Empowerment Through Enterprise

"We believe every SEND young person has the potential to lead, inspire, and build something incredible — their own future. From bold business start-ups 💼 to creative self-employment ventures 🎨, we're turning passion into purpose and ideas into impact. 🌍💪"

Why UnderdogCrew?

At Underdog Crew, neurodiversity isn't a concept - it's our culture, our compass, and our calling. We are lived-experience educators, creatives, and empowerment specialists who know that different minds don't just think outside the box - they redesign it completely. Our recent recognition as **BBC Make a Difference Award Winners 2025** and **Colchester City Mayor's Charity of the Year** stands as proof of what happens when passion meets purpose, and when the voices once overlooked become the ones leading the change.

The **SENtrepreneur Movement** is more than a showcase — it's a celebration of the thinkers, feelers, builders, and dreamers whose neurodiverse brilliance is lighting up new paths in education, enterprise, and creative empowerment.

At Underdog Crew, we don't just make a difference — **we *are* the difference.**

1) Executive Summary

Across the UK, thousands of autistic and neurodiverse teenagers are leaving school with potential that traditional education has failed to recognise. The “one-size-fits-all” system measures compliance, not creativity — leaving some of our most brilliant thinkers without opportunity.

SENtrepreneur™ exists to change that. It delivers post-school programmes that turn neurodiverse talent into employability, confidence, and self-sustaining enterprise. We train participants in public speaking, portfolio creation, digital storytelling, design, and AI-assisted business strategy — equipping them for the future of creative and technological work.

“Neurodiversity isn’t a diagnosis – it’s an innovation engine.”

2) Vision – From Classroom to Catalyst

SENtrepreneur™ builds a bridge between education and industry for those who don’t fit traditional systems. Autistic, dyslexic, ADHD and otherwise neurodivergent thinkers are not “special needs” — they’re the next generation of problem-solvers, designers, and thought leaders.

“When the world thinks in straight lines, we teach in spirals.”

3) The Problem – The Post-School Cliff Edge

When neurodiverse students leave school, many lose structure and support. Mainstream education often overlooks their strengths — creative thinking, precision, hyper-focus, and loyalty — while focusing on conformity.

Yet neurodiverse individuals bring:
• Attention to detail and precision.
• Hyper-focus and persistence.
• Structure and reliability.
• Boundless creativity.

“The education system doesn’t fail them because they can’t learn – it fails because it refuses to learn from them.”

4) **The SENtrepreneur™ Solution** – Turning Difference into Direction

SENtrepreneur™ transforms lived experience into leadership potential. Our post-school training programmes provide young adults (16–25) with real-world creative and professional skills.

Core Curriculum:
Public speaking | Portfolio & CV creation | Showreel design | AI for productivity | Employability Skills Training | Teamwork | Entrepreneurial mindset

Doucecroft School Workshops:

Weekly alternative education and life skills sessions blending life-skills and business challenges for Pathway Students.

"Potential is never missing – it's waiting to be understood."

"We don't fix people – we fix the pathways."

The Urgency of Change

The UK SEND Review (2023) warns of a post-16 support cliff. Neurodiverse abilities — pattern recognition, creativity, focus — are the very skills the future economy needs.

"We can't afford to waste brilliance just because it thinks differently."

5) Educational Philosophy – Built by Those Who Get It

SENtrepreneur™ was designed by a neurodiverse-led team who understand non-traditional learners. Our core principles are:

- Strength-based learning
- Adaptive pacing
- Safe environments
- Peer mentorship.

"True inclusion isn't about fitting in – it's about belonging."

6) Economic and Social Case for Investment

Neurodiverse talent is the next competitive advantage.

- Teams with neurodiverse representation show a **30–40 % productivity boost**.
- Less than **20 %** of autistic adults in the UK are employed.

SENtrepreneur™ closes this gap by transforming under-represented learners into the workforce of the future.

“Inclusion isn’t a cost – it’s an investment with exponential returns.”

7) Curriculum Snapshot

Our SEN specialist service menu is geared towards real world employment and self-employment training and opportunities.

- Professional Filmmaking
- Set design
- Sound recording
- Editing
- Public Speaking
- Graphic Design for Work
- AI for Entrepreneurs
- Filmmaking
- Creative Art and Sculpture
- Puppetry & Animatronics
- Culinary skills and professional kitchen etiquette
- Future Pathways via apprenticeships

“Confidence is the new curriculum.”

8) SENtrepreneur™ Retreats - Beyond the Classroom

Following the success of the **#DigitalDetox Retreats** (2024–2025), SENtrepreneur™ is expanding through immersive weekend empowerment camps for neurodiverse young people transitioning beyond school.

Our previous retreats saved **3000+ hours** of online dependency and reshaped the outlook of more than **50 young adults**.

Programme Features: team challenges | guest mentors | creative labs | nature immersion including fishing & bushcraft soft mentorship

“Take them out of the classroom – and they’ll show you what learning really looks like.”

9) Proof of Concept – Real Change, Real Potential

Ryan K. Case Study: from near-non-verbal student to thriving creative performer through person-centric mentorship.

As the mother of a teenager with complex autistic and ADHD needs, I had reached a point of despair. Every respite service and programme we tried simply couldn’t meet Ryan’s unique energy or emotional world. He didn’t fit anywhere — and that sense of

isolation was breaking us as a family. But when Doucecroft School introduced us to the Underdog Crew, as part of Ryan's personal development, everything changed.

Then we found *The Underdog Crew*. From the very first session, something shifted. For the first time, Ryan was seen, understood, and encouraged to grow rather than to 'cope'. Eighteen months later, the transformation is nothing short of remarkable.

He now attends college, performs with confidence, and continues to thrive under the twice-weekly guidance of the Underdog team. Our home life has changed beyond words — laughter has returned, hope has returned, and our son finally has a future that feels possible.

What The Underdog Crew have built is extraordinary — a space designed by neurodiverse minds for neurodiverse brilliance. They don't just teach; they unlock potential. The difference they've made to Ryan, and to us as his parents, is honestly life changing." - *Lisa K.*

10) Essex by the Numbers

NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) – ages 16–17

- In **Essex**, the NEET rate for 16–17-year-olds **rose from 2.4 % (2019) to 3.4 % (2023)** — a clear upward trend showing more young people drifting without structure or opportunity.

EHCP Timeliness & Access to Support

- In 2023, **96.8 %** of Essex EHCP decisions took **more than six months**, and **15.2 %** took **over a year** — far beyond the 20-week legal benchmark.
- By March 2024, **99 %** of EHCPs in Essex were **issued late**, with an average completion time of 46 weeks.
- Essex County Council has publicly acknowledged the backlog and committed to reforms through 2025.

Autistic Pupils – National Context That Mirrors Essex

- Across England, over **51 000** autistic pupils — around **one in four** — are *persistently absent* (missing ≥ 10 % of lessons).
- **Four in five** autistic secondary pupils report *mental-health difficulties*.
  These numbers resonate in Essex, where delayed plans and narrow pathways amplify the same national pattern of lost potential.

"The education system doesn't fail them because they can't learn — it fails because it refuses to learn from them."

11) **Voices of Change** - Champions for Neurodiversity and Youth Mental Health

Chris Packham – 'Autism Does Not Need a Cure'

Chris Packham's honesty about his late autism diagnosis has inspired millions: "I loathed myself — I thought I was broken … Autism does not need a cure; we are not broken, we are merely different." His openness reframes difference as *potential* and reinforces SENtrepreneur's belief that education must *celebrate diversity rather than repair it*.

Stacey Dooley – 'We End Up Saying Very Little'

Stacey Dooley, one of Britain's most authentic documentary voices, challenges society's silence around mental health: "People are so terrified of saying the wrong thing … we end up saying very little." Her advocacy reminds us that young neurodiverse learners are often *spoken about* but rarely *spoken to* — SENtrepreneur creates the safe spaces where their voices can finally be heard.

Roman Kemp – 'The Fight for Young Lives'

Roman Kemp's campaigning for mental-health support in education underscores the urgency of early intervention: "We need to treat youth mental health like the pandemic that it is — with dedicated support teams in every school." His message mirrors SENtrepreneur's mission: *don't wait for crisis — create connection now*.

12) **Advocacy to Action** - Thought Leaders in Residence

SENtrepreneur™ doesn't just quote these voices — we **invite them in**.
Our **Underdog Speaker Series** brings nationally recognised advocates and role models directly into our workshops and retreats to speak with authenticity, humility, and lived experience.

Headline guests include:

- **Meg Robson**, *2024 World's Strongest Woman* — sharing her journey from trauma to triumph and teaching that real strength begins in the mind.
- **Celebrity mental-health and neurodiversity champions** drawn from broadcasting, sport, and the arts who exemplify resilience, creativity, and self-belief.
- **Local "Underdogs"** — young adults from Essex who have faced exclusion or adversity and are now thriving in creative industries.

These sessions are not lectures — they are *conversations* between achievers and aspirers, designed to show that difference can drive success.

"If they can stand tall in their story, so can you."

13) The Impact – Why This Matters Now

Rising NEET levels and delayed EHCPs show traditional systems are missing thousands of capable young minds.

"We don't need more pity in policy – we need proof of possibility."

14) Proof of Concept – Evidence of Visionary Leadership

Drawn from the **UCS Milestone Report (May 2025)**:
• 30 + young adults supported in year one.
• Named Colchester Mayor's Charity of the Year 2025/26.
• Partnerships with Doucecroft School and Chelmsford CCI College.
• National press coverage for #DigitalDetox and Fishing Academy retreats.
• Studio complex launch offering 3D printing, culinary arts, pottery, stop-motion, music production.

15) Proof of Concept – Evidence of Visionary Leadership

Demonstrated Community Impact

Underdog Crew Studios has already built a verifiable record of **real-world transformation** across Essex:

- Over **30 young adults** supported through filmmaking and empowerment projects in just one year
- Named **Colchester City Mayor's Charity of the Year 2025/26**, formalising our civic credibility
- Partnered with **Doucecroft School** and **Chelmsford CCI College** as trusted life-skills provider
- Delivered **#DigitalDetox Camps** and **Fishing Academy** wellbeing retreats with *Angling Times* media coverage and national retail sponsors (*Angling Direct*, *Angling Trust*)
- Launched our first *purpose-built studio complex* with facilities in 3D printing, culinary arts, pottery, stop-motion animation, and music production

These aren't abstractions — they are **living examples of inclusion in action**, proof that SENtrepreneur™'s philosophy is **already embedded in community outcomes.**

Core Projects as Proof of Concept

- **'Teen Voices' – National Lottery Funded:** a multimedia anthology of autism and mental-health stories told by Essex youth through film, rap, poetry, and spoken word

- **‘The Slip’ – Teen-Drama Series:** funded by Anglian Community Trust, providing a national platform for lived experience storytelling

- **#DigitalDetox Documentary:** a collaboration with national angling bodies, proving the measurable benefits of outdoor mentoring and analogue reconnection

Together, these projects demonstrate **creative pedagogy** — the method SENtrepreneur™ will expand across schools, studios, and retreats.

16) Partnerships and Sustainability

We are *already embedded* within Essex’s youth and SEND network, collaborating with:

- **Angling Direct**, **Angling Trust**, and **Angling Times** (national sponsorship & media partnerships)

- **iCARP** and **Hintlesham Fisheries** as rural activity and nature-therapy partners

- **Essex Youth Trust** and **Local Community Fund** grants securing operational stability

These partnerships reinforce our role as **strategic connectors** — bridging education, enterprise, and mental-health advocacy.

17) Endorsement & Contact

“Since working with Underdog Crew Studios over the past two years, we have witnessed a remarkable transformation in our students. Their confidence, ambition, and creative exploration have flourished in ways we have never seen before.

DB. Morgan truly understands – as an autistic leader – the mind of a SEN student. His innovative, empathetic approach inspires engagement and self-belief through teaching methods that blend fun, competition, and challenge.

Our students look forward to every session and remain fully immersed throughout, exploring a diverse menu of over 30 creative, enterprise-based activities. Underdog Crew Studios doesn’t just educate – they ignite potential.”

Antony Ketley-O’Donel
Careers Leader, Doucecroft School
01206 771234
www.autism-anglia.org.uk/doucecroft-school

Presented by D.B. Morgan & Underdog Crew CIC
Multi-Award-Winning Social Enterprise | BBC Essex Make a Difference Award 2025 | Colchester Mayor's Charity 2025/26
✉ db@underdogcrew.org 🌐 www.underdogcrew.org 📞 07498 606258

"The future of education belongs to those who think differently."