

Child Exploitation Awareness Week of Action

23-27 June 2025

Background

- In Essex, there are several campaigns running during each year to raise awareness of exploitation and how to report it. This campaign aimed to coordinate some of these campaigns into a week of action once a year.
- The current campaigns include multiagency campaigns between Social Care (Essex, Southend & Thurrock), Police, Youth Service, British Transport Police, local councils, The Children's Society, The Railway Children, C2C and Greater Anglia train operators. These focus on transport Hubs (Operation Henderson) and leisure/hospitality (Operation Makesafe) as well as sports coaches (Safe to Play).
- Our aim is to support these to continue in their current format but within an Essex Child Exploitation Awareness week. This will also allow greater coordination across the county.
- Our aim is to also include some additional areas of focus during this week so a broader range of contexts can be included to raise awareness further so we can have a positive impact on reducing harm and increasing safety for young people and their communities.

The Format

This campaign ran for five consecutive days from **Monday 23 June – Friday 27 June 2025.**



Issues that were covered included;

- spotting signs of exploitation in various contexts
- how to report concerns
- language that should be used
- what a victim of exploitation looks like
- how exploitation happens
- the impact of blame and shame
- how professionals tackle these issues
- how communities can increase safety themselves
- how professionals and communities work together



There was;

- in-person training
- pre-recorded learning sessions
- face to face engagement at targeted localities
- dissemination of campaign materials
- social media coverage



The week followed this format:

- Monday - Leisure & hospitality (hotels, bowling alleys, fast food restaurants, skate parks etc.)
- Tuesday - Sports coaches and venues
- Wednesday - Transport Hubs (train stations, bus stations and taxis)
- Thursday - Parents/carers
- Friday - Educational providers



The Reach

Face to face engagements Operation Makesafe (Monday)

Hotel staff	44
Leisure venue staff	11
Young people	0
Adults	24
Total face to face engagements	79

Face to face engagements Operation Henderson (Wednesday)

Young people passengers (up to age 19)	147
Adult passengers	274
Train Station staff	68 (train workers and bus drivers)
Taxi Drivers	143
Businesses	49
Total face to face engagements	681

The Reach

Digital Reach

Social Media impressions (ESCB account only)	7597
Social Media Engagements (likes, shares, comments)	331
Website visits	928 (exploitation pages)
QR code scans	67
The 2 Johns session	408 listeners

Radio interviews

- Greatest Hits Radio - Essex Police's Proactive Child Sexual Exploitation Investigation Team - broadcast hourly between 6am and 2pm, Friday 27 June.
- Heart Essex radio broadcast interview Monday 30 June.

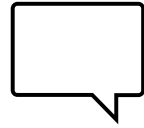
News stories

[Child Exploitation Awareness: **Safeguarding** vulnerable **children** and young people ... - Your Harlow](#)

[Safeguarding vulnerable children & young people on public transport | Essex Police](#)

[Hotel spot checks across Essex test child exploitation awareness | Essex Police](#)

Feedback from The 2 Johns session



“The influence chat was very thought provoking.”



“Really informative session.”



“Really great advice and so important we think about how to keep our children safe from influence.”



“So much I was not aware of. Will signpost to some of my friends with young children.”

Information shared

Social media posts included videos aimed at young and adult passengers and the workforce.

Discussions at train stations engaged passengers in conversations about signs of exploitation and missing children, grooming tactics, where to get help and support and how to report to Police and via the BTP text line.

Passengers were offered a chance to scan the QR code which signposted them to the ESCB webpages about the campaign to access further materials and videos.

Discussions with hotel and leisure staff of signs to look for and signposted to ESCB website for further resources. Operation Makesafe letters were given out.

Downloadable posters, taxi stickers and leaflets, with details of how to report concerns, for business and drivers were shared with working group for onward cascade.



Verbal expression

Harassment, threats, "put-downs", name calling cat calling, humiliation

Gymnasts were subjected to humiliating remarks about their bodies, including being told they "look like a whale," "how's your belly," or that their "thighs are disgusting." Such comments were made in front of peers, exacerbating the emotional impact.

nwg

Verbal expression

Prejudices & Microaggressions

Biased attitudes & beliefs

DID YOU KNOW?

There are many ways a child can be exploited.

Online • Criminally
Sexually • Modern slavery

Exploitation is never the child's fault.

Get this app and find out how to report concerns. Scan QR code or visit www.nwg.org.uk/exploitation

SCAN ME

Sport Welfare Officer Network

Promoting safe sport and building stronger communities for every child, young person & adult in Essex.

It's your chance to share your expertise and support others. Join the network today.

SCAN ME

VOICES IN SPORT

SAY SOMETHING IF YOU HEAR SOMETHING

The voices of women and girls who have experienced abuse in sport are crucial to effecting change. Without their voices we will never truly understand the life long impact of abuse and how it can be prevented.

"I was a child and didn't have the language to say what was happening to me."

"The way women are put back up on any alleged aggression and punishment and punishment and punishment."

Feedback transport workers & businesses

“Through conversations at the train station the team obtained intel of known drug dealer.”

“Bus drivers shared they see a lot at the bus station and young people do not appear to feel safe there as many homeless or street drinkers frequent the area.”

“The taxi drivers were welcoming and said they had taken courses provided by the council on safeguarding, exploitation and county lines and they were certain of some of the signs and on how to effectively report to the right authorities. They also suggested the idea of having more police presence in the neighbourhood.”

“The local businesses we spoke to all complained about hooliganism and drug use amongst the young people in the area and mentioned that it was difficult for them to trust and report any such incidents to the authorities as they do not believe the police will take them seriously and support them adequately. This makes it very difficult for them to reach out.”



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Automatic
door

Platform 4	Platform 1
15:39 London Liverpool Street	15:39 Colchester Town
15:40 Ipswich	15:40 Colchester Town
15:41 Colchester	15:41 Colchester Town
15:42 Ipswich	15:42 Colchester Town
15:43 Ipswich	15:43 Colchester Town
15:44 Ipswich	15:44 Colchester Town
15:45 Ipswich	15:45 Colchester Town
15:46 Ipswich	15:46 Colchester Town
15:47 Ipswich	15:47 Colchester Town
15:48 Ipswich	15:48 Colchester Town
15:49 Ipswich	15:49 Colchester Town
15:50 Ipswich	15:50 Colchester Town

Feedback members of the public and young people

- *“In relation to the members of public, some felt they wouldn't have the confidence to report through fear of getting it wrong. Advice given that we would rather have the reports to enable us to ensure safeguarding than have a child potentially at risk.”*
- *“We had some good conversations with young people, some who were aware of County Lines, we asked would they recognise signs of people who may be involved and advised on the number to call, some young people took down the phone number. Most people were receptive to our conversation. We gave out flyers and felt we had a positive impact.”*
- *“Young people are confident in reciting the BTP number and understand what it is used for.”*



Feedback leisure and hospitality

- *“We generally found that people were open to more training, it sounded like as well as the signs of exploitation it might be helpful to have strategies and skills to use in the situations for example being able to delay check in. We also noticed that their staff were more likely to reference a young female and a male as the situation to be worried about”*
- *“There was some concerning responses when the Op Makesafe scenario was used. The hotel staff were prepared to rent out a room to the adult and child for 1 hour, payment in cash, no ID, child clearly looked frightened, no questions asked. When we revealed ourselves, they felt that because they suggested a 'family room' instead of a room with a double bed this was an appropriate safeguarding step”*
- *“All Caravan Park staff were very receptive and happy to engage with our team and we will continue this partnership moving forward” section of the Essex Partnership”*
- *“Some gyms shared that they have found suspicious items in lockers that could be linked to criminal exploitation but they are not reporting this to Police, nor carrying out more thorough checks on how their 24 hour gyms are being used”*




Maximum Headroom 2.8m

Premier Inn



Learning Points



- **Public Awareness & Reporting:** Many members of the public were unsure about how to report exploitation, fearing they might get it wrong. They were reassured that reporting is better than not acting
 - **Engagement with Young People:** Positive conversations with young people, many of whom were aware of county lines and safeguarding
 - **Taxi Drivers & Licensing Teams:** Taxi drivers had prior safeguarding training but requested updated materials
 - **Business & Transport Staff:** Mixed levels of awareness. Some had recent training, others were unaware on how to respond and signs
 - **Hotel & Caravan Park Staff Engagement:** Staff were generally receptive, with some having completed online training. Generally strong interest in continued input from the partnership and training
 - **Hotel Training & Awareness:** Some had strong safeguarding procedures and training. Other hotels varied in their approach and awareness. Some concerning responses with some willing to rent rooms under suspicious circumstances without proper checks
 - **Intelligence Gathering:** Some useful intel was gathered, including reports of suspected drug dealers and suspicious activity in gyms
 - **Challenges Identified:** Some lack of confidence in recognising exploitation signs by the public and professionals, concerns about safety at bus stations, concerning responses in some leisure and hospitality venues and despondency in reporting to Police
 - **Recommendations:** More training needed for leisure & hospitality, gyms, transport workers, especially on recognising exploitation and understanding legal obligations, continued awareness campaigns, more testing scenarios as a partnership, sharing of materials and reassurances on ease of reporting
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Next steps

Earlier promotion and clarity about audience - invite only or wider publicity (for sports provider events)

Attempt to gain support of bus companies. Buses are cheaper and more accessible, less guarded than stations. Seeing more young people using bus network

Some were unsure about reporting for fear of getting it wrong – worried about it coming back on them. Think about how to get message across of the importance of reporting ALL concerns, better to report than not

Consider bystander training - some saying they would just call 999. Show other ways of reporting suspicions activity, not just crime

Continue testing scenarios with help from the partnership

Consider focusing on activity in gyms and dedicated materials to raise awareness

Consider how each locality can engage with providers to develop awareness and strengthen relationship to improve intel gathering

Next date for diaries - Provisional date of w/c 22 June 2026 for next campaign