

# ACL Essex

## Learner Handbook 2016 - 2017



**ACL Essex  
Learner Handbook 2014-2015**

**Contents**

Welcome to the ACL Service for Essex .....	3
1. How to contact your local ACL Centre .....	4
1.1 Equality and Diversity Statement .....	4
1.2 Access to Information .....	4
1.3 Customer Care Policy .....	4
1.4 Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) .....	5
1.5 Access to facilities .....	5
1.6 Access to Learning Support .....	5
1.7 Virtual Learning Environment .....	6
1.8 Our Website .....	6
1.9 Unfamiliar with computers? .....	6
2. Learner Charter .....	7
3. Continuous Quality Improvement .....	8
3.1 MATRIX - National Information, Advice and Guidance Standards .....	8
4. Health and Safety .....	9
4.1 Safeguarding and Prevent .....	9
4.2 Fire Safety .....	9
5. Facilities/Bad weather arrangements .....	10
5.1 Car Parking .....	10
5.2 Refreshments .....	10
5.3 Bad Weather .....	10
5.4 Personal Property .....	10
5.5 TV Information Screens .....	10
6. Confidentiality of Information .....	10
6.1 Data Protection .....	10
6.2 How do I find out more? .....	11
7. Plagiarism .....	11
8. Frequently asked questions .....	12
8.1 Can I get any help with course fees and other costs? .....	12
8.2 What if I'm on the wrong course? .....	12
8.3 Do you offer any childcare? .....	13
8.4 Why is my learning being assessed for a course I'm taking for pleasure? .....	13
8.5 What happens to the personal information I give you? .....	13

## Welcome to the ACL Service for Essex

We look forward to welcoming you at one of our centres and hope you enjoy your learning experience with us. We continuously review how we manage the ACL Service in Essex, so that we can offer you a better range of services in your local community. We have centres in most major towns in Essex. In addition we provide courses in around 200 other local venues including schools and village halls. We also deliver work based training and Apprenticeships via our Employability and Enterprise Team.

This handbook has been designed to help you make the most of your time with us. It explains how we can support your learning and how you can help us improve our information and services to you.

**Our Purpose:** Improving lives through learning

### Our values:

- create a safe and happy environment where people enjoy their learning
- enable adults and young people to learn, succeed, achieve their ambitions and gain the skills they need to enter and or progress in the workplace
- enable people to have access to programmes of learning that promote the healthy and creative lifestyle they choose
- be proactive in partnership working to ensure people can benefit from our learning opportunities
- empower our workforce to provide customer focussed services that achieve our ambitions and support their aspirations
- promote a culture of commitment within the organisation
- promote a culture and ethos which fosters and values equality, diversity, respect and tolerance, challenges prejudice and discrimination and equips learners for life and work in a multi-cultural, multi-faith society

### Term dates

Autumn Term 2016	Spring Terms 2017	Summer Term 2017
Starts: Tuesday 30 <sup>th</sup> August Half Term: 24 Oct – 28 Oct Ends: Saturday 17 December	Starts: Tuesday 3 January Half Term: 13 – 17 Feb Ends: Saturday 1 <sup>st</sup> April	Starts: Tues 18 April Half term: 29 May – 2 June Final end date may be subject to change.

Please note that the end date will vary according to the length of the course you enrol on and some courses may run outside of these dates.

# 1. How to contact your local ACL Centre

In the first instance please speak with your tutor. If you would like to make further contact please contact us:

**By telephone:** 0345 603 7635

**By email:** [lifelong.learning@essex.gov.uk](mailto:lifelong.learning@essex.gov.uk)

**Visit our website:** [www.essex.gov.uk/adultlearning](http://www.essex.gov.uk/adultlearning)

## 1.1 Equality and Diversity Statement

We are committed to fairness and equality of access, opportunity and outcome for all learners and potential learners. We oppose discrimination in any form and have a commitment to making our courses inclusive and available to all.

Therefore we positively welcome enrolments from everyone, regardless of age, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, religion/belief and sexual orientation.

We have developed a Single Equality Scheme applying the ethos of statutory Equality Duties for Disability, Gender and Race to Age, Religion/Belief and Sexual Orientation. We are undertaking a programme of Equality Impact Assessments and continually update existing policies, procedures and practices in response to these and the Single Equality Scheme.

We work with Essex County Council Diversity and Equality team, in addition to other agencies and organisations, and run Focus Groups to elicit feedback from learners and other stakeholders, which then informs future service development.

When appropriate we aim to make reasonable adjustments to ensure you gain the most from your learning experience.

## 1.2 Access to Information

We have particular regard for the needs of customers who may require information in formats other than those immediately available. This may include large print, audiocassette or Braille. We can put information on to disk to be read with assistive software if required. Please ask your tutor or at reception if you require this service.

Equality is a fundamental feature of democracy and service quality, as well as being a vital principle underpinning customer care.

## 1.3 Customer Care Policy

ACL Essex commitment to customer care provides an ethos for promoting continuous improvement and endeavours to provide a high standard of customer care. We aim to provide a quality service to all customers that is timely, helpful, courteous, friendly and knowledgeable; and to promote effective provision for all learners, whatever their background. To ensure a prompt and courteous service, responsive to the needs of all customers and clients, standards have been set to apply as minimum requirements across the ACL Essex Service. Should you require the standards please contact your local centre.

## **1.4 Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)**

ACL Essex is a Matrix Excellence award winner.

The matrix Standard is the national quality standard for any organisation that delivers information, advice and guidance on learning and work. It is a unique quality standard for organisations to assess and measure their advice and support services, which ultimately supports individuals in their choice of career and learning. The standard also informs the strategic management of our customer service. We received re-accreditation against the standard in October 2015. We have also received the MATRIX excellence award for outstanding service.

### **How to Access the Information Advice and Guidance Service**

At all of our adult learning centres you may speak with a member of staff who can help you to access the following:

- Detailed information on our own ACL courses
- Details of other organisations or suitable services that may be able to assist you to achieve your learning or career goals and support to access these, including the National Careers Service.

## **1.5 Access to facilities**

We will make every effort to ensure our buildings are accessible to all. We will seek to influence and encourage owners of other buildings that we hire to do likewise. We will make all reasonable adjustment to facilitate access for wheelchair users and those with restricted mobility or sensory impairment. If you have any concerns about accessing any of our buildings please contact us on 0345 603 7635

## **1.6 Access to Learning Support**

We are committed to supporting all learners. If you have particular needs we hope to that you will tell us. We invite you to do this at enrolment or you can talk to us at any stage of your programme. We will agree a support plan with you to ensure that you have a successful learning experience with us.

We provide support for people with disabilities and /or learning difficulties, for example visual impairment and mental health difficulty.

It is important for us to know as much about your individual needs as is possible, this includes any support you may require while undertaking exams, in line with Awarding Organisation requirements, where possible.

### **Types of support we can offer you include:**

- Note takers or tape recorded notes if you have any difficulty in taking notes
- British Sign Language Communication support
- Assistive hearing devices if you have a hearing impairment
- Reading or other support for certain examinations, where possible
- Additional teaching, either to reduce class size or to provide support in or out of class
- One-to-one tuition in certain circumstances
- Study skills support if you have not undertaken formal learning for a while
- Specialist assistive or enabling software and resources.

If you would like to speak to a member of the Learning Support team in confidence please give your contact details to a member of the reception team or call the appropriate telephone number below.

Area	Learning Support Coordinator	Telephone
Clacton, Harwich, Colchester	Joanna Rice	03330139205
Uttlesford, Harlow, Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Pont, Rayleigh	Tracey Lang	03330138647
Witham, Braintree, Maldon, Chelmsford	Nicola Burwood	033301 34958

## 1.7 Virtual Learning Environment

ACL Essex has its own Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) where learners can access information and resources related to their subject – <http://moodle.essexacl.ac.uk>

To access the VLE you will need to create your own account. Your tutor will be able to advise you and offer support:

1. Go to <http://moodle.essexacl.ac.uk>
2. Click “Create new account”
3. Fill in the new account form by creating a username and password for yourself – make sure you write down your username and password for future use!!
4. Enter a valid email address because the system will send you an email to confirm your account. You won’t be able to log in again until you confirm your account.
5. It may take up to half an hour but you should receive an email at the account you specified on the form.
6. Click the link in the email (or copy and paste it into the address window in your
7. browser) to confirm your account.
8. When you have created your account, please inform your tutor who will give you the enrolment key for your online course (if the tutor has set one up).
9. To find your course, click on the ‘ACL Courses’ picture and then choose your subject area.
10. You will also be able to access the ACL Learner Induction course. The enrolment key you need to access this area is: ACLIND

For further assistance with the VLE and queries regarding training in its use, contact:

[maria.neary@essex.gov.uk](mailto:maria.neary@essex.gov.uk)

## 1.8 Our Website

There is 24 hour access to our website [www.essex.gov.uk/adultlearning](http://www.essex.gov.uk/adultlearning) where you can find local contact details for your area. The website and our Facebook page:

[www.facebook.com/ACLEssex](http://www.facebook.com/ACLEssex) can also provide up to date information about new courses which are added throughout the year.

## 1.9 Unfamiliar with computers?

To help you develop your skills and confidence using computers, we have computers in the public areas at most of our centres. We also offer specially designed courses aiming to support you through the initial stages of using a computer. Please ask at Reception for further details.

## 2. Learner Charter

### ACL Essex Learner Charter

#### As a learner with ACL Essex, you can expect:

- A high standard of teaching, learning and assessment
- Classes that run on time in rooms that are appropriately equipped
- Regular visits and support in the workplace if your programme is non-classroom based
- Access to information, advice and guidance that supports your learning -and your next steps
- To learn in a way that suits your needs
- To be provided with regular feedback on your progress
- A culture where discrimination is challenged and the dignity of learners and others is not abused.
- An environment that safeguards learners from all types of abuse including radicalisation and develops an awareness of social and moral responsibility in modern Britain.
- To receive a timely response to compliments, complaints or comments.
- Your learning to take place in a safe environment
- To be provided with learning support and reasonable adjustments where needed

#### In turn we have expectations of our learners.

#### We expect you to:

- Respect the rights of all ACL centre users
- Behave in a manner that contributes to a healthy and safe environment, and that respects those that use our centres by treating all with consideration and courtesy.
- Be fully committed to your learning, attend all classes or appointments on time, complete course work, and inform us if you are unable to.
- Complete a learning plan and feedback to your tutor on your progress.
- Provide us with appropriate information to help us meet your learning needs and keep us informed of any changes in your personal details
- Report any incidents of abuse or suspected radicalisation

### 3. Continuous Quality Improvement

By carefully monitoring our service quality, we can ensure that we are giving you the best possible value for money. We develop an annual all service quality improvement plan which is reviewed regularly to monitor our performance. This includes an annual self-assessment report, which includes gaining feedback from learners and other service users. You may be invited to join a focus group to give your views on your experience. The annual self-assessment report informs our quality improvement report.

#### 1. FE Choices

One of the national surveys is called FE Choices. You can see the results for ACL Essex by clicking on the link below:

<http://fechoices.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk>

#### 2. Ofsted Learner View

Ofsted Inspectors operate a learner survey, called "Learner View". You are invited to give your views about your learning experiences with ACL Essex. You need to enter an email address and a password to complete the questionnaire. On registration, users have to verify their application via their e-mail account, as a security measure. Click on the link below to access the site:

[www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk)

### 3.1 MATRIX - National Information, Advice and Guidance Standards

We are also proud to be recognised as meeting the national standards of **Matrix** for information and advice and gained re-accreditation against this standard in October 2012. We have been assessed on the following elements:

1. **Leadership and Management**
2. **Resources**
3. **Service Delivery**
4. **Continuous Quality Improvement**

### 3.2 Customer Feedback

We welcome feedback and you can do this by:

Visiting [www.essex.gov.uk/Pages/Complaints-comments-compliments](http://www.essex.gov.uk/Pages/Complaints-comments-compliments)

Emailing [ECC.CustomerServices@essex.gov.uk](mailto:ECC.CustomerServices@essex.gov.uk)

Telephoning on **0345 330 430**.

## 4. Health and Safety

We promote the Skills Funding Agency Safe Learner concept in addition to ensuring a safe healthy and supportive environment through effective health and safety management. The Service operates within the Essex County Council Health and Safety Policy, the ACL Learner Charter, Essex County Council Corporate Health and Safety and the ACL Code of Practice, copies of which are available at each centre as well as online via the ACL virtual learning environment. The Service will ensure that there is an awareness of safety issues among all staff and, so far as it is reasonably practicable, that the health and safety of non-employees who may be affected by its work activities are not endangered. Please be alert to potential risks and report anything you think could be a danger straight away to the reception staff or your tutor.

As part of your learning experience, we aim to enhance your understanding of:

- the importance of health and safety
- how hazards are identified, risks assessed and the principles of control measures
- how to play an active part in developing a set of safe behaviours,
- how to acquire practical, transferable skills from your learning experience.

Health and Safety will be covered as part of your induction to the course. By the end of your first class you should be clear about:

- emergency arrangements
- any significant risks that may affect you
- control measures for the risks
- supervision arrangements and the contact person for any health and safety concerns
- any restrictions or prohibitions that apply in the learning situation and premises
- any personal protective equipment or clothing that you must wear
- accident reporting
- any health and safety rules (“dos” and “don’ts”).

### 4.1 Safeguarding and Prevent

ACL Essex takes seriously its responsibility for creating an environment that promotes well-being and ensures personal safety, security and welfare. The Service operates the following policies:

- Safeguarding policy
- Harassment and Bullying policy
- Computer Use policy to include e-safety

All Staff are required to complete Prevent and Safeguarding training. There are staff within the Service you can approach if you have concerns. These include your tutor/assessor, Centre Reception Staff, and Centre Management Staff.

### 4.2 Fire Safety

In the event of the fire bells ringing, all persons within the building must leave immediately and congregate in the designated assembly area.

Fire alarms, extinguishers and fire signs are provided to ensure safety. It is the responsibility of all users to ensure that such equipment remains in good working order. The discovery of defective firefighting or warning equipment must be reported immediately to reception.

It is a legal requirement that designated fire doors are not wedged open and that their self-closing mechanisms are not tampered with in any way.

## **5. Facilities/Bad weather arrangements**

### **5.1 Car Parking**

We have car parking at each of our main centres other than Rayleigh. Please contact the appropriate reception for details.

### **5.2 Refreshments**

At all our main centres snacks, hot and cold drinks are available. These may sometimes be limited to service from machines and as such there may at times be limited availability

### **5.3 Bad Weather**

In the event of extreme weather and the need to close the college:

Radio updates: **BBC Essex FM 103.5 or 95.3 or MW 765.**

Radio station website at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/england/essex/>

ACL Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/aclessex](http://www.facebook.com/aclessex)

Updates on our website [www.essex.gov.uk/adultlearning](http://www.essex.gov.uk/adultlearning)

### **5.4 Personal Property**

Neither ACL Essex nor Essex County Council will accept responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property including cars parked on the premises.

### **5.5 TV Information Screens**

At all our main ACL centres we have TV Information Screens that displays up to date information on our learning provision and services.

## **6. Confidentiality of Information**

### **6.1 Data Protection**

The personal information you provide is passed to the Chief Executive of Skills Funding (“the Skills Funding Agency”) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). Where necessary it is also shared with the Department for Education, including the Education Funding Agency. The information is used for the exercise of functions of these government departments and to meet statutory responsibilities, including under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, and to create and maintain a unique learner number (ULN) and a Personal Learning Record (PLR).

The information you provide may be shared with other organisations for education, training, employment and well-being related purposes, including for research. You may be contacted after you have completed your programme of learning to establish whether you have entered employment or gone onto further training. You can opt out of contact for other purposes by ticking any of the boxes on the Enrolment/Learning Agreement Form if you do not wish to be

contacted: Further information about use of and access to your personal data, and details of organisations with which we regularly share data are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfa-privacy-notice>

## 6.2 How do I find out more?

If you have any questions or concerns about the collection, use, or disclosure of your personal information, please write to the ACL Business Improvement Officer MI who is based at ACL Witham centre, Spinks Lane, Witham, CM8 1EP. You can also write to the Skills Funding Agency's Information Rights Manager at: Cheylesmore House, Coventry, CV1 2WT or e-mail:

[dataprotectionqueries@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotectionqueries@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk)

## 7. Plagiarism

If you are studying an accredited programme, there may be varied forms of assessment. Usually assessment will involve the production of written work (coursework). Your tutor will provide guidance about the format, style and content of the written assessment, including advice on how to use written sources (i.e. information from books, periodicals, articles, the internet etc). It is very important not to copy sections of any written source that you use and pass it off as your own work. This is called "plagiarism".

Plagiarism involves taking someone else's words, thoughts or ideas and trying to pass them off as your own. It is a form of cheating which is taken very seriously.

Don't think you won't be caught; there are many ways to detect plagiarism.

- Markers can spot changes in the style of writing and use of language.
- Markers are highly experienced subject specialists who are very familiar with work on the topic concerned – they may have read the source you are using, (or even marked the essay you have copied from).
- Internet search engines and specialised computer software can be used to match phrases or pieces of text with original sources and to detect changes in the grammar and style of writing or punctuation.

Penalties for breaking the regulations

If your work is submitted and it is discovered that you have broken the regulations, one of the following penalties will be applied:

- The piece of work will be awarded zero marks
- You will be disqualified from that unit for the examination series in question
- You will be disqualified from the whole subject for that examination series
- You will be disqualified from all subjects and barred from entering again for a period of time.
- If you have copied from another learner they may also have the above penalties applied.

Your awarding body will decide which penalty is appropriate.

**REMEMBER IT'S YOUR QUALIFICATION SO IT NEEDS TO BE YOUR OWN WORK**

## 8. Frequently asked questions

### 8.1 Can I get any help with course fees and other costs?

The Government identifies priority programmes which may be free to eligible learners.

The ACL website:

[www.essex.gov.uk/adultlearning](http://www.essex.gov.uk/adultlearning)

provides you with more information about the programmes that are free to eligible learners.

**Our course fees continue to be competitive and reasonably priced and in order to help our learners we have managed to hold our tuition fees for the coming academic year 2015-2016.**

ACL Essex is committed to supporting learners wherever possible, and for the academic year 2016-2017, we are providing a small Learner Support Fund to help those on low incomes with the costs of course fees, childcare, materials or resources needed to complete examination or accredited courses.

A Bursary Fund is available for those attending non-accredited courses. This fund is limited and only available to those who are not already entitled to a fee remission. You will be asked to provide some evidence so that your application for support can be assessed.

#### Fee payments

You can book and pay for some courses via the internet at [www.essex.gov.uk/adultlearning](http://www.essex.gov.uk/adultlearning) and this will require full payment at the time of booking. Alternatively, fees can be paid by telephoning **0345 603 7635**, or by post, or in person at one of our centres. You can pay your fees in full by cheque, credit/debit card or cash.

If you are eligible for free tuition fees as a result of meeting the necessary criteria, your booking will be made on receipt of the relevant proof of entitlement documents.

**Direct Debit payments** are available to help manage the cost of learning and, in exceptional circumstances; individual payment plans can be arranged. **Please note that no further course bookings can be taken until all outstanding payments have been made.**

**If you think you may be eligible for further help with fees or you have any other questions regarding our fee policy, please contact us on 0345 603 7635.**

### 8.2 What if I'm on the wrong course?

We try to help you as much as possible to choose the right course. If you think you have made the wrong choice, please help us to help you by telling us as quickly as possible.

#### Refund policy

It is not the policy of Essex County Council to refund fees automatically when a change in circumstances prevents or discourages a learner from continuing with a particular class.

Refunds are only made on the following basis:

- If ACL Essex cancels a course before it is due to start – Full Refund
- If ACL Essex cancels a course after it has started – Full Refund

#### Student withdrawal

[What if I cancel my enrolment within at least 10 working days before the course begins?](#) Refund of fees allowed, however an administration fee applies which will not be refunded.

[What if I need to cancel my enrolment after the 10 day period has elapsed?](#) Refund requests for courses received less than 10 working days before commencement will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

In exceptional circumstances, at our discretion, once courses have started refunds or a credit note may be considered. All requests for refunds should be made within two weeks of your last attendance. Please note that course fees include an administration charge which will not be refunded.

**What if I find the course I have chosen is unsuitable when I turn up to the first session?** An alternative will be offered, if available, or you can have a full refund of tuition fees (less the registration fee of £15.00) provided we are notified in writing within one week of the course starting. Transfers are limited to one per enrolment within the first week of the course. Any additional transfers will be subject to a £10.00 administrative charge per transfer.

### **8.3 Do you offer any childcare?**

Childcare is available in some centres, please contact your local centre for information.

### **8.4 Why is my learning being assessed for a course I'm taking for pleasure?**

1. Learners have told us and research shows that getting written feedback on how you are progressing can be extremely helpful.
2. We want your course to meet your individual needs. An Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is a valuable working document to help you plan your learning with your tutor.
3. It provides evidence for the funding bodies of the many benefits you gain from your learning, including self-esteem and improved health.
4. It also provides you with a summary of the learning outcomes you have completed. This gives you a useful record of your achievements if you are aiming to progress to a further course, employment or voluntary work.

### **8.5 What happens to the personal information I give you?**

These are the forms we ask you to complete and the purpose of each one:

Enrolment form/Learning Agreement.	To get your details on our computer system so that we can contact you. This form also triggers the funding for courses. By law we have to get your signature for all the required information.
Individual Learning Plan.	To help you plan your learning and recognise our progress and achievement.
Learner Satisfaction Surveys.	To see if you are happy, and how we can improve our Service. We are also required to do this by the inspection service and our funders.
Learner Support Fund/bursary fund application.	If you are applying for financial help or additional learning support: We are required to do this for funding and SFA audit purposes.
Learning Support Plan.	This identifies the support we have agreed with you and is required for funding and SFA audit purposes.

**This document was issued by Essex County Council, ACL Essex**  
August 2016

You can contact us in the following ways:

**By post:**

Essex County Council  
Adult Community Learning  
PO Box 47  
Chelmsford  
CM2 6WN

**By telephone:**

General enquiries: 0345 603 7635

**By email**

[lifelong.learning@essex.gov.uk](mailto:lifelong.learning@essex.gov.uk)

**Visit our website:**

[www.essex.gov.uk/adultlearning](http://www.essex.gov.uk/adultlearning)

The information contained in this document can be translated, and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.