Inverclyde Council area

Good practice: Safety Net Inverclyde: Protecting Children in the Electronic Age.

What were the identified issues?

Inverclyde Council recognised the risks posed to children when using the internet and mobiles phones. The dangers of communicating with on-line predators, the sharing of sexual images and cyber bullying were identified.

What have the staff and services done together?

A multi-agency group was set up by the Inverclyde Child Protection Committee (ICPC) to deliver a range of activities around Internet Safety between December 2009 and January 2010. Actions included safety information leaflets issued to anyone purchasing a computer or mobile phone from electronic retail outlets in Inverclyde prior to Christmas 2009.

Young people were invited to a foam party where 168 questionnaires were completed by them to identify how internet sites and mobile phones were used. This confirmed that many young people were not using safe practices to protect themselves. For younger children, activities took place in school. Learning resources from the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) website were used to introduce on-line safety. Within the community the 'Invernet' bus was used to provide information on internet safety.

A publicity campaign involved successful partnership working with the local media. This included the local press highlighting different topics over five days to alert parents and children of their potential vulnerability to on-line predators and cyber bullying when using social networking sites and mobile phones. The cost of the newspaper coverage was at a reduced rate for maximum coverage. Children were interviewed on the local radio over five evenings.

What are the Benefits?

The safety of children and young people has increased due to heightened awareness of the potential dangers when accessing social networking sites, surfing online and using mobile phones. Parents and carers are aware of the ways they can protect their children from harm when using the internet and mobile phones.