

ERF weekly briefing note

wc 13 April 2020

The Essex Resilience Forum Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) was put into action to provide coordination and alignment for member services in Essex.

The SCG is chaired by Chief Constable BJ Harrington and Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Rick Hylton. The two Chairs rotate responsibility to provide resilience.

Current SCG Chair – BJ Harrington, Essex Police

The purpose of the SCG is to:

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

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

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

SCG work streams/tactical groups

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

- **Excess Death Planning** - end to end and inclusive excess death plan group established. Exploring using other emergency services (probable FRS) to help with manual handling, body removal. Body bags – national shortage
- **Education** – consistent approach by the Directors of Children’s Services across Essex. Key worker children to remain in school – uptake from key workers low.
- **Shielding the vulnerable** - following the announcement of the 1.5million people in the UK (approx. 28,000 in Essex), Gavin Jones (ECC Chief Exec) is leading on this piece of work for Essex County Council and linking with Southend and Thurrock to share complementary practice where it makes sense. Three hubs have now been set up (Witham Southend and Thurrock) – Category A (super vulnerable) now being reached, and food being distributed to them, LA’s are acting as a safety net for any that do not receive directly. Work is now underway to understand those within the Government Cat B, and support those needs utilising volunteers and partners capacity as required.
- **Care Provision – Adults & Children** – coordinated approach between heads of adult social care across Essex.
- **PPE** - PPE is in stock and being delivered to high risk areas – as a pan Essex approach. This remains an issue for whole of system. ECC has issued comms asking for PPE from Essex businesses with some success and Fire and Police are seeking to tap into other supply chains, however this continues to be a significant challenge for us.
- **Licensing** – Essex Police are ready. Seeking compliance is and will continue to be their first priority
- **3 MOD Support Officers:** 1 x excess death planning, 2 x PPE and adult and children care provision and 1 x validating ERF plans
- **Waste disposal** – local authorities across Essex are providing varying collection services (some having been revised recently, others which remain unchanged) following the introduction of the government measures on 23rd March. In addition, some refuse recycling sites are closed. Some district councils and boroughs are now looking at reinstating some of the services that have been temporarily suspended.
- **Strategic faith and community group** – the ERF proposes a forum chaired by Bishop Roger Morris from Colchester to assess the impact of Covid-19 on different faiths, in order to ensure that the response to the virus by authorities and agencies is inclusive, and acknowledges the ethnic and religious diversity that exists across the county.

Key updates from the Chair

Creating extra mortuary space: Over the Easter weekend, temporary mortuary spaces have been established and set up. This included Brentwood and Braintree community hospitals, Chelmer Valley (park and ride) and units across Essex hospital. These temporary mortuary spaces are being provided to cope with the rise in deaths in Essex.

The park and ride is currently closed and will remain so until the mortuary is no longer required. This could be up to six months. The site was chosen because it was already closed, has the space, is close to main roads and can be secured.

The decision to provide the extra capacity was taken this week as part of the emergency planning across Essex, including Southend and Thurrock, to respond to Coronavirus, reduce its spread and ease pressure on the NHS and other services.

It will ease pressure on existing mortuaries and funeral directors and ensure the deceased from COVID-19 are treated with respect and dignity. All sites will be temperature controlled and secure.

PPE: PPE still remains a huge issue, nationally and for Essex. For context the stock we have received is around a day supply and the entire expected delivery is around 3 days' supply. We continue to request this from the MHCLG, whilst looking locally through Police and Fire Procurement routes to source additional PPE.

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

- Over 6,000 volunteers recruited via EWS, of which around 2,000 were ready to support vulnerable people by Wednesday 08/04.
- 300 call handlers supporting this at EWS.
- Key businesses such as Stansted offering to support the volunteering offer across Essex
- Over 1,000 volunteers linked to local hubs and co-ordination through the districts, although capacity in each district varies.
- Thurrock Coronavirus Community Action (TCCA) has spoken to over 1,000 of the borough's most vulnerable residents during the first five days of the community

response launching last Wednesday (1 April).

- More than 380 residents have already volunteered. A helpline has been established and is open 9am – 5pm Monday to Sunday. More information on TCCA can be found here: <https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-community-support/thurrock-coronavirus-community-action>
- An information pack has been created and distributed to local bus drivers for them to give to passengers they see who they feel are vulnerable and should be at home/making less frequent journeys. It includes a letter they can hand to passengers with contact details for TCCA.

Communications

- Newsquest Facebook, promoting the EWS to vulnerable people over 70, pregnant or with underlying health issues who don't have support from family, friends, neighbours or local support groups.
- Organic social media content on ECC social channels promoting EWS to vulnerable people
- Content on ECC residents e-newsletter promoting EWS to vulnerable people
- GP-surgery lead SMS contacts underway.

Engaging volunteers

ECC set up a [Coronavirus Action Group](#) on Facebook, working with local community Facebook group admins to create a group of volunteers willing to help those in need.

Essex Coronavirus Action is a collaboration between the council, the Essex Public Health team, and local Facebook group owners to provide 3 main services during the coronavirus outbreak:

Prevent: to give advice to help people prevent coming into contact with coronavirus and passing it on to others, including those who are vulnerable

Inform: to inform people about hoaxes, myths and fake news circulating social media about coronavirus

Assist: to assist vulnerable members of our local communities who may need help due to self-isolation or other factors, by putting them and their carers and families in touch with local volunteers



Thurrock Coronavirus
**COMMUNITY
ACTION**

Prevent – Inform – Assist
Safely co-ordinating help and volunteers

Excess death planning

Capacity: Bereavement services (hospitals, funeral directors crematoria and faith organisations) and the county council are working together to cope with the number of extra deaths expected in Essex due to COVID-19

Registering Deaths: The Coronavirus Act 2020 changed the rules around death registrations. Deaths can now be registered by phone.

Thurrock Council registrars have ceased all work aside from registering deaths. Facilities have been put in place to allow this to be done over the phone

Funerals: Funerals are affected by social distancing measures. Can only be attended by family and very close family members.

Faith and community issues: PHE advises adaptations to funerals and mourning rituals to observe social distancing rules and reduce risk of infection deceased. We are working with representatives of faith organisations across Essex to coordinate efforts, deal with anxieties and concerns and provide useful information to communities. Please do not congregate for religious festivals including Easter, Passover and the Sikh and Hindu New Years this bank holiday weekend or for Ramadan and Vesak in a few weeks. Follow guidance from the Government and your national faith leaders to stay home and protect lives.

Communications: PR, online content, Q&A, letter to nearby businesses residents issued last Thursday 9 April. This week the focus will be on reaction to public response to announcement; faith leaflet; consideration of memorials

Social cohesion and bringing communities together

Work is progression with Bishop Roger Morris to look at messaging which is useful for all communities including making clearer some of the restrictions including the interpretation of 'household' which is not universally understood as the people who live in the same dwelling.

This work is also seeking to coordinate the activity around the celebration of religious festivals as well as build a network of communicators in faith-sectors to disseminate messages from the ERF.

Thurrock Council is publishing 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 and links to more advice on mindfulness and well-being. (most recent version attached). Last week a specific coronavirus e-newsletter was sent to a mailing list of 108,000 people in Thurrock (also attached)

Work has taken place to make sure Thurrock residents and businesses are aware of financial help available to them. All help is available:

<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/financial-support>



Staying safe in the home

Staying Safe in the Home campaign launched Friday 10 April. With more people at home, we're reducing the risk of spreading coronavirus. But unfortunately, that does bring other risks.

The Stay Safe at Home campaign focuses on five risks to people during this challenging time:

1. domestic abuse
2. child abuse
3. accidental house fires
4. fraud
5. bogus callers

We know there are certain areas that pose a higher risk during these difficult times, and we want to inform and educate our public around what they can do to avoid and lower these risks. Where people are unable to avoid these risks, we'll work to signpost them to a safe place where they can get support.

Regardless of the situation, our role will always be to keep people safe in their homes, and rest assured, we will continue to do everything we can to achieve this.

Essex residents will start to see the different messages on social media, Essex organisation's websites and in local media.

To support or follow the campaign search for #ProtectingandServingEssex and #StayHomeSaveLives on social media.

- **Domestic Abuse** - Although reporting in DA has decreased, we see a similar pattern over the Christmas period, where reporting goes down while the abuse is taking place and significantly spikes at the end of the period when victims can see 'an out'. Silent emergency number is available to those in isolation and in danger.
- **Fraud** - Action Fraud have reported a 400% increase in fraud incidents in March 2020, relating to the coronavirus.
- **Bogus callers** - Trading Standards are issuing a warning to residents about people being scammed and retailers hiking prices amid the coronavirus outbreak. Residents are warned not to open the door to anyone claiming to offer testing for coronavirus. They are also warned not to give money to strangers knocking doors and asking for cash upfront to do shopping for people who are self-isolating.
- **Child abuse/Sexting** – The College of Policing have shared a briefing in response to youth produced sexual imagery (can range from consensual to exploitation) – based on young people (under 18) sharing indecent images, stills or videos, of themselves or others (under 18) and reference to many parents being unsure of what is illegal. Essex Police Public Protection advises these offences will likely increase over the isolation period.
- **Fire safety** – More chance of fire the more you spend time at home

Messaging for the Easter weekend was focussed on continuing to encourage residents to continue to abide by the restrictions, even with the weather anticipated to be sunny and nice.



Further content can be made available. Please contact the team on pressoffice@essex.police.uk

Fire safety: 21 Essex firefighters are now joining NHS staff on the frontline from Monday 13 April – beginning work as ambulance drivers, alongside East of England Ambulance Service (EEAST) paramedics.

The firefighters will be driving ambulances, and helping fetch equipment such as stretchers. This is an excellent example of partnership working: we are one of the first Fire and Rescue Services in the country to be pressing on with this initiative.

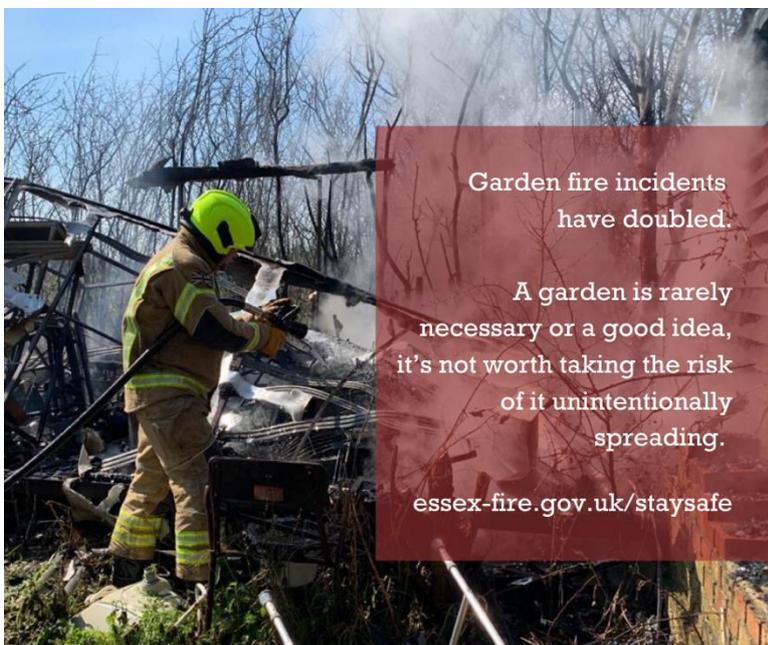


Garden fires increase by 100% - Firefighters were called to 55 garden fires in March 2020, compared to 28 in the same month in 2018 and 2019.

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

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

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



Health and social care

North East

- A new prescriptions delivery service is due to be launched across north East Essex to support those vulnerable people with no family or friends able to help at this time. This service will only be available if local people have no other way of getting non urgent prescriptions which are waiting to be collected from their pharmacy. Plans are being finalised with the Red Cross to deliver the service.
- The East of England Ambulance Service (EEAST) has joined forces with 16 Medical Regiment to boost the number of frontline staff available to provide life-saving care to patients in Essex. The partnership will see paramedics and combat medical technicians deployed to work on ambulances alongside staff from EEAST. The service expects this will help increase capacity during the pandemic while also giving the military medics a wider clinical experience.
- The system has rolled out video conferencing in all the acute hospital sites for outpatient appointments. Staff at Ipswich and Colchester Hospitals have now undertaken 217 video consultations with patients in the last week, and have enabled 35 services across the hospital and community.
- Local charities and community groups are the glue that supports vulnerable members of our society, especially at this time of a national crisis. The Essex Community Foundation has launched its Essex Coronavirus Response and Recovery Programme with £300k which they hope will increase over the coming weeks and months. It has been set up as a central place for people to give. Its aim is to provide immediate and vital financial support to these key local organisations and the vital work they do to keep people safe and well.
- A series of local radio and newspaper interviews have taken place to provide reassurance to our residents and communities. There has been local coverage in the East Anglian Daily Times, Colchester Gazette and Bury Free Press as well as interviews on local BBC radio.

Mid and South Essex

Primary Care GP practices will be operating normal opening hours on Good Friday (April 10) and Easter Monday (April 13). Local guides to health services over Easter – which includes information on pharmacy opening times – has been widely circulated with stakeholders, on websites and across social media.

Community a significant number of additional beds at Brentwood Community Hospital are now operational and similar work is taking place at Braintree Community Hospital to be live next week. A system wide bed bureau has been set up which will support tracking of community bed availability across mid and south Essex.

Redeployment includes staff to support the additional bed capacity in the community. Student nurses and midwives within six months of completing their training are being contacted through education links. St John Ambulance Service has been approached to request extended first-aid volunteers who may be available for such roles as healthcare assistants.

Mortuary work has commenced at Brentwood Community Hospital to build temporary additional mortuary space as part of the plan to manage anticipated excess deaths. Essex County Council is also developing a larger facility at Chelmer Valley.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) deliveries are arriving and thanks to multi-agency support are turned around at speed and dispatched onwards. Essex County Council is leading the management of supplies to care homes, hospices, social care.

Care Homes a range of support packages are being developed for care homes to support them to care for residents who are able to move on from acute and community hospital beds, and help ease growing pressure in the system.

Staff testing this is due to commence towards the end of next week at three sites in Chelmsford, Basildon and Southend with the aim to establish capacity for up to 300 tests a day. A priority exercise to identify staff to be tested first is underway.

West

Staff across West Essex CCG are working hard with partners and providers to support the Government's response to COVID-19.

- The CCG is actively supporting the delivery of PPE being received to allow staff to continue caring for patients safely.
- GPs are continuing to triage patients via telephone to support social distancing and protect patients and staff.
- Stansted is now open as a national swabbing centre. Over the weekend 450 NHS and social care staff and family members were swabbed. The offer will be extended to other key workers as we approach the next weekend as other swabbing centres open across Essex over the coming week.

COMMUNICATIONS FUNCTION DEVELOPMENT

The ERF is seeking to develop a core communications function to support the joint chairs and the wider group with countywide activity focus and coordination.

This function would see the strategic communications chairs from police and fire, supported by the following roles:

- Lead communicator
- Admin
- Proactive PR officer
- Campaigns officer

A decision on where these roles will come from is still in progress.

LOCAL MEDIA INTERVIEWS – ERF

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

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

For this week the schedule is like to be:

- Tues 14 Apr 4pm – Bishop Roger – social cohesion
- Fri 10 Apr 4pm – ERF/ SCG Chair – Chief Constable BJ Harrington – unsung heroes and good news stories

HOW YOU CAN HELP US

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

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

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

Key Messages/Lines to take

Volunteering and shielding

- Essex residents have come out in their thousands to volunteer
- Mapping across our key public services and major voluntary/community organisations is now underway to help us understand the volunteering capacity across Essex- so we can match supply to known demand in places
- Working closely with colleagues from the Essex Alliance to help us understand what smaller voluntary organisations have in terms of additional capacity to support our efforts

Social care (children and young people)

- If children and young people are feeling overwhelmed and confused due to the current situation, they should be encouraged to express their feelings with someone they trust, or through organisations that can provide safe and confidential support.
- The Livewell website has links to a range of organisations that can help young people and parents/carers: <https://www.livewellcampaign.co.uk/livewell-articles/mental-health-support-for-young-people/>
- There are lots of steps that parents/carers can take to ensure their child remains safe online, including having regular conversations with them about what they're doing on the internet and who they are talking to.
- The Essex Safeguarding Children Board has more information about online safety, including links to information and resources for both parents and young people: www.escb.co.uk
- More information about how to effectively resolve conflict at home can be found on the Livewell website: <https://www.livewellcampaign.co.uk/livewell-articles/healthy-relationships/>
 - PAUSE - is a disagreement escalating to a point where you are no longer in control and you are just reacting? If so, take a breath and re-assess the situation.
 - THINK - try to reflect on why an argument started. Ask yourself how you were feeling before the conversation started and whether you were already feeling anxious or tense.
 - RESOLVE IT – take a step back. Is this argument about something important, or can you come back to it when you are both calmer?
 - If a child or young person is in immediate danger, call 999.

- If you're worried that a child is being abused or neglected, call us on 0345 603 7627.
- During out of hours or on bank holidays, call the emergency duty team on 0345 606 1212.

For more information, visit <https://www.essex.gov.uk/report-a-concern-about-a-child>

Deaths and bereavement

- Bereavement services (hospitals, funeral directors crematoria and faith organisations) and the county council are working together to cope with the number of extra deaths expected in Essex due to COVID-19
- We are currently creating temporary mortuary space in our hospitals
- Funeral Directors can now be 'qualified informants' of a deaths
- Deaths can be registered by phone
- Book appointments online at [essex.gov.uk/register-a-death](https://www.essex.gov.uk/register-a-death)
- Family members or funeral directors can register deaths
- Currently funerals can take place but attended only by household members and close family
- 'Household' means those who live in your home, not extended family
- Follow social distancing guidelines (keep two metres apart) during funerals and when travelling to and from them
- Don't attend if you show coronavirus symptoms or are in a vulnerable category
- Household members of the deceased should self-isolate for 14 days and not mix with other mourners
- Wakes and memorials can be scheduled later
- Although funerals can go ahead some mourning rituals have had to change.
- Due to the small but real risk of infection from the deceased, mourners are strongly advised not to take part in rituals or practices that bring them into close contact with the body

- National faith leaders are urging their communities to follow the national guidelines
- We are working with representatives of faith organisations across Essex to coordinate efforts, deal with anxieties and concerns and provide useful information to communities
- Please do not congregate for religious festivals including Easter, Passover and the Sikh and Hindu New Years this bank holiday weekend or for Ramadan and Vesak in a few weeks.
- Follow guidance from the Government and your national faith leaders to stay home and protect lives.

Education and key workers

- 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 during the Easter holiday period for key worker children.
- 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.