

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27 June 2014

Covering report –
Draft report of the Online Safety of Children and Young People Task Group

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 This report asks the Committee to:

- a. Note the information in this report.
- b. Consider the information in the draft final report of the Online Safety of Children and Young People Task Group, attached at Annex A
- c. Consider the recommendations set out in section 4 of the draft final report

2.0 Background

In October 2013 the Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee (YP O&SC) responded to a request from a member of the committee to take a closer look at online safety for children and young people by setting up a task and finish group to look at what could be done in North Yorkshire.

The task group was chaired by County Councillor Joe Plant and included County Councillors; Val Arnold, David Jeffels and Janet Sanderson as well as the Church of England representative on the Committee Mr Graham Richards.

3.0 Focus of the review

Typically, schools and partner organisations in North Yorkshire tend to deal well in ensuring that children and young people are aware of the dangers that can manifest through technology, alongside promoting its positive application. However, there remain a number of key challenges that have never fully or consistently been addressed and the task group sought to take a closer look at the challenges that are essentially focussed around a child's digital life within a social context and especially within their home environment.

There are many aspects to keeping safe online and advances in technology continue to present new and complex challenges. The issues this review seeks to address are:

- The need for parents to better understand the risks their children may be exposed to, and how they can supervise and support their children effectively.
- Children and Young People themselves will need to develop the skills to evaluate the way they use technology at home, in their social lives and at school, identifying risks and developing ways to balance the risks with the benefits.

4.0 Next Steps

After the draft report is considered and agreed by the Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee it is scheduled to be presented to the Executive on the 8th July 2014 and the North Yorkshire Children Safeguarding Board on the 14th July 2014. The recommendations are set out in section 4 of the draft report for consideration and agreement.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 The Committee is recommended to:

- a. Note the information in this report.
- b. Agree and / or amend the draft final report of the Online Safety of Children and Young People Task Group attached at Annex A
- c. Agree and / or amend the recommendations set out in section 4 of the draft final report

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Date:	June 2014
Background Documents:	None
Annex:	Annex A – Draft report of the Online Safety of Children and Young People Task Group

Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**Online Safety of Children and Young People
Task Group**

June 2014

Foreword

We all have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and that responsibility must apply to the online world which is such an important part of everyday life of children and young people.

New technologies open up many exciting benefits and opportunities for children and young people but they can also present some risks. Technology is becoming all pervasive, touching all areas of society, with children and young people having increasing access to personal technology such as web – enabled phones. We must ensure, therefore, that a framework is in place to help children and young people stay safe when using technology, and to ensure that where problems do occur, children and young people and their parents and carers have support dealing with them effectively.

The local safeguarding children board (LSCB) have a key role to play in this process. They co –ordinate and ensure the effectiveness of what their member organisations do both individually and together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

It is only through a combined and consistent approach to online safety that we can ensure that all children and young people are safeguarded from harm, wherever and whenever they go online.

I would like to thank fellow members and officers and everyone else involved in the review for their valuable input for what is becoming more and more important for children and young people.

County Councillor Joe Plant
Chairman Online Safety Task Group



1 - INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

We need to teach our children not just about how to stay safe online but how to behave online too – on social media and over phones with their friends. And it's not just children that need to be educated – but parents.”

- Prime Minister, July 2013

Typically, schools and partner organisations in North Yorkshire tend to deal well in ensuring that children and young people are aware of the dangers that can manifest through technology, alongside promoting its positive application. However, there remain a number of key challenges that we have never fully or consistently addressed and we now seek to apply further, more direct, attention. These challenges are essentially focussed around a child's digital life within a social context and especially within their home environment.

There are many aspects to keeping safe online and advances in technology continue to present new and complex challenges. The issues this review seeks to address are:

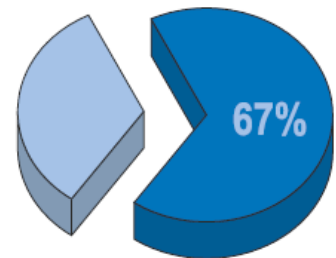
- The need for parents to better understand the risks their children may be exposed to, and how they can supervise and support their children effectively.
- Children and Young People themselves will need to develop the skills to evaluate the way they use technology at home, in their social lives and at school, identifying risks and developing ways to balance the risks with the benefits.

1.2 Background

The results of the North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) survey 'Growing up in North Yorkshire'¹, with particular reference to internet safety are shown on the right. However, although the figures look quite positive in that $\frac{3}{4}$ of those responding said they follow the advice they have been given, that still sees 24% who do not follow that advice. This is why any work done to promote online safety needs to work with young people to ensure that effective methods are identified, and that parents are armed with the correct information in order to help keep their children safe.

INTERNET SAFETY

- ❑ 67% of the sample reported that they have ever chatted online.
- ❑ 8% of all pupils reported that they have ever received a chat message that scared or upset them.
- ❑ 81% of the sample reported that they have been told how to safe while chatting online.
- ❑ 76% of all pupils reported that they always follow the advice they have been given.
- ❑ 5% of pupils responded that anyone can see their profile on Facebook or Bebo, while 4% said they 'don't know' who can.



¹ The survey was undertaken in 2012 and had responses from over 16,000 pupils across North Yorkshire

1.3 Background

In October 2013 the Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee (YP O&SC) responded to a request from a member of the committee to take a closer look at online safety for children and young people by setting up a task and finish group to look at what could be done in North Yorkshire.

The task group was chaired by County Councillor Joe Plant and included County Councillors; Val Arnold, David Jeffels, Janet Sanderson (it should be noted Janet is also the Chairman of Looked After Children Members Group and Young People's Champion) as well as the Church of England representative on the Committee, Mr Graham Richards.



From left to right C Cllrs Val Arnold, David Jeffels & Janet Sanderson & co-opted member Graham Richards

The first meeting of the task group opened our eyes to what a huge subject online safety is! We had concerns that young people under the age of 13 were accessing social networking sites but perhaps not receiving appropriate advice, that online bullying might be an issue for our young people and they might not know what to do about it, that they might be accessing inappropriate content and even that they may be putting themselves in harm's way and open to sexual exploitation. But what could we do about this through our scrutiny review?

We decided to look at what national information and support is already available, to satisfy ourselves that our schools and children's residential homes promote and monitor online safety, to see if other local authorities were putting advice concerning online safety on their websites, to consult with the North Yorkshire Police and get their views on how North Yorkshire might support its young people to stay safe online and most importantly to talk to the children and young people and listen to their ideas.



It was important to recognise the work on-going by the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board (NY-SCB). An eSafety Strategy and eSafety Policy was published on their website in February 2014 and a Task Group had already started a review of eSafety. We were keen that our work did not duplicate that of the NY-SCB and hope that each task groups' work would complement each other.

2 - RESEARCH

Our research began with a look at what information was available online.

2.1 Online

We found many different publications and websites providing lots of advice ranging from academic studies to self-help or parental help guides. We soon realised that the amount of information is overwhelming and for parents with busy lives a one stop shop for clear and simple guidance would be much more helpful. We also learnt that it is not simply about the home computer as our children have access to the internet in their pockets and bags through smart phones and tablet devices.



2.2 National Campaign

We found a National Campaign that had been launched by Central Government working through the UK Council for Child Internet Safety. The campaign seemed to have limited take up but the mobile phone company Talk Talk used it on their website and at the time Dixons and PC World also agreed to use it. The campaign advocated 'Click Clever Click Safe!' and used a simple banner to catch the attention.



This week (13 May 2014) has seen the launch of a web portal providing child safety tips created by Sky, TalkTalk, Virgin and BT after finding that most parents wanted more information. [Internet Matters](#).



(Sky News 13 May 2014)

The Task Group would suggest that a joined up and visible approach to providing online safety advice is a good way to reach a wide audience. The internet is the obvious place to put this information but it should be used together with other approaches such as posters, publicity on radio and television, banners on the side of buses and public sector vehicles.

2.3 Other Local Authorities

Our look at other Local Authority websites showed us there were few that chose to include any information on online safety but Norfolk County Council was an example of an Authority that used “Click Clever Click Safe!” and provided further information on children’s use of the internet in libraries.



We feel consideration should be given to providing this information on the North Yorkshire County Council website as some of the libraries in North Yorkshire are run by the local community and as such guidance needs to be clear on this.

2.4 Schools online safety policies



We looked at examples of school e safety policies and were advised by key officers that although NYCC can provide support and guidance it is the responsibility of the school to decide how the policy is put into practice. The implementation of the policies is the most important part of this and good practice saw pupils and teaching staff engaged and promoting online safety regularly rather than basing information on one lesson in the year.

The task group suggest it would be helpful to schools and would ensure a consistent message about online safety if ‘off the shelf’ lesson plans could be available. It would also assist schools in continuing to improve in this area, and to evidence the good work they are doing, so that others can learn from it, if regular online safety audits were undertaken.

2.5 Looked After Children

C Cllr Janet Sanderson is a member of our Task Group and as the Chairman of the County Council’s Looked After Children Members Group and the Young People’s Champion Janet consistently reminded the Task Group that any recommendations coming out of this review have to reflect the needs of the County Councils Looked After Children. Janet works tirelessly to spread the message that any consultation with children and young people should be done in an appropriate and innovative way not simply through the production of another questionnaire.

The County Council’s children’s residential homes have their own policies and procedures around online safety but it is encouraging to see that opportunities are taken to have informal discussions with young people about their safety online. The computers within the residential homes do have firewalls and security software installed that prevent inappropriate content being accessed, but as many young people have access to a smart phone, it is important to raise their awareness, and develop their understanding, and this may often be more successfully done through informal open discussion.

2.6 The voice of children and young people

We met with groups of children and young people and members of the Local Safeguarding Children Board on 12th February 2014 at North Yorkshire Police headquarters, Newby Wiske to discuss the issue of on-line and eSafety. The event, organised by the NY- LSCB, coincided with the National Safer Internet Day and provided a platform for groups of children and young people from primary and secondary schools as well as youth clubs and young volunteers, to put forward their top tips for parents, share their views on the internet and social networking and present a series of short films entitled “My Digital Life”. Their key message was that digital networking is their way of life, so adults need to get on board and work with them to raise awareness about the risks and consequences.

This event was the start of a conversation and a partnership with children and young people

Our task group not only found the ideas of the children and young people insightful but we would like to endorse them here:



- Young people should be involved in presenting, talking to and supporting other children and young people
- Young people can be mentors and campaigners on eSafety
- Parents need advice, support and training
- There should be a North Yorkshire eSafety Campaign – aimed at children, young people and parents
- There needs to be continued involvement of children and young people around the issue of eSafety
- Good practice and children and young people’s work needs to be shared
- People who work directly with children and young people need training on eSafety

2.7 North Yorkshire Police

Our conversation with colleagues in North Yorkshire Police reassured us that we were thinking along the right lines! The key message we took away from the discussion was that we need to be consistent across the County. It is not enough to all want to make sure our children and young people are as safe as they can be online; We; the Public Sector; Private Sector; Voluntary Sector have to be spreading the same messages in the same way.

We were reminded that it is not enough to give the message to children and young people in schools but that parents also require education. We all recognise that this is not an easy task!

2.8 Public Health

In canvassing the opinion on a county wide campaign around online safety for children and young people, the Director of Public Health Lincoln Sargeant said *“The digital age provides many new opportunities for children and young people but also poses new risks. The Public Health team is keen to work with partners to promote online safety for children and young people and to explore the best means to achieve this in North Yorkshire.”*

2.9 Safeguarding Lead Officers in District & Borough Councils

Feedback from the safeguarding lead officers in the District and Borough Councils was equally as positive to the idea of a county wide approach. They agreed it would be helpful if they could access an - 'off the shelf' information pack so that a consistent approach could be applied.

The officers suggested that a similar approach might also be useful in raising awareness of online safety for vulnerable adults.

3 - CONCLUSION

3.1 Online Green Cross Code!

The task group concluded that we need a 'green cross code' for online safety that has the potential to reach a wide audience. We have to be advising the children and young people but we also need to be reaching and educating their parents and foster parents.... But we believe it shouldn't stop there! As well as Mums and Dads there are other family members who can influence and help keep children and young people safe online, aunties, uncles, grandparents, as well as brothers and sisters.



3.2 Lesson plans

We believe that the information that is provided needs to be consistent and that a quality signposting service is a basic requirement. 'Off the shelf' lesson plans should be available to assist schools and children's residential homes in delivering the same message and children and young people should be advisors to the development of any campaign and instrumental in its delivery.

3.3 Debating competition

Through our discussions we learnt that the County Council led by County Councillor Cliff Trotter is involved in organising a school's debating competition. We thought that this might also be a useful way to spread the message about online safety and give children and young people the opportunity to debate the different viewpoints that surround the use of the internet. What we must not do however, is demonise the internet. We have to accept it is a valuable resource of the 21st century, one that opens doors to a vast array of information.

3.4 Indicators of success

The range of success indicators might include

- Wider coverage (and completion) of eSafety Audits in schools and partner agencies
- Increase in schools and partner agencies requesting eSafety Training (and offering eSafety training to parents in a way that is interesting and engaging)
- Raised awareness of the dangers of internet and social media misuse, evidenced through the 'Growing up in North Yorkshire' Questionnaire.
- Reduction in % of young people leaving their online identity visible, evidenced through the 'Growing up in North Yorkshire' Questionnaire
- Reduction in the incidence of cyber-bullying, , evidenced through the 'Growing up in North Yorkshire' Questionnaire

- Reduction in % children playing inappropriate, age restricted games, with full awareness of their parent/ carer, evidenced through the 'Growing up in North Yorkshire' Questionnaire
- Increase in communication with parents/ carers regarding issues of online safety.

3.5 North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board

In April this year Mr William Shaw presented a report to the NY-SCB on behalf of their task group on eSafety which proposes a partnership with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) Campaigns Unit for a dual branded eSafety campaign. Our task group would like to support the NY-SCB in this proposal for a cross county campaign utilising the expertise and resources of the NSPCC.

We would stress the importance of working with children and young people in the development of the campaign and suggest the Youth Council, the Young People's Council and the Flying High Group might be a good starting point.

We would call on the County Council and the District and Borough Councils to work together with the NY-SCB, as appropriate, in the development, promotion and implementation of the campaign.

We would encourage the NY-SCB to; look at how local businesses might be part of the campaign (the Local Enterprise Partnership may be able to help with that), and contact the Director of Public Health to see how Public Health might be involved.

We would request that the regular updates provided to the NY-SCB on progress with the work with the NSPCC and the development of the campaign also be shared with the Young Peoples O&SC.



4 – RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the task group are set out below:

We would ask the North Yorkshire County Council Executive to consider:

1. supporting the NY-SCB decision to work with the NSPCC on a county wide campaign to raise the profile of online safety for children and young people
2. working in collaboration with other Local Authorities in the County as well as the North Yorkshire Police, Public Health, the voluntary sector and the private sector to promote a county wide campaign
3. promoting a consistent approach to the provision of further information and signposting on online safety for children and young people
4. putting forward the topic of 'online safety' to the organisers of the schools debating competition for 2015 for their consideration
5. raising with the Care & Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee and relevant NYCC officers how the county region might raise the profile of online safety for vulnerable adults
6. Supporting the recommendations of the task group to the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board set out below:

We would ask the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board to consider

1. assuring the County Council that they will work closely with children and young people including the County Council's Looked After Children in the development of any campaign
2. ensuring that the County Local Authorities, NY Police, Fire & Rescue, Public Health and representatives of the voluntary and private sector have the opportunity to input into the development of the campaign
3. sharing regular progress reports on the development of the campaign with the Young Peoples O&SC

This may be the end of this report but it is most definitely the beginning of this most important piece of work. In focussing attention on online safety we have to ensure that the measures we employ to make children and young people safer online are continuously reviewed and updated as this is an area that will never stand still.

Glossary

NYCC	North Yorkshire County Council
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
NY-SCB	North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board
YPO&SC	Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

Facebook & Bebo are social networking websites

Websites

We have looked at many different websites about online safety, a selection are included here

www.NSPCC.org.uk

www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk

www.onlinecompass.org.uk

www.saferinternet.org.uk

www.yhgl.net

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

www.saferinternetday.org.uk

www.wisekids.org.uk

www.childnet.com

A big Thank You to:

The children and young people involved in the safer internet event

North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board

North Yorkshire Police

North Yorkshire District / Borough Councils Safeguarding officers

NYCC officers in Children and Young People's Service, ICT and Communications

Dr Lincoln Sargeant Director of Public Health North Yorkshire