
NEWS RELEASE

Early detection of children at risk

Darlington Borough Council employs digital forensics experts to safeguard children and young people on the computer

In the wake of the tragic death of student Ashleigh Hall, raped and then murdered by a man she met on a social networking site, Darlington Borough Council is commissioning the expertise of highly skilled digital forensic experts and ex-police at e-safe education (www.esafeeducation.co.uk) to monitor children's computer usage. .

Implemented by the Learning Technologies Team at Darlington Borough Council in partnership with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, the new managed service forms part of a community-wide strategy to educate and safeguard Darlington's 14,000+ children and young people. The e-safe education software will also have the potential to be provided to every pupil's household, giving parents and carers peace-of-mind that their child is kept safe when using the computer at home.

Trained by CEOP (The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) in the latest detection techniques, the e-safe education team will work to safeguard Darlington's children and young people in the digital/online world by monitoring and identifying incidents involving pupils or staff and notifying schools accordingly. This can include accessing inappropriate content, including serious issues from predator grooming, cyberbullying, racism and radicalisation to drugs, gambling and self-harm. By engaging the services of digital forensic experts, Darlington Borough Council is ensuring that every incident, whether an early indicator or a more serious problem, is reviewed and flagged within 24-hours, by preventing, as far as possible, children at risk from slipping through the net.

Darlington has devised a comprehensive education programme to help children and young people stay safe online. This includes e-safeguarding curriculum materials, a bespoke DVD containing resources from the Internet Watch Foundation and CEOP and an award-winning internet safety film* compiled by students and the council. The e-safe education solution will support this strategy by providing protection to pupils and teachers using Web 2.0 technology such as social networking sites and educating them about responsible use of ICT the moment they breach their school's Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP). The system engages students in e-safety by providing pop-up messages, if necessary, in a foreign

language that can be tailored by the teacher to explain why their action is inappropriate. This education-led approach will help Darlington's pastoral team open dialogue with vulnerable children, such as those contemplating self-harm or suicide.

John Steel, Lead Improvement Officer for Children's Services at Darlington Borough Council, comments: "It is non-negotiable that our children and young people should be actively engaged in online learning and to achieve this, e-safety must form an integral part of the curriculum. The combination of a progressive education programme, in which state-of-the-art technologies are fully embedded, and the e-safe education monitoring managed service, ensures that all our students are properly safeguarded, whenever they use a computer, both in school and at home. By working with a team of forensics experts, our schools are now fully compliant with Ofsted's new safeguarding requirements.

"I am also mindful of the recent Ofsted report which suggests that internet access should be broadened to include safe use of Web 2.0 technologies. The confidence that deploying e-safe education's monitoring software will give us, in terms of safeguarding and educating students about responsible and safe use of technology, should help us move forwards with using important Web 2.0 collateral."

Understanding the fast-paced nature of the internet and associated online language, e-safe education's advanced threat detection libraries are updated monthly by forensic experts working on recent child protection cases. This provides reassurance to Darlington that new words, phrases or techniques are identified quickly and incorporated into the protection systems.

Mark Donkersley, Managing Director of e-safe Systems Ltd, comments: "We are extremely proud to be working with Darlington Borough Council to educate and protect children and young people when using the computer. A holistic, community wide approach must be taken to ensure consistency for e-safety and deliver the early warning indicators that could be crucial to successfully protecting children and young people."

For further information please contact Colin McKeown at e-safe Systems Ltd: tel: 08444 128 623 / e-mail: colin.mckeown@esafeeducation.co.uk or visit the website: www.esafeeducation.co.uk.

**Choices... a Click too far* won the Digital Media category at the Northern Grid for Learning's ICT in Education Awards 2010. It forms part of a pack of training materials called E-Safety for All, created by the Council's Learning Technologies Team which provides teachers with resources for teaching internet safety to children from nursery age up to further education.

Notes to editors:

e-safe education is a division of e-safe Systems Ltd. The system can be used to monitor both local PC-based activity and network usage across Internet Service Providers, Regional Broadband Grids, Local Authorities, schools and public libraries, and to protect children from inappropriate content at home.

The full managed service provision of the e-safe education solution to Darlington Borough Council comprises:

- 30 Primary schools
- 7 Secondary schools
- 1 Pupil Referral Unit
- Approximately 14,000 pupils

Plus standalone copies of e-safeProtect@Home to the households of all pupils attending the schools above.

e-safe education - unique elements of supply:

The solution includes the following key elements which differentiate e-safe education from the alternative products evaluated and trialled by Darlington Borough Council:

- Image analysis and control both “within” and “beyond” the browser
- Multilingual contextual word/phrase monitoring in any language - providing genuine inclusion to support all stakeholders (unlike our competitors who monitor ASCII only)
- Daily updated threat libraries from a leading UK Police Force Forensic company specialising in child abuse/predator grooming including URL listings from the IWF[1]
- 4USB and multimedia storage device management and control
- ACPO[2] compliant escalation policies and procedures for serious issue handling and well established protocols for Children Services Contact team engagement
- Local Authority/Community wide solution through the provision of standalone esafeProtect@Home licenses to every pupils’ home.