July 2026

Essex County Council
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Preparing for Adulthood: Why the summer holidays matter

Targeted Employment Newsletter

targetedemployment@essex.gov.uk

For young people with SEND, the summer holidays offer more than a break from school — they provide a valuable opportunity to build independence, confidence and social skills in a lower-pressure environment. It is also a great time to explore and research careers of interest, helping young people begin to think about their future pathways and aspirations.

This newsletter aims to share information, ideas and local opportunities that can help young people and families make the most of this time — supporting small, meaningful steps towards independence and preparing for adult life.

Inspiring aspirations and future pathways



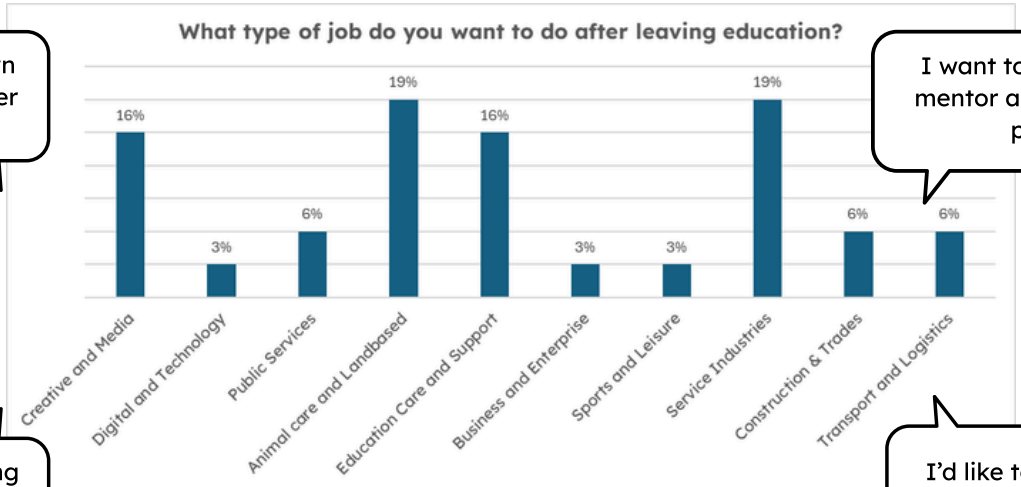
United in Diversity 2026: Pathways to Potential welcomed over 300 young people from 33 educational settings across Essex this year, highlighting the growing demand for inclusive opportunities that help young people explore their future pathways with confidence.

Many young people shared clear “dream job” ambitions, including roles in creative and digital industries, education and care, construction and engineering, transport and logistics. Interactive, hands-on activities provided by employers — such as creative workshops, construction, animal care engagement, and uniformed service activities — were frequently highlighted as favourites.

Importantly, feedback also showed that young people are already thinking positively about life after education, with aspirations spanning health and care, hospitality, business, technology, and land-based careers. We are delighted that this event continues to play a vital role in raising expectations, broadening horizons, and helping young people see how their interests can link directly to future employment and training opportunities.

I want to own my own cafe and employ other people

I want to be a student mentor and help young people



I’m interested in being a chef when I leave school

I’d like to work on an oil rig

AI Disclosure: This document may contain content drafted or refined with the support of OpenAI tools used to enhance clarity and communication

Pathways to potential





The event created valuable opportunities for young people to engage directly with employers and learn more about the world of work. The range of hands-on activities offered was particularly impactful, allowing them to explore different job roles in a practical and interactive way. These experiences not only helped to bring careers to life and encouraged curiosity about future pathways, but also supported the development of important social and communication skills.

These are the very same skills that can continue to be nurtured beyond such events, particularly during less structured times such as the summer holidays. Young people can:



Build on the confidence gained from speaking with employers by practising conversations in everyday settings such as shops, cafés or community groups



Take part in local activities, volunteering opportunities or short holiday programmes - these mirror the hands-on experiences from the event, allowing young people to try new tasks, develop problem-solving skills and explore different interests



Practice travelling more independently or managing their own time during the day to help reinforce the independence, communication and social skills





We are currently working with employers regarding the format of next years event to ensure young people who are not currently in full-time education can attend alongside educational settings - so watch this space!

A thank you to our employers







We could not run the event without the employers that gave their time to work with our young people in making the day such a success. We would like to extend a big thank you to:

All Things Alpaca
ANURAG FOOD STORY
Balfour Beatty
Chelmsford College
Endeavour Co-operative Academy
ENSIGNA
Essex County Council Libraries
Essex County Council
Ford
Making Fitness Accessible
MEDEQUIP
MORGAN SINDALL GROUP
NHS
Pinnacle Group
SWIFT BRICKWORK CONTRACTORS LTD
TRAVEL TRAINING
Embracing Differences, Creating Opportunities
WASHCLUB
One Soap at a time









Supporting the transition to post-16 education

As September approaches, many young people and families will be preparing for an important milestone: the transition from school to post-16 education. Whether a young person is moving to sixth form, further education college, a supported learning programme, an apprenticeship or a Supported Internship, the summer provides a valuable opportunity to build confidence, develop independence and prepare for the changes ahead.



Looking ahead: planning future transitions

Even if a young person is not due to leave school this year, it is never too early to begin preparing for adulthood. Building aspirations, independence and employability skills should be viewed as a gradual process that starts long before Year 11. This can supported this by:

- Talking regularly about hopes, dreams and future ambitions
- Encouraging young people to make choices and decisions for themselves
- Exploring different jobs, careers and workplaces together
- Building independence skills at home
- Supporting participation in EHCP reviews and transition planning

Understanding the difference between school and college



Moving from school to college can be a big change, with greater expectations around independence and personal responsibility. Preparing for these differences can help build confidence and reduce anxiety. At college, young people are generally expected to:

- Take more responsibility for managing their timetable
- Organise coursework and deadlines independently
- Travel independently where possible
- Communicate directly with tutors and support staff
- Manage free periods and unstructured time appropriately
- Take greater ownership of decisions about their future

Build travel confidence

Independent travel plays an important role in helping young people access education, employment and their community. Developing travel confidence can increase independence and open up future opportunities. Families can:

- Practise the journey to the new setting several times
- Learn bus or train routes together
- Discuss what to do if services are delayed/cancelled
- Save important contact numbers in a mobile phone
- Practise reading timetables and using journey planning apps
- Consider Travel Training opportunities where available



Develop everyday independence skills



Encouraging the following skills can help young people feel more prepared for the increased independence expected in post-16 settings:

- Setting their own alarm clock
- Packing their own bag or equipment
- Managing a daily routine
- Preparing simple meals
- Handling small amounts of money
- Using a calendar or phone reminders
- Attending appointments and asking questions independently where appropriate

Preparing for post-16 life

Help reduce anxiety, build confidence and encourage young people to become active participants in planning for their future by:

- Visiting the new site and locating key facilities
- Attending induction events and reviewing maps or information available online
- Identifying where support staff can be found and who to approach for help
- Discussing any worries about starting somewhere new
- Talking about what support works well, preferences and reasonable adjustments that may be needed





A positive step towards adulthood

The transition to post-16 education is much more than changing educational settings - it's an important step towards adulthood. Every young person's journey will be different, but with the right preparation and support, post-16 transition can become a positive opportunity to develop the skills, confidence and independence needed for adult life, employment and community inclusion.

Promoting independence skills and wellbeing

Celebrating catering skills in action!

Learners from Endeavour Co-operative Academy did an outstanding job preparing and serving food at United in Diversity, showcasing both their practical skills and growing confidence.

As part of the settings personalised approach to education, students are supported to develop the skills they need for adulthood and the world of work. Through an embedded careers curriculum and strong focus on Preparing for Adulthood, learners gain valuable real-life experiences that build independence, teamwork and communication skills.

The event provided an excellent opportunity for young people to put their learning into practice. From food preparation and presentation to delivering a high standard of customer service, they demonstrated professionalism and pride throughout their work. Their contribution was a fantastic example of how meaningful work-related opportunities help raise aspirations and prepare young people for future pathways.

Well done to all those involved and the positive impression made on the organisations attending!





Supporting independence through accessible cooking

Tesco's Accessible Recipes are a great example of how everyday activities can be made more inclusive for SEND young people. With clear, step-by-step instructions, simple language, visual prompts and practical adaptations, these recipes support young people to prepare meals more independently and safely.

Cooking is an essential life skill, and resources like this help build confidence, decision-making and independence at home and in adulthood. By removing barriers and presenting information in an accessible way, young people are empowered to take part in daily routines, supporting their journey towards greater independence and wellbeing.

Free Online Mental Health Support with Kooth

Kooth is a free, **safe and anonymous online mental health and wellbeing service** for young people. It provides access to self-help resources, wellbeing activities, peer support, moderated forums and confidential support from trained counsellors.

Available online 24/7, Kooth allows young people to access support at a time that suits them, without the need for a referral or waiting list. The service is designed to help with a range of issues, including stress, anxiety, low mood, school pressures and emotional wellbeing.

To find out more go to:
www.kooth.com

Building confidence and having fun!

Holiday independence programmes

Specialist holiday programmes across Essex are designed to support SEND young people aged 11–18 to develop independence in safe, supportive settings.

The Independence Project (ages 8–18) focuses on helping young people build social skills, self-esteem and confidence through group activities in the community. Families complete an intake assessment to ensure the right level of support is in place, helping young people feel secure while gradually becoming more independent.

SEND Sensation (via Essex Short Breaks) also offers clubs across the county for secondary-aged young people, with activities such as cooking, sports, music, dance and day trips. Programmes are delivered at different support levels, ensuring young people can develop life skills while having their individual needs met.

Visit the Essex Local Offer for details on on other support , groups and activities available.



Essex Youth Service: Summer Activities 2026

Looking for something to do this summer? Explore activities running across Essex during the holidays.

Click on your area to see what's happening or go to:

https://youth.essex.gov.uk/young-people/summer-activities-2026/



For young people 18+ and just a 10 minute bus ride from Basildon station via B5 (www.timemusiccharity.com)

Saturdays 11am–12pm

Harlow Amateur Boxing Club

Harlow Amateur Boxing Club is offering **free inclusive neurodiverse boxing lessons** for children, young people and adults aged 5+.

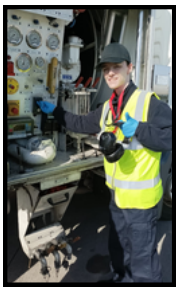
Sessions are **designed to improve fitness, confidence, focus, memory, coordination and social connections in a fun and supportive environment**. All coaches are DBS checked, first aid trained and have completed child protection training.

Book via Frontline or for more information email: harlowboxingclub@yahoo.co.uk or call 07789996019

Supported Internships: Celebrating success!

Taking flight: Vinny's next step

In our last newsletter, we shared Vinny's Supported Internship journey and we are delighted to report that he has successfully secured a paid position as a Delivery Assistant with the F&B section at London Southend Airport.



Congratulations on this well-deserved success, and thank you to the colleagues and teams who supported the journey along the way. We wish Vinny every success in this exciting new role!

Harry Secures NHS role

Congratulations to Harry, who has secured a second permanent role with the NHS as a Ward Host after completing a Supported Internship with Chelmsford College - and being offered the position after just two interviews!



Harry's achievement highlights the value of Supported Internships in helping young people develop workplace skills, confidence and experience which can then lead to sustainable employment.

Harvey's hard work pays off

Congratulations to Harvey, who has secured a paid contract at Thurrock Garden Centre following a highly successful Supported Internship. Harvey impressed staff with a positive attitude, enthusiasm for learning and strong workplace relationships.



To top off this fantastic achievement, Harvey was also named SEND Student of the Year by Thurrock SEND Alternative Provision.

A huge well done to Harvey on these well-deserved accomplishments!

Alice secures paid employment

An exciting milestone has been reached for Alice, who has secured paid employment with her work placement following a successful Supported Internship at the Hive Cafe!

Alice's dedication, commitment and growing skills in the workplace impressed her employer, leading to the offer of a paid role. We wish Alice every success as she begins this new chapter in her career.



Supported Internships...

- Are work-based study programmes designed to help young people with SEND transition into paid employment
- Combine real supported workplace experience with a study programme
- Are for young people aged 16-24 with a current Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) who want to progress into paid employment as an end goal
- Typically last one academic year with a minimum of 6 months in a work setting

Components of a Supported Internship

Employment
Delivered in partnership with local employers

Education
Delivered by college who coordinate the programme and support

Job Coach
Supports in the workplace in learning tasks & building confidence

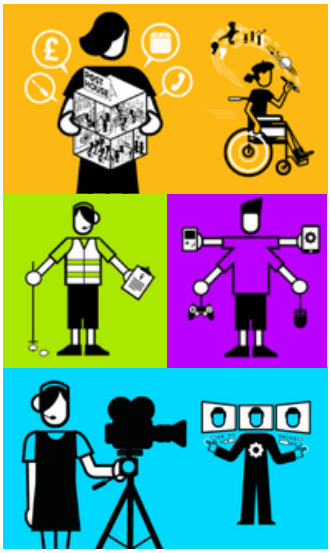
Person Centred
Tailored to individual strengths, interests and aspirations

For more information on this pathway and to find the contact details for your local college delivering Supported Internships please go to:

Section 5 of the Preparing for Adulthood: Parents and carers guide to post-16 opportunities

Exploring careers and new resources

Creative Careers: Discover, explore and create your future with ScreenSkills

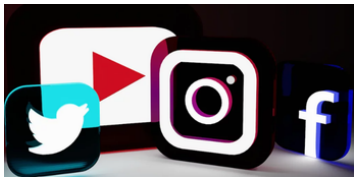


Young people looking for inspiration this summer can discover a wide range of exciting career options through the ScreenSkills website. The site is packed with information about jobs in film, TV, animation, games and visual effects, helping users explore roles they may never have considered before.

ScreenSkills offers interactive tools such as a job profile matcher, which helps young people identify careers that suit their interests and strengths. There are also detailed job profiles and career maps, giving clear information about what each role involves and the skills needed to succeed.

The website also provides practical advice on how to get started, including information about courses, apprenticeships, work experience and training opportunities. It also includes a useful section on FAQs for parents whose young people are considering a future creative career.

This is a great resource for anyone interested in creative industries or unsure about their next steps after education. Exploring the site could spark new ideas, build confidence for the future, and encourage young people to explore different pathways while considering the skills and experiences they want to develop.



Creative Careers Hub: Where could your interests take you?

Young people can also explore and research creative career options through the Youth Employment UK Creative Careers hub.

The site showcases a wide range of roles—from graphic design to media and digital careers—helping young people understand what different jobs involve and how their interests could lead to future opportunities. It also provides advice on routes into work, including apprenticeships, courses and gaining experience, supporting learners to build independence as part of preparing for adulthood.

Building Resilience: New Resources from NeuroEmpower

Two free resources are available to support the emotional wellbeing of neurodivergent young people and their families. **Emotional Check-In Cards for Teens** provide practical tools to help young people identify and communicate their feelings, while **Building Resilience in Neurodivergent Children** offers evidence-based strategies to help children develop confidence, self-advocacy and coping skills. Both resources are designed to promote positive wellbeing and resilience.

To access go to: https://neuroempower.org/resources

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT UK LATEST NEWS — THE VOICE OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Discover new ways to support young people

Youth Employment's **Quick Start Guides** are designed to help educators explore free employability resources with ease. Learn what each resource offers, why it matters, and how to use it to build engaging, meaningful employability learning.

Free Resources help young people recognise their strengths

What's Your Strength? offers free downloadable resources designed to help young people and adults recognise their skills, strengths and potential. The website includes downloadable worksheets, skills checklists, glossaries, career planning tools, journals and interactive activities, supporting confidence-building and self-awareness. Resources are free to access and can be used by young people, parents, educators and careers professionals.

What's your strength?

Other news and opportunities



A Royal Honour for Enterprise East Group

Enterprise East Group has been awarded a **King's Award for Enterprise for Promoting Opportunity**, recognising its Inclusion & Thrive programme, which helps disadvantaged adults build confidence, develop skills and move into meaningful employment.

Founder Samantha McReynolds said the award highlights the belief that "everybody deserves the opportunity to thrive, regardless of the challenges they may face" and celebrates the positive impact that confidence, inclusion and community support can have on people's lives.

To learn more about Enterprise East and the **Inclusion & Thrive Employability Programme** go to: https://enterpriseeast.org/

Supported Learning Courses for 2026–27

Supported Learning courses offer opportunities for adults with learning disabilities and/or autism to develop skills, build confidence and increase independence. ACL also offer a **Bridging Course** to help neurodivergent individuals aged 19+, and not in education or work prepare for their next steps in education, training or employment.

Click for information on Supported Learning and Bridging Course opportunities

Accessible apprenticeships at ACL

ACL's accessible apprenticeships offer paid jobs, nationally recognised qualifications and personalised adjustments for SEND learners. This includes flexible entry requirements, hours and tailored support to help young people succeed.

Click this link to find out more or email: ACL.Apprenticeships@essex.gov.uk

Train for a career that makes a difference

For those looking to start or progress a career in health and social care or early years, ACL's fully funded Poppins and Nightingale programmes offer flexible, supportive training designed to build confidence, skills and job-ready experience. For more information email: Lifelong.Learning@essex.gov.uk

Introducing Deaf Wave

Deaf Wave is a new online space, co-created with deaf young people to support mental health and wellbeing.

SignHealth's new website also offers information for deaf young people alongside relevant counselling, workshops and one-to-one support.

Hamelin Employment Support

Hamelin's **Links Project** is offering **free employment support for autistic adults and people with learning disabilities across the Chelmsford, Braintree and Basildon districts**. The service provides help with CV writing, building confidence, exploring work options and discussing gaps in employment history.

Weekly drop-in sessions are available in all three locations, giving individuals the opportunity to access personalised advice and support in a relaxed environment. Alongside employment support, Links also helps people develop new skills, pursue hobbies and expand their social networks through community activities.

For more information, scan the QR code, visit www.hamelin.org.uk or email links@hamelin.org.uk

Next Steps Essex: Free Support for Young People

Get Set for a better tomorrow

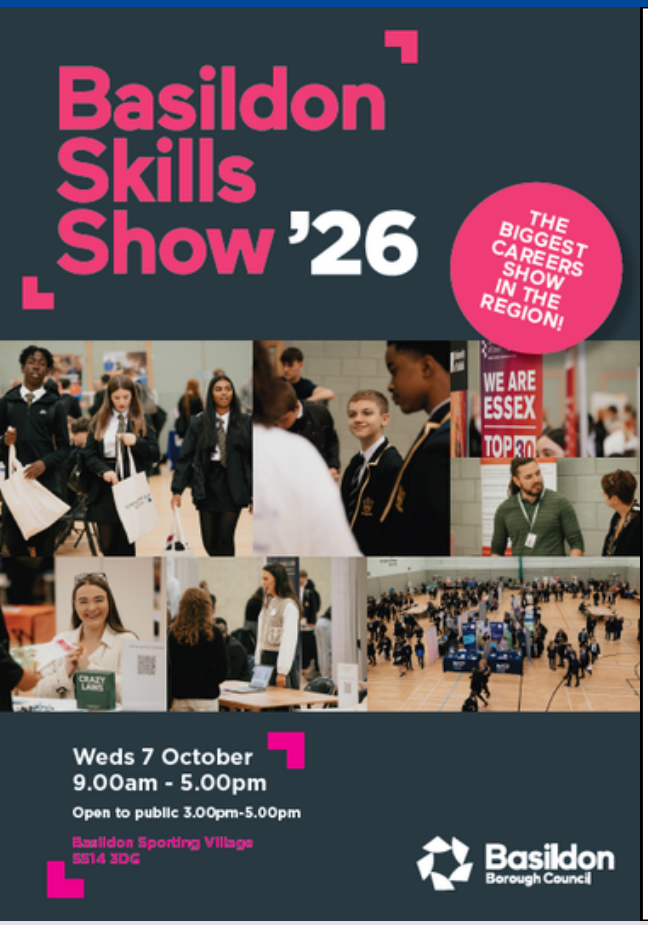
Next Steps Essex provides free one-to-one support for young people aged 16–26 who are NEET, or at risk of becoming NEET, **where mental health or emotional wellbeing is the main barrier to moving forward**.

The service helps young people build confidence, develop life skills and access education, training, apprenticeships and employment opportunities.

For more information or to make a referral, visit www.getsetuk.co.uk/next-steps-essex or email:

claire.mackaness@getsetuk.co.uk (Mid, South & West)
steven.brand@getsetuk.co.uk (North Essex)

Key reminders and upcoming events





Preparing for the Future
9 & 10 November 2026
(free online PfA information event)

We're delighted to invite parents and carers to **Preparing for the Future**, a free online information event taking place on 9 and 10 November 2026.

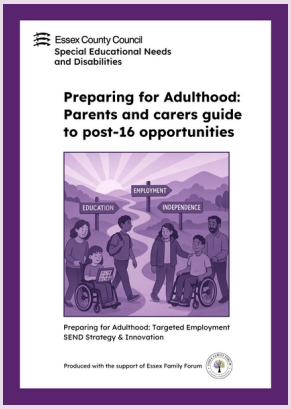
Developed in response to feedback from families, the event will provide clear and consistent information to help parents and carers support young people aged 13 to 25 and beyond as they plan for adulthood.

The event, delivered in partnership with Essex Family Forum, Essex Carers Network and other key services, will cover topics including education, employment, independent living, and community inclusion. Sessions will offer practical guidance to help families feel more confident about future planning.

Be the first to receive updates & booking details: **https://forms.office.com/e/BqtRutQvmz**

ESSEX CARERS NETWORK

Essex County Council



Don't forget to download your copy of the **Preparing for Adulthood: Parents and Carers Guide to Post-16 Opportunities**. The guide helps families understand the full range of options available to young people after age 16 and brings together clear, accessible information on post-16 education and training routes, employment pathways, Supported Internships, apprenticeships, travel training and wider Preparing for Adulthood support. It also includes a link to our up-to-date **events calendar**, helping families keep track of information sessions, workshops and opportunities throughout the year.

FREE DOWNLOAD

https://www.essexopportunities.co.uk/post-16-parents-carers-guide/post-16-parents-carers-guide/



The information provided in this newsletter about various organisations and services is intended to be impartial and informative. We do not endorse or favour any particular organisation over others. Our goal is to present a balanced view to help readers make informed choices; opinions and views expressed are those of the respective organisations. If you would like information included in our next newsletter please email us at:

targetedemployment@essex.gov.uk