SCOTLAND'S CHILD INTERNET SAFETY ACTION PLAN

February 2010

Introduction

The internet is central to our everyday lives and those of our children. It can be a positive, fun place to interact with the world, with endless possibilities for learning and socialising. However, in enjoying the internet, we must also be aware that there are individuals and organisations that take advantage of the relative freedom the online environment provides, and that sadly, irresponsible and inappropriate use of the internet can often place children and young people at risk of harm.

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that our children and young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. Equally, we want to make sure that we improve the life chances of those children and young people in our communities who are at risk. So while we want young people to enjoy the internet and all that it has to offer, we also want them to stay in control and know what to do and who to go to if they feel at risk.

This means working together with practitioners, parents and industry to build resilience and understanding amongst our children and young people about how to stay safe online. Too often we differentiate between the risks associated with the internet and those that we face in our day to day lives. But more often than not the same principles apply to keeping ourselves safe online as they do offline. As children grow and learn about the opportunities that the internet presents, at the same time they need the support of responsible adults around them to learn and understand what is suitable and responsible behaviour online. By supporting our young people in this way, we can help them take full advantage of all the benefits that the internet can offer, whilst keeping themselves safe at the same time.

The Scottish Government is taking steps which will improve the safety of our children and young people in the online environment. This Plan outlines a series of actions which I believe can help us meet this aspiration. It builds on the UK-wide Strategy for Child Internet Safety published in December of last year and will, once implemented, help to make our young people's approach to the internet more safe and responsible.   The Plan has been developed in partnership with a dedicated Scottish Stakeholder Group, and we remain committed to working with stakeholders and partners as we look to further develop and deliver policy and practice in this area moving forward.

I believe that this Plan provides us with a sound platform for making real progress. That being said, we should not feel restricted by its content. The internet is developing every day, and as such, we need to remain alive to these changes, and be flexible with our approach. These shifting boundaries provide us with real opportunities as well as challenges and I look forward to working with partners to develop policy and practice in this area in order to ensure that Scotland's children and young people continue to enjoy the internet and all it has to offer.

Adam Ingram MSP
Minister for Children & Early Years

What's happened already?

A significant amount of work has taken place in Scotland in recent years to improve practice in the area of child internet safety, including:

- The implementation of "Glow" - the Scottish schools' education platform - which provides pupils and teachers with a safe and secure online education community, allowing for joined up networking and learning. By January 2010 over 656,000 Glow accounts for pupils, staff and parents had been provided.   The education platform is a core element of the Curriculum for Excellence. It allows for easy access to high quality teaching resources with material built specifically for the Scottish curriculum as well as offering access to personalised learning opportunities for our teachers and young people.

- The introduction of a new approach to multi-agency child protection inspection, being driven forward by HMIE, which provides us for the first time with a clear and robust understanding of child protection practice across the country. Internet Safety continues to form a key component of the inspection regime, now in its second cycle.

- The establishment of "Respect*me",* Scotland's Government-funded national anti-bullying service. Launched in 2007, Respect*me* works with all adults who have a role to play in the lives of children and young people to give them the practical skills and confidence to deal with bullying behaviour, wherever it occurs. A key component of Respect*me*'s work focuses on providing support on the issue of bullying in the online environment or "cyber bullying".

- The establishment of a Scottish Stakeholder Group focussing on the issue of child internet safety. The group, consisting of representation from the police, industry, education, child protection and youth work , oversees the approach being taken by the Scottish Government in relation to child internet safety, ensuring that the work being delivered both directly and via the UK Council for Child Internet Safety is consistent in terms of best practice and meets the needs of our stakeholders.

- The training of Scottish teachers and local education authority staff through access to *Think U Know,* an education initiative aimed at parents, carers, teachers and children, delivered by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre.

- The raising of awareness of child internet safety issues amongst the public and practitioners involved in the delivery of children's services through a series of targeted initiatives driven forward by the Scottish Crime & Drug Enforcement Agency in late 2009 and early 2010.

What we want to do next

The actions included in this Plan can be considered under three broad overarching aims:

- **Creating a safer online environment:** We will work together to make sure that children are less likely to come across or get access to things online that are not suitable for them.

- **Giving everybody the skills, knowledge and understanding to help children and young people stay safe online:** We will help parents, carers and people who work with children and families to understand how to help children stay safe online and how to deal with problems if they occur.

- **Inspiring safe and responsible use and behaviour:** We will make it clear that individuals, including children and young people themselves, need to take responsibility for their own online behaviour.

These mirror the strategic aims of the UK Strategy for Child Internet Safety and are based on the key findings of the Review undertaken by Dr Tanya Byron in 2007/2008 which looked at the risks to children from exposure to potentially harmful or inappropriate material on the internet and in video games.

The actions below reflect the Scottish Government's commitment to child internet safety and responsible use in this country. Other UK administrations are also taking forward work in this area and we will continue to liaise with the UK Government and other devolved administrations as we move forward with the development of a distinctive Scottish approach.

Creating a safer online environment

The Scottish Government is committed to working with industry to improve the safeguards in place for children and young people in the online environment. We will do this by:

- Working with games developers in Scotland to raise awareness of the potential dangers associated with accessing inappropriate material through gaming. We will do this by encouraging them to raise awareness amongst their partners and customers through websites and other platforms of key messages regarding safe use of games in both the online and offline environment.

- Working with industry to identify how best it can support parents to increase their understanding and use of web-filtering software and other readily available parental safeguards designed to assist them in keeping their children safe in the online environment.

Giving everybody the skills, knowledge and understanding to help children and young people stay safe online

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring young people are supported to make informed decisions about how best to keep themselves safe in the online environment. To do this we will:

- Work with Learning Teaching Scotland to establish a dedicated Glow group for teaching professionals focussing on child internet safety. Glow groups are tools designed to facilitate discussion and debate practice, share ideas and resources, or collaborate on projects.

- Work with Learning Teaching Scotland to promote the use of *Double Click Thinking* guidance for education authorities within schools and education authorities. Other teaching materials will be recommended and made available via Glow.

- Make available on-line training and advice on internet safety and responsible use for teachers via Glow.

- Provide exemplification of how on-line safety and responsible use provide children with the knowledge and skills required to help meet the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence.

- Work with partners to integrate child internet safety and responsible use into training for all relevant professionals.

- Work with Child Protection Committees to ensure child internet safety and responsible use is embedded into local Integrated Children's Services Plans.

- Include clear guidance around child internet safety in the revised national child protection guidance (scheduled for publication later in 2010) and in the Scottish Government's revised *Safe & Well* child protection in schools guidance document.

- Through inspection of both education and child protection services, record evaluative comments on the effectiveness of services in raising children's awareness of keeping themselves safe when using communications technology, including mobile phones and the internet; and record evaluative comments on the effectiveness of services in promoting safe use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), including the internet, by children and young people.

- Through the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency, identify continuous professional development opportunities for police officers which will act to increase understanding of internet safety issues.

Inspiring safe and responsible use and behaviour

It is the responsibility of children, young people and their families to look after their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others when using the internet. To support awareness raising of this message the Scottish Government will:

- Continue to work with Respect*me,* Scotland's Government funded national anti-bullying service to support those working in schools, local authorities and children's services to build capacity to prevent and tackle bullying effectively, including cyber-bullying, through training, policy development and making publications and information available through their website.

- Raise awareness of the issue of cyber-bullying as part of Respect*me*'s national anti-bullying week in November 2010.

- Work in partnership with Young Scot to raise awareness of child internet safety and to inform young people about safe and responsible use of the internet.

- Work with children, using mainstream education as a platform to develop key messages and relevant materials designed to increase understanding of the issue of child internet safety.

- Raise the awareness of parents and families of children in Scotland of the existing wide range of high quality resources available regarding Internet Safety and Responsible Use.

- Ensure that parents can access these through the parentzone website and promote them to Parent Councils and the range of parent groups that provide advice and information to parents and families in Scotland.

- Undertake targeted public awareness raising in Scotland, placing particular focus on the dissemination of messages centred on the UK Council's Digital Code *Click Clever Click Safe: Zip it Block it Flag it.* Further information on the code can be found at www.scotland.gov.uk/internetsafety.

Summary

The internet is constantly evolving and we must remain alive to developments in internet usage, and their impact on internet safety, as we implement the actions in this Plan.

The Scottish Government will publish an update on progress with implementation of this Action Plan in one year. In the intervening period, the Scottish Stakeholder Group will monitor progress against the Plan and work with the Scottish Government to identify further opportunities to improve practice in this area. We will develop a monitoring framework to help the group measure our achievements over this period.

Scottish Government
February 2010