

PEN PICTURE: TESSA: Argyll and Bute Rape Crisis

TESSA is Argyll and Bute Rape Crisis's Youth Project for young people of secondary school age which aims to raise awareness of issues surrounding internet safety, cyber-bullying and grooming. It also seeks to challenge inappropriate behaviour.

We deliver a range of age-appropriate interactive workshops to schools, parents groups and youth clubs. These workshops are designed to be interactive and fun while still giving information, tips and hints on how to keep safe on and off-line. In addition to the workshops available for mainstream pupils TESSA - Supported Learning offers 1-2-1 pupil-lead interactive workshops for vulnerable learners. Using visual, audio, and arts and craft materials these workshops are designed to help express feelings and emotions in a safe manner, helping young people to explore the dangers of the Internet, sexual bullying and abuse in a sensitive way.

In today's world, access to the Internet is easy. Simply switching on your mobile phone, tablet, laptop or gaming console will place you in a world where anything is possible. This digital environment has created a difficulty for young people as consequences of poor judgment or behaviour may not initially feel real. It is much easier to say things to someone when they are not in front of you and it can also be easier to be convinced to do things you would never dream of doing in public, such as taking naked pictures of yourself and sending it onto a boy/girlfriend or to someone you think you are having an online relationship with. This can often start as harmless fun and it can seem that no one else will find out about it. Unfortunately, young people can find themselves in situations where they are being blackmailed into taking more explicit pictures and films or being convinced to meet up with someone they think they know because they have been chatting to them online for a while.

When young people have found themselves in these situations the impact on their lives can be devastating. They are afraid of what family, friends, peers or teachers will think of them. Some young people can become reclusive and not want to mix with anyone, sleeping patterns may be disturbed causing concentration and attention to be affected, this can appear as though they no longer care and get into trouble at home and school. Exclusion from school for poor attendance or behaviour will then have a knock on effect on their education and the outcome of adult life.

TESSA use a range of materials to show young people how easy it is to get into difficult situations online. Whilst exploring this we ensure each pupil is aware that there are several ways to access help and support should they need it. An example of the resources we use are the CEOP films (Child Exploitation Online Protection). These short films are designed specifically for young people and during the workshop we discuss what is happening, ask if participants can see similarities to the way they behave and explore how they can make their online life safer.

Links to a sample of films:

Caught in the web www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTYZMdbq8PE

CEOP Jigsaw www.youtube.com/watch?v=_o8auwnJtqE

CEOP Matt thought he knew www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JpyO5XlfCo