

Parents / Carers of Highland Pupils

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Dear Parent / Carer

Mobile Phone Safety Advice

In Highland, we have a partnership approach to promoting e-safety by encouraging children and young people to use new technologies safely and responsibly. This has involved a programme of education about internet safety and responsible use in our school communities.

As part of our approach we would like to offer you advice on the use of mobile technology, as you will be aware that modern mobiles or 'smart phones' are in essence small personal computers. The latest phones provide great opportunities for being more connected in the digital world but can also therefore pose a risk for users to be identified or located, and send or receive images they may feel uncomfortable with. We wish therefore to raise awareness and specifically highlight the dangers of young people finding themselves in uncomfortable or compromising situations.

Research recently conducted by the NSPCC has reported that in most cases where young people have been in situations of risk from being involved in transmission of inappropriate images, this has been through interaction with their peers rather than strangers. It is vital that modern technology is used with responsibility and regard for the personal safety and privacy of both the user and others both now and for the future. There are also implications for young people who may not know that they could be breaking the law by receiving or sending such images or footage. They also may be unaware that images may be circulated far and wide or uploaded without their permission or knowledge.

We hope that this letter provides you with a starting point for increasing your own awareness of these issues and may help you in your ongoing discussions in keeping your family safe.

Yours sincerely



Hugh Fraser
Director of Education Culture and Sport
The Highland Council



Vince McLaughlin
Detective Inspector
Public Protection Policy and Support Unit
Northern Constabulary

NSPCC Research - http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/resourcesforprofessionals/sexualabuse/sexting-research_wda89260.html

Mobile Technology Advice

Please find attached some helpful tips and advice in the form of common questions and answers which may help you in discussing issues of personal safety and the law using mobile technology with your son or daughter. Please note - all Highland schools will also have a policy on using mobile phones in the school and this should be adhered to.

Owning a mobile phone for the first time can be very exciting and be seen as a step towards independence. As newer mobile phones or 'smart phones' become highly developed and internet accessible, they are more akin to a personal handheld computer which is constantly online.

What can I do to keep my child safe?

We would ask you to think about the same kinds of risks you would talk about with your child if you had purchased a mini online computer with integrated webcam capable of video chat and video recording. Remind them of the future consequences of pictures, video clips or text messages that can be widely distributed without permission or knowledge only to re-surface embarrassingly at a later date!

In purchasing a mobile phone, discuss firstly what your family boundaries might be, financially, app purchases, insurance, theft and appropriate usage. This also may include not sharing their number or email address with strangers or posting it on social networking site profiles. To prevent unauthorised use it may be advisable to use a password pin to unlock the phone.

Many types of communication for speaking, texting or video-chatting can now work irrespective of phone signal or 'credit' on a phone network. For example, Apple iPhones use a technology called 'Face Time' or 'iMessage' which allows users to interact based on account details or email rather than phone number. Many other apps freely available also provide this facility. As new popular games for phones allow the user to play anyone freely across the globe, it's vital that young people know how to keep safe and not disclose their name, location or personal identifiable information.

What can I do to keep my child safe?

Keep lines of communication open with your child to ensure that they are not afraid to tell you if they have received an image, unwanted contact or are being pressurised to send any inappropriate photos of themselves. Remind them to report any images they receive to yourself or an adult they can trust.

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre (CEOP) Report Abuse Button is a way of them finding out about how to report concerns too. The CEOP Report Abuse button can be found at www.thinkuknow.co.uk and on many social networking sites.

Remind them to switch off the Bluetooth[®], keeping this switched off keeps the device safe from receiving unsolicited images, videos or having their phone hacked.

Most modern mobiles (iPhones and Android Smart phones) have location settings which may be applied to functions of the phone or apps they use. This may mean that images they take either to keep or share might also contain details of where the user took that image, this information is then stored in the image identifying personal information. For advice on disabling location settings please check the phone instruction manual or contact your network provider.

Discuss with your son or daughter how to turn off this function or when it may be appropriate to have this turned on. For example - some parents may wish, at certain times, for these settings to be kept switched on so that a young person could be located in emergency situations.

Mobile phone theft is often opportunistic and it is wise to remind them that they should not leave their phone in full view unattended.

Remind them of **street safety**; it is important to be extra careful when walking, running, crossing roads or riding a bike whilst using music players on mobile phones, browsing the internet, chatting or texting.

Many new smart phones can also be used to store documents using apps turning their phone into a 'drive'. Remind them they should not be storing documents on their phone that contain their personal details as they would not be secure if the phone were hacked, lost or stolen.

What is the law regarding the distribution of indecent images?

The future costs for children who find themselves the subject of a Police investigation are potentially severe. If they were to be convicted this may lead to foreign travel, jobs or careers being unavailable to them. They may find themselves charged with offences under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 in relation to making, possession and distribution of indecent images of children or under the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009 in relation to Indecent Communications.

Ultimately this may lead to them finding themselves convicted of a serious sexual offence and placed on the Sex Offender's Register.

What about Cyberbullying?

Being targeted by Cyberbullying, which is the use of mobile phones or technology deliberately to upset someone can be very distressing. The audience can be very large and reached rapidly. The difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages means the scale and the scope of Cyberbullying can be greater than other forms of bullying behaviours.

Cyberbullying may also involve recording/videoing events without permission and uploading them to the internet, videoing events on mobile phones. This may also be a good discussion point with your son or daughter. By using their mobile responsibly this also helps to contribute towards being a good role model for siblings or others in online communities.

If your child receives abusive calls or messages, it is important that they do not respond. They should report this to you as their parent or carer or trusted adult / teacher. **It is advised they do not delete or tamper with the message or evidence so that vital evidence is kept.**

Where can I find further help or advice?

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre (CEOP) has a dedicated website that is for all children, young people, professionals, parents and carers. www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Childnet International www.childnet.com have advice and guidance and a specific section called 'Know it All' advice for Parents and Carers.

General mobile phone advice and safety www.mobilephonesandsafety.co.uk

Also, you may wish to check with your preferred mobile phone service provider. They may have further advice and guidance on specific networks and internet access.

What should I do if I am concerned about a child?

Tell someone what your concerns are - speak to a teacher, a doctor, a social worker, a police officer or school nurse. **Phone 01463 703488** For General Enquiries e-mail:

CPAdmin@highland.gov.uk

For information on the work of the Highland Child Protection Committee

<http://www.forhighlandschildren.org/2-childprotection/>

This guidance has been developed by the multi-agency Highland E-Safety Group May 2012

The Highland E-Safety Group has a site for news and advice on all matters

www.highlandesafety.wordpress.com