

Welsh Government steps up support to tackle online safety

The Welsh Government is urging teachers, parents and carers to read their [Online Safety Action Plan](#) (external link) which provides enhanced support for the online safety of children and young people.

It addresses a wide number of issues, including safeguarding, anti-bullying and cyber security, and builds on existing tools for teaching online safety such as the Hwb [Online Safety Zone](#) (external link) and [360 degree safe Cymru](#) (external link).

Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams, visited Porthcawl Comprehensive School on Wednesday to congratulate them on achieving the 360 degree safe Cymru award, formally launch the plan and listen to students about their online experiences.

She said:

“Nothing is more important than the safety of our young people – whether that’s physical or online. The internet has completely revolutionised education. Just a few weeks ago I launched Wales’s first ever E-sgol project which uses video technology, via the tools available through Hwb, to connect different classrooms. This is the future, but with emerging technology like this, the safety of our learners has become increasingly important.

“Our National Mission makes a commitment to provide all learners with high-level digital skills and we need to make sure these skills are accompanied by the knowledge to use the internet safely. We all have a responsibility to ensure they are safe online and I urge everyone who cares for or teaches children to read this action plan.”

To ensure the real issues individuals face online are addressed, the Welsh Government worked with NSPCC on a ‘pupils’ voice’ exercise which asked young people about their concerns. Other key stakeholders including Barnados, Estyn and the Office of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales have also been engaged in the production of this plan.

Vivienne Laing, the NSPCC’s policy and public affairs manager for Wales, said:

“Online safety is one of the major 21st century child protection challenges with children often placed at risk of seeing inappropriate content, bullying or even grooming and abuse when using the internet. It is vital that the Welsh Government is at the

forefront of efforts to keep young people safe and this plan is a major step forward giving children and parents the knowledge they need.

“We now want to see an online safety advisory group of experts created, which includes young people, to ensure that this plan is implemented effectively and that it stays up to date with changes in technology. And it is crucial that the Welsh and UK Governments work together and with tech companies, law enforcement and charities to make the internet a much safer place for children in Wales.”

Leader of the House with responsibility for digital, Julie James, said:

“We want to give young people the opportunity to maximise their digital skills, this is vital for them and our economy. I was very pleased to attend the launch of the Institute of Coding Wales a few weeks ago which will help ensure schools have access to world-class digital skills. But we also have a responsibility to ensure young people are safe when online and I urge people to read the National Online Safety Action Plan.”