

Free time

Getting involved

There are many ways in which your son or daughter can get involved in the delivery of services to young people across Essex. It's a great way for them to have some influence over the things that really matter to them and affect their future. Two of the routes to getting involved are:

Young Essex Assembly (YEA) – The YEA is an elected group of young people who regularly get involved in a variety of topics representing the views of young people from across Essex. The YEA currently has sub-groups looking at: bullying, crime & feeling safe; road safety; smoking, alcohol & drugs. 12 YEA members are elected to represent Essex on the UK Youth Parliament, working with central government. For more information your son/daughter can contact the YEA on 01206 762923, email yea@essex.gov.uk or check out www.youngessexassembly.org.

The Government has made funds available to young people, through Essex County Council, to support and improve facilities in their local area. The **Youth Opportunity Fund** and **Youth Capital Fund** work together to allow young people to influence and improve the things to do and places to go within their neighbourhood. Your son or daughter can become a member of a decision panel, judge the bids and decide who gets the money, or they can come up with ideas of things to do in their area and make an application for funding. For more information about how to get involved your son or daughter can email yof@essex.gov.uk or call 01245 431433.

Young people who are already involved say that the main things they gain from the experience are:

- Making new friends.
- Having fun.
- Developing personal, social and specific skills.
- Feeling good about making a contribution to improving things for themselves and others.

Volunteering and personal development

There are a wide range of fun and interesting volunteering opportunities available to your son or daughter whatever their interests. Personal development is a way of saying how we improve ourselves, either personally or professionally - for example, gaining better employment skills. Volunteering, usually with a charity or other good cause such as a community development project, is one of the best ways to achieve 'personal development', giving your son or daughter the chance to meet new people, learn new things and gain life and work experience.

Check out these websites for volunteering and personal development opportunities.

www.essexyounglife.co.uk – An online directory of activities, clubs, advice and support groups across Essex. Look for things to do, places to go, find information about a particular type of club or group, and where they are located.

www.dofe.org - The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is a voluntary, flexible programme of cultural and adventurous activities for all young people, whatever their background

or ability. To find your local award centre call the County Award Office on 01245 436633.

www.princes-trust.org.uk - A Prince's Trust Team course provides the opportunity to take on challenges, build skills and confidence, make friends and a lot more. For young people leaving care, The Prince's Trust can find a mentor to help with choices, and their programmes can help a young person become independent. Young people can call 0800 842842 for more information about the Prince's Trust.

www.vinspired.com – vinolved is the new national youth volunteering programme, which offers opportunities in Essex. It has replaced the Millennium Volunteers. Hotline 0800 089 9000.

www.do-it.org.uk – Search a database of over one million opportunities and apply on line.

www.timebank.org.uk - Opportunities around the country for volunteering. This also has a great site for young people at www.youngtimebank.org.uk.

www.csv.org.uk - Community Service Volunteers provides the opportunity for full-time volunteers to live away from home for between four months and a year. They will receive accommodation and weekly allowances to live on. No volunteer is ever rejected.

www.sja.org.uk - St John Ambulance provide first aid and medical support services, caring services in support of community needs and education, training and personal development for young people. They involve young people from the age of 5 to 18. They also have a student wing, LINKS. Contact the Essex office on 01245 265678.

Sport and keeping fit

It's important for all of us to take time out to relax, whether this is spending time with friends, playing sport or pursuing a hobby. For more information on sport, check out the links below.

www.sportessex.com – A guide to thousands of sporting opportunities in Essex.

www.sportscoachuk.org - Sports Coach UK can assist you on the road to becoming a coach.

Music, dance, art and drama

Whether your son or daughter wants to know about a gig, an art exhibition, or where to learn salsa dancing, they can find out by checking out the websites below.

www.theatre-resource.co.uk - Theatre Resource is an arts organisation, specialising in the area of disability arts and social inclusion. Telephone 01277 365626 for more information.

www.essexdance.co.uk - Essex Dance is the regional dance development agency for Essex, based in Chelmsford. Telephone 01245 346036 for information.

www.youthartsonline.org - Search here for projects and courses in your area. Covers dance, music, carnival and circus, visual arts, creative writing, film and video plus much more.

www.youthmusic.org.uk - Youth Music is a UK-wide charity set up to provide high quality and diverse music-making opportunities for 0-18 year olds. It mainly supports activities that are held outside school hours.