

ESSEX YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY

Realise **your** potential

**"Connecting Talent to Opportunity
– Building Essex's Skills for the
Future"**

**Bridging the gap between
education, skills, and employment.**



The Year of Opportunity is built on three strands

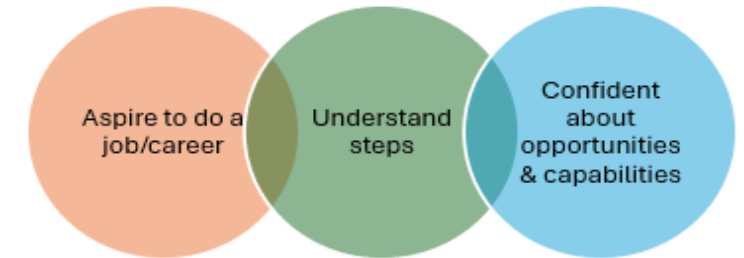
Skills: for life, for work

Careers: inclusive and for all ages

Employability: to get into work and to grow business.

What you know

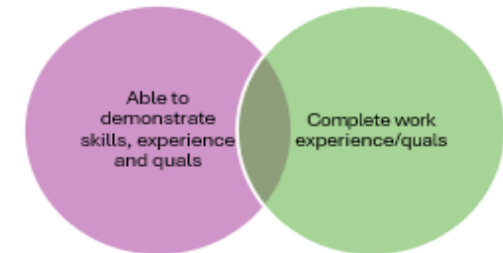
U can't be what you can't see



Who you know



Help with the next step



Start Early, Aim High: The Case for Careers Education in Primary Schools

Evidence from UK and global research on the impact
of early employer encounters

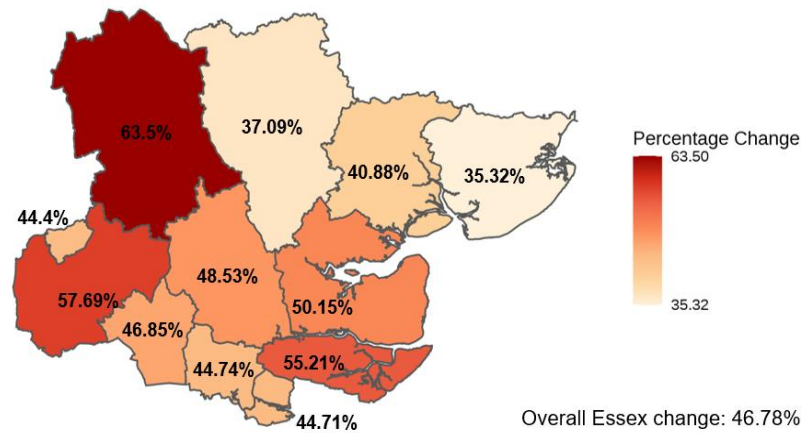
Some of the Context in Essex

- The Local Skills Improvement Plan identified **‘soft skills’ (‘essential skills’) and Careers Guidance** as the two biggest issues for employers.
- Essex Young People voted **“Jobs, Money, and Opportunities”** as their 2nd top issue.
- A survey of 600 growth sector businesses in Essex found that 62% have **difficulties finding new recruits with the right skills.**
- Just 36.2% of disadvantaged students gained a **level 3 qualification.**
- over 64% of disadvantaged students did not achieve a grade 4 in **English and Maths** in 2024 and over 80% didn’t get a ‘good’ pass (grade 5 or above).
- **Social mobility is more challenging than it has been before.** Socio-economic background has a greater impact on an individual’s career progression than any other diversity characteristic.

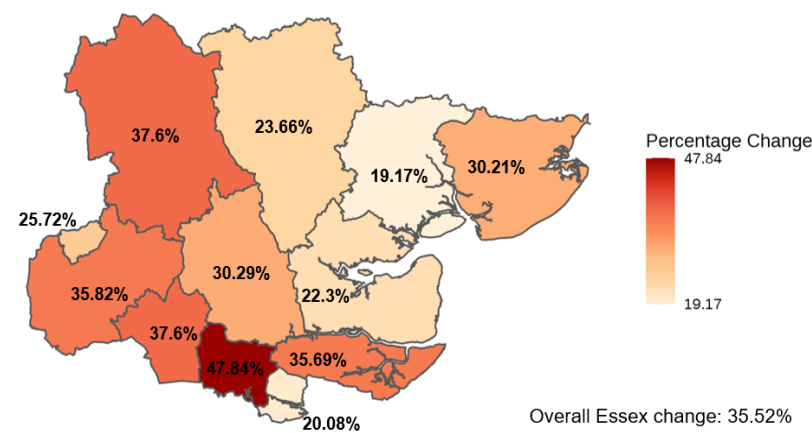
Heat maps of projected change in GVA (Gross Value Added).

Source: Cambridge Econometrics Post-Covid Projections

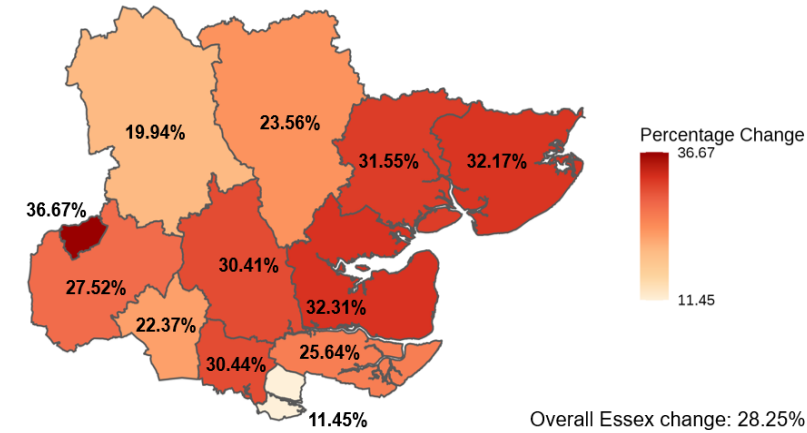
Projected Percentage Change in Construction GVA
2020-2040



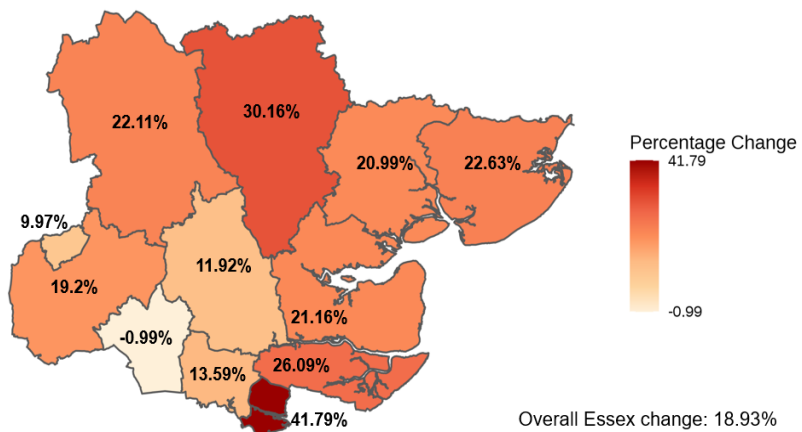
Projected Percentage Change in Telecommunications & Digital
Technology GVA 2020-2040



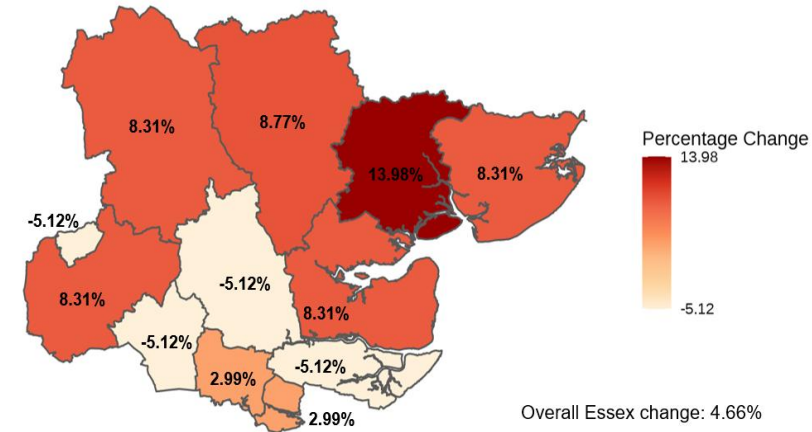
Projected Percentage Change in Advanced Manufacturing GVA
2020-2040



Projected Percentage Change in Life Sciences GVA
2020-2040



Projected Percentage Change in Energy GVA
2020-2040



Construction, Telecommunications & Digital, Advanced Manufacturing, Health & Lifesciences and Energy are forecast to be key growth sectors across Essex.

According to the World Economic Forum, **65% of children entering primary school today will work in jobs that don't yet exist.**

Why Careers Education and Employer Encounters Matter in Primary Schools

Limited Exposure, Limited Aspirations

- Children form career ideas by age 6–10
- Disadvantaged pupils often lack role models and career awareness
- 75% of aspirations are shaped by gender and socio-economic stereotypes

Consequences of Inaction

- **Higher NEET risk:** Mismatched aspirations and poor guidance
- **Low social capital:** Fewer networks and employer connections
- **Misaligned goals:** Poor understanding of qualifications needed
- **Reduced ambition:** Lack of relatable role models

Multiple Aspirations = Greater Resilience

- OECD PISA 2022: Students with clear and multiple career plans are more likely to achieve better employment outcomes than peers with uncertain or singular aspirations. www.oecd.org

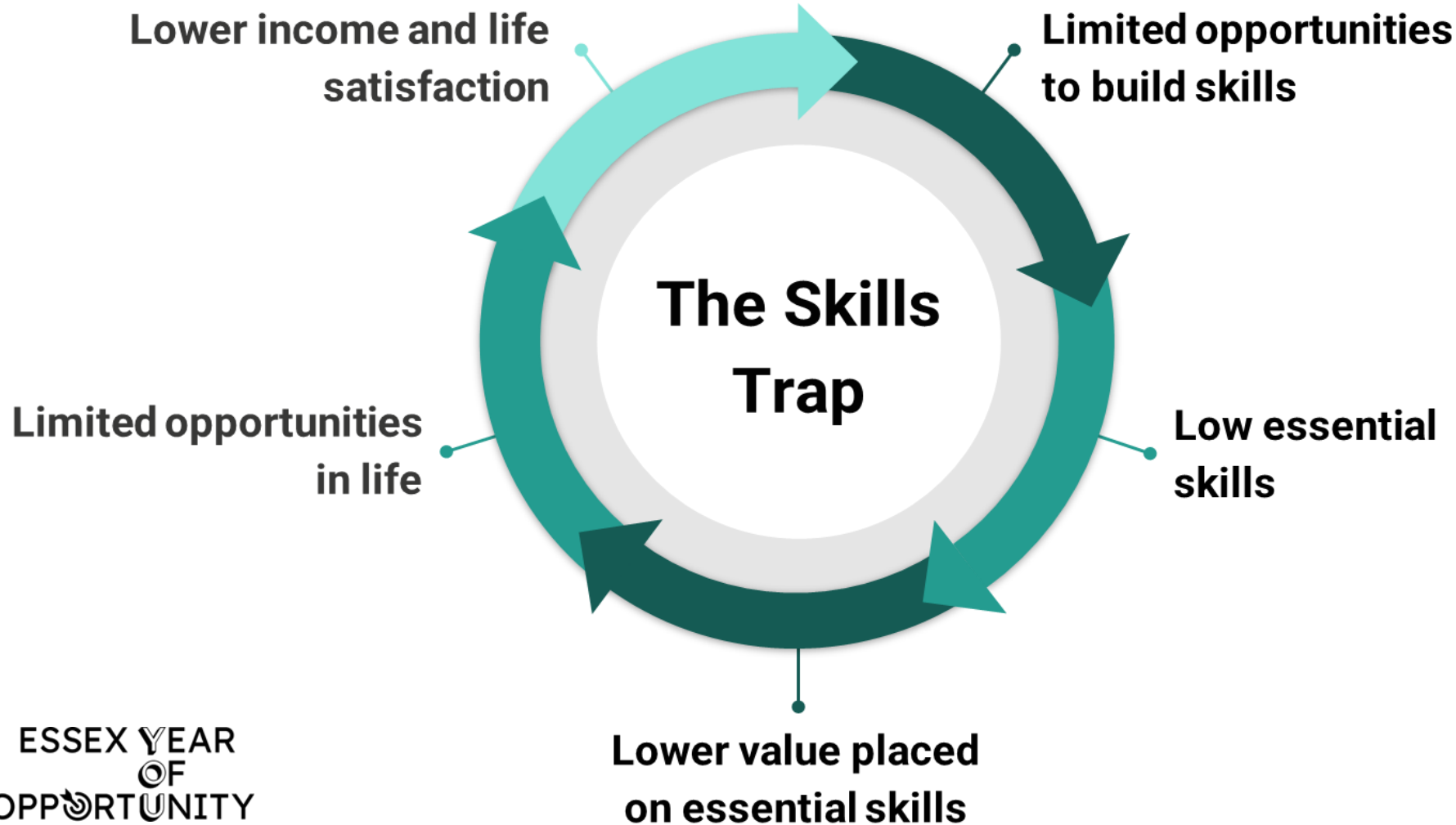
Having more than one career goal is linked to:

- Higher self-efficacy in decision-making
- Lower career anxiety
- Greater adaptability to changing job markets
- (Especially for those with disadvantaged backgrounds)

bmcp psychology.biomedcentral.com

Essential Skills – Why?

Individuals starting from a position of disadvantage do not manage to break out of a cycle of low education, basic skills, and essential skills.



Low essential skills cost the UK **£22.2bn** a year

Wage premium of **£3,600** to **£4,600** a year

Essential skills support higher **life** and **job satisfaction**

Essential skills are a vital component of an effective **skills portfolio**

People with high levels of **essential skills** are 25% less likely to be unemployed

Developing Essential Skills improves confidence, collaboration, employability and academic outcomes

Having a clear language and common approach for essential skills



Receiving, retaining and processing information



Transmitting information or ideas



Finding solutions to challenges



Using imagination and generating new ideas



Overcoming challenges and setbacks to achieve goals



Setting goals and designing routes to achieve them

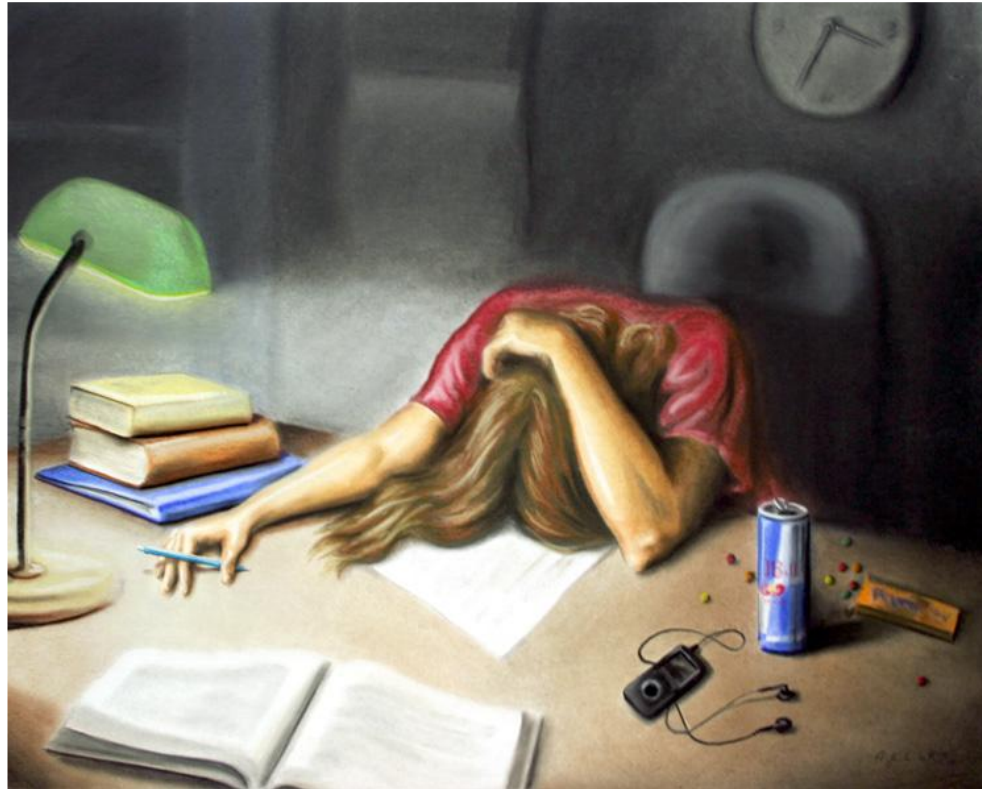


Supporting, encouraging and motivating others to achieve a shared goal

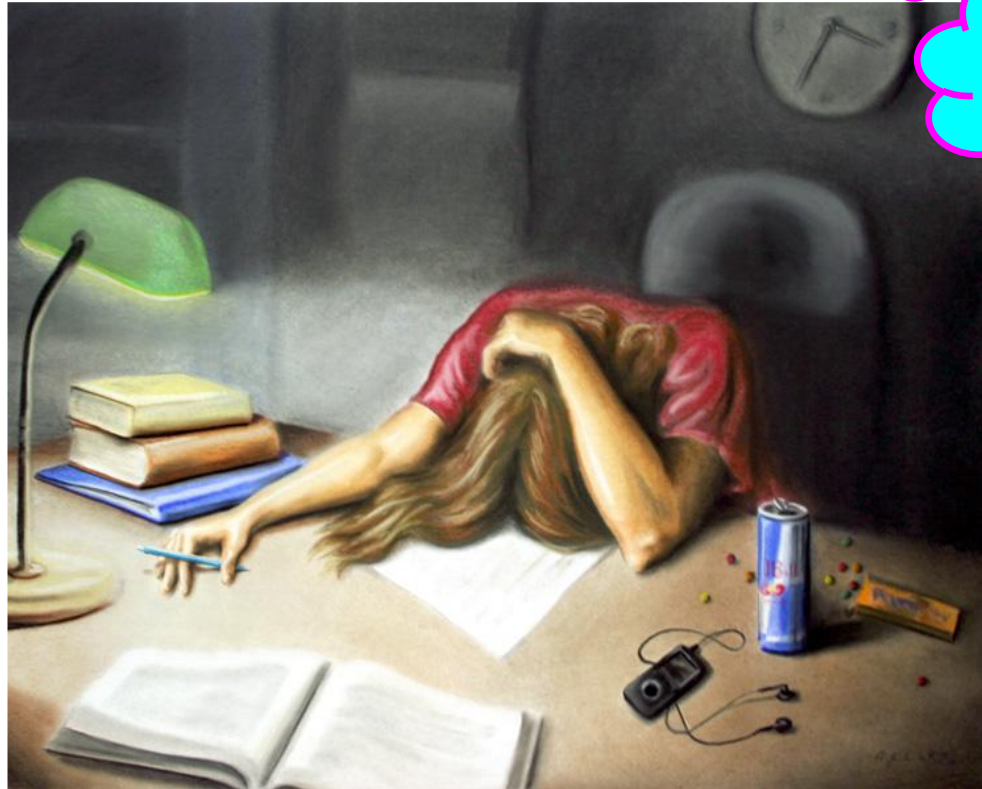


Working cooperatively with others to achieve a shared goal

**Do we help our pupils
develop these skills?**



**Do we help our pupils
develop these skills?**



Explicitly?

Start Small; Dream Big – the National Pilot

2-year national programme in Education Opportunity Areas – 1394 Primary schools, 199,244 employer encounters, CPD with Teach First.

Impact:

- 75% of teachers saw **reduced gender stereotyping** e.g. 31% increase in girls' interest in business and finance
- 73% of schools now have a formal **careers strategy** (up from almost none)
- 60% of schools **embedded careers into the curriculum** (up from 17%)
- 93% of employers want to **continue engagement** with primary schools
- **Children** exposed to diverse career pathways show **greater confidence, expanded aspirations, and less gender stereotyping**.
- **Teachers**, buoyed by leadership and high-quality training, emerged **more confident and intentional**.
- **Employers and families** joined as **partners**, reinforcing that what happens in school matters beyond its walls.

<https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/evidence-and-reports/insight-briefing-3-the-promise-of-primary/>

Start Small; Dream Big – Some Conclusions

- Careers education supports **whole-school improvement and pupil engagement**.
- Employer encounters **make learning relevant** and exciting.

Aligns with national policy direction: The DfE and Ofsted have highlighted the importance of starting careers education early to raise aspirations and improve outcomes. www.gov.uk

- **Embedding essential skills** in primary education supports both **academic success** and **future employability**, preparing pupils for a changing world.
- These skills are transferable across subjects and **help children connect learning to real-world contexts, improving motivation and engagement**.
- Countries like **Singapore and Germany** integrate career-related learning early, resulting in **higher employment rates** and **better transitions to work**. www.weforum.org

Start Small; Dream Big – Next steps

Careers & Enterprise Company will:

- Provide free CPD, resources and support for all primary schools through their [Digital Academy](#) and [Primary Platform](#).
- Develop a clear impact model that defines how Careers Related Learning should look in primary settings, so schools can measure progress and build on what works.

The Good Career Guidance Draft Primary Benchmarks

4. Linking curriculum learning to careers

All teachers should link curriculum learning with careers and future learning possibilities. **The importance of literacy, numeracy and digital awareness should be emphasised**, and pupils should have the chance to explore STEM related opportunities and **understand the skills they will need for the future**.

5. Encounters with employers and employees

Every pupil should have the opportunity to have meaningful and age-appropriate encounters with a range of different employers and **understand the importance of skills in the workplace**. This can be through a range of different activities including visiting speakers and/or enterprise schemes.

Workshop Activity 1 – Initial Reflection – Pairs discussion (5 mins) – Thinking about the ‘Why?’



TASK: 1. Which elements of this research most resonates with your experience?

2. Why is it important to develop essential skills?

Wider personal development

People don't talk about these skills enough

Good for self-esteem

They are important for employability

Important to join learning offers

These skills make them better learners

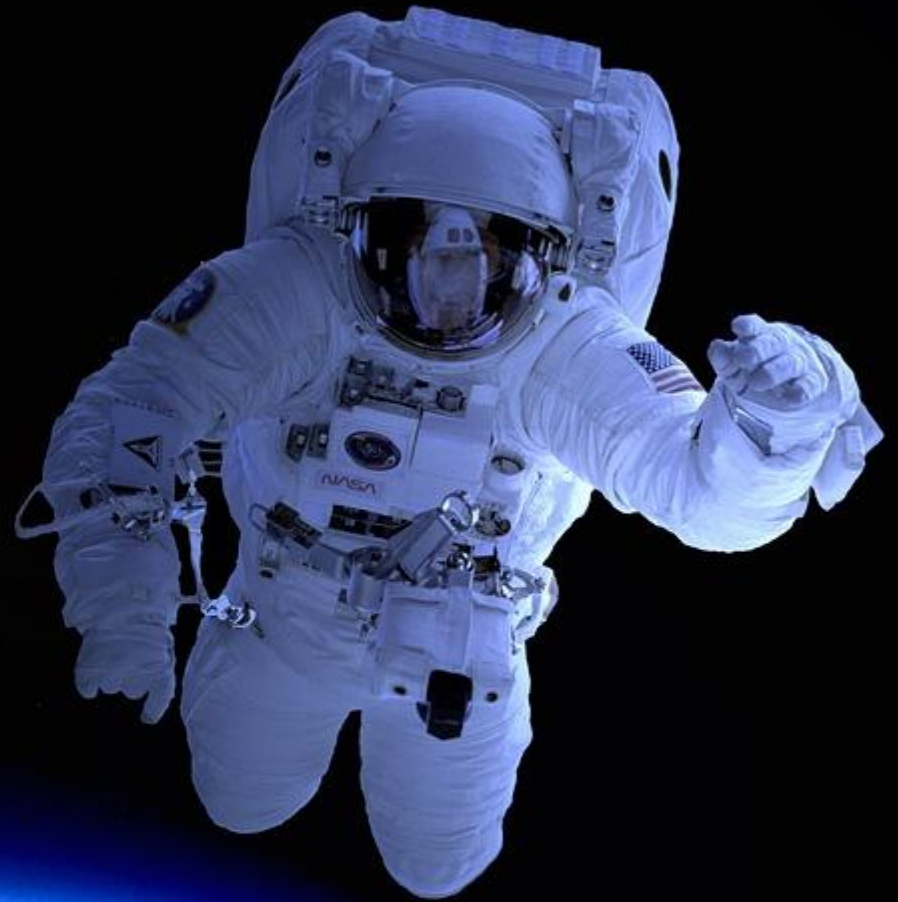
They support making positive change

It's important to have shared language

Connects our conversations with employers

It's why I got into this work

My Future 2025-26



My Future - Aims

To raise
aspirations

To broaden
horizons

To challenge
stereotypes



Jess is a Volkswagen Product Designer who designed the ID Buzz.

Why do our children need this programme?

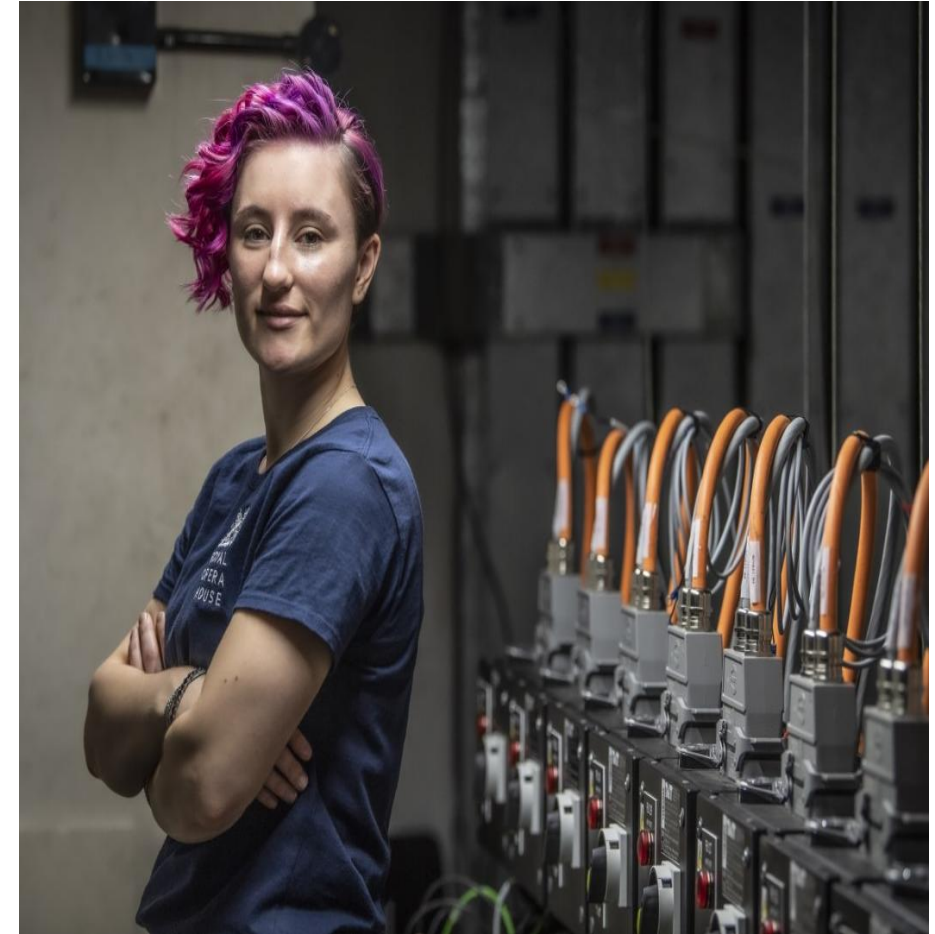
The research behind the My Future Programme.

‘Drawing The Future’ report

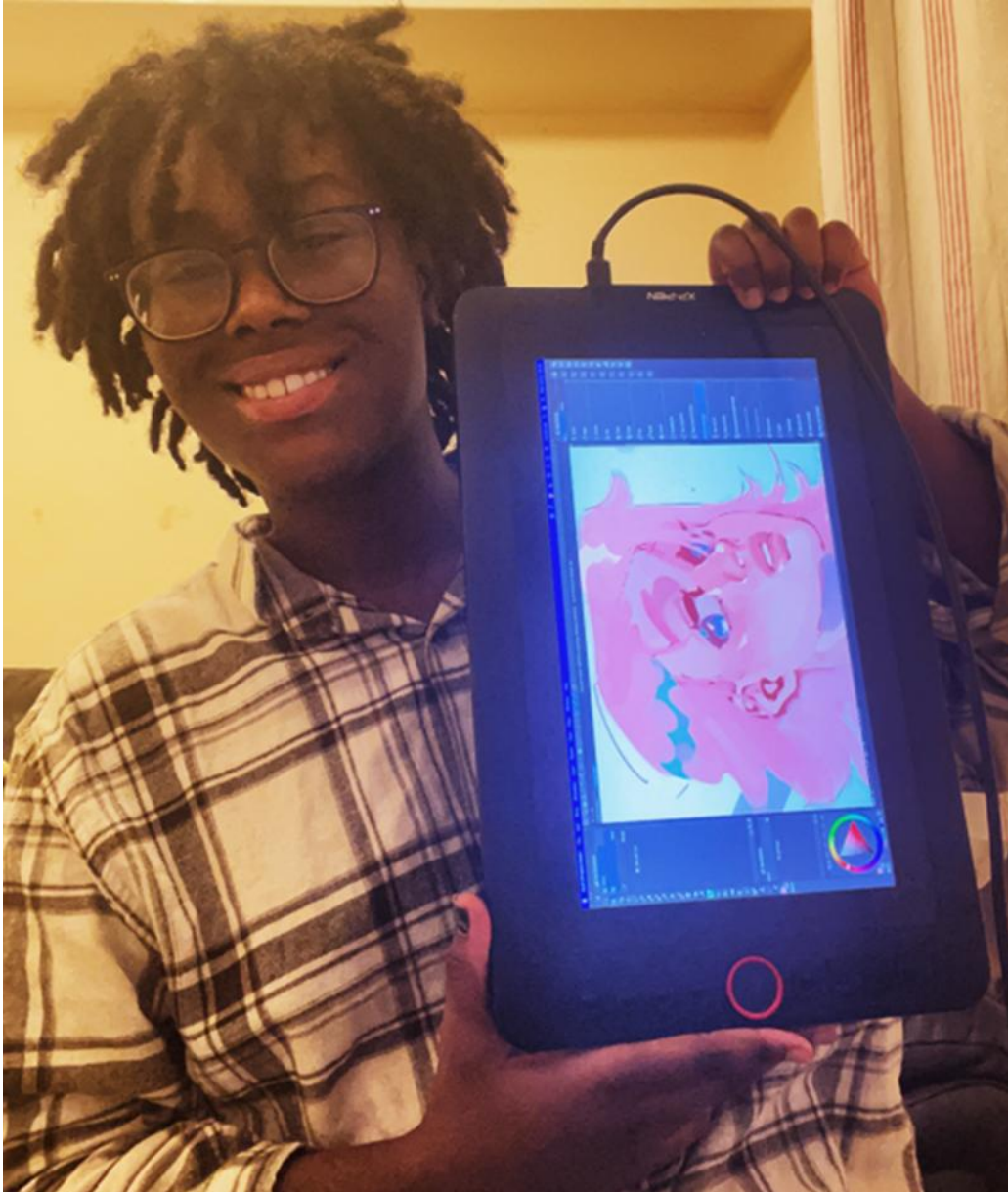
“In partnership with *Tes*, the NAHT, UCL Institute of Education and OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), a study of 20,000 primary school children has significant implications for social mobility and gender equality. Read [Drawing The Future Report \(PDF\)](#)

Recognised worldwide for their research, ‘Education and Employers’ launched a landmark report, **Drawing the Future**, which revealed that the difference between children’s career aspirations from age seven to 17 are marginal, and too often based on gender stereotypes, socio-economic backgrounds and by TV, film and radio.

The report also shows that some sectors vital for economic health look set to be badly under-resourced in future.”



Lauren is a Fly Systems Engineer at the Royal Opera House.



Maz is a Freelance Digital Illustrator.

Findings include:

- The patterns of jobs chosen by seven-year-olds mirror those selected by 17-year olds
- Gender stereotyping about jobs is set from a young age
- Family, TV, radio and film have the biggest influence on children's choices
- There is a need for greater access to career role models from a young age
- Children's career aspirations have little in common with projected workforce needs, which could have serious implications for the UK's economy

THE FACTS

- “36 per cent of 7 year olds base their career aspirations on people they know.”
- “For those who didn’t, 45 per cent stated TV, film and radio were the biggest factors influencing their choice.”
- “Only 1 per cent of children knew about a job from someone visiting their school. This has real implications for social mobility, as children from poorer backgrounds may not have successful role models from the world of work and their aspirations are limited as a result.”
- “When asked to draw a firefighter, surgeon and a fighter pilot, 92% of pictures were drawn of men and only 8% were female” – ‘Redrawing the Balance’ research)



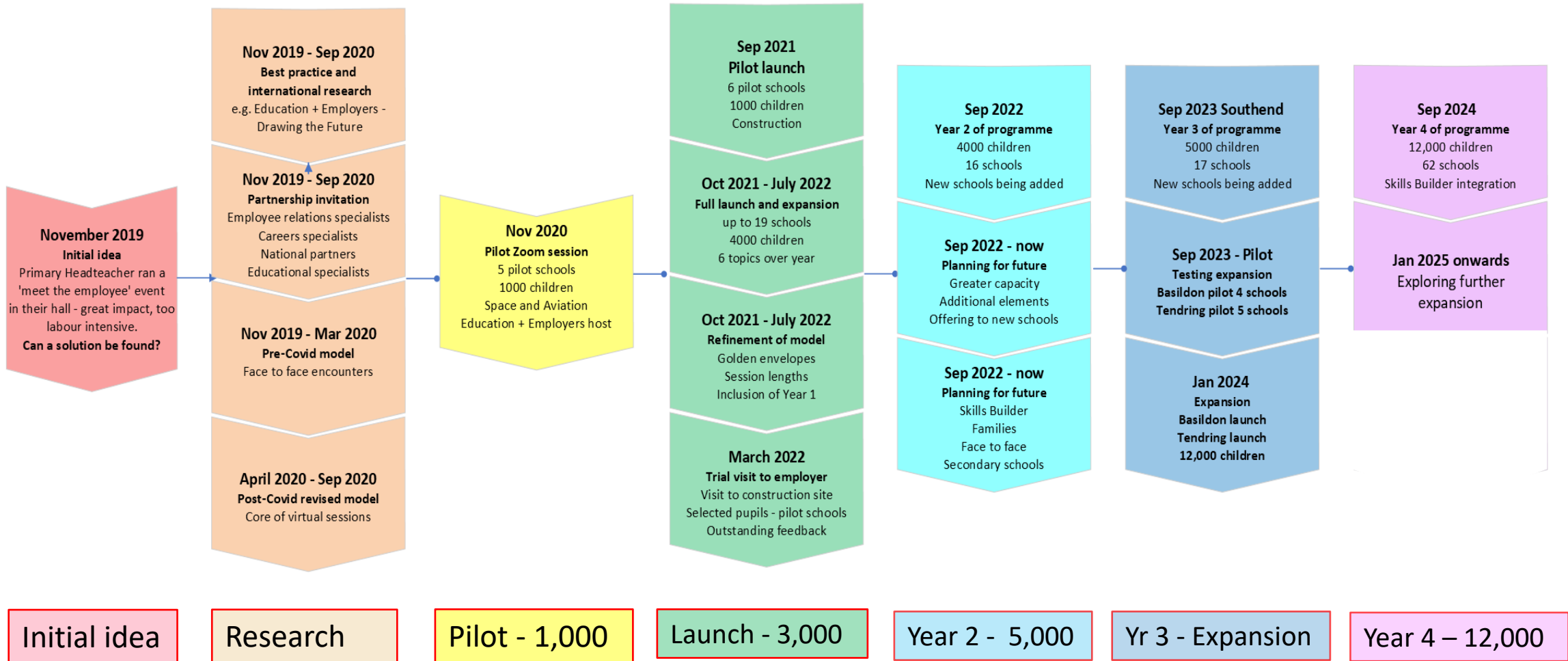
Chris is a Car Personalisation Expert who wraps super cars.

‘My Future’ Vision - By 2030

- All children in all schools in Essex have access to the My Future programme.
- The My Future programme runs from 5-18 offering a fun and powerful way to take children from their first awareness of the world of work into real employment and higher education opportunities.
- Our young people leave school and enter high paid and highly skilled jobs within this region that were previously unfilled by local workers.



The My Future Programme – The Story So Far



Project Outline

- **Each half term has an industry theme and an Essential Skill from Skills Builder**
e.g 'STEM' and 'Leadership'
- **3 special guests per session** -
children interact with them via Zoom chat,
asking them questions,
guessing what their jobs are and
hearing about their roles and stories.
- **Resources** to use before and after sessions
- **12 virtual zoom sessions** overall
- Six 40 min virtual sessions for Years 1, 2, 3
- Six 1 hour virtual sessions for Years 4, 5, 6
- There are **no costs** at any stage to the school.





“A 'meaningful' encounter is one in which the student has an opportunity to learn about what work is like or what it takes to be successful in the workplace.”

Gatsby National Careers
Benchmarks

Imogen is a Senior Hardware Engineer who designs fighter jets.

Skills Builder Essential Skills

Skills Builder Universal Framework skills are woven throughout the programme

“This research shows that essential skills are correlated with life outcomes, from increased wellbeing and higher earnings to lower probability of being out of work or education” read page 5 of this report:

<https://www.skillsbuilder.org/file/essential-skills-tracker-2022>



Skills Builder Essential Skills



Evaluation – Tim's booklet



INSIDE OUT

	Guest 1	Guest 2	Guest 3
Name			
Their job My guess			
Their job			
My rating	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Which job did you like the most and why?

Before today, I didn't know that...

On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is not needed and 10 is essential), how important do you think these skills are for this job?

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



Self-Management Adapting

Overcoming challenges and setbacks to achieve goals



Step 3
Persisting
I keep going when faced with challenges

Step 4
Managing reactions
I respond calmly when faced with challenges

Step 5
Reflective learning
I reflect and learn from challenges

Step 6
Supporting others
I help others face challenges

Why and when is it important to persist even if you feel like giving up?

How can you help yourself to stay calm when facing challenges?

When have you reflected and learnt from challenges and how did it help?

How can you support others facing challenges?



My Future

	Dream Job	Back Up 1	Back Up 2
Start of year			
End of year			
Notes			

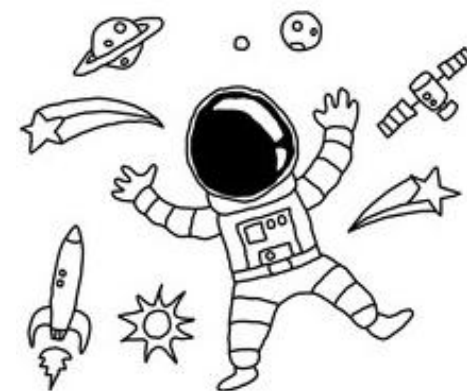
At this time, what would be your dream job?

As things don't always go to plan, what would be your back up options?

Draw a picture in the top box and write the job name in the box underneath.

An example...

Dream Job



Astronaut



THE MY FUTURE PROGRAMME HAS:

- ✓ Reached **22,926** children
- ✓ Engaged **72** schools
- ✓ Involved **784** classes
- ✓ Featured **85** employees
- ✓ Enabled **537,729** encounters
- ✓ Showcased **25** industry sectors

As at 21st June 2025

Liz is an Animal Therapist who runs her own mental health charity.

Pupil Feedback

CLIP STUDIO
PAINT



Timelapse digital drawing from our
Freelance Digital Artist Maz

“You can achieve anything no matter who you are.”

“We have learned to think of disability as a superpower. Nothing is impossible!”

“We have learnt that people don’t look like what their job is.”

“It’s hard to do certain jobs but it is still possible! Follow your dreams!”

“I really liked how they explain how they use their skills. It made me want to be like them when I am older.”

“Hearing about Liz's job with dogs because I would like to do something similar”

“Take our time and we will be successful. Never give up!”

“You can use your talents to be anything you want!”

“I really like designing so Anna has inspired me to keep going.”

“I liked how they gave us top tips to get into that specific job role.”

Teacher Feedback

“Great session, children loved finding out about different artistic jobs that they had never thought of or heard before.”

“We really liked seeing 'real people' who do the jobs we were talking about.”

“Having an opportunity to ask people in their careers different questions that you wouldn't otherwise be able to. To see/hear things that we don't usually get to learn about in school.”

“Excellent content and interesting conversations had.”

“We found hearing about their jobs inspiring and could relate to lots of them as many of us share their passions and aspirations. Maz's message of 'if you can think it, you can make it' was particularly inspiring.”

“Another great session, the children were all engaged and interested in the different jobs.”

“That they were real people that are in our local area.”

“Great to see how creativity is used in everyday life – how things the children use and see every day are created.”

“That we don't have to do the same jobs as our grown-ups do and that if we enjoy something as a child we may want to think about whether it can be used as a career.”

“Great information from real professionals that will help children to consider this job for the future.”

“Showing them a range of different jobs that really intrigued the children. They can see themselves doing them too! It's given them ideas on careers that they didn't know about.”

“Great to let them see where their interests could lead.”



Katie is a Milliner and designs hats for Ascot.

School SLT Feedback

“The drivers behind the project of raising aspirations, challenging stereotypes and broadening horizons resonated strongly with us and our school values.”

“Being part of the project has meant that our pupils have been exposed to career opportunities that they may have never encountered or felt that they would be able to achieve.”

“My Future My Southend has been invaluable at providing opportunities to discuss skills needed for various careers. It has enabled our pupils to question and raise their own ambitions and aspire for opportunities that they may have thought were beyond them.”



Jack is an Electronics Engineer.

Ofsted and Multi Academy Trust Feedback



Charlie plays wheelchair basketball for England, winning a bronze medal at the Commonwealth games and was shortlisted for BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year.

Ofsted – “With each step they take, pupils are prepared for the next stage in their education. A careers programme, introduced as early as Year 1, ensures that they are also well set up for their future lives.”

“The school **raises pupil aspirations** by providing regular opportunities to learn about different professions. This also **exposes pupils to potential future careers.**”

“Careers work has started from Year 1 – My Future My Southend. This is very strong practice and one that is not often seen.”

Strength identified in Peer Review of Prince Avenue Primary School and Nursery by SEEAT Multi Academy Trust

Real life impact:

“My class (in year 5) were participating in the MF session, which featured a female engineer working for a defence company. During the presentation, she held up a piece of computing hardware that she was working on (for the new war plane - Tempest). The number of eyes that widened, mouths that gaped in awe and wonder was captivating.

After the session, during our debrief and discussion one girl in particular raised her hand and commented "I didn't realise that girls could do such a job." To which a good number of the girls in my class nodded in agreement. It is brilliant that this programme is enabling children to challenge their gender stereotype views and give those who might be disadvantaged by such barriers the opportunity to see that there are a wider selection of careers available to them.”

“MF is like opening a book which takes you on an adventure you never knew existed. The children join the Zoom and are given the opportunity to learn about jobs, and the skills needed to aspire to these roles.

It has opened up a whole new world to our children.”



Tokunbo is a chef working across the World.



Karen is a firefighter

Real life impact:

“A boy in year 4 who found writing very challenging and was not motivated by his English lessons suddenly came to life with his writing after meeting and listening to a games designer, he suddenly realised the purpose of writing as he realised that writing was very important in the gaming industry for jobs such as content writing, instructions, promotions etc. From this point he went from being disengaged to wanting to write and his progress was evident in his books, presentation and engagement.”

“I had a child in my year 6 class who was working pre-key stage in English and Maths, he loved cars and would talk to me about driving cars when he was older. During one of the MF sessions, which had a focus on the arts, it featured someone who wrapped cars for a job, and this child could not believe that this was a job that actually fitted into a creative aspect as opposed to it being the car industry. He loved understanding that it was an art to customise these cars and not just required a skill of understanding how the vinyl worked but recognising that you can see the beauty in creating customised cars. He told me he'd love to do that job when he was older.”

What else will be part of the Essex Year of Opportunity?

More Eco Refill Shops

Step into STEAM events

Primary Careers comms:

- Primary Times insert – 5 editions this year – information for parents
- 6 Newsletters

Primary Careers Newsletter

<https://news.news.essex.gov.uk/9j46/Design/d7cc-4ejo1>

Feedback please:

- **What is your favourite part of this newsletter?**
- **How could we make it even better for your staff and school?**
- **How could you use this information within your school?**

A Pathway to choice and opportunity



Primary School

*Raise aspirations,
reduce stereotypes
and build skills*



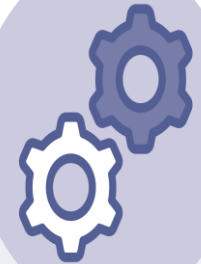
Secondary School

*High quality experience of
work and skill
development.
Information about
apprenticeships, technical
routes, and local jobs
alongside HE*



Transition

*Personalised advice
Targeted support for
young people at risk*



**A good job/
further
study/training
or personal
independence**

Things to engage with now or look out for:

Sign up to join in with My Future!

Essex Year of Opportunity landing page

<https://www.essexyearofopportunity.co.uk/essex-year-opportunity>

The initial directory of Opportunities is available here - [Essex Year of Opportunity Directory](#)

Eco Refill shops

[Essex Year of App](#) to be updated soon

Access to LinkedIn Learning via Library service

ESSEX YEAR
OF
OPPORTUNITY

Email the team at:

essex.yearofopportunity@essex.gov.uk

<https://www.primarytimes.co.uk/essex/home-intro>

Essex Year of Opportunity launch [video](#)

Essex Year of Reading [video](#)

Essex Year of Numbers [video](#)

Call to Action

“Primary career-related learning has been proven:

- children gain wider career awareness,
- teachers gain confidence, and
- schools become more intentional.

Now is the time to embed what has been learned so that every child, regardless of background, can dream big.”

"Investing in early careers education is investing in equity, aspiration, and future success."

My Future - Aims

To raise
aspirations

To broaden
horizons

To challenge
stereotypes



Jess is a Volkswagen Product Designer who designed the ID Buzz.

Workshop Activity 3 – Main Discussion – Individual reflection then discussion

- What has struck you most from both the national challenges and the My Future solution?
- There will be an opportunity for schools to join the My Future programme to start in January 2026. Places will be limited – if you are interested, express your interest today. Alison.Gellett@bigeducation.org
- There may also be an opportunity for further expansion and places from September 2026.
- How will you use the careers newsletter in your school?
- What other ways do you currently counter stereotypes and broaden horizons in your school?
- What new ways could you incorporate e.g. books available for children to read?
- What actions will you take away from today?

Grasping Opportunities

More opportunities -> greater economic growth -> prosperity for all

- Start Early
- Connect Education to Employers
- Use an awareness of opportunities to drive engagement, attainment and progression
- Reduce inequalities
- Increase access to opportunity
- Reach for the Stars
- More opportunities builds better lives
- **You** can join us in the journey
- **You** can make a difference
- **You** can find opportunities for **your** children and young people

