

## Press Release

### County-wide campaign highlights the risk of online child exploitation during a week of activity

The first half term back at school is almost complete for many children and young people across the County, but the risks of online abuse remain a threat which young people and their parents/carers need to be aware of. There is also the possibility that children may take their Halloween celebrations online. This could result in sharing frightening content and peer pressure to undertake harmful online challenges.

From the 17-24 October the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) and partners will be hosting a week of online activity raising awareness of online risk, spotting the signs of abuse, discussing the importance of healthy relationships and open communication at home, and exploring methods to protect young people from abuse.

Traditional signs of exploitation include a young person having more money, being secretive, or getting taxis everywhere. New and emerging signs of exploitation stem from the online world, such as receiving online commodities - game currency and other gifts within games.

It is important to remember exploitation is not the child's fault and they are never to blame. By creating a supportive environment, where online safety is discussed in the same way as road safety or stranger danger, children will feel more able to speak openly about concerns they may have and potentially avoid an online threat escalating.

The week of activity will cover:

- Children's internet use
- Online safety for pre-schoolers, primary and secondary age children
- Online gaming
- How to discuss healthy relationships and consent with children (including children with special educational needs)
- Sending nudes
- Frightening content/harmful online challenges

The [resources created by the ESCB](#) and partners will help provide parents and carers the information they need to support their child to safely navigate the online world, whether they are primary or secondary age.

There will be a Facebook Live session during the week.

#### **Brook Essex @EssexBrook**

#### **Thursday 21 October 2021 1.30pm**

Healthy relationships experts will be delivering a session for parents and carers of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. The purpose of the session will be to inform parents and carers about how the new Relationships, Sex and Health Education curriculum is taught in both mainstream and special schools and answer any questions or concerns around promoting healthy relationships.

To keep up to date with the latest information about the campaign and to make sure you don't miss updates and reminders about the Live Q&A's, search and like Essex Safeguarding Children Board on Facebook.

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.

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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](#).

- Brook Essex Facebook page for the live event: [@EssexBrook](#)

#### Organisations involved:

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

[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 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.

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.