

Essex Emergency Services Response to COVID -19

Essex Resilience Forum – Strategic Coordinating Group

In response to the growing threat posed by the Covid-19 virus the Essex Resilience Forum Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) was put into action to provide coordination and alignment for member services in Essex. The SCG is chaired by Chief Constable BJ Harrington, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Rick Hylton and the Chief Executive of Essex County Council, Gavin Jones. The three Chairs rotate responsibility each week to provide resilience.

The purpose of the SCG is to:

- Minimise the risk to the public by assisting Public Health to contain the spread of the virus and to support the contact tracing.
- Maximise, where practicable, the safety of our staff and partners by providing advice and appropriate PPE where necessary.
- Ensure business continuity plans are in place to enable the provision of key services and continued delivery of essential services to the public.
- To reassure the public by supporting Public Health guidance and Public Health messages.
- To ensure that community tension and intelligence/information is being effectively managed through the strategic co-ordinating group and existing structures.
- To support Local Resilience Forum partner agencies and local communities to mitigate the impacts of the virus.
- To ensure a coordinated approach to any arrivals to UK (By Air or Sea) of persons who pose a Public Health risk arising from Covid-19
- To promote a return to business as usual and restoration of disrupted services at the earliest opportunity.

To support the work of the SCG and provide consistency of messaging a Multi Agency Information Cell has been formed which provides daily updates from all of the Services on who COVID-19 is impacting in Essex. The report covers a UK Update, Health, East of England Ambulance Service, Essex Police – Including Community Tensions, Essex Fire and Rescue Service, Ports, Southend Borough Council, Essex Council (Covering all 12 districts) and Thurrock Council.

Essex Police Response

The Essex Police response is led by a Gold Commander, who convenes key staff daily in order to accurately assess the Threat, Harm and Risk situation for the County. The force has detailed business continuity plans in place, and these have been activated with two main outcomes;

1. The Police presence is maintained across the County.

2. The public and partners are reassured that the Chief Constable's Force Plan is being delivered irrespective of the circumstances, namely to help people, keep people safe and to catch criminals.

The business continuity plan involves calling in officers not currently on front line duty to provide resilience to frontline services, increased remote working, single patrols where operationally appropriate and the use of social distancing measures while undertaking operational activities.

There is currently **NO CHANGE** to the way the force is responding to incidents in Essex. Officers will continue to respond under the existing Command & Control system and existing team structures. Operational staff are empowered to make decisions in the best interests of the public and are successfully managing changing demand.

In line with the Government advice about sensible social distancing, Essex Police are taking a pragmatic approach to business meetings, thinking about how colleagues interact, washing hands regularly and utilising technology where possible to avoid unnecessary contact. Core business delivery through team briefings and other essential communication is being maintained.

Essex Police are also maintaining engagement with the public. Some engagement forums such as public meetings and events such as 'coffee with cops' are being replaced with outdoor patrols on foot and in vehicles and as well as online 'virtual' conversations in order for Officers and Staff to be visible and accessible but safe, in line with government advice.

As the situation develops it is possible that there will be a change in the types of crime committed or attempted. Experience from other countries indicates that there may be an increase in Domestic Abuse in particular. Essex Police are planning for these situations and also monitoring other areas of offending such as hate crime or theft from closed business premises.

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Response

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS) is an emergency service, and rest assured, there is currently **NO CHANGE** to the way we will respond to incidents. Keeping people who live, work and travel in Essex safe is our priority. Whatever the situation, we will always be there for you if you need us in an emergency.

Though the situation involving coronavirus (COVID-19) is unprecedented, ECFRS has a robust operational and business continuity plan which we regularly update and test, so that in events such as this, we are prepared and confident in meeting these challenges. We intend to use operational staff who are not currently on front line duty to provide resilience to our frontline services if needed, increase remote working across our whole Service and reduce non-essential interaction with our public, but not at the expense of upholding our emergency service.

As always, ECFRS is working hard to maintain communication and engagement with the public. While it has been necessary to postpone forums such as public meetings and events such as car washes and station visits, we will continue to deliver safety messages and updates through our website, social media channels and via local media.

During this time we expect to reduce the number of home fire safety and safe and well visits we conduct, prioritising them for people who are particularly vulnerable to the risk of fire. During this time we will provide home safety advice over the phone, and ensure more staff than ever are available to reassure, educate and advise anyone who need this information.

As this situation develops, and more people stay at home because they are social distancing or self-isolating, there is a chance we could see an increase in accidental house fires. This is because people are at a higher risk of these types of incidents while they are at home. We are already increasing our safety messaging around these types of incidents as well as advertising our home safety phone number: 0300 303 0088

In these unprecedented times it is difficult to know when official advice will change, but we will always work to keep our public updated whenever we can on our latest information and advice