Cabinet Meeting: **Monday, 30 June 2025**

Question from: **Ed Greenwood**

Question to: **Councillor Wilkinson, Cabinet Member with responsiblity for Children and Young People's Services**

QUESTION

I was recently contacted by a few residents and discussed with a Governor of local schools on the subject of smartphones used by children up to and including Key Stage 2 (<= age 14 years). The subject raised the point of how 'uncontrolled usage' allowing social media would affect the formative years of this cohort of children. Having viewed the website ;
https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.smartphonefreechildhood.org%2Fparent-pact-results%3Fregion%3Dof&data=05%7C02%7CDemocratic.Support%40calderdale.gov.uk%7Ccef7993f0fd42f9116608ddb3cf5fb1%7C07162ea21b0e498fbb555b41fd4dce4f%7C1%7C0%7C638864425458385304%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=c53AC%2B9TvdpKbxtYAy1U8trz43TPsqsASLZdlfQDNi8%3D&reserved=0

it is evidenced that circa 35 schools (out of 100 state funded) in C.M.B.C. area have signed up parents to the contained pledge. However, the number of parents is, generally, quite poor.

Whilst I believe that C.M.B.C has a Safeguarding policy; can I report back to the residents that the Local Authority has reviewed this issue ,has an active Strategy and Action plan to underpin the Safeguarding policy of our children and that it is 'ahead of the curve' in implementation, along with third parties (Head Teachers and School Governors) and can the strategy be viewed.
Is the Action plan, if created, have ID entries in the KPI reports?

Response

Keeping our children safe from online abuse is really important to us.

All schools and academies in Calderdale have bespoke E-Safety/Online Safety policies and procedures. These are in addition to the model Calderdale Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures. These are written by the Councils Calderdale School Safeguarding Advisers and shared with schools every year.

The model Policy and Procedure meet the requirements of the Department for Education 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. This policy requires schools to use appropriate filtering systems to block illegal and harmful content.

Primary schools adopt a 'no mobile phone' policy in school and often require pupils to hand in their phones on arrival at school, returning it at the end of the day. Secondary schools differ with some being more flexible than others. The vast majority adopt a policy that mobile phones should not be seen, heard or used at any point during the school day. Failure to adhere to the school policy often results in confiscation of the device with it being returned at the end of the day.

The online safety culture of safeguarding within schools extends to parental engagement events including the provision of workshops, resources and newsletters. Staff training includes filtering and monitoring, understanding online risks and digital safety. Individual schools may also choose to participate in online safety initiatives such as Safer Internet Day and, as the question highlights Smartphone Free Childhood.

From the early years upwards, online safety is taught through the curriculum and covers respectful online relationships, keeping themselves safe online, recognising and managing online risks, evaluating online content and misinformation, understanding privacy, data sharing and digital footprints.