

Online Safety remains a key priority as internet use rises

The Education Secretary Kirsty Williams has announced that online safety will remain a key priority for the Welsh Government with an extensive programme to enhance online safety practice in schools over the next two years, to continue to support young people to stay safe online.

The figures from the National Survey of Wales show:

- 95% of children aged 7 to 15 used the internet at home.
- The device most commonly used by these children was a tablet or similar (71%).
- 64% of children aged 7 to 15, who access the internet outside school, accessed a school learning platform and 67% used the internet to find other information related to schoolwork.
- 87% of parents felt that their child knew how to stay safe when using the internet.
- 56% of households with children aged 7-15 used parental control filters.
- Further analysis showed that the parents are more likely to use a parental control filter if they are more highly educated, if they also use the internet themselves, if they have more children, and if their children are younger.

Over the last two and a half years, the Welsh Government has strengthened online safety practice in education with:

- 63 online safety training days across all 22 local authorities, training approximately 2,300 educational professionals.
- An increase in take-up of the 360 degree Safe Cymru tool from 196 schools (19% schools in Wales) in 2014 to 1,375 (85% of schools in Wales).
- Production of the Online Safety Resource for Wales.
- A range of resources for learners, parents & carers and educational practitioners on online safety issues such as Cyberbullying, Online Trust and Social Media.

Last month the Cabinet Secretary for Education launched the Online Safety Zone on Hwb, the digital learning platform for schools in Wales. The Online Safety Zone provides young people, teachers, parents and governors with access to a wide range of bilingual online safety materials.

The Welsh Government is also supporting Operation Netsafe – a pan-Wales campaign led by South Wales Police in partnership with the Lucy Faithful Foundation, which aims to stop the creation, viewing and sharing of indecent images of children online.

Kirsty Williams said:

“Being online is increasingly part of all of our lives. Alongside the many benefits of the internet come very real risks and that is why we are taking action to safeguard our children and young people and preparing them to become safe and responsible digital citizens.

“We’ll continue to build on the progress we’ve made to date and drive improvements in online safety practice with an extensive online safety education and awareness programme across Wales. This provides schools with access to online resources and classroom materials to support learners in thinking critically behaving safely and participating responsibly online.”