



# Violence & Vulnerability Unit Newsletter

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## VVU grants awarded

We are delighted to announce that we have awarded £370,499 to 20 organisations in Essex to deliver work with young people as part of our community grant programme.

Not for profit local organisations could apply for up to £20k to deliver work that is proven to have a positive impact on priority issues for young people.

It is important to us that young people are involved throughout the whole grant process as these funds are to help them. The priority needs identified came from young people, the young people were involved in the decision making on who received funding and we are developing ways for them to be involved in project monitoring and evaluation.

The issues young people deem priority are those relating to serious violence, exploitation or young people's mental health. They were also keen to see more detached youth work, increased safer spaces for young people and opportunities for young people to learn life skills and participate in community based or volunteering session.

The calibre of applications was so high, and the need for financial support within the voluntary sector so strong, that the Community Safety Development Fund of the Essex PFCC joined with the VVU to provide a larger combined pot of funds.

Roger Hirst, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex and Chair of the Violence and Vulnerability Round Table said: "We know that if young people have the knowledge, the support and information, and the diversionary activities in place, they are less likely to become involved in crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour.

"The voluntary and not for profit sector work incredibly hard in communities with young people to provide them with this support. However, these organisations have been hit really hard financially over the last 18 months, while the need for their support within these communities has not gone away.

"I'm delighted we've been able to fund so many varied initiatives and I look forward to seeing the work in action and the difference it makes to so many. Congratulations to all involved."

The funding is for projects running from January 2022 through to March 2023. A full list of organisations can be found on the [VVU website](#).

## Just a bit of festive fun?

This Christmas Essex residents are once again being urged to think about the supply chain behind recreational drugs, and consider the violence, intimidation and exploitation of vulnerable children that goes hand in hand with the movement of drugs around the County.



In order to get drugs, including 'party drugs', to those who take them, a supply chain of violence, grooming and modern slavery is established. Local children are being targeted right now, purely to move drugs and money through Essex, up and down to London and beyond, in County Lines.

County Lines is the name given to drug dealing where organised criminal gangs move drugs across the country. They exploit vulnerable people, particularly children, by recruiting them to distribute the drugs, often referred to as 'drug running'. They are forced to carry drugs between locations, usually on trains or coaches. Sometimes made to swallow or hide drugs inside their bodies so not to be detected.

This December, the Violence and Vulnerability Partnership is rerunning the hard hitting #MerryMuletide campaign created by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council. The social media campaign wants to educate party going residents about the back story behind their illegal drugs and educate the public about the young people being exploited behind "just that one pill" or "just one line of coke."

While some young people are more at risk of being groomed than others, any young person could be at risk of being targeted by County Line Drug gangs. Children as young as 12 years old are recruited, often using social media, often enticed into the gang lifestyle with drugs, alcohol, money and the promise of friendship or a relationship.

For more information visit [Merry Muletide](#)



## Op Sceptre – anti knife crime week

Essex Police officers recovered 791kg of weapons from surrender bins across Essex during a national week of anti-knife crime activity.

During Op Sceptre, the name given to anti-knife crime operational activity, Essex Police also seized 14 knives, made ten arrests, carried out 74 stop and searches and executed nine warrants.

Officers also worked alongside colleagues in UK Border Force to seize four weapons which were destined for addresses in Essex, including a knuckleduster and a blade disguised as a bracelet.

Investigations have been opened into how and where these weapons were bought and by whom.

The 791kg of weapons was collected from less than half of the amnesty bins in Essex and roughly equates to 9,500 weapons, demonstrating the significant impact the knife bins have in taking weapons off the streets of Essex.

## Keeping children safe online over the festive period

Online safety is as important as ever in the lead up to the festive season. New technology and gadgets feature high on the wish list for many young people this Christmas and it's important that they know how to keep themselves safe when using them.



The Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) are reminding parents and carers that if their child does receive new technology for Christmas, it's important to set up devices correctly to keep them safe when online.

The ESCB has advice for parents on what to look out for online including information about online gaming, online chat rooms, sharing images and photos on line and online bullying

Parents and carers should make sure their children know they can speak to them if they see something they are not comfortable with online. As we move more to an online and digital world the ways adults use to exploit young people change and traditional signs of exploitation are now blended with new ones. Things such as new trainers, more money, getting taxis everywhere are combined with gifts including receiving online commodities – game currency and other gifts within games.

To see the resources available, visit the [Essex Safeguarding Children Board website](#)



## Merry Christmas

This is our last newsletter of 2021 and all of us at the VVU would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and best wishes for 2022. The newsletter will be back in the New Year, but you can always follow us on Twitter if you can't wait till then!

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](mailto:katie.canning@essex.gov.uk) Visit our website [www.essexvvu.co.uk](http://www.essexvvu.co.uk) or follow us on Twitter [@EssexVVU](https://twitter.com/EssexVVU)

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