

# ECC Report April 2018

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## **National Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme to kick-start a full fibre future**

Hundreds of businesses and residents across Essex can now access an ultrafast boost in their broadband connection with the help of a new scheme launched nationally by UK Government.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport is investing £67m in the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme to provide businesses and residential communities around them with future-proof full fibre connections which are faster, more reliable and cheaper to operate than traditional copper lines, and are capable of supporting not only gigabit, but terabit and even petabit speeds\*, which will serve the UK far into the future.

The vouchers, worth up to £3,000 for a small or medium business and £500 for a resident, provide a one-off contribution to subsidise the installation cost of gigabit-capable infrastructure (able to support speeds of at least 1Gbps or 1000Mbps). The scheme will be supplier-led, meaning residents or businesses will need to approach a supplier and the supplier will request a voucher from the UK Government.

The scheme can provide a boost to most small or medium-sized businesses in Essex, whether they can already access superfast speeds or not. Residential premises can also benefit by taking part in a business-led local community group scheme.

Councillor Kevin Bentley, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Skills, Infrastructure and Digital Economy, said: "This is great news for the Essex economy. Full fibre connections are the future. The Superfast Essex programme is continuing to extend superfast broadband coverage countywide and remains committed to doing so. This Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme will help to further enhance opportunities for businesses and residents to benefit in the digital world."

This latest investment is in addition to the £200m UK Government has allocated to the Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN) programme and part of UK Government's commitment to make full fibre broadband available to at least 10 million homes and businesses by 2022. Currently only around 3% of UK premises have access to a full fibre connection.

A successful pilot scheme launched in 4 areas around the country late last year has already seen nearly 1000 vouchers snapped up to date.

The scheme will run until March 2021 or until all available funding has been allocated. For more information and to apply visit [www.superfastessex.org/gigabitvoucher](http://www.superfastessex.org/gigabitvoucher).

The Superfast Essex programme has so far enabled more than 106,000 homes and businesses to access superfast broadband with the help of network operator's Openreach and Gigaclear. To check the broadband status for your address, visit: [www.superfastessex.org/maps](http://www.superfastessex.org/maps).

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Notes to Editors:

- \*Broadband speeds:
  - 1Gigabit (1Gbps) = 1000Mbps (Megabits per second)
  - 1Terabit (1Tbps) = 1000Gbps
  - 1Petabit (1Pbps) = 1000Tbp
- The Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme is intended to further the strategic objective of the [Local Full Fibre Networks programme](#) to stimulate commercial investment in full fibre coverage across the UK in both rural and urban locations across the UK.
- A market trial of the voucher scheme for business premises was launched in late 2017 in four areas across the country, with one area also running a trial of residential vouchers. These areas were:
  - Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire
  - Bristol, with Bath and North East Somerset (also had residential vouchers)
  - Coventry and Warwickshire (North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Rugby, Stratford-on-Avon, Warwick)
  - West Yorkshire and York (Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, Wakefield and York)
- Businesses and residents can get vouchers from suppliers who are registered with the scheme. Vouchers may only be used to support the cost of eligible connections. Suppliers can offer vouchers to both new and existing customers.

- Where suppliers are able to provide qualifying connections to single SMEs, vouchers will be made available to cover up to £3,000 of eligible costs.
- The only way residents can benefit from the voucher scheme is as part of a local community group scheme, which must also include small businesses. Residents and businesses taking part in a group scheme are able to join together to pool the value of their vouchers. Within this group the total value of vouchers used by businesses must always be greater than the value of vouchers taken by residents.
- In some areas the value of a single voucher will not fully meet the installation costs of a gigabit capable full fibre connection. Anyone in this position can also benefit from the group approach outlined above.
- Businesses and local community groups interested in requesting a voucher will be able to find details of the scheme on the Superfast Essex website at [www.superfastessex.org/gigabitvoucher](http://www.superfastessex.org/gigabitvoucher) or on the DCMS website at <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>, where there are also instructions for new suppliers on how to register, and the full details and terms and conditions of the scheme.

### **Thousands of Essex children offered preferred primary school place**

More than 14,000 pupils who are due to start primary school in Essex for the first time from September have been offered their parents' top preference of school.

About 16,000 parents in the county will discover the outcome of their primary school applications today (16 April), with those who applied online getting confirmation by email or via the Essex County Council website.

Despite significant growth of pupil numbers in parts of the county, the council's continued investment in creating new school places means 88.13 per cent of pupils have been offered their parents' first preference of school.

A further 7.12 per cent have been offered their second preference, meaning **95.25 per cent have been offered either their first or second preference.**

**In total, 98.22 per cent of pupils are being one of their parent's preferred schools** - representing the highest ever overall preferences met figure in Essex.

In February the council allocated a further £87million for creating new mainstream school places in the county as part of its ambitious new budget.

94 per cent of the county's primary schools have been rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted, compared with a national average of 90 per cent, which makes Essex County Council.

This year's figures in full:

- 88.13% of parents have been offered their 1st preference
- 7.12% of parents have been offered their 2nd preference
- 2.20% of parents have been offered their 3rd preference
- 0.77% of parents have been offered their 4th preference
- 1.78 of parents could not be offered any of their preferences and have been offered a place at the nearest school with a place available

Last year's figures:

- 89.37% of parents have been offered their 1st preference
- 6.23% of parents have been offered their 2nd preference
- 1.80% of parents have been offered their 3rd preference
- 0.79% of parents have been offered their 4th preference
- 1.81 % of parents could not be offered any of their preferences and have been offered a place at the nearest school with a place available

### **Essex Skills Board contributes to Essex Economic Report**

An independent economic report on Greater Essex (Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock) was released in March (2018) in response to the region's ambitions to become one of Britain's leading economies.

The Essex Employment and Skills Board (ESB) has helped the Essex Economic Commission to develop this report by contributing research from its annual skills evidence base.

Released in March (2018), 'Enterprising Essex: Meeting the Challenge', the second and final report will be the leading study in analysing the future of Greater Essex's economy, and inform on how it can position itself to become a more competitive economic power nationally.

Skills have a huge impact on the outlook of Essex's economy as it encourages sector growth and employment. Further headlines report:

- A-Levels results are below the UK average but GCSE results for Greater Essex are above the national average

- Apprenticeships for Greater Essex are at 0.82% of the local population (0.1% below the England total).
- Qualifications at level 4 and above have risen by 7% from 2005 - 2015, and those without a qualification have fallen by 7.8% (lesser than the national average of 8.4%)

The report was led by Dr Andrew Sentance CBE, acting as Chair and Senior Economic Advisor, PwC, and was recently discussed by business experts, economists and academics at Anglia Ruskin University (Friday, 23 March).

In the report's recommendations, it suggests that the ESB's employer-led approach should be supported in order to challenge the current skills gap and bolster business engagement. It also commends the ESB's development of a localised skills strategy which is in-line with its long-term vision for skills in Greater Essex:

ESB Chair, Adam Jones, who also acts as Head of HR Operations, Teledyne e2v, commented that: "The ESB is continuously shaping the skills system through our work and we've never been afraid of challenging the status quo to ensure that Essex's businesses are heard.

"Our input to this report on the skills gap in Essex was vital. With even more opportunities on the horizon, we are making progress in closing this skills gap, although there is still a lot of work to do. Skills play a huge part in building Essex's economy and we need to make sure that Essex is providing the right skills for what our businesses need to succeed."

### **Essex County Council's Community Learning and Skills provision judged 'Good' by Ofsted**

Ofsted inspectors visited ACL (Adult Community Learning, Essex) in February 2018 and found that leaders, managers and staff have worked hard to improve its adult learning provision; they awarded an overall rating of Good in its recent OFSTED inspection.

The service was particularly praised for its welcoming, enabling, supportive and inclusive culture, highlighting that leaders, managers and staff are impressive role models in this regard.

ACL was judged to be good in all aspects of the service, including the effectiveness of leadership and management; apprenticeships; quality of teaching, learning and

assessment; Adult Learning Programmes; personal development, behaviour and welfare and outcomes for learners.

Highlights of the report include:

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved markedly since the previous inspection. As a result, the large majority of learners and apprentices rapidly develop their skills and knowledge.
- Staff successfully promote safeguarding, teach learners about the 'Prevent' agenda and support the development of British values. As a result, learners are confident, knowledgeable, secure and respectful.
- Leaders and managers ensure that a greater proportion of apprentices achieve within planned timescales than previously.
- Learners studying creative courses and apprentices develop particularly high-quality practical skills.
- Very strong partnership working and engagement with employers bring real benefits to learners from all communities

ACL runs courses across Essex. These include recognised qualifications as a route to employment, as well as creative courses to develop new interests and improve health and wellbeing.

For more information visit [www.aclessex.com](http://www.aclessex.com)

### ***The Children's Society announced as provider of new approach to children's care in Essex***

National charity, The Children's Society, has been announced as the lead provider of a new children's social care innovation programme – *Inside Out* - being piloted in the East of England.

The local authorities of Essex, Hertfordshire and Norfolk were awarded £3million by the Department for Education last year to trial a new approach to delivering children's social care across each of the three areas.

As part of the pilot, The Children's Society has been awarded grant funding to recruit a team of coaches. The coaches will provide support for young people in residential placements, helping to improve their stability and successfully 'step down' to less intensive care wherever appropriate and possible.

A coach will work intensively one-on-one with a young person and their family, giving tailored support based on their individual needs and working alongside the young person's social worker, current residential provider and other agencies involved in their life.

Councillor Dick Madden, Essex County Council's Cabinet Member for Children and Families, said: "We're extremely pleased to announce The Children's Society will be joining our pilot innovation programme, following their impressive application which included a strong focus on achieving real, sustained change for young people.

"This announcement marks an important milestone in the project and reinforces the fact that we are truly at the forefront of innovation in children's social care. I'm proud of how multiple partners have come together to pioneer a new way of working.

"The Children's Society has a positive track record of working with vulnerable children and young people nationally and we look forward to working closely with them to mobilise the new model over the coming months."

Kerry Clancy-Horner, Children and Families Area Manager for the East of England at The Children's Society, said: "We are delighted to have been awarded funding to create the *Inside Out* coaching service which we hope will make a real difference to the lives of looked after young people and keep them safe and settled.

"Young people who are in the care of the local authority often have several issues in their lives; they may move around frequently between foster care placements, feel isolated and are particularly vulnerable to running away from home, putting them at greater risk of being sexually exploited.

"These children deserve to have a good childhood and we hope this innovative approach will improve their overall stability and help them have better lives as they grow up."

- The Children's Society is a national charity that works with the most vulnerable children and young people in Britain today. We listen. We support. We act. Because no child should feel alone.
- More information about The Children's Society can be found here: <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/>
- The Children's Social Care Innovation Programme was launched by the Department for Education (DfE) to test innovative ways of supporting vulnerable children and young people. More information can be found here: <http://springconsortium.com/innovation-programme/>
- The *Inside Out* pilot will focus on a small cohort of young people aged 15-17, currently living in residential placements in Essex, before being rolled out to Hertfordshire and Norfolk next year.

## **Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness Day 2018**

On Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> March a County wide initiative, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Awareness, was launched.

Essex, Southend and Thurrock Safeguarding Children Boards in partnership with Essex Police are re-launching the I Didn't Know campaign, this year focussing on online safety awareness and youth produced sexual imagery. A week long social media campaign followed the awareness day, targeting both parents, carers and children.

Online abuse is present in over 60% of all cases of child sexual exploitation investigated by Essex Police, making the need for online safety education a priority. The campaign will target parents and carers as research shows they are unaware of the dangers of social media, and the privacy settings available on social media apps. Additionally, children and young people aged 8-13 years old will be targeted as this is a crucial age where mobile phones and the internet are often introduced.

Messages will aim to:

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- Highlight the risks to children from online threats.
- Provide tips to parents on what they can do to help keep their child safe online
- Provide advice to parents on what to do if they have concerns.
- Support children to use their mobiles and other devices safely, responsibly and positively.
- Provide advice to children on what to do if they are worried about something they have seen or been asked to do online.

Phil Picton, Independent Chair Essex Safeguarding Children Board said: "People are encouraged to get involved with the campaign on social media using the hashtag #KnowAboutCSE to help spread awareness of the importance of privacy settings online. Having the right settings on your child's mobile phone could save them from being the victim of online abuse."

Detective Superintendent Jason Hendy, Head of Investigations for the Crime and Public Protection Unit, Essex Police said: "In over 60% of the child sexual exploitation cases we investigate, we find the victim has been targeted through social media or online. This makes the need for online safety education a priority.

"The relaunch of our 'I Didn't Know' campaign with our partners will inform parents, carers and children about the potential dangers of social media and the privacy settings available on apps to help reduce the risk of online CSE.

“We want to reach children before they start using social media, so they’re aware of how to keep themselves safe online.”

Based on data gathered by Essex Police’s Performance Information Unit updated in February 2018, online abuse is present in more than 60% of all cases of child sexual exploitation investigated by Essex Police.

Advice, support and resources can be found at [essex.police.uk/onlineCSE](https://essex.police.uk/onlineCSE)

For media interviews please contact: [lucy.badham@essex.pnn.police.uk](mailto:lucy.badham@essex.pnn.police.uk)