



Press Release

Media Release:

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

New Pilot Scheme for Internet Safety

WISE KIDS is working in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government and the Wales Youth Agency to develop and deliver a pilot, innovative "Internet WISE" peer mentoring programme for young people. The programme, which is aimed at 14-19 year olds, can be delivered by youth workers, teachers, librarians, in fact any learning providers who work with young people. It is anticipated that this programme will be OCN accredited. WISE KIDS is a Wales based organisation promoting positive and safe Internet use.

This innovative programme works by delivering on three levels:

- At its center, it aims to provide core knowledge and skills to young people to be WISE about all aspects of the Internet i.e., understand its core workings, use it more proficiently, understand its potential, and understand how to use it safely. This knowledge will inform their own web use.
- At the next level, it aims to support young people to share and pass on this knowledge to other young people, in both a structured and non structured fashion. Hence the phrase "peer mentors". This will enable other young people to develop a degree of knowledge and understanding of safe surfing to inform their own Internet use.
- Finally, potential learning providers from a wide range of settings (examples: youth workers, teachers, lecturers, librarians) will be trained to train the young people as peer mentors.

The proposed pilot programme will be divided into several phases.

- In the first phase, ethnographic research will be used to gain insights into the underlying beliefs, desires, knowledge, values, usage and proficiency of 14 to 19 year olds, with respect to the Internet.
- In the next phase, this knowledge will be used to develop the structure and content of a training programme where teens will be given the knowledge, tools and skills to lead and promote creative, fun and safe Internet use within their own peer groups.
- The Internet WISE Teen mentoring programme will then be trialled and evaluated.
- The outcome will be a proven format for an Internet WISE Teen mentoring programme that meets the interests and needs of young people aged 14-19.

The programme is the first of its kind in the area of Internet Safety awareness.

Sangeet Bhullar, Director of WISE KIDS said, "*We are very pleased to have the support of the Welsh Assembly Government and the Wales Youth Agency in the development of this programme. This programme has immense potential as it seeks to empower young people by giving them the knowledge and skills to be proficient and WISE on the Internet, and to use this knowledge amongst their peer groups in both formal and non formal ways*"

Elizabeth Williams, Head of Youth and Pupil Participation at the Welsh Assembly Government said, "We are pleased to be able to support this project. The Internet is an integral part of all our lives and providing young people with the opportunity to learn how to use it safely and proficiently is an important element of extending their entitlement to access to information. Enabling young people to share this knowledge with others and to be accredited for doing so ensures that we formally recognise the contribution young people are making to their communities as a whole, as envisaged by our Learning Pathways 14-19 agenda."

John Rose, Acting Chief Executive of the Wales Youth Agency said, "Young people today are faced with a number of challenges when it comes to accessing the Internet. All workers working with young people and the young people themselves need to be made aware of these issues and continue to access the Internet safely and with confidence. The Agency is pleased to be involved in this unique and challenging programme being run for the benefit of and with young people in Wales."

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WISE KIDS is a non-profit organisation set up in October 2002, whose aim is to work with:-

- + young people, parents, communities,
- + libraries, youth organisations,
- + local education authorities, schools and
- + businesses throughout Wales and elsewhere, to raise awareness of positive and safe Internet use.

This is implemented through:-

- + raising awareness,
- + consultation,
- + delivery of customised training programmes for the communities listed above and the
- + WISE KIDS website which has resources for young people and the broader community to learn about online safety and using the Internet positively.