

## Press Release



# Online safety - child exploitation does not stop over the summer

While many people will be hoping to enjoy the summer outside away from the screens and technology indoors, it's important to remember online safety. Smartphones go everywhere with us and exploiters don't take a summer holiday.

From the 11-18 July, the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) and partners are encouraging people across Essex to take part in sharing messages across social media. The ESCB have partnered with Brook Essex, who have recorded a new podcast aimed at young people around the topic of consent - it's a really important listen and people are encouraged to share with young people they know. Brook Essex will also be facilitating a Facebook Live event aimed at parents and carers on Wednesday 14 July at 6pm.

The week of activity will also cover topics including online gaming, youth-involved sexual images and online safety for pre-schoolers, giving parents and carers the information they need to support their child to safely navigate the online world, whether they are primary age or secondary age. The 2 Johns will be hosting their regular Q&A session on Facebook to launch the week of activity on Sunday 11 July at 6pm.

The [ESCB website](#) has resources for parents, carers and professionals including podcasts, videos, how to report concerns and information about spotting the signs of exploitation. Signs of exploitation include a young person having more money, being secretive or getting taxis everywhere, as well as receiving online commodities such as 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.

David Archibald, ESCB Independent Chair/Facilitator on behalf of the Statutory Partners said: "Online exploitation is a terrible crime which can have a significant impact on the lives of the individuals, families and communities involved. I am pleased that we are continuing this campaign, along with our partners, to support parents and carers to recognise the signs of exploitation, which are often hidden. Together we can support young people and families to be aware of the dangers and know where to go 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.

## Notes to Editors

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

### 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 [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.