

Programme to combat cyber bullying and digital misuse to be rolled out across Scotland.



A new online safety training programme designed to prevent young people from being at risk of cyber bullying and digital misuse is to be rolled out across Scotland.

Designed in conjunction with global cyber security giant, Trend Micro, the online safety programme, “Be Smart”, addresses the core vulnerabilities facing young people of cyber bullying, sexual content and their online profile.

Stakeholders including the Scottish Government joined around 90 East Renfrewshire secondary pupils at Hampden Stadium in Glasgow today (Wednesday 11 January 2017) for the launch of the programme and heard the words of a parent whose child was groomed online and exposed to sexual content unintentionally.

“ Be Smart” – as part of the Choices for Life programme, which is delivered by Police Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government – aims to create a team of young people (including senior school pupils), youth workers and parent groups who will be equipped with the tools to ‘start the conversation’ with young people about online safety.

These local groups will then deliver training workshops to their peer groups in communities across Scotland. Using three videos, which feature Police Scotland Youth Volunteers, the sessions focus on prevention messaging to help safeguard young people and explaining how online safety needs to be integrated into all our everyday digital activity.

Opening the event, Deputy Chief Constable Johnny Gwynne said: "The internet is a fantastic resource and has many excellent uses for people of all ages. However, it also provides those who seek to exploit others with opportunities to target victims and inflict misery on innocent people.

"With cybercrime developing as an increasing threat to communities, programmes like Be Smart are crucial to educate children and young people, from a young age, that they must take steps to keep themselves as safe in the online virtual world as they would in the real world.

"The benefits of peer mentoring are clear – children and young people respond well to their equals who can deliver information in a relatable and easy to understand manner, making it more likely they will pay attention and take the advice seriously."

Minister for Childcare and Early Years, Mark McDonald said: "We want all of our children and young people to benefit from the great opportunities the internet has to offer in a safe and secure environment.

"The Choices for Life Be Smart programme is an excellent way to encourage young people to think carefully about the way they behave online to ensure they get the most out of what the internet has to offer but, most importantly, to ensure they remain safe and supported at all times.

"By making sure young people know where to access information about staying safe online and providing a peer network to discuss any issues they may face we can create a positive online presence for all."