Information to be sent to parents of secondary and primary school pupils via education

INFORMATION MESSAGE FOR PARENTS & CARERS – keeping children safe online

Argyll & Bute Child Protection Committee is asking parents, carers and members of the public to be ever vigilant about children's safety online.

This messages comes on the back of increased concerns from Police Scotland about online child abuse crimes and an increase in the number of people accessing self-help resources to stop **online** child sexual abuse during lockdown.

As children and young people spend more time online there is also an increase in the chances they will see something which isn't intended for them, be targeted by cyberbullies or online criminal offenders. Families and communities having awareness of the risks and helping prepare children and young people to have vigilance can be the first and necessary step in staying safe online.

The most important guidance in relation to keeping your children and young people safe online is:

> ➢ *Link in with internet providers to see what parental controls can be put in place to limit access to inappropriate adult websites and subject matter.*
> ➢ *Keep an open dialogue with your child about what sites and apps they are accessing, who they are talking to and be vigilant to changes in their behaviour or language.*
> ➢ *Whilst your child will have learnt in school about keeping safe online, this alone is not enough. Having conversations with your child/ren about the potential dangers of the internet and how they can stay safe and monitoring what they are doing and who they are chatting to is critical. Police Scotland Cybercrime Harm Prevention Unit have produced a presentation to provide guidance and support for parents https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b12kdb89CVY&feature=youtu.be*
> ➢ *Talk to other parents to keep up to date. Share ideas and information about the apps and websites your children use, and share any safety concerns you have.*
> ➢ *It is not always easy to spot the signs of online grooming and sexual exploitation so if you have any concern at all about someone your child is in contact with, you should report it.*
> ➢ *If you believe your child has been targeted or exposed to online abuse contact the police. Try to capture screenshots, user names or emails and do not engage in further online conversations.*
> ➢ *Be supportive and don't blame yourself or your child.*

There are lots of organisations which provide advice and guidance on understanding the risks and helping to keep children safe. They also offer support and confidential helplines for anyone with concerns about, or affected by online abuse or cyberbullying. Links to some of these organisations can be found on Argyll & Bute Child Protection Committee website in the "Eyes and Ears Open campaign box". www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/abcpc

You can report online crime to Police Scotland:

- **by telephone 999 (emergency) 101 (non-emergency)**
- **in person at any police station**

You can also report a crime anonymously online with Crimestoppers

If you're unsure whether someone's behaviour online is a crime or not call 101. This is a non-emergency police line that can offer advice on what you can report as a crime. You can also visit the Youth Hub on Police Scotland website for advice www.scotland.police.uk