

Press Release - Friday 1st of June 2007

New Welsh Partnership Helps Young People be Savvy and Safe Online.

A new partnership, representing the social, business and cultural diversity of Wales, has been launched to raise awareness of Internet safety amongst young people and their parents or carers.

The partnership, made up of WISE KIDS, Urdd Gobaith Cymru, Childline Cymru and BT Wales, has a number of important aims, including:-

- Assessing current trends in young people's use of the Internet and mobile phones, and the safety challenges these present.
- Developing innovative targeted programmes to ensure that young people and parents have an informed understanding of the Internet and mobile technologies, and the risks that these can present. This includes risks associated in using online social networking sites, messenger services, accessing inappropriate content online, and grooming.

The partnership is keen to stress the many positive benefits the Internet presents. They hope that by developing these programmes and resources, they will succeed in creating more engaged and informed e-citizens who have a better understanding of their online world, and who are able to handle their personal safety online.

Member of the partnership, Sangeet Bhullar, Executive Director of WISE KIDS, said, "The Internet and mobile technologies today offer so many tools for young people to access learning, socialise and network with their friends online. However, whilst many young people are comfortable in using social networking sites and instant messaging services, they are not necessarily aware that their profiles and the sites they create are available for anyone in the world to view unless they have specifically protected them. They are also not aware of how the Internet works, how to judge website content, what constitutes personal information, or how grooming occurs. It is important that we provide young people with the knowledge and tools that will empower them in their use of these technologies, and prepare them for life, not just seek to restrict their use of these services. This partnership will go a long way towards meeting the needs of our young people."

Efa Gruffudd Jones, Chief Executive of Urdd Gobaith Cymru and also a partnership member, says, "The Urdd takes the safety of children and young people extremely seriously, and understands that their world is constantly evolving. We look forward to working in partnership with others to develop guidelines and good practice to keep children and young people safe, whilst recognising that they must also have the freedom to develop their own interests and individual personalities. The more we can do to increase the understanding of the potential dangers the better."

Finally, Ann Beynon, BT's Director Wales, and membership partner, added: "The Internet has become an integral part of our lives and children are exceptionally well versed when it comes to using the web for all sorts of educational and social activities. But that familiarity can also make the Internet a dangerous place for children. BT already promotes safe surfing through its Green Cross Code but this partnership will take this one step further, looking at current trends such as cyber bullying and bringing together those organisations who work with children everyday to tackle such issues. We all want to provide a 'safe surfer' code of practice where children and parents alike can take guidance that will help keep them safe while they surf and we believe this partnership will do just that."

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WISE KIDS is a non-profit organisation set up in October 2002, whose aim is to work with:-

- ❖ young people, parents, youth workers, librarians, teachers, governors, LEAs, social workers, foster carers, community groups and businesses, **to promote New Internet and Mobile Technologies, Internet Literacy, Proficiency and Safety.**

This is implemented through:-

- ❖ awareness raising events and literature,
- ❖ the delivery of consultancy and training programmes,
- ❖ the WISE KIDS website which has resources for young people and the broader community to learn about online safety and using the Internet positively.

Urdd Gobaith Cymru is Wales' largest youth organisation with over 52,000 members between the ages of 8 and 25. The aim of the Urdd is:-

- ❖ to give the children and young people of Wales an opportunity to live their lives through the medium of Welsh, developing confidence and respect for each other and the people of the world.

Urdd activities include:-

- ❖ tours and visits, sports, eisteddfod, magazines, adrannau and aelwydydd and residential centres.

The Urdd has given children and young people exciting opportunities for over 80 years.

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