

TV campaign focused on child sexual exploitation launched in capital



Police Scotland is supporting the first TV campaign in the UK focused on child sexual exploitation which launched in Edinburgh today (Thursday 28 January 2016).

New research shows 93 per cent of parents have heard of child sexual exploitation, but almost a third (29 per cent) know little about it and more than a third (36 per cent) believe it won't affect their family.

A new TV advert and website – www.csethesigns.scot – shows how conversations online can potentially lead to a young person placing themselves in danger and highlight how to spot the warning signs.

Education Secretary Angela Constance launched the campaign during a visit to ParentLine in Edinburgh today.

She said: “Child sexual exploitation is happening to boys and girls in Scotland. By its very nature this form of child abuse is often hidden and many young people who are affected don't realise they are a victim and will not ask for help.

“The first step in tackling this abhorrent crime is understanding it can happen to anyone. It can take many forms – online, through social media or on phones, as well as in person on a one to one or group basis.

“Barnardo's Scotland directly supported 266 young people who have been victims or were at risk last year, but these figures may be the tip of the iceberg.

“New research shows that most parents don’t know a lot about it and don’t believe that their family is at risk. This campaign aims to change that and help parents and young people understand the warning signs and prevent the abuse before it takes place.”



She was joined by Assistant Chief Constable Malcolm Graham (Major Crime and Public Protection), who said:

“Tackling abuse in all its forms, including child sexual exploitation (CSE), is a priority for Police Scotland. Child sexual exploitation is an evolving issue, as is our understanding of it and how it can affect young people. CSE takes place across all communities and it affects girls and boys.

“Young people are exposed to exploitation in a myriad of ways from online grooming to contact offending. They may not recognise or understand what’s happening until it’s too late.

“We fully support the Government’s campaign. We are committed to working with the Government and with other partners to prevent young people’s lives being blighted by CSE. Raising public awareness, and particularly parental awareness of what to look for if their child is being exploited, is an important part of tackling this crime.

“If anyone suspects a child may be a victim of any form child abuse including sexual exploitation then contact the Police or one of our partner agencies. In the same vein I would like to emphasise that if anyone suspects individuals of committing acts of child abuse then contact us and we will investigate thoroughly and robustly in order to keep children safe.”

The TV advert will run alongside outdoor advertising, partnership work with local authorities and social media. The campaign is aimed at parents and young people aged 11-17, with

the message that child sexual exploitation can happen to any young person, regardless of their gender or background.

A range of partners are supporting the campaign, including Barnardo's Scotland, NSPCC Scotland, ChildLine, Police Scotland and Children 1st .

Jill Cook, Service Manager at ParentLine Scotland, said: "I am delighted that ParentLine was been chosen to launch the CSE campaign. It is very important to raise greater awareness on the issues of child sexual exploitation and to equip parents and carers with better understanding and advice of the signs to look out for.

"The safety and wellbeing of young people is of paramount importance. For young people the internet is a place, not a thing, and just like when they are going out, parents would want to know where their child is going and with whom. I'd encourage any parent concerned that their child may be involved in sexual exploitation to call ParentLine for advice and support."

Martin Crewe, Director of Barnardo's Scotland, said: "It is vital that we raise awareness of the risks of child sexual exploitation. Although there is widespread concern about the issue, many parents believe their children are not at risk. We want to ensure that parents know the signs of child sexual exploitation and can take appropriate action to minimise the risks."