

Leading physiotherapist warns of child health 'time bomb'

- **Poor posture, careless use of technology and heavy bags pose a serious health risk to young people**
- **Stress and strain on developing bodies will lead to serious physical disorders and a "life in pain"**
- **Free e-learning course will help schools teach children safe practices**

ADULTS who allow children to use computers, games consoles, smartphones and iPad-style tablets without considering the effects on their bodies are acting irresponsibly, according to a leading child physiotherapist. The children's activities could lead to debilitating health problems that have been described by one expert as a "healthcare time bomb".

Speaking at a conference for health and safety professionals on November 13, Lorna Taylor BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy, MCSP, HPC warned of the dangers posed to young children by the inappropriate use of technology, poor posture and heavy bags. She called for greater awareness of the risks faced by young people and supported a new training initiative being offered free to all schools.

Ms Taylor said, "Current lifestyles and the increase in technology are having detrimental effects on our children's musculoskeletal health and if not addressed in school and at home now, will have far reaching effects for our children, future working generation and society. This is a healthcare time bomb.

"Parents and teachers attentively nurture our children to be the best they can, guiding each child and equipping them with skills to reach their full potential. However, by

neglecting to teach and promote essential musculoskeletal health skills, the serious, far-reaching consequences of back and neck pain can affect every one of them.

“It's vital we instil good habits and provide resources so children can be comfortable, be able to concentrate, reach their full potential and work and play sport as they decide, and not be limited by preventable disability and a life in pain.”

Ms Taylor was speaking at a conference organised by Cardinus Risk Management where an e-learning programme was launched, designed to educate children about safe working. Healthy Working MOVE explains to young people how using electronic devices, carrying school bags and adopting different postures when working and relaxing can affect their bodies. It teaches them how to use technology comfortably and safely.

The past few years have seen a significant increase in the number of children showing signs of musculoskeletal disorder with more than 72 per cent of primary school children suffering back or neck pain in the last 12 months. An increasing number of children are requiring NHS treatment and taking medication.

Healthy Working MOVE will help to stop this worrying trend by promoting safe practices among children and young people at home and at school. The e-learning programme will be offered free-of-charge to every primary school, secondary school and college in the UK.

It has been developed by Cardinus Risk Management in association with the Health and Safety Laboratory, an agency of the Health and Safety Executive. The e-learning is based on the award-winning course Healthy Working that helps to protect adult workers around the world.

The information, advice and guidance in Healthy Working MOVE has been redesigned and re-presented in ways that will have strong appeal for children and young people. There is a version for primary school children, a version for secondary school children and another for students in higher education.

Jon Abbott, managing director – ergonomics and safety at Cardinus, said, “For many years we have recognised the risk of ergonomics injuries to adults in the workplace and the DSE regulations are designed to reduce risk. Our younger generations are using technology more regularly at school and home and yet we are failing to recognise the risks. It cannot be right that we work so hard to protect the working population but fail to recognise the impact technology has on children at a critical stage of their physiological development.

“I am delighted that Cardinus is in a position to help. Along with our partners at the Health and Safety Laboratory, we are in a great position to help protect children. Healthy Working MOVE is our first response to the problem and we have taken the decision to make it available free to education establishments across the country.”

Healthy Working, the innovative online DSE assessment and e-learning solution, provides award-winning solutions that are fully endorsed by the International Institute of Risk and Safety Management. (IIRSM)

Healthy Working MOVE takes all the expertise that went into Healthy Working and presents it in a format that young people will enjoy and that is available completely free of charge to all schools and colleges. Healthy Working MOVE is supported by IIRSM, NEBOSH, IEHF and Jolly Back (Back Care and Ergonomics for Children). For more information, schools and colleges should telephone 020 7469 0200.

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Notes to Editors

Cardinus directors, experts and consultants are available for interview and quotes on industry issues. The full range of Cardinus consultancy services can be seen on its website, www.cardinus.com or you can telephone 0207 469 0200 (UK) 1-866-966-3420 (US).

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Cardinus provides online injury reduction solutions and risk management within the [safety](#), [fleet](#) and [property](#) sectors. Established in 1995, it has an enviable track record of working with government and leading blue chip organizations. Cardinus provides solutions to customers across the United Kingdom, the US and worldwide. Solutions include '[Workstation Safety Plus](#)' a software solution designed to reduce the risks associated with using [DSE](#) and [ergonomics](#); a comprehensive [fleet risk](#) solution that combines [in-vehicle driver training](#) with online self-assessment; [property solutions](#) including [fire risk surveys](#), [asbestos assessment](#) and a range of [e-learning](#) courses. Cardinus Environmental provides a range of services, including Environmental Essentials.

Cardinus Risk Management Limited, 4th Floor, 3 East Grinstead House, Wood Street, East Grinstead, West Sussex RH19 1UZ. Cardinus Risk Management Limited, 10 Flag Business Exchange, Vicarage Farm Road, Peterborough, Cambs PE1 5SL. For further information please call Cardinus Risk Management Limited on 020 7469 0200 or email info@cardinus.com