



What is the Children's University?

Essex Children's University (Charity No 1168871) is part of a national project that aims to provide social mobility and encourages participation in learning outside of the classroom: we encourage 5 to 14 year olds to try new experiences; develop new interests and acquire new skills.

In Essex we have Children's University Campus areas in Colchester, Braintree and District, Basildon, Canvey Island, Tendring, Harwich & Dovercourt and Blackwater and we are developing our work in Southminster, Brentwood, Ockendon and Chelmsford too.

Children's University centres operate across the UK and in Australia, Malaysia and China too.

At the heart of our work is the ambition to raise aspirations, boost achievement and foster a love of learning, so that children can make the most of their abilities and interests, regardless of background. Children can only aspire to be what they know exists.

How does it work?

The Children's University believes that children can and do learn anywhere, when doing all sorts of activities, and that children learn best when *they* decide what they want to learn, when and where, and most importantly, have FUN whilst learning. Participants are presented with a diverse menu of learning options – everything from child friendly lectures about the chemistry of fireworks to street dance workshops – which are delivered by accredited learning partners called 'Learning Destinations': museums, sports venues, universities, community partners and after school clubs to name a few.

Through their Children's University Membership (at a cost of £5 per child) children receive a Passport to Learning.

Recognition and celebration of effort and achievement is central to the programme's success. Each time a child participates in a Children's University Learning Activity they receive a stamp in their CU 'Passport to Learning' – one hour of learning equals one CU credit. Once sufficient credits have been accrued the young person is awarded a CU Certificate of Achievement. There are three levels – Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Doctorate – certificates are presented at a CU Graduation Ceremony, neatly modelled on the 'grown up' version. Children will have the opportunity to Graduate once a year at which time all the CU Awards they have successfully completed will be presented.

Who participates?

It is important to point out that Children's University is open to all children aged 5 to 14, irrespective of background, as everybody benefits from raised achievement levels, a broader skillset, new interests and greater awareness of education/career options, but can be targeted at those who need it most.

What difference does it make?

Childhood experiences, or a lack of them, heavily shape future life chances and choices. At national level we have two independent evaluations carried out through the University of Cambridge and locally we know, from our conversations with parents, schools and children that participation in CU activity has a positive impact on achievement at school and, as importantly, on the skills and attributes which so many employers want to see more of in young people – resilience, adaptability, collaboration, self-confidence and self-belief.

