

Essex Leaders and MPs request move to 'High level' Covid restrictions as coronavirus cases continue to rise



Following extensive discussions with Leaders of other councils across the county and with Essex MPs, Essex County Council is to apply to the Secretary of State for Health to be placed into the new 'High level' banding of Covid-19 restrictions.

Essex continues to see an increase in cases, which the County's Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, Dr Mike Gogarty has advised will continue to accelerate unless urgent action is taken and a move to 'High' from the current 'Medium' level is made sooner rather than later.

Essex has seen a significant increase in the number of cases, and rates in nearly all districts are now rising exponentially.

While the great majority of cases are in the younger age groups, rates are now increasing in older age groups as well, who are at higher risk of serious consequences. Hospital admissions are rising, and deaths are also now being reported. Without action now, Council expects to see substantially increase pressure on hospitals which will impact still further on those suffering from other serious conditions such as cancer.

Under High level restrictions, people must not meet with anybody outside their household or support bubble in any indoor setting, whether at home or in a public place. They must not meet in a group of more than 6 outside, including in a garden or other space.

Should 'High level' restrictions fail to work, areas would be placed into 'Very High', the highest level of restrictions.

Leader of Essex County Council, Cllr David Finch, who also Chairs the Essex Covid-19 Engagement Board, said:

"By acting now, we can hope to stem this increase, limiting the time that we are in these enhanced restrictions and – above all – avoiding further escalation into 'Very High'. All of this will limit the damage to the economy; a healthy economy is critical to everyone having better lives in future.

"We already have one of the best track and trace operations in the country, but we will also be aiming to push its performance still higher alongside strengthening

enforcement capacity and visibility. Making these painful decisions now will, we hope, bring dividends later.”

Cllr John Spence, ECC’s Cabinet Member for Adults and Health, added: “We need both to look ahead and across the whole system.

“The advice from our Director of Public Health is compelling – that without action now, we can expect to see continuing doubling of rates week after week, and these increases will be followed by on-going growth in hospital admissions and, most horribly of all, deaths. It is critical that we enable the hospitals and the NHS as a whole not just to cope with Covid, but to avoid yet further backlogs in other aspects of critical care.”

Dr Mike Gogarty, Essex’s Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, said: “Across the county we have moved from gradual to exponential growth with number of cases rising exponentially.

“We want act now to minimise the impact on the public health and the economy and by doing so we believe we can shorten the period of enhanced restrictions.”

The request, which will go to the Secretary of State today (Tuesday 13 October), has the support of leaders from across the County Council’s area, along with the County’s MPs and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.