

ECC Report November 2020

Essex County Council announces £1.5 million winter support for children, families and the most vulnerable and welcomes additional government funding to come

ECC has announced its latest plans to support families through the winter and school holidays during 2021. There is also funding for foodbanks, extension of holiday camps, investment for families in deprived areas and targeted support for vulnerable people are all included.

This announcement coincided with a government statement that outlined additional funding for local authorities in England that will see ECC receive some £3.8m in December for assistance with holiday hunger and camp programmes as well as help with food and bills for the hardest hit families and individuals.

ECC has plans for just under **£1.5m** from existing funds to be used for increasing funding for food banks and access to food including through the Holiday Hunger club to support children and their families through to March 2021. In addition, this funding will support holiday camp programmes through Easter and Summer holidays in 2021.

Cllr Louise McKinlay, Essex County Council's Cabinet Member for Children and Families, said that when the Working Families Programme was launched in Summer 2019, it was driven by the ambition to support families across Essex. The pandemic has made that need more acute, which is why a more comprehensive support package had been put in place over the last few months with a particular focus on July and August and more recently over the October half term. We know that more help is needed, which is why we are now looking to go even further.

Essex County Council has been working on extending existing plans and is announcing the following key areas of support:

1. Extension of the Holiday Camp Scheme that ran in the Summer 2019 to cover Easter and Summer 2021. New sites will be added across the County to offer wider opportunities for working parents to sign up to free childcare activity camps for their children, with the option to pay a small fee for an extended day offer.
2. Money for foodbanks and associated organisations, enabling them to provide at least 14k Christmas food packages for those in need. (Equivalent to the number of Essex families on free school meals due to household income.) Additional support will be provided over each school holiday, including the half terms.

3. Care leavers - providing 750 young people with extra support and supplies over the Christmas period.
4. Funding for HomeStart to target additional help to those families with pre-school children, who are living in our most deprived communities.
5. Holiday activity sessions for our most vulnerable families, providing food and targeted support,

The package enhances a wide-ranging programme that was announced on 2nd November to help fund partner organisations, community groups and provide essentials to families across Essex. Councillor McKinlay said that times are very difficult for many families at this present time, and this additional investment will make such a difference to working families and those in need across the county.

Welcoming the government's extra support to councils, Councillor McKinlay said that this significant new government funding for such schemes is well timed. It will enable the Council to build on all that we have done to date and further extend the additional plans that we are putting in place today to support children, families and vulnerable people.

Over the coming days, she will be focusing on how best this extra money can be used. By working closely with partners to identify and work out where to target the additional funds that have come from government will be the best way to maximize this. The main aim is to ensure that children of all ages – whether pre-school, primary age or teenagers and their families have access to the food and the essential help that they need not just over the winter but through next year as well.

- Essex's Holiday Hunger programme of food and activities for vulnerable school children was launched in 2019, before the pandemic. It offers food packages and activities to 28,000 children who qualify for free school meals through all school holidays, including half terms, up to summer 2021.
- The [council's current plan to support vulnerable children, families and residents](#) up to summer 2021 was announced last week. If the link does not work copy and paste this in your browser
<https://www.essex.gov.uk/news/extra-support-for-the-most-vulnerable-this-winter>
- The [Government's new winter support package](#) was announced on Sunday 8 November. If the link does not work copy and paste this in your browser
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-winter-package-to-provide-further-support-for-children-and-families?utm_source=9aeed473-f5b0-4cc5-861d-7a702385cabd&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=daily

In addition to the £1.5million investment in the schemes described above, ECC will use the £3.7m of COVID-19 related funding from government as well as £200k of its own funds to support the most vulnerable in the following areas:

Planned support includes:

- **Crisis help:** £623,000 for:
 - direct support for individuals or families in financial crisis, via food vouchers, energy, bills and white goods, provided by [Essex Essential Living Fund](#)

<https://www.livingwellessex.org/money-and-legal/managing-your-money/budgeting-loans-and-local-support-payments>

- discretionary hardship funds to support people required to self-isolate who don't qualify for the government scheme
- volunteer practical and emotional support to vulnerable individuals and families from [Essex Wellbeing Service](#)

<https://www.essexwellbeingsservice.co.uk/>

Food: £866,500 distributed via [Active Essex](#) and [Essex Association of Local Councils](#) for <https://www.activeessex.org/> <http://www.ealc.gov.uk/home/>

- Extra capacity for food banks
- Holiday Hunger Clubs to support children and their families with food packages and activity clubs in the Christmas, half terms and Easter school holidays – up to summer 2021.
- Essential food packages for care leavers.
- Targeted support for vulnerable families.
- **Clinically extremely vulnerable:** £910,000 new Government funding to meet basic support needs, food and essentials for those most vulnerable due to Covid.
- **Homelessness:** £627,000 new funding to provide safe, long-term homes for rough sleepers and others vulnerable to homelessness
- **Mental health and emotional support:** £555,000 - for mental health, domestic violence, alcohol and substance misuse services to help people in crisis or experiencing poor mental health and issues due to the pandemic.
- **Grassroots clubs and activities for children and young people** - £134,500 for grants to groups facing financial crisis due to lost income or exceptional costs of making their activities COVID safe. ECC will fund support via

the [borough, city and district councils](#) who will use local knowledge to distribute the funds to groups within their communities.

- **Vital support agencies** including the Citizens Advice Bureau will receive a total of £212,500. This money will support community and voluntary organisations and infrastructure agencies.

Further announcements are expected about additional lockdown support for businesses, infrastructure and extra operational costs.

New Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions Launched

ECC has launched a new Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions as part of a range of measures designed to support sustainable growth in Essex.

The new guide details the range and scope of contributions that the County Council seeks in order to mitigate the impact of development. It helps to ensure that new housing developments are supported by appropriate infrastructure including school and early years places, transport links and waste management.

The Guide was produced in consultation with the district, borough and city councils of Essex and developers to provide a transparent and consistent approach and to ensure that new development makes a positive contribution to the community for residents.

The Guide features several new elements including a new section requiring developer contributions towards employment and skills. This new section is particularly important in the current climate as the County Council looks to support the local economy during the Covid-19 recovery phase. There is also a new section on contributions to special educational needs provision. Approximately 15% of the Essex school population has some form of special educational needs and the cost of specialist provision can be up to four times higher than mainstream education provision.

Councillor Tony Ball, Essex County Council's Cabinet Member for Economic Development said that with the increasing need to provide new housing to support Essex's growing population, it is vital that the County Council is able to secure contributions to provide the infrastructure needed to create balanced, well-designed places. The new guide is just one of the Council's commitments to building not just houses but communities for people to live, work and enjoy.

For a link to the Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions and other links to planning advice visit <https://www.essex.gov.uk/planning-advice-guidance/guidance-for-developers>

County Council shares lockdown plans for key services

Following the Prime Minister's announcement that England will enter into a second national lockdown from Thursday 5th November, ECC has been putting plans in place for the continued provision of key services.

The lockdown will have implications for some County Council services, meaning they will be required to adapt their usual operations in order to adhere to new national guidelines.

The second national lockdown won't involve the same level of restrictions introduced in March and wherever possible ECC services will remain in operation. However, in some instances the national guidelines will mean that some will need to be temporarily paused.

From Thursday 5 November:

- **Essex Country Parks** will remain open, including car parks, children's play equipment and toilets. Some cafés will also continue to offer a takeaway service in line with government guidance. All visitors are required to follow government guidelines. More details can be found here <https://www.explore-essex.com/covid-19-updates>
- **Outdoor spaces at Cressing Temple Barns**, including the grounds and restored Tudor Walled Garden, will remain open for the benefit of local communities during the national lockdown.
- **All Essex recycling centres** will remain open as per current operating times. <https://www.loveessex.org/find-your-nearest-recycling-centre/>
- **Public transport** will continue to operate in line with government guidelines.
- **Essex Registration Service** and **Blue Badge Assessments** that take place from libraries will continue to operate. Ceremonies of marriage or civil partnership will be unable to take place. <https://www.essex.gov.uk/topic/births-ceremonies-deaths>
- **Essex Libraries** will be closed to the public in terms of book borrowing. However, some sites will continue to offer public computer use by appointment only. Where possible the Home Library Service will continue. A new click and collect service will be put in place and more details will be shared shortly. The e-library service is still fully accessible. The mobile library service will temporarily be paused. More details can be found here <https://libraries.essex.gov.uk/>
- **Essex Outdoor Centres** and **The Lock climbing wall** will close during the national lockdown. <https://www.essexoutdoors.com/>
- **The Essex Record Office** will be closed, with certificate service available online. <https://www.essexrecordoffice.co.uk/visit-us/coronavirus-latest-information/>

Cllr David Finch, Leader of Essex County Council, said: "We are doing everything we can to ensure vital services remain available to Essex residents through lockdown, in

line with government guidance and where needed are adapting services and putting additional measures in place so that they can keep running.

“We are in a much stronger position than the first lockdown back in March - we know what works and can move quickly to implement the appropriate government guidance, as we receive it.

“I would like to thank our residents, businesses and employees for their patience at this time, and remind everyone that the most important thing is that we all play our part, follow the rules and stick to social distancing guidance – if we do, it will mean we exit this second lockdown as soon as possible. But we can only do this by working together.”

Guidance around Remembrance Sunday had been shared on ECC’s social media channels and by District, Borough and City councils and faith organisations.

Further guidance and updates on any changes to other services will also be shared via ECC’s website <https://www.essex.gov.uk/> and social media channels when it is available.

Latest COVID-19 data for Essex

Weekly COVID-19 data for Essex (excluding Southend and Thurrock) is published every Thursday here: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/local-outbreak-control-plan>

Media outlets are encouraged to use this latest data to ensure the most up-to-date and complete figures are shared with Essex residents.

Cases and rates

In the seven days to 29/10/20, there were 1,482 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Essex. This is the latest date for which complete data is available <https://www.essex.gov.uk/news>

As of 29/10/20, the weekly case rate (the number of cases recorded in the preceding seven days per 100,000 population) for Essex is 99.5. This is the latest date for which complete data is available.

As of 29/10/20, the highest weekly case rates were in Brentwood and Epping Forest, with rates of 214.3 and 157.9, respectively.

Hospitals

As of 03/11/20 there were 210 beds occupied by confirmed COVID-19 patients in Essex hospital trusts. This equates to 7.3% of trust capacity and is nearly 10% higher than one week previous (27/10/20).

Children in Care Project

An Essex-led multi local authority programme developed to improve stability for vulnerable young people in care has been a success according to an independent evaluation interim report. The report was produced by Tavistock and published by the Department for Education on 5th November.

The **Inside Out** project began as a pilot in Essex in July 2018, expanded to Hertfordshire in May 2019 and was rolled out to Norfolk in July 2019. The programme, which was co-designed with children in care, involves providing intensive, targeted support for young people aged 14 ½ – 18 who have experienced multiple foster care or residential care placement breakdowns.

Under the scheme the young people work with a coach from The Children's Society. The coach provides intensive support of up to 25 hours a week for a duration of up to 18 months. Paige, a young person using the scheme, said: "Coach always keeps her promises and helps me. I feel good while talking to her and I know I can trust her."

The evaluation report found that **Inside Out** has achieved positive results for young people over the first 18 months. Data showed that the scheme had increased stability for participants with fewer care placement breakdowns and reduced episodes of young people going missing. Some participants were also able to move back to their birth family with the support provided by the coach.

The scheme reduced behaviours that could lead to child sexual exploitation or criminality and young people reported feeling happier, calmer and less anxious. Social workers also reported increased wellbeing as a result of having the input of another professional to support vulnerable young people.

A cost-benefit analysis estimated that for every £1 invested in the programme, approximately £2.50 of benefits would accrue to the local authority or wider public sector.

Councillor Louise McKinlay, Essex County Council's Cabinet Member for Children and Families said that these results so far were fantastic news and that she was very grateful to everyone involved in setting up the project.

She also said that even in the circumstances in which local authorities currently find themselves, ECC remains absolutely committed to protecting and supporting all young people in Essex and helping them to reach their full potential.

Cllr Teresa Heritage, Hertfordshire County Council's Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families said: "We welcome this evaluation of the Inside Out project, which is offering an innovative approach to supporting some of the most vulnerable young people in Hertfordshire.

"In Hertfordshire we are never complacent about the care of our most vulnerable young people, so being part of a partnership, where we are able to share best

practice and make sure that we are constantly improving the service is excellent. We are pleased to see that the early indicators show this project is making a positive change for young people and helping them reach their potential.”

Cllr John Fisher, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services at Norfolk County Council, said: “This project is demonstrating early success in Norfolk, with greater stability for some of our most vulnerable young people, keeping them safe and helping them to achieve their potential. At a time when we are faced with the impact of Covid-19, it’s testament to the hard work of those involved that we are seeing such positive early results.

“Inside Out is part of our wider work to ensure young people in and leaving our care have access to the very best support. We’ve created our own supported accommodation for care leavers and new enhanced fostering services so that more young people can live in families, rather than in residential care.

Kerry Clancy-Horner, Head of Services for London and the East of England at The Children’s Society, said: “Children in care are among the most vulnerable in our communities and some may be trying to recover from the trauma of abuse or neglect.

“Without the right support, their well-being and life chances can be harmed, some may go missing as a cry for help, and they may be particularly vulnerable to perpetrators who target them for sexual or criminal exploitation.

“We were therefore delighted to be chosen to help deliver the Inside Out programme and are really pleased with the great start it has made in improving life for children in care and setting them on the path to a brighter future.

“This success is testament to fantastic teamwork in designing the programme between placement providers, social care teams at the three local authorities and most importantly of all, the children themselves, whose voices are at the heart of everything we do.”

To read the full evaluation report visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/childrens-social-care-innovation-programme-insights-and-evaluation#history>

