

Suggested content for newsletters

Online safety - how to spot the signs of exploitation, check device security settings and report concerns.

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 should be aware of.

It's also spooky season and there is 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. The addictive effects of technology could also impact on mental health.

From the 21-27 October the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) and partners are encouraging people across Essex to take part in sharing messages about online safety across social media.

The week of activity will cover topics including youth involved sexual images, online gaming, and online safety for pre-schoolers. There will be information on 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.

Any child is at risk of being exploited - both boys and girls can be groomed online, with contact often starting on social media. **It is important to remember that exploitation is not the child's fault, and they are never to blame.**

Caregivers can create a supportive environment, where online safety is discussed regularly in the same way as road safety or stranger danger, enabling children to speak up about any concerns they may have. By taking an interest in what games they are playing and trying to understand their online world, parents and carers can initiate important conversations. It's also worthwhile double checking that devices have the correct parental controls, especially if they're new.

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.

Concerns about child exploitation can be reported anonymously via Crimestoppers 0800 555111. There is also a dedicated Essex 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.