

ERF weekly briefing note

wc 04 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 – 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

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

- **Excess Death Planning** – Plans continue to progress the temporary mortuary site at Chelmer Valley Park and Ride, which aims to 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. Deliveries of food and medicine to the next-most-vulnerable group of people, those over 70, who have health conditions or are pregnant have now commenced. Medicines are also being delivered via the Red Cross.
- **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 are 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** – 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. There was a further appeal to business community for supplies on the 22 April.
- **Volunteers** – Good practice guidance has been developed and has now be circulated.

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. This is based upon MHCLG guidance that PPE supplied to the LRF should **only** be distributed when settings have exhausted their normal supply chain and require urgent supply of PPE. PHE guidance issued on 28 April, relating to domiciliary settings has created potential for greater demand on these stocks. 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.

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. This includes a TCG for waste/recycling centres opening, phased return for schools and businesses opening. **Early indication and notice of these openings would be hugely beneficial for the ERF.**

Key workers from the public and private sector can now access testing for COVID-19 at a number of centres across Essex. National testing centres are open 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. A new 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 at a test at one of the national programme sites – at Stansted or Ipswich– or get a test kit delivered directly to their home.

Friday 8th May 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day (commonly known as VE Day). This year, the Government has 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 community events have had to be cancelled. However, there will be alternative virtual events organised across the county, and the government have developed a wide range of [digital resources](#) for use on social media channels to be distributed in the run up to VE Day.

Our messaging focus:

Honour the Heroes of VE Day and Protect the Heroes of today. Over the Bank Holiday weekend, please stay home and save lives.

The content produced (see below) is going to be used across Essex public sector organisations.



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 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. Over the last fortnight, nearly 8,000 tasks were assigned to, and delivered by volunteers. Deliveries of food and medicine to the next-most-vulnerable group of people, those over 70, who have health conditions or are pregnant have now commenced. Medicines are also being delivered via the Red Cross.

[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

A meals on wheels service in Mersea has proved so popular it is being rolled out to the villages in the surrounding area.

Set up by Essex Outdoors (which is run by Essex County Council) and West Mersea Town Council, the service is open to all and is currently delivering more than 150 meals a week to over 30 senior citizens and vulnerable families living in Mersea.

Due to its success, Essex Outdoors is also working with local care agencies, to extend the service to pensioners and vulnerable families living in the surrounding villages of Peldon, Abberton and Fingeringhoe along with Great Wigborough and Little Wigborough. All of the meals provided are cooked and prepared by the chefs at Essex Outdoors - which has onsite facilities at the activity centre to cater for up to 500 people - and are collected by one of the 13 voluntary delivery drivers and then distributed.

Colchester Borough Council has put together a COVID19 Community Response Pack to support our communities. The pack contains lots of useful information including key contacts, resources and information, ways to volunteer etc. You can access the pack [HERE](#)

People across Essex are being encouraged to keep active through the @ActiveEssex dedicated YouTube channel. There is a weekly schedule of events and people can choose which class and instructor to follow, with exercise opportunities including seated aerobics, yoga and Pilates. There are activities for all ages and fitness levels [HERE](#).

Essex Unites Interviews, BBC Essex

Last week's key interview was with the HM Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Mrs Jennifer Tolhurst.

It covered volunteering, business support, the role of army cadets and reservists and the armed forces covenant.

Business Support

- Essex County Council has established a dedicated **Covid-19 ECC Business Support** service to help businesses understand the financial support options available to them from Government and to assist with any other questions they might have
- The team can be contacted [online](#) and via [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).
- Please connect with us on social media and help to share our posts
- So far over 200 enquiries have been received and the majority have been about access to financial support
- In total, more than £175million of Government business grants has been handed out to more than 14,000 businesses Essex-wide following the Coronavirus pandemic.
- Around 40% of businesses (about 9,000) are yet to access funding and are eligible for it.
- Some businesses have not yet applied – they should; we don't want them to miss out
- In some cases district/borough/city councils are unable to transfer the funds because they don't have the correct business bank details and are struggling to make contact with businesses that are closed.
- Businesses are urged to approach their local authority online to apply and provide bank details: www.essex.gov.uk/applying-for-small-business-grants-in-essex
- Businesses who do not usually pay business rates to their local council are also eligible to apply.
- Some businesses may be hesitant to apply because they are concerned about getting into debt – but the grants are not loans and businesses will not be required to pay the money back later.
- Thurrock Council has distributed £17.6m in government funding to 1,360 local businesses.

Community Engagement

- Thurrock Council is continuing to publish a weekly e-newsletter to a mailing list of over 100,000 people. This has included advice and guidance on how to exercise, mental health, home schooling and links to more advice on mindfulness and well-being. Two e-newsletters published last week.
- Continuing to use social and digital channels to keep residents up-to-date with [service changes](#) and recommending residents use digital channels to contact and communicate with the council and to access services including the digital library service to check out books, newspapers and magazines.
- The council has shared more than 530 social media messages related to coronavirus and the council's actions in light of the pandemic. Between them these have appeared on people's screens more than a million times and been interacted with nearly 10,400 times.

- The council has celebrated the work of the NHS, key workers and volunteers with road markings, illuminating the Thameside Theatre and Civic Offices in blue, painted road markings with colourful rainbows in Grays and Orsett, put signs and banners on council vehicles including bin lorries and highways vehicles and is flying a thank the NHS flag outside the civic offices.

Staying safe in the home

Education

Across the region schools have remained open to offer schools places to children of key workers, where their children cannot safely stay at home and to vulnerable children and young people. The uptake has been lower than expected but the offer will continue. Childcare providers have also remained open where possible to provide childcare places for children of key workers. The government has recently released some more information clarifying the support, through a voucher system, for children and young people entitled to Free School Meals whilst the schools are closed to all but children of key workers and children with a social worker or Education Health and Care plan. There have been some issues with supply chain and provision of the vouchers.

VE Day

Residents are being encouraged to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of VE Day even though the restrictions which remain in place during the lockdown to control the spread of COVID-19 have curtailed outdoor and mass participation events.

District and Borough Councils across the county are making use of online resources to allow residents to celebrate VE Day.

Colchester Borough Council is producing a virtual VE Day experience and asking residents to commemorate the anniversary online at a website due to go live on Monday. For more go to <https://www.colchester.gov.uk/>

Basildon Council is sharing downloadable content kits (colouring sheets, links to national resources etc) and allowing residents to share their memories online on our social channels. The team are working with Basildon heritage to share historical images throughout the day and we hope to have a video message from a veteran. For more go to <https://www.basildon.gov.uk/>

Braintree District Council is encouraging residents to share their family stories, photos or memories with us via social media channels and asking families to share photographs via social media. More can be found here <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/>

Maldon District Council has an online resource pack which is available via social media and the district council website. Maldon District Council is working with the Salvation Army to deliver A4 VE Day posters to people receiving food parcels, so

they can display the in their windows. More can be found here
<https://www.maldon.gov.uk/site/>

Tendring District Council is exploring working with the Royal British Legion to allow people to be part of a service via the TDC Facebook page on 8 May. There are also a range of resources for people to use to hold their own, lockdown-friendly commemoration and to find out more about VE Day, at the national website,
<https://ve-viday75.gov.uk/>

Epping Forest District Council has online resources for residents to celebrate VE Day in Epping Forest while observing the lockdown. These include a short video made by Epping Forest Museum of how VE Day itself was celebrated in the district. Working with parish councils of both towns both Epping and Ongar village halls will be decorated in red, white and blue to mark the event. And a veteran of 56 Squadron, which was based at North Weald Airfield during the Second World War, will be visiting the airfield to give his reminiscences. The veteran lives near to the airfield and all social distancing protocols will be observed.

Southend

The council has issued advice on holding safe 'stay at home' street parties in a dedicated page: <https://www.southend.gov.uk/stayathomestreetparty>. This urges residents to think carefully before organising or attending a stay at home street party, and to follow guidance on the website on holding a responsible stay at home part, focussing on maintaining social distancing and encouraging respect and thought to all neighbours.

Don't Stay, Take it Away

A campaign is being developed to reiterate the 'stay at home' message while lockdown continues, recognising the upcoming bank holiday weekend and also a small but potentially growing issue with people congregating outside businesses (which are trading legitimately).

The core message is 'Don't Stay, Take it Away' – if you are buying goods, and especially food or alcohol, it should be taken away to home to consume.

With a particular concern around beaches and open spaces, these will be a main theme – but not exclusively so recognising this can be an issue inland as well.

The focus will be on social media and press, with the potential to scale up as required.

Work is being led by Tendring, Southend and Maldon councils supported by Essex CC, Essex Police, and ECFRS.

Assets will be ready by 7 May 2020.

Fire safety:

There is still currently no change to the way ECFRS responds to incidents.

Volunteers help at hospitals during pandemic

Hard-working volunteers from Essex County Fire and Rescue Service have helped to increase hospital capacity in Essex in the fight against Covid-19. Last Saturday, an Essex County Fire and Rescue Service team was tasked with moving equipment out of Mayfield Community Hospital in Thurrock ready to be loaded onto vans. Brentwood Hospital is being turned into a specialist site to look after patients with Covid-19.

Fire Fitness Team offer advice to people working from home

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service's (ECFRS) Fitness Team has put together a series of exercises to help people avoid injuries when working from home.

The team, who usually spend their days testing recruits and training firefighters, has seen an increase in colleagues and the public asking for advice while spending more time at home. The whole routine consists of seven stretches and takes between 5 - 10 minutes to complete, with a recommendation of doing it a couple of times a day.

Full press release: <https://www.essex->

[fire.gov.uk/news/Fire_Fitness_Team_offer_advice_to_people_working_from_home/](https://www.essex-fire.gov.uk/news/Fire_Fitness_Team_offer_advice_to_people_working_from_home/)

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.

Figures issued this week from Care Quality Commission (CQC) has been confirmed that up to and including 27th April 2020, 263 deaths due to COVID-19 have occurred in care home in Essex, Southend and Thurrock.

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

St Helena Hospice has partnered with a local care provider, Bluebird Colchester and Tendring, to support people in the last days of life in their own homes through the SinglePoint Virtual Ward service. The partnership comes as the hospice has adapted its SinglePoint service which acts as a co-ordinator for all local services to ensure people are given the option to stay out of hospital if they don't need to go in. The Virtual Ward is an extension of this service, where patients can receive similar care from healthcare assistants as they would at the hospice, but in their own homes instead.

Clacton Hospital and NHS Property Services have been working together to refurbish and re-open the Seaview House building on the hospital site. The building has been closed for several years but is being revitalised and will be used as sleeping accommodation by front line staff during this very busy time.

Our integrated care system has created a webpage on its 'Can Do' website pages. This outlines all of the help and support available to health and care colleagues across our system during the pandemic. You can access the page [HERE](#).

Mid and South Essex

Planning to resume services:

As we move into the next phase of the unified response to COVID-19, over the coming weeks health and social care colleagues will be looking at how we can safely restore some of the services which have been paused, whilst providing care for patients affected by Covid-19. Those services we are exploring first are urgent care and cancer services; this will follow with elective and diagnostic services which have been downscaled across our hospitals during the initial response to the pandemic. We are committed to sustaining the changes in the way care has been delivered as a system including the use of technology-enabled service delivery such as digital consultations; this work and benefits will continue to develop and evolve as we start to resume other key services over the coming months. Alongside this we continue to revise and test our modelling; which now enables us to estimate the capacity of all of our local health and social provision (acute, critical care, community and primary care, care packages etc).

Help Us Help You:

We are supporting the national Help us Help You campaign launched on 24 April 2020, promoting the message that the NHS remains there for those who need it, and

has not closed its doors to non-COVID-19 related patients. Locally we are producing a range of videos featuring our own clinicians to help reassure people who have a health need or believe they are at risk of cancer, a heart attack or stroke, parents with a sick child, pregnant women and people with mental health issues to seek support from our local healthcare services; these will complement the national publicity materials. We are working with all our Partnership colleagues to support this social media campaign via their own channels. Bereavement Havens Hospices have launched a Coronavirus Crisis Bereavement Line to support adults and children across Essex bereaved directly or indirectly as a result of coronavirus. The helpline number is 01702 220321. The phone line is open seven days a week, 9am to 6pm, with a trained team of counsellors and bereavement workers who will listen, advise and signpost people so they can manage their grief until longer term support can be arranged. Children will be offered more structured sessions over the phone or via Zoom. Across mid and south Essex, hospices, CCGs, local authorities with our Healthwatches are working together on a joint awareness campaign for Dying Matters Week (May 11-17). Social media toolkits will be sent out to partners and organisations shortly to help them participate in the awareness campaign.

Community:

From next week the care provided at Cumberledge Intermediate Care Centre (CICC) based at Rochford Hospital will temporarily relocate to Brentwood Community Hospital. Making these changes to CICC will support an increased community bed capacity, allowing us to care for more step-down / rehabilitation patients and support discharge from our acute hospitals. Thank you to all our wider partners for their support with mobilisation of this change.

Staff testing:

Key workers in health and social care roles can continue to be tested via appointments booked at our three drive-through swabbing sites located in Basildon, Chelmsford and Southend. Around 150 colleagues per day are being tested at our local centres. We have capacity for up to 300 tests per day. In addition, key frontline workers with symptoms can get tested at the nationally run sites in Stansted and Ipswich this weekend (10am to 6pm Sat and Sun) by simply turning up and showing their ID badges. Further opportunities and venues for testing are being explored as we look to manage the announcement that further categories of people can be offered testing under the national swabbing scheme. For those who do not have a car, home test kits are now available via the nationally run testing scheme. Individuals can order a kit via the Self-Referral Portal which Amazon will deliver to their home. The individual performs then tests them self following the detailed instructions then Royal Mail couriers collect the sample, with the results received within 72 hours.

Primary Care For the coming Bank Holiday:

On Friday 8 May primary care will operate the respiratory hubs and the usual extended access provision with IC24 will be available on that day. Once details of pharmacy opening times are available, we will be publishing guides to health services for the Bank Holiday and circulating to stakeholders, on websites and across social media.

West

Testing:

Testing at the national centre at Stansted is running well and uptake is good. Latest figures suggest Stansted is carrying out more than 1,000 tests per day.

Home testing kits are increasing but demand is outstripping supply.

West Essex CCG and the testing TCG is working with the military to identify and open up additional testing sites across Essex, either fixed temporary sites or mobile sites that can tour the area.

A response team to cover testing in key workers' homes (for those who cannot get to a testing site) may be operational next week. This group may also be able to support testing in care homes.

PPE

The CCG continues to source PPE for primary care staff and the primary care hubs where clinicians see patients face-to-face. Practices continue to go through their usual suppliers for what they need.

ECC has been advising providers on the Public Health England guidance on a regular basis and as it is updated. The donated stock, orders by council and the MHCLG stock have enabled us to provide urgent support to providers but only for symptomatic people.

ECC has not been able to issue this stock for visits to and care of shielded people or (in line with Monday's guidance for all domiciliary care visits). Our approach remains in line with DHSC and MHCLG guidance issued when the MHCLG 'push' supplies were first provided over the Easter weekend. ECC has finite supply of PPE with limited confidence in content/quality/immediacy of supply. Supply varies amongst care providers who are suffering the same supply problems as us, and/or they think government should be providing it

The approach across the ERF and the ECC process has been discussed in detail and agreed through the PPE Tactical Group.

UPDATE 01/05/20

Along with military liaison officers, a number of further sites across the County are being scoped, including Harlow, Chelmsford, Basildon, Southend and Rochford.

These will be focussed on the over 65s, and also provide extra capacity for key worker testing.

Arrangements are also being looked at to deliver home testing to get to those unable to order them online or who cannot leave their homes.

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.

Tue 5 May – 16:00

Mark Cory (leader Colchester BC) – support for the vulnerable, keeping people fit and helping business (payments)

Fri 8 May – 16:00 (bank holiday)

Southend – Bank Holiday Warning about visiting beaches etc – Please don't stay, take it away campaign

Other events

Thurs 07 – Essex MPs briefing (Microsoft Teams)

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.