

What's Next? 2026 Provision Guide – North Essex

Employability & Skills Team

A guide to support a young person's next steps.

The purpose of this guide is to give you an overview of the options for post-16 provision in your local area. Delivery and availability of the opportunities listed may change.

Many of you will expect to achieve the grades needed and will be staying in your school sixth form, have secured a place at college, or have a start date agreed for an apprenticeship. If you do not have any firm plans in place, then please read on.

Planning

When considering your next steps, it can seem confusing as there are so many options to choose from. Whether you are looking at further education, apprenticeships, work or training, we recommend that you research thoroughly.

There are several websites listed in this resource which can help you to explore courses and careers. In addition, it is important to identify existing skills as well as your hobbies and interests to help you when considering your options.

You could also speak with school or college staff, careers advisers and family networks to help you to make a strong choice. Remember to have a backup plan.

Still unsure?

Where possible, speak with the Careers Adviser at your school or college for guidance on subject choices and career paths.

From Monday 29th June: If you are aged 16–18, do not have access to a school or college Careers Adviser, and do not have a firm plan for September, please get in touch.

Employability and Skills Team
0800 707 6384

KeepInContactTeam@essex.gov.uk

You may receive communications from our Keep In Contact Team, who will update records and offer support from our Employability and Skills Advisers.

Website: <https://youth.essex.gov.uk/young-people/education-employment-and-training-support/>

Extension to Child Benefit

If you are a school or college leaver, under 18, unemployed and do not have a course or training programme to start in September 2026, your parent/carer may be entitled to claim Extension to Child Benefit. There is a time limit in which you can register your claim. For more information and to apply for an extension please call:

HMRC Child Benefit General Enquiries on 0300 200 3100 or visit:

www.gov.uk/child-benefit-16-19

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College and Further Education options

If you have not already applied, then we suggest that you make applications quickly as some providers have deadlines early in the academic year. There are broadly two different types of college course:

Academic Courses (e.g. A Levels/ International Baccalaureate)

Usually involves studying multiple subjects. This may provide increased progression options at the end of the course.

- Assessment is usually weighted towards exams with less emphasis on continuous assessment.
- Entry Criteria: Typically, applicants will be expected to achieve at least five GCSEs at grades 9 to 4. The specific requirements vary across schools and colleges.
- Some schools and Sixth Form Colleges may offer GCSE resit options for young people that have narrowly missed out on GCSE grades.

Vocational Courses (e.g. BTECs/T Levels/NVQ/CACHE)

Vocational courses are typically designed around a specific industry/ occupation.

Courses usually range from Level 1 and go up to Level 3 and higher.

Vocational courses are an opportunity to specialise early in a subject that interests you.

It often means studying one main subject (some schools and colleges allow you to blend academic and vocational options).

If you have not achieved Grade 4 in GCSE Maths or English, you will be required to complete these qualifications alongside your main course.

Sixth Form & College options for summer 2026

For more information about course availability, application procedures, open events and entry requirements, please contact the establishment directly.

School Sixth Forms

Lift Clacton

Telephone: 01255 428131

Website: www.liftclacton.org

Clacton County High School Clacton

Telephone: 01255 424266

Website: www.countyhigh.org.uk

Colchester County High School for Girls

Telephone: 01206 576 973

Website: www.cchsg.com

Colchester Royal Grammar School

Telephone: 01206 509100

Website: www.crgs.co.uk

Philip Morant School & College

Telephone: 01206 545222

Website: www.pmsc.school

Lift Tendring

Telephone: 01255 672116

Website: www.lifttendring.org

Colleges & Sixth Form Colleges

Colchester Institute,

Colchester and Braintree

Telephone: 01206 712000

Website: www.colchester.ac.uk

The Colchester Sixth Form College

Telephone: 01206 500723 / 500700

Website: www.colchsfc.ac.uk

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Other Colleges close to North Essex

Chelmsford College

Telephone: 01245 265611

Website: www.chelmsford.ac.uk

Suffolk New College, Ipswich

Telephone: 01473 382200

Website: www.suffolk.ac.uk

Suffolk One, Ipswich

Telephone: 01473 556600

Website: www.suffolkone.ac.uk

Suffolk Rural College, Ipswich (formerly Otley College)

Telephone: 01473 382200

Buses are subsidised for students coming from the Essex area.

Website: www.suffolk.ac.uk/course-categories/suffolk-rural

Writtle College - ARU, near Chelmsford

Telephone: 01245 493131

Website: www.aru.ac.uk/writtle-college

Apprenticeships

What is an Apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship gives you the opportunity to gain work experience, a qualification and earn a wage at the same time.

Apprenticeships are available from Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE 9-4) all the way up to Degree level in some occupational areas.

For current information on local vacancies and further support, please visit:

www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship

www.apprenticeships.gov.uk

essexopportunities.co.uk/apprenticeship-hub

Training Providers that frequently deliver apprenticeship opportunities for young people in the local area:

ACL Essex County Council

Apprenticeships in Business Administration, Customer service and more.

www.aclessex.com/apprenticeships/

Career Track

For Career Track opportunities and Tendring District Council apprenticeship vacancies contact Debianna Messenger via email:

dmessenger@tendringdc.gov.uk

Colchester Institute

www.colchester.ac.uk/apprenticeships

KEITS

Apprenticeships in equine, animal care, grounds person, horticulture, dog grooming and doggy day care.

www.keits.co.uk

Kleek

Hairdressing and Beauty.

<https://kleekapprenticeships.co.uk/>

Hit Training

Hospitality, Catering and Retail.

www.hittraining.co.uk

NHS Apprenticeships

With over 350 different NHS careers, there are hundreds of jobs which can be done through an apprenticeship.

www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/study-and-training/nhs-apprenticeships

QA Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships in IT Systems and Networking/Software and Website Development, Digital Skills, Business Admin.

www.qa.com/learners/become-an-apprentice

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Ixion Holdings

Offers Apprenticeships and Traineeships in:
Business, Construction, Customer Service,
Digital Media and Marketing.
www.ixionholdings.com/

Colleges that offer Apprenticeships

Chelmsford College

Telephone: 01245 265611
www.chelmsford.ac.uk

Colchester Institute

Telephone: 01206 712000
www.colchester.ac.uk/apprenticeships

Suffolk New College, Ipswich

Telephone: 01473 382200
www.suffolk.ac.uk

Suffolk Rural College, Ipswich (formerly Otley College)

Telephone: 01473 382200
Buses are subsidised for Essex Students
www.suffolk.ac.uk/course-categories/suffolk-rural

Writtle College - ARU, near Chelmsford

Telephone: 01245 493131
www.aru.ac.uk/study/college-courses/apprenticeships

Foundation Learning Programmes

Foundation Learning providers offer English and Maths qualifications often alongside vocational elements to help improve your skills and get you ready to undertake an apprenticeship opportunity. This option often is usually accepted as approved training.

*Some Foundation Learning courses may have restrictions due to funding. Check with the provider when making your enquiries.

Central Training Group

www.centraltraininggroup.com

Study programmes in hairdressing, barbering, childcare, sport and personal development.

For more information, please email:

Samantha Hayter

samanthahayter@centraltraininggroup.com
or telephone: 0800 783 2901

MPCT Military Academies - Colchester

www.mpct.co.uk

The Military Academy is a unique training college that helps 16+ year olds develop fitness, vocational qualifications and employability skills to help prepare for employment, including rewarding careers in the British Armed Forces.

Nova Training – Colchester & Clacton

www.novatrainng.co.uk

Full-time programmes to improve English and Maths up to Level 1, Level 2 or GCSE (if required). Includes opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships and employment support, alongside nationally recognised qualifications. The Clacton Centre has dedicated motor vehicle and construction workshops.

For **Colchester Centre** email:

Mila Chepyha

mila.chepyha@novatrainng.co.uk
or telephone 01206 562657

For **Clacton Centre** email:

Gill Baldwin

gill.baldwin@novatrainng.co.uk
or telephone: 01255 427785

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Useful Websites

Below is a list of useful websites ranging from careers advice, skills assessments, finding work to volunteering.

Careers and Opportunities Research

www.essexopportunities.co.uk
<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>
www.youthemployment.org.uk
www.icould.com
www.careerpilot.org.uk
<https://careers.startprofile.com>
www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/careers
<https://animalme.myworldofwork.co.uk>

Apprenticeships

www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship
www.apprenticeships.gov.uk
www.aclessex.com/apprentices
www.ratemyapprenticeship.co.uk
www.amazingapprenticeships.com
www.talentview.org
www.essexopportunities.co.uk/apprenticeship-hub

Jobs

www.getmyfirstjob.co.uk
www.gov.uk/find-a-job
www.indeed.co.uk
www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

Higher Education

www.ucas.com
www.prospects.ac.uk

Volunteering

www.vinspired.com
www.volunteersex.org
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/get-involved/get-involved/volunteering/>
www.doit.life/volunteer
<https://youth.essex.gov.uk/young-people/volunteering/>

Employability and Skills Team

Local provision options, opportunities & support

<https://youth.essex.gov.uk/young-people/education-employment-and-training-support/>

Raising of the Participation Age

www.essex.gov.uk/education-and-training-for-young-people

Youth Service Padlet's

NORTH - [What's Next Guide](#)

NORTH - [Advice and Guidance](#)

NORTH - [Job and Opportunities Board](#)

Mental Health Support

The Southend, Essex and Thurrock Children's and Adolescent Mental Health Services (SET CAMHS) provide advice and support to children, young people and families who are in need of support with their emotional wellbeing or mental health difficulties. www.nelft.nhs.uk/set-camhs

Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm: call **0800 953 0222**

Email: set-camhs.referrals@nelft.nhs.uk

Urgent or out of hours: call **111** and press option 2 to speak to a mental health professional.

This Guide was produced by the Essex County Council Employability & Skills Team. All information was correct as of April 2026.