



Violence & Vulnerability Unit Newsletter

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Supporting the work of the VVU

Essex County Council have pledged £500,000 from the council's 2021/22 budget to support the VVU break the cycle of violence and protect young people from gangs.

Roger Hirst, Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner said: "We thank Essex County Council for their continued support, it is vital in our fight against gangs and the drug driven violence they bring to our communities."

"Only by working together can we break the cycle of violence that drugs and gangs inflict on our communities and protect the vulnerable from being groomed into a life of crime. Our county is at the forefront of this work with successful projects being delivered across greater Essex from hospitals and schools to communities and clubs; together we are making a difference and creating the safe, secure communities we all need to prosper and thrive."

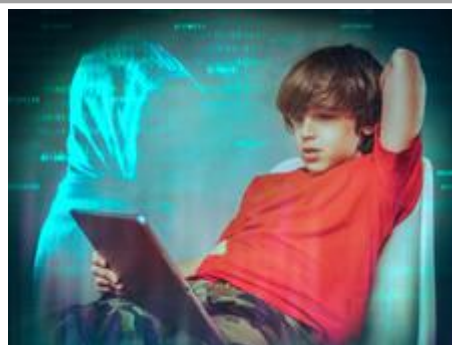
Councillor Louise McKinlay, Cabinet Member for Children and Families at Essex County Council said: "I'm pleased that ECC has recognised the importance of continuing to fund work that tackles County Lines and child exploitation. I know how vital some of the project work has been to protect some of our most vulnerable young people and I'm delighted that we can continue to support communities and make Essex a safer place."

Education professionals supported with online safety information

As part of the VVU workforce development programme, and in response to Covid-19, the VVU has worked with Essex County Council's education safeguarding team to run online training for 685 educational professionals to support young people to stay safe online.

The recent periods of lockdown have resulted in increased time spent online for children and young people, and increased opportunities for perpetrators wishing to target them. Educational settings are expected to keep children safe online during periods of remote learning, therefore to support this expectation, the education safeguarding team arranged for ['The 2 Johns'](#) to deliver two, two hour long training sessions.

The sessions discussed online risks, with a specific focus on those presented by COVID-19 and the latest period of lockdown, as well as the topics of mental health, exploitation, hate crime, radicalisation and influencers. Videos, lesson plans and resources for children and young people Key Stage 1 to 4 were also provided.



A variety of Essex educational settings were represented on the training – primary (infant, junior and primary schools), secondary, special, Pupil Referral Units, alternative education providers, independent, and Academy Trusts, as well as educational teams and colleagues from Essex Police. ECC's social, emotional and mental health team also attended the sessions to discuss support mechanisms for managing issues specific to individual young people and their families.

All the resources used in the training were made available to attendees in time for Safer Internet Day on 9 February. This included resources to share with parents and carers about how to support their children at home. The materials have since been accessed by several hundred educational settings; with many using them to deliver their own online safety sessions.

Feedback has been extremely positive:

- Thank you so much for all the training materials, they are excellent and in the current circumstances a great relief for teachers to have a session like this planned for them, knowing it will be a quality resource!
- From my perspective a really thought provoking and important input. Thank you for what you are doing. The knowledge and insight you are sharing makes a real difference.



Being Inspired in Thurrock

Thurrock's group mentoring project, building on V&V funded work from 2019, delivered a successful group mentoring project in summer 2020 run by mentors within the Youth and Outdoor Education Team of Inspire. (Thurrock Council Youth Service).

Using an outdoor education setting as the backdrop, the project worked with a group of young people who were associating with gang culture, displaying anti-social behaviours or were experiencing anxiety and stress related issues relating to Covid-19.

The project focuses on self-care, and challenges the young people to try new experiences through positive activities in order to increase self-confidence, build resilience and maintain better physical and mental health. By using these new experiences, the group explore consequences, make informed decisions, increase their skills and abilities and have support to make positive choices.

The young people are able to share how they feel about their daily life, their struggles, and then look at options to find a positive way to change their behaviour and channel this into a focussed outcome.

All of the activities provide a pathway or route into clubs or relevant support services, including one to one mentoring.

The programme has been really well received, with one of the schools (which the young people attend) requesting the mentoring service to be delivered in their school. The school support staff noted the positive impact of the project on their students and the opportunity to build on the programme.

A parent commented that: "My son has something positive to focus on and get involved with, because he has a lot of issues in his area, and he gets involved with the wrong crowd."

Psychological First Aid training

We know that young people have found the stress and strain of lockdown and Covid-19 particularly difficult. The feelings of isolation, lack of social contact with friends, and upheaval to education means many young people are suffering.



Last week our partners at Public Health England (PHE) launched a new online Psychological First Aid (PFA) training course on how to provide practical and emotional support to children and young people affected by coronavirus, or other emergency or crisis situations.

The course is introductory level, free and available for all frontline workers such as teachers, health and social workers, charity and community volunteers and anyone who cares for or is regularly in contact with children and young people aged up to 25, including parents and caregivers.

You can sign up [here](#)

If you would like to find out more about any of the items in this newsletter please get in touch katie.canning@essex.gov.uk Follow us on Twitter [@EssexVVU](https://twitter.com/EssexVVU)



Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Essex

Victims of crime can access support [here](#)
Book your free Home Fire Safety Visit [here](#)

