

Essex Vital Signs

Vital Signs is a community philanthropy guide from your local community foundations, measuring the vitality of our communities and identifying significant trends in a range of areas critical to quality of life. Vital Signs is supported by UK Community Foundations. The Vital Signs trademark is used with permission from Community Foundations of Canada, our partner and supporter in Vital Signs.



ESSEX

Vital Signs 2014

Skills and Education

Welcome to Essex Community Foundation's Vital Signs 2014 report which takes the pulse of local communities, measuring the quality of life and highlighting our county's priorities, needs and opportunities for action.

Vital Signs is an annual initiative and was launched in October 2013. Vital Signs brings together existing statistical data and results from a community survey to give a 360 degree view of what life is like in Essex and how we are performing when compared to other parts of the UK. Our first report looked at 12 issue areas including transport, healthy living and crime. In our 2014 report we have focused on just one issue, which has emerged as a priority for Essex, *Skills and Education*.

Essex is generally perceived as an affluent county, but in terms of skills and education Essex is a county of contrasts. Vital Signs concludes that where you live, work and

learn can have a real impact on your life. We have an ageing workforce and despite falling unemployment, especially among young people, the jobs being created tend to be low skilled. Our community survey shows that people are impressed by the range and quality of adult education but they would like to see more apprenticeships for younger people and more opportunities for older people to re-train and learn new skills.

Vital Signs 2014 provides a snapshot of skills and education in Essex and shows where the county is performing well and where there could be improvements. Whilst we can celebrate Essex's success we must recognise there are inequalities that exist across the county. Only by working together can we ensure everyone can realise their potential.

Our intention is to use Vital Signs to inform our grantmaking and the development of effective community philanthropy in Essex. We hope that you will read the report with interest and that it will stimulate conversation about how we can work together to improve skills and education for all.

Skills and qualifications: National to local

Essex population:
1,725,000



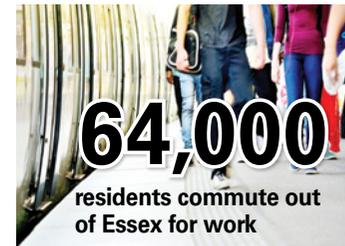
Compared to all other counties in Britain, Essex does well in most key social and economic indicators, with the exception of skills and qualifications, where 67% of all other counties score better.

In comparison to our five neighbouring counties in the East of England, we rank lower in eight out of 13 social and economic indicators. The worst scores are for skills, qualifications, inequality, health and crime.

Across Essex, residents without any qualifications are in line with the national average - Essex stands at 9% compared to the national average of 9.3%. But the averages can mask the underlying geographical inequalities. 3.8% of people living in Epping Forest and 4% in Rochford have no qualifications compared with Maldon at 15% and 12.6% in Tendring.

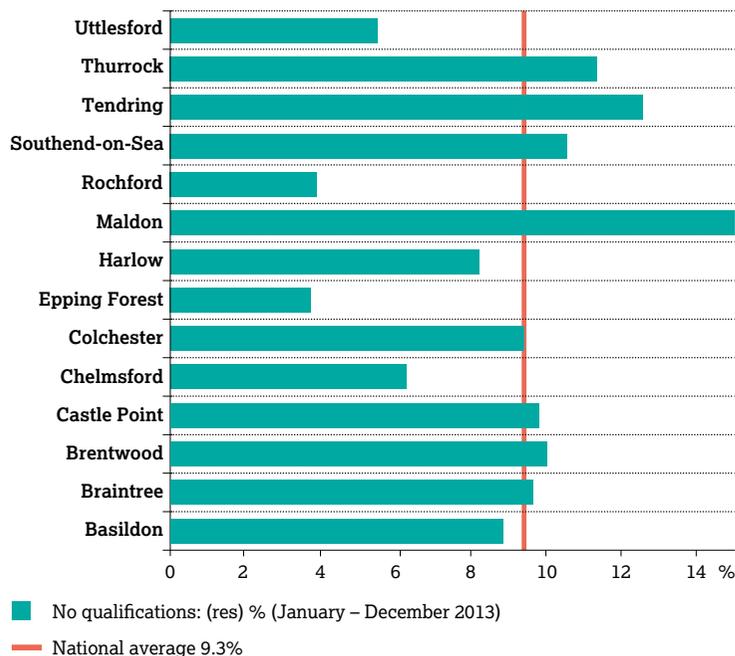
Qualifications and income

The link between qualification levels and average total income shows that areas with a greater population of people with higher qualifications also score more highly in terms of average annual income. Ten districts in Essex score above the national average income and four score below. Regionally, over the past decade Essex has ranked above Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk in average income.



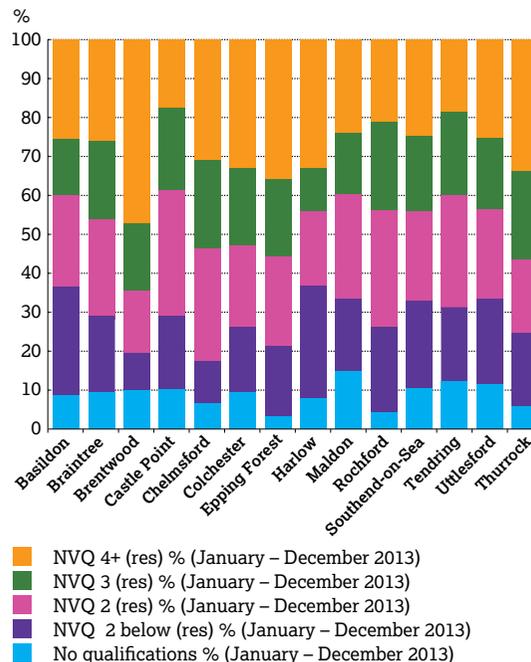
An estimated 64,000 people commute out of Essex every day to work. The pull of London could explain why average total income for Essex residents exceeds those of its close neighbours. This income will flow back into the county, which is a good thing but it also means local businesses struggle to recruit skilled employees. When looking at people without qualifications by workplace Essex averages 14% which means that out of 48 regions we are ranked at number 44.

People without qualifications in Essex by district: 2013



Source: Local Futures DUIS derived from ONS Annual Population Survey

Essex districts by qualification level 2013



Source: Local Futures

What do the people of Essex say about Skills and Qualifications?

In our Vital Signs 2014 survey many Essex residents commented on internships and apprenticeships and said: "We should provide internships/apprenticeships that lead to full-time employment for young people and those older workers who need re-skilling." "We should encourage employers to take on more apprentices."

How does Essex Community Foundation help?

We give grants to organisations that help people who need support to gain qualifications and prepare for employment. In 2013 17% of our grant funding supported projects that focused on learning, work and the local economy. Examples include:

Jaywick Community Resources Centre Association for computer classes for residents in the most deprived area in England.

The Prince's Trust to help disadvantaged young people from Thurrock gain access to education, training or employment.

Groundworks for the Green Team project, which trains young people in Braintree in practical landscaping and then helps to find them employment.

Education in Essex

Children age 0-16 in Essex: 329,000

A good education is a major factor in developing skills and qualifications. Many will look to schools to provide the foundation for educational attainment, but others also recognise the important role the family and community can play.

One of the key measurements used to compare secondary schools are GCSE grades. In Essex we have seen a steady rise in the number of students gaining at least five A* to C grades, from 55% in 2010 to 61% in 2013. But disadvantage does influence the results.

There is a direct correlation between low academic attainment and parental status, parental qualifications, eligibility for free school meals and levels of unemployment. Only 35% of students who are eligible for free school meals achieve five A* to C grades and only 8% of children with a 'Statement of Special Educational Need' achieve this level of grade (ONS 2013).

27% of Essex residents are qualified at the higher skill level NVQ4+ against a national average of nearly 36% making Essex the 38th lowest scoring region out of 44 nationally.

What do the people of Essex say about education?

In our community survey we asked, based upon your experience of learning in Essex, tell us two things that have impressed you. 13% of those who responded said the

quality of education in Essex was impressive and 31% were impressed by the variety of courses on offer.

Individual comments included how impressed people were, "...by how young people can thrive given the opportunities and right support." And, "...by the number of responsible, well-educated young people in my town is increasing." These are encouraging comments, particularly when compared to the very challenging situations facing some children.

What is Essex Community Foundation doing to help?

We award grants to help families support and encourage their children's education and foster community activities that promote a good education. Examples of this include:

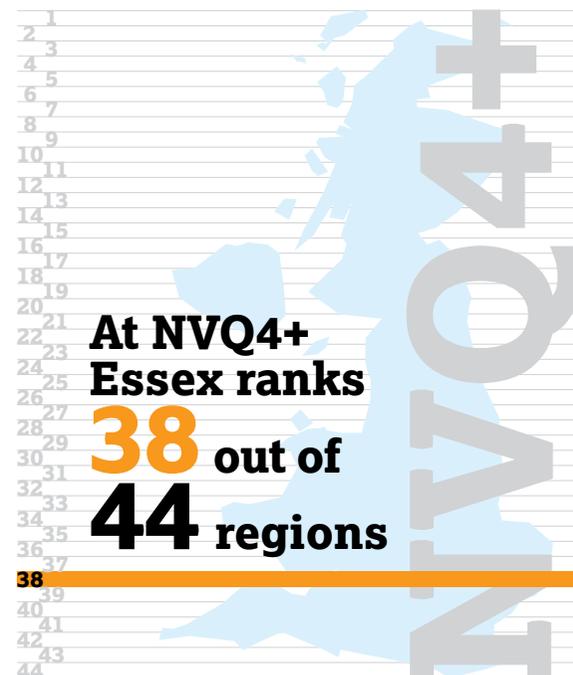
Tomorrow's Achievers Educational Trust enable gifted young children in Essex from low income families to attend educational masterclasses.

Signpost run a homework club for primary school children in Greenstead, Colchester.

Essex Youthbuild offer accredited training in construction and work related skills to young people who are offenders, or at risk of offending, helping them to get their lives back on track.

Essex Firebreak improves the confidence and skills of young children through a week long course as a junior fire fighter.

ECF also supports and encourages young people in their chosen area of arts, literature or sport through our education funds.



"...it is decisions and investments made considerably earlier in young people's lives that appear to be the main drivers of differences in educational outcomes during the teenage years."

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

In summary

Since 1996 ECF grant distribution is over: **£23 million**



Essex Vital Signs 2014 is a snapshot of the complex and varied subject of skills and education in Essex. We hope it raises questions and initiates conversations about what we can do together to help.

Questions such as:

How can we motivate those with resources to help improve skills and qualifications across Essex?

How can more people become aware of projects across Essex that are making a positive difference to disadvantaged communities?

Our research is clear:

Most people in Essex have a good quality of life, but we still have too many people who do not; one of the main reasons for this is a lack of skills and qualifications.

The people of Essex are clear:

They want more internships and apprenticeships that lead to work, they want children to enjoy learning and take advantage of educational and vocational opportunities and they want more opportunities for older people to re-skill.

The need is clear:

More targeted support and investment are required to improve skills and education especially in more disadvantaged areas.

We hope this report helps generate debate about the quality of life in Essex and what can be done to make a difference. There is further information on our website and if you would like to become involved please do contact us.

“17% of ECF grant funding supported projects that focused on learning, work and the local economy”



Essex Firebreak



Essex Youthbuild

ESSEX

VitalSigns 2014

The Vital Signs Survey was sent to 2,275 people who live or work in Essex during August to September 2014 through Survey Monkey. We mainly used closed ended questions and received a 9% response rate.



Signpost



YMCA Music