

Pupils speak out against cyber bullying

The harmful effects of cyber bullying and “sexting” are being highlighted by the latest phase of an Edinburgh public protection campaign against abuse.

Pupils from Drummond Community High School discussed the problem of being bullied via mobile phones and social networking sites at the launch of the next step of the [Speak up Speak out](#) initiative. The launch took place today on national [Safer Internet Day 2014](#).

One form of harassment which is becoming more prevalent amongst teenagers involves sexting, when indecent images of a person are texted or emailed to someone else, and are then circulated without their consent.

One 15-year-old victim had sent her boyfriend a naked picture of herself who then shared it with a friend. The girl was devastated to discover that it had then been posted online. Another girl had been pressured by her boyfriend to text him a photo, which she did, and then overheard boys at school talking about owning indecent photos on their phones of several girls at their school.

Speak up Speak out was launched last August by the City of Edinburgh Council, NHS Lothian and Police Scotland to encourage those who are affected by abuse to come forward and find out about the wide range of support that is available to them.

One of the key messages is that anyone can suffer from abuse, regardless of their age, gender or the colour of their skin. It can happen anywhere and be caused by friends, relatives, colleagues or strangers. By encouraging people to be open about their concerns and talk to care professionals, it is

hoped that more adults and children can be protected from harm.

This latest strand of the campaign sets out to raise awareness that cyber bullying can affect people of all ages in different forms – younger children; domestic abuse victims; adults with special needs; and older people.

Cllr Paul Godzik, Children and Families Convener for the City of Edinburgh Council, said: “Safer Internet Day is one example of the concerted effort taking place across Edinburgh schools to educate our pupils about acceptable online behaviour, and keeping themselves safe. All schools have the ‘Keeping Myself eSafe’ materials and staff receive mandatory child protection training every three years which includes internet safety.

“Schools also carry out partnership working with the UK Safer Internet Centre, and our Community Police Officers have a key role in talking to young people about ‘cyber bullying’ and safe use of the internet.”

Councillor Cammy Day, Community Safety Convener for the City of Edinburgh Council, said: “Speak up Speak out is a campaign that reaches out to all members of the community who are suffering from abuse or who are concerned about someone who might be.

“Whatever shape it takes, everyone has the right to feel secure and safe from harm and I would encourage anyone who is worried about themselves or someone they know to “speak out” and get in touch for help.”

Police Scotland Divisional Commander Chief Superintendent Mark Williams said “I fully support the ‘Speak up Speak out’ campaign, cyber bullying and ‘sexting’ can have a devastating effect on people.

“Police Scotland is committed to keeping people safe and I

would encourage anyone who has been the target of such behaviour to speak up and speak out in the knowledge that support is available through our partners. Where the conduct is criminal, my officers will take robust action against those responsible.”

Dona Milne, Deputy Director of Public Health and Health Policy, NHS Lothian, said: “It’s important for people of all ages to think more about the kind of bullying that takes place online. Unfortunately, many people will encounter or experience instances of cyber bullying at one point or another, whether it is sexting or online scamming.

“We would encourage people to stand up against cyber bullying by seeking support and guidance from local organisations such as NHS Lothian and City of Edinburgh Council.”

A series of posters will be distributed to public places, such as libraries and hospitals throughout Edinburgh to promote the initiative and encourage people to come forward for advice. Information sessions will also be taking place in schools and libraries.

Police Scotland: 101 (or in an emergency call 999)

ChildLine 0800 1111

ParentLine 08000 28 22 33

Social Care Direct – The City of Edinburgh Council’s social work service: 0131 200 2324 socialcaredirect@edinburgh.gov.uk

<http://collateral.vuelio.uk.com/RemoteStorage/Edinburgh/Releases/3389/Internet%20posters.pdf>