

Top tips to help young stay safe online

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Young people are being encouraged to make themselves aware of how to stay safe online and avoid risky or dangerous situations.

The West Midlands-wide See Me, Hear Me campaign, which raises awareness of child sexual exploitation (CSE), provides a wealth of advice and information to protect young people.

Among the top tips are:

- never give out personal information
- understand that the internet makes it easy for offenders to 'hide' behind fake profiles
- don't meet up with anyone you meet online
- don't post pictures or videos online which may make you vulnerable.

Parents are encouraged to talk openly to their children about their online activity and help them understand what is safe and unsafe. This includes making use of parental controls and limiting who young people can speak to via online gaming. For more information, please visit the See Me, Hear Me campaign website, www.seeme-hearme.org.uk.

The advice comes days after five men in Coventry were jailed for a total of 42 years after being convicted of serious sexual offences against young girls. The gang had used social media over a period of months to contact the teenagers and groom them before arranging to meet them with the promise of gifts and shopping trips.

Online grooming can affect both boys and girls and can happen through social media, gaming, chatrooms or other online communication.

Councillor Val Gibson, the City of Wolverhampton Council's Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, said: "The internet is a great resource for young people. However, with social media and the internet becoming an increasing part of young people's lives and a hub for interaction with peers they may be vulnerable to being targeted by those who wish to harm them.

"By giving young people the information about how to stay safe online and encouraging them to share it with their friends we can stop the perpetrators in their tracks.

“Preventing CSE is everyone’s responsibility and I would urge people to visit our campaign website to find out more.”

Anyone who is concerned about the safety of a young person should call West Midlands Police on 101, speak in confidence to Crimestoppers on 0800 555111 or in an emergency call 999. Childline also have counsellors available online at www.childline.org.uk.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

1/ For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Paul Brown, Communications Advisor, on 01902 555497 or email paul.brown@wolverhampton.gov.uk.

2/ The See Me, Hear Me campaign was launched in June 2014 by Dudley, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Walsall, Coventry, Birmingham and Solihull councils, along with West Midlands Police, to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation.

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