

It is clear that as the government advise older and vulnerable people to social distance that local communities can step up and help with simple support tasks including shopping.

There is a strong voluntary sector in Essex including faith groups, parishes, well established third sector groups and communities themselves. There has already been a strong reaction from the people of Essex stepping forward to help and we need to encourage and support all these local actions. Recent events mean too that we have had to do this at pace to ensure support will be available for people.

One key approach has been Essex County Council working in partnership with Facebook, local Facebook Admins and Community Groups to develop a social media campaign that seeks to build community resilience and community through the Essex Coronavirus Action Group.

It is a largely Facebook based initiative and can be found here:

https://www.facebook.com/essexcoronavirusaction/?epa=SEARCH_BOX

The initiative consists of the Facebook page above, which has been authenticated by Facebook with the blue ticks to endorse it as a validated and secure information source.

Essex Coronavirus Action looks to carry out three core objectives in relation to the ongoing Covid-19 outbreak - PREVENT, INFORM and ASSIST.

PREVENT - The latest NHS-approved advice about how to avoid exposing yourself to Covid-19 and passing it on to other more vulnerable people. Key messages will include:

- Consider your actions
- Basic hygiene advice
- Think of others and be 'United in Kindness'
- Think of people who may be social distancing and isolated; connect and reach out to your them safely

INFORM - The latest information to debunk the many viral myths on social media about Covid-19. Key messages will include:

- Get your information from Essex Coronavirus Action
- Make the most of online groups
- Keep up to date with official sources of information through this page and join Essex Coronavirus Action group

ASSIST - A local authority-backed mobilisation of local Facebook groups to ensure that the most vulnerable members of Essex and their carers get the urgent help that they need, both practically and emotionally. Key messages will include:

- Share accurate, information and advice
- Support anyone who may be anxious and signpost to Essex Coronavirus Action for up to date information
- Sign up as a volunteer to help people in your community with daily tasks such as
- Helping with:
 - Shopping
 - Transport
 - Being a phone buddy
 - Being a Facebook buddy
 - Posting mail
 - Urgent supplies

- Feeding
- Hydration
- Carer support

We additionally need to encourage, amplify and support local action and have set up a Facebook Group that connects to the page that will enable Facebook Admins and VCS organisations in this space to connect and come together to share ideas and an approach to supporting those who may be self- isolating.

We will adopt a local first approach to mutual aid and will seek to direct people to the following:

- An authenticated Facebook Group
- CVS/Volunteer Centre

We would also seek to work with our district partners to ascertain which trusted local partner they are choosing to work with and encourage them to engage with the Essex CoronaVirus Action Page and groups.

Local first is important to us, particularly at the mobilisation stage of this challenge.

To this end we are creating a local action group database that will need to be populated as soon as possible. I will ensure that we circulate the sign up form this morning. The form will also be on the Essex Coronavirus Action Page and associated admin group today. This will be an organic document and we will adopt a common sense approach with this work, it will be as solid as it can be.

The intent is to then share the database of public facing VCS and Facebook Groups who are supporting or re-purposing to support those who are self- isolating or vulnerable to access their own support.

Where we are unable to facilitate or stream people into a local approach we can use our existing single point of access to ensure we can support people effectively at this time.

Assist is a key part of our approach and we have set up a means for people to register their interest as a volunteer. In less than 24 hours we have signed up 1,200 volunteers across Essex.

Although common sense is essential -we recognise that DBS checks maybe required for some daily living tasks and we are seeking to work with the Tribe project. The Tribe Project provided by Bronze labs is a secure app that can sit within the Facebook platform, it is able to confirm if a volunteer is DBS checked or not. It can also rapidly process a DBS check. The app provides a safe interface with volunteers who are geo located and allows those people who require support to confirm if they would like someone to be DBS checked, not DBS checked or if they would prefer a volunteer who had already had Covid-19. The system can support with DBS checking those volunteers who have already signed up to our existing form.

Essex Coronavirus Action has reached 25,0000 people and has 12,000 people signed up to a mutual aid group. The pages and groups are administered by trusted Facebook Admins, the ECC Communities and Communications team.

A big Thankyou for all the excellent work you are doing – please stay safe and well.
#Unitedinkind #Essexcoronavirusaction