



Minutes

EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE - CHILDREN'S INTERNET SAFETY INQUIRY

MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE - CHILDREN'S INTERNET SAFETY INQUIRY HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2014, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 2, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 2.30 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 4.00 PM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Paul Irwin, Valerie Letheren and Robin Stuchbury

CO-OPTED MEMBERS PRESENT

GUESTS PRESENT

Graham Briggins, Joanne Cowdrey and Graham Strachan

OFFICERS PRESENT

Simon Billenness and Michael Carr

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Phil Gomm and Katrina Wood.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

They were none.

3 CHILDREN'S INTERNET SAFETY SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY

The membership and terms of reference for the Inquiry were noted.

4 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



The Chairman reported that she had recently visited Amersham and Wycombe College, where she had met with the Principal and had been impressed by the range of vocational courses offered.

5 COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

There were none.

6 ORAL EVIDENCE - SIMON BILLENNESS - CHAIRMAN OF THE E-SAFETY BSCB SUBCOMMITTEE

The Chairman welcomed Mr Simon Billenness, Senior Practitioner – Participation, to the meeting. The Chairman and the Policy Officer had recently attended a meeting of the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) e-safety Sub-Committee, which Mr Billenness chairs.

The Chairman asked Mr Billenness to provide members with an overview of the work of the e-safety Sub-Committee. He explained that the Sub-Committee was established in 2009 and he became involved in 2010. The aims of the Sub-Committee were to create a safe environment online, give people the skills and knowledge to stay safe online and to inspire safe and responsible use of the internet. Currently ambassadors of CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) travel around Bucks delivering workshops for parents, carers, professionals and young people, often through school assemblies.

Those who have had CEOP training include youth workers, children's centre staff and Graham Brigginsshaw from Thames Valley Police. Some teachers also deliver workshops in schools, but in order to make it more sustainable the Sub-Committee would like more teachers to be trained and they would also like to target those with specific needs. Mr Billenness hoped that the Select Committee Inquiry might help to identify any gaps in their work and help to raise the profile of the e-safety message.

The Chairman invited members' questions.

How successful has the Sub-Committee's work been so far?

It is very hard to measure success, especially as the internet is always changing. As more and more children and young people have access to smart phones or tablet computers, online safety becomes an even bigger issue. I feel that Internet Service Providers (ISP) are becoming more aware of their duty of care.

I took a theatre group into a school and went back in a year later to ask the children what they remembered of the production. They had remembered the key messages and amended their behaviour accordingly so that is an example of our success.

I have concerns around Social Media, particularly Twitter. I think young people can easily access inappropriate material on Twitter, so how can we possibly control this?

Twitter operates with a default setting of open and we need to lobby them to have a default setting of private instead. Also we need to encourage parents to discuss with their children what they should do if they stumble across inappropriate content online. At evenings with parents we give out information about sharing online, which is very relevant for sites like Twitter and Facebook.

Do you feel threatened by the findings of the recent Ofsted inspection of BSCB?

No, I am pleased because Ofsted recognised our work. We are a multi-agency Sub-Committee which I feel is working well and at no additional expense to BSCB. I told Ofsted that I am proud of the spreading the e-safety message and challenging both young people and

parents about their behaviour online. Young people have been exploring their sexuality since the beginning of time – we need to help them identify misinformation they can find online, for example, around suicide, eating disorders etc. It is about educating children from an early age not to believe everything they read on the internet.

I am concerned about the apps children can access on their phones. Snapchat worries me, I don't feel the creators of Snapchat are fulfilling their moral obligations.

Snapchat is an app which allows you to share photos. Instagram, Snapchat and Kick are all apps which have not been created for malicious reasons, but young people could find themselves in difficult situations as a result of sharing via the apps. Some Primary school children use these apps.

Is there anyway of lobbying at a national level regarding inappropriate content on the internet, for example you mentioned sites around self-harm, eating disorders etc?

Anyone can report inappropriate content to the Internet Watch Foundation. If a young person feels someone is acting inappropriately online this can be reported directly to CEOP. Young people do want to engage with us when we visit schools, they want to feel safe online.

How effective is all the activity of the Sub-Committee?

As I said earlier it is very difficult to quantify our success. We can do a hard hitting assembly and some kids will take it on board whilst others will have forgotten it 24 hours later. But it is impossible to shut down the internet so we need to keep reminding young people about consequences. The CEOP videos we use are hard hitting but it is about educating children from a young age.

The Chairman thanked Simon Billenness.

7 ORAL EVIDENCE - GRAHAM BRIGGINSHAW, THAMES VALLEY POLICE

The Chairman welcomed Mr Graham Brigginsshaw from Thames Valley Police to the meeting. The Chairman asked Mr Brigginsshaw to explain his work in this area. Mr Brigginsshaw explained that he works at the frontline everyday with students, in schools, colleges or youth clubs and he also educates parents. He uses CEOP videos and gives real life examples.

The Chairman asked Mr Brigginsshaw how he measures the effectiveness of his work. In response he reported that he does see a reduction in issues, such as sexting, when he has visited a school. He attends in uniform and reminds young people that they could be breaking the law by sharing images or even just be storing images on their phones. If someone under 16 years old sends a semi-naked picture to a friend who then keeps it on their phone, they are storing an indecent image and could be prosecuted. He had already been alerted to three sexting cases this week. Again Mr Brigginsshaw emphasised how quickly the internet changes and how important it was to keep revisiting schools to reinforce the e-safety messages.

The Chairman thanked Mr Brigginsshaw.

8 ORAL EVIDENCE - GRAHAM STRACHAN - MCAFEE

The Chairman welcomed Mr Graham Strachan and Ms Jo Cowdrey from McAfee to the meeting. Graham Strachan explained that McAfee is a US company, now part of Intel Security and the internet is their business. In the US, the National Cyber Security Alliance which includes companies such as Cisco and Microsoft have developed a cybersafety programme which McAfee have adopted. McAfee have one of their largest engineering sites in Aylesbury and the company wanted to develop some Outreach work with the local community so decided to take their cybersafety programme called 'Online Safety for Kids' out to schools.

McAfee staff have volunteered to receive training on how to deliver the programme and McAfee talk about their experience rather than selling their products. Over the past two years they have visited 35 schools, reaching 5,000 children, teachers and parents. The focus to date has been on Primary and Secondary schools in and around Aylesbury and often McAfee volunteers are keen to present in their own children's schools.

The sessions contain strong messages within videos, followed by a talk with the young people and their teachers and parents. Initially questions were all about protecting your computer at home but now mobile phones and tablets have increased the challenges. McAfee talk about how to protect your phone or tablet, discussing cyber safety, cyber ethics and cyber bullying. Often parents don't realise how easy it is to set up parental controls on a device. Windows versions 7 and 8 have good levels of protection for internet use, enabling you to restrict content by age and you can also access a weekly digest which shows parents which websites their children have tried to visit. Parents can also turn off Safari on iphones to prevent internet access.

Mr Briggshaw of Thames Valley Police commented that often the parents who you really need to educate are not the ones who will attend a presentation at school. He gave the example of a recent session he had at a school with real issues around internet use and only 7 parents attended. Mr Strachan from McAfee reported that they had 120 parents attend an evening workshop at Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School in Aylesbury, following the Ask FM media coverage. The Sixth Formers had concerns around these issues and they participated in delivering the presentation to parents.

The Chairman asked how effectively the Police or the Intelligence Services can monitor online activity, for example, with the recent ISIS videos that have been placed on the internet. Graham Briggshaw explained that 30 hours of video are uploaded to You Tube every minute which makes it very difficult to police. Young people are even able to make money from You Tube if what they post generates enough views.

The Chairman invited further questions from members.

Is it possible to devise a traffic lights system for the internet to help children and parents know what sites are safe to use?

Mr Strachan from McAfee explained that the training they deliver is similar in its approach – Stop! Think. Connect. McAfee also produce a free product called Site Advisor which tries to provide a traffic light system for the internet. If you use the product, when you search on Google, each link will display a green tick, an amber cross or a red cross alongside it. You can then click on the tick or cross for further information about the site before entering. You can also buy a version which prevents you clicking into a 'red cross' site

Should Twitter have an age profile?

Maybe but young people lie about their age to access Facebook. It is about behaviour – parents may feel they will allow their child to access a site as it looks ok to them but it is about how the child uses the site. Facebook is a very good, sophisticated site but it all comes down to the conduct of the person using it.

Has any work been undertaken on risk mapping and how this dovetails in with an engagement strategy with key stakeholders?

The Sub-Committee has tried to do this but we rely on other partners. Now we are aware of the McAfee training we can help them to maximise the opportunity.

If we learn of a particular risk we want a way of providing information to schools to update them, but we are now aware that some schools have opted out of the BCC IT systems, which makes this more difficult. 30% of primary schools have opted out therefore we did not know what they were doing to control content on their IT systems. The Sub-Committee has

therefore written to all these schools and Independent Schools in Bucks to highlight this concern.

Do you feel that the issue of Internet Safety is being taken seriously?

It is starting to be recognised as a problem now - it has recently been debated in the Houses of Parliament. Previously the advice was to put your home PC in a common area of your home to enable parents to monitor internet use, but now with mobile phones and tablets, it is harder to monitor. Gaining friends online becomes a competition between children. A popular site at the moment is one called Omegle where you can talk to strangers.

Some parents seem to think that parenting stops online, but parenting and rules must continue. Parents need to feel empowered and Digital Parenting magazine is very helpful. Simon Billenness gave an example of his family rule that there are no gadgets at the dinner table. It is important that a child does not feel alone in handling difficult online experiences.

Ms Cowdrey of McAfee gave an example from a session she had led at a Primary School where teachers were concerned about one of their seven year old pupils who had no toys at home, only an ipad. Graham Briginshaw agreed that it was important to speak to children at a younger age – six years ago he was routinely talking to 14 or 15 year olds about internet use but now he needs to talk to 8,9 and 10 year olds instead. Smart phones are now much cheaper and they often get passed down when parents or older siblings upgrade to a newer model. Children can also access the internet via gaming consoles such as Playstations or X boxes.

The Chairman thanked all contributors for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the oral evidence be noted as evidence.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 29th October 2014 at 10am in Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall

CHAIRMAN