

# Fiona DUFF



## Discover what your kids really get up to

**S**O your teenager is in their bedroom doing homework. Or so they say, because can you really be sure?

Looking after children who are growing up in a digital age is uncharted territory for most of us parents. We might like to think that our offspring are sensible but apparently the largest number of consumers of online porn are boys aged between 12 and 17 (according to Psychologies magazine).

It's quite a while since we tucked them up in bed while reading *The Gruffalo*.

Addiction to these sorts of sites can cause serious mental health issues and often an inability to form "normal" relationships with girls.

They see the men all six-pack fit and feel inadequate, and cannot understand why their girlfriends won't indulge in the sort of practices that they have been viewing.

On top of that there is sexting, online dating and cyber bullying. It's difficult to know where to start as most of us don't have a clue about any of these things anyway.

However, I know a couple of women who do. Allison Havey and Deana Puccio have, in the past couple of years, visited over a 100 schools talking to teenagers about how they can be affected.

They aren't teachers, nor parents of those to whom they are addressing, but two sassy bright New York ladies who seem to be able to get through to our children.

Deana is about five foot nothing in her stocking feet and may look like a pushover, but she used to be a Sex Crimes Prosecutor in Brooklyn. Boy, does she know her stuff.

Of course, there is no way that they are going to be able to visit every school in the country (although frankly they should), but later this month you'll be able to buy their book.

They've used information gleaned from pupils they have met as well as talking to many others before writing *Sex, Likes and Social Media*; the results are both compelling and sometimes shocking.

However, if we are to be in a position to cope with your child possibly being groomed by an older person or feeling socially hopeless because all their acquaintances seem to be having



**TEEN TALK:** Allison Havey and Deana Puccio have visited over 100 schools talking to digital age teens

such a better time with their posts on Facebook or Snapchat then it is definitely worth a read.

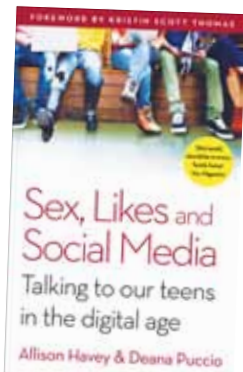
We need to be able to talk to our offspring about why sending an explicit photo of themselves may be a laugh at the time, but it could have repercussions well into the future.

Larger companies now often employ IT experts when they are recruiting to ensure that the candidate's online profile will not be of embarrassment to them.

They should know that someone sending them sweet messages and promises of all sorts is not always a nice person with whom they should arrange to meet alone.

I have always worried about my children walking around on their own at night.

They have money for a taxi if necessary and they know that danger can lurk in darkened doorways. Now, having read this book I know that some of the worst threats to their lives may be on a screen in their own home.



## Michael McVeigh - Edinburgh artist in residence

**MICHAEL McVeigh is someone you may have seen in Edinburgh city centre.**

**Occasionally it might be sitting on a stool on a pavement with an easel in front of him. Or perhaps you have seen him selling prints of his paintings from a stall on Rose Street.**

**Michael is absolute proof that if you want something badly enough, it might just happen.**

**He left school with no exam qualifications. He loved painting so just started going to classes at Dundee School of Art and after**



**being rumbled by the staff, they looked at his work and offered him an official place.**

**He's lived in Edinburgh for almost 40 years and for the first time is getting his own solo exhibition. And not at some piddling little joint in the back end of beyond - it's at The Scottish**



## Lauriston Castle's going to the dogs

I WENT for a dog walk to Lauriston Castle last week. It's a beautiful building with lovely grounds which is owned by Edinburgh Council. But there is definitely something amiss.

The fabulous greenhouse was cordoned off, as was a large pillar in the garden. The gatehouse looks like it could be close to having the same fate.

I know the council is cash-strapped, but surely they could make money from this wonderful place. The gatehouse could be renovated and rented out.

Currently the website says that it isn't available for wedding receptions, which is such a wasted opportunity.

Do they have any idea how much people spend on large wedding venues which are 20 miles out of town - the investment of a large marquee, some chairs and a fancy portaloos would be paid back within a month I reckon (especially if the month was June).

So pull your socks up councillors - why not think of ways to make some money rather than wasting it.

I'd certainly recommend it to anyone as long as there are some professionals running the event.



**Gallery on Dundas Street, which is the most established and prestigious private gallery in Scotland.**

**If you are in town anytime from Wednesday until October 1, why not pop in? You never know, you might walk out with a little piece of original art tucked under your arm.**