

ECC Report June 2023

£350,000 Community Initiatives Fund (CIF) now open to apply

ECC is inviting organisations in Essex to bid for funding to help create resilient and vibrant communities.

[The Essex Community Initiatives Fund](#) (CIF) 2023 to 2024 is now open for applications. Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) will administer the fund on our behalf.

There are two levels of grant. The [main CIF](#) with an allocation of £300,000 and grants up to £10,000 towards projects that benefit the wider community. The [Micro Grant Community Chest Fund](#) with an allocation of £50,000 and grants of up to £1,000 to help communities connect.

Town and parish councils, community groups, social enterprises and individuals in the [Essex County Council area](#) are invited to [apply](#).

Projects should have community backing and show that they meet a real community need.

Projects could be to:

- create, buy or develop new community assets
- enhance existing community assets
- enhance or develop initiatives that strengthen a community, including cultural initiatives

Top examples of Community Initiative Fund projects funded in the past 4 years:

- children's play areas
- upgrades to sports facilities

- improvements to community buildings such as new heating systems or accessible toilets
- a new minibus
- staff costs for projects or maintenance
- restoring a nature reserve
- IT systems or support
- cultural events and activities

The deadline for applications to the main CIF is 18th August 2023.

Unpaid carers in Essex praised this Carers Week

As part of Carers Week 2023 that started on 5th June , ECC is celebrating unpaid carers and highlighting the [support we offer](#).

There are a reported 124,000 unpaid carers in the county, but the real number could be greater.

Unpaid carers play a vital role in helping family and friends live independently. It also means those they care for can remain in their own homes and communities.

Some carers see it as their role to support relatives, friends and neighbours so they might not realise they are a carer or that there is [help available](#).

Watch Simon, a carer in Harlow, talk about his experience of caring for his 101-year-old mother.

[Simon, Carers Week 2023, Carers Case Study - Essex County Council](#)

Meet young carers from the Action for Family Carers Stanway Youth Club.

[Action for Family Carers, Carers Week 2023 - Essex County Council](#)

This year also marks one year since the launch of our [All-Age Carers Strategy](#), which sets out key commitments we have made to carers. It

outlines how we will help them lead happy and fulfilling lives while caring.

In the last year since the strategy launched, the Council has:

- provided over 5,000 carers with information, advice and guidance
- helped over 200 carers access counselling to support their emotional wellbeing
- launched Mobilise, a new digital offer helping carers access advice and guidance
- helped carers come together through 40 face-to-face and online support groups- helping carers connect, share experiences and build friendships
- made small grants of over £150,000 to carers in 'Time for you' awards, for carers to use on something that supports their own health and wellbeing

Supporting unpaid carers is and continues to be a priority for the council. We will continue to engage with carers to make sure they are getting the very best and most suitable help.

Find out more about [support available for carers.](#)

Free mobile data to help jobseekers stay digitally connected

People in Essex who receive Universal Credit and have been out of work for at least nine months can now receive free mobile data.

This is thanks to a scheme which helps people to stay digitally connected.

The Restart Scheme already offers a range of support to help people receiving Universal Credit find sustainable work. It offers:

- skills training
- support with job applications
- financial help
- health and wellbeing resources

Now those using the Restart Scheme can also access free, pre-loaded SIM cards from eight locations in Essex. This helps them take advantage of digital opportunities that can help with their job search.

Anyone interested should speak with their work coach at the JobCentre Plus, who will then refer them.

This new offering is thanks to [Reed in Partnership](#) becoming a National Databank Hub.

Our Digital Essex team has helped Reed in Partnership become a National Databank Hub through its work to overcome the causes of digital exclusion. This is part of a national scheme run by [Good Things Foundation](#) that offers free mobile connectivity to people in need.

We're committed to supporting people across Essex including working families and 16 to 25-year-olds who have been out of education, training or employment for at least six months. This is our commitment as part of the [Everyone's Essex Levelling Up programme](#).

Levelling Up seeks to provide initiatives for certain groups who may not have access to the same opportunities as others.

New drive to reduce food waste

ECC is introducing new ways to help people reduce their food waste.

From July, eligible households will receive tools to help them recycle food at the kerbside. This includes a sticker for their general rubbish bin, caddy liners and a leaflet. Households in Braintree, Colchester

and Epping Forest will receive these first. The scheme will then be expanded to other areas of the county.

Currently, 26% of food waste in Essex ends up in the general rubbish bin. These tools have helped other authorities increase food recycling by up to 20%. It has also reduced the amount of food waste sent to landfill.

Councillor Malcolm Buckley, Essex County Council's Cabinet Member for Waste Reduction and Recycling, said:

"This is an exciting opportunity for us to increase the amount of food waste recycled at the kerbside. When food goes to landfill it releases methane. Methane is a harmful greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change.

"Disposing of food waste in landfill is also very costly. In fact, it's costing Essex taxpayers £9 million a year to dispose of. By recycling food waste, we can save money and invest it in other essential services.

"Recycling food waste also generates energy and fertiliser, which can be used in farming across Essex."

You can learn more about [food recycling](#).

New app to support Essex's fight against climate change

A new free app will help residents of Essex find out how to reduce their carbon footprint. Carbon Cutting Essex was launched on 22nd May to mark [International Day for Biological Diversity](#).

The app allows residents to track their carbon footprint and discover how they can reduce it. It provides hundreds of practical and cost-effective ideas on how to minimise our impact on the planet. Many of these suggestions will not only help to reduce the county's carbon footprint but can also help save residents money.

It features a range of fun activities, quizzes and videos and will also motivate. It will reward positive actions by providing points and rewards for residents when they mitigate their carbon footprint. Residents will be able to use their points to enter prize draws or donate them to good causes.

Developed by Greenredeem, the app forms part of our [£200 million Climate Action Plan](#) to tackle climate change.

Councillor Peter Schwier, Essex County Council's Climate Czar, said: "We are delighted to launch the Carbon Cutting Essex app which we hope will play a significant role in helping us all to tackle climate change.

"We can all play our part in cutting greenhouse gas emissions so that we can protect the future of our planet for generations to come. I would encourage everyone across the county to download the app today."

[Find out more about the Carbon Cutting Essex app](#) and download it for free from the App Store or GooglePlay.

Get ready for school with Essex Library Service's new challenge

A fun and educational challenge for kids is taking place at Essex Libraries this summer. [Ready... Steady... Go To School](#) will help children become more confident for starting primary school in September.

The challenge is running in all Essex libraries until 31 July and will include a range of activities within seven challenge areas. These are:

- speaking and listening
- being active
- personal, social and emotional skills

- early reading and writing
- maths and numbers
- understanding the world
- express yourself

Children will earn stamps in their special booklet as they go along. When they finish all seven sections, they will receive a certificate.

Councillor Louise McKinlay, Deputy Leader of Essex County Council and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance, said:

“Starting school is an exciting time for children and parents but it can be a daunting experience too.

“This challenge aims to prepare little ones for when they take that big step through the school gates, by building their confidence as they start to learn what to expect on their first day.”

[Find your local library](#) or follow Essex Libraries on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).