

Press Release

Understanding Internet Risks – a day of fun with children in residential homes

Children and their Carers Learn How to BeSmartOnline!

Children in residential homes, ranging between 3 and 16 years of age, together with their respective carers, enjoyed a fun-filled day of activities which focused on how to use the Internet and its various applications in a safe way. The event took place on the 15th and 16th of July 2013.

Specialised talks and activities targeting different age groups were given, with the aim of educating and thus, empowering children with the tools required to avoid falling victims to online risks, whilst enriching their online experiences.

The Foundation for Social Welfare Services, through Aġenzija Appoġġ and the Police Cyber Crime Unit, shared local and foreign case studies with the carers, offering valuable tips on how to protect children whilst they are learning and having fun online.

The children were invited to present creative plays and puppet shows at the end of the event, which demonstrated their understanding of the topics that were covered throughout the day.

Ms. Celia Falzon, Chief of External Relations within the Malta Communications Authority, stated that, “every young member of our society, irrespective of age, gender, race and home environment, must not only have access to ICT, but must also be able to use technologies competently, responsibly, and safely for their own benefit and that of the community”.

The Commissioner for Children, Ms. Helen D’Amato, said that “concerted efforts amongst various public and civil stakeholders are most welcome, especially when these give children from diverse backgrounds an equal opportunity to be successful in life”. She added that “the safe use of ICT is of paramount importance and this gives children an opportunity to overcome their disadvantages and become more inclusive within the community”.

Ms. Yvonne Mallia, Operations Director of Aġenzija Appoġġ, commented that as an entity working directly with vulnerable children and young people, the Agency stresses the importance of more awareness and skills on how to use new technologies. “The Agency stresses its commitment in helping vulnerable children and young people stay safer online and in supporting their carers on making good use of new technologies that are emerging”.

This event complemented other nationwide initiatives undertaken as part of the BeSmartOnline! project. Co-funded by the European Union, the project is implemented by a consortium coordinated by the Malta Communications Authority and includes the Foundation for Social Welfare Services and the Office of the Commissioner for Children. This event was also supported by the Cyber Crime Unit of the Malta Police Force.

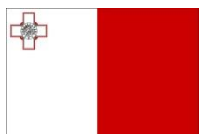


Additional information

During the current year, all Form 3 students (13-14 year olds) in Malta and Gozo participated in a lesson that has been specifically developed on the subject of Internet safety, in particular one's digital footprint. A similar exercise is planned to be launched in the next scholastic year, targeting Year 6 students (10-11 year olds). A number of seminars shall also be held for professionals in the educational field and other persons whose career brings them in frequent contact with children.

For further information on how to stay safe online, one can call Helpline 179. The services offered by the helpline have been extended so that assistance is now also offered on Internet safety related issues. The public may also report illegal content or activity on www.childwebalert.gov.mt.

For more information and tips please refer to www.besmartonline.org.mt



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