

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL COVID 19 BRIEFING – May 2020

Cllr Nick Bennett

Since the pandemic began, staff across the Council have been involved in a huge amount of work to support the nation's response. We have launched new services to protect and support the most medically vulnerable (the shielded group), changed and adapted services to meet the current situation. Looking after the most vulnerable people in our community is our absolute priority.

We are planning for the reopening of services, taking account of the need to live with Covid.

The changes we have made will have profound and sometimes permanent impacts on our services and finances. Whilst the government has partially recognised these changes and has made additional funding available, it is insufficient to meet the pressures we face, particularly in relation to adult social care. We will need to consider the effects of these changes on our future service offer and financial plans for the remainder of this year.

Deaths due to Covid

The ONS publishes weekly [provisional counts](#) of the number of deaths registered involving the coronavirus (COVID-19), by local authority of residence. The figures for the week ending 24 April which include any mention of COVID-19 on the death certificate:

	Home	Hospital	Care home	Hospice	Elsewhere	Total
Eastbourne	0	21	14	1	0	36
Hastings	0	6	0	1	0	7
Lewes	1	33	19	0	0	53
Rother	0	15	3	1	1	20
Wealden	0	40	15	2	0	57
East Sussex	1	115	51	5	1	173

Adult Social Care

Supply of social care provision remains under real pressure in East Sussex and on 30 April, 76 of 313 East Sussex care homes were closed to all admissions. We now have in place an integrated health and social care plan in East Sussex which delivers the objectives set in the DHSC Action Plan. This includes testing all patients before admission to a care home. Patients testing positive will be supported through a period of isolation at either Bexhill Care Centre or in a community health unit before moving, when clear, to a care home. This will help give the care homes the reassurance they require to accept discharges and maintain the required flow of patients from hospital.

In terms of provider support, we send care homes a daily bulletin and have regular web-based provider forums. We also have an email address for questions and issues . We have a specific email address for PPE enquiries and if providers are identifying shortages, we have a form for them to complete and we then prioritise allocation.

Children's Services

Schools

To date we have seen daily pupil numbers of approximately:

- 1000 pupils per day across all schools before the Easter holidays
- About 800 per day over the Easter holidays
- 100 per day over the two bank holidays
- Since the Easter holidays about 1800 per day (50% vulnerable children).

Early Years Sector (EYS) Providers

In April, 710 children attended an early year's provider. To support sustainability East Sussex has paid an additional £177,500 to support those nurseries, pre-schools and childminders who remained open. There are 98 settings open, caring for 467 children.

Digital Devices for Disadvantaged Children to access Remote Education

The Department for Education (DfE) will provide digital devices (laptops and tablets) and internet access for some disadvantaged children and young people who do not currently have access to them. Eligible children and young people include care leavers, children and young people aged 0 to 19 with a social worker and disadvantaged year 10 pupils. East Sussex has been given 129 devices for disadvantaged year 10 pupils within maintained schools (academies receive directly from the DfE). A further 1,094 devices will be allocated to vulnerable children in social care. The allocation of 129 laptops and tablets is insufficient to meet all the demand from our eleven secondary and special schools. To address this critical issue, we are working with partner organisations to deliver funding to purchase additional devices to reach as many of our disadvantaged year 10 pupils as possible. Additional funding of £65,500 has already been approved to facilitate this.

Vulnerable Groups

As part of our duty for safeguarding children and supporting schools to safeguard vulnerable children and young people (0-25), a database of vulnerable children was compiled, and each school was sent the list of children in their school. Support has been provided to schools to manage remote safeguarding arrangements, but for some children, where social care determine that they would be safer in school or college, we are supporting schools to offer appropriate provision.

Working with Schools to support the transition to re-opening

We are awaiting guidance from Government on plans for reopening schools and how this may be phased. We have begun the process of looking at how to prepare for the transition to school recovery. We are identifying key areas where we believe schools will need support:

- Provision of support for disadvantaged children to catch up due to the length of time they have been out of schools.
- Provision of Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing support
- Transition arrangements for all key stages and year groups.

We have secured some additional capacity from HMI to undertake support for:

- Special school re-integration
- Primary school re-integration, with the Primary Board, linking with ISEND and with also a focus on transition and digital disadvantage
- EYS providers' reintegration.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Supply of PPE is improving, although deliveries through the Local Resilience Forum don't have regular frequency. Maintaining an adequate supply and flow of PPE for our staff, the care sector and other key workers in East Sussex will therefore remain a concern until the central online system is up and running. We will continue to source what we need through all routes available to us in the meantime, and our procurement team is making progress on building a supply chain. We now have face shields, aprons, masks and gloves in stock.

In response to the Government's request for data on our local requirements, we have submitted the below Sussex-wide weekly PPE requirement.

	Masks	Aprons	Gloves	Hand Sanitiser	Eye protection
35% of East & West Sussex Demand	373,156	2,386,985	5,020,399	230,602	95,433

Testing

The Government has increased testing capacity and expanded the offer of testing to include:

- Everyone in England aged 65 and over with coronavirus symptoms, along with symptomatic members of their household
- Symptomatic workers who are unable to work from home
- Testing of all asymptomatic NHS and social care staff and care home residents.

Financial Implications of COVID 19

The Government has provided two tranches Covid-19 response funding for councils. Each tranche was £1.6bn nationally. Whilst the first tranche was distributed to provide support to social care authorities in particular, the second tranche was allocated on a per capita basis. The split between county and district authorities was 65:35. Almost 70% of district councils received more than £1m of additional funding to ensure they are fully supported. Allocations for East Sussex authorities are:

Local Authority	First Tranche of Covid-19 Funding	Second Tranche of Covid-19 Funding	Total Covid-19 Additional Funding
TOTAL England	£1,600,000,000	£1,594,000,000	£3,194,000,000
East Sussex	£16,297,243	£9,810,215	£26,107,458
East Sussex Fire	£136,730	£633,138	£769,868
Eastbourne	£64,321	£1,026,186	£1,090,507
Hastings	£67,268	£918,693	£985,961
Lewes	£39,501	£1,026,785	£1,066,286
Rother	£41,835	£961,373	£1,003,208
Wealden	£52,005	£1,604,988	£1,656,993

The Government has also confirmed that the Review of Relative Needs and Resource and 75% business rates retention will not be implemented in 2021-22.

Our latest projections are that we face additional costs of around £54m this year, so with the additional funding we are facing an estimated shortfall of £28m. This is modelled on anticipated costs such as providing adult social care support for more people, block booking of beds and purchase of food supplies and PPE, along with expected reduced income from services which are closed.

Economy

The impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on East Sussex businesses have been significant and will be ongoing. Whilst much financial support has been provided by Government, it is unclear how long the restrictions will last, and in turn how long financial support will be available. We have a good understanding of where the stress areas are based on the intelligence we garner through Business East Sussex and various other mechanisms and have started work on developing an Economy Recovery Plan (ERP) for the county.

We are currently working with SELEP, particularly in developing a case for utilising funding they hold for additional business support, and the East Sussex College Group on how their Adult Education Budget can be used for training/re-training needs of our employment base. They are likely to feature prominently in the ERP, as will the local recovery plans that colleagues in the District and Borough Councils are developing. The first draft of the ERP will be available in early June, and it will be considered by TES soon after.