



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**Embargo: Immediate release**

### **Suzy Lamplugh Trust Warns of the Dangers of Internet Chat Rooms**

Following the story of missing teenager, Laura Stainforth, the personal safety charity Suzy Lamplugh Trust, are stressing the dangers of internet chat rooms and the unprecedented opportunities they give to paedophiles to groom young people and gain their trust.

Ann Elledge, Director of Personal Safety at the Trust, said:

“Laura’s case has once again highlighted how young people can be taken in by these men, who are adept at making themselves appear to be the ideal friend, the one person their young ‘victim’ can really talk to and trust.

“Tragically the internet, and the popularity of the chat rooms, gives unlimited time and opportunity for paedophiles to groom their victims - to an extent they have never had before. And believe me they are taking every advantage of it! So it is essential that parents and carers ensure that young people are aware of the precautions they should take.”

The Trust offers the following advice to parents and carers:

#### **Keeping children and young people safe on the Internet**

- Keep an eye on the websites they visit.
- Get them to tell you if they click onto an 'adult' site or chat room by mistake.
- You can buy filters and blocks that keep out e-mails from strangers and help you control what they see on screen.
- Tell them you are happy for them to meet up with people they have been chatting to on the internet – as long as you or another responsible adult go with them to check that the person they are meeting is who they have claimed to be. (Avoid saying they must never meet up with people they

have been chatting to, as this is more likely to result in them going to meet them on their own behind your back.)

**Talk through the following advice with your children:**

- Choose a nickname to use in chat rooms and newsgroups. Never use your real name.
- Try to make it hard for people to guess your real name. For example, it's easy to guess that someone with the nickname 'luap' is really called Paul.
- Never give out personal details, such as your name, address or phone number on the internet.
- Internet providers will **never** ask you for your password except when you first sign on. If you get an email saying that computer problems mean the company has to ask you to confirm your password, delete it from your mailbox without answering.
- If someone is making offensive comments or using threatening language in a chat room or newsgroup, leave the chat room, at once and report it to the person in charge of monitoring the chat room.
- If a person you have been chatting to asks you not to tell anyone about something eg. something they have asked you to do, then immediately show an adult because, no matter what excuse they give, the **only** reason they would do this is because an adult would know it was something wrong or dangerous.

If you decide you want to meet someone you have been chatting to:

- Take a parent, another responsible adult, or at the very least one of your friends with you to the first meeting. Always meet in a public place and if they are not who they described themselves to be, leave immediately.
- If you plan to see them again, arrange to meet in a busy public place, like a café, that you know well and feel safe in – and let someone know where you are going and who you are meeting.

Ends

*Press/Media enquiries to: Jo Walker, Press Officer Tel: 07747 611308 E-mail – [jo.walker@suzylamplugh.org](mailto:jo.walker@suzylamplugh.org)*

**Notes to Editors:**

**The Suzy Lamplugh Trust**, a registered charity, is the leading charity for personal safety. The Trust works to raise awareness of the importance of personal safety in order to help people to avoid violence and aggression and live safer, more confident lives.

The Trust works alongside government, the police, the educational establishment, public bodies and the business sector to encourage safety wherever people may be at risk - in the home, at work, in public and in schools and colleges, on public transport and when travelling at home or abroad.