

ESSEX CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL



Message to care Leavers

We wanted to get in touch to let you know that because of the situation with coronavirus there might be some changes in the way we keep in touch.

Keeping in touch is important for you and for us and if we are not able to do face to face visits there are lots of other ways we can keep in touch. It might be that together we decide to talk over the phone, text, Facetime.

Where we do still see each other we will be following NHS and Public Health England advice about infection control, we need to make sure we wash our hands and maintaining a safe distance where possible.

If you have symptoms and need to isolate, please let us know so we can both keep safe and make alternative arrangements to keep in touch.

We are always here for you to talk with about any worries and concerns you might have and are happy to work together to think through ways we can keep in touch.

Please contact us for help and support through this uncertain and challenging time. If you cant get hold of your worker please leave a message and they will get back to you as soon as they can. If you cant get hold of them then a duty social worker will be able to support you, you can contact them on the Duty number.

If your case has been closed please do make sure you contact your local office and speak with a leaving and Aftercare worker there, who will try to help you, or call the Duty Team

You could also contact the Involvement Service on involvement@essex.gov.uk

In the mean time please make sure you are following the advice. Stay Home. Save Lives.

We have attached some information that you might find useful:

The latest advice on coronavirus (COVID-19) is available on the [Public Health England](#) (PHE) and [NHS](#) websites.

Advice and Support :

Social Care: If your social worker is not available you can contact the Duty Team

Citizens Advice

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

- if you have money or work worries, Citizen's Advice can help
- freephone: 03444 111 444 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)
- text service: 03444 111 445
- you can talk to a debt adviser online for free Mon-Fri, 8am-7pm
- for advice on anything else, you can chat to an adviser online for free Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm

Family Lives Parents Helpline and Website (this is an emotional listening service)

Tel: 0808 8002222 Website: www.familylives.org.uk

Care Leavers Support

Become Charity: <https://becomecharity.org.uk/>

Care Advice Line for young people in and leaving care. 0800 023 2033

10.30am to 3pm Monday to Friday.

Health Advice: NHS

<https://www.nhs.uk/>

Information on Health concerns, A &E, dentists, local pharmacy's.

If you need help now, but it's not an emergency

Go to 111.nhs.uk or [call 111](tel:111)

Mental Health Advice/Support:

www.mentalhealth.org.uk

EWMHS (Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service) Provide (under 18's only)

During the week from 9am – 5pm, you can contact their service on 0300 300 1600 or email NELFT-EWMHS.referrals@nhs.net to make a self-referral.

If you need to contact them outside of these hours call 0300 555 1201 for immediate short-term support.

Samaritans have free phone lines that your child can call at any time day or night.

Samaritans Freephone 116123 www.samaritans.org

www.bigwhitewall.com Offers a range of support online for 16 to 18 years old.

The Mix www.themix.org.uk

If you're under 25 you can talk to The Mix for free on the phone, by email or on their webchat. You can also use their phone counselling service, or get more information on support services you might need.

- freephone: 0808 808 4994 (1pm - 11pm daily)

MIND <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

Shout Crisis Line: For support in a crisis, Text **Shout** to **85258**. If you're experiencing a personal crisis, are unable to cope and need support. Shout can help with urgent issues such as:

- Suicidal thoughts
- Abuse or assault
- Self-harm
- Bullying
- Relationship challenges

Foodbanks:

<https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank/>

COVID – 19 Mutual Aid UK Local Groups

Colchester Emergency Co-ordinations Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/551969565422044/?ref=share>

Chelmsford community kindness

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/216876509690115/>

Coronavirus Help! Basildon, Laindon, Pitsea, Wickford, Billericay

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2898417116918837/>

Canvey Corona Virus Support <https://www.facebook.com/groups/202798474370661/>

Ingatestone Beats Covid19 <https://chat.whatsapp.com/EBafeubUXG8FDuLXiMQ9lh>

Harold Wood and Harold Park Covid 19 Support <https://www.facebook.com/groups/207014900405302/>

Rochford District Community Task Force <https://www.facebook.com/groups/818155198689190/>

Southend Covid-19 Mutual Aid <https://www.facebook.com/groups/808834132961998/>

Coronavirus Help! Southend, Leigh, Hadleigh, Rayleigh, Benfleet, Canvey

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2645107359146279/>

Havering Covid 19 Mutual Aid <https://www.facebook.com/groups/231197438280762/>

Loughton COVID-19 Mutual Aid <https://www.facebook.com/groups/527555214863742/>

Covid-19 Mutual Aid Harlow <https://www.facebook.com/groups/205498480792577/>

Sawbridgeworth Mutual Aid COVID-19 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/229641398221107/>

COVID-19 Mutual Aid - Bishops Stortford <https://www.facebook.com/groups/196866378305274/?ref=share>

Citizens Advice about COVID 19

There are things you can do to help you avoid getting coronavirus, also known as COVID-19. There are also things you can do to stop the virus spreading if you think you have it.

You can [read more about the symptoms of coronavirus and how to avoid it](#) on the NHS website.

You can also [read guidance on how the UK is affected by coronavirus](#) on GOV.UK. This guidance from the government is updated every day.

You can also [watch British Sign Language versions of government advice](#) on the SignHealth website.

Can't pay your bills

There are things you can do if you're struggling to pay things like your rent, mortgage or energy bills because of coronavirus.

It's important you don't ignore your bills. Speak to the organisation you owe money to - they might be able to help by letting you pay smaller amounts or take a break.

It's also worth checking with your bank or building society - they might be able to help you with your debts or let you delay loan or credit card repayments.

Check if something is a scam

Make sure you only use trusted sources of information about coronavirus and your debts.

If you're not working because of coronavirus

You might be able to claim benefits if you've lost your job or you're self-employed and can't get work.

What you can claim will depend on your situation. You can check if you can claim:

- [Universal Credit](#)
- [Jobseeker's allowance](#) - you can't claim this if you're self-employed
- [Employment and support allowance](#)

If you already get benefits

If you're already claiming benefits like housing benefit or tax credits, you might get more money if your income is reduced.

You can contact your local council to see if they can give you any extra help from a hardship fund. [Check your local council](#) on GOV.UK.

The government has postponed all face-to-face benefits assessments or appointments at the Jobcentre Plus until at least 19 June 2020.

This means you don't have to go to:

- interviews if you're starting a claim for JSA, ESA or Universal Credit
- medical assessments for ESA, Universal Credit or PIP
- appointments with your work coach

The Jobcentre Plus might still ask to talk to you by phone.

You can still go to the Jobcentre Plus – for example if you want to hand in a form.

[If you're ill or you're following guidance to self-isolate](#)

Don't go to the Jobcentre Plus. Tell the Jobcentre Plus you're ill or self-isolating by:

- calling the office paying your benefit
- updating your online journal if you get Universal Credit

You won't have to search for work or do work-related activity.

[If you can't pay your rent](#)

The government has [announced a ban on evictions](#) - your landlord can't start court action for at least 3 months.

You should explain the situation to your landlord straight away - they might give you more time to pay.

You still need to pay your rent. If you've fallen behind with your rent you should start [dealing with rent arrears](#). You can also [check if you can get extra financial help](#).

If your landlord doesn't offer to be flexible with your rent payments, it's a good idea to pay as much as you can afford and keep a record of what you discussed.

You should also [contact your nearest Citizens Advice](#) - an adviser can help you explain things to your landlord.

Coronavirus - if you can't afford to top up

Tell your supplier if you can't afford to top up because you're ill with coronavirus or following guidance to 'self-isolate'. You'll find their contact details on their website or on your bill.

They'll try to help you find other ways to keep your energy supply connected. For example:

- let someone else top up for you
- add funds to your account
- send you a pre-loaded top-up card

You'll need to pay back any credit your supplier gives you - ask them when and how you'll need to do this.

Looking after your mental health while self-isolating Advice from Young Minds Website

If you are self-isolating or social distancing because of coronavirus (COVID-19), it is important to look after your mental health. Here are some tips that may help. Social distancing and self-isolation can be really hard to deal with. It's normal to feel anxious, frustrated or bored, and if you're worried about the effect it will have on your mental health, you are not alone. Here are our tips for looking after your wellbeing during quarantine.

Staying connected

Phone calls are amazing, and are a great way to stay connected. But seeing someone's face really can make a huge difference on a phone call. It can lift your mood and make you feel less lonely. There are lots of free video calling services you can use, and if you can connect to wifi this will help if you're worried about your data allowance.

Find a positive online community

There are lots of positive online communities, where you can make new friends, get inspired and chat about things you care about. You could try searching for groups involved in causes, music or TV shows you are passionate about.

But remember to avoid anything that encourages you to do things which are harmful for your physical or mental health. If you're worried by things you're experiencing online, talk to someone you trust.

Reach out

You're probably not the only person feeling worried, bored or frustrated. It's a good time for a catch up, so don't be afraid to make the first move and reach out to someone you haven't heard from in a while. They'll probably be very grateful to hear from you. Send them a message and let them know you care.

Staying calm, try mindfulness

There are lots of great free apps you can use to guide you through breathing techniques and meditation that can help ease your anxiety and clear your mind of anxious thoughts. We like to use Headspace.

Why not also try some yoga as a way to relax and also get some gentle exercise which can boost your mood? There are lots of YouTube videos you can use to suit your ability and level of mobility.

Clean up your social media

You might be spending more time than usual scrolling on social media. But have you ever thought about how this could be affecting your mental health? Try unfollowing or muting accounts that make you feel anxious, upset or angry.

Take a break from the news

It can be tempting to constantly check the news during times like this, but if you notice this is having a negative impact on your mental health. Try limiting how often you check the news.

Read a book

Getting away from screens and reading a book can help you escape for a bit. Why not re-read one of your favourites, or get your friend to recommend one? It might be difficult to get a new book, but you can access lots of books online.

Plan your days

Your normal routine might be disrupted and that can be stressful. Take some time to write down

how you want to spend your day. Creating and sticking to a new routine will give you a sense of order and normality. Decide on your new routine and make sure you build in time to do things you enjoy. If you live with other people, you could ask them to help you.

Feel productive

Make a list of all those things you said you would do but never get round to. It could be sorting out your wardrobe, doing some gardening, fixing things around your living space etc. These tasks can make you feel productive and give you a sense of accomplishment. Tidying your living space can also make you feel calmer and more positive.

If you want to take the time off to rest and not be productive, that's also fine too. Listen to your body.

Online games you can play with friends

Board games can be a great way to spend time with friends or family while giving you something to focus on. You can play a lot of these games online, like [Monopoly](#) or [Chess](#), or via apps like [Words With Friends 2](#).

Walk away from tense situations if you can

Being cooped up with other people will naturally be frustrating and might create tension between you and those you live with. You can defuse difficult situations by walking away from arguments until everyone starts to feel calmer. If you and those you live with do not have any coronavirus symptoms, you could go outside for a walk.

Create a rota

If you're in a situation where lots of people are fighting over who gets to decide what you watch on TV, who cooks and cleans, or anything else, you might find it helpful to create a rota. This can help you agree a fair system and help avoid arguments.