

# ECC Report June 2020

## **International relationship helps Essex secure PPE**

Thanks to a strong, 30-year relationship with colleagues from Jiangsu Province in China, 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.

Led by Peter Manning, ECC's International Trade team has worked closely with their Chinese contacts and shipping company, Woodland Group, to negotiate the procurement of the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for both Essex and Norfolk County Council. The first shipment of 100,000 masks arrived in Essex last month.

The process involved researching reputable factories in China to identify those with the correct documentation and those that were on approved lists for medical device exports.

The team then liaised directly with the factories before working with Woodland Group – a global supply chain specialist – who were able to ensure costs were kept low and appropriate inspections took place prior to organising the correct customs documentation and successfully delivering the equipment to our dedicated storage facility this week.

Due to the national shortage of PPE, ECC is continuing to proactively put plans in place to establish local supply chains in order to meet urgent local need.

The council is also making it's PPE sourcing service available, free-of-charge to other councils across the country during the outbreak, helping them to identify suppliers, perform due diligence and liaise on prices and minimum orders, before they purchase the equipment themselves.

Cllr David Finch, Leader of Essex County Council, said that he was pleased to have been able to work with colleagues in China and across the supply chain to procure this vital equipment and to also be able to offer this support to other councils in critical need of PPE.

The national PPE shortage will not be solved overnight and so we have been actively working on our own solutions. It is of paramount importance that care staff are protected so that they can carry out their vital duties to keep people safe.

Councillor Andrew Jamieson, Norfolk County Council's cabinet member for finance, said that Norfolk County Council has now sourced over two million items of PPE to protect care workers in Norfolk, and having direct supply from the Chinese manufacturers as it provides better value for the taxpayer and makes local authorities less dependent on middlemen.

It has been hugely beneficial to have Essex's Chinese contacts and expertise alongside NCC's own sourcing team, and Woodland Group has been exemplary in arranging inspection and airfreight so the Council could get quality PPE to the front line quickly."

Essex County Council has and continues to support the care market across the county, with provision of masks and other PPE, where this is most needed and in line with the Essex Resilience Forum guidelines.

Due to national shortages of PPE, it is vital that ECC manages supplies carefully on a local level. However, if a provider is in critical need, ECC can get supplies to them on the same day. All providers are expected to use PPE in line with Government guidelines.

ECC is expecting further deliveries of PPE over the coming weeks and is already supporting several other councils to source their own.

Any council procurement teams that are interested in finding out more should contact [Peter.Manning@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Peter.Manning@essex.gov.uk). Councils will purchase their own supplies and are encouraged to aggregate their requests on a regional basis before approaching ECC.

- More information about Woodland Group can be found here: <https://www.woodlandgroup.com>

### ***New virtual care solution provides support for people in Essex***

Essex County Council, in partnership with RETHINK Partners and Alcove, has been rolling-out a new and innovative response to the COVID-19 crisis, by providing virtual care and health and wellbeing support to vulnerable or shielded people.

The partnership has worked quickly and proactively during the crisis and will be delivering 2,000 Video Carephones to appropriate people in Essex with the aim to supplement face-to-face contact, aid social distancing and support emerging needs related to COVID-19. It also ensures that staff and their families will be protected from infection and can continue to work during this time. The Alcove Video Carephone is an integrated, easy-to-use device which enables users to make video calls to pre-identified services via a locked down tablet and a web portal.

Responders can use the Alcove app/web site to make calls, issue reminders and prompts which will allow the continuity of care and ensure general health and wellbeing. Users are being supported to set up the devices remotely and their friends and family members can also be added during set-up.

One user said that she's 'thrilled' to have the device and it has allowed her to see a long-lost school friend who she hasn't met face-to-face for years. She has also

managed to get shopping and basic essentials through the [Help@home](#) service provided with the device.

Essex County Councillor John Spence, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care said: "We are delighted to be leading this exciting project. This is a limited offer that we are providing for 2,000 of our most vulnerable service users and those who can get the most benefit. It not only will provide people with care and support calls, but it will help them with loneliness and to connect more easily with the support networks in their community.

"Over the coming weeks, we will be capturing some of the good news stories from our users which help us shape our longer term care technology strategy."

Clare Morris, chief executive of RETHINK Partners said: "During the coronavirus outbreak, we are using the device to connect people to their regular services allowing much of this to be provided remotely and without contact. This includes paid care, supported discharge from hospital, scheduled check-ins and prompts for people with mental health issues and contact for people with learning disabilities, who may be missing out on regular visits to day centres. We are also linking in with the Essex Welfare Service to ensure daily living needs are met such as shopping and prescription collection for those who are shielding or self-isolating."

These one-touch Video Carephones do offer easy-to-use technology as a solution to the current situation – without users needing to understand how to use Zoom or Skype, and not leave those without their own smart devices behind, whilst the rest of us adapt to a virtual world.

1. RETHINK Partners is a health and care transformation consultancy that specialise in the biggest challenge of the sector: technology. They wrap around the technology and the council, focusing on the people, processes and culture change that accelerates the uptake of tech.

2. Alcove specialises in delivering personalised care monitoring systems for local authorities, the NHS, housing associations and sheltered accommodation providers across the country. Alcove's intelligent care technology ecosystem was developed to enhance independent living for older and disabled adults, and revolutionise the delivery of care and support services globally to provide the 21st-century replacement for telecare. It is the only assistive technology ecosystem provider in the marketplace to embed both one touch video calling and Alexa into its connected platform.

## **A new crisis mental health phone line has launched across Essex.**

<https://eput.nhs.uk/new-crisis-mental-health-phone-line-launched/>



# **Essex Partnership University**

## **NHS Foundation Trust**

### **New crisis mental health phone line launched**

May 11, 2020

The 24-hour service, launched by Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT), offers immediate and specialist support to adults experiencing mental health crisis.

Anyone in need can dial 111 at any time and select the option for mental health crisis (option 2).

Callers will be connected to trained staff at EPUT who can provide timely and appropriate support and advice.

The service is for people aged 18 and over and aims to ensure those in need of support can access it quickly when they need it most.

It is hoped the service will help alleviate pressure on hospital accident and emergency services and GP surgeries.

Andy Brogan, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Chief Executive at EPUT, said: "It is vital that people are able to access specialist support without delay when they are experiencing mental health crisis. This service will enable people to do just that 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

"Working with colleagues at Clinical Commissioning Groups across Essex, I am pleased that we have been able to launch this service to help people when they need it most."

The crisis service does not replace 999. Anyone in mental health crisis who requires serious or life threatening emergency mental or physical care, should dial 999 immediately.

The crisis phone line is for people aged 18 and over. Anyone under the age of 18 or family members of anyone under the age of 18 in crisis, should call North East London NHS Foundation Trust's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service on 0300 555 1201.

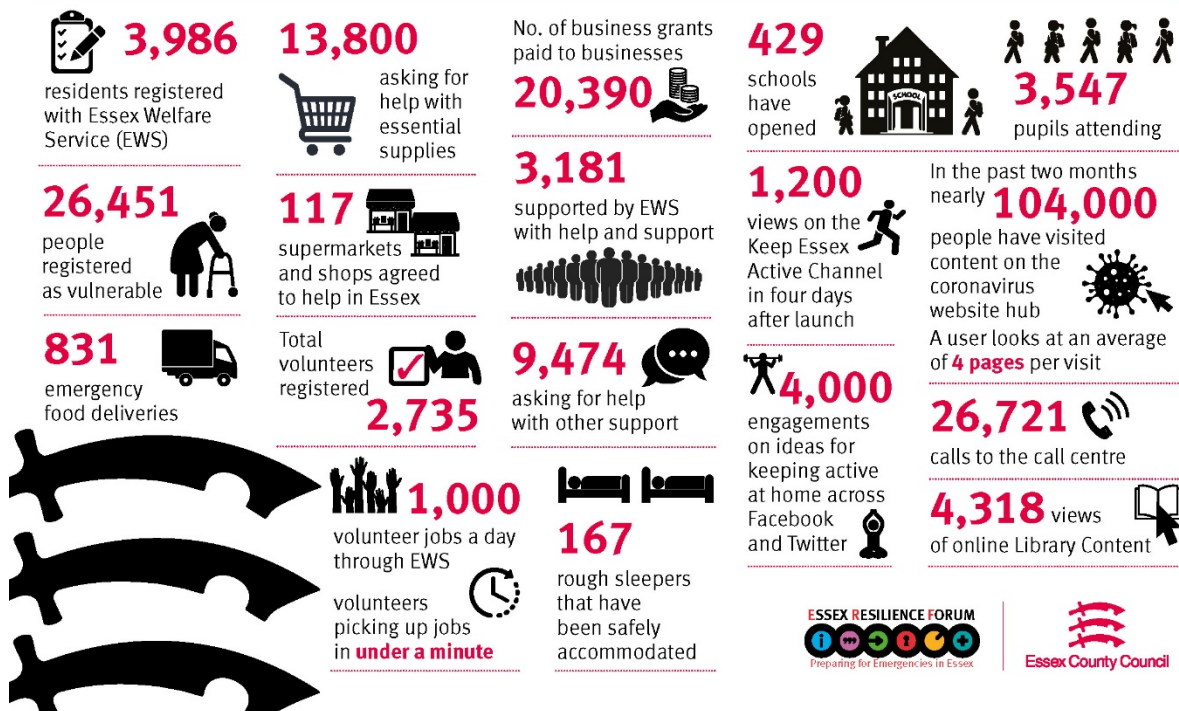
**ECC has worked continuously to ensure Essex residents, communities and businesses are fully supported during the coronavirus outbreak**

Here are some key facts about our work so far:

- 3,986 residents registered with the Essex Welfare Service (EWS)
- 26,451 people registered as vulnerable
- 831 emergency food deliveries
- 13,800 asking for help with essential supplies
- 117 supermarkets and shops agreed to help in Essex
- 2,735 volunteers registered
- 1,000 volunteer jobs a day through EWS, volunteers picking up jobs in under a minute
- 3,181 supported by EWS with help and support
- 9,474 asking for help with other support
- 20,390 business grants paid to businesses
- 167 rough sleepers have been safely accommodated
- 429 schools have opened with 3,547 pupils attending
- 1,200 views on the Keep Essex Active Channel in four days after launch
- 4,000 engagements on ideas for keeping active at home across Facebook and Twitter
- In the past two months nearly 104,000 people have visited content on the coronavirus hub
- 26,721 calls to the call centre
- 4,318 views of online library content

March/April 2020

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



## **Every Family Matters on International Day of Families**

On this year's International Day of Families, Essex County Council (ECC) is reminding local people about its ongoing campaign to support children, young people, parents and carers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The aim of the "Every Family Matters" campaign is to sign-post families across Essex to organisations, information and resources across three key areas – children's mental health, social distancing and young people, and online safety.

It is one of the ways that ECC is actively responding to the pandemic and helping to ensure families – especially those that are vulnerable – have the support they need to navigate the challenging circumstances the country is currently in.

Cllr Louise McKinlay, ECC's Cabinet Member for Children and Families, said: "We recognise that many families will currently be experiencing unfamiliar territory, with many children out of school, parents and carers working from home and their usual support networks now unavailable.

"There is no precedent for how to cope with these changes and it is understandable that some parents and carers will be struggling with the additional pressures of how to support their child's emotional wellbeing, or what they can do to keep them safe if they're spending more time online.

"However, International Day of Families is the perfect reminder that help is available. We remain absolutely committed to ensuring every family in Essex has the support they need to thrive, despite the current circumstances."

As part of the campaign, ECC is posting regular advice and resources on its social media channels - [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

It is also sign-posting families to information on the [Staying Well Children and Families page](#), which includes links to organisations and resources that can help at this time

[https://www.essex.gov.uk/staying-well?utm\\_medium=IDOF%20release&utm\\_campaign=covid19%20cyp&utm\\_source=press%20release&utm\\_content=&utm\\_term=](https://www.essex.gov.uk/staying-well?utm_medium=IDOF%20release&utm_campaign=covid19%20cyp&utm_source=press%20release&utm_content=&utm_term=)

## **Essex preparing for phased school reopening**

Following the Government's announcement last month regarding the reopening of education and childcare settings, Essex County Council wants to update parents, school communities, and the wider Essex population on the work taking place to support reopening in the safest possible way.

In Essex, building on the Government's plans, the return will take place on a gradual, phased and small-scale basis, allowing for local flexibility within schools in terms of class size, staffing, and the constraints of school buildings.

Teams across the Council have been working with Essex schools and early years settings, and partners such as the Department for Education, Ofsted, education professional associations, unions and other local authorities to prepare for reopening. Resources, experiences, and approaches are being shared across all education settings, giving school leaders a wealth of information and support, which will help them to make the best decisions to support their school community.

The safety of everyone in the school community will be paramount in our planning. A thorough Health and Safety Risk Assessment will be undertaken by every setting, contact will be minimised through smaller class sizes and mixing between groups will be reduced through timetable changes.

This is a very uncertain and worrying time for parents and carers, about reopening of education and childcare settings, with a lot of questions and concerns.

Planning to reopen our Schools has been a complicated exercise and ECC has been helping settings to come up with their own solutions. This means that settings will have their own approaches that work best for them, their children and their local communities.

Each setting's health and safety risk assessment should drive their decision making, which means that not all settings will be able to offer a full-time service initially. Some may re-open later in June. Things will be gradual, phased, and small scale to begin with, and potentially until the end of term.

The Government announcement on 10<sup>th</sup> May was it may soon be feasible for early years children to return to settings and for children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 to return to schools in smaller group sizes from 1<sup>st</sup> June.

Secondary school pupils in Years 10 and 12 due to be taking exams next year (Years 10 and 11 for alternative provision settings as they have no Year 12) may be able to receive some face-to-face contact with teachers, and special schools may be able to gradually increase the number of children and young people on site, again from 1<sup>st</sup> June.

## **Update on Education setting reopening in Essex**

### **SCHOOLS**

Although no actual figures have been passed on to ECC from the Department for Education (DfE), indications prior to 1<sup>st</sup> June were that between 75 and 80 per cent of Essex primary schools would have reopen this week.

ECC has been clear that the priority is the health and safety of children, families and staff. As set out by the DfE, each school and setting has undertaken their own risk assessment bespoke to their setting / community to determine their response to wider opening being possible. This means arrangements in settings vary. For example, some have initially opened part time to eligible year groups, others have initially opened only to some eligible year groups.

Key factors in the decision-making of schools have been the physical space they have available to them and the capacity of their staff. The necessarily low number of children in each 'bubble' means twice the classrooms are needed for each year group, sometimes more. This in turn means twice the staff to lead groups. School staff must also plan lessons, maintain remote learning, and maintain contact with all children not in school for safeguarding reasons. It is worth remembering that there are still more pupils at home than attending school.

Some schools fed back early in the week that teaching unions had been contacting them directly looking to obtain a copy of their risk assessment. The Council also raised this issue with the unions to better understand their position and supported schools in their responses.

Whilst scientific advice is that the risk posed by coronavirus to children themselves is very low, schools have reported some parents have expressed concerns in relation to the safety of their children when returning to school. This low confidence from parents will impact on the number of children in school whilst attendance is not compulsory.

As more children attend school, the availability and increase in cost of home to school transport will become more of an issue. This will become a concern firstly for those children who are entitled to transport, but also in relation to social distancing on vehicles.

The protocol for schools in the event of a confirmed case of coronavirus in a setting is defined by the government and supplemented by advice sought from Public Health England.

## EARLY YEARS SETTINGS

Early years settings were permitted to open more widely for non-keyworker children from 1 June. On 4 June, 29% of settings in Essex were open. This is up from 19% in the week prior to half term (18 to 22 May). Of these, 49% were day nurseries and pre-schools, 50% childminders and 1% out-of-school providers. The sector has been supported throughout this week and prior to reopening by the Early Years Team, with regular advice, checklists, FAQs and information for parents.

Initial demand for childcare, as expected, is lower than pre-coronavirus levels. Some settings are reporting that there is currently insufficient demand to make it financially viable to reopen. The Council has been working closely with the district and borough councils on their administration of the financial support packages the government have made available for early years settings. Some childcare providers aren't eligible



to access this support, which is a concern. The financial implications across the sector will be monitored in the coming weeks.

Before opening, each setting must undertake its own risk assessment, something ECC has provided support and guidance to. Unlike older children, those in early years settings cannot be expected to remain two metres apart from other children and adults. However, protective measures such as frequent hand washing, regular cleaning of rooms, staggered drop off and pick-up times and dividing groups of children into 'bubbles' with consistent adults have been implemented. A small amount of emergency PPE pack for use if a child becomes unwell, has been provided, whilst in the setting to all early years and childcare providers who requested it, has also been provided.

Out of school childcare providers are only able to open if they are operating on a school site and working in line with the school's risk assessment, such as keeping children in the same bubbles they are in during the school day where possible.

An update from the DfE is expected at the beginning of July on whether holiday provision will be able to run.

Clarity from the DfE has now been received on the guidance around the opening of community and church halls for childcare providers and ECC is encouraging local councils and parishes to support any of its childcare providers in community and church halls to reopen if they want to.