

Skills academy helps to bring pupils into world of computing

Digital initiative to break down 'blind spot' in education system

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A GENERATION of Scottish school pupils have grown up in the digital age not knowing how to programme computers, experts have warned.

This "blind spot" in the education system had left Scotland with a significant skills gap, according to Harvey Wheaton, chief executive of Edinburgh-based digital skills academy Codeclan.

Currently there are some 11,000 digital job vacancies every year in

Scotland, but only half of these are filled.

The aim of Codeclan, which is backed by Skills Development Scotland, is to create a new generation of software developers by offering courses to adult learners.

Mr Wheaton said: "The whole world is digital and every business is a software business because, whatever you are doing, software is at the heart of it."

"That means being able to programme is critical to everything we do and therefore the demand for that as the world moves on and as

computers move on is constantly increasing.

"However, the education system has not identified this as an important enough factor and we have lost a generation or more of people who don't understand what programming is."

Mr Wheaton, who is planning further expansion of Codeclan into Glasgow, said the negative impact of the skills gap was significant.

He added: "The economy is not going to survive without these skills because the future is digital."

"Without that talent in Scotland people are going to look elsewhere and bring people in from or look at other locations in the world to set up businesses."

Codeclan offers intensive



KEY ROLES: But schools are still not teaching pupils sufficient skills.

courses with the aim of creating a new generation of software developers with the required skills. The development of the skills

academy comes at a time when some secondaries have closed their computing science departments, blaming a lack of interest from pupils.

A report by national schools body Education Scotland said: "In too many schools, computing science has diminished in popularity. The subject can too easily become a sterile and functional experience, lacking in creativity."

In 2011, Google chief executive Eric Schmidt said the UK was throwing away its "great computer heritage" by failing to teach programming.

Meanwhile, Rowena Arshad, head of the Moray House School of Education at Edinburgh University, called for all children to be

taught coding from primary school to a bid to address the issue.

And the following year, Ian Livingstone, co-author of a report on the future of the UK gaming industry, said Scottish schools should give computer science the same prominence as chemistry, physics and mathematics.

Mr Wheaton has taken on the role at Codeclan after more than 25 years in software development roles, including spells at JPMorgan Chase, Cap Gemini and gaming company Electronic Arts.

Topics on the courses – which cost £4,000 – include data structures, algorithms, databases, object oriented design and programming.

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Properties evacuated after close furniture set on fire

EIGHT homes were evacuated in Edinburgh after furniture was deliberately set alight in a close, police have said.

Three women and a man were treated at the scene for smoke inhalation following the blaze in the city.

Two of the women were then taken to hospital for precautionary checks.

Several members of the public called 999 to report a fire at a ground-floor flat in Murrayburn Green at about 9pm on Sunday.

Fire crews from Sighthill and Tollcross were sent to the scene and eight homes were evacuated. Firefighters extinguished the blaze by 12.55am.

Police said the fire was caused by furniture abandoned in the common close being deliberately set alight.

Inspector David Ferguson said: "Thankfully, no-one was seriously injured in this incident but it could have been much worse. I would like to hear from anyone who was in the area about 9pm on Sunday and who might have information that can assist us with our inquiries."

"I would also like to remind residents not to leave items of furniture or rubbish in communal areas where they can be a target for fire-raising."

Meanwhile, a woman has been taken to hospital for treatment to injuries after her TV went up in flames.

The fire service were called to the property at Somerset Place, Edinburgh, at 8.55pm on Sunday.

A Scottish Fire and Rescue Service spokeswoman said: "A TV was alight in the living room. A female casualty was given oxygen therapy while awaiting an ambulance."

Dog walker in hospital after assault

A DOG walker has been taken to hospital after being attacked by a group of men and women.

The man and a friend were walking a black whippet in Greenock on Sunday night.

The 45-year-old man was hit with a weapon – thought to be a blade or hammer – and needed stitches to three cuts to his head. He was taken to hospital for treatment.

The 48-year-old man with him was also assaulted but escaped injury.

Detective Inspector David Wagstaff said they were set upon by a group they spoke to at a bus stop on Kilmacolm Road at about 10.40pm.

He said: "We would like to hear from anyone who saw the attacks or knows anything about them."

Man in wheelchair is attacked in house

A WHEELCHAIR user is being treated in hospital after he was attacked by thieves in his house.

The 55-year-old victim answered the door of his home in Prestwick, South Ayrshire, to a woman at about 4.30pm on Sunday.

As they spoke, a man pushed his way into the house, attacked the wheelchair user with a knife and demanded money.

The pair stole more than £1,000 and made off from the property.

The victim was rushed to Ayr Hospital for treatment to a neck injury and remains in a stable condition, police said.

Detectives believe it was a targeted attack.

The thieves are both white and in their early forties.

The man is about 5ft 10in, slim and was wearing a blue beanie hat, jeans and a blue fleece.

The woman is 5ft 6in to 5ft 8in, slim, and with long dark hair.

She was wearing a dark jacket that may have had white writing on the back.

Detective Inspector Alan Sommerville said: "Thankfully, the man was not seriously injured during the attack but it was a terrifying and very nasty experience for him."

"I believe he was targeted and would appeal to anyone who recognises the descriptions, who may have seen the couple hanging about either prior to or after the robbery, to contact police."

If you have information on the incident, call the police on 101.

Facing the future



AN ARTIST who creates three dimensional portraits of what people may look like from using discarded chewing gum, strands of hair and cigarette butts is exhibiting as part of Edinburgh's science festival.

Heather Dewey-Hagborg's Stranger Vision is part of the Bio and Beyond visual art programme at Summerhall.

Her portraits, created from analyses of genetic material that people unwittingly leave

when they dump the items, pays attention to DNA phenotyping and the potential for a culture of biological surveillance.

Amanda Tyndall, creative director of EIFF, said the artists are "inspired by and yet

willing to challenge the concept of science, technology, engineering, art and design's potential to help us to build better worlds."

The exhibition runs until May 13. Picture: Gordon Terris

Deadline is looming for flood victims to apply for support

RESIDENTS who suffered storm damage during the winter have been warned they have only days left to apply for grants in to help with repairs.

Aberdeen City Council,

along with other local authorities, was administering the £1,500 grant to householders in the city who were affected by the recent flooding and met the criteria.

The funding, available to

all local authorities in Scotland to administer, provides a £1,500 grant to residents who meet the criteria.

However, the council said the scheme to administer flooding grants is to close to

applicants on Thursday.

About 40 residents from a sheltered housing complex were forced to leave their home and other properties were flooded after the River Dee burst its banks.

The local authority said only those households and businesses that were directly affected by the flooding caused by Storm Frank during the period December 29 to 31 last year and the

flooding on January 7 and 8 which caused "inundation of water within their premises" will be eligible to apply.

Those seeking grants are urged to call or check the council's website for details.

Town will pay tribute to band killed in crash

THE members and manager of a British indie band who were killed with their manager in a car crash in Sweden are to be honoured by their home town.

Viola Beach members Kris Leonard, River Reeves, Tomas Lowe and Jack Dakin – died with their manager Craig Tarry in February when their car plunged more than 80ft into a

canal in Sodertalje, Sweden.

Warrington Borough Council has pledged its support for a permanent memorial in the town centre and established an online fundraising page where the public can donate.

The Mayor, Councillor Geoff Settle, said: "Families and friends have sought comfort in the thousands of tributes that

have poured in through the media, on social media sites and books of condolence.

"We hope that they can continue to seek solace through a permanent tribute to the five young men."

The total amount donated will be allocated in accordance with the wishes of the families. Family of the band said they

hoped the final memorial would "mark Viola Beach's musical impact on the town".

Ben and Sharon Dunne, the family of Mr Reeves, said: "The memorial would give everyone an opportunity to reflect on what might have been but also realise to the potential which we all have to make amazing things happen."

Police assist with a special Easter delivery

POLICE officers have welcomed a special Easter delivery by helping a mother in labour give birth to a healthy baby boy.

Two constables were on routine patrol in Harrow, north London, when they were flagged down by the driver of a van at 1.30pm yesterday.

They approached to find the female passenger was in labour and quickly set about helping.

The two male officers assisted with the delivery of the boy, who was wrapped in a Metropolitan Police fleece.

The newborn has been named Alex and was taken with his mother to a London hospital.

The male police officers shared the news on Twitter. They wrote: "A special



SPECIAL DELIVERY: The baby has been named Alex.

Easter delivery, delivered by officers from Harrow police on Kenton Road this morning. Named Alex."

In December 2013, Nicola McDowell gave birth to a baby in the back seat of her car at a petrol station at Edinburgh's Cameron Toll shopping centre.

Chemotherapy is set for real-time imaging

CANCER patients could one day be able to know whether their chemotherapy has worked in "real time".

Scientists are honing a technique that can assess the effectiveness of the cancer treatment in as little as eight hours after administration.

Conventional methods of testing the effectiveness of treatment, such as scans, usually cannot detect whether a tumour is shrinking until a patient has received multiple cycles of therapy.

But experts from the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts, have developed an approach that can alert them to the death of cancer cells the moment the drugs start to work using a nanoparticle that

delivers cancer therapy and then glows green when cancer cells die.

Researchers were able to see whether a tumour was resistant or susceptible to chemotherapy or immunotherapy.

The finding, published in The Proceedings Of The National Academy Of Sciences, could one day mean patients are not given more chemotherapy that does not respond to their cancer.

"We can determine if a cancer therapy is effective within hours of treatment," said Dr Shiladitya Sengupta, of Brigham and Women's Hospital Division of Bioengineering."

The researchers now plan to see whether the findings can be tested in humans.

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