

ERF weekly briefing note

Wc 1 June 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 County Fire and Rescue Service, ports, Southend Borough Council, Essex County 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** – the temporary mortuary site at Chelmer Valley Park and Ride will be decommissioned following a decision by the SCG last week. Talks are in place with the contractors around the practicalities of this and a communications piece is being developed to support this work.
- **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 continues to make emergency food deliveries, give help with essential supplies to people who have asked for help.
- **Care Provision – Adults & Children** – The Every Family Matters Campaign, which provides advice on children’s health and wellbeing, continues. Last week was Mental Health Awareness Week, and parents and carers were encouraged to have a conversation with their child about how they’re feeling.
- **PPE** – We are receiving deliveries each week and have shared the new guidance around its use from Public Health England.
- **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

Schools – On the 28th May, the government announced that primary schools, nurseries and early years settings can begin to open to more pupils from Monday 1 June. Secondary schools and colleges will be able to open to more students from 15 June. This is possible because the [government’s 5 tests](#) have been met.

In Essex, we have been supporting schools and settings to develop their plans for wider opening. Each school and setting has made their own decision on how they will respond based on the completion of a thorough health and safety risk assessment.

This means that not all schools and settings will open full time to all pupils who are now eligible to return from 1 June. We do not yet have a full picture, but our current indications are that between 75 and 80 per cent of Essex primary schools will open to more pupils in some form from 1 June, while 20 per cent are indicating they will not.

Recovery - The LRF is planning for return to normal, with specific TCGs being set up across the agencies to approach this in a joined-up way. Recovery will recognise the sovereignty of our local authorities and will be led and shaped by our political leadership. We are working to establish this independence from the SCG whilst retaining the important mechanisms to best enable this to occur.

Testing - There are a number of ways people can be tested across Essex. These testing sites are to enable key workers to return to work and keep vulnerable and older people safe. Anyone wanting to be tested must meet the eligibility criteria, pre-book an appointment, travel to the centre by car – i.e. not on foot or by public transport. The sites are open to symptomatic people who are: key workers/their household members who have symptoms, people aged 65 and over/their household members who have symptoms, those that are currently having to travel to work who fall outside of the key worker group, and their household members who have symptoms.

The government has announced plans to offer antibody tests to all NHS and care staff in England from this week. Patients and care residents will be eligible for the tests at their clinician's request.

Extending Eligibility for Testing

Everyone in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland who is showing coronavirus symptoms is eligible to book a swab test to find out if they have the virus. People can register for a test at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus, after checking their symptoms. Those in England and Wales who do not have any access to the internet, or who have difficulty with the digital portals, will be able to ring a new 119 service to book their test.

Test and Trace

The government has announced £300 million additional funding for councils in England to support the new Test and Trace Service and to develop tailored outbreak control plans. Work on the plans will start immediately. Plans will focus on identifying and containing potential outbreaks in places such as workplaces, housing complexes, care homes and schools.

Essex plans are being developed between Local Authorities, NHS England and Public Health England with the support of the ERF.

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

The Essex Welfare Service (EWS), established by Essex County Council, is now enabling access to more support services across the county.

The county council service, delivered by Provide, was set up to help those most vulnerable during the Coronavirus pandemic and has so far seen almost 9,000 vulnerable people across the county receiving support and over 3,000 volunteers helping to make this happen.

This invaluable volunteer support has ranged from help with shopping, medicine or day to day tasks that has enabled individuals to stay healthy and well whilst shielding at home.

The EWS has seen an increasing demand from residents for a number of different types of support. In response to that EWS has expanded to enable access to a range of organisations that can help those who feel isolated or vulnerable.

Essex unites to thank volunteers who are helping the vulnerable

The Covid-19 pandemic may have shut shops, kept families apart and stopped fundraising events but the community of Essex has gone the extra mile to look out for one another in all parts of the county during the lockdown.

This Volunteers' Week, running from 1st June to 7th June, EWS would like to thank the residents of Essex who signed up in lockdown to help others in their time of need.

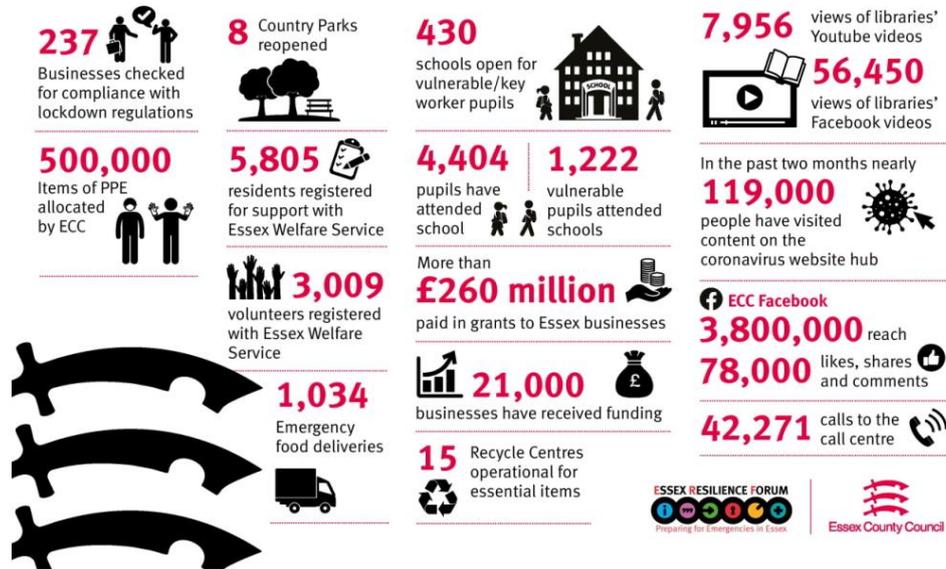
As the county faced many different challenges during Covid-19, communities, the voluntary sector and public sector services have come together and stepped up to help our residents.

From firemen being redeployed for charity work, to police officers stepping into many new roles and local authority workers giving a diverse range of essential support, everyone has worked together and risen to the challenge of the pandemic.

Community Engagement

Essex County Council have been working to support residents, communities and businesses in Essex throughout the coronavirus pandemic. Here are some key facts about our work so far:

Essex's response to COVID-19 so far...



Active Essex 3030

A countywide campaign encouraging Essex residents to get moving this June has been officially launched. Now in its third year, the 30:30 Essex movement is to encourage every Essex resident to take part in 30 minutes of movement every day in the month of June.

It is proven that an active lifestyle and regular exercise provides a range of benefits, such as improved energy and mental health as well as reducing the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

The current global situation has caused many Essex individuals to become more sedentary and less mobile, or less motivated due to being at home more than we were. The Active Essex led campaign hopes that June will become the motivation to get up and get moving.

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

The temporary mortuary at Chelmer Valley, outside Chelmsford is to be taken down. It was built in case there were more deaths during the coronavirus pandemic than hospitals and funeral directors in Essex, Southend and Thurrock could cope with.

The site has been on standby since 27 April but has not been needed.

The facility was set up at the closed park and ride site at Chelmer Valley as part of the emergency plan for responding to the pandemic. Specialist disaster recovery firm, Kenyon International built the space and was ready to run it if needed.

Social cohesion and bringing communities together

On Tuesday 26 May, Cllr Tony Ball, was interviewed as part of BBC Essex's Essex Unites interview series, highlighting the following:

- Government has made a package of financial support options available to help prevent as many permanent business closures and job losses as possible.
- We want to help as many of our Essex businesses to survive as possible
- Visit: www.essex.gov.uk/support-for-employers-and-businesses for full details of support available including small business grants, hospitality and leisure grants and job retention scheme as well as various loans.
- So far £250million has been paid out to Essex businesses.
- 23,500 Essex businesses eligible for small business grants or hospitality and leisure grant funding, but 14% (around 3,200 businesses) are yet to access any funding.
- If your business is still open and operating or if you have adapted the way you operate or have since reopened, you may still be eligible for government support if the pandemic is or is due to impact your business financially
- Businesses need to contact their local borough/district/city council online to apply.
- Many of them have forms available on their website
- All local authority website links are available at www.essex.gov.uk/applying-for-small-business-grants-in-essex
- Some businesses have not been paid because local authorities do not have the correct bank details to pay them – so businesses need to get in touch online to provide them.
- Local councils are struggling to contact businesses which are closed – we need businesses to get in touch with their local council online to make sure they can receive the money they're entitled to
- If you need any further help, please contact the Covid-19 ECC Business Support team via social media or the online form available on the ECC website.
- The team has handled 340+ enquiries since the pandemic began.

- We hope to see as many Essex businesses survive and recover from the pandemic as possible.
- There are several reasons why 3,200 businesses are yet to access funding
- For those who have applied but not yet been paid, your local authority may be waiting for your bank details, so we'd encourage you to contact them online to provide them.
- Some businesses aren't applying because they are worried about getting into debt, mistaking the grant for a loan and thinking they need to pay the money back later – they don't!
- Some businesses aren't applying because they don't think they need the money – even if they don't now, they might do later. This is going to have a long-term impact and they are entitled to it, so they should claim it
- Some businesses aren't applying because they would not usually think to seek funding support or help from the government, and they may not think this funding support applies to them.
- Government has advised it will be making discretionary top-up grants available, but the details on how this funding will be allocated to districts and how it can and will be used is not yet clear

Emergency Active Travel Fund

The first tranche of a multi-million funding package that will help to transform the way people can cycle and walk in the county has just been announced by the Government.

The £1.9m from the Emergency Active Travel fund will allow Essex County Council to enhance current cycle lanes and pavements and create new ones. Everybody has the chance to improve the environment, create cleaner air and reduce congestion by, cycling and walking more, if they are able, using the car only if they have to or have no other means of transport over short distances.

At present, many town and city centre roads in Essex are empty or have dramatically less traffic, although as lockdown restrictions get gradually lifted it is anticipated that traffic levels will increase, but perhaps not back to pre-coronavirus levels. However many pavements and cycleways in Essex are too narrow to allow social distancing, so change is necessary to encourage new, healthier ways of travelling locally.

In order to prioritise pedestrians and cyclists more, Essex Highways is planning to utilise some road space by making temporary changes to the road network in Essex town and city centres to benefit users and residents.

Staying safe in the home

Mental Health Awareness Week

In the current climate it is so important to take the time to look after ourselves and our loved ones. Many people are missing their friends and family, their hobbies and interests, their routine and their work.

Changes and loss can have a profound impact on our wellbeing – be this loss of a loved one, the change in our relationships – including at home – loss of work and therefore routine or financial stability. Prolonged isolation and limited contact with others can negatively affect our moods and outlook.

These changes to our “normal” will almost certainly influence our mental health, maybe making us anxious, apprehensive and unsure about the future. This is perfectly understandable but there is no reason to suffer alone.

Take time to check in – virtually – with each other, get outside and enjoy the fresh air and sunshine, and if you need further help and support then there is a wealth of resources and organisations out there that have experience in all sorts of aspects of mental health. It’s been said that it is “ok to not be ok” and I think this message is so important as long as we all recognise when we aren’t ok and seek help.

The [Staying well](#) page includes information and advice on:

- looking after your mental health when you are social distancing
- online counseling and mental health services
- national and local organisations providing support
- things you can do to stay active at home
- how to work safely and comfortably from home

If you need support with mental health for yourself or someone you know, the Essex Welfare Service (EWS) is working with organisations across the county to provide support to people regardless of age, health or circumstance.

For anyone without help from family, friends, neighbours or the local community, EWS can connect them to Action for Family Carers, Summit, Sport for Confidence and other organisations.

If you or someone you know needs support you can [request support](#), [refer someone for support](#) or phone 0300 303 9988.

Education

On the 28th May, the government announced that primary schools, nurseries and early years settings can begin to open to more pupils from Monday 1 June. Secondary schools and colleges will be able to open to more students from 15 June. This is possible because the [government’s 5 tests](#) have been met.

In Essex, we have been supporting schools and settings to develop their plans for wider opening. Each school and setting has made their own decision on how they will respond based on the completion of a thorough health and safety risk assessment.

This means that not all schools and settings will open full time to all pupils who are now eligible to return from 1 June. We do not yet have a full picture, but our current indications are that between 75 and 80 per cent of Essex primary schools will open to more pupils in some form from 1 June, while 20 per cent are indicating they will not.

Schools and settings are responsible for communicating with parents and their setting's wider community about their individual decisions. All schools and settings will continue to remain open for the children of critical workers and vulnerable pupils.

For more information, visit our page on [Schools opening: guidance for parents and carers](#).

Every Family Matters campaign

Covering children's mental health and wellbeing, social distancing and young people and online safety, the campaign supports parents/carers and sign-post to relevant resources that can help them help their children.

In the last month, the campaign has reached 70,034 people on Twitter and 84,182 people on Facebook.

3,093 users, with 4,117 pageviews, have visited the new [Staying well](#) page.

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.

Fire safety:

Firefighters continue to work with Ambulance Service giving 4,700 hours. Nineteen Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS) firefighters have worked alongside the East of England Ambulance Service to protect Essex residents during the Covid-19 pandemic. In six weeks, the firefighters have worked 4,702 hours alongside paramedics to help.

Fire Service thanks dedicated volunteers for their contribution. Essex County Fire and Rescue Service has thanked its dedicated volunteers as it celebrates Volunteers' Week 2020. Ahead of the national Volunteers' Week campaign to thank the country's volunteers, ECFRS has given a big thank you to its army of volunteers who give their time.

Fire Service gives advice on storing rubbish following house fire
Essex County Fire and Rescue Service has issued advice on storing rubbish after a fire spread to a house in Shoeburyness. Firefighters attended a house fire in Jena Close, Shoeburyness that is believed to have been accelerated by a build up of rubbish next to a house.

Health and social care

North East

Our system continues to reiterate to our communities that the NHS is here to help you. Over recent weeks we have been encouraging local people to use our local hospitals, GP practices and other health and care services during the pandemic. Please click [HERE](#) to hear from some of our GP colleagues about the importance of patients getting help when they need it.

Citizens Advice Tendring has been approached by almost 1,000 people across the district wanting help during COVID-19. The main four issues the charity has helped with are Universal Credit, employment, welfare benefits and housing. Its staff and volunteers have worked work from home to give advice and support over the phone, through email or via online chats.

Antibody testing to show if people have had coronavirus is due to be rolled out from this week nationally and across Suffolk and north east Essex. There will be a phased approach with NHS staff taking priority. The initial number of tests available will be small but this will be increased by the end of June. Antibody testing does not mean that people have immunity even if they have a positive result and social distancing rules still need to be observed.

Active Essex has launched its 3030 challenge again for June. The aim is to get people moving for 30 minutes a day for the 30 days during the month. There are no distances to run, no targets to beat, no calories to burn just 30 minutes of activity – a great initiative. For more information please visit [HERE](#)

Mid and South Essex

Technology to support care homes A pilot scheme which has helped care and nursing home residents avoid hospital admissions has been extended across Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership. The includes investment in a new suite of technology for all care homes in the area for the next 12 months. Called Whzan Digital Health, the technology will see each home supplied with a digital health kit, including blood pressure monitoring, pulse oximeters, and thermometers to support the NHS to provide clinical care for nursing and residential home residents.

Test and Trace We are working with partners across mid and south Essex to promote the Test and Trace service launched by the Government yesterday. Anyone who tests positive for coronavirus will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace service and will need to share information about their recent interactions. There is guidance on how the service will impact individuals, workplaces, households and contacts of people with confirmed coronavirus. We are using national materials to roll out a social media campaign across all channels.

Restarting non-urgent outpatient referrals In line with national guidance, the Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust is restarting routine outpatient activity across the hospitals in a managed way to ensure the safety of patients and staff. As of Wednesday 20 May, Basildon, Mid Essex and Southend hospitals started to accept routine non-urgent referrals from primary care providers. Patients should only attend the hospital if told to do so. Some of the new ways of working, including remote appointments either by video or telephone, will continue. Face-to-face appointments for non-urgent referrals will resume from Monday 8 June across the hospitals. Urgent outpatient care continues for patients with confirmed or suspected cancer or where it is considered to be time-critical. Patients referred will also be offered phone or video consultations in the first instance.

COVID-19 test centre opens In early March, NHS England announced the ramping up of testing in NHS laboratories to reduce the pressure being felt within the PHE test centres. In response to this the Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust microbiology team based at Broomfield hospital have established a Trust-wide COVID-19 test centre which is supported by a call centre to handle COVID-19 enquiries, swab allocation and any other general queries. The new test means emergency patients are now tested as soon as the decision is taken to admit them to hospital if their stay is expected to be 24 hours or longer. Having the centre means the turnaround times of results have reduced by approximately 48 hours. This has helped with improving the patient flow across the hospitals, allowing better use of the wards, and is already leading to earlier discharges, as patients and their clinical team get their test results more quickly.

Volunteer's Week Next week is National Volunteer Week (1-7 June) - an annual celebration of the contribution millions of people make across the UK through volunteering. They play a significant role throughout the year and even more so during the current time, supporting activity around the COVID-19 pandemic. We have seen some fantastic team work in mid and south Essex as volunteers from a range of organisations have come together to support a number of projects including the mobilisation of extra capacity across community hospitals. The list of volunteers is vast but includes support from our CVS organisations, St John's Ambulance, The Fire Service, the Army and their partner charities such as Team Rubicon. System partners will be promoting the week and sharing the stories of volunteers across social media channels.

Pride in Practice Over the past year Mid Essex CCG has been working with the LGBT Foundation on an expansion of their Pride in Practice programme funded by the Government Equalities Office. Pride in Practice is a quality assurance and social prescribing programme that supports healthcare professionals in meeting the needs of their lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) patients. The uptake from GP surgeries across mid Essex has been fantastic with a total of 29 engagements and 21 training sessions taking place. Of these, 15 practices were awarded a Pride in Practice award for excellence in LGBT healthcare including 11 gold accreditations and one practice being recognised as outstanding. With June being the start of Pride month, the CCG will be announcing the impact of this pilot programme to staff, stakeholders and the local media. Discussions are currently ongoing about how the CCG can continue its partnership with the LGBT Foundation and how this initiative could be adopted across the rest of the mid and south Essex footprint.

The Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership have created a series of videos with support from the incident communications team featuring local GPs, nurses and healthcare specialists to remind local residents that the NHS is “open for business” and still here for them during the pandemic should they need medical advice. The videos cover primary care services, child immunisations, Accident and Emergency and cancer services. Following feedback from a local resident on social media, the videos have had British sign language superimposed onto them, to ensure they are accessible. Each video has been shared across social media with good levels of engagement. Both the regional and national NHS England teams have also shared them as part of a “Help Us Help You” day focusing on primary care services.

West

Testing

Mobile testing

The locations for mobile testing units week (w/c 1 June), are:

Monday 1 June 2020, Basildon Sporting Village, Basildon, SS14 3GR, The Civic Hall, Grays, RM16 2JU

Tuesday 2 June 2020, Rayleigh Leisure Centre, Rayleigh, SS6 9NF, Clacton on Sea Leisure Centre, Clacton, CO15 6DB, Long Stay Car Park 3, Southend Airport, Southend on Sea, SS2 6YE

Wednesday 3 June 2020, Harlow Football Club, Harlow, CM19 5BE, Dovercourt Bay Lifestyles, Low Road, Dovercourt, CO12 3TA

Thursday 4 June 2020, Basildon Sporting Village, Basildon, SS14 3GR, Clacton on Sea Leisure Centre, Clacton, CO15 6DB

Friday 5 June 2020, Harlow Football Club, Harlow, CM19 5BE, Rayleigh Leisure Centre, Rayleigh, SS6 9NF, The Civic Hall, Grays, RM16 2JU

Saturday 6 June 2020, Long Stay Car Park 3, Southend Airport, Southend on Sea, SS2 6YE

Sunday 7 June 2020, Dovercourt Bay Lifestyles, Low Road, Dovercourt, CO12 3TA

The CCG has developed content for a testing-specific web page on Essex County Council's Coronavirus Hub which is updated weekly with the venues for the following week. Thurrock and Southend Councils both display a link from their websites to this one for their residents to access further information on testing.

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/getting-tested-for-covid-19>

COVID-19 testing in under fives

All regional testing sites, including Stansted, and all mobile testing units are now ready for parents to administer COVID tests to children aged under five (including children under two years).

Volunteers' Week

The CCG will be focussing on the invaluable contribution volunteers have made to NHS services and within the community in West Essex. Good news stories will be shared via social media, internally and via the CCG website.

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.

Tues 5 June – Cllr Susan Barker, Essex County Council – wrap up on volunteers week

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.