

Ex-Gendarme launches Epsom safety awareness programme for children

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A new safety awareness programme for children has been launched in **Epsom** by former French armed police officer Xavier Vollin, who now works in the UK as a close protection officer for foreign diplomats and a behavioural detection instructor. Mr Vollin, who was awarded a Medal for Bravery during his police service, has more than 25 years' frontline experience in law enforcement, personal protection and behavioural analysis. He also trains colleagues in recognising early warning signs and behavioural anomalies in everyday environments. The initiative, developed under his training company XavSafety, is currently being piloted with children aged 9 to 13, with plans to expand to older teenagers and adults.

Seeing what others miss

Mr Vollin said that much traditional safety advice focuses on what to do once a situation has already gone wrong, whereas his approach concentrates on what happens before that point, helping participants notice changes in behaviour, inconsistencies in surroundings and subtle cues that may signal emerging risk. The programme emphasises calm awareness, observation and environmental understanding rather than confrontation or fear-based thinking. It is described as helping children "see what others miss", while remaining age-appropriate, engaging and accessible. Mr Vollin said the aim is not to turn children into "mini security officers", but to help them become more present, confident and aware of how people and environments can change around them.

Pilot programme underway in Epsom

The initial six-week programme began in early January 2026 and has deliberately been kept small to allow the format to be refined and adapted before wider rollout. Sessions combine practical exercises with elements of behavioural observation and pattern recognition, presented in a way intended to remain playful rather than intimidating. Early feedback from parents and children has been positive, although images and evaluation material are currently limited while the pilot phase continues. Future developments are expected to include programmes for older teenagers and adults, exploring the same core skills in greater depth, and Mr Vollin intends to formalise the framework and pursue CPD accreditation.

Focus on awareness in a digital age

Mr Vollin said the wider purpose of the project is to help young people reconnect with their surroundings at a time when attention is increasingly absorbed by screens. He described the underlying idea as being less about strength or reaction, and more about presence, understanding people and recognising risk early, before reaction becomes the only option. The programme is currently launching locally in Epsom, with potential for expansion depending on demand and community interest. Further details about the initiative can be found on the XavSafety website.

Sam Jones - Reporter

