

ERF weekly briefing note

wc 20 April 2020

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 and Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Rick Hylton. The two Chairs rotate responsibility to provide resilience.

Current SCG Chair – Rick Hylton

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.

We have an established joined up multi-agency approach in place, that is delivering against the expectations of the government. Our SCG is meeting twice-weekly, and coordinating the plans and response for Essex. This means we are working together, keeping everyone across Essex as safe as we can, and providing the most up-to-date information as possible.

SCG work streams/tactical groups

Six streams continue to be the core focus for the SCG – notes/ issues as below.

- **Excess Death Planning** – Plans are progressing to have the temporary mortuary site at Chelmer Valley Park and Ride operational by the end of April. Liaison is ongoing with funeral directors on how partners can support them.
- **Shielding the vulnerable** – Essex residents have come out in their thousands to volunteer to help shield the vulnerable. Essex County Council have now recruited over 6,000 volunteers via Essex Welfare Service. Around 2,000 of these are ready to support the vulnerable.
- **Care Provision – Adults & Children** – There is some concern that there may be a lack of reporting around domestic abuse and this is being monitored in partnership with relevant charities. Some communications is being issued to tackle an emerging issue of parents waiting too long to take their children to hospital (for non covid matters) because they think the NHS is only dealing with coronavirus cases.
- **PPE** – we're working together across Essex, Thurrock and Southend to ensure that the stocks we have received have been prioritised to areas of need.
- **Testing** – this work stream is being led by CCGs. Key workers access to the testing centre at Stansted will be quicker from today (20 April) with the introduction of a new fast-track booking system. As well as all NHS and social care staff, it now includes police, fire and rescue services, other local authority staff and defence, prisons, probation and judiciary employees.
- **Volunteers** – Some good practice guidance has been developed and has now be circulated.

Key updates from the Chair

Stay Safe at Home Campaign – The campaign material is being shared widely and has even cropped up being used by Neighbourhood Watch over the water in Kent. The Essex Police Media and Communications Team who produced the content have been approached by policing colleagues in Wiltshire for rights to use the content also. Please keep continuing to use the graphics and videos provided. If you don't have them please email pressoffice@essex.police.uk and the content will be sent.

The [Government's Social Care action plan](#) has been published, setting out how the sector will be supported further during Covid-19: Key points include plans for: controlling the spread of infection in care settings, supporting the workforce, supporting independence, supporting people at the end of their lives and responding to individual needs, and supporting local authorities and the providers of care.

Stansted is now open as a national swabbing centre. NHS and social care staff and family members are being swabbed. The offer has been extended to other key workers as other swabbing centres open across Essex.

Wider partner updates

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/news/coronavirus>

www.southend.gov.uk/coronavirus

https://www.essex-fire.gov.uk/About_Us/Coronavirus/

<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/government-and-health-information>

<https://www.essex.police.uk/news/essex/news/news/2020/march/keeping-you-safe-in-challenging-times/>

Key Focus Areas for communication

The proactive communication of the ERF will focus on four main strands:

- **Protecting the vulnerable;**
 - Community Shield;
 - Engaging volunteers;
- **Staying safe in the home;**
 - Tackling domestic abuse and supporting victims;
 - Prevention and tackling fraud;
 - Preventing exploitation;
 - Fire safety in the home;
- **Social cohesion and communities together;**
 - Paying tribute to frontline workers keeping people safe;
 - Activities which bring people together – volunteering, acts of kindness, community spirit, cultural activity, support to others;
 - Recognising those staying at home and following restrictions;
 - Visible policing in our communities;
 - Accessible and available fire and rescue services;
 - Emergency services working together;
- **Health and social care;**
 - Building capacity within our health service;
 - Keeping frontline worker safe;
 - Maintaining frontline services.

This briefing will focus on providing detail and messaging to help support and amplify these strands of work as the fight against the pandemic continues.

Protecting the vulnerable

Shielding

Essex residents have come out in their thousands to volunteer. Over 6,000 volunteers have now been recruited via Essex Welfare Service. Around 2,000 of these are ready to support the vulnerable. 300 call handlers supporting this at EWS. Over 1,000 volunteers are linked to local hubs and co-ordination through the districts, although capacity in each district varies. Supplies of food and medicine have been delivered to the most vulnerable people over the past 3 weeks – directly by the government to many, but with over around 300 emergency deliveries via EWS.

Engaging volunteers

Essex County Council has established a **Facebook Coronavirus Action Group**. This will involve close working with local community Facebook group administrators to create a group of volunteers willing to help those in need. The group is a collaboration between the council, the Essex Public Health team, and local Facebook group owners.

Good practice guidance has been developed and has now been circulated by the MAIC. This provides those coordinating volunteers / volunteering with a common approach, in order to maximise opportunity for interoperability between volunteer groups and minimise exposure to risk for all stakeholders.

Excess death planning

Bereavement services (hospitals, funeral directors, crematoria and faith organisations) are working together to extend **capacity** to cope with the number of extra deaths expected in Essex due to COVID-19. Temporary mortuary spaces have been in our hospitals and at the Chelmer Valley Park and Ride Site.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 changed the rules around **death registrations**. To help register deaths, Funeral Directors can now be 'qualified informants' of a deaths, deaths can be registered by phone or [online](#). Family members or funeral directors can register deaths.

Funerals are affected by social distancing measures. Currently funerals, can take place but attended only by household members and close family, with households meaning those who live in the home, and not extended family. Social distancing guidelines (keeping two metres apart) must be followed during funerals and when travelling to and from them. Funerals should not be attended if household/family members are showing coronavirus symptoms or are in a vulnerable category. Household members of the deceased should self-isolate for 14 days and not mix with other mourners. Wakes and memorials can be scheduled later.

PHE have advised adaptations to funerals and mourning rituals for faith and community groups to observe social distancing rules and reduce risk of infection deceased. Due to the small but real risk of infection from the deceased, mourners are strongly advised not to take part in rituals or practices that bring them into close contact with the body. National faith leaders are urging their communities to follow the national guidelines.

Social cohesion and bringing communities together

Essex Police produced a short video circulated on social media over the weekend to address the variation in Easter celebrations for the Romanian community who celebrate a week later than those following an Anglican faith. The video included Bishop Roger Morris who is leading for the SCG on social cohesion alongside a Romanian Special Constable, to appeal to those in that community to continue to observe social restrictions.

Working with a group of faith representatives from across Essex, Southend and Thurrock, information has been put together about [coronavirus, faith and bereavement](#), covering:

- Worship, prayers and festivals
- Registering a death
- Funerals and mourning
- Bereavement support.

A leaflet covering the first three bullet points is being distributed to faith and community contacts. From this week it will be available in English, Arabic, Bengali, Hindi and Urdu (languages identified by the faith and community working group) and can be provided in other languages, large print, audio and EasyRead (for people with learning disabilities) on request.

Information already available about bereavement support, including links to national and local sources of support and information, has been brought together (see above link). Through the working group there has also been an appeal for local faith and community groups to come forward if they are willing to offer telephone or online

emotional support to bereaved people within their communities. A directory of these contacts should be available this week.

This information is being circulated to faith and community contacts, funeral directors, crematoria, mortuaries, hospital bereavement suites and other services likely to be in contact with bereaved people.

Briefing on Bishop Roger Morris on BBC Essex afternoon show

On 14th April, Bishop Roger Morris spoke on the BBC Essex afternoon show, highlighting the following:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p0889twq>

- Over last weekend the Diocese of Chelmsford had the highest number of streamed services in the whole of England.
- There are many ways to stay focussed mentally, the Firstsite Gallery has some wonderful resources and important to stay on top of mindfulness and physical health.
- Seven thousand volunteers for the Essex Welfare Service: www.essexwelfareservice.org.uk The Essex Welfare Service is a wonderful resource where people can ask for help but also can volunteer.
- All faiths have come together, and are talking/ will be taking about Easter, Passover, Hindu new year and Ramadan.
- Faith leaders have come together and are incredibly proud of this county and how people have come together.
- A directory of people will be launched who can put those who are grieving in touch with people who can support them. This will be sent out to funeral directors, bereavement services, but will also be on the Essex County Council website, linking people to others at this difficult time.
- One of the costs we bear is keeping churches closed. We can't do anything that undermines the message of Stay Home, Save Lives, Protect the NHS. All our efforts have been focussed on allowing people to practice their faith at home. The Chelmsford Diocese Website has a wealth of resources for people seeking to worship at home.

Staying safe in the home

The Staying Safe in the Home campaign launched Friday 10 April continues to run. To support or follow the campaign search for #ProtectingandServingEssex and #StayHomeSaveLives on social media.

Spending more time together at home can put additional pressure on relationships or amplify existing tensions More information about how to effectively resolve conflict at

home can be found on the Livewell website:

<https://www.livewellcampaign.co.uk/livewell-articles/healthy-relationships/>

- PAUSE - is a disagreement escalating to a point where you are no longer in control and you are just reacting? If so, take a breath and re-assess the situation.
- THINK - try to reflect on why an argument started. Ask yourself how you were feeling before the conversation started and whether you were already feeling anxious or tense.
- RESOLVE IT – take a step back. Is this argument about something important, or can you come back to it when you are both calmer?

There is an increased risk of children and young people feeling issues around their mental health. If children and young people are feeling overwhelmed and confused due to the current situation, they should be encouraged to express their feelings with someone they trust, or through organisations that can provide safe and confidential support. Visit: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/staying-well/>

More time online can increase the risk of online abuse. There are lots of steps that parents/carers can take to ensure children remains safe online, including having regular conversations with them about what they're doing on the internet and who they are talking to. Visit: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/staying-well/>

The change to normal routines and social distancing may be placing families under extra pressure. If a child or young person is in immediate danger, call 999. If you're worried that a child is being abused or neglected, call Essex County Council on 0345 603 7627 (out of hours or on bank holidays, call the emergency duty team on 0345 606 1212). For more information, visit: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/report-a-concern-about-a-child>

Fire safety

Essex firefighters make more than 40 extra ambulances available in a week

Firefighters from Essex County Fire and Rescue Service have joined NHS staff on the frontline last week to support them in their efforts against the coronavirus pandemic. Nineteen firefighters, who are on-call firefighters at fire station across Essex, have spent the week as ambulance drivers, alongside East of England Ambulance Service (EEAST) paramedics. By the end of the week, the nineteen firefighters completed 50 shifts between them, making more than 40 extra ambulances available across Essex.

National Fire Chiefs Council: Ready, Willing and Able

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service is supporting the National Fire Chiefs Council's Ready, Willing and Able Campaign to show how fire and rescue services

across the UK are going the extra mile to protect their communities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

ECFRS encourages people to donate blood

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service is encouraging people to donate blood. During a time when more people than ever want to take action to help others, the fire and rescue service is reminding people how simple but important it is to give blood and support other emergency services.

100% increase in bonfire fires

ECFRS has issued a plea to anyone with outdoor space after an increase of almost 100% in garden fires during March.

Causes of the fires mainly involve bonfires burning out of control, as well as hot ashes and cigarettes not being extinguished properly.

We strongly advise people to avoid them if they can – we know some districts have banned bonfires, and we'd ask people to check with their local council to see if that's the case in their area.

Having a fire in your garden is rarely necessary or a good idea, it's not worth taking the risk of it unintentionally spreading.

If you really must to have one, and your district is still allowing it, never use accelerants like oil or petrol to light it and be sure to keep the fire small and away from your house, shed and fence.”

As well as an increase in garden fires, ECFRS has already reported an increase in accidental house fires and a decrease in road traffic collisions throughout March.

For home and outdoor safety advice visit essex-fire.gov.uk/staysafe

Health and social care

North East

Recognising that additional capacity was needed, North East Essex workforce team initiated a local recruitment campaign on 30 March. This has attracted a wide variety of highly skilled clinical and non-clinical local candidates across Suffolk and north east Essex. These candidates have been deployed to provider organisations after completing induction and refresher courses. They are now an integral part of our health and care workforce, e.g. nurses on intensive care units, student nurses in the community, physiotherapists to respiratory care, health care support workers to the

reablement service, pharmacists to community pharmacy, trainee medics to community hospitals.

The North East Essex system has managed to secure an additional 70 beds for patients across Colchester and Tendring. It will mean that our teams of frontline clinicians will be able to care for more people.

Staff at East Suffolk and North Essex Foundation NHS Trust, which manages Colchester Hospital, are working closely with local private sector hospitals to utilise the additional capacity that has been made available through funding from central government. Regular calls are taking place to discuss local capacity and demand issues. The Trust has bed occupancy levels below the regional average.

St Elizabeth's Hospice in Ipswich has now established a hub to manage services in the community for those needing palliative and end of life care. Contact details for this service have now confirmed as via OnCall telephone: 0800 567 0111.

ECC have agreed with St Helena hospice a four-month arrangement to coordinate out of hospital End of Life care.

The 111 option 2 mental health crisis line went live on Friday in north east Essex. This will support 111 and to reduce demand on local A&E services.

Mid and South Essex

Staff testing was launched last Thursday at three sites in Chelmsford, Basildon and Southend by appointment with the aim to establish capacity for up to 500 tests a day. This will support essential staff currently self isolating to return to work. Locally we are extending this service to additional professional groups, beyond those identified nationally.

Health at Home is a new campaign which signposts the public to useful information on how to contact their GP, order repeat prescriptions, manage their wellbeing and existing conditions – without leaving their home. We have been sharing details via our usual public facing communication channels. More information can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/health-at-home/>

Community Work continues to expand the number of community beds to meet a range of patient needs such as rehabilitation, end of life care or beds for patients stepping down from an acute hospital as they recover. Patients are now being cared for in the extra beds at Brentwood Community Hospital. Work is on-going to open additional beds at Braintree Community Hospital.

Almost a 100 third year nursing and midwifery students have been welcomed to work at our acute hospitals. From Monday (20/4) volunteers from the St John Ambulance Service will be deployed to work in both acute and community hospitals. Agreements

are being finalised with independent sector providers to enable their staff to be redeployed to support the system.

Cancer care is continuing as much as possible in line with national guidance. A strategic system wide approach is being developed so that the most urgent clinical cases are seen first, with the three acute hospitals supporting each other and some patients being moved for treatment.

Psychological support service Open to staff across health and care, a confidential service has been set up by Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT). It aims to provide immediate help for health and care staff dealing with unprecedented levels of stress and emotional difficulties in relation to the pandemic. If you'd like to talk to someone, you can call 01375 898837 seven days a week, from 8am to 8pm, or you can email epunft.staffpsychsupport@nhs.net

West

PPE

The CCG continues to source PPE to provide stop-gap assistance to primary care staff and in particular, the primary care hubs where clinicians see patients face-to-face. The CCG has sourced suitable coveralls in the absence of protective gowns and continue to do so based on need. Practices continue to go through their usual suppliers for what they need.

Staff redeployment

West Essex CCG is currently in the process of redeploying approximately 12 members of staff to EPUT. In addition, three members of staff have been redeployed to areas of need.

Testing

A successful swabbing programme to test health and care staff for COVID-19 launched Stansted on Good Friday.

The current criteria for testing covers:

- Key workers who are displaying symptoms and are self-isolating. Under 18s must be accompanied by an adult.
- Individuals who are displaying symptoms and live in the same household as a key worker, but the key worker is not symptomatic.
- Children who are aged between five and 12, who will need to be swabbed by a parent or guardian.

If an individual is self-isolating with symptoms and is a household member of a key worker who is also symptomatic, that individual is not eligible to take the test. If individuals are self-isolating but no one in the household is displaying symptoms,

they will not be eligible to take the test. Children under five cannot currently be tested.

A Tactical Command Group made up of health, emergency services, providers and local authorities has been established to co-ordinate the testing centre at Stansted and also the local centres across mid and south Essex. This will ensure a consistent approach to testing and wide coverage.

LOCAL MEDIA INTERVIEWS – ERF

Representatives of the ERF will be giving regular media interviews on BBC Essex local radio from Tuesday 7 April – the first of which will be with Chief Constable BJ Harrington and Deputy Chief Fire Officer Rick Hylton, as joint chairs of the ERF.

From then a regular schedule will be established to ensure local residents are updated on the work of the ERF and the county to help keep them safe in uncertain and challenging times.

For this week the schedule is like to be:

Tuesday – PFCC Roger Hirst talking about the commitment from local businesses

Friday – Rick Hylton – ERF SCG chair

HOW YOU CAN HELP US

Volunteering – Essex County Council [Coronavirus Action Group](#) – Facebook

Essex Community Shield – The message will set out the instructions for those people who do not have the support of friends, families and neighbours to register with the Essex Welfare Service (EWS), part of PROVIDE (a health and social care provider), should they need food deliveries. www.essexwelfareservice.org

Good news – Please flag any good news with your local communications colleague for potential highlighting in media opportunities.

Key Messages/Lines to take – [by exception only]