Publicity campaign hits home the child protection message

A hard-hitting publicity campaign will get underway across South Ayrshire next week to remind people that it’s everyone’s job to help protect children and young people and keep them safe from abuse, harm and neglect.

The campaign, which gets underway from Monday 26 September, is led by the South Ayrshire Child Protection Committee, which consists of representatives from South Ayrshire Council, Strathclyde Police, NHS Ayrshire & Arran, the Children’s Reporter, voluntary sector and others who help ensure services work together effectively to protect children.

The Committee is also responsible for ensuring local communities and the general public understand their role and responsibility in identifying and reporting concerns about children’s safety and protection.

The campaign is based on a series of leaflets, posters and adverts that feature different children overlooked by a figure of abuse and detail who people should contact if they have any concerns about a child’s safety and protection.

The artwork was influenced by designs created by pupils from Heathfield Primary School and Prestwick Academy who worked together to come up with ideas on how to raise awareness about child protection.

Joanne Sharp, Chair of the Child Protection Committee, said: “The children’s ideas and designs played a key role in the development of our campaign materials and gave a useful insight into what children and young people envisage when they think about a child’s safety being at risk.”

Robin Bates (11) said: “These posters really made me think and I realised things like this happen to young people all over the world. I hope the posters will help young people tell someone if they have any worries or concerns,
especially if something is happening to them, or if they are worried about someone else."

Sarah McClymont (17) said: “The posters are actually really hard-hitting and make the point that child protection is an issue we all need to be extra vigilant on and take very seriously. When we worked on the posters, it was interesting to hear what some of the younger pupils thought and this helped us decide on the final design. If the message on the posters can help even one young person, then I think we'll have done a good job.”

Last year in South Ayrshire, more than 140 children were identified as either suffering from – or at significant risk of suffering from – abuse and action was taken to prevent further harm. Many more children and their families were given earlier support, which helped prevent the risk of children suffering from abusive behaviour.

Ms Sharp continued: “People in South Ayrshire have a good understanding of what to do if they are worried about a child’s safety and protection, but we need to do all we can to reinforce the message that we all have a responsibility to help protect children. Our leaflets, posters and adverts do that and also provide a very clear and simple message on what to do if you think a child is being abused or neglected.

“Our campaign is all about protecting our children and if it helps just one child, then it will have been a success.”

Councillor Nan McFarlane, South Ayrshire Council’s Portfolio Holder for Social Services, added: “It is essential for the welfare of children that everyone is aware they have a duty to protect them. If you see signs of or are aware of child abuse and neglect, it’s important that you know what to do. The Child Protection Committee’s campaign puts that message across in a very clear way and I fully support its efforts to protect South Ayrshire’s children.”
If you have any concerns about a child’s safety, speak to someone such as a health visitor, nursery staff, teacher, family doctor, social worker or police officer as soon as possible and provide as much information as you can. You can contact social work services on 01292 267675 or call the police on 01292 664000. In an emergency, call 999.

For further information on the work of the South Ayrshire Child Protection Committee, visit www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/childprotection.

Ends

Photo caption: Pictured with pupils from Prestwick Academy involved in the design of new child protection poster designs are members of the Child Protection Committee; Councillors Nan McFarlane, Margaret Toner, Stan Fisher, and Helen Moonie; and Anita Hall, Deputy Head Teacher Prestwick Academy.

Notes to editors:

1. Copies of the campaign artwork are available by calling Denise Robertson on 07581 007258.
2. Child abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting – or by failing to act to prevent – significant harm to the child.

3. Children rarely tell if they are being abused. Signs that may make you concerned and be an indication of a child being abused or neglected include:

- unexplained bruising or bruising in an unusual place;
- a child who appears afraid, quiet or withdrawn;
- a child who appears afraid to go home;
- a child who appears constantly hungry, tired or unkempt;
- a child left unattended or unsupervised;
- a child with too much responsibility for their age;
- a child acting in a sexually inappropriate way;
- a child misusing drugs or alcohol; or
- a child missing school regularly.

4. An adult’s behaviour may cause concern that a child is being mistreated, such as acting in a violent or sexual manner towards a child, misusing drugs or alcohol while caring for a child or being verbally abusive towards a child.

ends