"Easy access to the internet on her phone meant that she was exposed to potentially upsetting communications 24 hours a day; and she was able to return to, and re-read, the upsetting messages at a later time, and therefore appears to have continued to ruminate about them."

This extract is from a coroner's report in America about a girl who was described in a newspaper as "a beautiful sensitive and capable teenager".

I thank you for the opportunity to speak today about bullying, which is potentially devastating for victims, and can have fatal consequences.

Many definitions of bullying abound; the Department of Education define it as "unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological, or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) which is repeated over time."

Clinical definitions do not capture the impact of relentless emotional painful torture caused by bullying, and the loss of self-esteem, hindered opportunities, feelings of uselessness and life-long implications of persecuting behaviour. This often occurs where there is a power imbalance.

The stereotype of the schoolyard bully taking lunch money fails to encompass the wider reality.

Bullies are often charismatic and charming, they please and impress superiors and demand the respect of others for whom they show little regard.

Definitions omit how subtle bullying can be, where a victim wonders if they imagined, or even deserved it. Bystanders witnessing events stay quiet out of fear or perhaps for personal gain.

Cyberbullying is a huge concern. It is intrusive and "constantly on". Digital devices delve into worlds where just one abusive comment or a displayed photograph might always exist to someone's utter dismay: perpetrators can be anonymous, and the sufferer's distress may be unknown to anyone.

Victims are often fearful of further reprisals or may not want others to know about their embarrassing online abuse. They can lose concentration, and become withdrawn, isolated and depressed.

Schools have a duty of care, and whilst they are required to have policies and procedures, it is difficult to know:

    (i)   who is being targeted,
            and

    (ii)   how much victimisation occurs, particularly in relation to cyber-bullying.

Several improvements need to be made in to control intimidation in school environments. Measures must include more guidance counsellors, restoration of middle management positions, prioritisation of well-being, relevant training for teachers, smaller classes and a reduction in work overload, would allow time for extra-curricular activities and room to foster school connectivity.