

Your Essex



Welcome to the May edition of Your Essex. In this edition, we're sharing plenty of things to do and see this spring as well as news from our services across the council.

Please avoid visiting our recycling centres this weekend. They are currently very busy and we are expecting long queues over the bank holiday. Make use of your kerbside collections and donate or give away unwanted items instead of throwing them away.

Skip to what you're interested in:

- [Covid-19 update](#)
- [Going green](#)
- [Be inspired](#)
- [Children and families](#)
- [Roads and infrastructure](#)
- [Business and economy](#)
- [Strengthening our communities](#)
- [Have your say](#)

Covid-19 update

Collect self-test kits from a local library or pharmacy

You are now able to get self-test kits to test yourself and your family for Covid-19 at home. Regular self-testing will help you stay safe and stop the spread of the virus.

You can get packs of self-test kits by:

- [collecting self-test kits](#) from participating libraries and pharmacies
- [ordering self-test kits online](#) from GOV.UK

Follow the testing instructions to log your result every time you take a test. If you need help to collect or order tests or assistance with a test, call 119.

If you have Covid-19 symptoms or if you test positive from a test kit at home, you should [book a follow-up test on GOV.UK](#) or call 119.

Councils make it easier to get financial support to self-isolate



We have worked with local city, district and borough councils to make it easier for you to get a £500 support payment if you are self-isolating.

You must self-isolate for 10 days if you or someone you've had contact with tests positive for Covid-19.

You may be eligible for a discretionary payment if you:

- are employed, including self-employed or on a zero hours contract
- earn less than £500 a week net
- have household savings less than £16,000 and
- unable to work from home
- are the parent or guardian of a child or young person told to self-isolate and you need to take time off to look after them (you must also meet the other criteria).

Find out more about [self-isolation support payments and how to apply](#) on our website.

People aged 40 and over can now book their Covid-19 vaccine

If you are aged 40 or over, or you turn 40 before 1 July 2021, you can [book your Covid-19 vaccine](#) through the NHS or call 119.

There are limited appointments available so please book your first dose if you have not yet had it. If you can't find a suitable appointment, keep checking the NHS booking system for availability.

Going green

Our ambitious plans to tackle climate change

We're planning to plant 50,000 trees, set up new electric vehicle charging stations and introduce energy-saving LED street lighting across the county.

Read more about our [ambitious new plans to tackle climate change](#).

Try home composting this spring

Composting is a natural process that turns your food and garden waste into soil improver for your garden. By composting at home, you can reduce the amount of waste needed to be processed elsewhere.



In Essex, food and garden waste makes up 25% of the general waste we throw away. [Get started with home composting and buy a subsidised compost bin for your garden](#) for as little as £10 (excluding delivery).

Claim a £30 refund on cloth nappies in Essex



Cloth nappies provide a great alternative to disposable nappies and can offer [great cost, health and environmental benefits](#). That's why we're giving £30 refunds on the purchase of any cloth nappies in the last year.

[Apply for your cloth nappy refund](#) on the Love Essex website. All you need is a receipt showing you paid £30 or more for cloth nappies in the last 12 months.

How people in Essex are making their homes greener

The first energy efficient home upgrades under the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme have been completed.

John Davies of Clacton (pictured) has had external wall insulation fitted to raise his [Energy Performance Certificate \(EPC\)](#) from E to D. This will lower his energy bills and carbon dioxide emissions while keeping his home warmer.



The scheme aims to reduce the number of people living in cold and poorly insulated homes. You can get up to £10,000 of energy improvements free of charge to keep your home warmer, cut your energy bills and lower carbon emissions.

[Find out more about the scheme](#) and make your family and friends aware that they could apply too. To be eligible for the funding you must own a house in Essex with an EPC rating of E, F or G, and have a household income below £30,000.

Be inspired this spring



Connect with nature at the new Infinity Forest in Danbury Country Park

The INSTAR Infinity Project at Danbury County Park (pictured) examines people's connections with the natural world through contemporary art. It promotes the importance of trees in helping to combat climate change, as well as how they provide a positive legacy.

[Find out more and plan a visit to the Infinity Forest.](#)

Discover Essex with Explorer magazine

In the spring issue of Essex Explorer, you can discover the history of Mountnessing Windmill and pick up gardening tips from the Head Gardener at Cressing Temple Barns.

Read about Essex Record Office's work for Sainsbury's supermarket's 150th anniversary and try a tasty recipe from Tiptree Tea Rooms.

Read more about the mental health benefits of connecting with nature in the spring feature as well as extracts from Chris Packham and Megan McCubbin's *Back to Nature*.

[Read Essex Explorer](#) on the Explore Essex website.



Volunteer to help children grow their passion for reading

We need volunteers who want to inspire children to read this summer.

The Summer Reading Challenge encourages children to read six books during the summer holidays. You'll help children join the challenge, talk to them about the books they read and help them grow their passion for reading at your local library.

[Apply to be a Summer Reading Challenge volunteer](#) on the Essex Libraries website.

Uncover the small businesses of Essex



There's no better way to discover the character of Essex than by visiting locally-owned shops, outdoor attractions, restaurants and venues. Now they've reopened, let's support the places, people and products that make Essex unique.

Visit [Love Local](#) to find out how you can find and support more small businesses in your area.

Be part of the Life in Lockdown exhibition

How did you entertain yourself during lockdown? Did you make banana bread? Knit outfits for your family? Uncover new parts of your neighbourhood?

Essex Libraries is inviting you to contribute your personal examples of life in lockdown to a new exhibition.

Your contribution can be anything you've made, learned or experienced during lockdown. [Find out how to contribute](#) on the Essex Libraries website.



Get creative with Discover Magazine



The first edition of [Discover Magazine](#) is jam-packed with creative ideas, craft tips and great stories from the staff, learners and partners at ACL Essex. It reveals how to enter ACL's latest competitions, and features all the details of upcoming courses.

Pick up your copy of Discover Magazine from supermarkets, ACL centres and libraries across Essex - while stocks last!

[ACL Essex](#) is the largest provider of adult education in the county and its creative online courses have been a huge hit during the pandemic. ACL also offers a wide range of employment courses and academic qualifications.

Support a good cause near you for £1 per week

The Remus Memorial Horse Sanctuary provides lifetime care for animals that have experienced abuse. It has relied on funding raised through the Essex Lottery to provide the best care possible for its animals during the pandemic.

One of the most touching examples of the sanctuary's work is of two horses, Hollie and Grace. They were found abandoned, heavily pregnant and deliberately blinded. Now, the two mares are best friends and live in a spacious paddock with their foals. With the help of staff and volunteers at the sanctuary, they've learnt to do all the things that sighted horses can do.



Read more about the [Remus Memorial Horse Sanctuary and how you can support them](#). You can help keep the grassroots causes of Essex alive for just £1 a week, plus you might win a cash prize of up to £25,000.

Children and families

Every family matters this Mental Health Awareness Week

Whilst the easing of national Covid-19 restrictions is an exciting prospect for many, it might feel overwhelming for others, particularly children and younger people.

This Mental Health Awareness Week (10-16 May), we're encouraging families to discover how connecting with nature can be beneficial to their mental health and wellbeing. From going for walks in your local park to creating a flower bed in your garden. Interacting with nature is proven to help improve your wellbeing and reduce anxiety.

If you or your child are feeling anxious or need advice, you can call the [Essex Wellbeing Service](#) on 0300 303 9988 for support in a range of areas including mental health and wellbeing. You can also visit the [staying well](#) pages on our website for more resources and services.

Keeping young people safe on public transport

The Essex Children's Safeguarding Board (ECSB) and its partners are working with local businesses and transport networks to help safeguard young people.

Vulnerable young people often visit transport stations because they are busy places that provide shelter and access to food and drink. But these locations can make them easy targets for criminal or sexual exploitation.

The ESCB is raising awareness of the dangers and helping young people spot the signs of exploitation among their friends.

Find out more about [safeguarding vulnerable young people](#) on public transport.

Join the Essex Working Parents group

Are you a working parent looking for help to navigate work and family life?

The [Essex is Supporting Working Parents](#) Facebook group is a community space of tips, information and advice on everything from finance and education to mental health. Join the group if you're looking for useful guidance and information but also to vent, laugh and bond with other working parents.

Roads and infrastructure



The roads we are resurfacing next

If your home has wooden windows, you'll know the battle to stop decay. Filling and painting will do the job for a while, but eventually it makes better sense to replace them.

Our roads are similar. We often fix individual potholes, but inspections, reports and technical scans can show it is more economical to resurface them entirely. Resurfaced roads are safer and more water resistant for years to come.

Our main road resurfacing programme started in April. View our [interactive map to see which roads we have resurfaced and where we are resurfacing next](#).

Visit our new and improved Essex Highways website

We have made our Essex Highways website clearer, easier to use and more accessible to residents.

It's now easier to [tell us about a problem with a road and track your query](#).

£2.5 million for electric transport schemes

Rural Mobility Funded (RMF) projects in mid Essex will trial on-demand transport solutions in rural and suburban areas. The aim is to see if these work better for residents than traditional transport services, such as timetabled bus services.

Read more about the [funding for electric transport schemes](#).

Our plans to transform Harlow

We are planning to transform Harlow's infrastructure and build major housing developments, bringing thousands of new jobs and homes to the area.

Read more about the [agreement to unlock more than £170 million with Hertfordshire County Council](#).

Modern new library for Shenfield



A new modern library, with a spacious design informed by the community, has moved a step closer for residents of Shenfield. We're planning to replace the current building with a larger and more flexible library, build a commercial unit and community meeting space, and upgrade the outdoor public area.

Read more about the [planning application for Shenfield Library](#) on our website.

Business and economy

Apply for a business support grant

We have made more funding available to support businesses that have suffered from Covid-19 restrictions. You may be eligible for a discretionary grant or the Essex County Council Business Adaptation Grant, which can help you make changes to your operations or premises.

Megarrys Antiques and Teashop in Blackmore used the Business Adaptation Grant to buy an iPad and e-payment machine, and a gazebo and large umbrella for its takeaway stall. "The grant process was very easy and the people at Brentwood District Council were extremely helpful," said Judi, the owner of Megarrys. "It really helped to cushion the process of getting back to normal trading."

[Find out more and how to apply for a grant.](#)

Apply for the Essex Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS)

The CBILS scheme offers loans repayable over up to six years with any interest and fees during the first 12-months paid for by the government. You can also get additional business mentoring support from Essex County Council through the Back to Business initiative.

Find out more about [CBILS and how to apply](#).

Submit a bid to work on the UK Community Renewal Fund

The government has committed funding to helping areas around the country recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. In Essex, we're going to help Harlow and Tendring bounce back.

We're a lead authority and are seeking bids from organisations that want to deliver activity as part of the UK Community Renewal Fund.

[Find out more and how to submit a bid.](#)

Find careers, employers and virtual experiences

[Essex Opportunities](#) can help you find local jobs, apprenticeships and courses.

You can find guidance on career changes, self-employment and new sectors, as well as get help finding a job.

Essex Opportunities was developed in partnership with Southend Borough Council, local businesses, colleges and training providers.



Get redundancy support

If you have been worried about redundancy or have recently lost your job, you can get funded skills training, retraining and careers guidance to help get you back into employment.

Find out more about the [Skills Support for Redundancy programme](#) on the Essex Opportunities website.

Strengthening our communities

Donate to our laptops for schools scheme

We have restarted our appeal for old laptops to donate to children and help them study. Anyone with an old or unused laptop can drop it off at their local library during opening hours.

Find out more about the [laptops for schools scheme and how to donate](#).

Help for people with health, housing or financial issues

Our Floating Support Service can help anyone solve issues to feel more confident, are able to live more independently and can access support services within their local community.

[Find out more and get help](#).

New Safety Advisory Group to tackle safety concerns in Essex

The Safety Advisory Group will work with partners, residents and council officials to tackle safety concerns, in particular those of female residents.

Find out more about the [Safety Advisory Group](#).

Successful bidders for roll-out of innovative care technology

We have had successful bidders to deliver countywide care technology services following the conclusion of a tender process.

The innovative technologies will support adults in their own homes and could include telecare, assistive technologies, remote monitoring and mobile apps.

Read more about [who will deliver the care technology services](#).

Have your say

Tell us how you think we should tackle climate change

The Essex Climate Action Commission needs your views on its plans to tackle climate change. Your views will help us decide the best ways to fight climate change and become a net-zero county by 2050.

[Find out more and have your say on the climate recommendations](#) by the 4 May.

Tell us how Covid-19 has impacted your employment

Please [tell us about your experiences of employment over the last year](#). We want to understand how your employment has been impacted by Covid-19 and what support might help in the future.

The survey gives you the option to volunteer for an online interview or focus group. If you are selected to take part, we will give you a £10 supermarket voucher as a thank you.

If you have any questions, contact research@essex.gov.uk.

