

Coronavirus update

Colchester, Uttlesford and Tendring to move to Tier 4 on Boxing Day

Dear resident,

We all expected this Christmas to be different. Alongside that, it will also be disrupted and difficult for many, especially for those who live alone. The government announced today that [Colchester, Tendring and Uttlesford will join the rest of Essex in Tier 4 restrictions](#) from 00:01 on Saturday 26 December (Boxing Day).

We are offering as much support as possible to the vulnerable and lonely this Christmas. You can read about the help on offer in this newsletter. Please, if you know someone who would benefit, do pass the information on.

While this Christmas will not be all that many of us would have wanted, it is important to remember that one year's disruption to plans will mean that we are able to enjoy the festive season with family and friends in years to come.

The [Tier 4 restrictions](#) are there for a reason, and it is vital that we follow them, stay safe and follow all the social distancing guidelines so we protect our friends and families.

We must remember that the advice is to stay at home, only go out for essentials such as food or medicine, and there can be no mixing of households – even on Christmas Day if you are already in Tier 4.

If you have a childcare or support bubble, you will be reassured to know that [these bubbles are still in place in Tier 4](#) and so you can get the help that you rely on.

The light at the end of the tunnel, however, grows ever brighter with more and more people across the county being vaccinated against Covid-19 every day. As we welcome 2021, the prospect of a return to a more normal way of life grows every day. This is what we must all look forward to.

My best wishes for a peaceful Christmas and a happier New Year.

Cllr David Finch,

Leader of Essex County Council.

Case and hospital data for Essex

You can find the latest [Covid case and hospital data for Essex](#) on our website.

Testing for secondary school age children

The government advises immediate testing for families with secondary school age children in Harlow, Epping Forest, Brentwood, Basildon, Castle Point or Rochford to book a test, whether they have symptoms or not. [Find out who should book a test and how.](#)

Fast testing centres open in Basildon, Pitsea and Brentwood

New fast testing centres have opened in Basildon, Pitsea and Brentwood for those who do not have symptoms of Covid. These centres give test results in around 30 minutes. You will be contacted if you are eligible to book a test without having symptoms. Find out more about the [new fast testing centres and who is eligible for a test.](#)

If you live anywhere else in Essex, you should [book a test](#) on gov.uk only if you develop symptoms.

Changes to our services

[Essex Country Parks](#) remain open. Cafes and attractions are closed.

The grounds, gardens and toilets at Cressing Temple Barns remain open. The tearoom and buildings are closed.

[Recycling centres for household waste](#) remain open across Essex. Please follow the 'Stay at Home' advice and only visit a recycling centre if it is essential. If you are living in a Tier 2 area of Essex you cannot visit a recycling centre in a Tier 4 area, and vice versa.

[Essex Outdoor Centres](#) and The Lock climbing wall are closed.

The [Essex Record Office](#) is closed.

[Essex Libraries](#) in Tier 4 areas are closed. However, public computer access is still available by appointment only and residents can still collect their reservations. In districts currently in Tier 2 (Colchester, Tendring and Uttlesford), most Essex Libraries will be open until 1pm on Christmas Eve.

[The Registration Service](#), including those that operate from Essex Libraries, are open as normal for birth registrations and notice of marriage or civil partnership appointments.

Weddings and civil partnership ceremonies in Tier 4 areas cannot take place except in exceptional circumstances.

In line with their usual Christmas and New Year operating times, [Essex Highways](#), will also temporarily pause nearly all non-emergency road works from 23 December to 4 January. However, in exceptional cases and for public safety, traffic management cones and barriers or temporary lights will remain on site.

Support for residents

Looking after your mental health

Not everyone feels in the festive mood over Christmas at the best of times. After the year we've had, more of us may find our mental health affected by loss, loneliness, family, work or financial stress. Feelings of grief, anger, confusion, anxiety or being overwhelmed are natural, so don't be afraid to reach out for help if you need it.

See our website for:

- [support for children and families](#)
- [mental health support for adults](#)
- [mental health emergency or crisis help](#)

If you are feeling suicidal or need to talk to someone, you can call the Samaritans free on [116 123](#) or NHS 111.

Guidance for the clinically extremely vulnerable in Tier 4

If you are clinically extremely vulnerable and live in a Tier 4 area, you are advised to stay at home as much as possible. You can go outside, but try to keep all contact with others outside of your household to a minimum, and avoid busy areas.

You should work from home if you can. If you cannot work from home, do not attend your place of work.

You are advised not to go to the shops. Use online shopping if you can, or ask others to collect and deliver shopping for you (friends and family, or [NHS Volunteer Responders](#)).

You can [register to request access to priority supermarket deliveries](#), if you do not have someone you can rely on to go shopping for you.

If your child is classed as clinically extremely vulnerable, they should follow shielding advice and should not attend school. Their school or college will make appropriate arrangements for them to be able to continue their education at home.

Read the [government guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable people in Tier 4](#).

Read the [government guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable people in Tier 2](#).

Get shielding support from the Essex Wellbeing Service

The National Shielding Service has been reactivated and, at a local level, the Essex Wellbeing Service (EWS) can provide vulnerable Essex residents with a single point of access to practical, emotional and specialist support.

Practical support on offer ranges from help accessing priority supermarket shopping slots, volunteers collecting medicines and befriending support with a phone buddy.

Visit the [Essex Wellbeing Service](#) website or call 0300 303 9988.

Get help with bills and household items from the Essential Living Fund

If you are struggling to pay for bills and household items, you can get help from the Essex Essential Living Fund. It could help you pay for furniture, clothing, fuel connection charges, food and toiletries.

[Apply for the Essential Living Fund](#) through Southend Borough Council. You must live in Essex, Southend or Thurrock to apply.

Test and Trace Support Payment

If you're asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and you're on a low income, unable to work from home and will lose income as a result, you may be entitled to a payment of £500 from your [local authority under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme](#).

Be aware of vaccination scams

You will be invited for a Covid vaccination from the NHS if you are eligible. Vaccinations are free and you will never be asked to pay.

Our Trading Standards team has found that residents across Essex are receiving texts asking them to book and pay for their vaccination. This is a scam: do not give any personal information or enter your payment details. Please make sure older or vulnerable friends and family are aware of this.

If you receive a message asking you to pay for a vaccination, [report it to the Citizens Advice Service](#) or call 08082 231 133.

Free school meals vouchers during school holidays

Essex County Council has launched a Christmas free school meals programme and sent vouchers to parents of eligible children and qualifying young people last week.

It means the families of 35,000 children and young people will have £30 per child to spend on food over the two-week holiday.

Find out more about the [free school meals vouchers](#) on our website.

Keep children safe online this festive season

If your child receives a device for Christmas, it's important to set it up correctly to keep them safe online.

Essex Safeguarding Children's Board (ESCB) is running a series of podcasts, webinars and social media events to help parents and carers keep their children safe online. Find out more about [online safety](#) on the ESCB website.

Resolving conflict at home

We all experience arguments at one time or another, but lots of families face additional pressures during the festive season. How parents interact with each other, regardless of whether they are together or not, has a big impact on children.

Find advice for healthy family relationships on the [Livewell](#) website.

Love Local and support Essex businesses

Businesses need our support more than ever. Let's champion the products, produce and people of Essex and find creative ways to support local businesses.

Look for new ways to shop local online and order food from local restaurants, cafes and pubs for delivery or takeaway.

For more ideas and tips to support local businesses safely, visit [Love Local](#) on our website.



Support for businesses

Apply for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS)

A new £1million loan fund to help business during the current Covid-19 restrictions has been unlocked thanks to a £200,000 investment from Essex County Council.

Businesses in Essex which need financial support are urged to apply to this loan fund, which has been specifically ring-fenced for use by firms in the county. [Find out more about CBILS](#) in our recent announcement.

Government extends furlough scheme

The government has extended the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme (CJRS) - also known as the furlough scheme - to the end of April 2021.

As well as full-time employees, you can furlough office holders, company directors and agency workers. Read more about [who you can claim furlough for](#) and check with your accountant.

Government extends Self-Employed Income Support Scheme

The Self-Employed Income Support Scheme will now run until April 2021. Grants will be paid in 2 lump sum instalments each covering a 3 month period from November to April.

To be eligible for the extension, you must have been eligible for the previous two grants under this scheme. Find out [if you are eligible](#) on GOV.UK.

Christmas Support Payment (CSP) for wet-led pubs

The Christmas Support Payment for wet-led pubs supports pubs that predominantly serve alcohol rather than food and have been severely impacted over the festive season due to temporary local restrictions.

Eligible businesses may be entitled to a one-off cash grant of £1,000 from their local council in areas under Tier 2, 3 or 4 restrictions.

Find out more about the [CSP](#) on GOV.UK.

Find more business support schemes

Find out [what financial support you can get for your business](#) on GOV.UK.

[Sign up to our business newsletter](#) to receive regular updates about Covid support schemes and the Brexit Transition.

