Greater Essex CAREERS HUB

THE CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY

ANNUAL REPORT

Academic Year 2025/26

WEX PILOT

16 schools

1,180 students

YOUTH VOICE

3 youth council workshops

21,351 FSQ completitons

FUTURE READY

20 schools

350 year 8 students

BOOSTING SKILLS PATHWAYS

60% of 52 employers engaged with project, would like to host a T Level student

3,608 young people reached

COMMS

48,455 impressions this year on LinkedIn

9,780 views on instagram

CPD TRAINING

105 schools engaged

31 training opportunities

EMPLOYERS

302 employers engaged

42 project plans co-designed

CASE STUDIES

11 new case studies this academic year - showcasing collaboration, inclusion and flaexible solutions

5,137 views of our website

CONFERENCE

130 attendees

education 63

36 employers

stakeholders 31

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INTRODUCTION

As I reflect on the 2025/26 academic year, I am incredibly proud of what has been achieved through the collective efforts of schools, colleges, employers, local authorities, careers professionals and young people across Greater Essex. This year has shown the power of working together around a shared ambition: ensuring every young person, whatever their background or circumstances, can access meaningful opportunities, raise their aspirations and make informed decisions about their future.



Throughout the year, the Greater Essex Careers Hub has strengthened connections between education and the world of work, supported more strategic careers education, expanded employer engagement, amplified youth voice and tested new approaches to work experience and technical pathway awareness. These activities have benefited thousands of young people while helping to build a more connected careers ecosystem across Essex, Southend and Thurrock.

Partnership and collaboration have been central to this progress. Our strongest outcomes have come when employers, educators and partners have worked together to innovate, share expertise and co-design inclusive solutions that give young people meaningful encounters, experiences and insight into future opportunities.

This year has also reinforced important lessons: careers education has the greatest impact when it starts early, employer encounters are purposeful, inclusion is built in from the beginning and young people's voices shape decision-making. These principles will continue to guide our priorities as careers education plays an increasingly important role in supporting skills development, social mobility, economic growth and reducing the number of young people who become NEET.

The achievements highlighted in this report are a testament to the commitment, passion and expertise of partners across Greater Essex. I would like to thank every school, college, employer, local authority, training provider and stakeholder who has contributed to this work, and my Greater Essex Careers Hub colleagues, whose professionalism, creativity and determination continue to make a real difference. Together, we are building a careers system shaped by young people, connected to employers, inclusive by design and focused on improving outcomes for every learner.

Hyla

Hyla Grimwade
Strategic Hub Lead

TRANSFORMING WORK EXPERIENCE

1,180 student experiences

23 exsisting employers engaging with WEX

82 new employers engaged

16 educational institutes taking part

One of the most significant developments this year has been the Greater Essex Work Experience Pilot.

Working with 16 schools and a growing employer network, the pilot explored how to make work experience more meaningful, inclusive and progressive. Schools and employers moved beyond a one-off Year 10 activity to create experiences that support career development throughout a young person's journey.



Starting earlier: Evidence from the pilot highlighted the value of introducing workplace experiences before GCSE option choices are made. Through a Key Stage 3 "Introduce and Inspire" approach, students have been given opportunities to explore sectors, understand pathways and connect classroom learning to real working environments. This approach helps students make more informed decisions about subject choices while broadening awareness of future opportunities.

Building a more inclusive model: Schools highlighted the need for work experience opportunities that better support disadvantaged learners, SEND students and those without established family networks. Employers equally expressed a desire for practical guidance on how to create meaningful opportunities for all young people.

The pilot has enabled employers and schools to work together to design solutions that meet these needs while maintaining quality and scalability.

Greater Essex Careers Hub: WEX PIlot Report 2025/26 | **Download Here**

BOOSTING SKILLS PATHWAYS

The Boosting Skills Pathway Project was developed to increase awareness, engagement and progression into technical education pathways, including T Levels, apprenticeships and careers within priority growth sectors across Greater Essex.

60% of 52 employers engaged with project, would like to host a T Level student

2,140% increase in active users on the Greater Essex Careers Hub T Level webpage

4,843 Linked In post impressions achieved

52 businesses engaged directly with the project

3,608 young people reached

Key Themes and Learnings

1. Early exposure has the greatest impact

The project found that younger learners, particularly Year 8 students, showed the highest levels of engagement. This suggests that introducing technical and vocational pathways earlier in a young person's education can positively influence career awareness and future decision-making.

2. Opportunities into schools increases participation

Delivering activities directly in schools reduced logistical barriers, increased attendance and enabled a wider range of young people to participate.

3. Engagement is strongest when linked to workforce needs

Employers responded most positively when discussions focused on recruitment, workforce development and future skills shortages. Employers valued hearing directly from students, to help build understanding of the benefits of supporting future talent pipelines.



Greater Essex Careers Hub: Boosting Skills Pathways Report 2025/26 | **Download Here**

FUTURE READY





2025/26 marked the first year of the **Future Ready programme**, an ambitious five-year initiative designed to explore the impact of providing young people with up to **10 days of progressive workplace experiences** throughout years 8 to 10. The Greater Essex Careers Hub is proud to be one of only **10 Careers Hubs nationally** successful in their bid to pilot this innovative programme.

Working with **350 Year 8 students in receipt of free school meals, from 20 schools**, Year 1 focused on introducing learners to future careers and types of employment at an earlier stage, inspiring them to consider different roles and sectors that they may not otherwise have known about.

Through numerous employer-led workplace visits, students were encouraged to broaden their aspirations and begin making connections between education and future employment.

The first year has established a strong foundation for the programme, demonstrating the value of engaging students before key transition points and creating a framework that will continue to develop and expand as it follows the students through their secondary school journey.

Future Ready: Year One

- 1 of 10 Careers Hubs nationally selected to pilot the programme
- 5-year programme examining the impact of progressive career-related experiences
- 10 days of employer and workplace experiences across a learner's journey
- 350 Year 8 students engaged in Year 1

Future Ready is helping us understand how sustained, progressive employer engagement can build aspiration, develop employability skills and improve career readiness; reducing NEET rates and providing employers with 'work-ready' employees.

YOUTH VOICE







Putting young people at the heart of our work

During 2025/26 we engaged directly with young people through a series of interactive workshops, listening events and Youth Voice activities. Through engagement with the Young Essex Assembly, Thurrock Youth Cabinet and Southend Make Your Mark event, young people shared their views on the future of careers education across Greater Essex.

Their message was clear: careers education should be practical, personalised, inclusive and connected to the real world. Young people told us that they value:

- **High-quality** work experience opportunities
- **More** interaction with employers
- Careers fairs that are **engaging** and **relevant**
- **Personalised** careers guidance
- Better access to information about **pathways**
- **Greater inclusion and representation of all routes into employment**

Greater Essex Careers Hub: Youth Voice Report 2025/26 | **Download Here**

Youth voice driving employer innovation

42 employer opportunities co-designed

302 Greater Essex employers engaged this year

26% specifically designed for SEND/AP learners

16 sectors represented

Feedback gathered through Youth Voice activities helped shape **42 new** employer engagement opportunities across Greater Essex. Young people consistently told us they wanted careers education that was **practical**, **inclusive** and **connected to real employers**. In response, Employer Specialist Enterprise Coordinators worked with businesses to co-design opportunities spanning **16 sectors**.

Opportunities were developed across engineering, infrastructure, manufacturing, construction, law, property, health and social care, sustainability, environmental services, creative media, digital industries, local government, logistics, telecommunications, heritage and vocational education.

Example: Students can now explore careers in robotics and environmental technology through Algaenic; law through Birketts and Ellisons; engineering through AECOM, BT Openreach and UK Power; and sustainability through SUEZ.

What opportunities were created?

- Work experience placements
- Open Doors workplace visits
- Employer-led challenges
- STEM activities and hackathons
- Workplace mentoring
- Mock interviews
- CV workshops
- Apprenticeship awareness sessions
- Digital and creative projects
- Teacher encounters

Inclusion by design

Many opportunities were specifically developed for:

- SEND learners
- Alternative Provision learners
- Disadvantaged young people
- Students with limited professional networks

CAREERS ECOSYSTEM

Careers Leader training



Over two days of Careers Leader training in Braintree, Careers Leaders from across Greater Essex strengthened their understanding of Gatsby Benchmarks, careers strategy and evaluation.

Participants reported immediate changes to action plans and careers strategies, while the programme helped build confidence and consistency across the network. This training is helping schools move beyond activity delivery towards strategic careers leadership.

> ***I will be writing up my notes and adding them to my action plan, redoing my careers strategy plan and adding benchmarks to plan and programme.***
>
> Careers Leader

Employers becoming long-term partners

Employer engagement continues to evolve from one-off encounters into sustainable partnerships. During the year, organisations including Ellisons Solicitors, Royal Mail, AECOM, Colas Rail and many others developed structured employer offers including open doors experiences, work experience, careers talks and mentoring opportunities. Employers increasingly recognise careers engagement as a way to develop future talent pipelines while supporting social value ambitions.







Creating a network of careers excellence



Throughout 2025/26, the Greater Essex Careers Hub continued to strengthen the careers community across Essex, Southend and Thurrock through a programme of Careers Leader networks, peer-to-peer reviews and professional development opportunities.

All schools and colleges were invited to attend termly Careers Leader meetings, to collaborate, share best practice and stay informed about local, regional and national developments in careers education. Meetings were hosted by employers, colleges and strategic partners, giving attendees the opportunity to explore workplaces and learning environments first-hand through guided tours alongside targeted CPD sessions. Recent meetings have included sessions at USP College, South Essex College and ROM Theatre Arts College, helping Careers Leaders develop a deeper understanding of post-16 pathways, local skills priorities and emerging opportunities for young people.

This year the Careers Hub has expanded its **peer-to-peer review programme**. These reviews brought together clusters of three schools, alongside their Careers Leader and Senior Leadership Team link, for a full-day deep dive into careers provision. Using a structured review process, participants explored each school's careers curriculum, reviewed strengths and areas for development, shared effective practice and identified high-priority actions to take forward. The collaborative approach enabled schools to learn from one another while creating clear, evidence-based improvement plans linked to Gatsby Benchmarks and wider school priorities.

> **Fantastic opportunity to network, evaluate and share ideas. Excellent opportunity to peer review in a relaxed environment and this will aid the careers progression in our school.**
>
> Senior Leader, Peer-to-Peer Review

Careers Leaders value working with peers facing similar challenges, helping schools build confidence, strengthen planning and improve consistency. This has grown into a connected careers community that shares knowledge, resources and innovation to improve outcomes for young people.

Supporting parents to support young people



A dedicated Parental Engagement CPD programme helped Careers Leaders strengthen communication with families and improve access to careers information. The training focused on practical approaches for engaging parents and overcoming common barriers. One attendee reported:

> **I now feel confident to go and create a communications plan and implement next steps to enhance parental engagement.**

The programme recognised the critical role parents play in shaping aspirations, choices and progression decisions.

Inclusion beyond specialist settings



This year saw the development of dedicated support for SEND learners in mainstream education. Careers Leaders received guidance, resources and CPD focused on embedding SEND into careers programmes and preparing young people for adulthood. The Careers Hub also supported Southend's Interactive Careers Day, bringing together young people from special schools, mainstream SEND departments, Alternative Provision and home-educated settings to engage directly with employers and post-16 providers.

Listening to over 20,000 student voices

During 2025/26, more than **20,145** young people completed the Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ), creating **one of the largest student voice datasets across Greater Essex**. The insight gathered has helped schools, colleges and the Careers Hub better understand students' aspirations, confidence levels and knowledge of future pathways.

The data highlight clear trends, identifying significant differences between year groups, helping schools target support and employer engagement more effectively.

The FSQ has been used by Careers Leaders to:

- Identify gaps in careers knowledge
- Inform strategic careers planning
- Shape employer engagement activity
- Target support for specific cohorts
- Strengthen Gatsby Benchmark delivery
- Better understand aspirations and skills needs

What young people are telling us they would like help with:



What the data is telling us:

- **Creative careers** are consistently **popular across all year groups**, appearing in the top three career interests from Year 7 through Year 11
- Students show **increased interest** in **Finance, Engineering** and **Health**-related pathways as they move into **Key Stage 4**
- **84-88%** of young people **lack confidence** in their awareness of **local employers** and businesses
- Understanding of employer expectations remains a challenge, with **72-82%** of students **lacking confidence** in the **skills employers value**
- Confidence in **understanding Apprenticeships grows**, reducing the knowledge gap from **90% of students in Year 7** to **66% in Year 11**
- **Awareness of T Levels** is particularly low, with **84-98%** of students reporting that they **do not fully understand** this post-16 option

Greater Essex Careers Hub: FSQ Report Summer 2025/26 | **Download Here**

IMPACT STORY

Creating opportunities for every learner

St Clere's School and Endeavour Co-operative Academy



A powerful example of inclusion this year came through the partnership between St Clere's School and Endeavour Co-operative Academy.

When it became clear that a traditional block placement would not be the most suitable option for Karim, a learner with severe hearing loss and cerebral palsy, both schools worked collaboratively to develop a personalised work experience pathway.

Through vocational profiling, tailored support and a flexible placement model, Karim was able to build confidence, independence and employability skills in a way that reflected his individual needs.

The success of the programme has influenced wider school practice, leading to earlier vocational profiling and more personalised careers planning for learners with additional needs.

We believe that work experience plays a vital role in shaping young people into confident, capable individuals. It gives students the chance to step beyond the classroom, discover their strengths, and gain a clearer sense of the futures they want to pursue.

We are proud to have students who achieve fantastic grades however, we know that universities and employers are looking for more than academic excellence alone. Extra curricular, real world experience, character, initiative and resilience are becoming just as important.

Work experience is a powerful part of that journey, and we are committed to supporting our students as they take these important steps toward their future aspirations.

Jon Purkiss. Headteacher at St. Clere's School

IMPACT STORY

Rethinking work experience for the future

Saffron Walden Museum



Working through the Work Experience Pilot, Saffron Walden Museum transformed a traditional placement model into a structured one-day experience for Year 8 students.

The redesigned activity enabled a small team to engage fifteen students in meaningful workplace tasks, including object documentation, collections management and photography. Student work was so strong that some outputs were retained and used by the museum. The new format has significantly increased reach while reducing pressure on staff.

This case study demonstrates that meaningful employer engagement does not require large organisations or extensive resources. With clear outcomes and thoughtful design, even small employers can have a significant impact.

We were really pleased to be invited to take part in the pilot and find new and sustainable ways to offer work experience opportunities to learners in the Uttlesford District. It has become increasingly difficult to offer the traditional 1 to1, 3 day to week long placements as we simply do not have the staff capacity to do so, due to the supervision that is required. We were regularly turning students away.

The pilot with Forest Hall school was very successful, enabling us to work with 15 pupils rather than one, and gave a much more engaging and honest demonstration of the kind of work that is carried out in Museums, and the routes that can be taken to get there. This is far superior to the basic tasks of sharpening pencils, preparing craft materials and patrolling the galleries which we might usually have to offer on a standard work experience placement.

Charlotte Pratt, Learning and Outreach Officer

IMPACT STORY

From employer engagement to future talent

Princeps



Princeps, a specialist electronics company in Harlow, began their journey with a single Teacher Encounter.

From that first engagement, the organisation progressed to delivering assemblies, supporting work experience placements and identifying future apprenticeship candidates. Six students completed work experience placements during the year, with one student progressing towards a future apprenticeship opportunity.

The programme has demonstrated how school engagement can strengthen talent pipelines, support recruitment strategies and deliver meaningful social value.

> **We've identified future leaders within our own team through mentoring students - skills that might never have surfaced otherwise.**
>
> **Community engagement isn't just good PR; it opens doors. We've won opportunities because of it.**
>
> Andrew Green, Product and Capabilities Manager, Princeps

IMPACT UPDATE:

Turning one event into lasting impact:

7 school workshops **8** work experience placements **3** mock interview days **1** apprenticeship in development

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Let's make it work!

Thursday 2nd July | ARU Chelmsford

Our annual conference brought together 130 attendees from education, business and partner organisations to share practice, celebrate success and shape future priorities.

AGENDA

9:30 **Arrival and Networking**

10:00 **Welcome and Reflections on Academic Year**

10:30 **WEX Pilot Panel**

11:15 **Workshop 1: Modern Work Experience Workshop**

This session explored modern approaches to work experience, helping participants develop a shared understanding of structured and meaningful workplace experiences beyond traditional placements.

12:15 **Lunch and Networking**

13:15 **Workshop 2:**

T Levels for Employers

This session aimed to raise awareness of the business benefits of hosting a T Level student and how T Levels can play a key role in establishing your talent pipeline.

T Levels for Education

This session helped raise awareness of T Levels as a alternative pathway for young people.

Careers Education as a NEET prevention tool

This session explored how careers programmes can raise aspirations and support successful transitions into education, training or employment.

Supported Internships

This session provided an overview of Supported Internships, highlighting the benefits for both young people and employers.

14:15 **Annual Awards**

14:30 **National priorities and reforming work experience**

Kerry Senatore - Programme Manager at The Careers & Enterprise Company

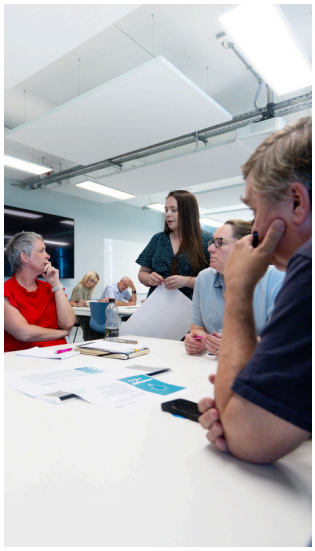
15:00 **What is your best next step?**

ANNUAL CONFERENCE













ANNUAL CONFERENCE

WEX Pilot Panel:



Wendy Malsen
Careers Advisor
The King Edmund School



Rav Samjawon
Assistant Headteacher and Careers Lead
The Gilberd School



Louise Warren
Employee Experience Lead
Epping Forest District Council



Matt Barry
Executive Creative Director
Blue Serif



Kate Green
Health & Care Academy Manager
NHS Essex



Matt Coffey
Assistant Head of Sixth Form and Careers Lead
The FitzWimarc School

Work experience is our apprenticeship scheme - Matt Barry

It's about remembering it's about them. It's not about us - Louise Warren

I didn't even know this was a job - Student feedback shared by Kate Green (A powerful example of the impact workplace experiences can have on broadening young people's horizons.)

If I can get that right for them, there's a 99% chance we're getting it right for everyone else - Matt Coffey (speaking about designing opportunities for SEND learners)

Main themes:

- **Meaningful experiences** - focus on quality and impact rather than counting placement days. Ensure activities are relevant, engaging and student-centred.
- **Earlier career exposure** - introduce workplace experiences in Years 7-9 rather than waiting until Year 10. Help students explore careers before making option choices. Challenge stereotypes and broaden aspirations at an earlier age.
- **Inclusion and accessibility** - adapt experiences to meet individual student needs. Use preparation visits, student profiles, social stories and flexible approaches.
- **Strong employer-school partnerships** - collaboration leads to better outcomes for students and employers. Long-term relationships create sustainable opportunities.
- **Flexible models** - Open-door events, workplace visits, projects, workshops and virtual experiences can be just as valuable as traditional placements.
- **Building confidence and employability skills** - Communication, teamwork, resilience and professionalism were highlighted as critical outcomes. Confidence was repeatedly identified as one of the most important results of workplace experiences.
- **Supporting future talent pipelines** - employers see work experience as a way to inspire future recruits with early engagement helping address skills shortages.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Feedback:

It was a superbly organised and informative event. My understanding of T Levels has grown significantly too.

Fiona Tomlinson – Essex County Council

Great panel! Really insightful approaches to modern WEX. Thank you for sharing your ideas and experiences.

Matthew Ashworth – Assistant Headteacher, Anglo European School, Chelmsford

You and the team rock! It was such a great and well organised event andI'm keen to see if we can get more employers and businesses involved.

Matt Barry - Blue Serif

I came away with some brilliant new connections, fresh ideas, and creative approaches to developing meaningful work experience.

Sabrina Codrington – Thurrock Council

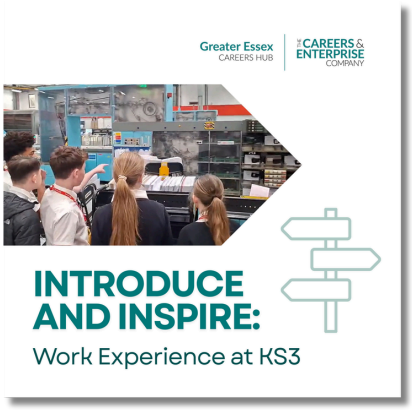
Events like this highlight the importance of collaboration in helping young people developthe skills, confidence and opportunities they need for the future.

Clare Pettini-West – Akins Realis

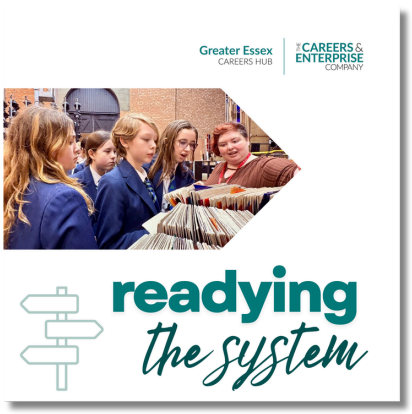
NEWS & CASE STUDIES

Greater Essex Careers Hub: News Page









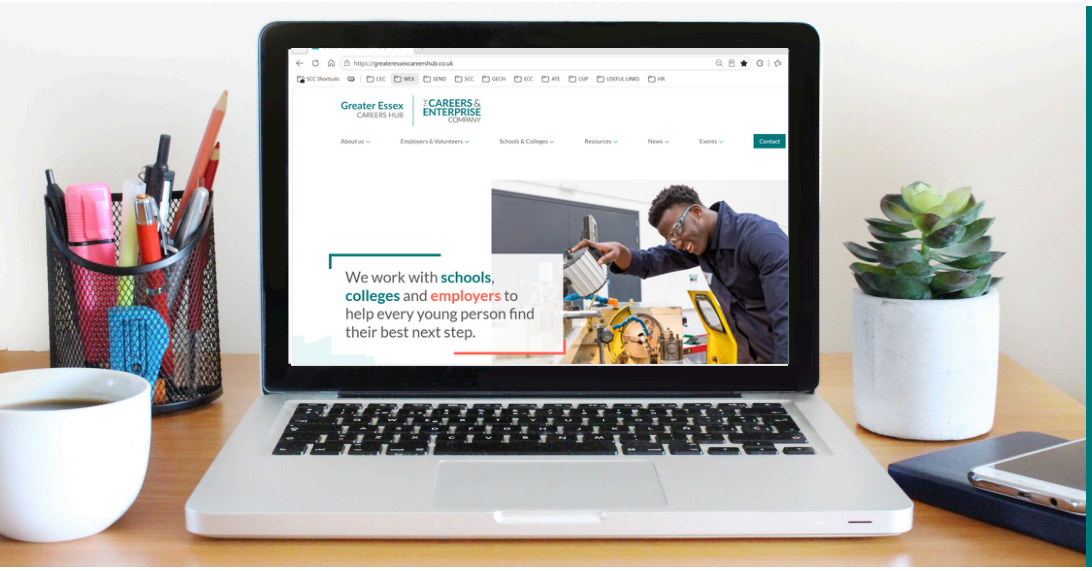




Greater Essex Careers Hub: Case Studies Page



ONLINE PRESENCE

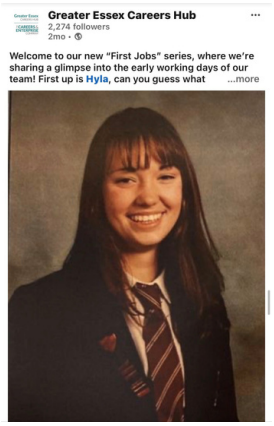


48,455
impressions this year on LinkedIn

9,780
views on instagram

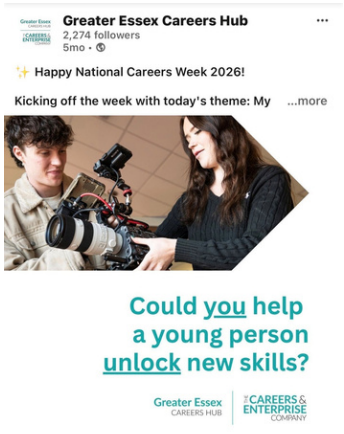
5,137
views of our website

Social media posts













2025/26 KEY THEMES

Driving innovation in work experience

The Work Experience Pilot has provided an important opportunity to explore new models of employer engagement and workplace learning.

Evidence emerging from the pilot suggests that effective work experience is increasingly characterised by flexibility, progression and clearly defined learning outcomes. Schools and employers have begun to move beyond traditional models towards experiences that are embedded within broader careers programmes and aligned with educational objectives.

Particular emphasis has been placed on earlier intervention, ensuring that young people are exposed to workplace environments and career pathways before key educational decisions are made. This approach supports informed decision-making while helping students understand the relationship between education, skills development and future employment opportunities.

Strengthening the careers ecosystem across Greater Essex

During 2025/26, the Greater Essex Careers Hub continued to strengthen the regional careers ecosystem by fostering collaboration between education, employers, local authorities and strategic partners.

Through targeted programmes, network development and stakeholder engagement, the Hub has expanded opportunities for young people while supporting schools and employers to play a more active role in developing future talent pipelines. This approach has enabled a greater alignment between careers education, labour market need and employer demand, ensuring that young people are better prepared to navigate an increasingly complex landscape of education, training and employment opportunities.

Enhancing employer engagement and social value

This year has demonstrated the willingness of employers across multiple sectors to contribute to careers education when provided with clear pathways for participation and meaningful opportunities for collaboration. Engagement has ranged from small and medium-sized enterprises to major national employers and public sector organisations.

Increasingly, employers are recognising careers engagement not solely as a social value activity but as an opportunity to contribute to workforce development, improve talent attraction and support longer-term recruitment strategies. The growth in employer participation reflects a shared commitment to developing the future workforce across Greater Essex.

Broadening horizons and raising aspirations

Throughout the year, Careers Hub activity has sought to expose young people to the breadth of opportunities available across the local and regional economy.

A recurring theme emerging from employer engagement activity has been the limited awareness many young people have of sectors, occupations and pathways that exist within their local communities. By facilitating encounters with employers across a diverse range of industries, the Hub has supported young people to challenge assumptions, expand aspirations and gain a more informed understanding of future opportunities.

This remains an important priority as Greater Essex continues to address skills shortages and support economic growth across key sectors.

Advancing inclusion and equity

This year has highlighted the importance of designing opportunities that are accessible, flexible and responsive to the needs of individual learners. Successful approaches have demonstrated that inclusion is most effective when embedded at the point of design rather than applied retrospectively.

Through ongoing collaboration with schools, employers and specialist partners, the Careers Hub has continued to support the development of careers programmes that seek to remove barriers to participation and ensure that all young people can access meaningful opportunities regardless of background or circumstance.

KEY STRATEGIC INSIGHTS



2025/26 important lessons

- **Early engagement** with employers has a significant influence on aspiration, awareness and decision-making
- Careers education is most effective when integrated into a **whole-organisation approach** rather than delivered as a standalone activity
- **Meaningful** employer encounters often have **greater impact** than large-scale, transactional engagement activities
- Employers are increasingly prepared to support education when engagement opportunities are clear, purposeful and **aligned to business priorities**
- **Inclusion** must remain a **central design principle** in all careers activity
- **Youth voice** provides valuable insight that **strengthens decision-making** and **improves programme relevance**

COMPASS+

THE CAREERS LEADER DASHBOARD



System achievement

2025/26 marked the first year that Greater Essex secondary schools achieved Gatsby Benchmark performance in line with the national average.

This demonstrates the impact of sustained investment in Careers Leader development, employer engagement and whole-school approaches to careers education.

NEXT ACADEMIC YEAR 2026/27

The learning from 2025/26 has shaped eight strategic workstreams that will guide activity across Greater Essex during 2026/27. Together, these workstreams will help us build a careers system that is shaped by young people, connected to employers, inclusive by design and focused on improving outcomes for every learner.

Our priorities

1. **Youth voice driving system change**
   We will continue to embed youth voice across all areas of activity, ensuring young people's views directly inform programme design, employer engagement, careers resources and strategic decision-making. Building on the successful co-design of 42 employer opportunities this year, we will further strengthen mechanisms for listening to and acting on young people's feedback.

2. **Work experience reform**
   Building on the findings from the Work Experience Pilot, we will support schools and employers to develop a more progressive, meaningful and inclusive model of workplace experiences. Activity will focus on earlier employer engagement, stronger curriculum links and equitable access to opportunities for all learners.

3. **Essential skills and employability**
   Using insights from the Future Skills Questionnaire and employer feedback, we will continue to help schools embed essential skills development throughout careers programmes. Particular emphasis will be placed on communication, teamwork, problem-solving, creativity and career readiness.

4. **Employer participation and talent pipelines**
   We will continue to expand employer participation across the region, helping organisations engage meaningfully with education while supporting future workforce development. Activity will focus on strengthening talent pipelines, increasing employer encounters and creating sustainable partnerships across growth sectors.

5. **Careers as a driver of educational outcomes**
We will support schools and colleges to position careers education as a strategic lever for improving attendance, engagement, aspiration, inclusion, destination outcomes and school improvement priorities.

6. **Aspiring Pathways**
A flagship programme for 2026/27, Aspire Pathways will increase equitable access to meaningful workplace experiences for learners in Alternative Provision. Through strengthened partnerships, targeted employer engagement and tailored support, the programme aims to improve confidence, employability skills and progression outcomes while reducing the risk of learners becoming NEET.

7. **Future Ready**
As one of only ten Careers Hubs nationally selected to deliver the programme, Future Ready will move into Year 2, helping young people develop career readiness, employability skills and confidence through progressive employer encounters and workplace experiences.

8. **Technical, vocational and future skills pathways**
Building on the success of the Boosting Skills Pathways project, activity will focus on increasing awareness, uptake and progression into technical education routes including T Levels, apprenticeships and careers within priority growth sectors. Employer engagement and learner-facing activity will support understanding of future workforce opportunities across Greater Essex.

Conclusion:

2025/26 has been a year of growth, innovation and collaboration. As we move into 2026/27, we will build on this momentum, expanding opportunities for young people, strengthening employer partnerships and embedding the learning from this year's programmes and pilots. Together, we will continue to create a careers system that is ambitious, inclusive and responsive to the needs of future generations.

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