

## **ERF weekly briefing note**

### **wc 11 May 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 – BJ Harrington**

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

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

- **Excess Death Planning** – There is an effective Death Management plan across Greater Essex with additional capacity in hospital mortuaries and within the temporary mortuary site at Chelmer Valley Park and Ride. Work continues with Funeral Directors, Crematoria and through the bereavement counselling service and the work of the Faith and Social Cohesion group.
- **Shielding the vulnerable** – Essex residents have come out in their thousands to volunteer to help shield the vulnerable. Essex County Council have now recruited around 3,000 volunteers via Essex Welfare Service. The service has made 831 emergency food deliveries made, given help with essential supplies to 13,800 people who have asked for help. Medicines are also being delivered via the Red Cross.
- **Care Provision – Adults & Children** – There is still some concern that there may be a lack of reporting around domestic abuse and this is being monitored in partnership with relevant charities. Information on accessing help continues to be issued. The Every Family Matters Campaign, which provides advice on children's health and wellbeing, continues.
- **Adult Social Care** – Southend, Essex and Thurrock Directors of Adult Social Care continue to work with NHS and the LRF to ensure a consistent and safe environment within care homes across Greater Essex. This involves following the guidance from PHE, Department of Health and Social Care and their own Directors of Public Health. This is ensuring sufficiency of PPE provision and developing plans around testing. This remains a priority area of work.
- **PPE** – As with many other areas of the country - PPE continues to be a significant issue for our system. We are receiving deliveries each week and have shared the new guidance around its use from Public Health England. Essex County Council (ECC) has been able to secure 200,000 protective face masks to support critical need across the social care sector in Essex and neighbouring counties, including Norfolk, due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The council's PPE sourcing service is now available free-of-charge to other councils across the county during the outbreak.
- **Volunteers** – Good practice guidance continues to be available. Volunteers can also continue to find support via the **Facebook Coronavirus Action Group**. The group is a collaboration between Essex County Council, the Essex Public Health team, and local Facebook group owners.

## Key updates from the Chair

**PPE** - Despite challenges with regards to supply and distribution of PPE nationally, locally we have a mature and well documented approach to the management of PPE through an agreed prioritisation and mutual aid protocol agreed by all partners of SCG. We continue to work with MHCLG and Dept Health and Social Care to get clarity and assurance on the ability of central government to meet local demand.

**Recycling centres** - Following the announcement by the Secretary of State and the publication of RCHW guidance by DEFRA on the 5 May; and in anticipation of the expected announcements by the Prime Minister on Sunday 1 May on a phased relaxation of the current lockdown, I am pleased to confirm we are now in a position to mobilise for a partial reopening of the Essex RCHW network on the 18 May. Please treat this information as confidential. A co-ordinated communication message is being prepared which will be launched 14 May, together with Southend and Thurrock, who will be re-opening their sites at the same time.

**Schools** – Following the Prime Ministers announcement on 10 May 2020 the LRF awaits firm guidance around the detail of the potential timetable for schools reopening and plans will be developed once this is known.

**Recovery** - The LRF is planning for how a return to normal could be managed with specific TCGs being set up across the agencies to approach this in a joined-up way.

**Testing** - National testing centres continue to operate at Stansted and Ipswich, and local centres are open to key workers in Basildon, Chelmsford and Southend. The list of those eligible to book for testing include NHS front line workers; social care staff; police; fire and rescue services; local authority staff; prison and probation staff; judiciary employees and also workers in the private sector including those delivering key medical, energy, utility, transport and food supplies. An online system has been launched on the gov.uk website for key worker employees to book a test directly for themselves or members of their household who are experiencing symptoms of the coronavirus. This allows people to either book a test at one of the national programme sites – at Stansted or Ipswich– or get a test kit delivered directly to their home.

**Don't Stay, Take it Away** - A campaign has been launched to encourage people to eat their takeaway food *at home*, and not to eat in parks, on beaches, or in town centres.

## Wider partner updates

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

[www.southend.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.southend.gov.uk/coronavirus)

[https://www.essex-fire.gov.uk/About\\_Us/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 continue to come out in their thousands to volunteer. Over 7,000 volunteers have now been recruited via Essex Welfare Service. Around 3,000 of these are ready to support the vulnerable - urging the remainder to be patient as

they are being on-boarded as quickly as possible. 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.

The Essex Welfare Service are now also providing support to any resident without support from family, friends, neighbours or their local community.

Anyone feeling isolated and in need of support can contact EWS for advice on:

- caring responsibilities
- mental wellbeing
- learning disability/autism
- dementia care
- sensory impairment
- keeping physically active.

[Thurrock Coronavirus Community Action](#) (TCCA) has more than 460 volunteers who have donated in excess of 3,000 hours to helping vulnerable people in the borough. TCCA has handled over 2,000 calls (average 100 a day) from residents who need additional support through the partnership

## Engaging volunteers

Essex County Council continues to support the **Facebook Coronavirus Action Group**. This involves 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.

## Excess death planning

Bereavement services (hospitals, funeral directors, crematoria and faith organisations) and the county council continue to work together to cope with the number of extra deaths expected in Essex due to COVID-19. To date, the extra mortuary capacity provided at hospitals and community hospitals has been sufficient.

## Social cohesion and bringing communities together

Options for a digital memorial and remembrance space (online book of condolence) open to people across Greater Essex (Essex County, Southend and Thurrock council areas) during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic are currently being considered.

A Greater Essex-wide (ECC, Southend and Thurrock) online 'book of condolence', or one for each of the constituent upper tier authorities (Essex, Southend and Thurrock) is proposed as the short-term solution during the pandemic to provide:

- An identifiable site for people to post and view memorial notices and tributes to people who have died in Greater Essex during the pandemic.
- A platform for people to post tributes and messages of thanks to, for instance, essential workers and volunteers.
- A place where people can either reflect and give condolences for all lives lost in Essex or include individual condolences for family and friends who have passed away during the pandemic.

### **Essex Unites Interviews, BBC Essex**

Cllr Mark Cory, Leader of Colchester Borough Council, spoke on BBC Essex on Tuesday 5 May, outing the following:

- We have worked across the whole of Essex as part of a strategic group. CBC worked hard to change our services, redeploy staff and make sure we could support every resident across the borough (especially the vulnerable).
- That has been a challenge, but something CBC has really stood up to with support from our partners – we have a team called One Colchester involving the police, health and many of the voluntary services – and we have made a really good effort in getting out to vulnerable people.
- We're adamant a resilient community should come out of this, despite the tragedy of all the loss

### **Community Shield**

- All our residents are identified according to need into A, B or C categories, and we've worked with our NHS colleagues to connect with these people.
- We've provided care packages, made sure the essential workforce are supported and if they are feeling ill are told to stay home.
- We are at the end of the Government delivery of packages and want vulnerable people in our district to feel safe and supported.

### **Helping people to stay in touch**

- We have been supporting befriending services – Age Concern and the One Colchester Partnership. They are doing an amazing job, communicating with people who may be isolated.
- We're reaching out to not just the vulnerable, but parents of children who have special needs. We feel we should be supporting people all across the community.

## Work with museums and parks

- We have developed an app to showcase services to the community where you can visit the museums and see the different exhibitions.
- There is also a Parks at Home app so people can get exercise.
- Our Leisure World app enables people to get in touch with a personnel trainer for free even though they can't get to the gym.
- There are many things the Mercury, the arts centre and Firstsite are doing for younger people as well and getting people creative.

The full interview can be found here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p08b4lbw>

## Staying safe in the home

### Education

The Government closed education settings (schools, colleges and early years settings) to the majority of pupils on Friday 20 March in order to slow the spread of COVID-19. Vulnerable children and the children of key workers who could not otherwise be cared for were still able to attend.

We expect that this reopening will be in phases, but we are not clear on whether or not these phases will be specified by central Government or for schools/LAs to decide what is best for their circumstances, or when they will be implemented.

High level details include:

- Schools and Settings will open to some year groups before others
- Schools and Settings will be asked to follow social distancing guidance – settings will need to determine how social distancing guidance can be implemented based on variable factors such as their building layout and pupil/student population

### Every Family Matters campaign

This campaign covers children's mental health and wellbeing, social distancing and young people and online safety. It supports parents/carers and sign-posts them to relevant resources. 2,050 users have visited the new [Staying well](#) page since it went live on 9 April.

### Keeping Children Safe At Home

Everyday items around the house can pose potential risks to children, especially those under five, who are still finding their feet and learning about the world around

them. Unsecured pieces of furniture, such as a television on a stand, or anything that a young child could easily grab such as a blind cord, could lead to an accident.

With more children at home due to the pandemic, ECC have issued some useful advice and guidance for parents and carers on [keeping children safe at home](#).

### **Domestic Abuse**

Domestic abuse can take many forms, including emotional, physical and sexual. If being at home doesn't feel safe right now, or you're concerned about someone you know, please contact [Essex Compass](#) who will be able to help you.

### **VE Day**

Friday 8 May 2020 marked the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day (commonly known as VE Day). The Government moved the May bank holiday to VE Day to allow the nation to remember the sacrifice so many made in the fight against fascism.

Given the restrictions due to COVID-19, many alternative virtual events were organised across the county, using the government developed [digital resources](#).

A round-up of [online resources available to residents in Essex](#) is online as well as the [full programme](#) of national celebrations which took place. A commemorative short video was also compiled for use on partner channels.

### **Don't Stay, Take it Away**

A campaign has been launched to encourage people to eat their takeaway food at home, and not to eat in parks, on beaches, or in town centres.

As people are getting a bit tired of the lockdown, it's good we can enjoy takeaways now that a few more businesses are open. However, it's very important to stay at home to protect the NHS. Residents are being encouraged to pick up their takeaway, but to then leave straight away and take it home and eat it at home.

## **Fire safety:**

### **Supporting our health service**

#### **Firefighters help to welcome babies into the world**

Two Essex County Fire and Rescue Service firefighters who have been working as ambulance drivers with the East of England Ambulance Service helped welcome two baby boys into the world. Paul Marshall, Head of Operations for Suffolk and North Essex at EEAST, said: "I feel hugely inspired right now, this sense of togetherness is a demonstration of the emergency services at their best, coming together in the

public's time of need to meet this national emergency head on."

Jo Turton, Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive for Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, said: "Our firefighters are continuing to work tirelessly to support other emergency service colleagues and serve our public. For these babies to grow up knowing they had both a paramedic and firefighter help to deliver them is quite something. In these difficult times I am delighted Adriaan and Scott have been able to be part of such a wonderful experience."

Full press release: [https://www.essex-fire.gov.uk/news/Firefighters help to welcome babies into the world/](https://www.essex-fire.gov.uk/news/Firefighters_help_to_welcome_babies_into_the_world/)

### **Fire Service staff record selfie-style home fire safety video**

Staff from Essex County Fire and Rescue Service have come together to share home fire safety advice and help Essex residents stay safe at home.

Head of Community Safety Andrea MacAlister said: "After seeing that outdoor fires doubled in March and that house fires were also higher than this time last year we were keen to continue our safety messages and embrace new ways of engaging with our public.

"All of our staff, operational and support, work tirelessly to spread our safety messages and help people to stay safe in their homes.

"We hope this video not only spreads our safety messages but gives people an insight into the different types of people at our Service all working to one common goal - to make Essex a safe place to live, work and travel."

Full press release: [https://www.essex-fire.gov.uk/news/Fire Service staff record selfie-style home fire safety video/](https://www.essex-fire.gov.uk/news/Fire_Service_staff_record_selfie-style_home_fire_safety_video/)  
Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsCUXsLGtLs>

## **Health and social care**

Essex County Council, in partnership with Public Health England (PHE), is piloting a new approach to minimise deaths due to COVID-19 in care homes in the county.

Care homes are especially vulnerable to infection due to the frailty of residents and social distancing struggles to be effective in a close-knit care home-setting.

To combat these rising figures, Essex County Council and PHE are piloting a new approach to care home infection across the county.

For homes with no cases, the new approach under discussion is to regularly test staff and residents. Essex County Council is now developing a strategy to shield homes with no cases, and shielding will need to go on for some months.

For homes with established outbreaks Essex County Council will work with the homes to establish best infection control practice advised by PHE and NHS infection control teams.

## North East

A mobile stroke unit that could help prevent death or serious disability by making sure patients receive fast access to diagnostics and the right treatment has been relaunched. It is the second time the 'stroke ambulance' has been stationed in Ipswich, where it was initially trialled last summer. As well as improving a patients' chances of recovery, it is hoped that by providing prompt diagnostics and the right treatment it will also help keep as many as possible out of hospital during the coronavirus pandemic.

This week is Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week. Despite the challenges of COVID19, the community-based Perinatal Mental Health Service is still supporting women across Essex, and is even managing to spread a little cheer in the process. Thanks to a generous donation of Liberty London fabric from the iconic London store, and a kind-hearted team of volunteer seamstresses, the team has been treated to new scrub-type workwear.

Twenty five community pharmacies across North East's Integrated Care System (ICS) are now commissioned to hold a full range of End of Life (EoL) drugs, ready to dispense for patients who need them urgently or pre-emptively. Some of these pharmacies are open for 100 hours-a-week, providing access to these drugs out of hours, and supplementing the out of hours access that is already provided by the Suffolk Pandemic Home Visiting Service. The move will help patients to receive these drugs quickly, and so ease their suffering at the end of life.

Working with the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT), a new telephone-based service called Suffolk Mind Connect has started. Clients are registered for the service and have access to 20 minutes of telephone support on a daily basis if they require it. Suffolk Mind's support workers are helping put together action plans for clients to keep themselves well and avoid readmission to secondary services.

Every year, on 12 May, it is International Nurses Day - a celebration of nursing but also the birthday of one of the world's most famous nurses, Florence Nightingale. Two centuries on, the anniversary of her birth was always going to be a big occasion, but with the COVID19 crisis highlighting similarities between her experiences and those of nursing staff today, it has taken on new significance. In honour of the special day, a number of local landmarks will be lit up blue next Tuesday evening. They include:

- Colchester hospital
- Clacton Town Hall
- Colchester Castle
- Colchester Town Hall
- Clacton Pier

The CCGs' IT team has worked tirelessly over the past six weeks to source, build and deploy 520 laptops, 1000 headsets and 900 webcams to equip every one of the 94 GP practices across Suffolk and north east Essex. Their aim has been to ensure every clinician could be fully mobile with a laptop which will enable them to work from any location.

Colchester-based Community360 (C360) has been working with local businesses to get essential food and supplies to people who have been advised to self-isolate as part of The One Colchester 'Operation Shield' initiative. The Firstsite art gallery in Colchester, which is closed to the public for the foreseeable future as a precaution against the spread of coronavirus, has become the operations base for gathering and distributing items such as basic non-perishable food items in and around the local area.

## Mid and South Essex

**New website for health and care professionals** - As part of the response to COVID-19, a website for local health and care professionals with key information and resources to support communication during COVID-19 has been launched. The website provides a central place for the latest information on local service changes and other useful resources. It features two main sections, one for all health and care staff and a specific section for staff working in GP practices. The website can be found at: <https://coronavirus.msehealthandcarepartnership.co.uk>

**Bed Bureau During the COVID-19 outbreak** - community providers (Provide, NELFT and EPUT) and partners have consolidated community beds across the patch and includes bringing together resources at Brentwood and Braintree Community Hospitals. This will ensure we are able to care for non-COVID-19 patients requiring admission and step up/step down during this time. Community hospital bed capacity is currently being tracked and monitored manually by a central team via the Community Bed Bureau. To make community bed capacity information even more accessible an online version of the Community Bed Bureau which can be found at: [www.provide.bed-bureau.co.uk](http://www.provide.bed-bureau.co.uk)

**Cancer Support Line** The Mid and South Essex Foundation Trust has set up a new service called Cancer Support Line for those patients who have been delayed/deferred for treatment during the current pandemic. Southend Hospital has gone live this week and Basildon site will start on Tuesday 12 May 2020, with a Broomfield hospital service beginning in the next few weeks. All sites will have a dedicated team of Clinical Nurse Specialists, Lead Cancer Nurse and an administrator all working to support the Cancer Support Line in addition to their usual duties. The support line is designed to give patients and carers another avenue of contact, providing the opportunity to communicate any concerns they may have to a professional. The teams have the tools to be able to give advice and refer to external services if required.

**Maternity Services** - The Maternity Direct app is now available for all pregnant women and new mums who have registered their pregnancy at any of the three main Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust sites. The app allows women to access advice from local midwives without leaving home, vital during the current pandemic. It was developed by midwives from Basildon Hospital in partnership with women who had used their services; its rollout highlights how the recent merger of the three acute trusts is improving the sharing of innovation and expertise. It was rolled out on International Day of the Midwife which system partners have marked on social media channels by thanking local midwives for their exceptional care and dedication.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** - Mid and South Essex CCGs have established a clear process to support allocation and distribution of PPE working with the Essex Resilience Forum; this looks to distribute the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government stock for those organisations with an urgent need.

**International Nurses' Day** - System partners are working together on a social media campaign to encourage everyone to show their appreciation for nurses and midwives to mark International Nurses' Day on Tuesday 12 May. We will be featuring videos from nurses on our Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts focusing in particular on the role they have played in responding to COVID-19.

**Dying Matters Week** - A campaign for this national awareness week from 11 to the 17 May has been put together by a collaboration of multiple organisations from across the health, social care and commercial sector with the intention of providing as much information and support to people throughout Essex, Southend and Thurrock in relation to death, dying and bereavement. A toolkit has been produced to encourage more organisations to get involved in the campaign. For details visit <https://bit.ly/2Lapрге>

**Robotic cats help people with Dementia** - A trial using robotic cats with a resident in a local Essex care home has made such an impact, the Mid and South Essex CCGs are purchasing more to support people affected by dementia. The battery powered cuddly toy sold by an American company purrs, meows, moves and responds to touch when petted and hugged. During the pandemic where people are unable to visit their relatives, they provide much needed comfort. In addition further work has been done to support people going into hospital with dementia by getting community knitters to make Twiddle Muffs, Lap Blankets and Aprons. These items are given to patients to provide something to keep them distracted and less distressed. Sixty have been made and distributed so far.

## West

### Testing

Testing at the national centres at Stansted and Ipswich continue to be well used. Week day testing is mainly over 1,000 per day, with weekends slightly lower. Home testing kits are increasing but demand is outstripping supply. Mobile testing sites have begun operating across Essex, with a site at Harlow available from Tuesday to Thursday, 12 May to 15 May. Booking is via the Gov.uk website. More sites will be confirmed soon.

### Care homes

The multi-disciplinary care home hub meets daily to assess the situation in all of West Essex's care homes. All organisations involved are working closely with care homes each day and reporting back to the team. The team is also encouraging care home teams to continue using the NHS tracker every day.

### Recovery

The CCG is beginning to look at recovery, including which services can be revived and how.

### NHS Help Us, Help You campaign

The CCG continues to support and promote the national Help Us, Help You campaign to encourage people to contact their GP and attend hospital appointments with serious and urgent medical needs.

## .LOCAL MEDIA INTERVIEWS – ERF

Representatives of the ERF have been giving regular media interviews on BBC Essex local radio from Tuesday 7 April.

A regular schedule has been 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.

### Tuesday 12 May – Tracy Rudling Community 360 Colchester on volunteering

### Friday 15 May – BJ Harrington

## 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](http://www.essexwelfareservice.org)

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