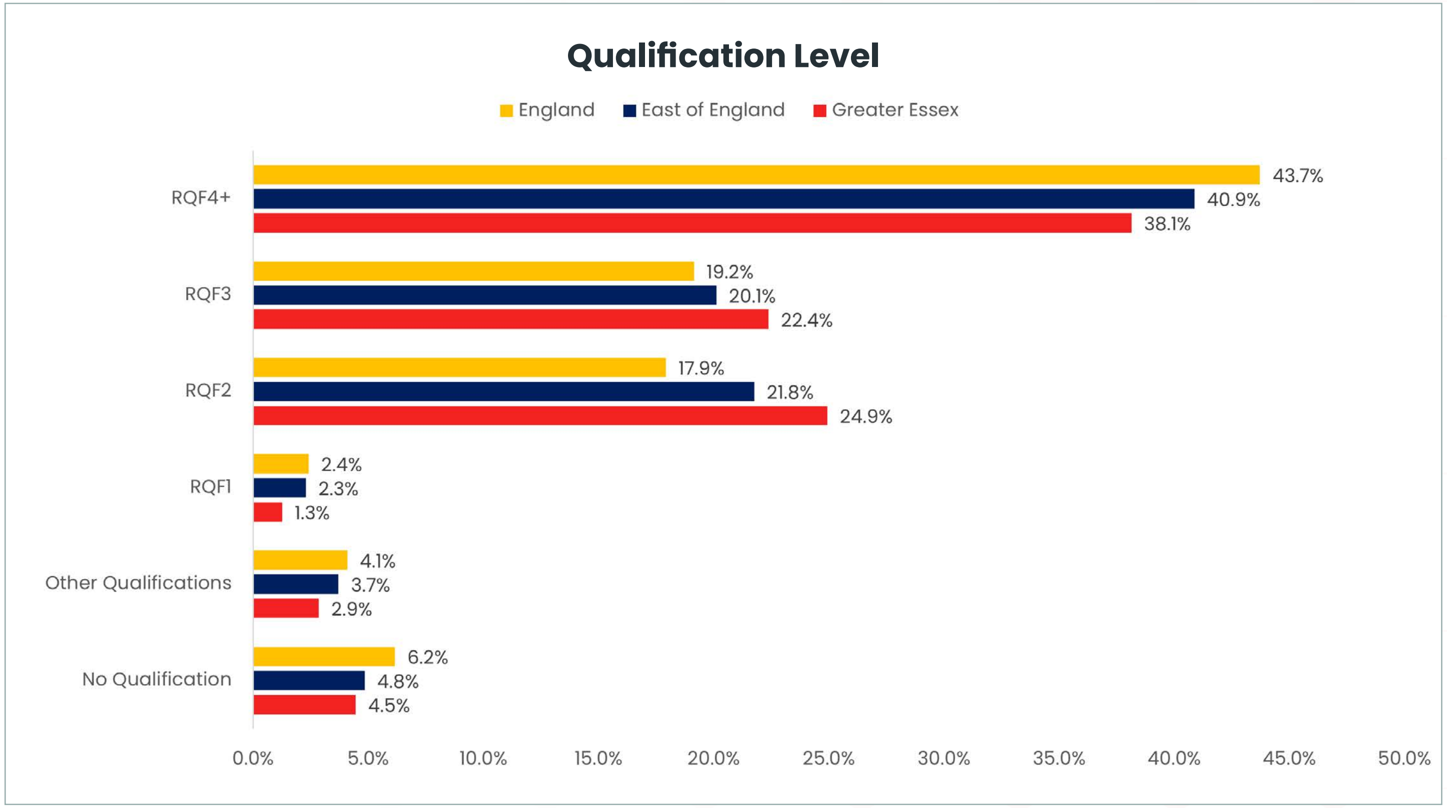


Fig 18: Qualification Level — 2024. Source: Adult Qualifications, Annual Population Survey ONS. Updated January 2026.

Qualifications (continued)

When looking closer at each local authority, we can see that there are some areas where the level of qualifications are drastically lower than others. For example, the number of residents in Tendring and Castle Point that hold no qualifications is 10% higher, this is a vast difference and can be attributed to other issues such as deprivation within these areas.

On the other end of the qualifications level, the number of residents that hold a Level 4 qualification is higher in those areas with a university such as Colchester and Chelmsford, and those with close proximity to London such as Uttlesford.

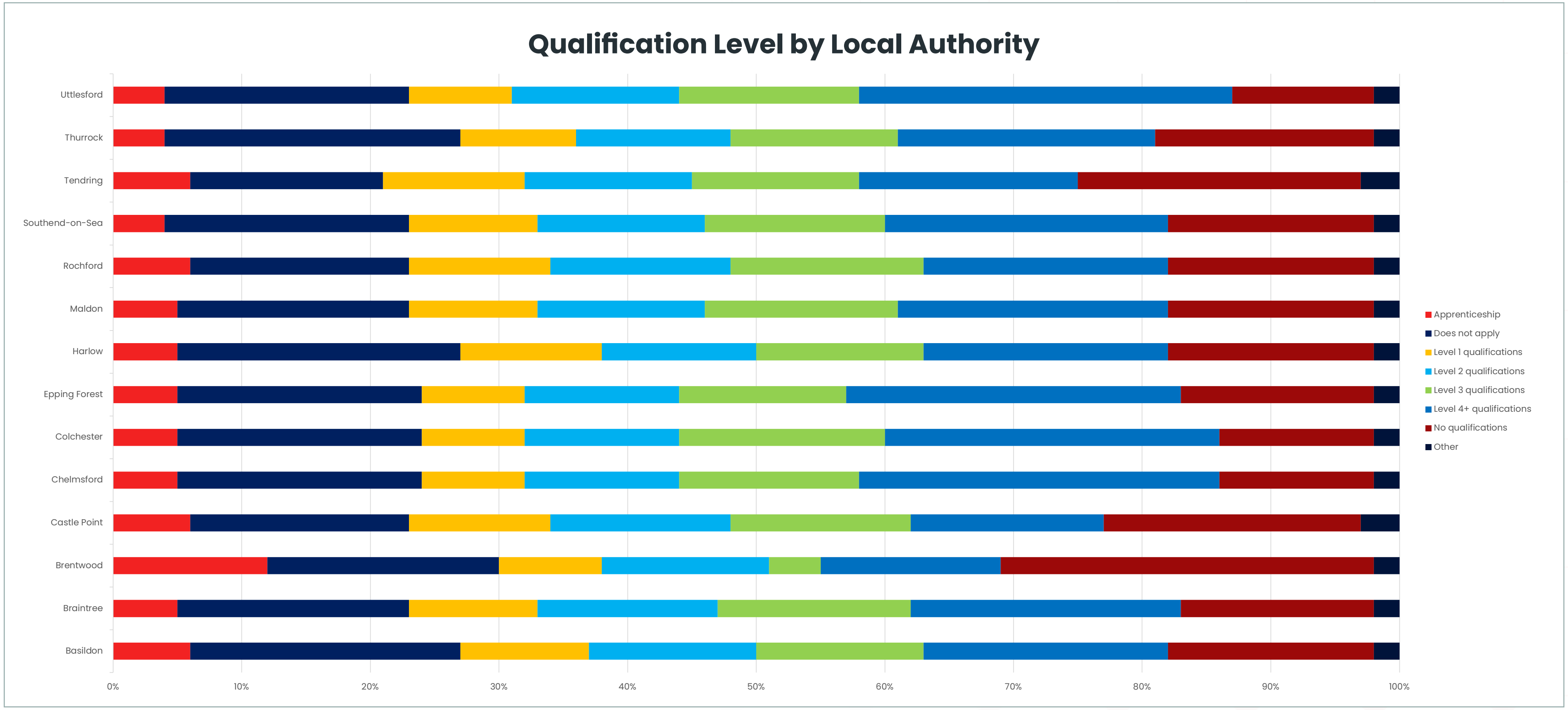


Fig 19: Qualification Level by Local Authority. Source: Adult Qualifications, Annual Population Survey ONS. January 2023.

Qualifications (continued)

It is important to clarify that the data presented by the ONS is not limited to individuals over the age of 16. Instead, it encompasses the entire population of the local authority. Consequently, the percentage of individuals without qualifications should be interpreted with caution.

	Basildon	Braintree	Brentwood	Castle Point	Chelmsford	Colchester	Epping Forest	Harlow	Maldon	Rochford	Southend-on-Sea	Tendring	Thurrock	Uttlesford
Apprenticeship	4%	5%	4%	6%	4%	4%	4%	4%	5%	5%	4%	6%	4%	4%
Does not apply	21%	18%	18%	17%	19%	19%	19%	22%	16%	17%	19%	16%	23%	20%
Level 1 qualifications	10%	10%	8%	11%	8%	8%	8%	11%	10%	11%	10%	11%	9%	8%
Level 2 qualifications	13%	14%	13%	14%	12%	12%	12%	12%	13%	14%	13%	13%	12%	13%
Level 3 qualifications	13%	15%	14%	14%	14%	16%	13%	13%	15%	15%	14%	13%	13%	14%
Level 4+ qualifications	19%	21%	29%	15%	28%	26%	26%	19%	21%	19%	22%	17%	20%	29%
No qualifications	16%	15%	12%	20%	12%	12%	15%	16%	16%	16%	16%	22%	17%	11%
Other	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%

Source: Adult Qualifications, Annual Population Survey ONS. January 2023.

Qualifications (continued)

Analysis of local authorities reveals that the highest levels of adult education achievement have been attained in the fields of Health and social care, Retail and commercial enterprise, and Business, administration and law.

There is a clear correlation between these qualification achievements and the vacancies being advertised across the region.

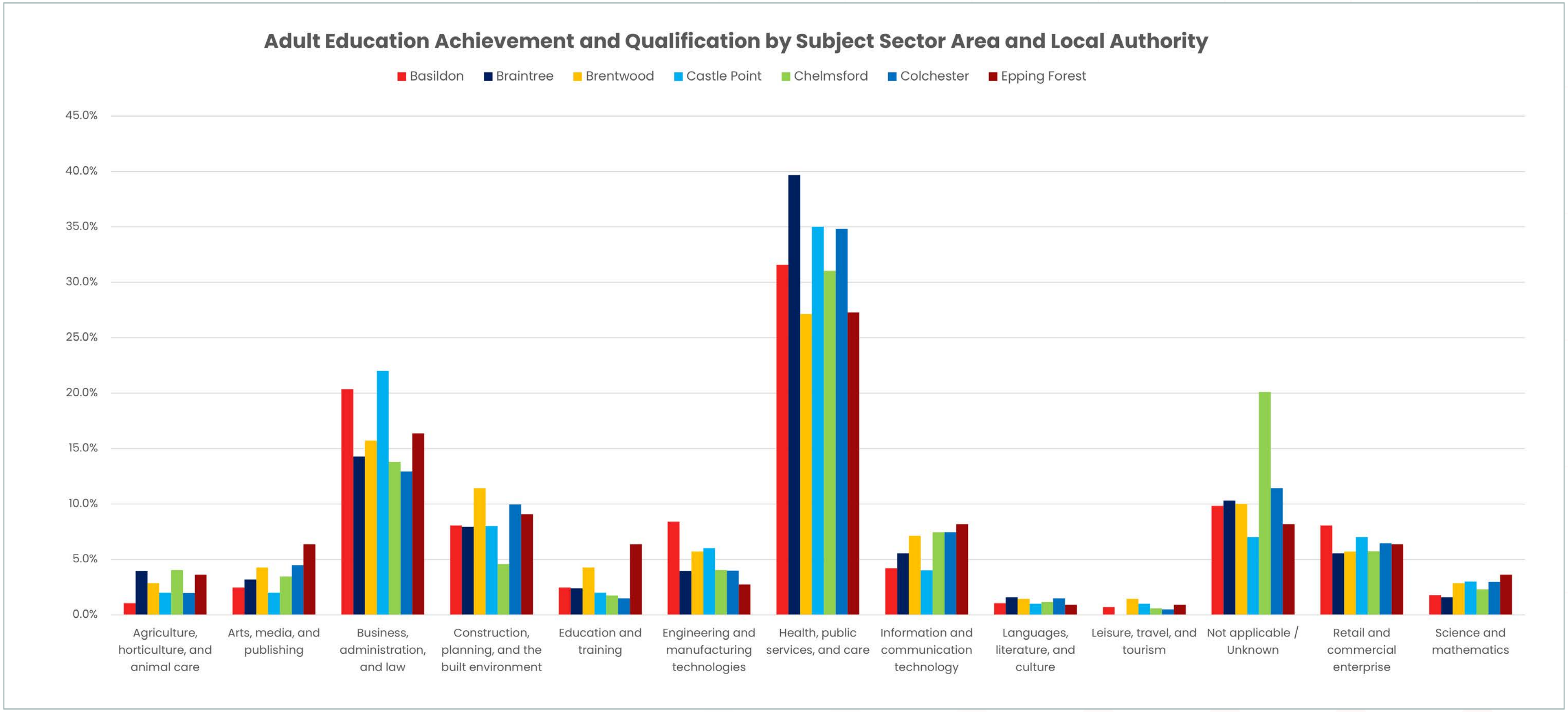


Fig 20: Adult Education Achievement and Qualification by Subject Sector Area and Local Authority — 2023/24. Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Colchester, and Epping Forest. Source: Further Education & Skills 2023/24 DfE.

Qualifications (continued)

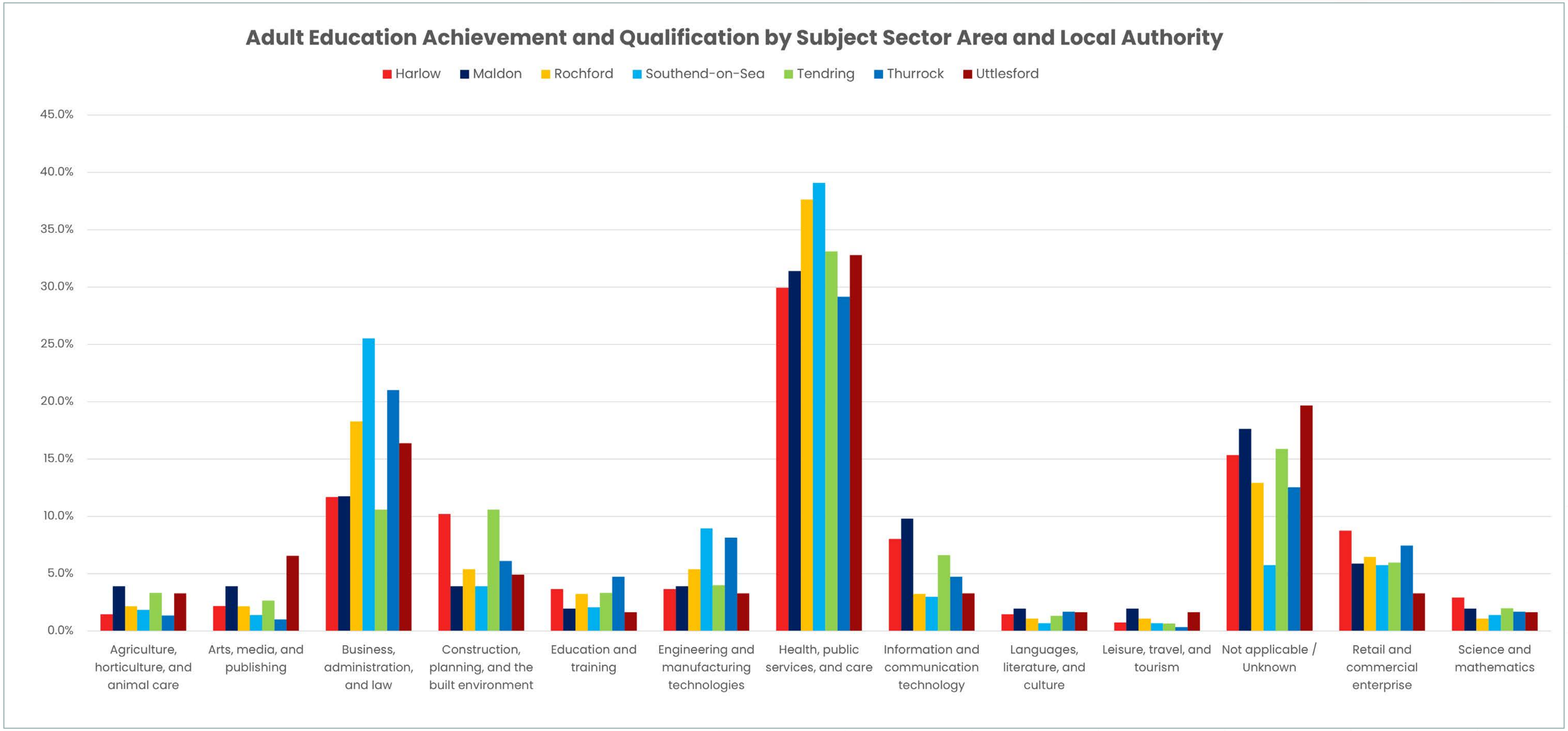


Fig 21: Adult Education Achievement and Qualification by Subject Sector Area and Local Authority — 2023/24. Harlow, Maldon, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea, Tendring, Thurrock, and Uttlesford. Source: Further Education & Skills 2023/24 DfE.

Qualifications (continued)

When we look at apprenticeship achievements over the region, we can see the figures in the last twelve months have shown an increase in Business, administration, and law.

Whilst demand for Health, public services, and care has decreased, the demand is still high.

These two areas are over half of the apprenticeship achievements within the region.

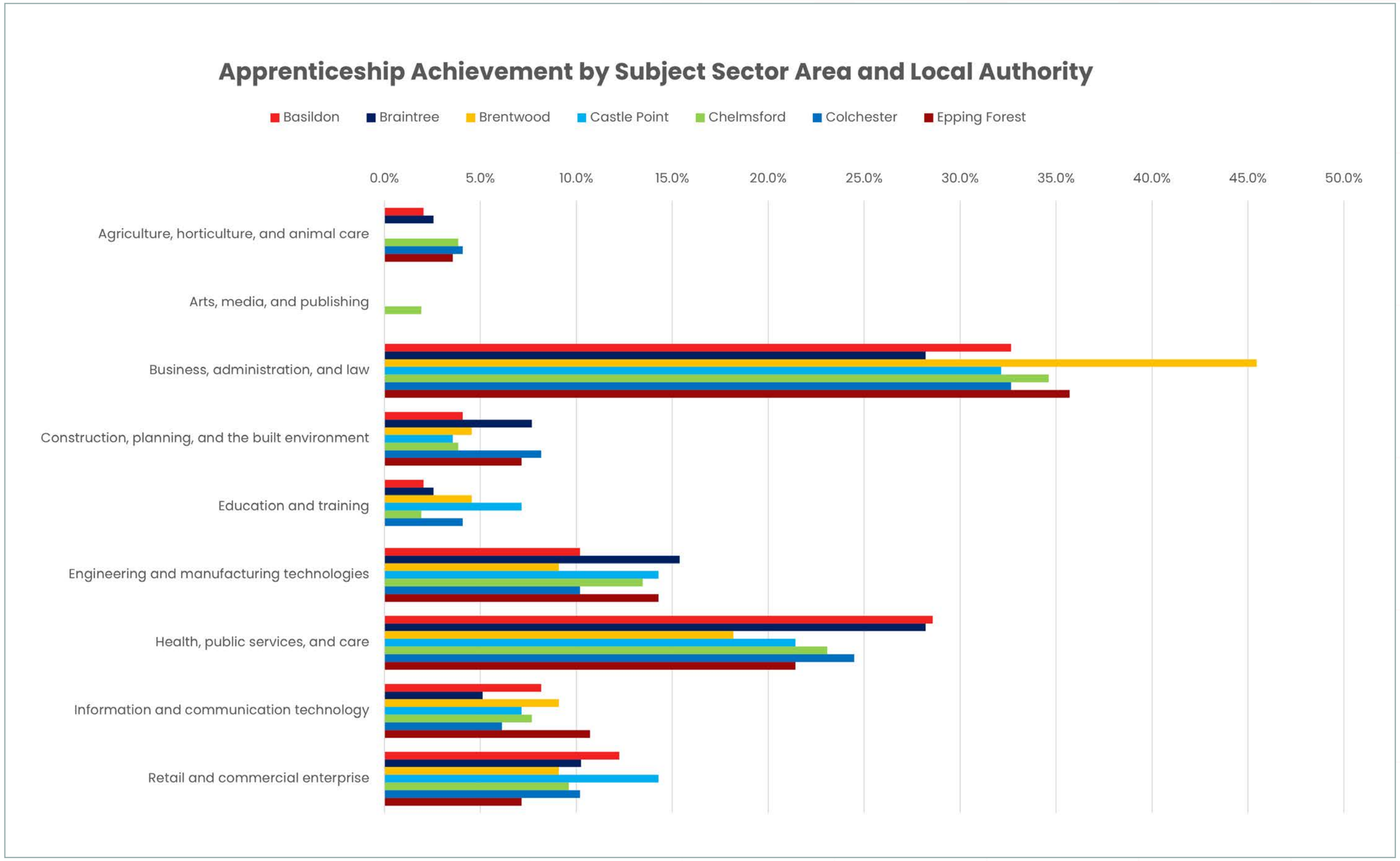


Fig 22: Apprenticeship Achievement by Subject Sector Area and Local Authority — 2023/24. Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Colchester, and Epping Forest. Source: Apprenticeship Achievements 2023/24 DfE.

Qualifications (continued)

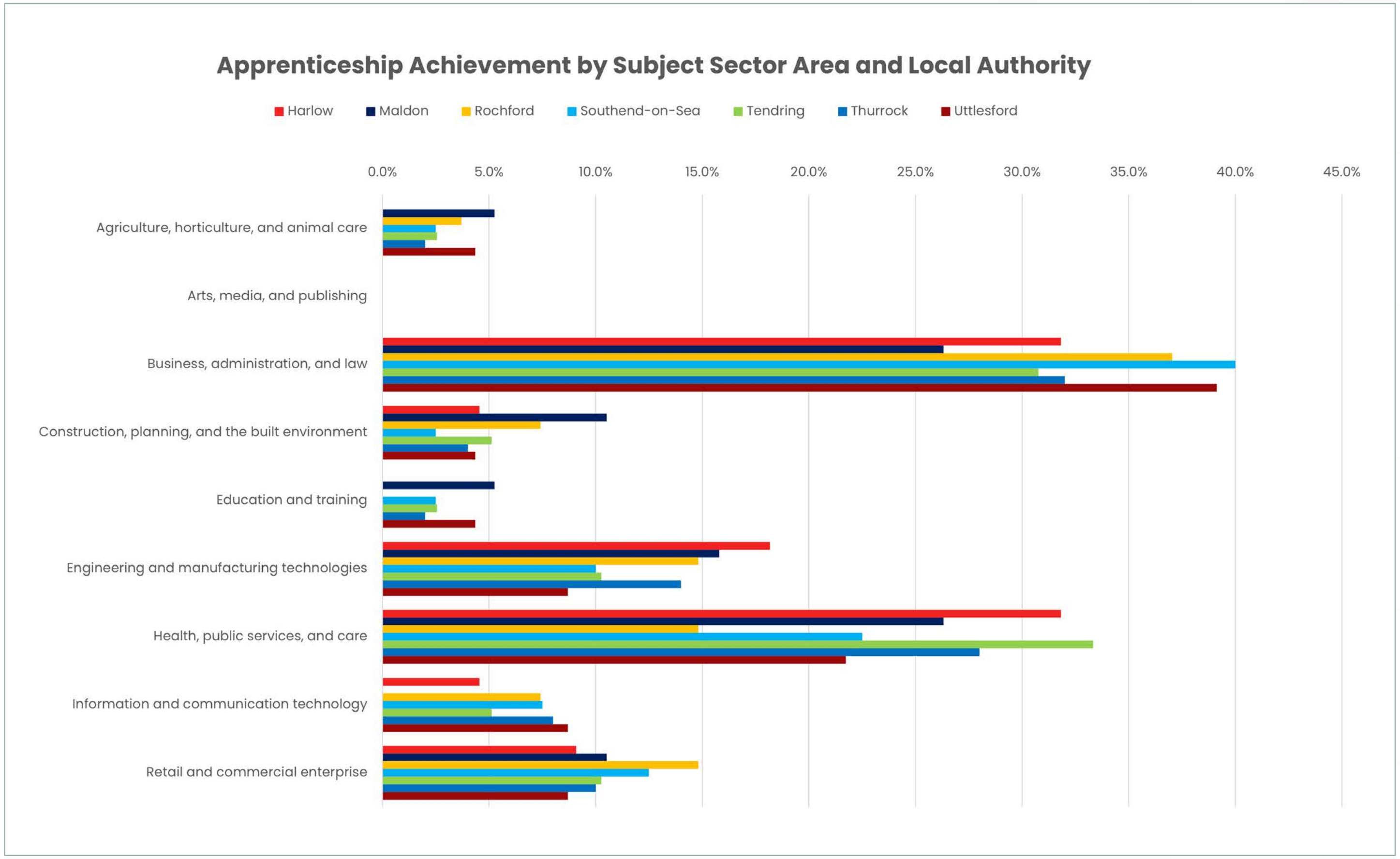


Fig 23: Apprenticeship Achievement by Subject Sector Area and Local Authority — 2023/24. Harlow, Maldon, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea, Tendring, Thurrock, and Uttlesford. Source: Apprenticeship Achievements 2023/24 DfE.

Qualifications (continued)

The chart shows clear subject area imbalances in HE qualifiers for 2024/25. Business and management dominates, producing far more graduates than any other field, indicating strong demand for business related skills.

Subjects allied to Medicine also show high volumes, reflecting continued growth in health sector training.

Social sciences, Psychology, and Engineering and technology form a strong mid-tier of graduate numbers.

Creative arts, Computing, and Biological and sport sciences show moderate representation.

In contrast, Medicine and dentistry, Veterinary sciences, and Physical sciences produce very small cohorts, suggesting niche specialisms or limited course capacity.

Overall, the data highlights a workforce pipeline strongly shaped by business and health fields.

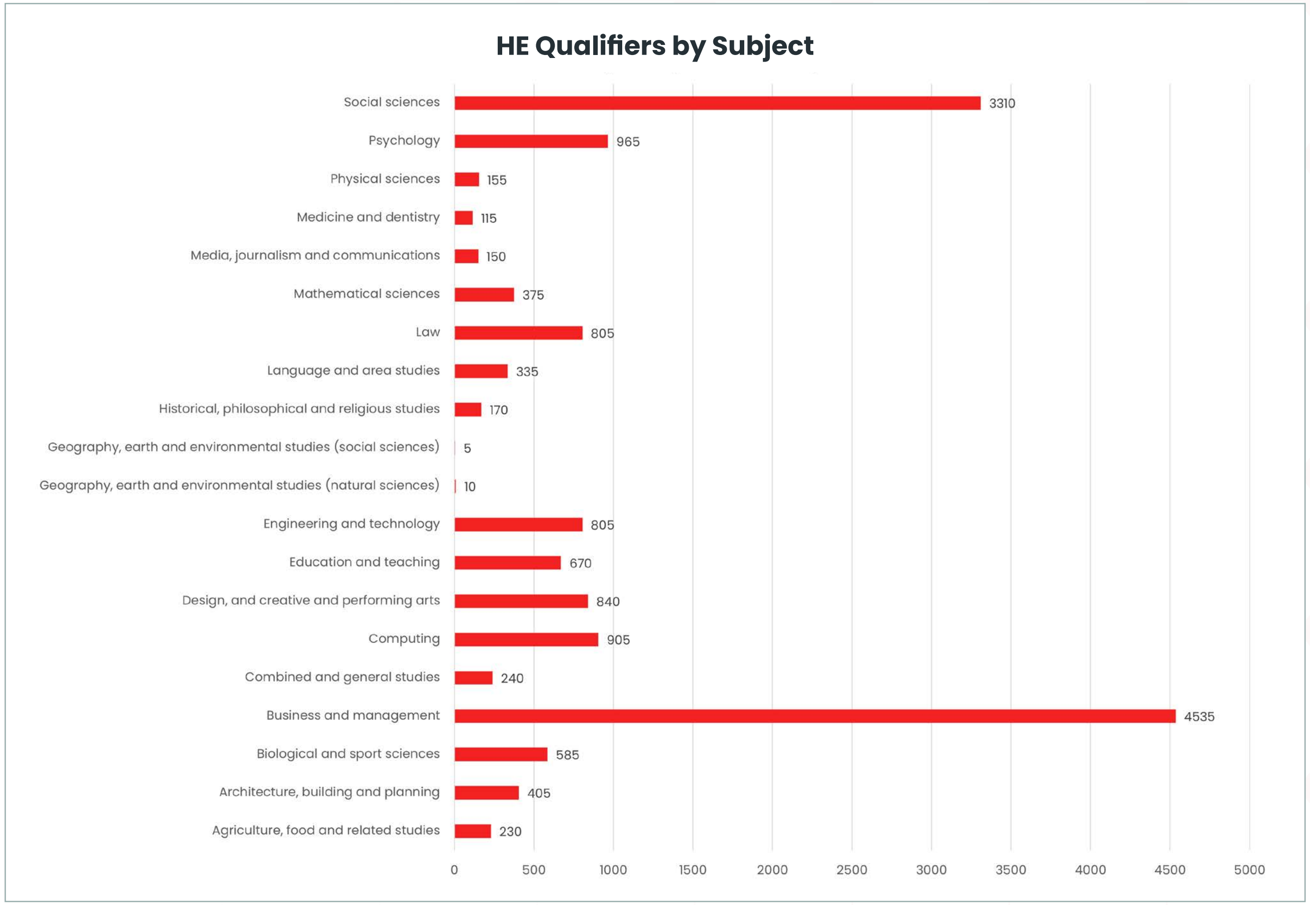


Fig 24: HE Qualifiers by Subject — 2024/25. Source: HESA. Updated January 2026.

Qualifications (continued)

The chart below compares KS4 student destinations in 2016/17 and 2022/23 across state-funded mainstream schools. Education remains by far the most common route, with both years showing close to 85–90% of students progressing into further study. Apprenticeships stay a small but stable pathway, with only a slight decline by 2022/23. The proportion entering work remains low and relatively unchanged.

The share of students recorded as "Not Sustained" increases slightly, suggesting a small rise in young people disengaging from education, employment, or training. "Unknown" destinations also grow marginally. Overall, patterns remain largely consistent, with education clearly dominant.

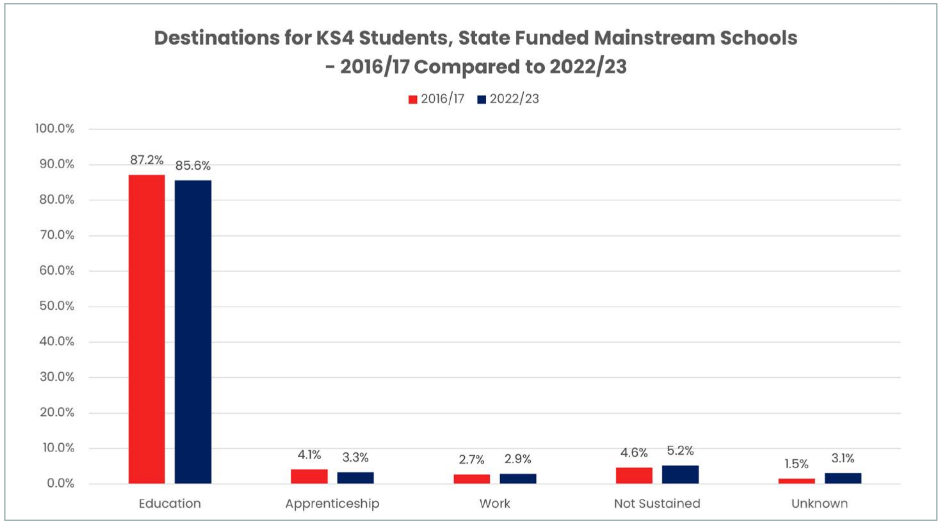


Fig 25: Destinations for KS4 Students, State Funded Mainstream Schools — 2016/17 Compared to 2022/23. Source: DfE. Updated January 2026.

The chart below highlights strong differences in destinations depending on the qualification level achieved at KS5. Level 3 learners are far more likely to continue into education, with 56% progressing, compared with just 13–19% at Level 2 and below.

In contrast, students with lower qualifications are much more likely to enter work, with 60% at Below Level 2 and 67% at Level 2 moving into employment. Apprenticeships make up a small share across all groups but are slightly higher for lower level learners. "Not sustained" outcomes decrease as qualification level rises, showing that higher attainment leads to more stable pathways.

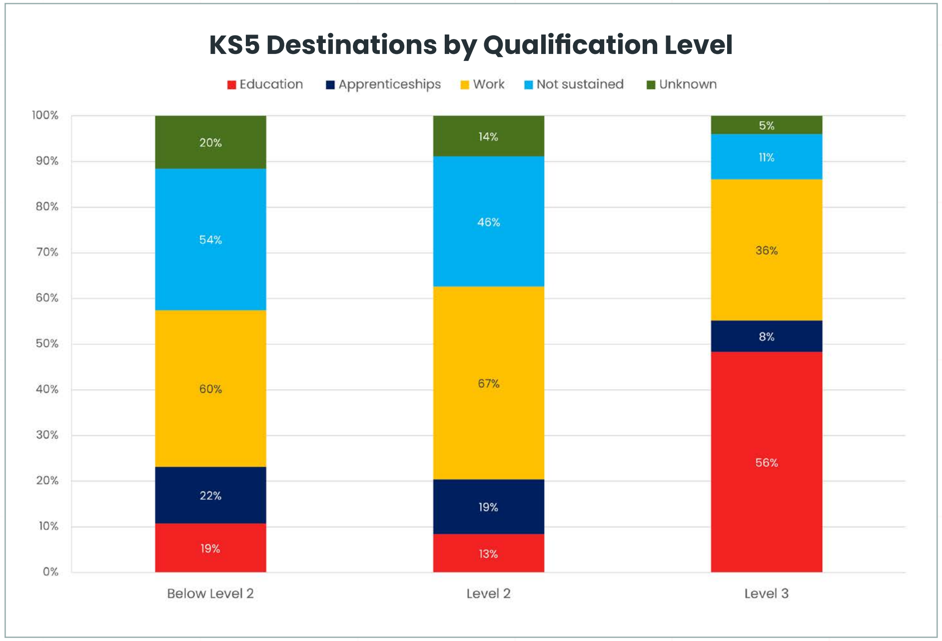


Fig 26: KS5 Destinations by Qualification Level — 2022/23. Source: DfE. Updated January 2026.

Qualifications (continued)

In 2022/23 there were 5615 students that left higher education, 1245 less than the previous year.

The chart shows clear differences in outcomes between undergraduates and postgraduates.

Employment is the dominant destination for both groups, with around 3,700 undergraduates and 1,900 postgraduates securing jobs, indicating strong labour market absorption but also reflecting the larger undergraduate population. Unemployment is comparatively low for both, though undergraduates appear to have slightly higher numbers. Postgraduates show minimal participation in further education, consistent with already holding advanced qualifications. The "Other" category is higher for undergraduates, suggesting more varied or transitional post study pathways.

Overall, postgraduates show more stable outcomes, while undergraduates experience more diverse destinations beyond direct employment.

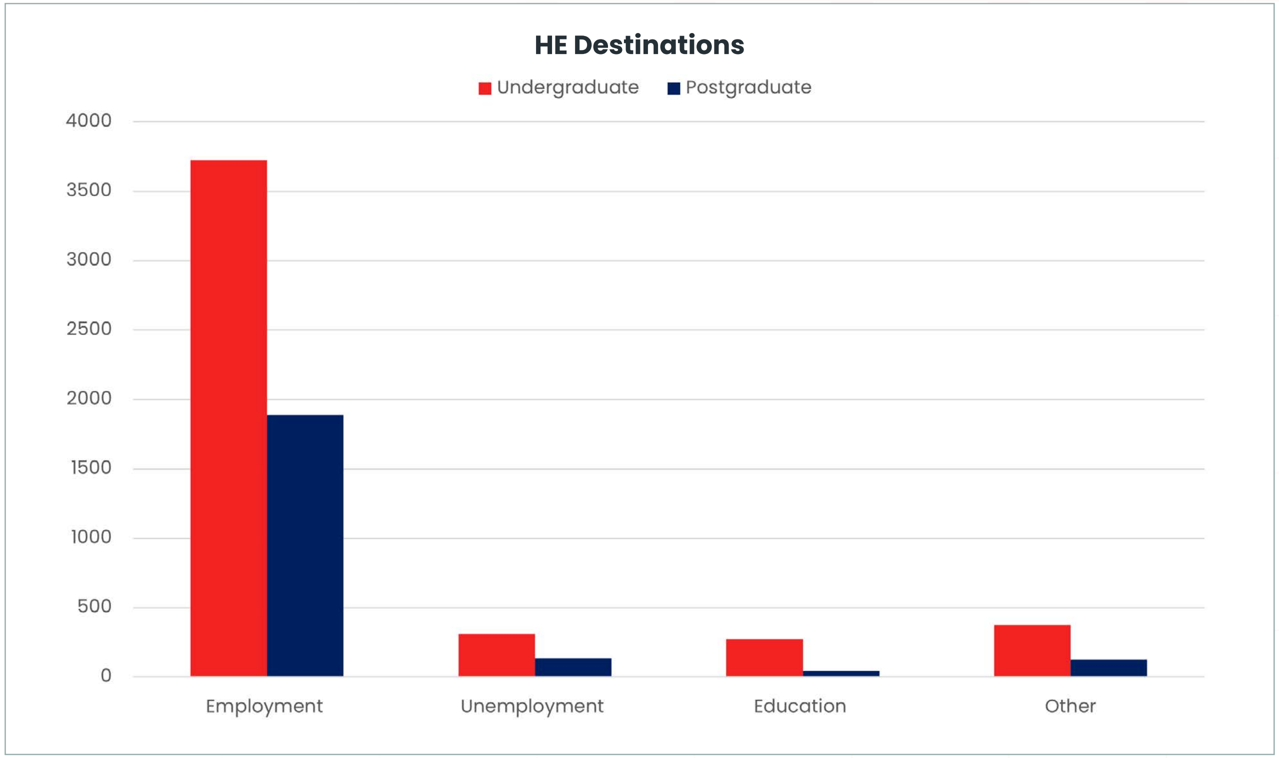


Fig 27: HE Destinations — 2022/23. Source: HESA. Updated January 2026.

Employer Provided Training

If we look at the chart to the right, we can see the comparison between training provision by employers in Essex and nationally. Essex seems very close to what is seen with training across the country. 37% of businesses do not train at all, which is lower than the national average of 39%. Essex is home to a huge number of micro businesses that have less than 10 employees, this can often mean that there is less emphasis on training. This can be due to funding constraints, resource constraints or other external factors.

The general training needs identified by employers for the future were things such as soft skills, mental health training, and management skills, mirroring the employer feedback we have received as part of the LSIP engagement. Employers have said that the priorities for them in regard to training are soft skills and behaviours, basic English, Maths and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), digital skills, digitech, leadership and management skills, and green skills.

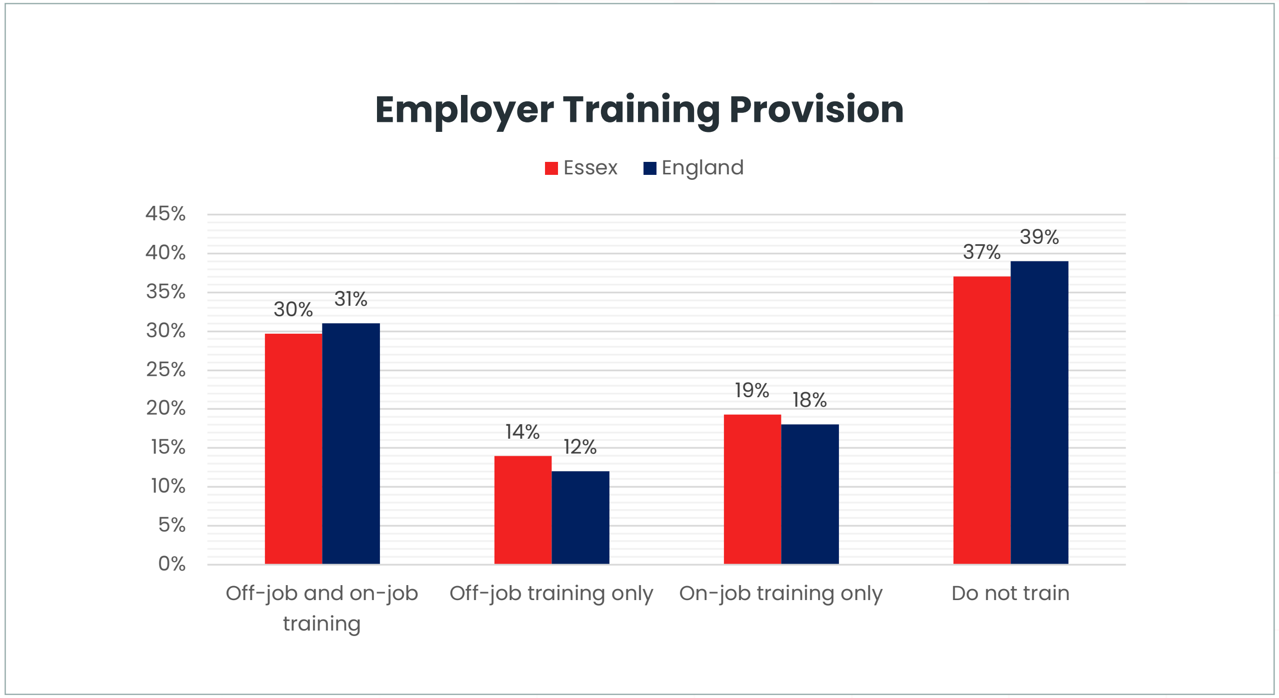


Fig 28: Employer Training Provision — 2019. Essex & England. Source: DfE Employer Skills Survey.

Skills Provision

Over the last two years (Jan 2024–Dec 2025), unique job postings show a steady decline from the elevated levels seen in 2023. Early 2024 begins around 40,000 postings, but numbers gradually fall throughout the year, dipping to around 30,000 by late 2024.

Throughout 2025, the labour market remains relatively flat, with postings fluctuating modestly between roughly 28,000 and 34,000. However, the year ends with another noticeable drop in December 2025. Overall, the trend suggests cooling employer demand, reduced hiring activity, and a more restrained job market compared with the peak observed in mid 2023.

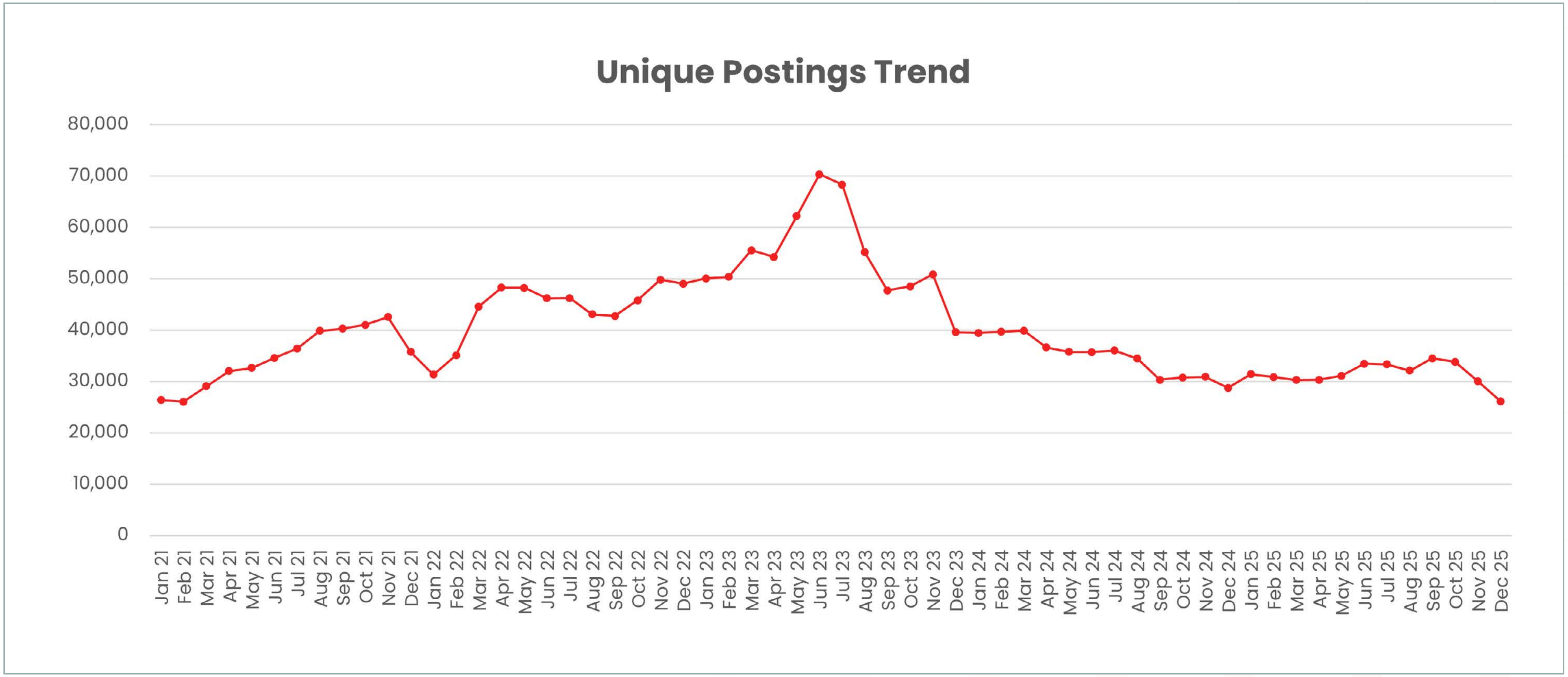


Fig 29: Unique Postings Trend — December 2025. Source: Lightcast. Updated January 2026.

Updated

Skills Provision (continued)

The data shows strong demand across several key sectors from Jan–Dec 2025. Health and social care dominates, with care workers and home carers representing the largest share at 7,375 postings (13%), reflecting ongoing workforce pressures and high turnover in care roles. Nursing and social work roles also generate steady demand.

The Retail and hospitality sector shows similarly high volumes, with sales related roles (6,359; 11%) and cleaners and domestics (6,108; 11%) among the most advertised, highlighting reliance on lower paid, high-churn occupations. Education also contributes significantly, especially secondary teachers (7%) and general teaching professionals (6%), pointing to continued recruitment challenges.

Transport demand is notable too, with large goods vehicle drivers (3,461; 6%), suggesting persistent shortages in logistics.

Overall, the postings show a labour market heavily driven by essential services, care, education, logistics, and consumer facing sectors, where staffing pressures remain high and recruitment demand consistent.

	New Postings Jan 25 - Dec 25	Share of Job Postings
Health, social care and med-tech		
Care workers and home carers	7,375	13%
Other registered nursing professionals	2,278	4%
Social workers	2,161	4%
Education		
Secondary education teaching professionals	3,958	7%
Teaching professionals n.e.c.	3,748	6%
Early education and childcare practitioners	2,381	4%
Professional services		
Other administrative occupations n.e.c.	1,960	3%
Transport and logistics		
Large goods vehicle drivers	3,461	6%

	New Postings Jan 25 - Dec 25	Share of Job Postings
Retail and hospitality		
Sales related occupations n.e.c.	6,359	11%
Cleaners and domestics	6,108	11%
Kitchen and catering assistants	3,421	6%
Managers and directors in retail and wholesale	2,972	5%
Customer service occupations n.e.c.	2,651	5%
Roundspersons and van salespersons	2,437	4%
Sales and retail assistants	2,230	4%
Chefs	2,015	3%
Bar staff	1,112	2%
Coffee shop workers	1,110	2%

Fig 30: Vacancies for Greater Essex — January 2025 to December 2025. Source: Lightcast. Updated January 2026.

Sector Growth Forecasts

The DfE sponsored Working Futures Labour Market and Skills Projections (2017–2027) provide one view on how employment by sector and skills requirements may change in the future. The projections are based on past trends and the impact the Covid-19 pandemic may have had (significantly altering some trajectories). The table to the right shows Essex projections for employment (in thousands) and employment change by sector from the Working Futures report.

As we can see from the table to the right, the key areas of growth expected within Essex are Construction, Travel, accommodation and transport, Business and other services and Non-marketed services. All of these align with the priority areas we have identified within the LSIP.

Fig 31: Sector Growth Forecasts. Source: Working Futures Labour Market and Skills Projections.

	2017	2022	2027	2017-2022	2022-2027	2017-2027
Primary sector and utilities	**59**	**57**	**56**	**-2**	**-2**	**-3**
Agriculture	29	27	25	-2	-2	-4
Mining and quarrying	3	3	2	0	0	-1
Electricity and gas	8	8	8	0	0	0
Water and sewerage	19	20	21	1	1	2
Manufacturing	**235**	**223**	**212**	**-12**	**-11**	**-23**
Food drink and tobacco	33	32	31	-1	-1	-2
Engineering	48	47	44	0	-3	-3
Rest of manufacturing	154	144	136	-10	-8	-18
Construction	**254**	**259**	**265**	**5**	**6**	**11**
Trade, accomodation, and transport	**860**	**861**	**883**	**2**	**22**	**24**
Wholesale and retail trade	494	500	511	7	10	17
Transport and storage	178	176	176	-2	0	-2
Accommodation and food	187	184	196	-3	12	9
Business and other services	**1,012**	**1,050**	**1,070**	**38**	**20**	**58**
Media	36	35	34	-1	0	-1
Information technology	94	94	95	0	1	1
Finance and insurance	64	63	60	-1	-3	-4
Real estate	49	51	53	2	2	5
Professional services	278	294	300	16	6	22
Support services	311	324	332	13	8	21
Arts and entertainment	93	99	102	6	3	9
Other services	87	90	92	4	2	5
Non-marketed services	**703**	**724**	**756**	**20**	**32**	**53**
Public admin. and defence	91	89	93	-2	4	2
Education	257	258	263	1	5	6
Health and social work	356	377	400	21	23	44
All industries	**3,124**	**3,175**	**3,242**	**51**	**67**	**119**

Annual Job Replacement

The Working Futures Labour Market and Skills Projections suggests that on average as the population and economy grows, the job market will see an increase of 6,000 jobs a year. However, this is just a projection and other external factors can increase or decrease this projection.

Regardless of the projections, it is likely that those sectors that currently have the highest employment levels will continue to have the most jobs in the future. We can see that in Essex this is likely to be Professional occupations, Caring, leisure and other services and Managers, directors and senior officials.

Sector	Expected annual job replacement demand 2022-2027 (Thousands)
Managers, directors and senior officials	24
Professional occupations	38
Associate professional and technical	19
Administrative and secretarial	-27
Skilled trades occupations	-13
Caring, leisure and other services	28
Sales and customer service	0
Process, plant and machine operatives	-5
Elementary occupations	2
All occupations	**66**

Fig 32: Annual Job Replacement. Source: Working Futures Labour Market and Skills Projections.

Occupational Growth Forecasts

When looking at the Working Futures Labour Market and Skills Projections at an occupational group level, we have a much clearer picture of what areas of growth we can expect to see within Essex.

These are Corporate managers and directors, Caring personal service occupations and Business and public service associate professionals.

We can also see a drop in Secretarial and related occupations and Process, plant, and machine operatives. This is potentially as a result of more automation for manufacturing occupations and the change in culture of professional occupations working from home more.

Source: Working Futures Labour Market and Skills Projections.

	2022	2027	Change
Managers, directors and senior officials			
11. Corporate managers and directors	272	291	19
12. Other managers and proprietors	105	111	6
Professional occupations			
21. Science, research, engineering, and technology professionals	189	196	7
22. Health professionals	122	133	10
23. Teaching and educational professionals	140	152	12
24. Business, media, and public service professionals	161	169	8
Associate professional and techncial			
31. Science, engineering, and technology associate professionals	64	65	1
32. Health and social care associate professionals	40	44	3
33. Protective service occupations	31	31	1
34. Culture, media, and sports occupations	80	81	1
35. Business and public service associate professionals	235	249	14
Adminstrative and secreterial			
41. Administrative occupations	240	231	-9
42. Secretarial and related occupations	54	36	-18
Skilled trades occupations			
51. Skilled agricultural and related trades	27	28	1
52. Skilled metal, electrical, and electronic trades	109	102	-7
53. Skilled construction and building trades	95	92	-3
54. Textiles, printing, and other skilled trades	68	63	-4
Caring, leisure, and other services			
61. Caring personal service occupations	253	282	29
62. Leisure, travel, and related personal service occupations	70	69	-1
Sales and customer services			
71. Sales occupations	193	189	-4
72. Customer service occupations	62	67	5
Process, plant, and machine operatives			
81. Process, plant, and machine operatives	68	62	-7
82. Transport and mobile machine drivers and operatives	123	125	2
Elementary occupations			
91. Elementary trades and related occupations	51	49	-1
92. Elementary administration and service occupations	322	325	4
All occupations	**3,175**	**3,242**	**67**

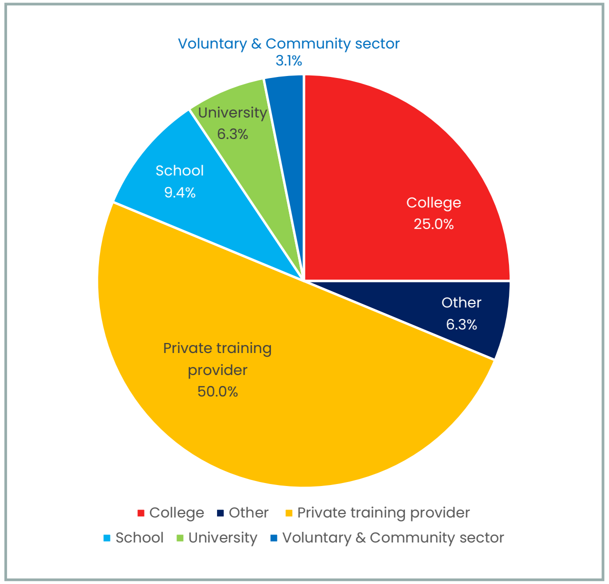
Local Skills Improvement Plan – Provider & Employer Survey Results

The employer and provider surveys were hosted on the Chamber of Commerce website.

Where we have received other additional comments, we have removed these to protect the identity of individuals and businesses. We will look at these comments locally.

The feedback from the provider survey can be found here:

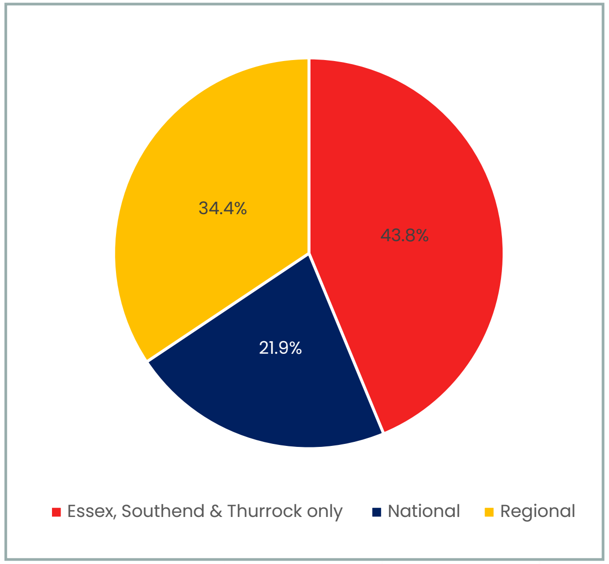
Type of organisation:



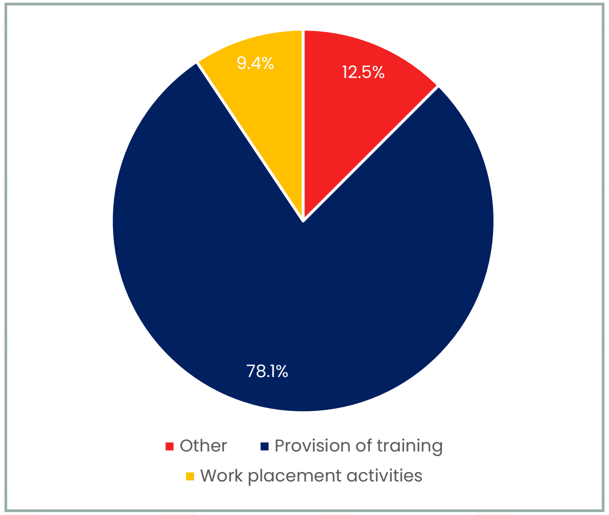
Other:

- Local authority.
- App developer (Technology services).

Are you a local provider, or do you have a regional or national coverage?



Do you engage with employers, and if so what is the nature of that engagement?

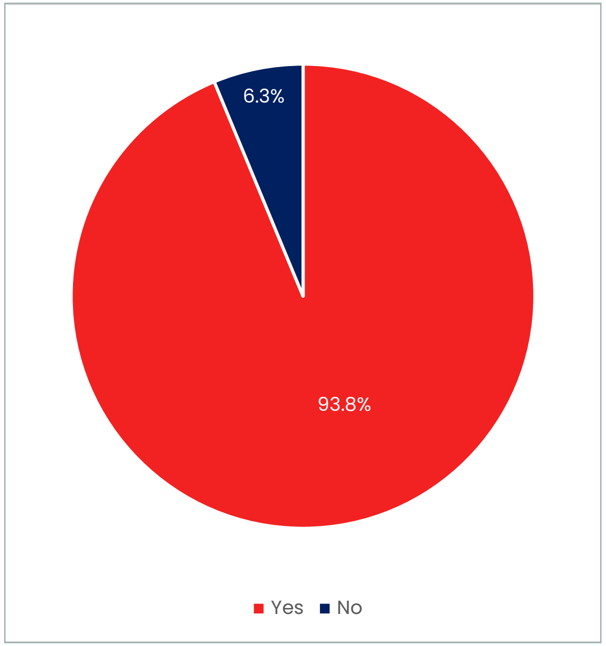


Other:

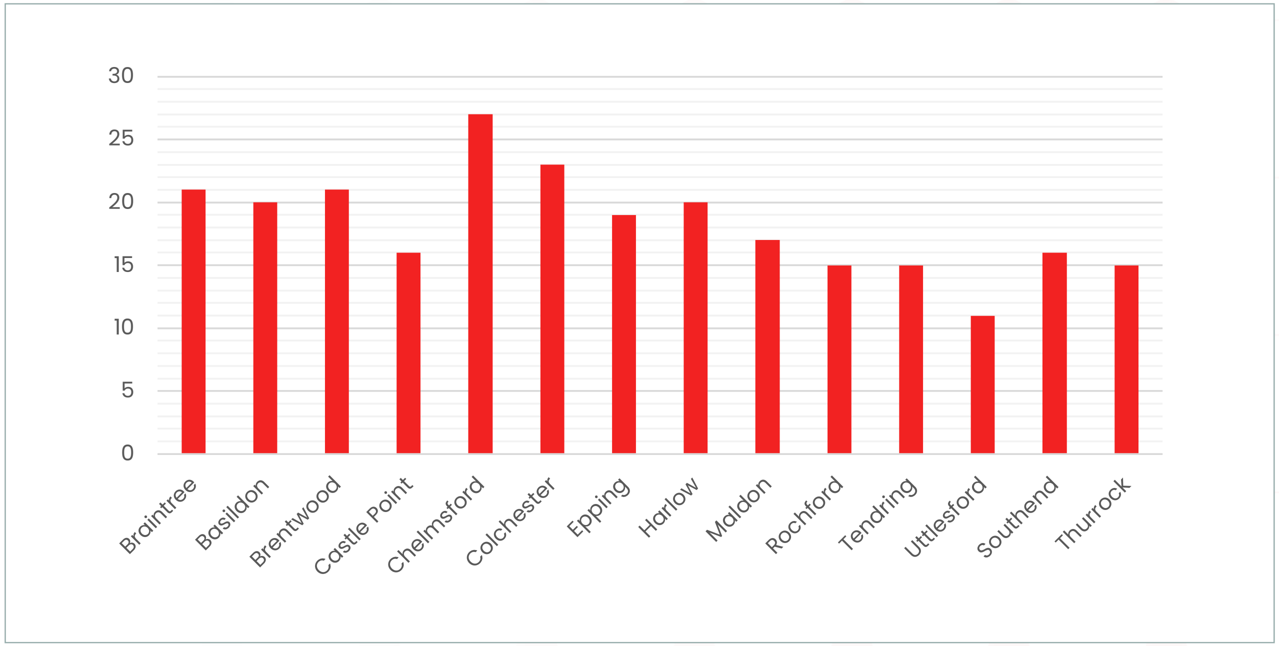
- 1:1 interviews with students, careers fairs, career talks to students.
- Encounters with employers/workplaces/employees.
- Work experience, completion of live projects, employer led masterclasses.
- Apprenticeships.
- Work placements, training needs analysis.
- Employment opportunities.
- We also engage in research and knowledge transfer activity. We also meet with many colleagues at various local committees, groups and organisations.
- Business support delivery (including workforce development).

Local Skills Improvement Plan – Provider & Employer Survey Results (continued)

Do you engage with employers in different locations in Essex?



If so, where?



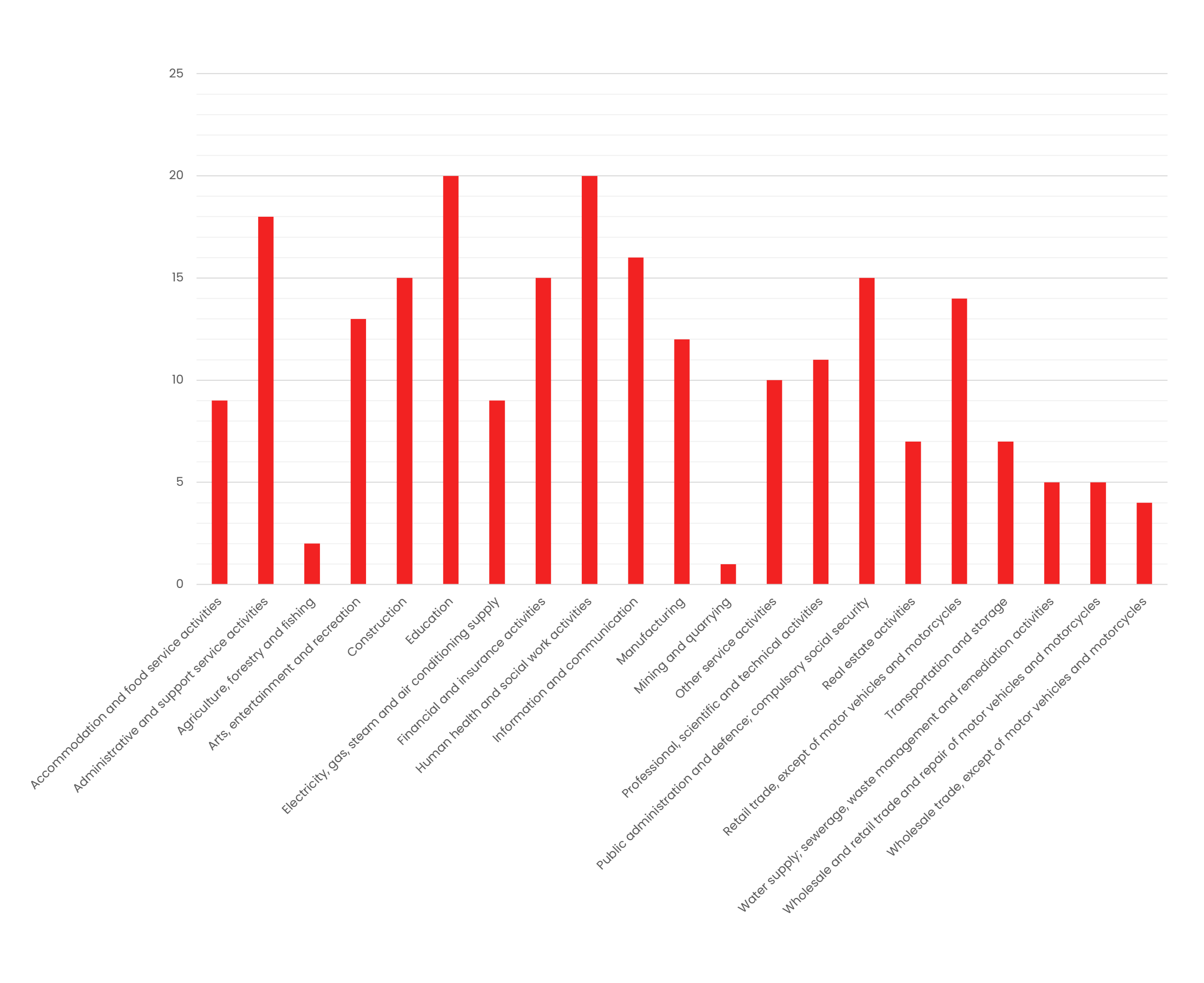
If you provide training for employers, what type of training/qualifications do you offer?

Other:

- We tend to deliver at Levels 4 to 7.
- Bespoke training solutions.

Local Skills Improvement Plan – Provider & Employer Survey Results (continued)

If you engage with employers, from what industry sectors do they come from?

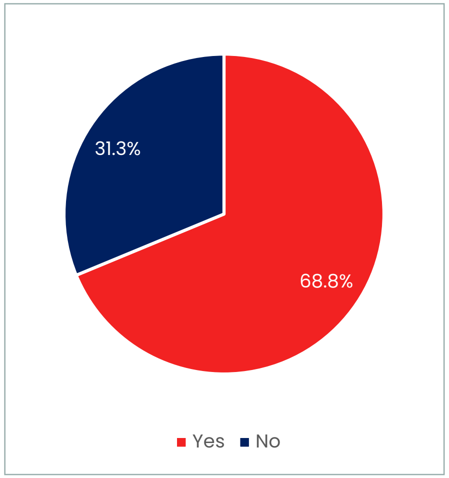


Other includes:

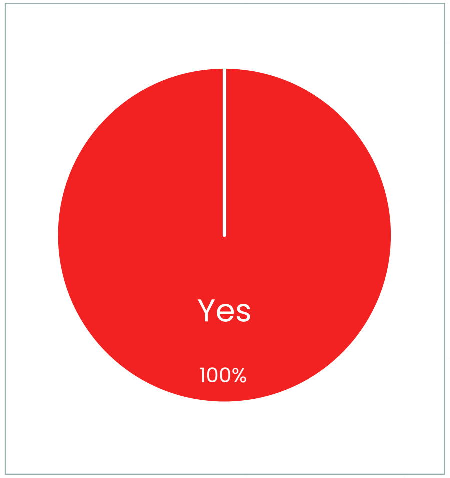
- Crown Prosecution Service.
- Recruitment.
- Equine, land-based, and animals.
- Health and social care.
- Beauty, nails, and hair.
- Hairdressing.
- Childcare and Adult social care.

Local Skills Improvement Plan – Provider & Employer Survey Results (continued)

Do you find it easy to engage with employers?



Would you like to do more with employers?



From your engagement with employers, what do you feel are key sectors Essex should be focussing on?

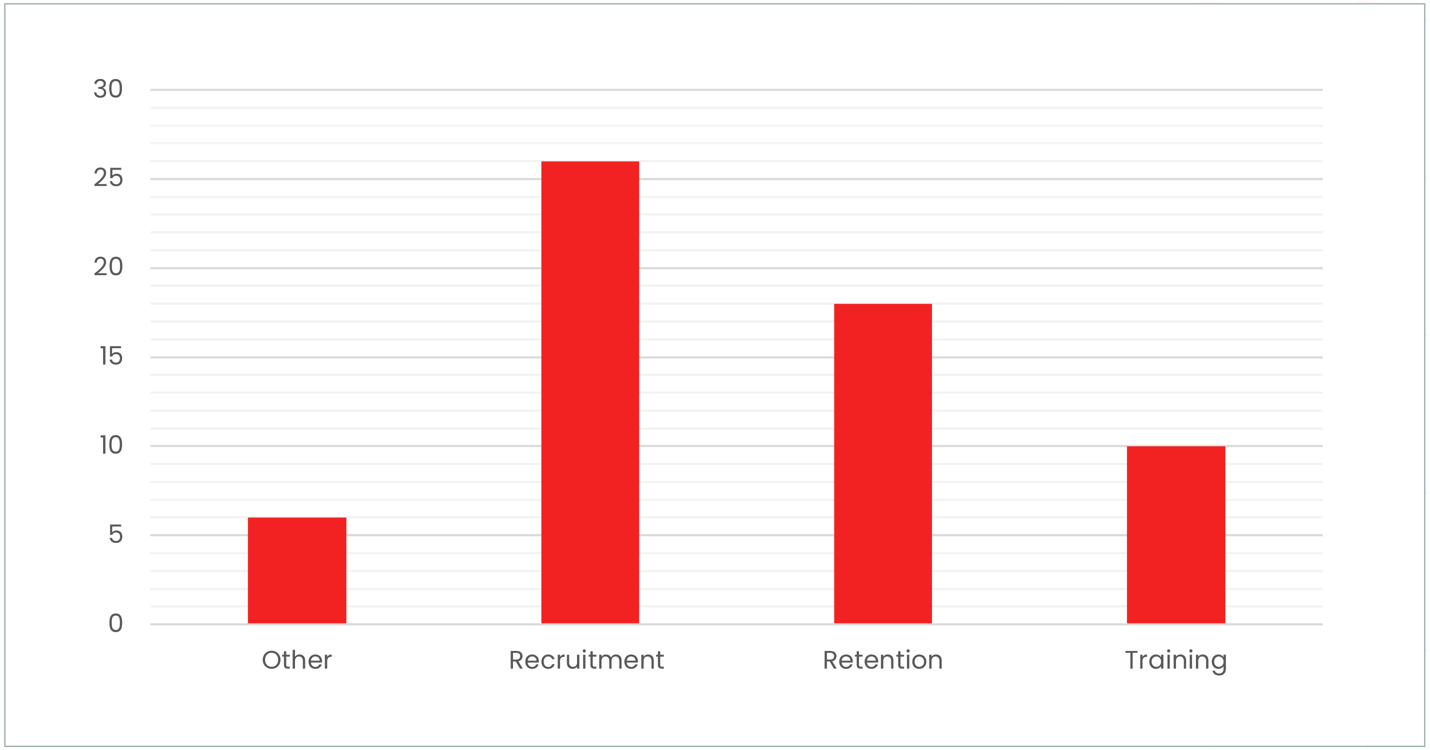
- Healthcare
- Education
- Construction and engineering
- Professional services
- Digital
- Green
- Hospitality and retail

From your engagement with employers, what skills are they asking you to focus on?

- Leadership
- Resilience/tenacity
- Soft skills
- Mental health
- IT skills
- English and Maths

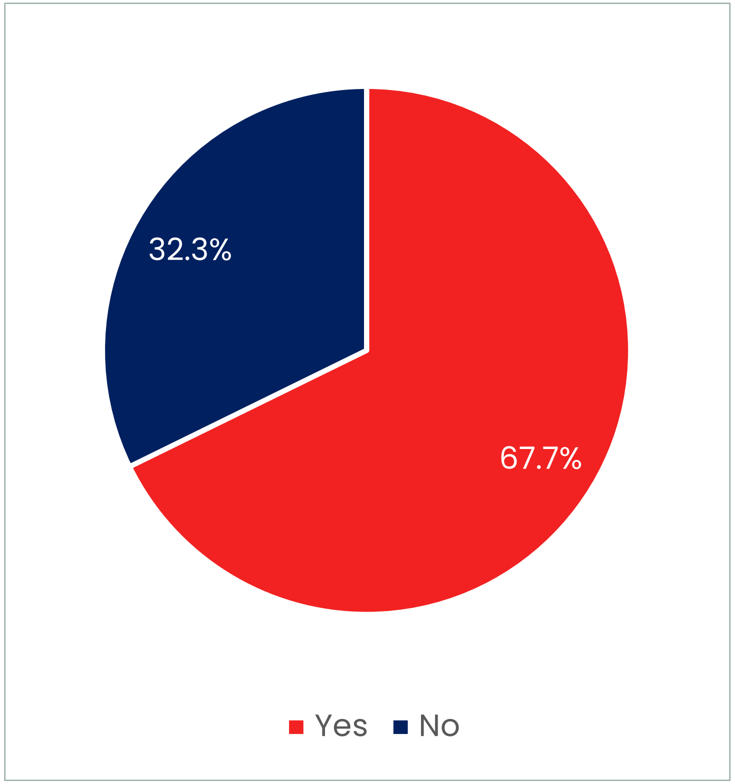
Local Skills Improvement Plan – Provider & Employer Survey Results (continued)

From your engagement with employers,
what barriers are they facing?



Local Skills Improvement Plan – Provider & Employer Survey Results (continued)

Does your organisation have recruitment and retention challenges?

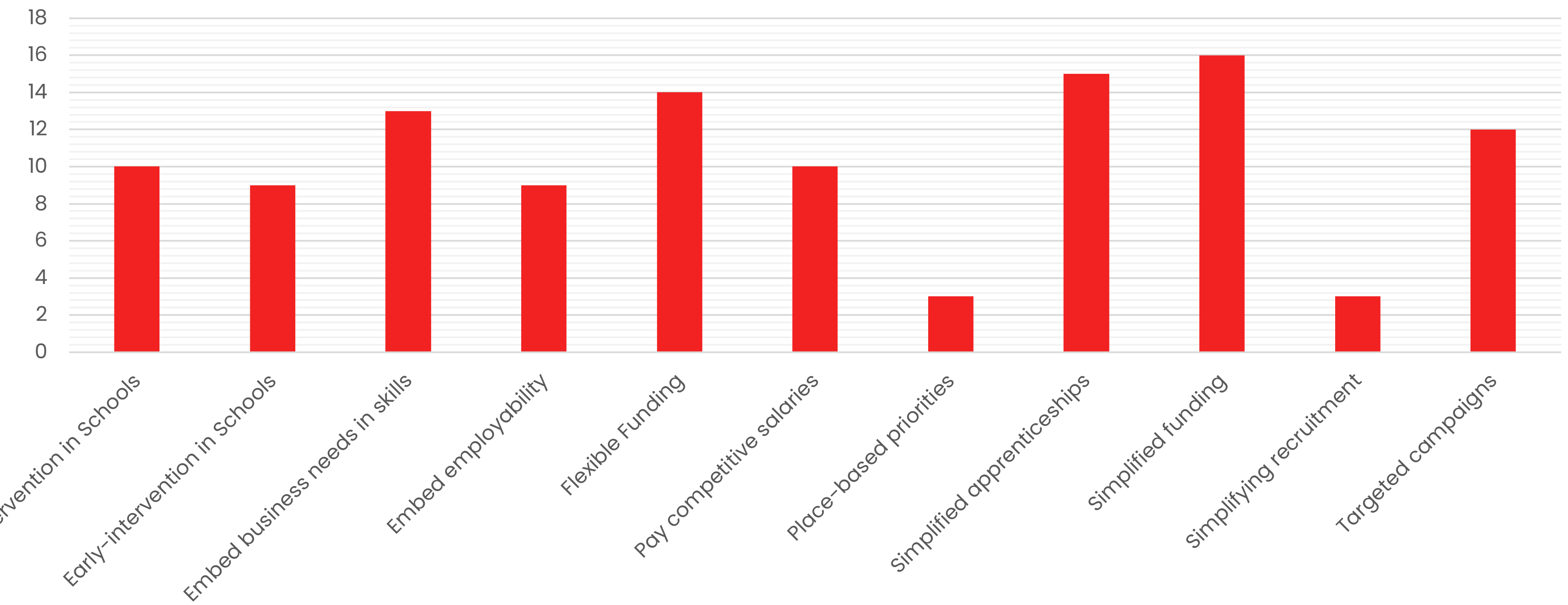


If yes, please specify:

- Teachers across the range of subjects, but also Admin roles, Security, IT, HR and Finance where better pay can be found in particular in the private sector but also in our local university.
- Recruiting highly skilled subject area experts in construction, engineering, business, with limitations on what salaries can be paid in comparison to what they can earn actually doing the job.
- Hard-to-fill vacancies in many areas often taking more than 12 months to fill and inadequate funding means wages not competitive.
- There are a shortage of applicants for all delivery posts including teaching. FE Colleges struggle to compete with both schools and industry where teachers can earn more money. This makes recruitment of new staff and retention of existing staff very difficult.

Local Skills Improvement Plan – Provider & Employer Survey Results (continued)

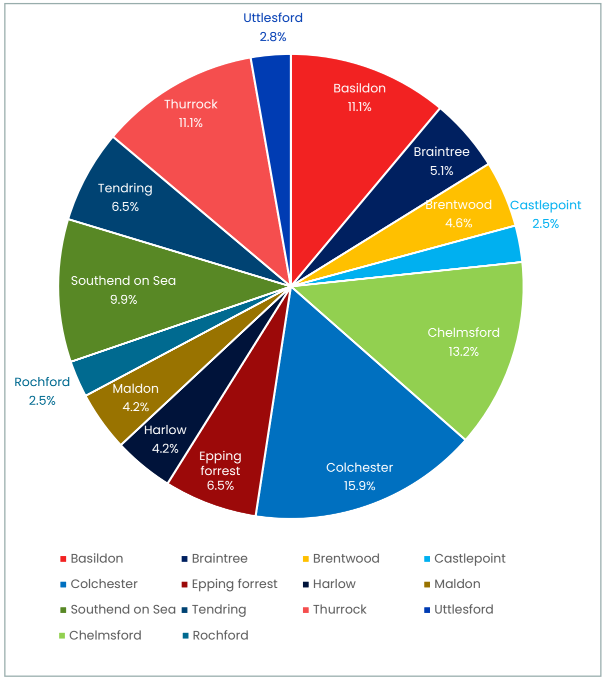
In your opinion, what are the top 3 priorities for the Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan?



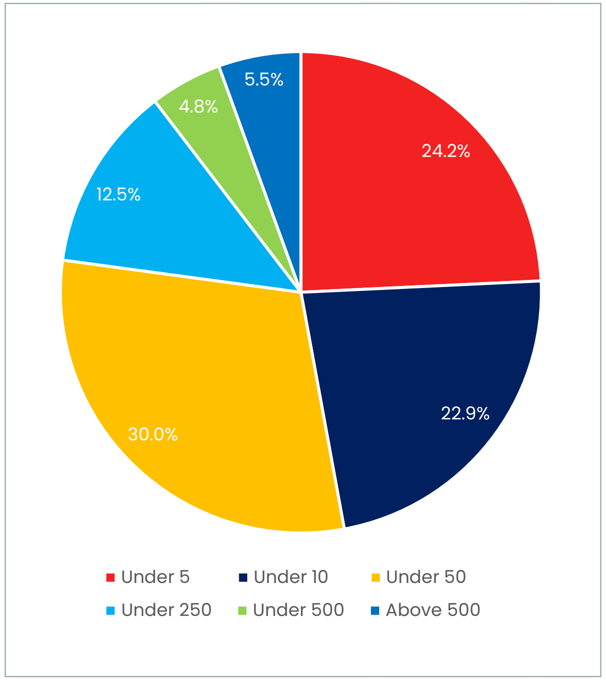
Local Skills Improvement Plan – Provider & Employer Survey Results (continued)

The feedback from the employer survey can be found here:

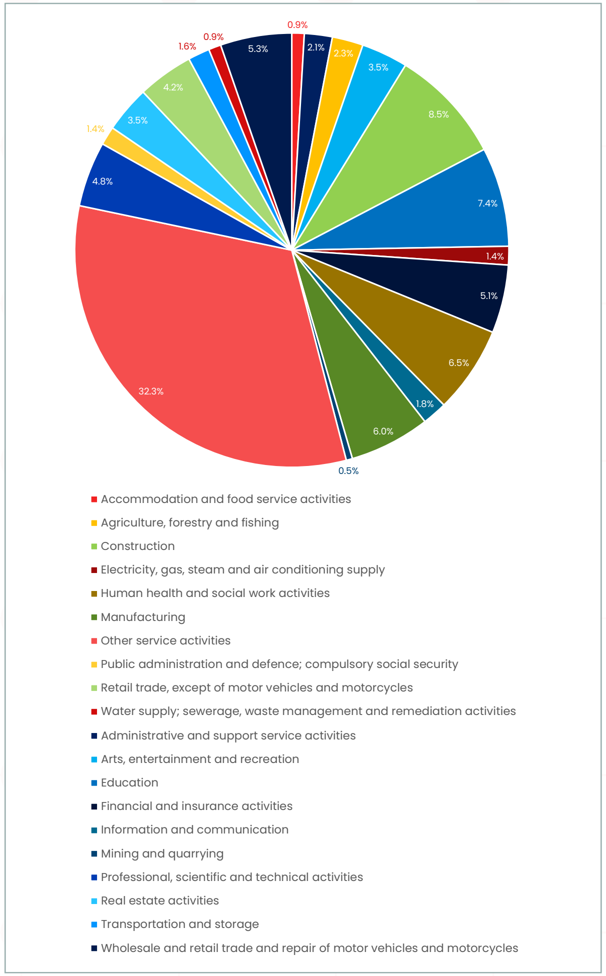
COMPANY LOCATION



COMPANY SIZE

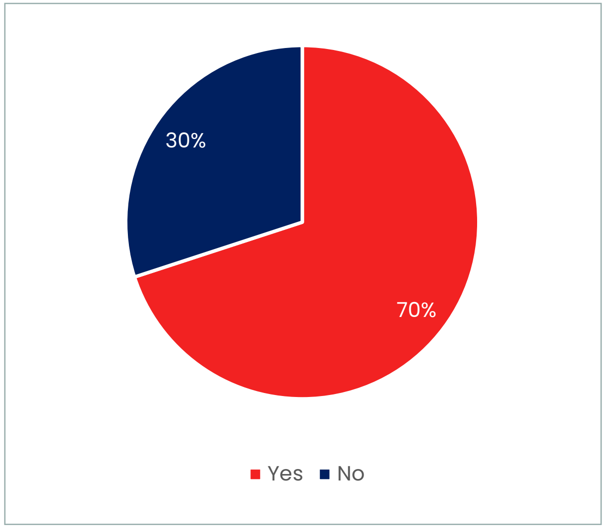


INDUSTRY SECTOR

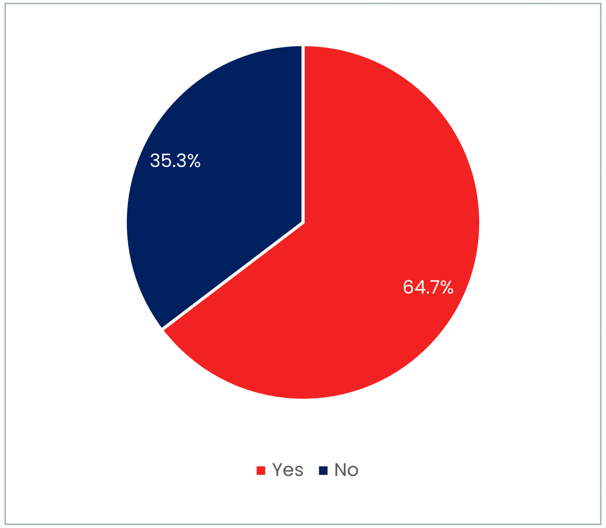


Local Skills Improvement Plan – Provider & Employer Survey Results (continued)

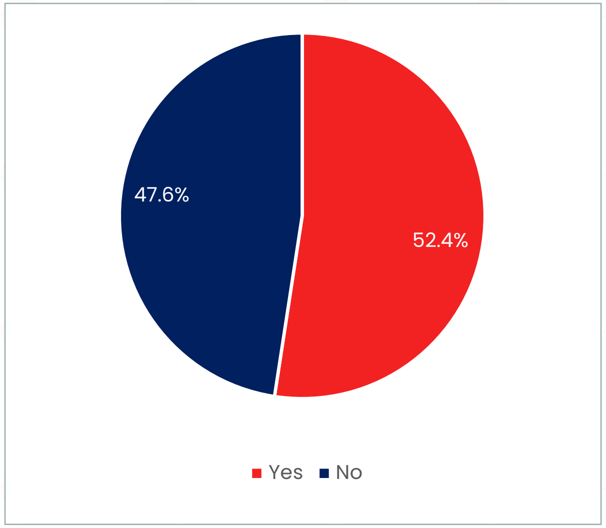
Have you recruited within the last 12 months?



Do you plan to recruit within the next 12 months?

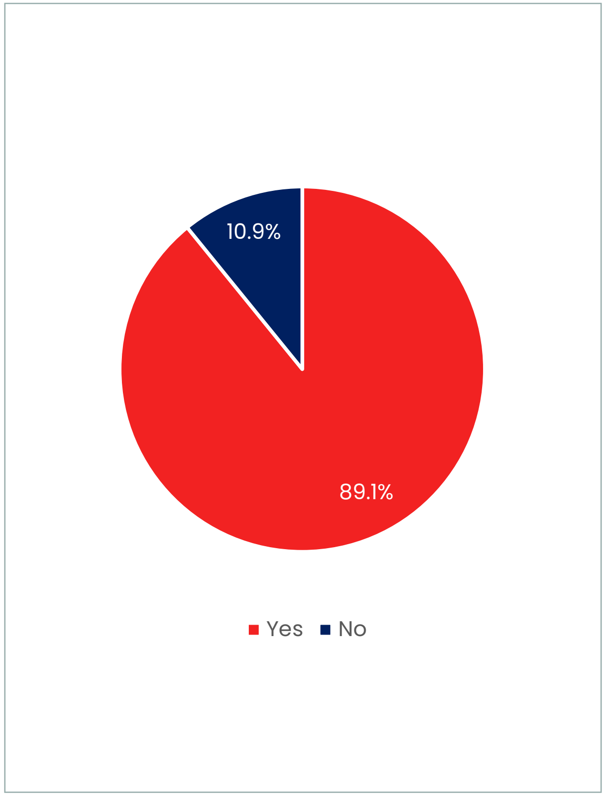


Do you generally find it easy to recruit?

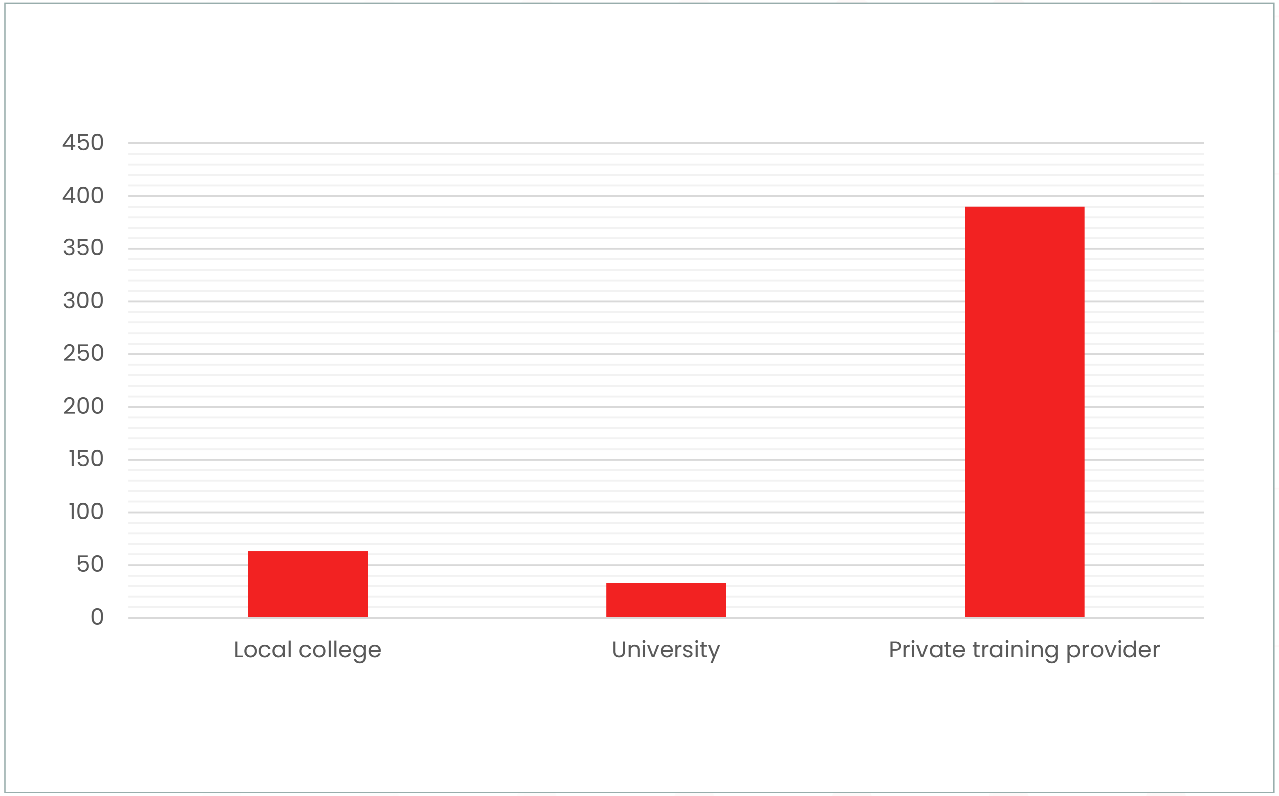


Local Skills Improvement Plan – Provider & Employer Survey Results (continued)

Do you currently offer training for your staff?

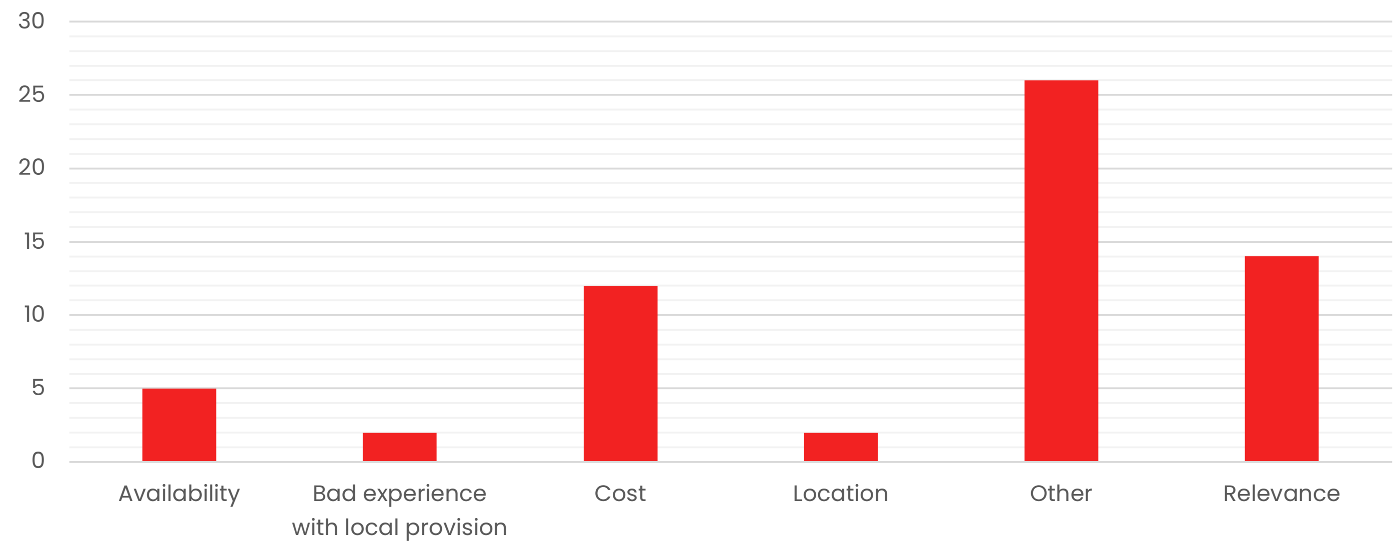


If yes, is this via a local college, university or private training provider?



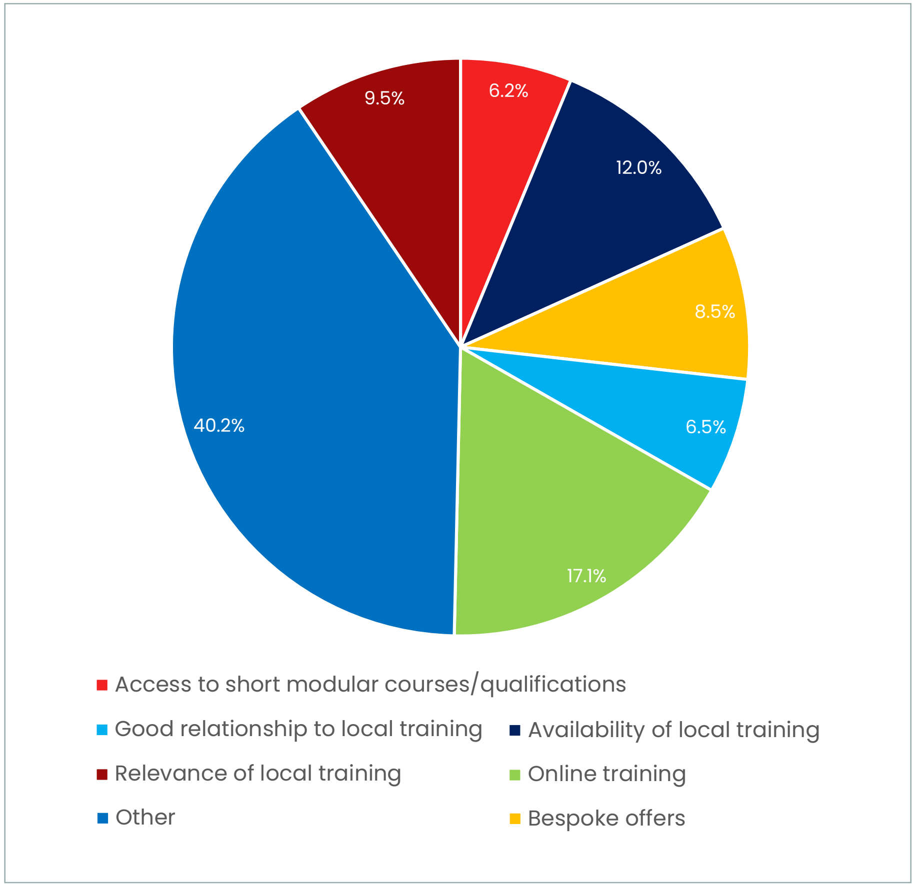
Local Skills Improvement Plan – Provider & Employer Survey Results (continued)

If no, what are the barriers?



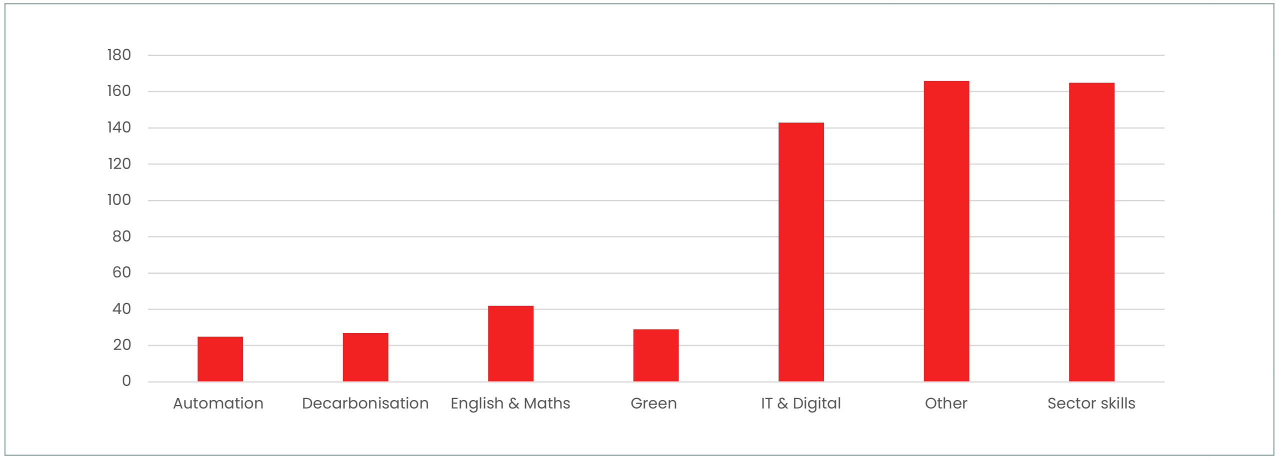
Local Skills Improvement Plan – Provider & Employer Survey Results (continued)

What would improve the skills supply for your business?



Local Skills Improvement Plan – Provider & Employer Survey Results (continued)

What skills is your business likely to need in the next 3-5 years?

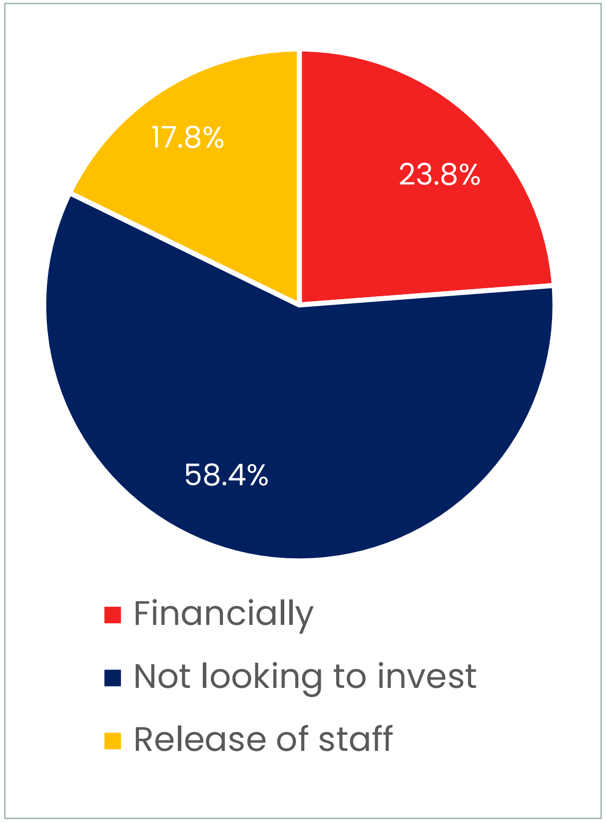


Other includes:

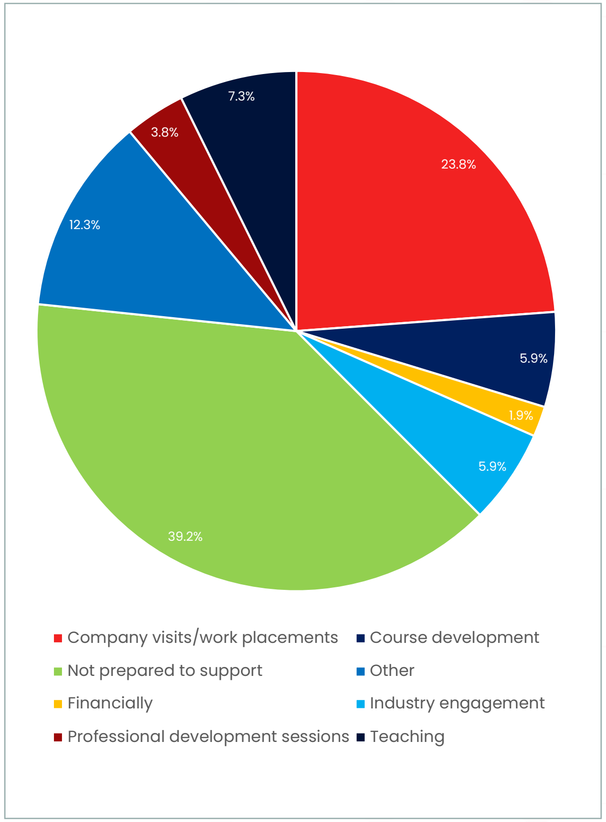
- Communication skills
- Specific health and safety skills needed and people with first aid training
- Retrofit skills which are not currently that available and cost of staff due to market conditions
- Company offers lone worker training and break away training, specialised skills required for this form of training
- Sales and organisational skills
- Their carpentry requires an artisan element - so requires specialist carpentry skills
- Need people with knowledge of carpentry, security, locksmith etc.
- Welders, engineers, gas engineers
- Veterinary
- Mechanics need experience to fully know what to do - hands on experience is required to know what to do
- Refrigeration and Gas safety engineers and stainless steel fabricators
- Creative thinking, confidence, imagination
- Dependant on how licencing regulations change - these will need to be adhered to but cannot be predicted
- Repair and maintenance skills and general building skills – heights
- Needs more training for working at heights
- Needs more courses in behaviour training, autism, speech etc.
- Tractor driving
- Hospitality skills
- Sales training, people management, leadership
- More qualified dentists
- Skill set required for new regulated body coming in near future and social media marketing skills are becoming more needed
- Hands on skills in the workshop
- Upgrade key staff electrical certification
- Maths and English - although not a high scoring skill required for us, to get our applicants on NVQ 2 trade apprenticeships generally school leavers and career changers need to have improved levels
- Scaffold courses
- Accounting and administration are most needed
- Ground workers, site managers, site supervisors
- Sales HTML
- Customer service and marketing skills
- RICS qualified staff
- Leisure skills such as swim teacher, lifeguards, coaches etc
- Recognised accredited qualifications
- Marketing support, leadership & management
- Building and quantity surveying skills
- Sports coaching aligned with National Curriculum needs
- Networking
- Sales and organisational skills
- Export related things, marketing
- Customer service and marketing skills
- Supporting people with autism
- Experience and resilience
- Neurodiversity, inclusion, mental health, mild learning difficulties etc.
- Health and Safety
- System engineering
- Engineering training courses to HNC Level 5
- Marketing, financial, design
- Availability of apprentices
- CIPD AND NEBOSH
- Director level
- Refrigeration, relevant gas and electrical appliance(s) training
- Skilled trades men / women

Local Skills Improvement Plan – Provider & Employer Survey Results (continued)

Would your company be prepared to invest in skills, and if so how?



Would your company be prepared to support colleges and providers?



01702 560 100

essexchambers.co.uk

Essex Chambers of Commerce