

Press Release

Keeping children safe online over the festive period - campaign aims to raise awareness of online exploitation

Online safety is as important as ever in the lead up to the festive season with new technology and gadgets high on the wish list for many young people this Christmas. The Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) are reminding parents and carers that if their child does receive new technology for Christmas, it's important to set up devices correctly to keep them safe when online.

From 5-12 December the ESCB, along with partners, will be sharing information about online gaming, youth involved sexual images and online bullying. This partnership campaign aims to challenge the perception that the victim is to blame; instead creating a supportive network around the child in which they feel able to speak openly about concerns they may have. Parents and carers should make sure their children know they can speak to them if they see something they are not comfortable with online.

The campaign will reinforce the signs to look out for. Traditional signs of exploitation are now blended with new ones. Things such as new trainers, more money, getting taxis everywhere are combined with signs including receiving online commodities – game currency and other gifts within games.

Launching the week of activity will be The 2 Johns E-Safety Training Facebook Live Q&A at 6pm on Sunday 5 December and there will be new resources from Brook Essex looking at how to support young people to have healthy relationships in a digital world and the importance of supporting them to understand the dangers that technology can present with relationships.

David Archibald, ESCB Independent Chair/Facilitator on behalf of the Statutory Partners said: "Going online has become a way of life, with more of us using social media and mobile apps to communicate. Online exploitation is a horrific crime and can have a significant impact on the lives of the individuals, families and communities involved.

“I am pleased that we are continuing the online safety campaign, along with our partners, to support parents and carers to recognise the signs and talk to their children about the risks of online exploitation. Together we can support children and parents to be aware of the dangers and know there is someone to talk to if they're concerned.”

Concerns about child exploitation can be reported anonymously via Crimestoppers 0800 555111. There is also a dedicated Police Child Exploitation hotline - for parents, carers and members of the public to seek advice around concerns they may have about their own or other children with regards to criminal and sexual exploitation: 01245 452058.

Additional notes

The [Essex Safeguarding Children Board website](#) has resources for parents and carers as well as professionals to enable them to fully support children and parents. People can also follow the campaign on the ESCB [Facebook page](#) and [Twitter account](#).

- The 2 Johns E-Safety Training Facebook page for the live event: @The2johns

Organisations involved:

[The 2 Johns](#) specialise in delivering bespoke Child Sexual Exploitation Training to professionals, parents and children, with an aim to totally change the perception that everyone has of 'Stranger Danger'.

The [Essex Violence and Vulnerability Unit](#) support direct work with young people at risk of violence, provide training and development to those who are on the front line and raise awareness with the general public about the dangers of County Lines.

The Children's Society, whose [CARE \(Children At Risk of Exploitation\) service](#) works with children and young adults in Essex who are at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation, with partners Barnardo's offering family support.

The [Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service](#) brings together a range of children's community services. Provided by Virgin Care in partnership with Barnardo's on behalf of Essex County Council and the NHS.

[Essex Brook](#) is part of [Brook](#) a leading Sexual Health and Wellbeing Charity for young people, with over 55 years' experience.