

Kildare Nationalist

By Tim Ryan, Oireachtas Correspondent

Legislation sought to curb revenge porn

The case of a young man in South Kildare who sadly took his own life as a result of videos posted on the internet was raised in the Dáil by Fianna Fáil Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin.

There has, she said, been a significant increase in the numbers of victims of “revenge porn” whereby revealing or explicit pictures or videos are posted on the Internet without the consent of the subject. “This is linked to very serious psychological harm to the persons involved,” she said. “The aim is to humiliate and degrade the victim.”

Deputy O' Loughlin asked the Taoiseach about promised legislation on revenge porn to protect these victims.

In response, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said he would have to check with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Denis Naughten, about that but he certainly agreed that legislation is required in this area in order to make it a specific offence.

Homelessness particularly difficult for families with special needs

Homelessness is a difficult situation for anyone but particularly for families with young children, especially children with special needs, Fianna Fáil Deputy Frank O'Rourke told the Dáil. Sometimes, he said, they are left outside of the discussion which is particularly sad.

“It is particularly sensitive for everyone involved in that situation,” he said. “They need to be given priority to assist them in having delivered some type of social housing or supports through whatever mechanism is possible. We must go back to the root cause of the issue that brings us here. There are a number of different categories which we have all spoken about and which affect families, particularly those with young children and children with special needs.”

Speaking during a debate on homelessness he said lack of supply is a massive issue at the moment. “We have to double our efforts to ensure we make greater attempts to bring supply into the market,” he said. “Supply affects everything. We have engaged with the Minister on this issue on numerous occasions. It is a massive problem on which we need to double our efforts.”

“My own local authority, Kildare County Council, which I deal with regularly, is doing its best under extremely difficult circumstances while being under-resourced,” he said. “It does not have the flexibility to give families priority in particular circumstances. That is a problem that needs to be addressed.”

Families with children are living with parents and other family members, which is causing all sorts of welfare and social problems, he said. “We need to look at cases of families who have been on the housing list for a year. One such case presented to me last week. They have been

on the housing list for a year and have a young child who is blind. It is very sad. They have been told it will be at least nine years before the local authority can deal with them as a family unit. They were advised to find housing they can rent and were offered support through HAP. However, they cannot get a unit because they need to access all the medical services and supports their child needs.”

Urgent need to roll out broadband

The urgent to get the national broadband plan rolled out and the contract put out to tender was raised on the Order of Business in the Dáil by Fianna Fáil Deputy Frank O'Rourke.

“On page 38 of the Programme for Government, there is a commitment to roll out broadband to every home and business in the country,” he said. “That is not happening. The increased provision referenced in the statistics quoted by the Minister and Department is due to private operators providing this much-needed service which all Members agree is no longer a luxury but, rather, a necessity for businesses, education, people who want to work from home and so on.”

In response, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said the contract negotiations are commercially sensitive and confidential and he was not a party to them. “The Minister, Deputy Naughten, has informed me that he anticipates the contract will be signed next year,” he said. “I agree with Deputy O'Rourke that broadband is not a luxury but, rather, is essential. It is the intention of the Government that Ireland will be the first country in the world in which every home and business has fibre broadband. Notwithstanding the delays in getting the contract signed, the private sector, in partnership with Government and local authorities, is providing more and more homes and premises with access to high speed broadband. Up to three quarters of all homes and businesses will have such access by the end of next year.”