

# DÁIL ÉIREANN

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## AN COMHCHOISTE UM LEANAÍ AGUS GNÓTHAÍ ÓIGE

## JOINT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

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*Dé Céadaoin, 7 Feabhra 2018*

*Wednesday, 7 February 2018*

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Tháinig an Comhchoiste le chéile ag 9.30 a.m.

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The Joint Committee met at 9.30 a.m.

Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair / Members present:

Teachtaí Dála / Deputies	Seanadóirí / Senators
Tom Neville,	Máire Devine.
Anne Rabbitte,	
Sean Sherlock.	

I láthair / In attendance: Deputies Jack Chambers, Timmy Dooley and James Lawless.

Teachta / Deputy Alan Farrell sa Chathaoir / in the Chair.

**Chairman:** Apologies have been received from Senators Joan Freeman and Catherine Noone. We will now go into private session to deal with committee business.

*The joint committee went into private session at 9.42 a.m. and resumed in public session at 10.31 a.m.*

### **Cybersecurity for Children and Young Adults: Discussion (Resumed)**

**Chairman:** I welcome everybody to the meeting, including guests in the Visitors Gallery and people watching the meeting on Oireachtas TV. We are joined by Ms Lauren Reynolds, Ms Muireann Whelan, Ms Serena Devereux and Ms Isabel Seacy from Newbridge College and Ms Tara Trevaskis Hoskin, Ms Jade O'Hagan, Ms Jody Whelan and Mr. Fearghal Burke from Wicklow and Clare Comhairle na nÓg. I thank them for attending the meeting this morning. The committee is very interested in hearing the views of young people and we are grateful to you for not only accepting our invitation but also making yourselves available and coming here from various places. It is important to note how significant your role is in our hearings on cybersafety in general. Heretofore we have met with representatives of Snapchat, we have received contributions from Facebook and a submission from Snap Inc. and we have had conversations with people from academia, among others. Now it is important to hear from the users of these services about their experience, and I hope you can inform us on how improvements could be made. I do not want you to feel this environment is too formal. Feel free to make a contribution and let me know if you wish to contribute. It is not quite a lámha suas but make sure you get my attention and I will call you. However, I am required to read a formal notice, so you can tune out for this bit.

Before we commence and in accordance with procedure I am required to draw attention to the fact that by virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to this committee. However, if you are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and you continue to do so, you are entitled thereafter only to a qualified privilege in respect of your evidence. You are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and you are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, you should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the House or an official either by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

I ask everybody in the room to switch off their mobile telephones. Mute is not sufficient so turn them off or put them into flight mode. Otherwise it will affect our proceedings and your counterparts in Newbridge, Wicklow and Clare will be unable to hear you on television. I wish to advise you that any submissions or opening statements submitted to the committee will be published on the committee website after the meeting has concluded. The witnesses will make a short presentation, followed by questions from members of the committee. I invite Ms Reynolds to commence.

**Ms Lauren Reynolds:** As a young person I wish to discuss the online safety issues that I believe affect us most. I will discuss sexting and inappropriate content, the social media sites

that affect us most and the issues relating to them.

The definition of a sext is a sexually explicit photograph or message sent via mobile telephone. It is very much a taboo subject, which people shy away from discussing, but it must be addressed. Many of the teenagers engaging in these activities are not informed of the dangers or the legalities relating to the sharing of intimate images. This issue was raised recently when stories surfaced in the news, leaving parents concerned and raising the need for awareness among young people. Sending an image to the person one plans to see it and trusts may appear harmless but can have disastrous consequences if it gets into the wrong hands. The sender of the photograph has no ability to prevent the image being shared with a wider audience than initially intended. It is important to take this into consideration when intending to send a risky image, even if it is to somebody with whom one is in a close or trusting relationship, as factors such as peer pressure or a break up might mean that the images stay in their possession. What would a future employer think of a resurfaced intimate image? It is important to consider the emotional stress of having pictures of oneself distributed to an audience. Under data protection and copyright law a person has the legal right to have the images taken off the Internet and if they are brought to the school's or the Garda's attention leaked images can be dealt with. This should be stressed to young people so they may become aware of the damaging and psychological effects of sexting.

Not only is sexting dangerous, it can also have serious possible legal consequences. Very few teenagers are aware of the legalities surrounding nude images, which can also be classified as child exploitation material. The Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998 makes no allowance or distinction regarding underage sexting. Child pornography incorporates a person under 17 years of age engaging in an explicit sexual activity or visual representation. Even the case of a suggestive provocative image that may suggest an explicit sexual representation of a part of the body may still come within the definition of child pornography. Offences include creation, distribution or possession of child pornography and the penalty can be up to 14 years imprisonment. The age of consent for sexual intercourse in Ireland is 17 years but while sexual activities under the age of 17 years are legal their recording is illegal and an offence. I believe this issue is getting out of control and becoming a popular trend due to the lack of education and information provided to young people. We can help prevent and tackle this by raising awareness and being taught the dangers of sexting in school as part of the social, personal and health education, SPHE, curriculum or the relationships and sexuality education, RSE, module.

Another concern with children using the Internet is how easily and instantly they can access inappropriate content, such as violent or sexually explicit images online, with or without the intention of doing so. Reports suggest that 25% of children have come across harmful content online and 11% have seen or received sexual content. The reports also found that less than 20% of parents are supervising their children's online activity. Parents can prevent this by monitoring their child's online usage, setting up safety mode within the settings of their YouTube account to filter out inappropriate content, setting up Google SafeSearch filters to filter out explicit material, setting up web filters and becoming aware of the apps their child is using.

Instagram is a free mobile app that can be downloaded to telephones, tablets, iPods and so forth. It is a form of social media that allows the user to upload photographs and videos to their profile page while allowing the person to direct message, follow, comment, view, tag in or like posts. It is a way to see what one's friends and favourite celebrities are up to, but can hold the risk of over-sharing personal details and information. It can be easy to feel one knows somebody from talking to the person online or seeing what seems like every minor detail of the

person's life, but how easy is it to base one's opinion on somebody one has never actually met? The leaking or distribution of personal or banking details can also leave a person vulnerable to scams and hackers.

The Instagirl aesthetic envisages an unrealistic reality, an idealistic image of a perfect world that does not exist. With filters, exotic locations and a faultless lifestyle, this creates a false illusion of these glamorised fantasies. Feeds filled with airbrushed photoshopped flawless figures can lead to extreme self esteem and confidence issues in young girls who aspire to look and live like this new generation of role models. Unrealistic and unhealthy portrayals of female sexuality can lead young girls to feel insecure about their bodies, provoke fears of them being unattractive and lead to extreme dieting. Young people and celebrities are known for only posting the good and happiness in their lives on the media. While a constant burst of a positive online influence may seem ideal, it can give young people an untrue perception of life, making them feel alienated for not constantly feeling the everyday optimism shared by these online influences. The messages that should be put across to teenagers are how it is okay not to be okay and that everyone has bad or off days. This should be highlighted through social media and should be used to promote the importance of mental health rather than damage it.

Public profiles on Instagram can be viewed by anyone, enabling access to any user to leave hateful or unkind comments. Privacy settings are in place to give the option for accounts to be on private, allowing the user to accept or deny follow requests. The age to own an account on Instagram is 13 years, but many children break this rule using false years of birth. Parents who are concerned by their children having accounts should implement their own rules, for example, having access to the account or controlling their child's online activity.

Snapchat is a photo and video messaging application that allows a person to send an image for a select amount of time. Snaps can be sent to anyone on a person's friends list. Snapchat lets a person draw on and add captions or text to his or her snaps. It also has a feature called stories where a person can post for his or her whole contact friend list to see and that lasts 24 hours. As well as this, it has a form of messaging known as blue chat. Here the chats will disappear if not tapped and saved. Snapchat is popular for sexting due to the users believing it will disappear once opened without considering the threat of a screenshot being taken of the image or the image being screen recorded. The age to activate an account is 13 years. There is a child-friendly version called "Snap kids" which allows a person to take pictures and save them to the camera roll without the option of friends and stories.

Snapchat launched a feature, snap maps, in June 2017 which outraged many people and was the subject of concern and alarm for parents. The feature allowed users to appear on a map for all their friends to see and pinpoint their location. This is highly dangerous and may cause serious threat to a child's location privacy. There is an option to turn off this feature - ghost mode - disabling access to the location.

Many of these problems can be easily prevented. The Internet is not a truly bad and dangerous place and, when used in a safe and responsible way, like many things, can be positive and beneficial. How do we tackle these issues? While there will always be negative and dangerous sources online, the right guidelines on children and young people, implemented with the assistance of teachers and parents, can help us young people remain safer on the web. Raising awareness is key. We need to get these issues talked about. There is much schools and parents can do to help. Safer Internet Day was yesterday, 6 February, with 100,000 teachers and students throughout the country taking part in activities relating to how to be safe when online.

Teachers addressing these issues through a range of subjects can help educate young people who are otherwise the most vulnerable to the dangers they may encounter online. Information evenings in schools or communities should be in place to inform parents and get them talking about the importance of safety online too. There are various helpful websites and organisations that provide information and help to people of all ages. With the right attitudes and resources and by addressing these issues, we can make a change and make the Internet a better and safer environment for the children and young people of Ireland.

**Chairman:** Thank you, Lauren. I now invite a member of Comhairle na nÓg to make their opening statement.

**Ms Tara Trevaskis Hoskin:** Good morning everyone. My name is Tara. We are here today representing Clare and Wicklow Comhairle na nÓg. I am from Wicklow Comhairle na nÓg.

**Ms Jade O’Hagan:** I am Jade from Wicklow Comhairle na nÓg.

**Ms Jody Whelan:** I am Jody from Clare Comhairle na nÓg.

**Mr. Fearghal Burke:** My name is Fearghal and I am from Clare Comhairle na nÓg. Comhairle na nÓg are youth councils for children and young people aged between 12 and 17 that give them a voice to speak on youth issues. They were established in 2002 and are the recognised national structure for the participation of children and young people in decision-making in all 31 local areas.

**Ms Jody Whelan:** Comhairle na nÓg is for young people under the age of 18 and who therefore have no other voting mechanism to have their voice heard. The programme is designed to enable young people to have a voice on the services, policies and issues in their local area.

**Ms Jade O’Hagan:** Today we will talk about the work on cybersecurity and safety for children and young people. Our work with Wicklow started when we began the Great Wicklow Youth Survey. This was given to 1,000 young people in Wicklow. This is really important to us because it represents the voices of young people around Wicklow. This helped us decide what issue we were to work on. As the survey results came back, cyberbullying was shown to be one of the most important issues, along with mental health and youth homelessness. This helped us and we started to work on cyberbullying.

**Ms Tara Trevaskis Hoskin:** More than 1,000 people identified cyberbullying as a major issue for them and among young people. However, we wanted to find out more about this issue. As I am sure the committee will agree, it is quite difficult to find information on it and to understand the problems that come from this and how these could be solved.

We held cyberbullying consultations online and received a good response from people all over Wicklow. First, we conducted a survey online where people could make submissions. It was helpful as well to get a personal response because it could be anonymous. People were happy to share. More than 220 young people took part in that. Then we hosted some workshops around the county to discuss the results of the survey with people. This was really helpful as well. We conducted walk-in debates where people told us their opinions on it, which helped us gain a greater understanding of the issue. The overwhelming feedback was that we should develop a charter which speaks to all of the relevant people within the picture of cyberbullying. The message was that there was more information needed on cyberbullying and that it was not only to be told to those who are being cyberbullied or to cyberbullies. It is more important to

include everyone who is involved. We started work on the charter then.

Through a serious amount of work within our comhairle and among us after we had gathered all the information, and supported by the steering group, we developed a cyberbullying charter, copies of which are available to the committee if the committee members want some. What makes it so powerful and unique in our view is that it carries messages to all of the stakeholders because we feel that we are all stakeholders when it comes to cyberbullying. We believe everyone has a part to play, from those who are bullied to bullies, to the bystanders, to those in authority and to all young people. If we really want this to change, everyone needs to be a part of the change.

It is our intention to share the charter poster within Wicklow and beyond, if there is interest. A good aspect of the charter is it is not specific to Wicklow. It can be shared nationwide, even universally, because it applies to all young people. We are really proud of it. It took a lot of work to put the charter together but we believe that it will help change people's perspective and maybe help open up the issue a bit more. We believe it will help reduce the prevalence of cyberbullying because more people will be involved in fixing the issue rather than merely putting it on one person or group.

**Ms Jody Whelan:** Fearghal and I will talk about the context and motivation, a sexting workshop we took part in and our cybersafety programme. I will start off with the context and motivation.

Clare Comhairle na nÓg takes its work plan directly from topics and suggestions put forward by young people in Clare. The main source is the comhairle AGM held in October. Additional input comes from Clare youth service, CYS, surveys and focus groups run by youth workers and Younger Voices. At the end of 2014, the issue of cybersafety was evident from feedback at the comhairle AGM in our discussion groups and through focus groups facilitated by CYS. Cybersafety became part of the Clare comhairle work plans in 2015, 2016 and 2017. In 2015 and 2016, we made a short film which included aspects of inappropriate sharing and ran a consultation which examined attitudes to oversharing online.

**Mr. Fearghal Burke:** In 2016 and 2017, Clare Comhairle na nÓg was involved in an Erasmus+ exchange with its equivalent in Iceland, the Samfés committee. Each group delivered workshops to the other on areas of common interest, including positive mental health and cybersafety. The young people from Samfés had developed and run a sexting peer education workshop in 2016 and they translated it into English for us. It was a good experience which led to lively and interesting debate. We now have formatted this sexting workshop, which could be adapted to the Irish context. We are looking for funding to run the programme itself.

**Ms Jody Whelan:** Changes in technology, in particular the availability of broadband and cheaper smartphones with data bundles, have changed the cyber landscape in recent years. In response to young people looking for some direction and education in this rapidly changing environment, we made links with McAfee which had developed a cybersafety programme as part of its corporate social responsibility, CSR, project. The programme was piloted with 49 young people at the 2015 comhairle AGM and the results were fed back to McAfee. Clare youth service decided to deliver this programme with funding from the Clare local development company, and during 2016 and 2017, 752 young people, mainly first years, took part in the programme in schools across Clare. McAfee has adapted the programme according to the feedback from the young people involved.

**Mr. Fearghal Burke:** We were delighted to see the cybersafety programme rolled out through Clare youth service and Youth Work Ireland in other regions across Ireland as well. While it is partly the role of Comhairle na nÓg to influence practitioners, we are interested in going a step further. In late 2017, ten members travelled to Cork to train as peer education mentors to enable us to deliver the programmes ourselves. We did this with McAfee, a leading cybersafety company. Yesterday, the programme was launched worldwide. It had been run only in Ireland until yesterday. The first stages are completed and in recent days, we found out the second programme of the workshop will be held in the coming weeks. We have been invited to NUI Galway to teach teachers because we believe it is better coming from young people. We thank the committee for listening.

**Chairman:** I thank the witnesses for their contributions. I thank them for taking the time to prepare their opening statements and for circulating them in advance. I invite members to make any observations they wish.

**Deputy Sean Sherlock:** I thank the witnesses for coming before the committee today. We are involved in the process of examining this issue. Very often we hear voices from academia and industry but the most important voices of all are those of the witnesses. What they have done today is to articulate a clear vision of what they want to achieve, and they have done so with such clarity that I want to get copies of their submissions. They have distilled the issues with such clarity that it has given me, as a member of the committee, a clear sense of what we need to achieve now. I express our gratitude to the witnesses.

I have a few questions arising from the submissions. My first question is for Ms Reynolds on the role of parents. We are trying hard to grapple with where parents come into the equation. Do the witnesses think the vast majority of parents have the confidence to monitor, as Ms Reynolds said, the activity of their children online so they can make the Internet safe for their children?

**Ms Lauren Reynolds:** I completely agree. Parents are very much in the dark because media have come on so much in our generation, which means we were thrown into the deep end. When growing up one is taught and given guidelines on everything. Someone is not given a bike and just told to cycle it. He or she is taught how to do so. One is taught languages and subjects but with social media, we have had to learn for ourselves. It is very important that parents become educated on the workings of the sites in which their children are involved. There is so much in the news that parents get concerned because they see the negatives when there are many benefits. We could have workshops and information evenings for parents, even given by students, informing them on how these sites work.

**Deputy Sean Sherlock:** How would this be done? If I asked Ms Reynolds to design a workshop or programme to educate or help parents would she do it in the school community or in the sporting community? If I gave her €1 million to design a programme for the country, what would be her vision and how would she do it? Would it be done during school time or out of school time? Parents are looking for programmes they can grab onto in their communities so they can educate themselves. Mr. Burke spoke about peer to peer programmes and young people teaching young people but there is a big gap in adults' minds on this issue. Will Ms Reynolds give me a sense of this? It might help in the devising of schemes here also.

**Ms Lauren Reynolds:** I would hold them in secondary schools, and in primary schools to educate parents for when their children go to secondary school. They could also be held in local libraries or community centres.

**Deputy Sean Sherlock:** Do the other witnesses have a perspective on this?

**Mr. Fearghal Burke:** We have thought about bringing this to parents. We have said we will go into secondary schools and primary schools. We have looked at all aspects, including town halls and youth clubs. The programme we run has been developed for all ages. It suits and teaches everybody.

**Deputy Sean Sherlock:** I am not a technophobe but I am not a technophile either. Probably like most people, I am somewhere in the middle. One does not necessarily have to fully understand the technology to be able to use it. I am an early adopter of technology but I am probably in the minority. The majority of people do not feel confident about trying to reach in and understand what their children are doing. Where is Comhairle na nÓg on this? It has its charter. How do we implement the charter? How do we get it to a point where every citizen in the country, young and old, has a sense we are designing a safe place for people to inhabit when they use the Internet? How do we get there?

**Mr. Fearghal Burke:** It is a learning curve for everyone. We should run the programmes and see how it goes. The results will show. It is about running the programmes.

**Deputy Sean Sherlock:** Get the programmes up and running, start the learning and replicate them throughout the country.

**Mr. Fearghal Burke:** It is a learning process for us also, even those teaching it and, of course, the people learning about cybersafety.

**Deputy Sean Sherlock:** My next questions require short answers. Do the witnesses believe there is a cut-off point with regard to children and young adults? Smartphones have been spoken about quite a bit recently, and people are saying children under the age of 12 or 16 should not have access to a smartphone. What is the view of the witnesses on this? Ms Muireann Whelan wants to answer it.

**Ms Muireann Whelan:** I completely agree with 14 year olds being allowed a smartphone if they have been brought up knowing the laws, knowing what to do and knowing how to use it safely. The Internet can be such an amazing thing for everyone but the problem is how to monitor it. That is up to parents. If parents give their children under the age of 14, for example, a smartphone and they get into trouble sexting, it is the parents' choice.

**Deputy Sean Sherlock:** Ms Whelan is stating parental responsibility is key to all of this and there is an onus on parents.

**Ms Muireann Whelan:** I agree 100%.

**Deputy Sean Sherlock:** The relationships and sexuality education, RSE, module has been mentioned. We have had some engagement with the Department of Education and Skills and with parents about the role of teachers. What I am picking up from the witnesses is that it depends on what school someone goes to. Some teachers are very confident with technology and some are not. Should we start rolling out programmes at undergraduate level for teachers in training so they do a compulsory module on Internet safety? They would then be able to roll out programmes in their classes through RSE and other programmes.

**Ms Jody Whelan:** It would be good to get teachers to learn about cybersafety because of the way technology is going. Everyone has a phone and everyone is on social media. If teach-



ers knew how to handle it, it would be a lot better in schools.

**Deputy Tom Neville:** I thank the witnesses for their submissions. I was very struck by the submission from Ms Reynolds on mental health. I am a member of the committee on mental health and I do a lot of campaigning and work in this area. A number of years ago, the social media trends which the witnesses are articulating with regard to younger people and teenagers were happening for adults, with regard to pressure to look and be the best and the manifestation of a perfect lifestyle on social media. This was kicking in for adults in 2011 and 2012. I do not know whether it is still happening because we are maturing as users of social media. It was probably also happening at that time for younger people but I am basing that on my own anecdotal experience. As I have said at this committee, social media holds dangers for young people, as does life offline, but there are also huge benefits to social media, in particular in regard to community. Anything in which I am involved in the area of the arts, in particular with community-led organisations, involves social media. Organisations such as Comhairle na nÓg probably use Facebook groups to say when something is on and who is going or interested, which is an example of the benefits of social media. The witnesses have said that they are here to articulate their concerns, which the committee is taking on board. What are their views on the point raised by Deputy Sherlock regarding the restriction and use of social media? Should certain sites or activities be unavailable or banned for children under a certain age or, rather, should we continue to educate and make people aware of potential dangers? It would be interesting to hear the views of people of the witnesses' age group on the issue.

**Ms Jody Whelan:** We should continue to educate because it would be very difficult to impose a ban such as a prohibition on owning a mobile phone before a certain age and it would not, therefore, make much difference. If we start to educate people on this issue at a younger age then by the time they reach their teens, they will know what is and is not safe. It would also be useful for parents to monitor and be involved in children's online activities.

**Ms Muireann Whelan:** It is not about taking the social element out of social media but, rather, addressing the issue of young people who get home from school, go straight upstairs, spend hours on their phone and do not socialise with their families. I agree that social media can be amazing but there are also downfalls for younger people in terms of how it is consuming their lives. It is media, not social media. Much attention is focused on how amazing a should person look all of the time.

**Deputy Tom Neville:** Is there an element of addiction to social media?

**Ms Muireann Whelan:** Yes, definitely.

**Ms Lauren Reynolds:** As Ms Muireann Whelan said, it is taking out the social aspect and is affecting the way we are living our lives. It is as though we are living our lives through the lens of a camera rather than in the moment. There are age restrictions and rules in place on social media sites but they are not being followed. Children of eight use websites that have a minimum age guideline of 13. In certain cases, it is down to parents controlling their child's online activity and ensuring these rules are implemented.

**Deputy Tom Neville:** The witnesses possibly started primary school seven or eight years ago when social media was not as prevalent and was only starting out and they are probably the first generation to have experience of social media during primary and secondary school. My generation did not have social media when we were children and only began using it as adults. Have teachers and education in schools evolved over that period or are they still hugely behind?

Is more support needed in that regard? Are people stepping in or are teachers more clued in on the issue? Through no fault of their own, teachers are under the same pressure as all adults in terms of trying to keep up with technology. As a culture, we must constantly try to keep up with technology because it is evolving so quickly. Have the witnesses seen a progression in that regard in recent years and, in particular, over the past two or three years?

**Ms Muireann Whelan:** That is the case with younger teachers in particular. The way such teachers use social media is amazing, in particular as regards Edmodo and so on. In terms of geography, a full significant relevant point, SRP, resource was placed online whereby one can access Christmas tests, special notes and so on. That side of using technology in school is hugely beneficial.

**Chairman:** What is an SRP?

**Ms Muireann Whelan:** It is like an essay for geography, for example, which consists of many of them. Through social media, one can have a group chat or one's maths teacher can put up a video of him or her doing a maths equation on YouTube in a special group such that only one's class can see and students can comment or ask for it to be redone. That is an example of how technology in schools can move in a positive direction.

**Deputy Tom Neville:** To take the past two to three years as an example because things move so fast in this area, have the online dangers and threats to young people increased in that period or are they being discussed more? Were such dangers present two or three years ago? That might be a difficult question which the witnesses cannot answer. Was the same volume of dangers present, has it increased or are we discussing it more and bringing it into the limelight?

**Ms Lauren Reynolds:** The issues have always been there but people are only now being made aware of them. Many stories on the issue have recently surfaced in the news but such activities have been ongoing since social media came about. It is good that we are now discussing and addressing it and that people are being made aware of these issues.

**Deputy Tom Neville:** How do young people feel about coming forward with these issues? Are they afraid to come forward when something happens, possibly because of potential consequences? Do they keep things to themselves? People are often afraid to come forward with such issues, which can have mental health implications. What is the culture among the witnesses' peers in that regard?

**Ms Tara Trevaskis Hoskin:** In terms of coming forward with issues such as cyberbullying and so on, people do not know how to properly deal with it because it is such a new issue. Older people such as teachers and so on often do not have a clue what to do or say. It would be preferable for them to be given more supports and information and for young people to be asked how the issue should be dealt with. It is not that people do not think it is an issue but, rather, they do not know how to deal with it because it is so new.

**Mr. Fearghal Burke:** On Deputy Neville's previous question regarding whether dangers are increasing, work is being done in that regard but the dangers are increasing more quickly than the measures to address them. It is our Internet and we should know what to do with it. It is a danger that is being faced by young people and we should control it now before it gets too far. The dangers are increasing year by year. It is very fast-moving and something must be done before it gets out of control.

**Deputy Tom Neville:** I thank the witnesses for their very informative answers.

**Chairman:** As I indicated, I very much appreciate the time that was put into producing today's opening remarks and the visual presentation by Comhairle na nÓg, which is always helpful in this relatively fast-paced environment. Taking into account all that the witnesses have said, improving the educational level and awareness is key to this issue. In particular, parents need to be better informed as to what is going on because the witnesses have been familiar with social media from a relatively young age. I have a six year old and a four year old whose online activity is limited to a highly supervised 30 minutes on the children's version of YouTube but they know how to unlock phones and probably also know the settings. The prevalence of screen time is quite alarming. A considerable research has shown how negative screen time can be in terms of the physical manifestation of being glued to a phone six inches from one's face, which cannot be good for a person, rather than the content or social aspect thereof. That said, there are many positive applications for social media, as referenced in the witnesses' contributions. There are several ways we could enhance the experience of younger and older people in terms of social media if there were proper broadband in certain communities around the country, which is currently a very topical issue. If proper broadband were available, issues such as rural isolation could be addressed through social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Skype and so on. That access is taken for granted in urban environments because we have decent broadband and mobile phone coverage but in many places that is not available. It would be welcome for people in rural communities to be able to use social media to the best of its intended use.

Mobile phones were recently completely banned from schools in France, rather than just during class time, when one is not supposed to use them anyway. A student may not bring a mobile phone to school unless he or she is over 14 and even then, while one is allowed to have it in one's possession, it may not be turned on. What are Ms Devereux's or Ms Seacy's views on this? What would they make of somebody telling a person that they cannot even have a phone in their bag?

**Ms Serena Devereux:** Last year, I did an exchange in France and I saw how they banned phones for students between the ages of 12 to 14 years. That is their middle school equivalent. As soon as they get home, however, they want what they cannot have and banning it will not make a difference. As soon as people get their hands on their phones, it is almost like an addiction because they have missed out on so much. We hear a great deal on the radio about the issue and it is like getting more attracted to the idea of it. Due to the lack of information for parents, it is almost as though they are blaming the platform itself rather than the problem, namely, how people use it. We need more information evenings, as Ms Reynolds and Ms Whelan said, held in the school by students. When it is held by students, then we know the problem is real and not just a concerned teacher trying to make it sound like it is a problem. It would be coming from students who know and deal with it every day. We did a workshop yesterday for Safer Internet Day. It included issues such as sexting, Internet safety and not talking to strangers online. We showed an information video on Webwise that was all about the consequences of sexting or sending a nude image. Afterwards, we discussed the legalities involved with the first and second years. We took them in groups of 12. Not one of the students knew of the legalities. It was a shock to them. These are young people. If young people are shocked, then we can only imagine what parents' reactions would be. It needs to be dealt with in a more serious manner.

**Chairman:** I thank Ms Devereux for her opening statement. It referenced the survey, the statistics from which are quite alarming. I cannot put my finger on a specific statistic but I certainly saw them. For example, 20% of parents supervise their children's online usage, 25% of children have come across harmful material and 11% have received sexual content. Were these

percentages out of 200 or thereabouts, or am I referencing a different survey? I believe it was in Lauren's opening remarks. I am sorry I will not put her on the spot. The point is that I would really love to see statistics because this is how I base my opinions on what works best. I am not the sort of person to think that it is a good thing to take something away from an environment where it could be helpful. I would not be in favour of banning mobile phones completely, but, as Ms Devereux has rightly pointed out, there is an absolute necessity for education, even for the little things. I would not expect there would be very much sexting going on in the schoolyard at break time, but that is not to say that something might not be shared, which can be very damaging to the individual involved. However, I am not sure about banning phones. I tend to concur with Ms Devereux's observation about the use of phones by students in France. I thank her for that.

**Ms Lauren Reynolds:** In the context of statistics, I believe they can be hard to follow on these issues. There are things that people are too embarrassed to admit. Also, it has all become such a casual thing and not just among first and second years. Older students, such as our fifth years, are also not aware of the legalities. It is about raising awareness of the legalities and how serious it is. This will help to prevent it happening and stop it.

**Chairman:** Deputy Neville made a very helpful observation earlier, and Mr. Fearghal Burke also mentioned that he is training teachers. It is very clear that if we can make any recommendations as part of our report to the Houses of the Oireachtas on cybersecurity, it would be to improve the educational standard and teachings that have been provided, not just to students but also to teachers. A module within our universities would be very welcome. The Department of Education and Skills could also look seriously at campaigns in schools, co-ordinating with the likes of CyberSafeIreland or Webwise, or whichever is the most relevant and available organisation within a particular area, and by funding that and giving it purpose. Internet Safety Month is terrific and Safer Internet Day was very helpful. I did some radio interviews on the subject yesterday, as did several other Members of the Oireachtas.

With regard to bringing the matter to the attention of people, in the course of these hearings I distributed a booklet on cyber safety to parents and guardians, of which many members would be aware and which they would also have distributed. I shall give an indication of the take-up in respect of the booklet. There are 52 primary and second-level schools in my constituency. I received more than 7,000 requests for the booklet. I had originally only printed 200. The schools could not get enough of them. The most important aspect from my perspective, as Chairman of this committee, was that we were in the middle of these hearings looking at the Office for Internet Safety, about which nobody knows but which does terrific work. Deputy Rabbitte and I have commented on the fact that the office produced four booklets but that only 40,000 copies were printed, which was pretty useless.

Focusing in on what has been the best practice in the experience of the Comhairle na nÓg, with, for example, the Newbridge College online tutorials, what would be the level of take-up in respect of this sort of initiative? If CyberSafeIreland was to put up a web video tutorial on the rights and law regarding cybersecurity for young people and what they are doing with their boyfriends, girlfriends or friends, how do we promote this to a young person? I do not necessarily mean young people the age of the witnesses, perhaps it would be for those who are a little younger at the age of 12 or 13. How might they engage with that type of communication?

**Ms Tara Trevaskis Hoskin:** Even though we are talking about the negatives of the Internet, social media has quite a positive effect when trying to share information among young people. From our first Wicklow survey to find out the problems, we started off by giving the survey to

each person by hand. We did not get even half the responses as when we did it online, where we received more than 1,000 responses. It is a much easier way of sharing information. It is important that if one makes video tutorials, they should speak on the young person's level. It should not be someone lecturing; it needs to be more open and conversational. This would make the message more accessible. If it is for young people, it should be made by young people or incorporating young people.

**Ms Jody Whelan:** In the context of the McAfee programme we are doing on cyber safety, when we went to Cork, we were given a PowerPoint presentation on cyber safety, online rules and so on. While we do peer mentoring, this tutorial could also be used for parents. There could be days when parents come and we would present this to them. The workshop we did was very interactive. We spoke about personal experiences and things we had heard, so we were able to relate this to each other.

**Chairman:** I want to welcome Deputy Dooley who has joined the meeting. We shall take Deputies Rabbitte, Lawless and Dooley in that order.

**Deputy Anne Rabbitte:** I am going to be very polite and let my colleagues go first because they were here and were holding the fort while I was doing something else. I thank them for that.

**Chairman:** That is fine.

**Deputy James Lawless:** I thank Deputy Rabbitte. I thank the witnesses for their presentations. It was very interesting to hear their well-articulated viewpoints and to hear about the research they have done. As a representative for Kildare, I am especially interested to see Newbridge College represented in force and, of course, our neighbours from Wicklow. I visited Clare and Ennis for the Éamon De Valera commemoration with my colleague, Deputy Dooley, last summer. The witnesses have all done their schools and counties proud today.

I shall now turn to the points articulated in the presentations. Reference was made to the anti-social media. What was said is so true. We see it so many times in the context of conversations when younger or older people are in a family room, such as around the dinner table or watching TV. When one looks around the room, not a single person is talking because everyone is actually on his or her phone. We see this happening so often these days. This particularly live point has been articulated here. People are tuning out of real conversations in order to talk online. They are not actually talking to each other. I understand some of the social media platforms are starting to build in a little endorphin hit. Refreshing and scrolling to see how many likes or comments one has attracted becomes addictive. One keeps going back to the well to see what is there. That is by design rather than accident.

The points regarding Instagram were quite interesting. There is the ideal Instagirl and, indeed, the ideal Instaboy. This has always been an issue. People always talked about glossy magazines before the Internet and about how they presented the idealised human form and depicted happy, glamorous lifestyles to which people aspire but which they can never quite attain. Social media has made this trend even more prevalent and difficult because it affects people one knows and individuals in one's circle. It is difficult to rationalise why others seem to be more happy and successful and to be living more exciting lives but, of course, one does not know what is really going on behind the facade. People of every age struggle with these issues. The witnesses identified young people in this context. They may be even more aware of the issue because they are tuned in to the pitfalls as well as the pluses. Perhaps they are even ahead of

the pack on that one.

A number of delegates have made the point already that the Internet is a really powerful force for good. It is a revolutionary technology and it has changed the world. With regard to education, I am old enough to remember my parents buying the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which comprised 24 volumes. It took pride of place in the sitting-room. It probably seems anathema to the delegation to go out and buy 24 books that would sit there and be the source of knowledge for all time. They were great when I was doing my junior certificate and leaving certificate examinations. These days, however, one finds all the information on one's mobile phone. The Internet has changed the way education works. In my school days, it was all about rote learning and doing three hours involving reading, writing and arithmetic, in addition to learning off all the tables and statistics. One does not really need to do that anymore because it is all about how one analyses information. The mind should now be trained how to analyse a set of facts and how to rationalise and validate information rather than just retrieving it. Again, the Internet is responsible for this need because, in any circumstances, required information can be pulled up in minutes. There is great potential for good.

On the school's theme, I have a question that has arisen many times previously. I am actually chairman of the board of management of a school that has a lot of technology. It uses iPads instead of books. Naas community college is the school. It has been asked many times here and elsewhere whether we should ban phones or have no network connection in schools. Should we put a blocker in a school zone so a signal cannot be obtained anymore, meaning no Internet access? This results in pitfalls where a school is trying to promote gaining access to information or even Schoology or some of the other educational resources. Should there be a limited local network and a bar on the outside world? These are the kinds of questions that need to be asked. I will be interested in hearing the delegates' views. I will ask a batch of questions, if that is acceptable, rather than going to and fro. I acknowledge that we are against the clock.

Questions on parental control were already asked and I accept it is really difficult to answer. I understand and am taking away the really helpful notes on parental filters and what parents can do to be more active in their children's lives. I am a father and my children are active online. I am not sure, however, that they always want their parents looking at what they are doing or seeing what they are saying. I am sure that I, no more than the delegates, recognise a privacy concern. How do we balance the desire for privacy with the need for protection? Should parents be able to log on to see what their children are posting on Instagram or Snapchat or saying in various conversations? They probably should not. There probably needs to be a certain degree of respect, dignity and privacy. On the other hand, there is the question of what happens if something that should not be happening is happening, or if somebody is being abused, manipulated, bullied, harassed or subjected to other such nasty behaviour. I am not quite sure what is the answer. I would be really interested in hearing the delegates' views on that. What is the correct balance? How do we get it right? What kinds of protections are appropriate or otherwise?

The age of digital consent has been touched on in the discussion. One of the delegates said a youth has to be 13 to go on Snapchat but everybody can just fake the age. A child could be ten, 11 or 12 years. Is there such a thing as a right age? Does it depend on maturity or parental control? Is it a question of going a bit younger with parental permission? That is a question we struggle with here.

Those are my thoughts and questions. Should the signal in schools be blocked? If not, how do we get around the problem? How do we strike a balance between privacy and protection? I

would be really interested in hearing all the delegates' views on those issues.

**Ms Jody Whelan:** I will address the question of signals in schools. In our school, we are allowed phones during breaks but every connection to social media is cut off. Therefore, we cannot get Snapchat or anything like that. On the computers we work with for certain classes, the user cannot get YouTube. Unless one is a teacher, one cannot access Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram or anything of that nature. That helps, for our school in any case.

**Deputy James Lawless:** So the teachers have the Internet but the pupils do not.

**Ms Jody Whelan:** We do not.

**Mr. Fearghal Burke:** I think you give what you get. If the rules are too strict, people will break them. They will want to go against them. One cannot be too lenient either. We were talking yesterday about all aspects of life. If there is a balance between leniency and strictness, the right things should happen and the right things will take place.

**Ms Tara Trevaskis Hoskin:** What the Deputy said about privacy is really important, especially in the context of teenagers and their parents. Teenagers have to be trusted to a certain level but it is really important to inform them beforehand so they will know they will have supports in place if something goes wrong, and that they will have been given the tools to be safe online rather than having to look over their shoulder.

**Ms Lauren Reynolds:** On phones in schools, our school brought in a rule stipulating first years were not allowed smartphones but that they could have a typical old "Blokia". This gave the kids the ability to remain as kids. They do not have the stress of someone taking a photo or video of them. There is another school locally that banned phones altogether. In this regard, there was more of a problem with the parents than the students themselves because the parents asked what would happen if they needed to contact their children. I believe that the blocking of smartphones was very beneficial but not the blocking of phones in general. A phone that is not a smartphone can still be used to make contact with someone although it has no access to social media or the Internet.

**Ms Muireann Whelan:** On the second question, if parents were informed properly, through workshops or otherwise, they could go online and monitor kids by following them or being friends with them. A young person will almost second-guess herself if she believes her mother or, perhaps, nanny will see what is being posted. She will be more respectful towards herself and others because she will be monitored. A great balance could be struck between both elements.

**Chairman:** I am sorry to interrupt the responses to Deputy Lawless. How can apps that are closed, such as Snapchat, be monitored?

**Ms Muireann Whelan:** On Snapchat, parents could be friends with their child. Parents might not get all the children's Snapchat posts individually. There are many Snapchat stories with pictures of people who do not want to be filmed or photographed. A parent could see such a story and tell her child to take it down because she does not want to see her child bullying someone. A youth would be more respectful if his or her parents were on the same page. I refer to where parents understand technology and are able to socialise with their children on social media. It is beneficial for parents to see what their children are up to and to know they can trust them even if they are not with them.

**Ms Lauren Reynolds:** As Ms Muireann Whelan said, yesterday in our workshops for first and second years we very much stressed what we consider to be the “granny rule”, which would involve them considering whether they would want their grandmothers or even parents to see what they are posting or the pictures they are sending. If they would be mortified, there is probably a reason and this should indicate to them that they probably should not be posting or sending the picture in the first place. Perhaps knowing what one’s parents would think if they saw the picture would draw attention to the fact that it might not be so appropriate.

**Ms Tara Trevaskis Hoskin:** There is a problem with monitoring because it is not that hard to block one’s parents or make sure they do not see something. There are ways around it so they can never see anything one posts. Therefore, it is really important to give children and young people the tools to know what they are doing will hurt someone else’s feelings or that a post might be dangerous. It is more important for us to have those tools and know the position in our own heads because, in all fairness, if there is something one does not want someone to see, it is not that hard to hide it.

**Mr. Fearghal Burke:** If one stands in someone else’s shoes, one knows not to do it. We produced a movie on this. I believe it was called “A Mile in Shoes” but I cannot remember the exact title. It examines various aspects of society and it puts people who bully others because they have certain features or qualities into the others’ shoes so they will see what it is like for them. After that, nothing else happens to the victims and there is no more bullying. Other people’s perspectives should be considered before doing something. It is a matter of thinking about what they would think.

**Deputy James Lawless:** I must leave for the big Chamber next door. Well done to the delegates.

**Chairman:** We will conclude after Deputy Dooley.

**Deputy Timmy Dooley:** I thank the Chairman for facilitating me. I am not a member of the committee, but I was made aware that two of my constituents were here. I was really impressed to see them on television last night. As they did an excellent job, I had better pull up my socks, as it seems that there is competition coming down the track.

I was delayed in getting here because I was on the “Today with Sean O’Rourke” radio programme to speak about broadband, or rather the lack of it, in rural areas. These issues are intermixed in the development of technologies and providing access to high speed broadband. What the delegates have provided for us is very helpful. We are charged with responsibility for making laws that will attempt to regulate how technologies are rolled out and people behave when using them and it is a struggle for us. We are used to dealing with the old issues of law and order, physical evidence, transport, etc. As all of this is dealt with in a cyber environment, it is much harder to understand.

From the presentation I see that the delegates, as a group, are developing and creating an environment in which responsible behaviour will be the guide, rather than attempting to create laws to try to regulate activities. Just because one can do certain things with technology does not mean that one should do them. Someone can drive a car at 150 mph along a road, but he or she should not do so because it would put lives in danger. We should have that mindset in the use of technology. I liked what the delegates said about not necessarily restricting access to phones in school but ensuring there was a responsible approach to what one could do with one. It is a tool. Parents may need to contact their children, or they may need to obtain information.



There should, however, be some restrictions in accessing social media, which would be very good.

I compliment the delegates on the approach they are taking. It is very clear that if tech companies or social media platforms were forced to provide access for parents or the authorities, as sure as night follows day, two kids in a garage would create another app and model to which everybody would migrate. The ways around technology far surpass that approach. Whatever we do has to empower social responsibility, which was previously taught in school. It is now harder because of all of the technologies available. My daughter is in transition year and has just been involved in a project to make a video on online bullying. It concerns overweight children and how their images can be doctored which can lead to them being laughed at and they can end up isolated as a result. My daughter's project is using technology in a positive way. She texted me recently to ask me to share it. This shows how technology can be used in a good way, in this case by showing how someone's behaviour, even if he or she is being jocose, can have a profound affect on the life of the person being bullied.

I have listened very carefully to what the delegates said. It should be helpful to us in addressing the big issue.

The digital age of consent should be explored further. We can put much greater pressure on the big social media platforms in that regard. There are apps for communication, but the operators of big social media apps have vast amounts of money. They are tracking everything a person does online, with the aim of eventually marketing to them directly at a later stage. If they capture a person at 12 or 13 years of age, they hope to track everything he or she will do for his or her entire life and sell things to him or her along the way. The aim is not to facilitate chats with friends. From a regulatory point of view, we have to look at ways in which we can force them to make it harder for people who wish to use these platforms for nefarious purposes or reasons. It is not in any way to inhibit the normal banter that goes on between young people.

**Deputy Anne Rabbitte:** I was really impressed by the submissions the delegates sent to the joint committee which has spent the past few months talking to various guests about this issue. We need to hear the voices of delegates. As Deputy Timmy Dooley said, the process is very informative.

Mr. Burke used the word "trust". Ms Hoskin used the word "balance". I really like the idea of the granny rule which Ms Reynolds discussed. It sounds so simple, but-----

**Deputy Timmy Dooley:** We could all use a bit of it in some of the social media.

**Deputy Anne Rabbitte:** The Deputy spoke about social responsibility. One of the most important tools is compassion. In the delegates' presentation it was mentioned that the subject could be incorporated into social, personal and health education, SPHE, classes. As legislators, we want to bring what we hear to a meaningful level in order that it can be introduced in law. That might mean that we have to discuss the issue at the Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs or with the Department of Education and Skills to see if it should be part of the curriculum and have a platform. I very much advocate for the appointment of a digital safety commissioner who would help to protect everybody online. However, we might be waiting some time for that measure to be enforced. Perhaps, based on how Deputy Timmy Dooley is approaching the issue, it might not take too long, but sometimes things take a long time to come to fruition. However, as we cannot afford to wait around, we have to find ways to empower schools and young people. The delegates are a classic example that empowerment. They are

also empowering the younger classes coming through and creating a forum in which to have a conversation and provide knowledge. They are leaders for many others who are watching the proceedings of the committee this morning, showing how it can be done. Everyone can take ownership and control within his or her own school. The report was carried out by Comhairle na nÓg. I really liked how it carried out its surveys by going out and interviewing people. That helps to provide the data we, as politicians, need to support the necessary changes.

The maturity of the content and the professional quality of the presentations are on a par with those made by everyone else who has come before us in the past few weeks. They are professionals and this is what they do. The delegates are students and they reached that high level. The presentations were excellent and will be up on the Oireachtas website later when people will be able to see them. The Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, ISPCC, has already been tweeting about the presentations we have heard. What the delegates are doing has been noticed and is invaluable and I have to praise them for it. If they were in our position, what would they ask us to do, as legislators? I am hung up on the idea of having a digital safety commissioner, but what would they suggest? Does Ms Reynolds have suggestions for me, for example, on monitoring and how students are supported in education? Some 40,000 books were provided, but the delegates probably did not get them in their schools. They are fantastic books, but 40,000 is not enough to have one for everyone in the audience. I received one and it is fabulous. Everybody, particularly in first year, should get one at school. What would the delegates suggest?

**Ms Lauren Reynolds:** We want to see a focus on education. Ms Whelan and I are involved with an organisation which provides kits in SPHE classes. They are really beneficial, but reaching out to every school and getting them in place across the country, rather than in just a select few, is important. This issue does not affect just a select few; it affects everyone. They should be brought to the Department of Education and Skills in order that the issue can be incorporated into SPHE classes. Children should be taught how to use them properly from a young age. If someone is informed from the start, it will prevent problems in the future.

**Ms Tara Trevaskis Hoskin:** I agree with Ms Reynolds when she says education is the key to getting the information out. Children should be informed before they reach the age of 14 or 15 years when they do not want to have their parents breathing down their necks.

**Deputy Anne Rabbitte:** Are the delegates telling me that, while there is a place for intervention programmes in secondary schools, we should be going into national schools with them?

**Ms Tara Trevaskis Hoskin:** Yes, definitely.

**Deputy Anne Rabbitte:** Are all of the delegates in agreement?

**Ms Tara Trevaskis Hoskin:** On matters such as cyberbullying, it is really important that everybody educate himself or herself. It should not just be about someone who is being bullied and a bully. Everybody should play a part and the authorities should be more informed about what happens online.

**Mr. Fearghal Burke:** There is no time like the present and there are positives. We need to tidy the negatives, as it is our responsibility because the Internet is ours. We need to control what is happening on it and what is to be done about it.

**Deputy Anne Rabbitte:** That is the education piece and it involves engaging young persons, but how do we bring parents on board? I am no different from all of the other speakers.

Believe it or not, but I have three teenagers - one in transition year, one in second year and one in sixth class - and have been really hit by this issue. I keep hearing the word “trust” and it is correct. I always hear the phrase, “Trust me mam.” How do we bring parents on board?

**Deputy Timmy Dooley:** We have all tried it.

**Deputy Anne Rabbitte:** Where do we provide a platform for parents to have that conversation or be reassured?

**Mr. Fearghal Burke:** It can happen in community classes. Parents want to know about this issue and how it affects their children. As they want to be involved, give them something in which they can be involved through a class.

**Deputy Anne Rabbitte:** Could it be spearheaded through the transition year programme, or has it been thought through?

**Ms Muireann Whelan:** I almost feel as if transition year could be too late. The problem is technology is being used by children who are younger. One can now see nine-year-olds with smartphones.

**Ms Serena Devereux:** Even younger.

**Ms Muireann Whelan:** Perhaps there might be information nights before the start of first year. Our school had an introduction night prior to the start of first year. Perhaps it might involve parents and sixth year students.

**Ms Serena Devereux:** Students could take part.

**Chairman:** The Deputy has more parental experience than I do, but it is my observation that the primary school network is tighter in terms of parental involvement. Clearly, teenagers are more independent and go to school on their own, etc. Having listened to the suggestions made, primary school would be the avenue to take in commencing the process of educating parents.

**Deputy Anne Rabbitte:** How then would we harness the experiences of children in secondary school? That is what I am trying to tease out. Do we need those involved in transition year to run it and go to national schools to explain the process involved? Do they need to be part of open nights for first year students, as the delegates have said? Where is the role for students, as they use the tools?

**Mr. Fearghal Burke:** Our programme also involves teaching people how to teach. We can teach peers how to teach others, with the network expanding from there, meaning that more people will know how to teach it. More people will become informed, which would be a good process.

**Deputy Timmy Dooley:** Perhaps it is not rocket science as we seem to think. In a different generation parents had to deal with the advent of drink, drugs and other issues that had the potential to impact negatively on children. It is still a battle to address the issue of alcohol as some have the view that drugs are bad and drink is good. At what age do young people start to drink? The law indicates that a person must be 18 years, but there is scarcely a child who reaches 18 before he or she has had some interaction with drink. There is an ongoing debate between parents and kids. We must almost use the same channels and methodologies in dealing with this matter. Is a young person allowed to go to a house party? His or her parents might not be sure as they do not know the other parents. Will they be in the house and who else is going to the

party? These are all issues, but we have managed to reach some compromise between parents and kids. We almost need to use the same common sense approach in dealing with this issue.

**Chairman:** I will draw our conversation to a conclusion as we are way over time. I am aware that the delegates from Newbridge, in particular, are on the clock.

**Senator Máire Devine:** I have one observation to make. I am sorry for being in and out. Two weeks ago a woman came to discuss the issue of housing. She had an 18-month-old baby who was chewing on an iPhone. She turned to me and said the baby was mad about the iPhone and that she was getting her an iPad.

**Deputy Anne Rabbitte:** That is scary.

**Senator Máire Devine:** It is. Every kid we see is chewing on an iPhone. It is also being used as a teething ring.

**Chairman:** My four-year-old had an iPad, although he was not able to use it. It has become an integral part of his education. We will take a final comment from each of the delegates before drawing the meeting to a conclusion.

**Mr. Fearghal Burke:** I saw my two-year-old cousin watching kids' videos on YouTube on an iPad. What if she came across the wrong video online? Primary schools should be a main target. We should show parents that kids can come across the wrong videos and that it is not a simple issue with which to deal.

**Ms Jody Whelan:** I am not sure if everybody is aware, but on YouTube and Netflix, on which kids may watch educational videos, there is the facility of a parental lock. Netflix has a kids' section out of which they cannot get. It is the same on YouTube. If people were more aware of the parental lock facility, it would help.

**Ms Muireann Whelan:** I was in a restaurant the other night and when a baby started to cry, the mother or the father just handed it an iPad and put on a show. They thought they were fine and could have a nice dinner and enjoy themselves. I say this a lot, but it takes the social from social media. People are quiet if we give them technology.

**Ms Lauren Reynolds:** I am 17 years old and it is maddening to think technology has come so far in the past few years. We had LeapPads back in the day, a tablet with no access to the Internet. I had a Dora laptop on which I could only play games. There was no access to the Internet. I am sure there are kids' toys available, but they are being given access to technology on which they can access dangerous things.

**Senator Máire Devine:** There is nothing like putting them in front of the washing machine to watch the spin cycle.

**Chairman:** Good luck with that.

I thank the delegates for their contributions to our hearings on the issue of cybersecurity. Unusually, I will name all of my colleagues who have taken the time to attend, quite a number of whom are not members of the committee. My colleague and the Vice Chairman, Senator Joan Freeman, could not make it and sent her apologies, as did another member, Senator Catherine Noone. Deputy Kathleen Funchion is unwell and also could not make it. Senator Máire Devine has been present throughout the morning but has had to step out. Senator Martin Conway and Deputy Tom Neville were present, while Deputy Sean Sherlock commenced his

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contribution. Deputies Timmy Dooley, James Lawless and Anne Rabbitte have also been present. On behalf of all of my colleagues from both Houses of the Oireachtas, I sincerely thank the delegates for their attendance, contributions and answering all of the questions asked. I thank Lauren, Muireann, Serena, Isabel, Tara, Jade, Jody, Fearghal and the attendees in the Visitors Gallery from Newbridge and Comhairle na nÓg. They include Ms Kathryn Scully and Ms Dorothee Reynolds and, from Comhairle na nÓg, Mr. Brian McManus, Mr. Dermot O'Brien, Mr. Olive McGovern and Ms Karyn Farrell.

I know that our guests will have a quick tour of the Houses of the Oireachtas. Regrettably, Leinster House is closed, but there is still much to see. There will also be a reception with tea, coffee and sandwiches for them.

The joint committee adjourned at 11.50 a.m. until 9.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 21 February 2018.