

How to Support Residents Through a Covid Christmas: Covid Update 71



Dear Chairman, Councillors, Clerks and Affiliates

In the event that your Clerk has already finished for the year, and is now on annual leave, please can Chair's/ Vice Chair's forward this message onto Council members and local residents. It is very important that we help spread the word on this matter.

The Essex Association of Local Councils have put together some details of helpful organisations which can support your residents throughout the Christmas and new years period. This time of year can ordinarily be hard for many people, but will prove particularly challenging given the backdrop of Covid-19 and it's tightening restrictions. Please therefore find below, and feel free to share and forward on, the details of links to resident support networks and community groups. We also encourage you to disseminate this information via community notice boards and your social media channels.

Samaritans

The Samaritans are a wonderful registered charity which aim to provide emotional support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope, or at risk of suicide throughout the United Kingdom, often through their telephone helpline. Whatever your residents are going through, a Samaritan will face it with them. They're here 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and are well trained for the rise in reports of suicidal thoughts which happen during the Christmas period. Call 116 123 for free to get help. You can also email jo@samaritans.org and you will receive a response within 24 hours. The Samaritans also have a self-help app which can help you keep track of how you're feeling, and get recommendations for things you can do to help yourself cope, feel better and stay safe in a crisis. NHS 111 can also give you someone to talk to in the event that you are having suicidal thoughts and would like to seek different approach to accessing support.

CALM

The Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) is a leading movement against suicide. Through this challenging time they are currently supporting more people than ever before through by taking far more calls and web-chats than usual. If you need help, are worried about someone, need support after someone you know has committed suicide or need help and support on some other specific issue then CALM can help. Please find the following link to learn more about CALM and access expert counselling: <https://www.thecalmzone.net>. Alternatively, call 0800 58 58 58 from 5 pm to midnight, 365 days a year. Text 'SHOUT' if you need immediate support from a mental health counsellor.

Bills, Food & Household Essentials Support

If you're struggling to pay household bills because of the pandemic this Christmas, emergency help is available. You can apply to the Essential Living Fund for help with energy and water bills, food and household essentials. For more information, visit Essex County Council's [Emergency Support](#) page or call 0300 7900124. Other support for residents is available on their website over this period.

Essex Wellbeing Service

The Essex Wellbeing Service offers free support with practical tasks, mental health, feelings of loneliness, debt, housing, employment, caring responsibilities and more. Please visit the [Essex Wellbeing Service](#) website or call 0300 303 9988 for more information and details of how you and your residents can access support over the coming weeks. Please also find attached a toolkit the Essex Wellbeing Service have produced to help local Councils inform residents about community welfare this Christmas. It provides a number of resources which can be emailed to residents and posted to social media.

Community Led Support

Please remember to look out for your neighbours and local community members. It is perhaps one of the most fundamental, but most forgotten parts of supporting residents at the moment. Please encourage your residents to ring up their neighbours and check in on how they're doing. Encourage them to do the Christmas shop for those who are elderly, disabled or otherwise unable to do it themselves. Make sure also that the neighbours receive a call on Christmas day to give them some social interaction and stop them from feeling too lonely. In addition, it is very important that older residents who struggle with technology can be kept informed. Please therefore ensure that Council notice boards are fully updated before Christmas and reflect support numbers which residents can access.

Live Well, Link Well

Live Well, Link Well can really help residents to get non-medical support which can improve their lifestyles and help them to lead longer, happier lives. This number will give you access to Community Agents, Learning Disability support, Blue Badges, Mental Health support and lots. There is one number to call, and then the resident will be triaged to the correct agency. Please contact 0300 303 9988 to access this support.

Christmas Mental Health

Not everyone feels in the festive mood over Christmas at the best of times. After the year we've all 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. Essex County Councils Adult Mental Health team is working up to the close of business 24th December and is then open again on the 30th & 31st December. Access to emergency services and crisis support are available throughout. Please visit their website to find out more about:

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

Government Guidance

Changes in government guidance over what the tiers mean for residents and what is permitted over Christmas can change very quickly. We won't therefore provide advice on the new rules as the information is fast changing and may quickly become outdated. Please instead find the following link to the governments guidance for the Christmas period: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-the-christmas-period>.

Essex County Council

To see the latest news and updates from Essex County Council on Covid-19, the Christmas period and various other areas of public interest, please visit <https://www.essex.gov.uk/latest-news>. This website is updated on a daily basis.

The National Association of Local Councils

To see the latest news and updates from the National Association of Local Councils on Covid-19, the Christmas period and various other areas of public interest, please visit <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/news>. This website is updated on a daily basis.

United in Kind

Social isolation and loneliness can have a devastating effect on our Health & Wellbeing (particularly over Christmas). Research has shown that over 60% of adults in Essex consider themselves to be lonely or socially isolated from their Communities. United in Kind are therefore interested in helping those individuals who are most at risk over the coming weeks; the elderly and carers as well as those with mental health issues, learning disabilities/ special educational needs and Autism. Details of district based contacts can be found below.

Basildon District - Ali Perrott: 07458 300899, ali.perrott@ceessex.org.uk
Braintree District - Jayne Laken: 07458 300903, Jayne.laken@ceessex.org.uk
Brentwood District - Donna Reilly: 07458 300901, donna.reilly@ceessex.org.uk
Castle Point District - Anna Wilson: 07458 300 anna.wilson@ceessex.org.uk
Chelmsford District - Stella Scrivener: 07458 300902, stella.scrivener@ceessex.org.uk
Colchester Borough - H Goodwin: 07458 300894, h.goodwin@ceessex.org.uk
Epping Forest - Nick Robinson: 07849 087920, nick.robinson@westessexcan.org
Harlow - Sarah Ayling: sarah.ayling@westessexcan.org
Maldon District - Amy Melton: 07458 300900, amy.melton@ceessex.org.uk
Rochford District - Corrina O'Donnell: Corrina.odonnell@ceessex.org.uk
Tendring District - Suzanne Howe: 07458 300898, Suzanne.howe@ceessex.org.uk
Uttlesford District - Kim Clark: Tel: 07849 087991, kim.clark@westessexcan.org

I hope that the above information will be of use to your residents. Please forward it on to them where appropriate to help support them through this challenging time. I hope that where possible, you are able to have a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

With kind regards,

Elaine Haines

Communications Officer

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Tel: 01371 879722

Working Hours:

Monday – Thursday: 9am – 5pm

Friday: 8:30am – 4pm

