

ECC Report December 2024

White Ribbon Day 2024



On 25th November, marked as The White Ribbon Day, we have pledged our continued support to ending violence against women and girls.

The theme for White Ribbon Day 2024 is 'It starts with men'.

It is meant to address the attitudes and behaviours that contribute to a fear of violence for women and girls, and it also marked the start of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

Last year [we were awarded White Ribbon Accreditation](#). This was for our commitment to ending men's violence against women in the workplace and local communities.

Over the last year, we have developed a White Ribbon Action Plan.

The plan focusses on four key areas:

- strategic leadership

- raising awareness
- engaging men and boys
- changing culture

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities, Economic Growth and Prosperity, Councillor Louise McKinlay said:

“Every woman and girl in the county should live a life free of violence, fear, and harassment.

“We are committed to leading the way in changing these behaviours and helping to create a society where women and girls feel safe and respected.

“Our three-year plan sets out our action to achieve this. It shows how we will address harmful attitudes and behaviours that lead to violence against women and girls.”

Over the past few years, we have launched initiatives and projects to improve women’s safety in Essex. These include:

- [Bystander intervention modules](#)
- A women’s [night time safety survey](#)
- [Courses](#) for young people on healthy relationship awareness
- The Essex Design Guide. This [guide](#) aims to make public spaces safer and more inclusive for women and girls in the county
- Our [online safety map](#) for women and girls to use to highlight areas they feel safe or unsafe in Essex.

The White Ribbon Action Plan launched to employees this month. It will be available to the public soon.

Medical equipment amnesty



Do you have medical equipment in your home lent out by NHS or Social Care Services in Essex?

We are asking for this to be returned if it is no longer needed. Thousands of pounds is lost each year because of equipment not being returned once it is finished with.

You might have:

- Wheeled adjustable frames
- Adjustable walking sticks
- Crutches
- Chair raisers
- Commodes

- Bed levers
- Perching stools
- Raised toilet seats
- Pressure cushions
- Toilet frames
- Trolleys

Medequip <https://www.medequip-uk.com/> will come and collect any equipment you have lying around. You can call 0333 034 2048 or email essex@medequip-uk.com to organise a collection or you can find your nearest drop-off point at mq-uk.com/return-essex.

If you decide to drop your equipment off, you will see a large blue amnesty bin to drop it in. By returning this equipment, you ensure it is recycled instead of it ending up in a landfill.

You will save the NHS and Essex Social Care money which can be used to provide more care to those in need. Please share this information with friends and relatives who may also have unused equipment lying around.

**Childcare Reforms Expansion: upcoming changes to
accessing early years and childcare places**



The Department for Education (DfE) Childcare Reforms Expansion has been designed to better help parents and carers manage childcare alongside their work responsibilities. These changes are part of the government's ongoing commitment to support families and enable parents to return to or remain in the workforce, while ensuring their children receive the care they need.

What's new?

Expansions to the current Funded Early Education Entitlement. Funded Early Education Entitlement hours can be used over 38 weeks of the year during school term time or, depending on the provider, up to 52 weeks as a stretched offer.

From April 2024

If you are a working parent, you will be eligible for up to 15 hours of funded childcare per week in term time, over 38 weeks, starting from the term after your child's second birthday.

From September 2024

Eligible working parents will be entitled to up to 15 hours of funded childcare per week in term time, over 38 weeks, available from the term following your child turning nine months old.

From September 2025

The support extends further, with up to 30 hours of funded childcare per week in term time, over 38 weeks, available from the term following your child turning nine months old.

How do families apply?

To apply for funded childcare, eligible parents need to register for a code by the end of the month before a new term starts.

[Check your eligibility and apply on the UK government's dedicated childcare support page](#). For the next term families need to apply and have an approved code by Tuesday 31 December 2024. Once you receive the code (usually beginning 50) please share this with your childcare provider.

For more information, [please visit our Family Information Service page](#).

Wraparound childcare for parents and carers of primary school-aged children

From September 2024, the national Wraparound childcare programme will commence with the ambition that by September 2026 most working parents will be able to access wraparound childcare that is either on their school site or within the local community. This wraparound childcare offer will be available during term time for parents with primary school-aged children.

What does this mean for you?

Wraparound care hours

During term time, parents of primary school-aged children can pay for their child to access childcare from 8am to 6pm. This includes breakfast clubs and after-school care.

Providers

These services can be offered by schools or private, voluntary, and independent (PVI) providers like childminders, out of school and early years settings.

Locations

Wraparound care can take place either on school premises or at another suitable location within the local area.

For more information and to find a Wraparound provider near you, please visit: <https://secureapps.essex.gov.uk/fis>

“I lost everything in the flood water” — residents urged to plan ahead with new grant



Mary Long-Dhonau OBE, also known as Flood Mary, lost everything in sewage water. Now, she raises awareness about property flood resilience. This includes a new grant offered by Essex County Council.

Mary remembers: “We were totally unprepared. I had a young family, the youngest of whom had been recently diagnosed with severe autism and we were reeling from that news. We were also doing extensive renovations to our home, and my eldest son had a downstairs bedroom, while we pulled ceilings down and replastered walls upstairs.

“During the night, he called me to say his bedroom was full of flood water - and it stank! When we went downstairs, I couldn’t believe my eyes as there was filthy stanching flood water everywhere. It was mostly sewage water, and the smell was horrific! At its worst, it was waist deep.

“The aftermath was terribly difficult and stressful, especially for my autistic son, as he had lost every single one of his toys in the flood. Due to his learning difficulties, he didn’t understand what on earth was going on.”

Mary lost irreplaceable memorabilia through the flood. She said: “I was saving all of my children’s memories from birth, such as hospital wristbands,

pregnancy records, photos, nursery and school drawings from each term. I was planning on giving them to my children, wrapped up in a ribbon, on their 18th birthday as a memento. Sadly, I lost everything in the flood water. It still brings tears to my eyes all these years on.”

Mary urges Essex residents to apply for the [Property Flood Resilience \(PFR\) grant](#).

This is for homeowners who have or may experience flood water entering their homes. You can [check your eligibility online](#).

You could receive up to £8,000 in defences if your home is prone to flooding. This includes:

- self-closing air bricks
- reinforced doors
- non-return valves
- pumps
- flood barriers

The [PFR grant](#) is being delivered by our partners, Lakeside Flood Solutions.

Lakeside Flood Solutions has installed defences in over 180 properties across Essex. This includes an end-to-end service.

Homeowners are asked to contribute to the cost if defences go above the £8,000 afforded by the grant.

Mary said: “If you have the chance to install Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures, do it! It’s a no-brainer. PFR will give you back control to know that, should a surface water flood come, you’ll be better protected to keep the water out, for longer. Having the peace of mind that you can manage your own flood risk is very empowering!”

Support your local community by becoming a county councillor



Ahead of Essex County Council elections in May 2025, residents are invited to [find out more](#) about becoming a county councillor.

An online information event took place online via Zoom on Thursday 21 November <https://youtu.be/HciEwqE40AA?feature=shared>

The session will give prospective candidates the opportunity to find out more about the role of councillors and the work they do with their local communities. Attendees will also meet Councillors from some of the political groups that make up the council

Leader, Councillor Kevin Bentley said: “Essex is one of the biggest council areas in the country, and our councillors play a vital role in supporting communities across the county.

“As a councillor you have the ability to make a real difference.

“We have councillors of all ages and backgrounds, and through these events, we hope to give a little bit more information about what is involved in the day-to-day work of being a county councillor.”

For more information email elections@essex.gov.uk

