

County Councillor's report, November 2020

County Council to focus on supporting business and communities during national restrictions

Cllr David Finch, Leader of Essex County Council, said: "As we enter the second national lockdown, our focus will be on supporting Essex's businesses and communities through the next month, and on planning for Essex to come out of lockdown as strongly as possible

"In order to come out of lockdown at the earliest opportunity, we need to remind residents that compliance with the new arrangements from this Thursday is absolutely key. We all need to play our part, and if we do, we believe that the extra restrictions we will be living under will do their job, and that the infection rate will have fallen sufficiently for us to exit lockdown.

"Because we had entered Tier 2 restrictions earlier in Essex in order to limit the increase in the infection rate, we are confident that when England exits the lockdown, the County will be well placed to recommend to government that we go into the lowest level of restrictions.

"In the meantime we will continue to consult with the business community in terms of what financial help and support will work best for them, and we will be announcing further support for families and vulnerable people, including people who are more at risk from Coronavirus or are clinically extremely vulnerable in the coming days."

Guidance on the upcoming national restrictions from Thursday 5th November can be found [here](#).

Prime Minister announces national lockdown

The Prime Minister has confirmed that from Thursday 5 November until Wednesday 2 December, England will be in lockdown.

This means there are new restrictions and guidelines for Essex residents and businesses to follow.

From Thursday 5 November:

- People must stay at home as much as possible except for education purposes; for work if you cannot work from home; for exercise and recreation outdoors; for medical reasons; to shop for food and essentials; to care for others
- Non-essential shops will be closed
- Hospitality venues will be closed, but takeaways can remain open
- Support bubbles will still be allowed which means a single person household can meet and socialise with another household. Children will be able to move homes if their parents are separated
- Schools, colleges and universities will remain open

The government has also announced that it will extend its furlough scheme throughout November to support businesses.

GOV.UK has guidance on the [new national restrictions](#).

County Council welcomes Government support for Essex businesses

Essex County Council, alongside MPs, Essex businesses and all councils in Essex, wrote to the government to set out the case for greater business support for High local Covid alert level areas.

On Thursday 22 October, the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, delivered a statement to the House of Commons on the economic support for businesses in these areas.

Before this announcement, no area in the country in the High local Covid alert level was receiving this support.

The Chancellor announced three steps that the government would be taking, including:

- A new grant scheme for businesses who have been impacted by tier 2 restrictions, even if they have not been forced to close. Local authorities will be funded so that they can provide cash grants to local businesses. It would be up to local authorities to decide how best to distribute the grants.
- A more generous Job Support Scheme where employees now have to work 20 per cent of normal hours, as opposed to 33 per cent previous. The revised scheme will also see employer contributions for the hours not worked reduce significantly from 33 per cent as originally planned, to 5 per cent. This scheme will apply to all eligible businesses in all alert levels.
- An increase in contributions to the incomes of the self-employed. The government will be doubling the next round of self-employed income support from 20 per cent to 40 per cent of people's incomes. Increasing the maximum grant to £3,750.

In addition, following this announcement and due to the county's move to the High local Covid alert level, Essex's hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses are now able to secure government support of up to £2,100 per month, which was not available when the county was in the medium level.

Essex County Council has also now received confirmation that it expects to receive £4.5m as a result of moving into high local Covid alert level. This funding will be specifically earmarked for supporting vulnerable groups and workplaces. The County Council will now work through how and when this funding will be distributed

Covid cases weekly update

From today, Thursday 29 October, the [latest Covid data for Essex](#) will be published weekly on a Thursday.

This is to ensure the most up to date and complete data is provided to residents.

Summary

It has been two weeks since Essex was placed into High local Covid alert level. We would not have expected to see any impact from moving alert level at this early stage. This is because given the epidemiology any impact will not be seen until at least 3-4 weeks following the date we moved into High.

Cases and rates

Case numbers show a further significant rise across nearly all parts of the county. In the seven days to 22/10/20, there were 1,596 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Essex. This is the latest date for which complete data is available.

As at 22/10/20, the weekly case rate (the number of cases recorded in the preceding seven days per 100,000 population) for Essex is 107.2. This is the latest date for which complete data is available.

As at 22/10/20, the highest weekly case rates were in Brentwood and Castle Point, with rates of 154.5 and 150.5, respectively.

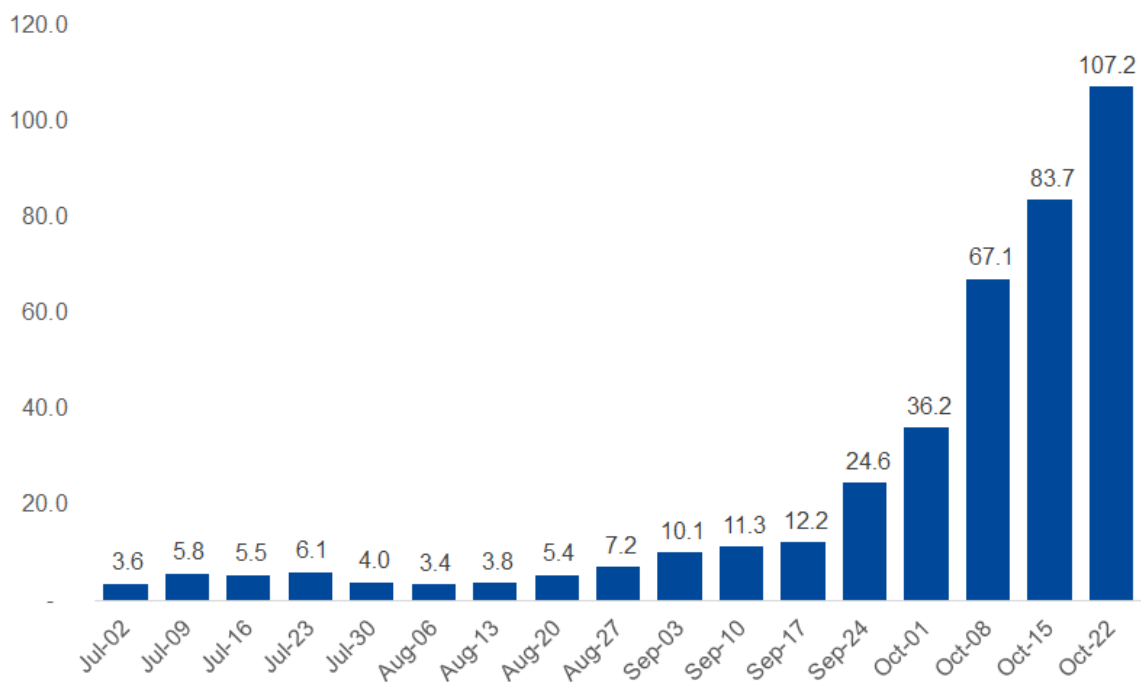
Numbers in the lowest age groups have flattened or declined, though the increase among older age groups is greater than the all age average.

Hospitals

Hospital occupancy continues to increase significantly. As at 27/10/20 there were 191 beds occupied by confirmed COVID-19 patients in Essex hospital trusts. This is nearly 55% higher than one week previous (20/10/20).

Dr Mike Gogarty, ECC's Director of Public Health, has [explained the latest data](#).

Data: cases in Essex, per 100,000 per week



This chart shows the number of new COVID-19 cases recorded in the previous seven days per 100,000. For example, 15 October relates to 9 October to 15 October.

Please note there is a time lag in data coming through.