

ECC Report July 2024

£8,000 available to Essex homeowners in flood risk zones



Residents urged to plan ahead with flood defence grant as UK Climate Projections anticipates increased winter rainfall and intensity.

At-risk residents can bolster their homes with up to £8,000 in flood protection measures offered by Essex County Council.

The Property Flood Resilience Grant (PFR) is being delivered by Lakeside Flood Solutions for Essex homeowners who have or may experience flood water entering their homes.

Eligible residents could improve their flood defences with self-closing air bricks, reinforced flood doors, non-return valves, pumps and flood barriers.

The measures are designed to help prevent water entering homes and mitigate damage in the event of a flood.

The grant comes as [UK Climate Projections](#) anticipates average winter rainfall to increase by 35% by 2070, with rainfall intensity projected to increase by 25%.

Lakeside Flood Solutions has completed installations in 196 properties across Essex since 2018. This includes an end-to-end service with flood risk surveys, product selection, design, installation and demonstration training.

Essex homeowners can [check their property's flood risk online](#) to see if they are able to apply for the PFR. This may include residents living in critical drainage areas.

Homeowners will be asked to contribute to their flood protection measures if they exceed the £8,000 afforded by the grant.

Sam Kennedy, Director for Environment & Climate Action at Essex County Council, said: “Essex has a long history of fighting floods from the sea and rivers, and heavy rain that can overwhelm drainage systems is becoming more frequent.

“This year, East Anglia saw its wettest February since 1836, while England as a whole saw its eighth wettest winter since records began.

“Extreme weather is unfortunately becoming more common, with risks of flooding projected by our [Essex Climate Action Commission](#) to double across the county. I therefore strongly encourage residents to [check their eligibility](#) for the Property Flood Resilience Grant and secure their homes for the future.”

- Essex County Council has partnered with Lakeside Flood Solutions to deliver the PFR.
- Lakeside Flood Solutions is not the sole provider, with customers having a choice between other providers following the initial survey.
- UK Climate Projections in high emission scenarios show that by 2070:
 - average winter precipitation will increase by up to +35%
 - average summer precipitation will decrease by up to -47%
 - hourly rainfall intensity will increase by 25%

This means Essex will continue to face increasing water scarcity alongside flooding in the winter [Read the Water Strategy for Essex](#).

Further £2.9 million allocated to address SEND assessment wait times in Essex.



Additional funding will help to create more capacity within the local Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) system.

Efforts to address long wait times for Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNA) in Essex are continuing.

A further £2.894 million is being allocated to deliver 'additional assistance' within the local SEND system over the next two financial years.

The aim is to address the current backlog of EHCNAs, mitigate further delays and ensure new requests are processed within the statutory 20-week timeframe.

The funding will be used, among other things, to:

- recruit additional posts into the quadrant SEND Operations Team including additional coordinators and engagement facilitators.
- increase the level of support given to schools and settings.
- develop a package of support for families who are waiting for an EHCNA.
- create additional business support and customer service capacity to undertake administrative functions that would have been undertaken within the quadrant SEND Operations Teams
- increase the capacity of specialist teaching teams for sensory impairments (hearing, visual, physical and neurological)

- create SEND-inclusive activities for families as the foundation for longer-term opportunities to be co-produced with the Essex Family Forum.

Helen Lincoln, Executive Director for Children, Families and Education at Essex County Council, said: “We are seizing different opportunities to improve Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment wait times, and the experience of families in Essex. Our aim is to do this as quickly as possible, without compromising on the quality of the service offered to families.

“The additional assistance plan is one part of our wider improvement work, and it is important we don’t make changes in isolation. We recognise there are different areas that need to be addressed across the system.

“We understand the effect that long wait times can have on families but hope the changes we are making will go some way in providing reassurance that SEND improvements remain a priority for the council.”

The £2.894 million will be drawn down from Essex County Council’s Early Intervention and Prevention holding account reserve. It will be split as follows over the next two financial years:

- £1.450 million in 2024/25
- £1.444 million in 2025/26

The additional assistance plan is one part of the council’s ongoing [SEND improvement efforts](#) It also recently announced it was allocating more than £1 million to recruit agency Educational Psychologists to help address the current assessment backlog.

As well as the additional assistance plan, the council has developed [SEND strategy](#) This sets out a five-year approach to improving the SEND system in Essex.

It has also produced an inclusion strategy. This aims to support schools, children, young people and their families at an earlier point and will, over time, help to ensure that the right support is delivered at the right time and in the right place. This will give parents and settings more confidence that children and young people’s needs can be met without the need for an Education, Health and Care Plan.

- Under the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice 2015, Essex County Council has a statutory obligation to assess children who may have SEND through the EHCNA process.
- The assessment process is coordinated by local authorities to determine a young person's education, health and care needs and whether they require an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- If an EHCP is deemed necessary, it is written collaboratively with professionals and the family. It will specify the provision needed to meet the child or young person's needs and states the educational placement.
- Nationally, SEND needs and subsequent EHCNA requests have risen year on year since the SEND code of practice in 2015. There was a significant rise during the pandemic years.
- Alongside this increase, there is a national shortage of Educational Psychologists, which are imperative to the EHCNA process.
- Requests for EHCNAs in Essex have risen by 70% since the 2018/19 academic year prior to the pandemic, with the most recent figures outlined below:
 - Academic year 2021/22 – 2,781 requests
 - Academic year 2022/23 – 4,011 requests
 - Academic year 2023/24 (Sep 23 to Apr 24) – 2,696 requests. The trend is expected to continue into the summer term.
- Not all EHCNA requests result in an assessment being completed. In these cases, an alternative approach will be discussed with the family and the child's school or setting. Parents and carers can appeal this decision.

More than 5,000 learners improve their numbers of skills thanks to Multiply



Free courses available to residents and businesses across Essex.

More than 5,000 residents have improved their numbers skills with free courses through Multiply in Essex.

Multiply has been running in Essex since January 2023. Offering bite-size training to adults aged 19 and above, over 5,000 people have so far benefitted from courses.

Delivered by a network of college and education providers, courses focus on things like:

- assisting residents to gain qualifications and progress at work
- support with managing finances
- helping children with their schoolwork

Charity 3Food4U runs both face-to-face and online Multiply courses. Subjects include everything from functional skills qualifications to cooking on a budget.

One of the participants, Jill, from Ongar, said: “I was very nervous. I was never any good at maths at school. But this was different, very relaxed and practical. I feel so happy I’ve achieved something.”

Ian, from Loughton, said: “The course is very easy to understand, and I did it online in my own time. I’ve learnt so much and feel more confident with numbers.”

The Multiply campaign is now in phase two. This will see at least 4,000 new opportunities created, including 800 specifically targeted to businesses, helping them upskill their workforce.

Multiply aims to address a skills gap in Essex, where adult numeracy ranks lower compared to the national average.

Find out more at the Essex Opportunities website: www.essexopportunities.co.uk/multiply.

Read more about [how Multiply is benefitting residents in Essex](#)

Adult safeguarding referrals made easier with new portal



A [new online portal](#) has launched that aims to speed up safeguarding referrals and responses.

Individuals and professionals can now submit adult safeguarding referrals through a new online portal.

Around 120 safeguarding referrals come into Adult Social Care each day. Until now this has been via various channels including emails, telephone calls and website forms.

Referrals can include:

- worries about the safety or wellbeing of a member of the public, family member or friend

- suspected neglect or abuse
- reporting an incident

The new portal is a central place to make adult safeguarding referrals. It will make reporting quicker and easier with improved response times

Even though the portal is online, there will still be the option to call to discuss concerns through [Adult Social Care Connects](#) on 0345 603 7630.

A Council spokesman said: “In an ideal world we would have very few people wanting to register safeguarding concerns. However, as all of us know, the world is not ideal. So, while the council will always work with partners to reduce volumes, when there is a concern, it is really important that residents and professionals have an easy and quick way to submit safeguarding concerns or referrals.

“The new portal will make the process much easier and faster, which will in turn help us work more efficiently behind the scenes.”

The portal can be found here:

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/adult-social-care-and-health/report-concern-about-adult>

Outdoor activities boost children's learning



As part of our early years' recruitment campaign, we're highlighting the benefits of outdoor learning.

Our campaign, 'Make a change. Build a future.', aims to inspire people to enter or return to the early years sector.

Sue Triscott, owner of Abacus Kindergarten in Colchester, is supporting the campaign. Sue's keen to highlight how practitioners can make the most of outdoor learning.

She said: "At our setting, we encourage children to get outside every day. Especially when the weather's good.

"It's important to enable child-led play and give children the space to be creative. We offer a range of outdoor activities that some children may not get at home."

The outdoor space at Abacus Kindergarten helps boost children's learning and development. Sue added: "We teach children about nature cycles, so we help them to grow their own vegetables to have for a snack.

"Then, we guide them to use the peelings as compost and put them back in the soil in the autumn. We teach them that this will help feed the new plants for the following spring."

For Sue, a large part of outdoor learning is encouraging children to discover things for themselves. Sue continued: "We want them to understand there's no right or wrong way to play with something.

"Our practitioners could give children some shingle, a tablespoon, some spades, an old jug and a bucket. Their imagination will do the rest.

"We encourage children to take part in activities which will naturally lead to learning. We support them to discover things for themselves.

"Outdoor learning is all about exploration. We think about how children play and learn and use our outdoor space to compliment what we teach. We add to their experiences and broaden their opportunities."

Sue also wants to show how rewarding a career in early years can be. She said: "We have great fun at work, which is really important. But it's also about having meaning and feeling satisfied that you've had a positive impact on a family.

"Being with children changes your perception. It makes you reflect, and you become a better human being. I feel it's a worthwhile career."

Find out more about [a career in early years and childcare](#). Search for [current](#) early years vacancies.

Record number of Essex schools take part in Walk to School Week



A record number of Essex schools took part in Walk to School Week last month.

Our sustainable transport team worked with 97 primary schools. This saw around 29,000 pupils participate this year.

The annual walking challenge is run by [Living Streets](#). It aims to encourage more children to walk as a form of exercise.

This year's event took place from May 20th to May 24th. May also marks Living Streets' National Walking Month.

More than 25 million steps were also walked collectively by Essex residents in the [third annual safer, greener, healthier walking challenge](#). This equates to a distance of nearly 20,000kms and a saving of 2,366kg of carbon emissions.

The challenge to walk 5k steps a day or 35k steps a week was run in collaboration with Go Jauntly. The app has 100 Essex walks available to download on the free.

There are hundreds of free Essex walking routes to explore on the app. [Find out more about Go Jauntly](#).

Learn more about our [Walking Strategy for Essex](#).

