



**MAKE  
—  
HAPPEN**

# Levelling Up Action Plan

Make Happen, The Essex Uni  
Connect Partnership



# Foreword

## Foreword by Rt Hon Justine Greening

Founder of the Levelling Up Goals and Former Secretary of State for Education

Bringing opportunity to an area and making sure that everyone there has access to it is a complex issue. Many have a mix of urban, suburban, rural and coastal communities and there can be marked differences of equality within those areas. The most deprived communities in the country are not always where you expect them to be.

Tackling a lack of opportunity that is still a reality for many young people in these areas requires a strategic and collaborative approach by a range of stakeholders. It also needs to be targeted and long-term to make a real difference. Each stakeholder has a part to play in encouraging and nurturing the talent that undoubtedly exists there and each can contribute towards improving young people's life chances, in a mutually beneficial partnership which sees tailored solutions to place-based problems.

The chance to go to university can open lots of doors, as it did for me growing up in 1980s Rotherham, leading to opportunities that just wouldn't have been available to me without that higher education option. The right advice, information and support can enable young people in communities with little knowledge of higher education, and where there are often many other challenges to overcome, to have the same chance. But that is not the only objective. Providing the right information empowers young people to make well-informed choices about their future, even if that does not include progressing to higher education.

A recent UCAS report highlighted that there is a significant gap between the experiences of those from the wealthiest postcodes who start thinking about university much earlier and those of their

more disadvantaged peers. As a result, better off young people are more likely to make more informed decisions about their degree and the subjects they want to study.

That's why projects like Make Happen, funded by Uni Connect and led by the University of Essex, are so integral to improving social mobility. Serving as a hub at the centre of the region, they reach out to connect services and resources, working with schools, colleges, employers and other local partners to deliver information and advice about the realities and benefits of going on to higher education. Aided by local knowledge and expertise, together they inspire young people who are better equipped when they take the next steps in their journey, wherever that may lead.

A shared ambition to close the opportunity gaps and improve the life chances of people in an area where many feel they are left behind is why Make Happen has partnered with the Purpose Coalition, a group of the UK's principal purpose-led policymakers, business leaders and university vice-chancellors, working together to help set a new and dynamic agenda to tackle levelling up. That work is even more important as the country seeks to recover from the impact of COVID-19, with young people and the least advantaged communities having been the



hardest hit. It has increased existing inequalities, reduced employment, widened the digital divide, exacerbated the mental health crisis and its impact on education risks creating an entire lost generation.

As a first piece of work, the Coalition has published 14 Levelling Up Goals, based on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals which I helped to develop as International Development Secretary. Focusing on key life stages, from early years to adulthood, they provide a common and transparent approach for organisations to identify gaps in their social impact and find solutions to close them. Crucially, they also provide a way to track and benchmark progress.

A focus on measuring outcomes is also an integral part of what Make Happen does. If it was not facilitating opportunities for young people in Essex, the cumulative social and economic impact for individuals and for the area would be significant. The outreach work it carries out is just the start of a journey which ends with young people in the area being more successful in life and more able to make a positive contribution to the economy and civil society, not only in Essex but across the country.

Robust evaluation is integral to the success of Uni Connect partnerships. In Essex, through the extensive collation of information from its initiatives, Make Happen is contributing to the compilation of a much stronger evidence base around what works in higher education outreach. It is able to share and strengthen best practice in the sector but can also introduce new and innovative approaches while identifying the needs of some of the least privileged communities in the region. What you can't measure you can't improve, so it is clear that continued rigorous and long-term assessment of the data is essential to be able to evaluate outcomes and adapt workstreams effectively.

Make Happen's intuitive and adaptable approach, developed in conjunction with, and as a result of, its broad range of local and regional partnerships, is making a real difference to levelling up in Essex. It has become a trusted agent in building up social capital for the young people who live there, providing successful school years, improving post 16+ destinations and offering the right advice and experiences. Its work should be allowed to embed still further to allow it to continue to bring opportunity to young people across the region.



# Foreword

## Foreword by Professor Lorna Fox O'Mahony

Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Essex and Chair of the Executive group,  
Make Happen

Levelling up is more important now than ever before.

At the University of Essex, we have seen first-hand the increasing challenges students face in terms of access to education, wellbeing and future opportunities. We are proud to be taking important initiatives to tackle underrepresentation in Higher Education and advance the levelling up agenda. As the lead institution for the Essex Uni Connect partnership, by working with our Make Happen partners, we can lead progress towards a level-playing field in our schools, colleges, universities and the wider community.

Universities are committed to supporting fair access and outcomes throughout the whole student lifecycle. Our Access and Participation Plans set out our plans to support student success in higher education, regardless of background or characteristics. While we have, as a sector,

made important progress in reducing gaps in participation, with more students from low socioeconomic groups progressing to higher education, we recognise that progress needs to be faster if we are to fully realise the potential of our talented young people, and the benefits that unlocking their potential will bring to our communities.

Uni Connect, funded by the Office for Students, has unlocked opportunities for young people across Essex: by giving them an insight into higher education, and then empowering them to fulfil their ambitions. Make Happen has developed a responsive programme with schools and colleges built on meaningful relationships, enabling tailored outreach activity which delivers impact and positive outcomes for young people.

Through Make Happen, we've been working together to support thousands of students from areas of low progression to Higher Education since 2017. By ensuring students have access to high quality impartial advice we are supporting them to making the right choices for their futures. Levelling up can only be achieved through partnership. We believe in a level playing field for everyone in terms of life chances and job opportunities. The Levelling Up Goals set out an inspirational vision and working in partnership will help us fulfil those goals.

The Make Happen Levelling up action plan demonstrates how powerful collaboration can be. Young people deserve to have aspirations for their future lives, to believe that they can make a difference and to have equal opportunities to realise their potential, both in terms of their education outcomes and also their continued progression into their future careers and lives. There are still significant inequalities in relation to access and outcomes between the most advantaged and disadvantaged. Collaborative Outreach activities, and programs like Uni Connect, are key to driving forward change.

We aspire to a world where levelling up no longer needs to be an agenda item; where all young people have access to education that meets their aspirations and enables them to succeed in their chosen path. Levelling up is a critical part of society, not only in education, but in employment, business and the wider community. Make Happen and the wider Uni Connect program have shown that it is possible to have an impact through collaborative outreach, and by providing meaningful pathways for our young people.

The levelling up agenda provides a real opportunity for a new mindset to be established. Like Make Happen, it focuses on equality of opportunity and positive outcomes. Our Levelling up action plan demonstrates the determination our universities, colleges, schools and stakeholders have in working together to make a difference.



**We aspire to a world where levelling up no longer needs to be an agenda item; where all young people have access to education that meets their aspirations and enables them to succeed in their chosen path.**

# 1: Introduction

## Levelling up in the context of COVID

In the UK, a lack of social mobility has been a persistent problem and, even before COVID, it was often the case that how well a person did in life depended on where they started. The Social Mobility Pledge's own research had indicated that young people in the UK were finding it harder to progress in the workplace than their parents or grandparents had. It also asked workers aged 18 to 64 how easy it was to get on in life in the UK, regardless of background, and a quarter rated it 'hard' or 'very hard'.



Justine Greening first used the phrase "levelled up Britain" in 2015 to set out her view that equality of opportunity should be achieved not by taking opportunity away from those who already have it, but by giving the same access to opportunities to people and communities without them. Elected on a manifesto which vowed to 'level up every part of the UK', in his first speech as Prime Minister in 2019 Boris Johnson identified the need to 'unleash the potential of the whole country' and close the opportunity gap as one of the biggest challenges for his government. He included not only

education and increased productivity as solutions, but improved infrastructure and giving people the chance to own their own home.

That ambition is now being more widely reflected across government, industry and civil society as the profound impact of the pandemic across locations, ages and education levels has become clear. COVID has shone a spotlight on many of the inequalities that already existed but its effects have undoubtedly made the task of levelling up the country much more difficult. A report by the think tank, Centre for Cities, estimates that the government's plan for levelling up the country has become four times harder because of the damage the pandemic has inflicted on the employment market.

In his 2020 Spending Review, the Chancellor of the Exchequer confirmed that unemployment rose by 300,000 in 2020 and that the fall in output would be the largest for over 300 years. While it is not expected to recover to pre-COVID levels until late 2022, the economic damage is likely to be lasting. The Office for Budget Responsibility provided a reference scenario in which the UK economy would contract by 35%, with unemployment peaking at 10 per cent as a result of COVID. Some sectors such as finance will emerge relatively unscathed with a contraction of just -5%, while others like retail and hospitality will contract by -50% and -85% respectively.

That difference in impact across sectors has already resulted in a difference in impact on people. Fifteen per cent of workers in shut-down sectors are from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background compared to 12% of all workers and 57% are women compared to a workforce that is 48% female. Those who are low paid are more likely to work in shut-down sectors, as well as less likely to be able to work from home. Young people

<sup>1</sup> [www.centreforcities.org/publication/cities-outlook-2021/](http://www.centreforcities.org/publication/cities-outlook-2021/)

<sup>2</sup> UK Government. Spending Review Speech. UK Government. [Online] November 2020. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/spending-review-2020-speech>.

<sup>3</sup> Office for Budget Responsibility. Coronavirus analysis. Office for Budget Responsibility. [Online] April 14, 2020. [Cited: April 15, 2020.] [https://cdn.obr.uk/Coronavirus\\_reference\\_scenario\\_commentary.pdf](https://cdn.obr.uk/Coronavirus_reference_scenario_commentary.pdf).

are particularly impacted with one in three young people under 25 employed in the three sectors most affected by the pandemic - travel, hospitality and retail. While employment levels for those aged 25-64 have fallen by 0.5%, employment levels amongst 16-24 year olds have fallen by 7%. ONS figures reviewing the labour market in April 2021 showed that young people are still bearing the brunt of the crisis with statistics showing that long-term unemployment for young people is at a five year high, that they are losing out on opportunities more than any other age groups and that employment is at its lowest rate.

Across every level of education, the impact of the pandemic has been severe, with the digital divide emerging as a key barrier from primary school through to university. An Institute for Fiscal Studies report assessed that the cost of lost learning could translate to as much as £350bn in lost earnings, with an estimation that pupils stand to lose an average of £40,000 in lifetime earnings, with children from disadvantaged backgrounds most affected. The impact on the health and wellbeing of our children is immense and the threat of a lost generation is very real.

Against this challenging background, there is now wide recognition that an organisation's social impact is a crucial part of its governance. The Government has introduced a social mobility agenda into each of its departments and has included the Social Mobility Commission at the centre of government, acknowledging the need for levelling up to be at the heart of its plans. It recognises that does not just extend to jobs and education but also, for example, to sustainable homes, health and infrastructure. Later this year, it will publish a Levelling Up White Paper to demonstrate how new policy interventions will improve opportunity and boost livelihoods across the country as we recover from the pandemic. It will focus on challenges including improving living standards, growing the private sector and increasing and spreading opportunity.

Businesses, universities and other organisations are also moving towards delivering a more authentic socially responsible agenda, away from purely corporate governance. Polling carried out by the

Social Mobility Pledge reflects what has become much clearer as a result of the pandemic: that the public now expect higher standards of social impact from the organisations that they work for or do business with. The majority also believe that their performance on improving social mobility should form part of how their success is measured. That requires a clear and wide-ranging set of objectives which can form the basis of an organisation's environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria and shape their focus.

For business and also for universities, the shift in consumer expectations towards making a positive impact has also increased and so too should the need to build a business strategy and plans around meaningful purpose. In research carried out by the US Trust as part of the Bank of America Private Bank, 93% of millennials believed that social or environmental impact is important in investment decisions. There is growing pressure from the public and investors for corporate Britain to play its part in solving global challenges, including climate change. That means encouraging as many organisations as possible to make a public commitment to reaching net zero emissions.

That is the right thing for the country but it is also the smart approach for businesses and universities. There is increasing evidence across markets and sectors of the intrinsic role that having a clear purpose has in underpinning long-term commercial success. Deutsche Bank evaluated 56 academic studies on environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria. Organisations with the highest ESG ratings were found to have a lower cost of debt and equity. Eighty nine per cent of the studies analysed showed that companies with the highest ESG ratings outperformed the market in the medium (3-5 years) and long (5-10 years) term.

The Levelling Up Goals have been designed to provide the framework by which purpose-led organisations can address the long-standing issue of poor social mobility more effectively and help communities across the country to recover from the impact of the pandemic.

<sup>4</sup> [www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/april2021](http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/april2021)

<sup>5</sup> Johnson, Paul, Joyce, Robert and Platt, Lucinda. The IFS Deaton Review of Inequalities: a New Year's Message. s.l. : IFS/Nuffield Foundation, 2021

## 2: The Journey to the Levelling Up Goals

In 2015, as Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening MP led the UK delegation to the United Nations (UN). Along with 184 international partners, she helped to establish the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In 2017, the SDGs were made more 'actionable' by a UN resolution adopted by the General Assembly which identified specific targets for each goal, along with indicators used to measure progress towards each target. These 17 interlinked, global goals were designed to be 'a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all'. They marked a shift from the previously established Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000. In contrast to the MDGs, the SDGs were nationally-owned, country-led and targeted wealthy, developed nations as well as developing countries.

The SDGs emphasised the interdependent environment, social and economic aspects of development by centralising the role of sustainability. As Secretary for State, Justine recognised how useful a common set of accessible but ambitious objectives could be in galvanising action to effect change. Since then the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated many of the problems relating to social inequality in the UK. The recovery is a chance for the United Kingdom to address these issues and level up but that requires updated and specific goals in order to outline, inspire and measure progress. The Purpose Coalition, of which Make Happen at the University of

Essex has been a key member, aims to improve social mobility in the UK and has responded to this challenge with the launch of their own Levelling Up Goals in February 2021.

These new Goals build on the foundations laid by the UN's SDGs by outlining 14 clear goals, and draw on expertise provided by academia and businesses which has been applied to the unique challenges facing the UK in levelling up. They focus on key life stages and highlight the main issues that need to be resolved in order to create a level playing field for all in this country. The Levelling Up Goals are intended to guide how the urgent ambition to level up the UK can actually be achieved. The impact of the work carried out to do this can, and should, be measurable.

Sub-goals with quantifiable targets and measurements against which progress can be charted within the 14 goals are being developed by the Purpose Coalition in partnership with Purpose Coalition universities, including the University of York and the University of Lincoln. This will create a more transparent and measurable framework with which to monitor and subsequently address problems of social

<p><b>1</b> Strong foundations in Early Years</p> 	<p><b>2</b> Successful school years</p> 
<p><b>3</b> Positive destinations Post 16+</p> 	<p><b>4</b> Right advice and experiences</p> 
<p><b>5</b> Open recruitment</p> 	<p><b>6</b> Fair career progression</p> 
<p><b>7</b> Widening access to savings &amp; credit</p> 	<p><b>8</b> Good health and well-being</p> 
<p><b>9</b> Extending enterprise</p> 	<p><b>10</b> Closing the digital divide</p> 
<p><b>11</b> Infrastructure for opportunity</p> 	<p><b>12</b> Building homes &amp; sustainable communities</p> 
<p><b>13</b> Harness the energy transition</p> 	<p><b>14</b> Achieve equality, through diversity &amp; inclusion</p> 

**If Britain is to achieve levelling up, I believe that we need a galvanizing set of goals that can unite Parliament, business, communities, and civil society to work in partnership for the common good of our country.**

mobility and inequality. The Levelling Up Goals are designed to look at the outcomes of CSR strategies and measures that organisations operate. Many organisations are doing outstanding work and making important contributions to society but are still measuring this via inputs – a measure that focuses on financial measures rather than real impact on human lives.

Crucially, these Goals are a shared framework. Justine and the wider Purpose Coalition believe that with a common understanding and objectives, there can be action that drives change on the ground. Distinct entities, including universities, businesses, policy-makers, communities and NGOs, can work together, with the shared Goals being a uniting and motivating foundation for progress. As the problems which cause social inequality in the UK are interlinked, it seems that the response to these problems must also be collaborative. The Purpose Coalition has encouraged businesses and universities to share their own best practice with other organisations so they are not only demonstrating their own commitment, but creating a shift towards purpose-led organisations. The Goals can encourage an extension of this co-operative exchange of information which can be used to help level up Britain.

### **3. Make Happen and their partners and the role of higher education in levelling up**

It has been reported that with current levels of inequality and intergenerational earnings mobility, it could take at least five generations – or 150 years – for the child of a poor family to reach the average income across OECD countries.

There are different rates in different countries – for example it can take just two to three generations to reach that average income in the Nordic countries but nine or more in some emerging economies. In the UK, levels of social mobility have been stagnant for some time and there has been a failure to keep up with other developed countries in addressing the issue.

The Levelling Up Goals provide an ambitious and strategic approach to address that challenge, setting out for the first time the gaps that need to be removed to successfully facilitate levelling up across the country. They will offer a common framework within which organisations can collate information on what they are doing and demonstrate how that is making a difference across all key life stages, using a common language.

That ambition should also apply to the higher education sector where universities can serve as anchor institutions in their region. Many already have a principle focus on widening access and participation. Reaching into communities that are often furthest away from a level playing field, they can be the gateway to opportunity – the chance for an individual to make something of their life, no matter where they were born or what their background is. If that option is not available, it is likely that much of the talent pool that undoubtedly

exists in those communities would be wasted, making poor social and economic sense.

The importance of early engagement, and the impact that can have depending on the school an individual attends, is highlighted in a report by UCAS, *Where Next? What influences the choices school leavers make*, which recommends that students should start thinking about degree options before choosing their GCSEs and highlights the important role that outreach with schools plays. One in five students at university said they were unable to study the degree subject that interested them because they did not receive good advice at school on A Level and GCSE choices and two in five admitted they would have made different choices if they had received better advice. Students from the wealthiest postcodes tended to start thinking about university earlier than those from the poorest, with 31% of the richest pupils considering higher education at primary school compared with 27% of their most disadvantaged peers and 37% were less likely to feel that they received insufficient information on their subject choices, compared to 43%.

Make Happen is part of Uni Connect, formerly known as the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP), which brings together 29 partnerships of universities, colleges and other local partners to offer activities, advice and information on the benefits and realities of going to university or college. Its aims are



to reduce the gap in higher education participation between the most and least represented groups and supporting young people to make well-informed decisions about their future education. As a partnership, it supports effective and impactful local collaboration by higher education providers working together with schools, colleges, employers and other partners to contribute to a stronger evidence base around what works in higher education outreach and strengthen evaluation practice in the sector.

The Uni Connect programme began in January 2017 and has anticipated funding until 2025. The programme is intended to complement and add value to the work that higher education providers undertake through their Access and Participation Plans, in particular work that is best delivered in collaboration.

However, a focus on the widening access and participation agenda offers only one perspective of higher education as a driver of levelling up, when the influence of universities actually extends to many other areas. That can also include innovative thinking on how they might have a wider impact on communities, for example on employability and connections to employers and industry or, with £11 billion spent by the sector annually, improved procurement practices to deliver better social value.

There needs to be a new approach to higher education and levelling up which strategically assesses how universities are delivering across each of the 14 Levelling Up Goals, the best practice that

already exists and the expectations they need to meet. The Goals framework will make it much easier to evaluate that and, as a result, compare it in a consistent way across organisations. Universities must embrace collaborative outreach, working with a range of stakeholders in a nuanced way, to achieve levelling up.

The Goals framework will also help to meet society's expectations, particularly following the pandemic, that they should be working towards the public good. Students reflect that sentiment and expect their institutions to pursue policies of procurement and sustainability, for example, that deliver positive social value.

Make Happen has acknowledged the important part that it can play in the levelling up agenda. It has demonstrated best practice on delivering innovative and creative solutions to give the young people and families in their communities better advice and information about going into higher education. This work would meet Goal 2 Successful School Years, Goal 3 Positive destinations post-16, Goal 4 Right advice and experience and Goal 14 Achieve equality through diversity & inclusion. Its approach is all the more effective because it is part of a collaborative effort on levelling up which it and its partners are seeking to embed into the region for the long term. This report examines how it is doing that in more detail and identifies more clearly where it is focusing its efforts and how effectively it achieves its strategic aims.

# Best Practice

This section looks at the work Make Happen is currently undertaking and how its collaborative partnerships deliver a successful tailored approach to social mobility in the region.

## Introduction

Make Happen unlocks opportunities for young people across Essex by helping them make informed choices about their education and future. The University of Essex is the lead institution for the programme which is part of the Office for Students' Uni Connect programme. It is one of 29 national partnerships across the UK which bring together schools and colleges, with universities and other local educational partners, to offer activities, advice and information on the benefits and realities of continuing to higher education.

Make Happen is a team of 20 higher education and outreach professionals who have extensive experience of working in the education and higher education sector, including ex teachers. The first phase of the programme ran from January 2017 until August 2019 and reached 60,000 students across Essex. Phase two ran from August 2019 until July 2021, delivering a varied programme of activities to the same partner schools and colleges. Beyond July 2021 Make Happen will continue this work as well as contributing to a network of outreach hubs serving many more schools across Essex, through support and activities as well as signposting services.

Uni Connect has a particular focus on areas where participation in higher education is lower than might be expected, given the GCSE results of the young people who live there. It also supports young people's exploration of the world of work and career progression to raise awareness of the opportunities higher education can provide. Essex is a county with a diverse demographic featuring rural, urban and coastal areas, as well as London borders. It also has high deprivation in areas including Southend, Thurrock and Clacton.



**It is the collaborative nature of Make Happen which enables effective engagement with young people who are furthest away from a level playing field**



Make Happen is at the centre of a network of partner organisations. These include 83 schools and colleges and a number of higher education institutions, including the University of Essex, Anglia Ruskin University, Writtle University College and the University of East London. They also include Essex County Council, Thurrock Council and Southend-On-Sea Borough Council. It also works with an extensive range of other local and regional partners. Further Education Colleges have always been a part of the programme with Phase 3 placing an additional focus on progression from Further Education. Make Happen works with its partner colleges: USP College, South Essex College, Harlow College, Colchester Institute and Writtle University College to ensure activity is tailored to students.

It is the collaborative nature of Make Happen which enables effective engagement with young people who are furthest away from a level playing field - to raise their aspirations, to promote an interest in higher education and to help them achieve their ambitions in life. Often from families with no history of higher education,

they have little knowledge of what is needed to get there or what university life is like and, crucially, what opportunities they could access as a result. The work Make Happen delivers, where possible, also includes parents and carers. For students who come from families with no prior history of HE, it is important parents and carers feel equipped and empowered to help their young person through the journey to HE.

Working together, and with a detailed knowledge of Essex, Make Happen and its stakeholders are able to facilitate positive outcomes that not only benefit individuals but the region as a whole, delivering outcomes which would not have been possible without these partnerships. With young people from less advantaged areas amongst the hardest hit by the impact of COVID-19, it is essential work in levelling up communities.

A collaborative thread runs through every initiative that Make Happens promotes. Some involve a single partner, others are run through a number of organisations. By sharing information and best practice, the impact Make Happen delivers is even more powerful.

# Partnering with universities

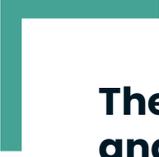
The University of Essex is the lead institution of the Essex Uni Connect partnership, however the Make Happen collaboration includes a number of other higher education institutions in and around Essex including Anglia Ruskin University, Writtle University College and the University of East London.

They provide another vital spoke in the wheel, reaching out to young people in the county to provide practical information and advice about what higher education is like, what subjects are available and what opportunities there might be at the end of their higher education journey. Collaboration with them is key to the success of Make Happen, along with work with other partners, schools and colleges. It relies on working collaboratively to develop targeted and relevant outreach which complements existing outreach activity within HE institutions.

The relationship between Make Happen and the higher education institutions with which it partners is two-way, and mutually beneficial. They share and promote each other's activities, signposting Make Happen's activities. Make Happen has built positive relationships with local schools and colleges which complement existing relationships with FE and HE providers. Make Happen data analysis has identified "cold spots" where a school has not engaged with outreach activity recently.

Make Happen will facilitate introductions and help develop the relationships between the school and Make Happen partners. The wider Make Happen stakeholders work together to avoid duplication and delivering activities to the same group - schools have noted that if initiatives are too targeted, they tend to attract the same group of students and other students, who may benefit more, do not get access. They share best practice to ensure that programmes deliver what works well for schools. They work on collaborative projects together with Make Happen as an impartial lead, coordinating the relevant higher education institute, often including individual college or university academic departments.

Finally, Make Happen has utilised the delivery of a partnership fund - small grants to organisations to deliver work on behalf of Make Happen. As an example, the University of Essex bid for funding for one member of staff to work on Aspire and Aspire Higher.

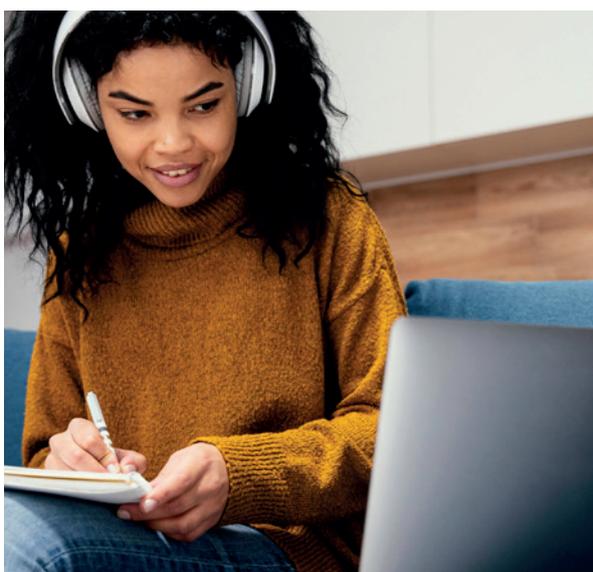


**The relationship between Make Happen and the higher education institutions with which it partners is two-way, and mutually beneficial**



**This experience was extremely worthwhile as it taught me to appreciate my voice and that I am good enough and no one can tell me otherwise. It also taught me to be more confident and that where ever you go you will be supported"**

*student on Aspire programme*



### ASPIRE AND ASPIRE HIGHER

The Aspire programmes highlight why the ethos behind Make Happen's work is so effective. The collaborative approach between Make Happen, schools and the University of Essex helps to effectively address potential cold spots in outreach provision, with some schools and colleges participating for the first time. There are multiple opportunities for touchpoints with young people, with clear benefits of early and repeated intervention. The range of activities available deliver a sustained and progressive programme of support and they are increasingly tailored to the age and circumstances of the learner, school or college and the area in which they are located.

Funded by Make Happen and led by the University of Essex, the Aspire and Aspire Higher programmes offer free activities to help students decide what they want to do with their future by exploring the different opportunities on offer after school or college. The programmes are not subject specific and instead focus on building skills, confidence and knowledge about higher education and everything that comes with it. There is a range of resources including events, blogs and webinars for teachers and advisers.

Aspire aims to encourage Year 9-11 students from traditionally under-represented backgrounds across the eastern region to work towards applying to, and studying at higher education. The programme is split into three years:

- Year 9 discover how their GCSEs relate to HE
- Year 10 explore the benefits of HE Year 11 highlight key differences between studying in school and HE

Aspire Higher is for Years 12 and 13 from similarly underrepresented backgrounds and aims to make a successful transition from school or college to university. The programme is split into two years:

- Year 12 looks at the potential challenges they might face in HE and discover how to overcome them
- Year 13 focuses on how to make more informed decisions and write a successful university application.

As a result of covid, all engagement has been online since April 2021. Despite a different approach engagement levels have still been high, with students continually providing high feedback for the programme.



### THE BRILLIANT CLUB

Make Happen uses a number of external providers to deliver impactful programmes. One such provider is the Brilliant Club, a charity which has been working with the programme for a number of years. It is another example of how a collaborative approach delivers results for young people in Essex.

The Brilliant Club mobilises the PhD community to share their expertise with state schools. They develop relationships with teachers and university widening participation staff to give pupils the opportunity to work with a PhD researcher to experience university-style learning. Over an eight week project they develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to secure a place at university. Pupils work with their PhD researcher on a range of different subjects culminating in a challenging final assignment which is marked and moderated using university grades. Alongside the assignment, the project includes a visit to a university which allows young people to immerse themselves in that setting and help motivate themselves to get there.

### MENTORING AND ROLE MODELS

The use of role models within outreach activity is known to be an effective way to raise aspirations. The chance for young people to come into contact with higher education students from the same underrepresented area, with a similar background and perhaps also with non-traditional qualifications, such as BTECs or an access course, inspires students that they can also achieve. Having a role model with a similar background is key to breaking down some of the barriers that can exist for young people from less privileged backgrounds. In addition to a lack of knowledge about higher education prospects and processes, these can include confidence, understanding the financial side of going to university and other responsibilities, for example caring for relatives.

Where possible, mentors and student ambassadors are used across all Make Happen activity due to the impact they have. Students are used from across the Make Happen partners to ensure there is a range of courses, backgrounds and insights.

**We also learned many techniques relating to both of the subjects. For instance, in poetry we learned different poetic techniques and how to analyse language, form and structure, etc. Whereas, when completing narratives, we learned how to incorporate different literary techniques into our own work. I truly enjoyed this experience and I am very grateful that I was given this opportunity.**

# Partnering with schools

Each school or college identified as a UniConnect school has a named Make Happen Outreach Officer.

This relationship is fundamental to the success of the partnership, particularly where this contact remains consistent over time. The officer is able to develop a knowledge and understanding of the school, the courses it offers and the demographic of the students. In turn, staff, pupils and their families get to know the officer who, over time, often becomes a familiar face in the school - attending parents' evenings, mentoring students and liaising with external providers to provide activities. UniConnect has strengthened its branding as a result of feedback from its evaluation process and, as a result, there is stronger branding and increased awareness of local partnerships, including Make Happen, in schools. This has helped teachers, pupils and parents to recognise it more easily.

As each school or college is unique, the activities offered by Make Happen are different, depending on the barriers that exist in that particular area and

the needs of its students. They can be tailored for the specific needs of the school and the individual. Delivery can be tailored to one-to-one, small groups, class groups or full year assemblies. UniConnect activity is mainly delivered to year 9 to 13 students and activities are available based on a range of topics. Some specific examples are featured below but, generally, they can include:

- Post-16 options
- University life
- Personal statements
- Interviews
- Subject taster sessions
- Study skills
- Transferable skills
- Financial education
- Student finance
- Apprenticeships
- Careers

## CASE STUDY

### WORKING WITH SCHOOLS AND THIRD PARTY PROVIDERS TO ENGAGE PARENTS AND CARERS

Parents and carers are key influencers when students are facing decisions about their next steps. Parents and carers have often been challenging to engage, however Covid-19 presented an unexpected opportunity to engage these vital stakeholders. To help inform and inspire this important group, two parent/carer webinars were organised and facilitated by members of the Make Happen team. To plan these sessions, Make Happen asked parents/carers to complete a survey indicating the best content and timing of these webinars to suit their needs.

For the first half of each webinar, Make Happen Officers provided information and advice to parents and carers on options for students, one focused on the KS4 transition for Year 11 and another on decisions after KS5. In the second half of each webinar, third-party providers discussed how to help their child/young person with their studies and motivation.

Both webinars had attendance levels unseen previously for parent/carer events. Sixty one parents and carers attended the first session in December 2020 and 104 in February 2021. The surveys given to the participants afterwards had 23 and 50 responses respectively. Overall, their answers were very positive with 100% and 86% of the respondents saying they 'strongly agreed or agreed' that the webinar they attended was helpful. A majority of respondents also indicated that they felt more confident in supporting their child/young person afterwards.

### OUTREACH HUB

As well as the targeted element of the Make Happen programme they also operate an outreach hub which includes a website to signpost a range of useful content. As well as signposting, Make Happen is able to deliver strategic outreach, identifying gaps across the region to support a wider variety of young people. Using the hub, the programme can support young people in years 7 and 8 which differs from the rest of the programme which is only able to reach out to Year 9 pupils and above. Research shows that working with younger students, and their families, is hugely important in sowing the early seeds of inspiration and motivation. Earlier intervention is key to producing more positive outcomes at a later stage.

The outreach hub can also work with those schools which are not currently accessing higher education support. In this way, Make Happen can identify where there are specific gaps in the region and what information or activity would be most effective in closing those gaps. It also allows more freedom to target specific groups of children who are underrepresented in higher education. This includes those with care experience or disabilities for example, or military families. Where appropriate, the hub will work with its partner institutions to support new relationships with these schools so outreach work can continue outside of the hub.



### CASE STUDY

#### WORKING WITH CAREER PROFESSIONALS AND SCHOOLS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE WORLD OF WORK

As part of its remit to inform young people about careers and the world of work whilst also continuing the messages around higher education, Make Happen runs Workplace Wednesdays. These events give an introduction to the variety of industries and careers that exist, focusing on the day-to-day life of people in these industries and finding out about their personal journeys to get there. Although there are talks from familiar professions such as doctors, lawyers, journalists and teachers, lesser known careers are also included, such as planning communications and scientific publishing.

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to have professional contacts within their family, or social groups. They may have never had the opportunity to engage directly with people who work in these sectors. Workplace Wednesday allows them to hear about the realities of the job, in an informal setting where they feel comfortable asking questions. The events also present authentic stories about how people get to where they are now, acknowledging that often the route to a great job is not necessarily straightforward or predictable. They emphasise the importance of resilience and creativity as young people consider their futures.

During the pandemic these sessions were some of the most popular within Make Happen's online material. They are pre-recorded and available on demand and have the advantage of existing as legacy material that can be viewed by individuals and as a class. In an evaluation carried out, 90% of students responded that they found the activity helpful and 100% learned something new.



### MENTORING WITH MAKE HAPPEN

Mentoring is a crucial part of the work Make Happen carries out and it runs a number of different programmes. Mentoring may be delivered by Make Happen Outreach Officers, or through external groups who receive funding to deliver mentoring. The format is tailored to the school, sessions usually take place over a number of consecutive weeks, in either small groups or on a one to one basis. They can be for a group of young people who are particularly disengaged and need inspiration and motivation or a group of high achievers who need pushing even further. The sessions encourage them to think about potential career pathways, the study skills they can learn and the support for revision they might need. Discussions include topics such as personal barriers, strengths and weaknesses, SMART goals and first-hand experiences. They foster a deeper understanding of higher education which allows pupils to recognise that it could actually be an option for them.

Schools and colleges value the impartiality of the Make Happen programme as it allows students to gain a complete view of the options available, whether that is higher education, apprenticeships or further education. In turn, young people trust the information and advice offered by the Make Happen Outreach Officer. They feel comfortable meeting a familiar face and are more confident about asking questions on issues they may have felt reticent about raising in other forums. As with other initiatives, a sustained level of activity offers continuity and message reinforcement and students can be supported over a number of years.

Make Happen also runs online mentoring sessions with external providers for Years 10-13. Some of these are conducted via a text-based messaging app on their phone and do not require video calls or live chat. This flexibility allows young people to go at a pace that suits them and offers a degree of privacy and discretion that can make all the difference in some pupils choosing to participate.

# Partnering with local authorities

Local authorities are able to provide in-depth knowledge of the economic, educational and social issues which affect an area.

They also connect up a wide range of organisations which serve the area and have close links to businesses and employers, making them aware of any particular skills shortages. An important part of this work is collaboration pre and post-16, feeding the right skills into the local economy.

The activities that local authorities can deliver with schools and colleges has been enhanced by their partnership with Make Happen and strengthened with a sustained programme of events. For example, previously a careers service existed which just offered guidance. Additional funding from Make Happen has enabled schools to provide activities which extend young people's extra-curricular skills, which they would not have had time to do in the classroom. They have encouraged young people to think differently about what they enjoy doing and what they might be able to do in terms of jobs, broadening their horizons and helping them to aspire to a much broader range of careers.



**The activities that local authorities can deliver with schools and colleges have been enhanced by their partnership with Make Happen**

Make Happen maintains a positive relationship with all three of the local authorities within the county, Essex, Southend and Thurrock. They have particularly benefited from the partnership fund. They bid for these small grants as part of a funding request, submitted alongside evaluation data, which also considers who the local authority will work with and how well the project fits in with Uni Connect and Make Happen objectives.

Some of the programmes that Make Happen work collaboratively on with these local authorities include:



### YES YOU CAN : SUMMER TRANSITION PROGRAMME FOR BTEC STUDENTS

BTEC students are less likely to attend summer schools and open days and, consequently, their decisions are not as well informed and many lack the confidence to take the step into HE. This programme is not subject specific but focuses on the key skills needed to navigate HE - increasing resilience, positive thinking and a growth mindset, thereby building social and cultural capital. The impact evaluation carried out contributed to Uni Connect's evaluation. Its aim was not just to get them to go to university, although a significant number did in this case. It was successful more broadly as a means to inform young people and increase awareness of what is available and how they might be supported.

### KICKSTART

Southend Council collaborated with Make Happen on the 'Kickstart Your Future' campaign which sends teams into schools to support young people in thinking about and inspiring them into higher education. The Kickstart scheme was introduced by the Government to create high quality six-month work placements for people aged 16-24 who are not working and claim Universal Credit. The programme helps young people to develop the right skills and gain experience to find work after their placement. The Council networks with Heads of Sixth Forms in Essex which are run by Essex County Council, illustrating the collaborative approach that extends to schools and local authorities.

### FUTURE STARS

Future Stars is a programme for young people in years 9-13 who are in foster care, or have experienced some time in care. They can access one-to-one support, careers guidance, extra tutoring in English and Maths, university taster days, virtual summer school, inspirational speakers and webinars.

The programme includes sessions for school staff, social workers and foster carers. It was piloted in 2020/21 in collaboration with local stakeholders. Make Happen has brought together the three local authorities, alongside university partners to produce a programme of activity. This activity is designed to support students with experience of the care system, as well as providing information to the key decision makers in their lives. As part of the project, foster carers and teachers were invited along to sessions to enable them to best support young people in accessing Higher Education. The scheme demonstrates how collaboration between a range of people - in this case, Make Happen, local authorities, university partners, schools, social workers and foster carers - can help address the opportunity gaps which can exist for specific groups.

From a strategic perspective, it also prevents a number of programmes being developed by different partners for the same group of students. The strength of partnership working is illustrated by this programme. Expertise can be combined, a range of different activities can be developed and students receive a much more rounded experience.

# Evaluation

OFS evaluates Uni Connect's impact at a national and partnership level to assess impact.

That information is used to influence funding decisions and refine practice at a local level. It carries out its own national evaluation as well as commissioning external evaluation with a focus on understanding the impact of Uni Connect in as much detail as possible.

There has been a series of reviews for each phase of Uni Connect which consider the key achievements made and the areas which could be targeted for improvement. They explore the effectiveness of collaborative approaches to governance, the implementation and delivery of outreach and of emerging evidence about the impact of the programme on target learners. The reviews help to set the partnerships within a strategic context where consideration is given to how each element of the partnership is working and how they can better work together. The most recent review incorporated 165 partnership submissions over phases one and two, with the higher quality and quantity of evidence during phase two demonstrating how Uni Connect meets one of its key aims to contribute to a stronger evidence base around what works in higher education outreach and strengthen evaluation practice in the sector. It found that:

- There is a high volume of strong evidence that multi-intervention approaches have a positive impact on short, medium and long-term outcomes for learners, particularly when they engage in seven to eight sessions for a minimum of three hours in total over the course of an academic year.
- All interventions are shown to have a positive effect on learners' knowledge of HE and their confidence to make informed decisions – a key aim of Uni Connect. Particular interventions appear to support the achievement of specific outcomes: workshops and masterclasses are effective for developing study skills and confidence; mentoring and summer schools support the development of self-

efficacy and interpersonal skills; and campus visits are an effective way to convey the benefits of HE and what student life is like.

- Evidence on the impact of individual activities on learners' intentions towards HE is more equivocal, but the stronger evidence suggests that most activities have a positive effect. There is evidence that some target learners, including some of those who previously expressed an intention to apply to HE, change their mind after taking part in Uni Connect activities. This still represents a positive outcome if the decision not to progress is well-informed as a result of their engagement in the programme. Furthermore, longitudinal analysis demonstrates that learners' intentions towards HE fluctuate over time and so it is possible that some of those who go from being likely to unlikely to apply to HE, will change their intentions again at a later stage.

As one of Uni Connect's partnerships, Make Happen surveys every student in each school and college it works with to establish a baseline of information. It typically receives about 20,000 responses each year. Alongside this, it carries out its own research where it collects data on the key themes of aspiration and confidence in, and knowledge of, university application processes, courses and lifestyle. All the data is fed into the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) with additional analysis where possible.

Longitudinal tracking looks at target learners to evaluate the impact of particular interventions and there is also local evaluation of its activities. This is broadly carried out in three different ways, depending on the type of activity.

- Details collected if it is a light touch activity, e.g. a careers fair.
- Post-activity survey for workshops.
- Long term evaluation (from beginning to end) for those who engage in sustained activity.

One of the key challenges with evaluating outreach activities is the time lag between a student engaging in the programme and being able to progress to HE. If Make Happen works with a student in Year 9 they won't be HE ready for at least 5 years, meaning a key outcome indicator will not be accessible for at least 6 years. Shorter-term indicators in evaluation can give a fairly accurate idea of how aspirations or opinions might have progressed throughout a project so there is a concerted effort to assess as much of the returned material as possible. The gold standard is progression to higher education but even when that does not happen, if a young person feels better informed about the process, has had equal opportunities with access to information and has felt more empowered to make that decision, the programme will have achieved its objectives.

Funding has also allowed Make Happen to commission some external evaluation and there has been a greater emphasis on this in recent years, not

only in the information that is shared with the OfS but also at a more local level. As further evidence of the collaborative nature, this is shared with its partners where there is a shared interest.

Make Happen has commissioned a number of smaller, qualitative research projects. A larger randomised control trial with the ISER (Institute of Social and Economic Research) was undertaken in 2020 with 12 schools. Form groups within these schools were randomised with two form groups receiving a package of interventions including talks on student finance, a campus visit and information on Higher Education more broadly. The project ran with students in Year 10. Although it was interrupted by COVID-19, it revealed some interesting findings including a significant lack of knowledge about student finance. Projects like this can help to inform future activities and, if the findings are also shared with partners, measures can be put in place by all parties to close these gaps.

### CASE STUDY POSITIVELY MAD

Positively MAD have provided student workshops and teacher CPD for the last 20 years. The day long workshops are aimed at secondary and FE learners but also include parent/carer workshops to help embed the techniques that the students have learned when they get home. It has a range of presenters from strong public-facing backgrounds, including actors and stand-up comedians, who deliver powerful messages to students in an engaging and relatable manner. Sessions include study skills, goal mapping, mastering student motivation and exam busters. These are delivered in schools and colleges across Essex to students across KS4 and KS5 as part of the programme to support students on their journey to HE.

Make Happen worked with the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) to conduct an analysis of the KS4 attainment of students who had received support from Positively Mad to better understand the impact of pre-16 activity on improved attainment at KS4. Studies have shown that KS4 attainment is an indicator for future HE progression. A matched cohort analysis took place with students who had not received any Make Happen support. HEAT's report was able to show correlation between participation in this Uni Connect activity and improved attainment at KS4. It was also able to demonstrate on which participants the programme had most impact, allowing Make Happen to identify where the workshops proved most beneficial.

### CASE STUDY MAKE HAPPEN'S MADE TRAINING OUTREACH PARTICIPANTS:

Make Happen asked HEAT to determine the impact of one of its delivery partners, MADE Training, on higher application and acceptance rates to HE. Made Training offers a variety of workshops encompassing resilience, motivation and study skills delivered to large cohorts over a one-day period. HEAT worked with STROBE, UCAS' linking service, to connect student outreach participant records to UCAS application cycles. It found that those participating in the programme had an HE application rate of 63% compared to a rate of 41% in a matched control group not taking part in outreach, a significant difference. Based on the evaluation of data, Made Training's workshops were found to be associated with a higher application and acceptance to HE, as well as a higher acceptance of offers to all tariff levels of institutions.

# Covid 19

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, all Make Happen's work moved online which, although challenging at first, presented a massive opportunity.

Previously, the majority of activity had been directed through schools or colleges but recently Make Happen has been looking into ways of engaging directly with students. Online content has been created to continue engagement through taster sessions and webinars. Content isn't just centered on the specifics of university - what it is, the benefits and finances - but everything around it which gives students a wider understanding, as well as the confidence to attend.

Make Happen has seen an increase in engagement during the pandemic with young people having more time on their hands to explore future opportunities. In the last year Make Happen has delivered 186 activities to over 10,000 students, of which around 70 per cent have come from low participation neighbourhoods. Sessions around study skills and motivational speakers were the most popular during this time.

The programme has also seen an increase in engagement with the traditionally harder to reach parents and carers, with webinars of over 100 participants and the launch of a parent newsletter. With parents and carers being influencers in a young person's choices, it is key that those from underrepresented backgrounds feel empowered to support their young person through decisions around higher education.

The pandemic has meant that the programme has had to be delivered in more creative ways. In February, Make Happen hosted an online Lockdown Learning Festival, inviting students, parents, carers and teachers from across Essex to log on, and join in. Over 600 people attended over the five-days of live events.



**Make Happen has seen an increase in engagement during the pandemic with young people having more time on their hands to explore future opportunities**

Online platforms have provided an opportunity for Make Happen to reach large numbers of schools and students simultaneously. A number of sessions have been run during school time with teachers facilitating webinars with members of the Make Happen team or providers presenting to multiple classrooms at the same time. This has enabled the team to reach 30-40 classes of students with sessions that previously could have only been delivered to one class at a time.

The most successful aspects of online engagement will be kept in place moving forward but there is still a clear desire for face-to-face interaction. It is important for young people to explore buildings and campuses, meet student ambassadors and experience university life first-hand.

## CASE STUDY U CAN UCAS!

Like other partnerships, Make Happen needed to adapt to new ways of working as a result of the pandemic and move away from an institution-led approach. It set up eight working groups, each tasked with creating events and resources to target a specific cohort of students or a key topic area. The groups set up to cover the UCAS process went on to create and deliver the 'U Can UCAS!' programme in Autumn 2020.

Make Happen recognised the disruption to learning caused by the pandemic meant that post-16 students wouldn't receive the same support to guide them through the university application process and could be put off applying. As the UCAS process follows a set timeline of dates, it needed to act quickly to reach students and to deliver the support virtually.

As a result of this, Make Happen created the 'U Can UCAS!' programme, a small-scale five-week programme run in November 2020 which aimed to offer personalised support to a cohort of post-16 students with their UCAS applications. Students were required to complete an application to join the programme, including a reason as to why they would be a good candidate to ensure buy-in from them to commit to the entire programme. Eight students were accepted from four different sixth forms or colleges.

The programme was delivered over Zoom with Make Happen staff, Causeway Education and student ambassadors in hour-long evening sessions which covered the following topics:

- Navigating UCAS and searching for courses
- The art of crafting a personal statement
- How to find bursaries and scholarships
- Discuss University Life with our University Ambassadors

Students completed a survey at the beginning and end of the programme to allow Make Happen to evidence some really positive evaluation data. Of the students completing both evaluations, all of them strongly agreed that they now understood the UCAS process and that their knowledge of all aspects of Higher Education had increased. This was a fantastic achievement and aligned with the aims of the programme. The data also showed a strong correlation between their increased knowledge of university types and financial support with their

intention to apply to Higher Education. There were substantial increases in student knowledge around three key areas of HE, the different types of university, financial support and the different opportunities available in higher education. Students also commented that they found the sessions on personal statements and student finance the most useful.

All of the students completing the evaluation agreed that the programme was helpful, they would recommend it to a friend and they learnt something new. This was further reflected in additional comments made by students:

"Every lesson taught me something new. I never originally wanted to go to uni until 2 weeks before these sessions, so this allowed me to gain the knowledge that people who had wanted to go to uni already had for a long time."

The small-scale and sustained nature of the programme meant that Make Happen's Outreach Officers could develop relationships with the students and offer bespoke support. Students received personalised follow-up emails after every session offering feedback and further support. Each weekly session was based on the discussions that had taken place in the sessions which included rearranging the personal statement session so that it took place before internal school deadlines. The strong relationships built with students meant that a couple felt able to contact them for further support even after the programme had ended.

The programme demonstrated the value of building relationships with students over a sustained period and the impact intensive programmes can have, regardless of the fact that it was delivered virtually and out of school hours. Make Happen hopes to run it again in the summer term, targeting students who missed the main UCAS deadline for this year or who want to apply for early entry courses in the next academic year.

The impact of the U can UCAS project was recognised in the Levelling Up Universities Awards in June 2021, where Make Happen won the positive destinations post-16 award. The award demonstrates Make Happen's ambition to ensure opportunity for all, regardless of their background.

# Insights

Make Happen, is at the centre of a series of partnerships which inform, advise and support young people about the realities and benefits of going on to higher education, delivering real social capital to those that are often furthest away from a level playing field.

Guided by a committed and knowledgeable leadership team, Make Happen connects up a wide range of organisations. The collaborative nature of these relationships is key to its success. Using local knowledge and personal connections, the partnerships share intelligence and information to identify the gaps in opportunity for young people in Essex, enabling them to deliver a comprehensive place-based service. Through the sharing of best practice, they assess what works and for whom in order to offer a wide range of bespoke activities, tailored to the needs of their communities. They trial established interventions with different groups and in different contexts to explore effectiveness. They also share resources, providing a more cost-effective service as a result.

Make Happen has demonstrated that it is possible to move away from more traditional outreach routes to deliver innovative solutions that can still operate effectively alongside the access and widening participation agendas of other organisations, including universities and other higher education institutions.

The role that Make Happen plays as a connector of services between schools, higher education and local authorities means that it can also act as a hub to help ensure that young people in the area are equipped with the skills and expertise that local businesses need. Local authorities in particular have an essential role to play in working with employers to identify what these are, feeding back information to Make Happen, as well as schools and colleges, about the higher education routes that can lead to jobs.

The sustained nature of its work means that its impact is cumulative. It has benefited from being allowed to establish its credentials over time, aided by word of mouth and anecdotal support from those in the community who have had contact with it. That has allowed it to foster relationships with local schools and colleges, higher education institutions and universities and other external agencies who all have a shared ambition to do their best for young people in the area.

The trust that Make Happen engenders as a result of its increasing familiarity, as well as its impartiality, is an important factor in maintaining strong relationships with the young people it engages and also, crucially, with their parents. Multiple interventions lead to confidence in engaging in its activities and, additionally, to longer-term effectiveness. Allowing its work to continue to embed into the local community over time will raise its profile and further highlight its benefits.

It is clear from work the Purpose Coalition has carried out with other universities that outreach projects which indicate success, but are still a work in progress because they need a longer timeframe, should be allowed to continue in order to really understand the longer-term gains they provide. The higher education sector needs a more patient policy to invest in outcomes that might take several years to become evident, rather than a series of short-term initiatives. The trial of interventions should be given the time they need to properly demonstrate impact and be assessed for effectiveness.

The focused approach of Make Happen's work is a direct result of information sharing and feedback processes that it employs with its partners. It maintains a rigorous evidence base, collecting information on every activity it delivers. That helps inform where it is making a difference and where more work is needed and it is able to drill down into the data to get a much more detailed picture of how the activity might be amended, or differently targeted, to get even more effective results. It also acknowledges that there are still pockets of young people in the area who are still not benefitting from its work.

However, the wealth of information that is gathered in this way is not necessarily being utilised and further consideration should be given to whether the information gathering process should be more selective, whether there should be more extensive examination of what is collected and whether it could be more widely and strategically shared with others.

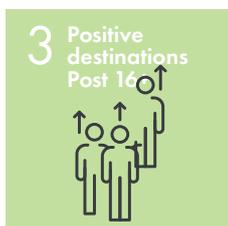
# LEVELLING UP GOALS

The work of Make Happen is successfully meeting the following Levelling Up Goals:



## GOAL 2 SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL YEARS

Through its partnerships, Make Happen provides information and advice to pupils and enables them to see higher education as an option for them. It inspires them to be bold and ambitious and focus on what they need to achieve at school in order to make that aspiration a reality. It identifies what they need to do, in which subjects and which skills, sometimes related to subjects which are not on the curriculum at school, and provides experiences to inform them what higher education is really like and what it can offer them. It encourages them to achieve their potential in attainment and development, helping to close the gap that often occurs in less privileged areas. The engagement of families, particularly parents, is an additional advantage as a holistic approach to successful school years which is delivered in conjunction with school and colleges, universities and higher education institutions, local authorities and a wide range of other external partners.



## GOAL 3 POSITIVE DESTINATIONS POST 16+

Make Happen closes the opportunity gap for young people through its collaborative work, increasing the number going on to further or higher education and improving the knowledge and skills they need to flourish there. It provides them with the information to make positive decisions about their futures and the ability to choose a high-quality route into education. Without the work of Make Happen and the resources it and its partners provide, many young people in Essex simply would not consider higher education or university as an option for them. Even if their decision, in the end, is not to go, the advice and guidance to which they have had access has led them to make better informed choices, achieving one of Make Happen's important aims.



## GOAL 4 RIGHT ADVICE AND EXPERIENCES

Most of the young people that benefit from Make Happen's activities are the first generation in their families to go to university. There is little or no experience in their families of higher education or university and no knowledge of the opportunities that it can open up. Many simply believe that route is not for people like them. Make Happen, working with its partner organisations, provides the tools for them to access the right advice and experiences at the right time to close the connections gap and unlock opportunity. Mentoring in particular enables them to see others from similar backgrounds in shared life experiences.



## GOAL 14 ACHIEVE EQUALITY THROUGH DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Achieving equality for those furthest away from a level playing field is always most effectively achieved in partnership with other organisations who often have a deep knowledge and understanding of specific targeted groups. The benefits that Make Happen can bring to its communities through working with its partners to deliver nuanced support helps to create opportunity, irrespective of background or circumstance. Its targeted outreach for groups who face particular challenges, for example those with care experience or disabilities, or from military families, means that it works to unlock talent regardless of where it is found.



## Conclusion

Uni Connect's partnership programmes, which include Make Happen in Essex, drive a focused approach to delivering opportunity into the region and have the potential to underpin sustained success on the ground.

Their continuation can unlock the sort of maximum impact, long term investment policy approach that will pay real dividends. A reduction in funding is likely to impact the level of activity that the programme can deliver, with higher cost activities like residential camps and projects carried out with PhD students likely to be cut, despite demonstrating some of the greatest impact.

Make Happen should leverage its experience in Essex to continue to build a legacy of opportunity there in a sustained approach that can contribute to the country's national recovery.

# Recommendations

## ADVOCACY AND SHARING BEST PRACTICE

Amid announced cuts to funding for the Uni Connect programme, Make Happen should take a leading advocacy role and ensure that the great work being done is fully and widely shared via:

- Parliament/Westminster engagement with local MPs. Make Happen is finalising a report into phase 2 of the project which would be a sensible approach to engage local MPs such as Robert Halfon MP, also Chair of the Education Select Committee, and Will Quince MP.
- Make Happen should be a specific part of the Levelling Up Universities White Paper which will also be launched in Parliament, planned for early November 2021 and be part of the Parliamentary Evidence Sessions we are holding to brief MPs on the wider social mobility work carried out by the sector.
- Engaging the wider HE Sector through the Purpose Coalition work. As part of its ongoing work the Purpose Coalition will continue to share the best practice coming out of the project, through further events beyond the White Paper Parliamentary launch as part of the campaign to maintain UniConnect activities.
- Wider 'Essex Levelling Up Coalition' work, including work now beginning with Essex County Council which is a clear route to share best practice and marshal wider support and potentially funding from across the county

## USE PANDEMIC RESPONSE TO SPREAD ONLINE PRESENCE

Make Happen should take advantage of the online-based approach triggered by the pandemic and could look to create a more distinct online offering to reach a wider group within Essex of students but importantly parents or carers as well. 'Make Happen Plus' could bring together the wide range of tailored resources available into one easily accessible place. This would allow a wider range of people in its outreach network to access the resources and also specifically target those with additional support and advice needs.

An increased online presence will help Make Happen target adult learners in further education (a new audience the project has been asked to focus on). Adult learners may be more used to accessing online resources and this will give them the opportunity to learn more about the options available to them.

**Amid announced cuts to funding for the Uni Connect programme, Make Happen should take a leading advocacy role and ensure that the great work being done is fully and widely shared...**

Make Happen should encourage the Office for Students to consider building upon the best practice of the different regions to launch online activity that is available to all.

### **LEAD THE WAY IN LEVELLING UP MEASUREMENT TO PROVE REAL IMPACT**

Measuring impact of the social mobility work being done on the ground is absolutely crucial for Make Happen. The Purpose Coalition is working with the ONS on a new, consistent data set to measure impact against the 14 Levelling Up Goals which can provide a benchmark for different stakeholders to work together to shift. Make Happen could be part of a pilot to work with us, alongside Essex County Council, other local authorities, businesses and the ONS to develop a set of consistent metrics that allow transparency and tracking progress, alongside valuation of impact. In particular, it provides a chance for Essex and Make Happen to innovate on the data sets from a place-based perspective with the potential to combine to provide more insight and then joined up action with the wider Levelling Up Essex plan the County Council seeks to develop. We could work together to see how these metrics aligned with what Make Happen already collects to prove real impact.

Through the Uni Connect Programme, and its own evaluation, Make Happen has a bank of data. Make Happen should ensure that these findings are used to tailor its programmes and identify any gaps in provision. Importantly this data needs to be able to show the impact of the programme - both those that go onto university but also those who are inspired into other routes. Make Happen should explore whether it is possible to compare the average outcomes of a child who has been involved in the programme against those who have not.

### **ESSEX LEVELLING UP COALITION - BE PART OF A PLACE-BASED APPROACH TO LEVELLING UP**

The Purpose Coalition is now working alongside Essex County Council and also East Suffolk and

North Essex NHS Foundation Trust (ESNEFT). As a region it has an emerging group of leaders working with us on levelling up. This is a great opportunity to extend these relationships and develop a cutting edge place-based approach to levelling up, targeting some of the most deprived areas of the region. Teaming up with other local organisations will allow more young people to gain the right advice and experiences to make informed decisions about their futures. Joint campaigns could be created to put in place local talent pipelines - for example on careers in healthcare and the new Community Diagnostic Hub in Clacton, where ESNEFT are seeking to develop long term career pathways for local people.

Alongside these new relationships, Make Happen should review existing partnerships and ensure that they are working as efficiently as possible. Effective partnerships are what makes the programme work as well as it does. Using evaluation, Make Happen can identify which partnerships are making a real impact and where changes need to be made.

### **USE LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH BUSINESSES AND EMPLOYERS TO INCREASE MENTORING OPPORTUNITIES**

Make Happen already uses mentors through a lot of its activities. Using partnerships with local businesses and other organisations, a wider range of mentors could be used to give students a taste of the career paths available within Essex and further afield. Partnering with Essex County Council on a mentoring campaign which mobilises more Essex businesses could help to align Make Happen with key stakeholders and sectors in the region. It can also provide a business and employer network which could then extend to work experiences and other development opportunities for those Make Happen reaches out to.



**Teaming up with other local organisations will allow more young people to gain the right advice and experiences to make informed decisions about their futures.**

# Make Happen Data Analysis

In this section of the Opportunity Action Plan we analyse the challenges individual communities face in terms of social mobility and the impact of COVID-19. The combined and interlinking impact of those two elements enable us to create a community's "Opportunity Gap". For the purposes of this analysis we have focused on the five areas in Essex in which Make Happen performs the most work.

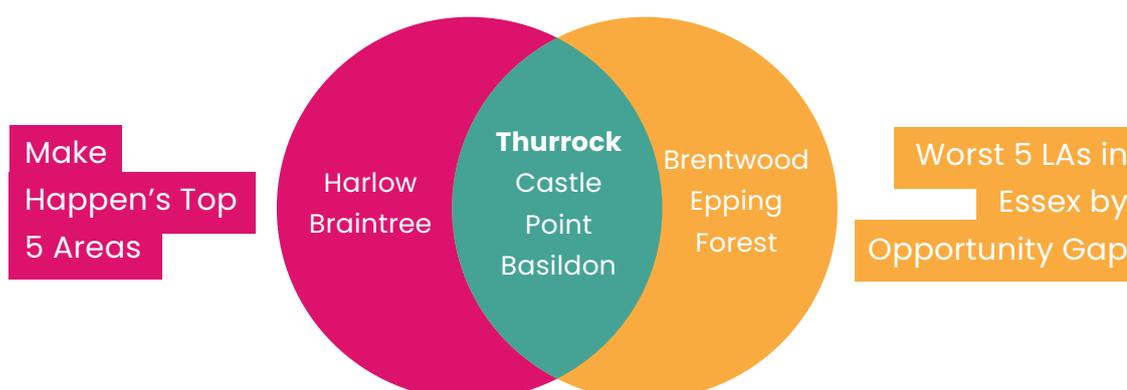
## Areas in which Make Happen perform most work

Local Authority	Constituency	Hours Delivered
Thurrock	Thurrock	14,054.28
Castle Point	Castle Point	14,182.09
Basildon	Basildon and Billericay	34,942.77
Harlow	Harlow	31,110.55
Braintree	Braintree	14,554.91

## Worst Areas in Essex by Opportunity Gap Rank

Local Authority	Opportunity Gap	Ranking
Thurrock	Thurrock	1
Castle Point	Castle Point	2
Basildon	Basildon and Billericay	3
Harlow	Harlow	4
Braintree	Braintree	5
...	...	...
Thurrock*	250	32
Castle Point	192	102
Basildon	189.5	104
Brentwood	176	121
Epping Forest	172	125

The above tables show us that Make Happen's work is already well targeted, with three of the top five local authorities areas in which they deliver the most work also appearing in the five worst local authority areas by Opportunity Gap ranking. What is particularly encouraging is that Thurrock, where Make Happen delivers over 14,000 hours of work, is also a Social Mobility Covid Opportunity Coldspot.



## Part A – Social Mobility

Social Mobility research conducted by the Department of Education’s Social Mobility Commission across 323 local authorities in England shows the top 20% of local authorities are labelled as ‘hotspots’, areas where social mobility is good, and the bottom 20% of local authorities are identified as ‘coldspots’, areas where social mobility is poor (1). The House of Commons Library performed analysis of the Index in order to map levels of social mobility to constituencies in the UK Parliament. (2)

It is important to note that just because an area’s overall ranking is designated a hot or cold spot based on the current rankings, that is not the complete picture. An area which is a social mobility hotspot for most indices can also mask sharp decline in social mobility at different life stages such as early years.

These complexities highlight that social mobility cannot be tackled with a ‘one size fits all approach’. Therefore, a thorough understanding of the challenges those individual communities face is vital and we assess social mobility below through those life stages.

Life Stage National Rank/533	Thurrock	England	
Early Years 104	Percentage of Nursery providers rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	92	93
	Percentage of children eligible for free school meals achieving a good level of development	61	53
Schools 224	Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a primary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	82	83
	Percentage of children eligible for FSM achieving at least the expected level in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2	38	39
	Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a secondary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	83	72
	Average Attainment 8 score for pupils eligible for FSM	39	39
Youth 160	Percentage of young people eligible for FSM that are not in education, employment or training (positive destination) after completing KS4	90	88
	Average points score per entry for young people eligible for FSM at age 15 taking A-level or equivalent qualification	27	26
	Percentage of young people eligible for FSM at age 15 achieving two or more A-Levels or equivalent by the age of 19	34	34
Adulthood 266	Median weekly salary of all employees who live in the local area	473	443
	Average house prices compared to median annual salary of employees who live in the local area	8	8
	Percentage of people that live in the local area who are in managerial and professional occupations	24	30
	Percentage of jobs that are paid less than the applicable Living Wage Foundation living wage	22	25
	Percentage of families with children who own their home	62	65

## Thurrock Analysis

With one of its indicators in the top 100 rankings and none in the bottom 100; across all life stages, Thurrock ranks at 137/533 on the Social Mobility Index. The area is high on the social mobility index, though is a Covid Opportunity Coldspot.

### Early Years Life Stage

At the early years life stage, Thurrock performs best at 104/533. Ninety-two per cent of nurseries in the constituency are rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted, worse than the national average of 93% and ranking Thurrock as 329/533 for this measure. In the other measure for this life stage, the percentage of children eligible for free school meals achieving a 'good level of development', Thurrock is ranked 35/533; 61% of those children achieve a good level compared to the national average of 53%.

### School Life Stage

Ranking at 224/533 at the school stage, Thurrock is in the top half of constituencies. Eighty-two per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals attend good or outstanding primary schools, with 38% of them achieving the expected level in reading, writing, and maths at the end of Key Stage 2, the national average being 39%. At secondary level, attendance of FSM eligible pupils at good or outstanding schools is 83%, making Thurrock the 196th best constituency, and an average Attainment 8 score of 39 places Thurrock at 210/533.

### Youth Life Stage

The youth stage sees Thurrock rise to rank at 160/533. Ninety per cent of young people who were eligible for free school meals find themselves in a positive destination (defined as being in education, employment, or training) after completing Key Stage 4. Thirty-four per cent of FSM-eligible young people will achieve two or more A Level or equivalent qualifications by age 19, those that do take A Levels will have an average points score per entry of 27. Thurrock ranks at 201 and 227 for these measures respectively.

### Adulthood Life Stage

At the adulthood life stage, Thurrock ranks at 266/533. Only 22% of jobs pay less than the real living wage, and average earnings are £473 weekly – the English average is £443. Housing is eight times the annualised salary, matching the national average and the 303rd most affordable area in England, with home ownership at 62%, the 377th best area for this measure. The percentage of jobs in the area that are managerial and professional stands at 24%, ranking Thurrock at 423/533 for this measure.

Life Stage  
National  
Rank/533

## Castle Point

Castle Point  
England

Early Years  
145

Percentage of Nursery providers rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	96	93
Percentage of children eligible for free school meals achieving a good level of development	53	53

Schools  
227

Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a primary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	82	83
Percentage of children eligible for FSM achieving at least the expected level in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2	40	39
Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a secondary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	79	72
Average Attainment 8 score for pupils eligible for FSM	38	39

Youth  
238

Percentage of young people eligible for FSM that are not in education, employment or training (positive destination) after completing KS4	87	88
Average points score per entry for young people eligible for FSM at age 15 taking A-level or equivalent qualification	28	26
Percentage of young people eligible for FSM at age 15 achieving two or more A-Levels or equivalent by the age of 19	33	34

Adulthood  
384

Median weekly salary of all employees who live in the local area	420	443
Average house prices compared to median annual salary of employees who live in the local area	8	8
Percentage of people that live in the local area who are in managerial and professional occupations	21	30
Percentage of jobs that are paid less than the applicable Living Wage Foundation living wage	33	25
Percentage of families with children who own their home	80	65

## Castle Point Analysis

With one of its indicators in the top 100 rankings and two in the bottom 100, across all life stages, Castle Point ranks at 226/533 on the Social Mobility Index.

### Early Years Life Stage

At the early years life stage, Castle Point performs best at 145/533. Ninety-six per cent of nurseries in the constituency are rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted, better than the national average of 93% and ranking Castle Point as 106/533 for this measure. In the other measure for this life stage, the percentage of children eligible for free school meals achieving a 'good level of development', Castle Point is ranked 274/533; 53% of those children achieve a good level compared to the national average of 53%.

### School Life Stage

Ranking at 227/533 at the school stage, Castle Point is in the top half of constituencies. Eighty-two per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals attend good or outstanding primary schools, with 40% of them achieving the expected level in reading, writing, and maths at the end of Key Stage 2, the national average being 39%. At secondary level, attendance of FSM eligible pupils at good or outstanding schools is 79%, making Castle Point the 228th best constituency, and an average Attainment 8 score of 38 places Castle Point at 275/533.

### Youth Life Stage

The youth stage sees Castle Point fall slightly to rank at 238/533. Eighty-seven per cent of young people who were eligible for free school meals find themselves in a positive destination (defined as being in education, employment, or training) after completing Key Stage 4. Thirty-three per cent of FSM-eligible young people will achieve two or more A Level or equivalent qualifications by age 19, those that do take A Levels will have an average points score per entry of 28. Castle Point ranks at 214 and 179 for these measures respectively.

### Adulthood Life Stage

At the adulthood life stage, Castle Point ranks at 384/533. With 33% of jobs paying less than the real living wage, average earnings are £420 weekly – the English average is £443. Housing is eight times the annualised salary, the 348th most affordable area in England, but home ownership is at 80%, the 17th best area for this measure. The percentage of jobs in the area that are managerial and professional stands at 21%, ranking Castle Point at 482/533 for this measure.

Life Stage  
National  
Rank/533

## Basildon and Billericay

Basildon and Billericay  
England

Early Years  
183

Percentage of Nursery providers rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	94	93
Percentage of children eligible for free school meals achieving a good level of development	54	53

Schools  
399

Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a primary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	73	83
Percentage of children eligible for FSM achieving at least the expected level in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2	38	39
Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a secondary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	81	72
Average Attainment 8 score for pupils eligible for FSM	34	39

Youth  
89

Percentage of young people eligible for FSM that are not in education, employment or training (positive destination) after completing KS4	87	88
Average points score per entry for young people eligible for FSM at age 15 taking A-level or equivalent qualification	33	26
Percentage of young people eligible for FSM at age 15 achieving two or more A-Levels or equivalent by the age of 19	34	34

Adulthood  
193

Median weekly salary of all employees who live in the local area	454	443
Average house prices compared to median annual salary of employees who live in the local area	9	8
Percentage of people that live in the local area who are in managerial and professional occupations	31	30
Percentage of jobs that are paid less than the applicable Living Wage Foundation living wage	21	25
Percentage of families with children who own their home	66	65

## Basildon and Billericay Analysis

With one of its indicators in the top 100 rankings and two in the bottom 100, across all life stages, Basildon and Billericay ranks at 184/533 on the Social Mobility Index.

### Early Years Life Stage

At the early years life stage, Basildon and Billericay performs well at 183/533. Ninety-four per cent of nurseries in the constituency are rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted, better than the national average of 93% and ranking Basildon and Billericay as 211/533 for this measure. In the other measure for this life stage, the percentage of children eligible for free school meals achieving a 'good level of development', Basildon and Billericay is ranked 239/533; 54% of those children achieve a good level compared to the national average of 53%.

### School Life Stage

Ranking at 399/533 at the school stage, Basildon and Billericay is in the bottom half of constituencies. Seventy-four per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals attend good or outstanding primary schools, with 38% of them achieving the expected level in reading, writing, and maths at the end of Key Stage 2, the national average being 39%. At secondary level, attendance of FSM eligible pupils at good or outstanding schools is 81%, making Basildon and Billericay the 209th best constituency, and an average Attainment 8 score of 34 places Basildon and Billericay at 495/533.

### Youth Life Stage

The youth stage sees Basildon and Billericay rank highest at 89/533. Eighty-seven per cent of young people who were eligible for free school meals find themselves in a positive destination (defined as being in education, employment, or training) after completing Key Stage 4. Thirty-four per cent of FSM-eligible young people will achieve two or more A Level or equivalent qualifications by age 19, those that do take A Levels will have an average points score per entry of 33. Basildon and Billericay ranks at 190 and 10 for these measures respectively.

### Adulthood Life Stage

At the adulthood life stage, Basildon and Billericay ranks at 193/533. With 21% of jobs paying less than the real living wage, average earnings are £454 weekly – the English average is £443. Housing is nine times the annualised salary, the 360th most affordable area in England (where houses are eight times the annualised salary), and home ownership is at 66%, the 278th best area for this measure. The percentage of jobs in the area that are managerial and professional stands at 31%, ranking Basildon and Billericay at 223/533 for this measure.

Life Stage  
National  
Rank/533

## Harlow

Harlow  
England

Early Years  
124

Percentage of Nursery providers rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	94	93
Percentage of children eligible for free school meals achieving a good level of development	56	53

Schools  
315

Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a primary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	67	83
Percentage of children eligible for FSM achieving at least the expected level in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2	44	39
Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a secondary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	93	72
Average Attainment 8 score for pupils eligible for FSM	36	39

Youth  
241

Percentage of young people eligible for FSM that are not in education, employment or training (positive destination) after completing KS4	90	88
Average points score per entry for young people eligible for FSM at age 15 taking A-level or equivalent qualification	26	26
Percentage of young people eligible for FSM at age 15 achieving two or more A-Levels or equivalent by the age of 19	31	34

Adulthood  
328

Median weekly salary of all employees who live in the local area	434	443
Average house prices compared to median annual salary of employees who live in the local area	9	8
Percentage of people that live in the local area who are in managerial and professional occupations	23	30
Percentage of jobs that are paid less than the applicable Living Wage Foundation living wage	18	25
Percentage of families with children who own their home	58	65

## Harlow Analysis

With one of its indicators in the top 100 rankings and one in the bottom 100; across all life stages, Harlow ranks at 232/533 on the Social Mobility Index.

### Early Years Life Stage

At the early years life stage, Harlow performs best at 124/533. Ninety-four percent of nurseries in the constituency are rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted, better than the national average of 93% and ranking Harlow as 202/533 for this measure. In the other measure for this life stage, the percentage of children eligible for free school meals achieving a 'good level of development', Harlow is ranked 140/533; 56% of those children achieve a good level compared to the national average of 53%.

### School Life Stage

Ranking at 315/533 at the school stage, Harlow is in the bottom half of constituencies. Only 67% of pupils eligible for free school meals attend good or outstanding primary schools, with 44% of them achieving the expected level in reading, writing, and maths at the end of Key Stage 2, the national average being 39%. At secondary level, attendance of FSM eligible pupils at good or outstanding schools is 93%, making Harlow the 106th best constituency, and an average Attainment 8 score of 36 places Harlow at 401/533.

### Youth Life Stage

The youth stage sees Harlow FALL/RISE to rank at 241/533. Ninety percent of young people who were eligible for free schools find themselves in a positive destination (defined as being in education, employment, or training) after completing Key Stage 4. Thirty-one percent of FSM-eligible young people will achieve two or more A Level or equivalent qualifications by age 19, those that do take A Levels will have an average points score per entry of 26. Harlow ranks at 278 and 298 for these measures respectively.

### Adulthood Life Stage

At the adulthood life stage, Harlow ranks at 328/533. Although only 18% of jobs pay less than the real living wage, average earnings are £434 weekly – the English average is £443. Housing is nine times the annualised salary, the 370th most affordable area in England (where houses are eight times the annualised salary), and home ownership is at 58%, the 424 area for this measure. The percentage of jobs in the area that are managerial and professional stands at 23%, ranking Harlow at 429/533 for this measure.

Life Stage  
National  
Rank/533

## Braintree

Braintree  
England

Early Years  
410

Percentage of Nursery providers rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	91	93
Percentage of children eligible for free school meals achieving a good level of development	51	53

Schools  
241

Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a primary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	89	83
Percentage of children eligible for FSM achieving at least the expected level in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2	38	39
Percentage of children eligible for FSM attending a secondary school rated outstanding or good by Ofsted	77	72
Average Attainment 8 score for pupils eligible for FSM	37	39

Youth  
161

Percentage of young people eligible for FSM that are not in education, employment or training (positive destination) after completing KS4	88	88
Average points score per entry for young people eligible for FSM at age 15 taking A-level or equivalent qualification	30	26
Percentage of young people eligible for FSM at age 15 achieving two or more A-Levels or equivalent by the age of 19	34	34

Adulthood  
323

Median weekly salary of all employees who live in the local area	448	443
Average house prices compared to median annual salary of employees who live in the local area	8	8
Percentage of people that live in the local area who are in managerial and professional occupations	21	30
Percentage of jobs that are paid less than the applicable Living Wage Foundation living wage	26	25
Percentage of families with children who own their home	70	65

## Braintree Analysis

With one of its indicators in the top 100 rankings and one in the bottom 100; across all life stages, Braintree ranks at 283/533 on the Social Mobility Index.

### Early Years Life Stage

At the early years life stage, Braintree performs most poorly at 410/533. Only 91% of nurseries in the constituency are rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted, worse the national average of 93% and ranking Braintree as 394/533 for this measure. In the other measure for this life stage, the percentage of children eligible for free school meals achieving a 'good level of development', Braintree is ranked 343/533; 51% of those children achieve a good level compared to the national average of 53%.

### School Life Stage

Ranking at 241/533 at the school stage, Braintree is in the top half of constituencies. Eighty-nine percent of pupils eligible for free school meals attend good or outstanding primary schools, with 38% of them achieving the expected level in reading, writing, and maths at the end of Key Stage 2, the national average being 39%. At secondary level, attendance of FSM eligible pupils at good or outstanding schools is 77%, making Braintree the 243rd best constituency, and an average Attainment 8 score of 37 places Braintree at 369/533.

### Youth Life Stage

The youth stage sees Braintree rise to rank at 161/533. Eighty-eight percent of young people who were eligible for free schools find themselves in a positive destination (defined as being in education, employment, or training) after completing Key Stage 4. Thirty-four percent of FSM-eligible young people will achieve two or more A Level or equivalent qualifications by age 19, those that do take A Levels will have an average points score per entry of 30. Braintree ranks at 206 and 81 for these measures respectively.

### Adulthood Life Stage

At the adulthood life stage, Braintree ranks at 323/533. Although 26% of jobs pay less than the real living wage, average earnings are £448 weekly – the English average is £443. Housing is eight times the annualised salary, which matches the average, and home ownership is at 70%, the 193rd best area for this measure. The percentage of jobs in the area that are managerial and professional stands at 21%, ranking Braintree at 486/533 for this measure.

## Make Happen Data Analysis.

### Part B – COVID 19

As well as considering the social mobility baseline for a community, our analysis also reflects the developing impact of Coronavirus on opportunity. The Office for Budget Responsibility's Covid Reference Scenario predicts that the economy of the United Kingdom will contract by 35%, with unemployment potentially peaking at 10% (3).

But just like the issue of social immobility, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic is varied across the UK. While the 35% national average figure is high in itself, it is the case that some areas – predominantly in the North West and Midlands – will see their economic growth reduce by almost 50%. Only one of the twenty hardest hit areas are in the South East or London (4).

In addition to the significant diversity of geographic impact estimated by the Centre for Progressive Policy, the Resolution Foundation points to previous data suggesting that there is likely to be a large impact on those leaving full time education and graduating into an economy in the midst of turmoil. In the 2008 Recession, the unemployment rate

across the whole population rose from 5.2% in 2007 to 8.5% in 2011; for those with GCSE equivalent qualifications the unemployment figures were 23% in 2007 and 32% in 2011 (5).

An exacerbating factor for those leaving full time education without a degree is the varied impact of the virus on different sectors of the economy. While sectors such as financial sectors will emerge from the coronavirus pandemic relatively unscathed, with a contraction of just -5%, sectors like retail and hospitality, which have a higher proportion of workers who haven't completed higher education, will contract by -50% and -85% respectively (3).

The health impacts for the coronavirus pandemic show that it is more likely to kill people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, but the economic impacts are disproportionately hitting BAME people as well: polling done by BMG for the Independent has also shown that people from black and minority ethnic households are almost twice as likely as white Britons to report that they have lost income or jobs. Lord Woolley, the Chair of the Race Disparity Unit, has pointed out that while "the virus itself doesn't discriminate, the system does, and that has left BAME communities extremely vulnerable both on health and economic grounds" (6).



**An exacerbating factor for those leaving full time education without a degree is the varied impact of the virus on different sectors of the economy**

So the data suggests a varied and profound impact across locations, ages, education levels, and ethnicity. This has a worrying impact for social mobility in the United Kingdom, as we predict that 8 out of 14 measures used to calculate social mobility will be impacted. We have combined existing place based social mobility analysis (1) with the predicted impact of coronavirus (4) to estimate the size of a communities developing "Opportunity Gap" and ranked these throughout England.

From our analysis, which utilises the research referred to above, we believe that there are 16 areas in England at risk of a 'double opportunity hit': already amongst the worst areas for social mobility, they are going to be particularly badly hit by coronavirus. These areas are Babergh, Bolsover, Broxtowe, Cannock Chase, Corby, Crawley, East Cambridgeshire, East Northamptonshire,

Erewash, Melton, North Warwickshire, Norwich, Rutland, South Derbyshire, Tamworth and Wellingborough.

We have also combined the research on local authority economic impact due to COVID with the Government's Social Mobility Index to create what we refer to as the 'COVID Opportunity Gap'. Where the data allows, all local authorities in England were ranked by the size of the Gap (a larger gap being worse). Corby, an area taking a large economic hit from COVID and also with low ranking on the Social Mobility Index, has the largest Opportunity Gap, at 318. For comparison, Tower Hamlets, which has high levels of social mobility and is minimally impacted by COVID, has an Opportunity Gap of 3 and ranks at 310. (7) These Opportunity Gap scores show to what extent an area's social mobility might be impacted as a result of COVID.

Local Authority	Opportunity Gap	Ranking
Corby	318	1
South Derbyshire	310	2
Wellingborough	308	3
Melton	306	4
North Warwickshire	296	5
Thurrock	250	32
Castle Point	192	102
Basildon	189.5	104
Braintree	150	171
Harlow	87.5	266

## Thurrock's Economy (4)

Sector	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
GVA (£m)	93	260	130	365	163	36	163	57	324	123	88	500	545	1015	90
GVA (%)	2.4	6.6	3.3	9.2	4.1	0.9	4.1	1.4	8.2	3.1	2.2	12.7	13.8	25.7	2.3
Decline (%)	-85	-40	-17	-70	-90	-5	+50	-45	-55	-40	-20	-20	-35	-50	-60

## Thurrock's Largest Sectors

Sector	Wholesale and retail	Transportation and storage	Real estate activities	Construction	Manufacturing
GVA (£m)	1015	545	500	365	324

## Biggest Impacted Sectors

Sector	Education	Accommodation and food	Construction	Other services	Manufacturing
Predicted Decline	-90%	-85%	-70%	-60%	-55%

Thurrock's biggest sectors are wholesale and retail, transportation, real estate, construction, and manufacturing. Two of these, construction and manufacturing, are also in the worst impacted sectors, while one, real estate, is in the least impacted sectors. A large health sector has been noted as being able to provide a buffer to COVID-induced shocks in the economy; in Thurrock the health sector makes up only 4.1% of the economy. In Thurrock, economic growth is predicted to decline by 41.8% - this is much worse than the 35% contraction across the UK as a whole.

Taking into consideration the economic reduction in Thurrock as well as its position on the Social Mobility Index, we predict that an Opportunity Gap of 250 will arise, the 32nd largest in England, making Thurrock a COVID Opportunity Coldspot.

### Sector Key

**1** Accommodation and food services **2** Administrative and support services **3** Agriculture, mining, electricity, gas, water and waste **4** Construction **5** Education **6** Financial and insurance activities **7** Human health and social work activities **8** Information and communication **9** Manufacturing **10** Professional, scientific, and technical activities **11** Public administration and defence **12** Real estate activities **13** Transportation and storage **14** Wholesale and retail (including repair of motor vehicles) **15** Other

## Castle Point's Economy

Sector	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
GVA (£m)	25	30	5	121	82	13	52	13	121	33	24	290	31	133	36
GVA (%)	2.5	3.0	0.5	12.0	8.1	1.3	5.2	1.3	12.0	3.3	2.4	28.7	3.1	13.2	3.6
Decline (%)	-85	-40	-17	-70	-90	-5	+50	-45	-55	-40	-20	-20	-35	-50	-60

## Castle Point's Largest Sectors

Sector	Real estate activities	Wholesale and retail	Construction	Manufacturing	Education
GVA (£m)	290	133	121	121	82

## Biggest Impacted Sectors

Sector	Education	Accommodation and food	Construction	Other services	Manufacturing
Predicted Decline	-90%	-85%	-70%	-60%	-55%

Castle Point's biggest sectors are real estate, wholesale and retail, construction, manufacturing, and education. Three of these, construction, manufacturing, and education, are also in the worst impacted sectors, while one, real estate, is in the least impacted sectors. A large health sector has been noted as being able to provide a buffer to COVID-induced shocks in the economy; in Castle Point the health sector makes up 5.2% of the economy. In Castle Point, economic growth is predicted to decline by 41.1% - this is worse than the 35% contraction across the UK as a whole.

Taking into consideration the economic reduction in Castle Point as well as its position on the Social Mobility Index, we predict that an Opportunity Gap of 192 will arise, the 102nd largest in England.

### Sector Key

**1** Accommodation and food services **2** Administrative and support services **3** Agriculture, mining, electricity, gas, water and waste **4** Construction **5** Education **6** Financial and insurance activities **7** Human health and social work activities **8** Information and communication **9** Manufacturing **10** Professional, scientific, and technical activities **11** Public administration and defence **12** Real estate activities **13** Transportation and storage **14** Wholesale and retail (including repair of motor vehicles) **15** Other

## Basildon's Economy

Sector	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
GVA (£m)	66	223	90	492	168	155	500	290	1003	824	144	650	333	673	151
GVA (%)	1.1	3.9	1.6	8.5	2.9	2.7	8.7	5.0	17.4	14.3	2.5	11.3	5.8	11.7	2.6
Decline (%)	-85	-40	-17	-70	-90	-5	+50	-45	-55	-40	-20	-20	-35	-50	-60

## Basildon's Largest Sectors

Sector	Manufacturing	Professional activities	Wholesale and retail	Real estate activities	Human health and social work
GVA (£m)	1003	824	673	650	500

## Biggest Impacted Sectors

Sector	Education	Accommodation and food	Construction	Other services	Manufacturing
Predicted Decline	-90%	-85%	-70%	-60%	-55%

Basildon's biggest sectors are manufacturing, professional activities, wholesale and retail, real estate, and human health. One of these, manufacturing, is also in the worst impacted sectors, while one, real estate, is in the least impacted sectors. A large health sector has been noted as being able to provide a buffer to COVID-induced shocks in the economy; in Basildon the health sector makes up 8.7% of the economy. In Basildon, economic growth is predicted to decline by 36.9% - this is slightly worse than the 35% contraction across the UK as a whole.

Taking into consideration the economic reduction in Basildon as well as its position on the Social Mobility Index, we predict that an Opportunity Gap of 189.5 will arise, the 104th largest in England.

### Sector Key

**1** Accommodation and food services **2** Administrative and support services **3** Agriculture, mining, electricity, gas, water and waste **4** Construction **5** Education **6** Financial and insurance activities **7** Human health and social work activities **8** Information and communication **9** Manufacturing **10** Professional, scientific, and technical activities **11** Public administration and defence **12** Real estate activities **13** Transportation and storage **14** Wholesale and retail (including repair of motor vehicles) **15** Other

## Braintree's Economy

Sector	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
GVA (£m)	55	153	80	357	134	624	199	78	405	181	117	478	121	405	86
GVA (%)	1.6	4.4	2.3	10.3	3.9	18.0	5.7	2.2	11.7	5.2	3.4	13.8	3.5	11.7	2.5
Decline (%)	-85	-40	-17	-70	-90	-5	+50	-45	-55	-40	-20	-20	-35	-50	-60

## Braintree's Largest Sectors

Sector	Financial and insurance activities	Real estate activities	Manufacturing	Wholesale and retail (including repair of motor vehicles)	Construction
GVA (£m)	624	478	405	405	357

## Biggest Impacted Sectors

Sector	Education	Accommodation and food	Construction	Other services	Manufacturing
Predicted Decline	-90%	-85%	-70%	-60%	-55%

Braintree's biggest sectors are financial and insurance, real estate, manufacturing, wholesale and retail, and construction. Two of these, manufacturing and construction, are also in the worst impacted sectors, while two, financial and real estate, are in the least impacted sectors. A large health sector has been noted as being able to provide a buffer to COVID-induced shocks in the economy; in Braintree the health sector makes up only 5.7% of the economy. In Braintree, economic growth is predicted to decline by 33.7% - this is slightly better than the 35% contraction across the UK as whole.

Taking into consideration the economic reduction in Braintree as well as its position on the Social Mobility Index, we predict that an Opportunity Gap of 150 will arise, the 171st largest in England.

### Sector Key

**1** Accommodation and food services **2** Administrative and support services **3** Agriculture, mining, electricity, gas, water and waste **4** Construction **5** Education **6** Financial and insurance activities **7** Human health and social work activities **8** Information and communication **9** Manufacturing **10** Professional, scientific, and technical activities **11** Public administration and defence **12** Real estate activities **13** Transportation and storage **14** Wholesale and retail (including repair of motor vehicles) **15** Other

## Harlow's Economy

Sector	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
GVA (£m)	27	120	16	159	96	21	424	80	291	208	48	205	57	382	57
GVA (%)	1.2	5.5	0.7	7.3	4.4	1.0	19.4	3.7	13.3	9.5	2.2	9.4	2.6	17.4	2.6
Decline (%)	-85	-40	-17	-70	-90	-5	+50	-45	-55	-40	-20	-20	-35	-50	-60

## Harlow's Largest Sectors

Sector	Human health and social work	Wholesale and retail (including repair of motor vehicles)	Manufacturing	Professional, scientific, and technical activities	Real estate activities
GVA (£m)	424	382	291	208	205

## Biggest Impacted Sectors

Sector	Education	Accommodation and food	Construction	Other services	Manufacturing
Predicted Decline	-90%	-85%	-70%	-60%	-55%

Harlow's biggest sectors are human health, wholesale and retail, manufacturing, professional services, and real estate. One of these, manufacturing, is also in the worst impacted sectors, while two, human health and real estate, are in the least impacted sectors. A large health sector has been noted as being able to provide a buffer to COVID-induced shocks in the economy; in Harlow the health sector makes up 19.4% of the economy. In Harlow, economic growth is predicted to decline by 29.0% - this is much better than the 35% contraction across the UK as whole.

Taking into consideration the economic reduction in Harlow as well as its position on the Social Mobility Index, we predict that an Opportunity Gap of 87.5 will arise, the 266th largest in England.

### Sector Key

**1** Accommodation and food services **2** Administrative and support services **3** Agriculture, mining, electricity, gas, water and waste **4** Construction **5** Education **6** Financial and insurance activities **7** Human health and social work activities **8** Information and communication **9** Manufacturing **10** Professional, scientific, and technical activities **11** Public administration and defence **12** Real estate activities **13** Transportation and storage **14** Wholesale and retail (including repair of motor vehicles) **15** Other



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. **Social Mobility Commission.** Social mobility index. Social Mobility Commission. [Online] July 2016. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-index>.
2. **House of Commons Library.** Social Mobility Index by Constituency SMIC. House of Commons Library. [Online] October 2018. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8400/>.
3. **Office for Budget Responsibility.** Coronavirus analysis. Office for Budget Responsibility. [Online] April 14, 2020. [Cited: April 15, 2020.] [https://cdn.obr.uk/Coronavirus\\_reference\\_scenario\\_commentary.pdf](https://cdn.obr.uk/Coronavirus_reference_scenario_commentary.pdf).
4. **Centre for Progressive Policy.** Which local authorities face the biggest immediate economic hit? Centre for Progressive Policy. [Online] April 16, 2020. [Cited: April 16, 2020.] <https://www.progressive-policy.net/publications/which-local-authorities-face-biggest-immediate-economic-hit>.
5. **Henehan, Kathleen.** Class of 2020. Resolution Foundation. [Online] May 6, 2020. [Cited: May 14, 2020.] <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2020/05/Class-of-2020.pdf>.
6. **Woodcock, Andrew.** Coronavirus economic effects hitting ethnic minorities and young people hardest. The Independent. [Online] April 13, 2020. [Cited: May 21, 2020.] <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/coronavirus-economic-effect-uk-ethnic-minorities-young-people-a9460511.html>.



LEVELLING UP  
GOALS



**OfS** Uni Connect  
Programme

**MAKE  
—  
HAPPEN**