

Our Ref: ESCB/SH/ga
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Dear Parent/Carer

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and parental/carer awareness

I am writing to you about the important and sensitive subject of child sexual exploitation. You may have seen information about this over the last few years through national and local press, and it has also been featured recently in some documentaries and television programme story lines.

Child sexual exploitation is a type of Sexual Abuse which involves someone or several people forcing or manipulating a child or young person into sexual acts in exchange for something. This 'exchange' could be for money, gifts, alcohol or drugs, or it could be for 'status' in a group or gang. Sexual exploitation does not have to be done through direct contact but can also occur online through computers and mobile phones.

The impact on young people can be immense and in efforts to tackle this appalling form of sexual abuse to children, Essex Safeguarding Children Board has decided to write directly to all parents and carers of secondary and primary aged children within the County, via their secondary and primary schools and academies. We want to tell you about a campaign that has been launched across Essex in partnership with Essex Police to provide information about child sexual exploitation to the general public, communities, businesses, as well as those working with children and young people. It's called the 'I Didn't Know' Campaign and you can access information at www.essex.police.uk/cse or www.escb.co.uk

Child sexual exploitation is a hidden crime, and children and young people will seldom be aware that they are being exploited, even if they are 16 or 17 year olds. I say this because young people often trust their abuser and don't understand that they're being abused. They may depend on their abuser or be too scared to tell anyone what's happening. We do know that child sexual exploitation can happen to any child or young person, in any community; it can affect girls and young women as well as boys and young men.

To understand more about child sexual exploitation please visit the website (link) which has further advice on spotting the signs, where to go for help, advice on speaking with your child or teenager and lots of other useful information, such as how to stay safe online.

Parents and carers can undertake a free online course provided by a national charity called Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation (PACE) and I would certainly encourage you to complete this simple short course. You can access it via the link below or through the PACE website (once you have completed a simple registration process): <http://www.paceuk.info/the-problem/keep-them-safe/>

Remember, if you are concerned that your child is at risk of being sexually exploited then you can telephone Essex County Council, Family Operations Hub on 03456037627 (you can of course contact the Police, if you have concerns ring 101 or in an emergency always ring 999). You can also discuss your concern with a member of staff at school if you have any worries.

Yours sincerely



Simon Hart
Independent Chair
Essex Safeguarding Children Board