Internet Safety Task and Finish Review Group

16th November, 2009

PRESENT – Councillors Armstrong, Chapman, Hughes, Davies and Curry. Mr. Egan

OFFICERS – Andrew Dunn, John Steel, Ruth Bernstein.

ALSO – Jeremy Musseell, ICT Manager, Darlington College.
Mike Shorten, Vice Principal Carmel College.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Burton,Francis and Long. D. Moyes and Canon Bamber.

Introduction

Following the report received at the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 9th November, 2009, it was agreed to hold a Task and Finish Review Group meeting to address some of the issues raised regarding internet safety and for the Scrutiny Committee to make recommendations to Cabinet regarding the provision of internet safety advice to all children, young people, parents and carers in Darlington.

Points Raised/Discussed

- Carmel College are delivering e-safety information to parents and carers employing materials provided by Orange and the Police as part of an evening event (second year this has been held) designed to help young people achieve and aspire. Carmel College is seen to be delivering best practice and would be willing to share their approach with other schools.

- There are numerous resources and available on e-safety on the internet and Orange have a free dvd which is available.

- There is a report going to the December Children's Services Joint Consultative Group to propose an e-safety policy for the Council and the introduction of a curriculum scheme of works which it is hoped all schools sign up to. Work is also ongoing to prepare a video aimed at young people to help them identify with the issues of internet safety and the dangers of 'grooming'.

- Jeremy advised the Members on the new safety measures that are in place at the Darlington College and the various software to monitor online behaviour to protect students. Staff at the College have been trained on how to monitor their own students.

- Ruth Bernstein gave an overview of community learning at the Library and the access restrictions for IT at the library. There are restricted access permissions dependant on age and every user has to sign up to an acceptable use policy.

- Ruth Bernstein also highlighted the importance of educating the vulnerable young people and the NEET.

- General discussion on the parents role in educating young people and also themselves to the dangers of internet safety. In schools and colleges there are filtering systems in place however these are not always in place in the home environment.

- The role of the parent/carer is key to the safety of young people and it is vital that information and advice is made available to parents. Ruth advised Members that she would be willing to offer informal e-safeguarding training for adults at the Library.

- General discussion around the dangers of 'facebook' and other social networking sites which are restricted to over 18's, however, younger children do have access to these sites, and sometimes with parental permission.

- Internet access is not just via computers, most young people can access the internet via their mobile phones which have less control.

- There is a need for better policing of social networking sites.

- Councillor Hughes advised the Members of monies available through the European Commission to give advice on e-safety and the E-safety day which is planned for 10th February, 2010 aimed at raising awareness. This may be an opportunity for the Council and its partners to provide an awareness raising event in Darlington.

- The Northern Echo is currently running a Safety Net Campaign.

- Reference was made to the Byron Report on internet safety.

- The group proposed that the The Local Strategic Partnership be involved in any "Safety Day" agreed which could include input by the Darlington College.

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