



**W**elcome to Barnardos' first issue of *ChildLinks* for 2008, which explores the topic 'Children & the Internet'. In many ways the Internet and the associated technologies such as mobile phones, social networking sites, instant messaging, games consoles etc. have been enmeshed in children's lives. For the most part this is positive in terms of information, play, learning, communications and more. However, the Internet also has serious downsides for children.

The issue of children and harmful content on the Internet is explored in an article from Hotline.ie. Another insight into harmful use of the Internet is included in 'Child Abusive Images on the Internet & Operation Ore', which presents a very revealing and disturbing account of child pornography from the perspective of a child protection investigator in the UK.

Cyberbullying is another downside of the Internet. It is a term often misunderstood, feared by parents and

# Editorial

The range of articles presented in this issue of *ChildLinks* illustrate both the benefits and the dangers in relation to children and the Internet.

The first article from Barnardos focuses on the use of the Internet and related technologies as a creative and therapeutic tool in working with children. Another article from the NCH in the UK presents insights gained from their research into the use of technologies with children with special needs. The common learning from both Barnardos and the NCH is that, while childcare workers and social workers may not be the most proficient in their use of computers/new technologies, where staff have been trained and have the necessary supports in place, children's quality of life and their development can be enhanced through the use of the Internet and related technologies.

about which there is little research in Ireland. Dr. Stephen Minton's article explores the forms of cyberbullying and presents international research findings as well as strategies for dealing with it. The final article from the NCTE focuses on Internet Safety skills. It is a truism to say that our children are way ahead of their parents in this area of life and education for both parents and children in Internet safety skills has a vital role to play.

Finally, the recent establishment of the Office for Internet Safety by the Minister for Justice Brian Lenihan is to be welcomed. However, the decision to set up the accompanying Internet Safety Advisory Council as an advisory body on a non-statutory basis is disappointing. It is imperative that all of the necessary legislative back-up is in place to ensure that, as far as possible, children are protected in this fast changing Internet world.

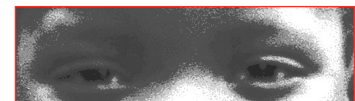
**Anne Conroy** Editor



Adapted from *Children and Technology: A Tool for Child Development* by ANGELA CANAVAN CORR

# The potential of ICT & the Internet in childcare services

In 2000, Barnardos' team in Dun Laoghaire decided to introduce ICT (Information and Communications Technology) into its direct work with children. The resulting project was evaluated and the many lessons learned shared in the publication *Paint, Sand and Computers*. It clearly demonstrated the many positive benefits of using ICT to children, including improved emotional development, increased language and literacy development, improved cognitive skills and general knowledge and increased self esteem. In 2003, another ICT project was piloted by Barnardos, this time in Galway City. *Computer Characters* aimed to increase and improve access to and use of ICT as a tool for learning by disadvantaged children and families. Participation of the children and their families in the design, operation and evaluation of the project was an integral part of the project. The evaluation of *Computer Characters* showed positive outcomes for participants in terms of skills development and enjoyment.



Building on the experience of running these two projects, Barnardos produced *Children and Technology: a tool for child development*. It aims to provide assistance to those who wish to introduce ICT into their services. The book provides information on a range of topics from choosing hardware and software to ergonomics and Internet safety. It also, through many case studies and examples, provides ideas and practical advice on the implementation of ICT into the learning environment.

## ICT AS A CHILD DEVELOPMENT TOOL

There are a number of reasons why ICT matters in childcare services. First, ICT already has an effect on the people and environments that surround young children's learning. Furthermore, these technologies offer new opportunities to strengthen many aspects of childcare practice. There is also support and interest across the whole education sector for the development and integration of ICT into education policy, curriculum, and practice.

There are a number of guiding principles surrounding the use of ICT in childcare services:

- **Participation**, where children are actively involved in the design of their own learning, leads to a greater sense of ownership and belonging and enhances self esteem.
- **Relationships and interactions** lie at the heart of all learning experiences including those involving ICT.
- **Inclusion** is promoted through a rich and varied information and communications technology environment.
- **All children can access** a range of appropriate information and communications technology within their childcare setting.

ICT use in childcare services does not simply mean 'children using computers'. Developmental impact appears to be greatest when the computer is used as a support to active learning, not as an end goal in and of itself. ICT represents another resource that practitioners can draw on to support their practice and to empower children to learn and grow. Research indicates that, when appropriately used, ICT can enhance children's learning and encourage purposeful and exploratory play, collaboration, co-operation, discussion, creativity, problem solving, risk taking and flexible thinking. ICT can be used with a wide range of age groups and settings, for example in an integrated pre-school or an after-school environment. It can be used with children in a one-to-one context where children are being counselled and supported by a practitioner.

THE FOLLOWING TABLE ILLUSTRATES DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY ICT:

Creative Development	Physical Development	Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Problem Solving and Mathematical Development	Knowledge and Understanding of the World
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Imaginative play</li> <li>■ Musical development</li> <li>■ Construction</li> <li>■ Painting and drawing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Gross motor skills</li> <li>■ Fine motor skills</li> <li>■ Keeping Healthy</li> <li>■ Communication, language &amp; literacy</li> <li>■ Encouraging conversation</li> <li>■ Developing reading skills</li> <li>■ Developing writing skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Building self esteem</li> <li>■ Promoting confidence</li> <li>■ Developing social skills</li> <li>■ Promoting equal opportunity</li> <li>■ Affirming diversity</li> <li>■ Promoting inclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Role play</li> <li>■ Problem solving</li> <li>■ Linking mathematics to other learning experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Everyday life</li> <li>■ Practical skill building</li> <li>■ Understanding of the world</li> <li>■ Preparation for the future</li> </ul>

## THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

A group of 10 pre-schoolers are excited. It is Jamie's fourth birthday and there is a lot of work to be done. Mary, Zoë and John are making cakes from a recipe they found on the Internet. Over at the computer Ratika and Bill are making a banner that says 'Happy Birthday Jamie'. Now they are making it beautiful by painting it in the art corner. Fran and Juan are making a birthday card on the computer. They have just started to learn English so are helped along by the software that speaks the words they type. The other children are busy looking through boxes of audio tapes trying to decide what music to play for the party. Two of this group decide to tape their own rendition of 'Happy Birthday' to play for Jamie later on. Finally Sophia grabs the digital camera to ensure all the excitement is captured forever!



**The above scene in a pre-school for 3–4 year olds demonstrates the integration of ICT of all types into the learning environment.**

Most experts agree that the use of ICT in the childcare setting must not be a goal unto itself. The purpose of technology should be to expand, enrich, individualise and extend the overall curriculum. Technology should be seamlessly integrated into the physical learning environment similar to other activities, for example, the water area, the home area and the computer area, and treated with the same emphasis as any other material available in the learning space. Children should be offered a choice of activity and materials and the computer should be just one of the things offered along with paint, sand etc.

### THE ROLE OF THE PRACTITIONER

Practitioners must understand the ways in which children learn and how ICT can support this. Staff members who have developed knowledge of individual children and who are sensitive

to their needs will be able to intervene and support their learning with ICT. This support may take many forms, including setting up the ICT to encourage exploration and co-operation; encouraging turn-taking and being aware of others' needs and choices; and helping children to select appropriate levels and challenges based on individual abilities and interests.

A less successful approach is where the practitioner views the computer in isolation to the other materials, organises a specified time for each child and keeps track of their length of time on the computer.

A well informed practitioner can use ICT to enhance present learning, to support and extend children's development, to assist children to generalise concepts and skills and to engage children in self-directed learning. Guided interaction offers assistance while at the same time promoting choice and independence.

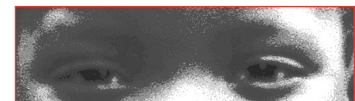
### PAUL'S STORY

Four-year-old Paul attends the Barnardos pre-school in Loughlinstown Family Centre. He has been using the computer as part of his pre-school routine for over a year. His first introduction was in a small group setting under close supervision of the pre-school worker, but he quickly moved to independently using the computer and only seeking help should a difficulty arise. With the High/Scope approach, Paul plans his activities, carries out his chosen tasks and reviews what he has done. Paul chooses from a wide range of activities from sand play to building blocks and at least twice a week Paul will choose to 'do the computer'. His favourite CD-ROM is 'Reader Rabbit Toddler'. This programme has introduced Paul to the alphabet, counting to five, recognising shapes, colours and matching objects. It also introduces Paul to memory games, songs, rhymes, and music. While playing this game, Paul can choose to use the mouse and the pre-school worker comments, 'Paul

has improved his eye/hand communication over the past year. He often has difficulty focusing on one task and carrying it out to completion. He can spend up to 20 minutes using the computer, which has helped improve his attention levels'. Paul enjoys the graphics and fun-filled characters and will describe the game and its characters with enthusiasm. Paul likes to use the computer on his own or with a friend. There is often a gathering of up to five children at the computer at one time and Paul has learned to be patient, wait his turn and share with his friends. Staff have noticed very positive benefits to Paul. The computer activities have played a significant role in developing vocabulary, listening skills and hand/eye co-ordination. It has also reinforced his knowledge of colours, numbers and letters. Paul's use of the computer has laid the foundation for further development in this area and has helped him prepare for school.

### THE DOS AND DON'TS OF INTEGRATING COMPUTERS INTO A PLAY SPACE

- Technology should be located in the play space, not in computer labs.
- It is important to view the computer as another tool – its use should not be based on reward or punishment, but as an integral part of the curriculum.
- Have at least two chairs placed at the computer to encourage co-operative learning. Computers should facilitate children working in pairs, small groups and one-to-one.
- Use technology to enrich the curriculum content and other classroom activities. For example, children might use the computer to make a sign for the 'restaurant' in their dramatic play area or they might use a piece of software to make music and play back during some other activity.
- Do not sacrifice the basics such as art materials, blocks, books, playdough etc. for ICT.
- Technology should be fully accessible to all children.
- Technology should be offered as a choice to children.
- Emphasis should be on independence, problem solving and exploration.
- The environment should be prepared in advance.



## PROMOTING INCLUSION

Cookie Bytes was the name chosen by one group of 3–4 year olds who participated in the Computer Characters project. The project was run in association with the link group Galway Refugee Support Group. The group was chosen on the basis that children living with their families in asylum seekers' accommodation are effectively cut off from normal life in the city, which results in low energy and lack of participation in social activity. It was felt that the project could offer some stimulation and social skills development to the children who had neither experience nor previous access to computers. They were from different ethnic backgrounds including Nigeria, Croatia, Congo and Russia. The group was trained in the basics of using a computer and undertook a group project called the

'Greeting Project'. The children took photos of themselves and their families. Their families translated a series of greetings from English into their native languages and these were compiled onto a display with information and maps from their home country. The children gained many positive outcomes during this project. They developed skills in using hardware and software. It also gave participants an opportunity to socialise, play with others and develop many social skills including sharing and taking turns. The participatory approach where children selected their own games and software helped them to develop confidence. Parents were very positive about the project and indicated that their children enjoyed the project.

## SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

One very special benefit of technology is the many ways in which it can level the playing field for children with additional needs by supporting them in their efforts to communicate, explore, play independently or communicate with their peers. Children with learning differences, hearing or visual impairment, developmental delay or physical challenges might have some difficulty in using the technology but these can be overcome by choosing appropriate software or by using a few adaptive aids. These products range from low-tech toys and simple switches to high-tech systems capable of managing complex environments. Practitioners must evaluate what kind of adaptive aids are required to meet the needs of the children in their care.

### Some Common Aids

The following aids are generally available and used to make computers more accessible to children of all ages:

- Screen magnifiers – to enlarge images.
- Easy-to-use mouse that assists children with poor motor skills and dexterity difficulties.
- Adapted keyboards – an alternative for children who find the conventional keyboard difficult to use.
- Touch screen, switches and pointing devices – to help children who have difficulty using a mouse or keyboard.
- Text-to-speech tools – enables the computer to read aloud any onscreen text. This feature is available through the website [www.readplease.com](http://www.readplease.com).
- Talking word processors – help children with literacy issues.
- Talking calculators are also a useful tool for children with literacy difficulties or visual impairment.

While each type of difficulty may require one or more adaptations to make computer use easier, these solutions aren't necessarily complicated or expensive.

### Accessibility Options

Practitioners should check out the accessibility options on their computers.

- Both Apple Mac and Microsoft include features that allow the child to regulate the clicking speed of the mouse and increase the size of navigation icons and cursors.
- They also have sound cues that notify the user when a task is completed.
- Some operating systems offer text to speech features which are very helpful for children with visual impairment or learning difficulties.
- Some word processors have 'word completion' options. This enables the computer to finish typing words and phrases which greatly speeds up the writing process.

### More Specialised Aids for Children with Additional Needs

The above section dealt with some of the more general and common 'low-tech' aids that can be used to assist children with additional needs use technology more effectively. There is a large number of 'high-tech' hardware and software systems now available to support people with specific needs, some representing a significant investment. If you are considering investing in assistive technology you should take time to plan this investment properly. The following offers a list of questions you should ask yourself to help you choose specialised equipment:

### Questions to ask when choosing Specialist Equipment

- What are the specific needs/challenges of the child/children?
- What are the strengths of the child/children?
- How interested or skilled are they now at using technology?
- How easy is it to learn about and operate the technology?
- How reliable is the technology?
- Does it need to work with other technologies?
- Is it compatible with existing technology?
- What technical support is available?
- Is the supplier reputable?



## THE INTERNET

Four-year-old Jason used the Internet to find out about owls. He navigated himself to a site that showed a live link to an owl's nest and then spent an hour watching owl babies being fed and cared for by parent owls. He astounded nursery staff by managing the whole process himself, not least because he was not yet able to read conventional print. 'Jason had made sense of the symbols he encountered because he was engaged in a purposeful activity using a medium he enjoyed working with'. This example of owl watching shows some uses of the Internet can encourage independence in learning and can develop an awareness of how to solve problems and begin to manage tasks with less adult support, but such applications need to be chosen with care.

The Internet is here to stay and despite the potential known and unknown dangers of going 'online', this technology can be a very useful tool in developing literacy, cognitive, communication and social skills. Used with care, it can also be a very useful problem solving tool. Practitioners should, however, be aware of the risks and take the necessary steps to keep the children in their care safe.

## PETER'S STORY

Peter is eleven and has been attending a family support service in a large town in rural Ireland for a number of years. His mother and father are separated and his father lives in England. He attends a family support service three times per week after school and participates in group and one-to-one counselling. Under the supervision of his family support worker Sinéad, Peter has enjoyed a weekly conversation with his father via email which he looks forward to and he treasures this interaction each week. Over a year ago, Peter was diagnosed with a severe form of epilepsy which was a huge blow.

This was very difficult for someone already very vulnerable. Peter felt isolated and lonely. After a number of months of counseling, Sinéad sourced an 'Epilepsy Discussion Forum' on the Internet. This forum is aimed specifically at young people of Peter's age. Peter has started to link into this group and it has helped him immensely in his ability to deal with his condition.

## INTERNET SAFETY

The Internet is not controlled by any one organisation and as a result it poses risks to those who use it, especially young children.

### Risks of the Internet

**Exposure to inappropriate material** – a child may be exposed to inappropriate material that is sexual, hateful, or violent in nature, or encourages activities that are dangerous or illegal.

**Physical molestation** – a child might provide information or

arrange an encounter that could risk his or her safety or the safety of the family members. In some cases child molesters have used children's chat areas, email and instant messages to gain a child's confidence and then arrange a face-to-face meeting.

**Harassment and bullying** – a child might encounter messages via chat, email, or their mobile phone that are demeaning, harassing or belligerent. There is clear evidence that cyberbullying, where children are targeted and harassed by peers, is becoming a worrying problem and children as young as nine or ten are victims of this malicious communication.

**Viruses and hackers** – a child could download a file containing a virus that could damage the computer or increase the risk of a hacker gaining remote access to the computer.

### Reducing the Risks

#### Location of Computer

If a childcare service is making the Internet accessible to children, the computer should be located in an open space with the monitor clearly visible to the practitioner.

#### Netiquette

Netiquette refers to Internet etiquette and the appropriate behaviour of Internet users. In the context of a childcare service, the supervisors of netiquette are the practitioners who have the role of monitoring, protecting and guiding children during online use.

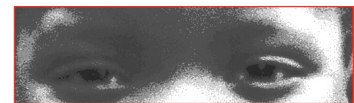
#### Parental Permission

It is very important that parents are fully informed about how the Internet is used as a learning tool. If the Internet is available in a childcare service a comprehensive policy for acceptable use should be developed in partnership with parents. This written document should clearly outline the rights and responsibilities of all parties. This code of conduct should be agreed and 'signed off' by all appropriate parties. The penalties for breach of the code should be stated clearly to all those involved.

#### The Role of the Practitioner

The role of the practitioner includes the following:

- Installing appropriate blocking and filtering software. This software is not completely foolproof but helps greatly in reducing the risk of access to undesirable material. It will also help restrict entry to undesirable forums, discussions, and bulletin boards. Ensure this software is up to date.
- Controlling the sites children have access to – ensuring they are age and stage appropriate.
- Checking the 'history files' for suitability of sites and chat rooms.
- Spending time with children online. Ask them to tell you of their favourite online connections.
- Directly supervising chat room use.
- Maintaining access to all email accounts.
- Very close monitoring of sites visited.
- Preventing email attachments from unsolicited or unknown sources being opened.



- Encouraging children to report any incidents of Internet bullying.
- Talking to children about the risks and particularly issues surrounding Internet bullying.
- Creating a list of 'favourite sites' which are safe and appropriate.
- Prohibiting registration or the signing of visitors' books at websites without permission.

## Filtering Software

There are many different filtering systems available and practitioners should research the best to suit their needs.

Features of this type of software include:

- The facility to review activity logs and produce activity reports.
- The facility to set up individual accounts for each child and monitor each one.
- Time management features where the time spent online is restricted.
- A block on the transmission of personal information.
- A block on access to applications you don't want children to have access to.
- Restrictive access to certain online activities such as chat rooms, instant messaging, etc.

## Setting out Rules and Guidelines

- Ensure that children choose passwords that are difficult to identify by third parties.
- Ensure that these passwords are changed regularly.
- Agree with children not to disclose personal information online.
- Agree with children that they never meet an online friend without permission.
- Agree with children never to respond to messages.
- Agree with children to never upload pictures of themselves to unknown sources.
- Agree with children never to respond to messages or bulletin board postings that are suggestive, obscene or harassing.

## ZACH'S STORY

Eleven-year-old Zach lives with his parents and his sister Gillian. Zach has mild Asperger's Syndrome. The computer has been a lifeline for him. Because the computer is non-threatening and consistent and gives Zach control, it has helped his social and communication skills enormously. Recently Zach signed up to a very well-known social networking site and has enjoyed the opportunity to talk to friends online. However, the dangers associated with this type of website only became apparent when his sister Gillian got a very nasty message supposedly from Zach. It transpires that Zach was using a password that was easily guessed by some of his peers – the name of his dog. Someone else logged onto the website in his name and posted very harmful messages including racist remarks causing untold damage to many young people, including Zach.

## MAKING YOUR OWN WEBSITES – A WORD OF WARNING

- If you are producing a website for your childcare service or if children are producing their own website be very careful not to include any personal information relating to the children in your care – addresses, telephone numbers, etc.
- The inclusion of a portrait style photograph or a small group photograph should be avoided – use large group photographs if necessary.
- Always obtain parental permission for any photographs that appear on the website.

## EVALUATING WEBSITES FOR CHILDREN

There are literally millions of websites on the World Wide Web. Practitioners should develop and evaluate the resources to determine their value and suitability for the children in their care:

### Is the author of the site stated?

- Is the site out-of-date or has it not been updated for some time?
- How good is the site navigation?
- Is the site badly presented or difficult to use (are spellings incorrect, text poorly written)?
- Is the site heavily populated with advertising (pop-ups, banner ads)?
- Is the site over-commercial?
- What kind of learning is being promoted using the website?

## CONCLUSION

Children's development is enhanced by participation, where children are actively involved in the design of their own learning. This leads to a greater sense of ownership and belonging and enhances self esteem. Practitioners should understand the different ways in which children learn and how ICT can contribute to this learning if used effectively. A rich variety of ICT resources can be used to support children's development though many different activities, for example used with proper supervision the Internet can be an invaluable learning tool. The potential of ICT in childcare services is far-reaching and ever changing. Practitioners must be open to constantly learning about new resources and approaches as well as keeping up to date on the risks and challenges.

## RESOURCES

Brady, B. (2004) *Computer Characters*. Barnardos' Participatory IT project for Children, Galway, Barnardos Child & Family Research and Policy Unit, Galway

Canavan Corr, A. (2006) *Children and Technology: a tool for child development*, Barnardos' National Children's Resource Centre, Dublin.

Canavan, A. (2004) *Paint, Sand and Computers, A Review of Barnardos' Children and Technology Programme* Barnardos' National Children's Resource Centre, Dublin.

These books are available from Barnardos' Training and Resource Service, contact [resources@barnardos.ie](mailto:resources@barnardos.ie) or phone 01 4549699



# HOW TRUTH S

## Tackling the issue of children & harmful content on the Internet

**PAUL DURRANT & JANE BOULTON**

Hotline.ie, Internet Service Providers  
Association of Ireland

*'I think it's fair to say that personal computers have become the most empowering tool we've ever created. They're tools of communication, they're tools of creativity, and they can be shaped by their user.'*

Bill Gates, Founder of Microsoft

It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the advent of the Internet has changed the shape of human civilisation across the globe. It has radically changed the way we live our

whole lives, from the way we work, to the way we entertain ourselves, right down to the fundamental way in which we communicate with each other. The Internet has been credited with revolutionising business, education and entertainment, by bridging physical distance in order to bring individuals, organisations and groups closer together. The Internet is generally a positive innovation, harnessed to perform useful or beneficial activities. However, as with all human enterprise, the Internet can be used for the bad as well as the good. Fortunately, the overwhelming majority of content on the Internet is benign but the fact that the bad exists at all is a cause for extreme concern for many, especially when it is considered alongside the issue of child welfare and child safety on the Internet.



At present, there seems to be a particular focus on children and the Internet, particularly in the media. It is a 'hot' topic for journalists and politicians alike and while this raises awareness of the potential for harm that children in particular face from certain parts of the Internet, uninformed debate and a tendency to sensationalise in the media is not entirely helpful. There is a temptation among some sections of society to see the Internet as a wholly alien monster with millions of dreadful tentacles that know no limits, incomprehensible in its enormity. This attitude makes any problems that exist on the Internet seem doubly threatening and virtually impossible to tackle. This is not in fact the case. It is important to recognise that, mysteries of technology aside, the Internet is simply another public space, not that different to any other, and that addressing the problems and potentially harmful issues it may raise does not require a PhD in Computer Science. Once we view the Internet as just another public space, albeit on a very large scale, the problems it might present seem less insurmountable.

When asked about their main concerns regarding children on the Internet, the majority of adults talk about the fear of children viewing adult pornography or other material inappropriate for their age. However, the issue that seems to draw the most attention is children's vulnerability to sexual predators when they are online, especially when using online chat-rooms or social networking sites. While this danger is certainly not unheard of and must be addressed, in actuality the most common dangers facing children on the Internet are often perpetrated by children themselves and include bullying, publishing intimate personal information on social networks, and illegally downloading or sharing copyrighted material.

### **WHAT IS 'HARMFUL'?**

When considering what 'harmful' means in the context of the Internet, it is important to recognise the distinction between 'harmful' and 'illegal'. In terms of illegal content, the Internet can become a tricky place. As a global entity the Internet is spread across multiple jurisdictions and what is illegal in one is not necessarily illegal in another. Many people think of child pornography when thinking of illegal Internet content and in Ireland, as in most other countries, child pornography is illegal. Other material illegal under Irish law includes that which incites racism or xenophobia, the promotion of violence against individuals or groups, child trafficking, and child sex tourism.

Fortunately, a lot of the material that falls into the illegal category, especially that involving the exploitation of children, is often fairly well hidden, existing at what is called the 'deep web' level. It is very unlikely that children using the Internet are ever likely to simply 'stumble' across this sort of illegal content accidentally. Of far greater concern are those materials and sites which fall into the 'harmful' category. These are materials or sites which are not illegal under Irish law (or the laws of

many other countries) but are considered unsuitable or inappropriate for children to encounter or engage with. Examples include adult pornography, pro anorexia websites, suicide websites, those sites which present material that glorifies violence, or sites which give access to TV, radio or video programmes that are unsuitable for children. The problem with all these sites is that they are not illegal nor are they particularly hidden and children can easily access them, accidentally or otherwise. Unlike mainstream television, the Internet has no watershed, all of the material is available nearly all of the time, whether it is suitable for children or not.

A recent phenomenon that has garnered huge popularity amongst children and teenagers is that of social networking. Social networking uses sites like MySpace, Facebook and Bebo to provide an interactive space where users can create their own 'spaces', pages they build themselves, about themselves. These pages usually include photographs of the user and their friends, personal details like age and location, as well as lots of information about likes and dislikes, activities and events that they have been involved in, even videos. They also usually include a message board where other users can leave them messages or hold conversations. Users can even do things like set up their own 'polls' seeking the opinions of other users on any topic they like. Currently, in Ireland, the most popular social networking site is Bebo, which went from having practically no Irish users in 2005 to having over 750,000 Irish users in late 2007, many of whom are teenagers.

Aware that its site might not be suitable for children, Bebo has a policy that anyone who registers must be over 13 years old. The problem is neither Bebo, nor any other site, really has any way of determining whether the registrant is telling the truth. The person registering could be stating that they are 15 but they could easily be nine or 39. There is simply no way to tell.

The interactive nature of sites like Bebo and the number of under-18s that use them make these sites akin to an online playground, and a relatively unsupervised playground at that. They are fraught with the same sorts of problems that might be encountered in any similar space in the so-called 'real' world, but on a larger scale. On a social networking site, just as in the real or offline world, children are vulnerable to things like bullying and the inappropriate behaviour of others. They are also vulnerable to the attentions of those who might wish to exploit their naivety for sexual or financial purposes, and herein lies one of the main problems. It is not only children who can be naïve when they are using the Internet, many adults seem to lose all sense of reason and common sense when they are online, but children are particularly vulnerable because they are often just as naïve about the 'real' world. They are still learning that human behaviour is filled with quirks and foibles and that not everyone is a decent and



trustworthy person. So they do not think twice about telling anyone who might read their profile where they live, who their friends are, where they go to school, or what they are doing tomorrow. Similarly on other websites they might be inclined to reveal their phone number, date of birth or even financial details. It is not unheard of for children and young teenagers to use their parents' credit cards on websites, leaving the parents as well as the children exposed to financial fraud and identity theft.

Another problem lies with the ease of illegal downloading of copyrighted material. Children may not even realise that what they are doing is illegal, but ignorance is not accepted as an excuse if the owners of the material should come to claim remuneration for the illegally downloaded items. In addition, the ease of downloading anything at all, be it illegal or otherwise, also makes it very easy for children in particular to inadvertently download spyware, malware, or viruses onto the family computer.

Some of the abovementioned activities may seem more harmful than others. Encountering adult pornography, being bullied online, or being groomed by child abusers may seem more harmful to some than using a parent's credit card or publishing personal details. This is no different from the offline world, where there are many things that can threaten a child's welfare, some more harmful than others. This means that just as in the offline world there is no one simple solution to the problems, despite the fact that all of the potential harm apparently exists in one space.

The perception that potential harms presented by the Internet are somehow more threatening and more complex than those that exist in the 'real' world leads many to look to their governments for legislation that will provide a simple, clean sweep solution to the problem. This may sound like the easiest solution but in reality it is extremely problematic. For example, simply considered in terms of the legal issues involved, dealing with illegal content or activity on the Internet is not as straightforward as getting the police to investigate and then going to court to punish the offenders. The Internet is global entity and it is not owned or controlled in any one place or by any one source, rather it straddles every jurisdiction. If the content or activity is assessed as illegal under Irish law, and it is being perpetrated by a person or group inside Ireland and is hosted on an Irish server, then the Gardai can deal with the crime in much the same way that they deal with other crimes. It immediately becomes more complicated, however, if the material is being hosted outside of Ireland.

### **LEGAL ISSUES**

A good example of some of the legal issues that can be faced when trying to deal with a site that could be deemed illegal in one jurisdiction is the ongoing legal fight by the International

Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) against the website [thepiratebay.org](http://thepiratebay.org). This site presents itself as a BitTorrent tracker, which basically means that it is a site which facilitates filesharing amongst users (although it does not hold any copyrighted material on its servers). The IFPI has been trying for some time to get The Pirate Bay closed down and removed from the Internet but so far it has met with little or no success. This is because although The Pirate Bay might arguably be illegal in some jurisdictions, it is not illegal under Swedish law, where the website is based. In response to this difficulty, the IFPI changed its direction and instead of trying to shut the website down in Sweden it has tried to force several international Internet service providers (ISPs) to block access to the site on the grounds that they believe it is illegal. In February 2008, the IFPI was successful in a Danish court in forcing Denmark's largest ISP, Tele2, to block its customers' access to the website. However, this ruling has already been challenged on the grounds that it is illegal under EU law for Tele2 to block access to its customers, a challenge which seems likely to succeed.

While this account is very much a simplification of all the twists and turns of this particular case, what it highlights is the complexity of trying to take legal and legislative action when it comes to combating any illegal material or activity on the Internet. This is not to say that governments or the law are powerless. In Ireland, the government has made real efforts to combat certain areas of illegal use of the Internet, especially with regard to child pornography. Ireland has one of the most robust laws in Europe when it comes to child pornography, with the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act, 1998, which defines exactly what constitutes child pornography and the consequences of being involved in it at any level. The Department of Justice has also recently established the Office of Internet Safety (OIS) and charged it with the promotion of Internet safety, particularly in relation to combating child pornography.

### **How do you legislate against online bullying for example, when there is no effective legislation against bullying in the 'real' world?**

The problem is that while dealing with illegal material on the Internet can be difficult enough, dealing with harmful material is much more complicated. Dealing with issues like bullying on social networking sites like Bebo, children's access to adult pornography, potential exposure of children to those who would exploit them sexually or otherwise, is a difficult proposition and here the law is not going to be much help. The reason is that what constitutes 'harmful' material depends on your perspective. How do you legislate against online bullying for



example, when there is no effective legislation against bullying in the 'real' world? Or, is illegal downloading of copyrighted material actually causing harm to children? Some would say yes, others no. Is it actually realistic to ask ISPs to monitor Internet usage and report anything 'unsuitable', as has been suggested by several pressure groups and media outlets? If so, what happens to data protection and privacy laws? Do you want your ISP to be able to reveal everything you and your family do on the Internet to the police or any other relevant body? And who decides what is 'suitable' and 'unsuitable'?

## THE SITUATION IN IRELAND

In Ireland, the government encourages ISPs to self regulate through the Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland (ISPAI). Through the ISPAI, member ISPs make an effort to combat potential harm to children on the Internet by agreeing to a Code of Practice and Ethics, one element of which requires them to formulate acceptable usage policies (AUPs) that must be agreed to by their customers. These AUPs contain 'harmful material' clauses, rather than confining acceptable usage to legal and illegal usage. In 1999, the ISPAI also set up hotline.ie, an online reporting service for members of the public who encounter what they believe to be illegal material on the Internet. The hotline is part of a network of 29 other similar entities around the world known as INHOPE. The hotline now deals with over 2,600 reports annually<sup>1</sup>.

**...the harm faced by children on the Internet is a very human harm, not a technological harm, and as such need not be viewed as a mystery by parents and educators.**

At the end of the day, however, with the current national and international legal frameworks available to them, there is only so much that government or ISPs can do to combat the potential of children being exposed to harm on the Internet. As stated earlier, the harm faced by children on the Internet is a very human harm, not a technological harm, and as such need not be viewed as a mystery by parents and educators. Parents must make themselves aware of the dangers and potential harms of the Internet on their children but they do not need to necessarily understand the technology behind. If a child is behaving inappropriately on Bebo it should be treated no differently from a child behaving inappropriately in any other public forum and thus parents, guardians and teachers need to address this sort of problem in much the same way. Protecting children from becoming the target of

groomers or adults who would wish them harm on the Internet need be little different from teaching them the same thing in the offline world. Stranger danger is just as valid online as offline.

Irish schools already make a significant effort in making sure their teachers are up to speed with the potential harms of the Internet. The NCTE runs a course for teachers to make them aware of problems and enable them to deal with them. They have also established Webwise.ie, a site which provides a lot of detailed information on Internet safety aimed not only at teachers and parents but also at children themselves. The government and other organisations also provide a great deal of information for parents. The hotline.ie website provides tips and information for parents and other concerned individuals for help on creating a safe environment in which children can use the Internet.

## CONCLUSION

An article of this length can never adequately cover or explain all the issues related to the matter of children and harmful use of the Internet and the authors are aware that there may be many gaps. However, the issues of foremost importance have hopefully been stressed here. Remember that nearly all of what is harmful on the Internet exists in the real world too, it may just be less accessible. It is really this accessibility that can cause many of the problems and, for the most part, means that the solution to this lies in the hands of parents, guardians and educators. Set rules, boundaries and guidelines for children's behaviour while using the Internet, just as you would in their daily life. Do not allow children to hide themselves away with the computer. Make sure you know what they are doing and where they are going, just as you would in the offline world. Do not hesitate to ask for help if you feel lost in a sea of unfamiliar words. In Ireland we are lucky as there are several organisations like Webwise and Hotline.ie who specialise in helping parents and educators keep children safe on the Internet. The Internet is a public space, like any other, and the task of keeping our children safe in this space is no more impossible than it is in the offline world. It can be done, and governments, legislators and industry across the world must play a part. But just as in the offline world, child safety online begins at home.

**The Internet is a public space, like any other, and the task of keeping our children safe in this space is no more impossible than it is in the offline world.**

<sup>1</sup> Figure taken from the 4th Report of the ISPAI www.hotline.ie Service covering the period 1st January 2006 – 31st December 2006

# Child abusive images on the Internet & Operation ORE

**SARAH BLOWS**

Project Leader, Barnardos' Mahon Family Support Project, Cork

I currently work as Project Leader at the Barnardos' Mahon Family Support Project in Cork. In my previous life in England, I worked for eight years within the Child Protection Investigation field in Essex. My final working year in England was being seconded to a specialist team which, with the police, jointly investigated identified persons arrested in connection with downloading child abusive images.

Within this article I will discuss, from my own perspective and experience, Child Abusive Images (CAI), Operation Ore, the collection of CAI and links with contact abuse, the impact on professionals, and issues for practice.



## So what are Child Abusive Images?

The term Child Abusive Images (CAI) was developed to replace the more commonly used expression Child Pornography. This was due to a fear among professionals that continued use of this phrase might serve to legitimise material and lead to comparisons with 'adult' material, which is seen as acceptable.

Taylor *et al* (2001) devised a scale describing 10 levels of severity of abuse, from non-erotic sexualised pictures, penetrative sex with an adult, to images involving sadism or bestiality. Within Operation Ore (outlined below), the majority of images were between level 7 and 10 and therefore the most severe of images. The other disturbing finding was that they were images of mostly younger children, from babies of a few months old to children of 5 or 6.

Clearly this is disturbing. To some people it is so incomprehensible that they will deny that such abusive images exist. Indeed we should remember that it was not that many years ago that there was a denial that sexual abuse existed at all. However, this view serves only to collude with the abusers and to assist and sustain their abusive practice.

## OPERATION ORE

In the United States in 1999, law enforcement agencies, in conjunction with the US postal service, intercepted a large business that sold abusive images of children via the Internet. Thomas and Janice Reedy owned a company called Landslide Productions in Texas, which operated a website that advertised and distributed these indecent images. Customers around the world paid monthly subscription fees in order to access the websites, many of which contained extremely graphic sexual images of children. The Reedys were indicted in 2000 and convicted in 2001. Thomas Reedy was given a life sentence, and his wife was given 14 years in prison.

The names of over 7,000 UK residents who had allegedly accessed these sites were given to the police in the UK. The operation, codenamed 'Ore', was the largest single investigation into Internet offending ever attempted in the UK. Two hundred individuals who were named as having accessed these sites were believed to be living in Essex. Senior managers in Essex Police and Social Services decided to set up a specialist team to deal with the investigation of these individuals, which employed 11 senior Social Work Practitioners. This was a radical approach not adopted by other authorities who mainly absorbed the referrals within their local Child Protection Teams. By approaching the investigation in this way, Essex Police and Social Services were recognising that this was an

opportunity to develop knowledge in the area of child protection investigation relating to Internet offending.

One hundred and forty four individuals were suspected of being involved in the viewing of child abusive images, and 72 children were identified as in need of assessment due to their association or relationship with the suspects. It was our job to undertake these assessments, identify risk, and ensure that the children were protected from any identified harm.

As practitioners, our first role was to accompany the police officers to the address, usually at 7 or 8am. A legal directive obtained by the operation prior to the raid stated that suspects arrested would be classed as a 'risk' to children, even before being charged, due to the evidence held. Therefore, we had the power to remove the suspect from the home, and ensure all contact at this time with any children was supervised.

After the suspect had been arrested and any items confiscated, we would then spend time with the suspect's partner. This time would be spent explaining the circumstances which led to the partner being arrested, discussing the viewing of Child Abusive Images, and then explaining the issues of Child Protection. In almost all of the cases (unless the partner was complicit in the crime), this all came as a complete shock to the suspect's partner, and was extremely distressing and traumatic. Many women were in complete denial, fiercely defending their partner, even when faced with the reality of the evidence. In these cases it would take a lot of time to convince the partner of the risks to her children. These processes were extremely traumatic and often disturbing, and they had to be managed in a very delicate, supportive and professional way. Two of the women interviewed were heavily pregnant, and so were even more vulnerable.

Our next role was also to interview the suspect while he was in custody in order to explain the Child Protection issues, and his need to leave the family home, but also to gather information for assessment purposes.

## WHY DO ABUSERS COLLECT & DOWNLOAD THESE IMAGES?

Certain key traits of those who collect images were identified by Hames (1993). He describes people who want a permanent record of a child, frozen in time, to be used to masturbate to. Some use images as part of a seduction of a child or to desensitise and sexualise a victim. Many use them to validate their belief system that it is acceptable to view children in a sexual way. Others will blackmail victims with the images or use them as an item of trade with other paedophiles.



Many abusers have huge collections of which they are fiercely protective. The largest collection I remember was of almost 3 million images, stored and catalogued on hard copy and on a computer. The abusers I interviewed often expressed feelings of 'loss' when their collections were seized by police, and many were devastated that they would not be returned.

There was no 'typical' suspect although all of those arrested were male. They were from both wealthy and low-income families, many were holding down respectable jobs and some were professionals. Some operated a completely 'secret life' in order to fulfil these needs. Others were more blatant in their discussions, and sometimes there was a high level of admission where the abuser gained some kind of sexual satisfaction explaining and discussing viewing the images. In the minority were suspects who were relieved to be 'caught' and appeared to show genuine remorse and shame. I did, however, interview one man who was in this category who took the opportunity to 'bare his soul' to me. His family had disowned him, he had lost his job and he was clearly suicidal.

### LINKS WITH CONTACT ABUSE

A question often asked is about the link between viewing CAI and contact abuse. There is little evidence or research available to clearly identify a causal link. However, there have been many small scale studies and research findings, which would suggest that there is a link. Some offenders of viewing CAI commit contact abuse, and others do not. Hernandez (2000) conducted a study of 90 convicted sex offenders at a treatment programme, the majority of who were Internet sex offenders. Fifty four of those 90 men had been convicted of Child Abusive Images offences. Seventy six per cent of the offenders admitted to having prior contact sexual crimes. Another small study of 23 offenders by Quayle/Taylor (2002) concluded 47.8 per cent had committed contact offences during the period of downloading CAI.

It can be misleading to conclude a definite causal link when there is a clear lack of substantial evidence, however, as John Carr wrote in his paper to the 2nd World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:

'... while acknowledging that different studies show different levels of probability... they establish beyond doubt that what one's common sense also suggests; whenever the authorities uncover someone in possession of child pornography, they are also identifying someone who is a potentially a real and active danger to children.'

### IN CONCLUSION

There is a need for all of us to be aware that this abuse is a reality and that, although it constitutes only a very small percentage of the population, it is still there. When working with families assessing their needs and helping to identify difficulties, we need to be aware of the specialist nature of this area. If we identify or suspect activity involving CAI we must know how to act appropriately and professionally, and how to act in the best interests of children. This should be high on all organisations' agendas.

When I first was seconded to Operation Ore, I had been working within the area of Child Protection at a senior level for many years, and had experienced many disturbing cases. However, I was not prepared for the level of depravity in abusers that I was to witness within this operation. There was a feeling among the team that they had been 'contaminated' both physically and emotionally by this work, and had experienced a world so far removed from decency, innocence and love that it was hard to believe it still existed while working on the operation.

Hardened, experienced senior police officers struggled to deal with the disturbing nature of the work, often having to view hundreds of disgusting images and videos of abuse each day and no practitioner could come away from this work unscarred. However, the learning and knowledge obtained throughout the operation has been invaluable in combating the viewing of Internet Child Abusive Images, and identifying the abusers who exploit it.

In Ireland, in 2002, a similar operation called Amethyst led to 500 Gardai raiding over 100 homes and seizing material associated with Child Abusive Images on the Internet. While such operations are to be commended, overall there is an international failure to protect and identify the children in Child Abusive Images. Interpol has 200,000 images of children on their database, 20,000 of them showing sexual abuse yet less than 500 of these children have been identified and protected. These are the 'Forgotten Children'.

### AFTER OPERATION ORE

The friend misunderstands his words.  
'After the operation I shall need a break.'

'What operation, are you ill?'  
No, not ill at all.

Just contaminated  
Just irradiated

Just hoping we can pass on what we know.  
Just wanting a mind free of filth.

(Written by Helen Brown, a colleague on Operation Ore)

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# The NCH's

# 'Access to I.T.' Programme

**JOHN CARR**

International Internet Consultant on Child Safety

**NCH, the children's charity helps the most vulnerable children and young people in the UK break through injustice, deprivation and inequality, so they can achieve their full potential.**

Poverty, disability and abuse are among the key challenges that NCH addresses. Founded by the Methodists during the time of Queen Victoria, NCH has nonetheless always been resolutely modern and forward-thinking in its outlook. In the mid-1990s, it was the first major children's and young persons' organisation in the UK to appreciate that the arrival of the Internet, linked to the falling cost of computers and the falling cost of telecommunications, was going to have a huge impact on children's and young people's lives. Most of this impact was going to be for the good, some of it wasn't. Both needed attention and so, from 1996 onwards, NCH started to engage in a major way and very directly with children's and young people's use of the new technologies. Originally this tended to refer to computers with Internet access, but it quickly broadened out to encompass mobile phones and games consoles, many of which were Internet enabled anyway, possessing most of the same properties as a stand alone PC.

While always keeping safety as a key focus, NCH was keen to ensure that all children and young people were also getting

access to the benefits which the new technologies could bring. If certain children and young people from better-off families were getting access to the new technologies while children from poorer families were not, wouldn't that simply entrench, possibly even worsen, existing patterns of disadvantage?

However, it was quickly realised that household income alone was not the sole explanation of differences in ownership or use of the new technologies. What about, for example, refugee families where low levels of proficiency in English could be a factor? Or homeless families where domestic arrangements are temporarily too unstable to allow for a computer to be kept and used in a regular place? What about children with learning difficulties or physical disabilities which prevent them from using standard hardware or standard software, or both?

## **ACCESS TO I.T.**

Initially NCH undertook a number of smaller scale investigations to try to determine the answers to these questions but finally, in 2004, it determined to embark on a major enquiry. NCH established a working group called 'Access to IT'. The working



group quickly attracted the active involvement of and sponsorship from several major industry players such as Microsoft, BT, AOL, Cable & Wireless, Hewlett Packard and the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists, the City's newest Livery company. Their financial support, and above all their expert knowledge and insights, were key to helping NCH to get to grips with what we quickly realised was a highly complex set of logistical and policy challenges.

Not the least of these challenges was essentially an internal one. Social workers and child care professionals were not, at the time, famous for their use or love of the new technologies. Many social workers saw access to computers and the Internet as being either altogether irrelevant, altogether too dangerous or as being a luxurious extra that would be nice but was by no means necessary for anything in particular. New technology was seen as being antithetical to the personal care and attention that they felt their charges most needed. Perhaps there were suspicions that, as ever, due to financial pressures, cheaper ways were being sought to provide support to needy children and maybe technology was now being trialled. In time, for most people many of these misapprehensions or anxieties would dissolve but it was absolutely necessary to understand and address them.

Paradoxically, at the same time we knew that many individual projects in NCH were in fact, at a local level, already engaging with the new technology in one way or another, sometimes on a significant scale. They had not waited for a missive from Head Office, they were doing it not least because many of the children and young people they were working with simply demanded it. Usually there would also be a member of staff in the NCH project who was either an enthusiast for the technology or at least they understood its importance, perhaps by having learned about it from their own children at home. These staff members may not have quite understood all of the ramifications but they were definitely on board and up for it. We decided to identify these existing pockets of innovation within the organisation, to work with them, learn from them and at the same time draw them into an embryonic new, national initiative. We were recruiting not ordering. One volunteer is worth ten pressed men, as they used to say.

Following an internal survey and extensive internal consultation, three specific service user target groups were identified: young people leaving care, Family Centre users and children with disabilities. They became the core of the 'Access to IT' programme.

For young people leaving care, the Coventry After-Care project was established to provide kit and Internet connectivity. NCH does a lot of work with care leavers. These could be young people who were already living with NCH, or young people who were coming out of other institutional settings and moving towards independent living for the first time in their

lives. As part of the research for the 'Access to IT' initiative, I vividly remember visiting an NCH project that was working with a number of young people in that situation and the head of the project was bursting with a kind of paternal pride, taking very great pleasure in telling me about this brilliant young Ethiopian refugee, here in the country entirely on his own, who had won a place to study architecture at a prestigious architectural school in London University. There was simply 'no way' that young man was going off to university without his own laptop, 'just like all the other kids will have when they arrive'. I was utterly convinced that our head of project was planning a break-in at PC World to get his hands on a computer for the lad but we were able to divert him from a life of crime by redirecting one from our internal resources. But how many other such cases were there among our service users? The Coventry project sought to answer that and to experiment with ways of meeting their needs.

The Bayswater Family Centre delivers a wide range of services including intensive social work intervention and a wide range of practical, therapeutic family support for families living in temporary accommodation in the Bayswater area. Refugee families have been major users of this facility. Through 'Access to IT', the centre complements its existing services by providing computer classes for children and adults to develop key skills, for example languages, and provides access to new information and support channels. The computer suite rapidly became an important community resource: a way for young people and their parents to seek more permanent or better accommodation, to enquire about benefits or other forms of support, to look for work or for training opportunities and also, in a number of cases, to locate lost family members or to re-establish contact with family members or friends left behind in their countries of origin.

### **WARREN PARK PROJECT**

However, by far the largest and most intensively resourced element within the 'Access to IT' framework was the Warren Park Project. NCH runs the Warren Park children's centre in partnership with the Royal Borough of Kingston. It is a single, purpose-built site offering a range of activities and support services for children with disabilities and their families. Those services include residential respite, shared care, summer play schemes and after-school provision. About 100 children a week, aged from five to 19, use those facilities. The partnership is with Kingston Social Services, but the local health authority is also involved and provides paediatric services on the site. The project was set up in 1997 with a 20-year contract. It is a fantastic example of long-term planning. The parents of the children took an active part in the design of the site and the buildings. Chris Abbott, a distinguished academic from Kings College, London, became involved in the project at a very early stage and was able to provide valuable strategic advice to the NCH staff who had the task of implementing the scheme that was developed. According to Abbott:



*'...technology alone...(is) not enough; alongside (the technology) we will continue to need enlightened individuals who will see potential, enable participation and develop opportunity. Young people with...disabilities need not only adapted and accessible buildings but also adaptive and accessible minds with which to communicate.'*

## ...young people were enormously motivated by the potential of IT for giving them some level of access to contemporary adolescent culture

At Warren Park, the human resources available were such that each child could have a supporting adult and was able to use the computers for much longer periods of time than would be possible in other schools. Although enjoyment is typically regarded as being more important than learning at the Centre, it is striking to note the level of evidence for informal learning that took place. Often this was as a by-product of the use of software which is set within a games-style environment. As another respected academic in this field put it

*'...computer games have much to offer children, if they are carefully selected. They can be highly motivating and, like other multimedia products, they are professionally made and have a high-quality image that is impossible for teachers to replicate. Games can encourage people to explore and try things out, instead of those people being passive consumers.'*<sup>1</sup>

Thus one of the clear findings at Warren Park was that the young people were enormously motivated by the potential of IT for giving them some level of access to contemporary adolescent culture.

**It has sometimes been very difficult for schools and other centres to communicate with the parents of disabled children and to fully relay the extent of what has been achieved, enjoyed or experienced during the child's time away from home. IT can do much to reduce this communication barrier, through recorded speech, digital photographs or electronic messages.**

Improvements in communication between parents and children were also noted. It has sometimes been very difficult for schools and other centres to communicate with the

parents of disabled children and to fully relay the extent of what has been achieved, enjoyed or experienced during the child's time away from home. IT can do much to reduce this communication barrier, through recorded speech, digital photographs or electronic messages.

Many of the young people at Warren Park did not have access to IT at home. As one mother explained, *'we only have a laptop at home which he was not able to use because it doesn't have switches and that (special) mouse.'* The same mother was delighted by the fact that staff at Warren Park send her child home with printouts of what he had done. This gave him the opportunity to indicate to his parents how pleased he was at what he had achieved. This was one of many examples of the use of digital photography to record and share achievement and enjoyment. As a Warren Park worker explained:

*'We can say to Mum, Dad, whoever's collecting the child, this is what they've been doing and here's the evidence... We photographed (some art work) and that was sent off to Pakistan to one child's grandfather.'*

The importance of being able to bring work home in this way was another key finding. It brought parents and children, and siblings, closer together through shared IT activities. As another project worker explained:

*'It's linked (us) with (the child's) school a lot more. The children are more in tune with looking things up, if they've had a discussion at school, they want to come in and get on the Internet... We can reinforce... whatever subject or topic they're working on. With the different equipment we've got here, we are then able to experiment and feed that back to school and they in turn can feed to us what's appropriate for individual children.'*

Just as the digital cameras are used to record what has been happening at Warren Park, so some of the mainstream schools the children attended used message-recording devices to pass on information to Warren Park about what had happened at school.

Some children do have access to IT at home, but parents and teachers have welcomed the opportunity to build on home use through the use of the resources at Warren Park. Parents began to see Warren Park as a source of valuable advice about the sort of IT that should be available to their children at home.

**IT can help children improve their self-confidence, motivation and self-esteem, and to take more control over their lives.**

<sup>1</sup> Sally McKeown, *'Unlocking Potential: How ICT Can Support Children With Special Education Needs'*, 2000.



Warren Park demonstrated that access to IT can help children improve their self-confidence, motivation and self-esteem, and to take more control over their lives. Referring to a particular young person, a staff member said:

*'He's much more relaxed, he's less aggressive, he's less likely to get upset about not being able to do something or watching other children do things that he can't do. He's achieving something... He's becoming a far more positive young teenager.'*

The emphasis throughout has been to show the children that they have some control. For some children, being in total control can be a new and very important experience. Here's a comment from a Warren Park care worker:

*'With the computer, she can do it herself and it's hers... You could leave her there and walk off and she would be able to do that on her own, even if you weren't there. Whereas with other things, you'd always have to be by her side.'*

The project has enabled children to use IT to become creative. The particular selection of software tools made available at the centre has enabled users to access their creative potential in ways that would be very difficult or impossible to achieve without these tools, as a parent explains:

*'They've been looking at music, they've been printing pictures, they've been finding pictures for T-shirts so he's actually created T-shirts... We can try new things here and find completely new things that we can take home... It opens a completely new world.'*

One project in particular, 'Art Matters' which was funded by Ernst and Young, led to considerable creative input from young people at Warren Park. According to a member of staff

*'We had quite a few of our young people take part in that and it was all based on a theme and ours was to do with gardens and the world outside really. And... our young people who have difficulty with their physical access to art, you know, decided they wanted to do photography. So again, it was assisted but they made the choices of what they wanted to photograph, so they came out into the garden with the camera and a staff member and photographed their things and then*

*we went back to the computer and they were assisted with downloading... They had to create an art work piece with the photographs and one young man decided he wanted his all cut in various shapes... It feeds his imagination and obviously allows the verbal expression which is quite satisfying to him.'*

The project has shown that IT can help children to interact with each other. Other children who may not have speech have seen an improvement in their communicative possibilities. The social aspect of working with others around the computer has led to some vocalisations being more identifiable among a peer group, particularly where this is in response to something on the computer screen. For some children, the IT room also supports socialisation in other ways.

Warren Park also showed that there was a need for further support for parents. Despite the considerable support that Warren Park is providing for parents, there are other areas towards which this support could be developed. One parent commented as follows:

*'What would be nice would be to be able to borrow some programmes and try them at home. The children might grow out of these programmes quickly and it might work or it might not work... to borrow like a software library, that you can borrow games and maybe even trial some controllers as well, [see] what works best for your child before you go and buy it.'*

There were many other learnings from the Warren Park project, and the other two components of NCH's 'Access to IT' initiative, particularly in relation to the managerial challenges which it presented. It is intended that a fuller account of these learnings will be published in the near future. However, there is no doubt that almost everyone who has been involved with it has come away convinced that the new technologies have a great deal to offer some of the neediest members of society. No one believes the new technologies are a panacea. They are not a silver bullet and for some people, particularly people with extremely severe disadvantages, they may be completely irrelevant. But equally, as NCH's research has shown, for a very large number of disadvantaged people having ready and convenient access to some of the new technologies can bring significant improvements in their quality of life.



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# Cyberbullying

## among young people in Ireland

### WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

Cyberbullying, often previously known as 'E-bullying' (with the 'E' denoting 'electronic' forms of contact)<sup>1</sup> is defined as:

*'...an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him- or herself.'*<sup>2</sup>

This definition was provided by Goldsmith College's Professor Peter K. Smith, who has conducted the first systematic study of cyberbullying, which will be regularly referred to throughout this article. In this study, Smith and his colleagues identified seven sub-categories of cyberbullying behaviour, which are:

- Text message, also known as SMS, bullying.
- Bullying by the taking, sending and publication of

photographs or video-clips via mobile phone cameras. This may involve so-called 'happy slapping' attacks, in which a gang may film themselves attacking random passers-by, or targeted individuals.

- Phone call bullying via mobile phones. This can involve the theft and use of another's phone in an attempt to make him or her appear culpable.
- E-mail bullying.
- Chatroom bullying.
- Bullying through Instant Messaging (IM).
- Bullying via websites. This may include the use of defamatory blogs, personal websites, on-line personal polling sites, general polling sites, and also the misuse of certain social networking sites (e.g., 'My Space', 'You Tube', 'Bebo') for the purposes of bullying.



Two of these sub-categories (the first and the last in the list above; i.e., text message (SMS) bullying and bullying via websites) have been fairly frequently reported in the media over the past two years in Ireland. The evidence, such as it exists, on these two forms of cyberbullying, will now be presented below.

### **TEXT MESSAGE (SMS) BULLYING: THE EVIDENCE**

From what little empirical information that exists on the matter, text message bullying appears to be the most common form of cyberbullying. In a small-scale study in Sacramento, California, self-identified cyberbullies preferred it 2:1 over e-mail, websites, and Instant Messaging.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in the UK, Smith *et al.*'s 2006 study of 92 11–16-year-old students revealed that text-message bullying was the type of cyberbullying that had been most frequently experienced. In a larger British study, around one-fifth of 900 students in their early teens study had been bullied via text message.<sup>4</sup>

So what is the picture regarding text message bullying in Ireland? While no study specifically concerned with text message bullying or cyberbullying has been undertaken as yet, questions concerning text message bullying have been asked as a part of more general studies of bullying behaviour among school students. In a survey of bullying behaviour, 2,354 primary school students (3rd–6th class), from 38 schools were asked to indicate whether 'other pupils have sent nasty text messages to me, or used mobile phones to get at me' within the last three months. Around one in ten – 8.7 per cent of girls, and 10.8 per cent of boys – indicated yes, that this had happened to them at least once in the last three months.<sup>5</sup> When 3,078 post-primary students (1st–3rd year), from 12 schools, were asked the same question, over one in eight girls (13.3 per cent) and around one in ten boys (9.6 per cent) indicated that this had happened to them at least once in the past three months.<sup>6</sup>

Although no scientifically-based research on the matter has been conducted to date, from media coverage and anecdotal evidence alone, text message bullying may be considered to be as potentially psychologically dangerous as any other form of bullying. At what is surely the most extreme end of psychological danger posed through bullying, Neil Marr and Tim Field (2001) have coined the term 'bullycide'.<sup>7</sup> This refers to when a person is literally 'bullied to death' – that is to say, when he or she takes his or her own life rather than face another day of being bullied. Marr & Field state that, at a conservative estimate, sixteen children (under the age of sixteen years old) in the United Kingdom per year commit 'bullycide'. Bramwell & Mussen (2003) have reported on the 'bullycide' of a sixteen-year-old male due to text message

bullying in New Zealand;<sup>8</sup> similarly, in the United Kingdom, Fleming (2004) has reported on a fourteen-year-old female 'bullycide' due to text message bullying in Liverpool.<sup>9</sup>

**...most targets of both bullying and cyberbullying did not report having been bullied. The non-reporting of bullying behaviour among young people has been identified as a major inhibitor of the effective dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.**

### **WEB-BASED BULLYING: THE EVIDENCE**

In Canada, Qing Li's 2006 study of 177 7th graders<sup>10</sup> recorded that 54 per cent of the students reported having been bullied, and 25 per cent reported having been cyberbullied; 33 per cent reported having bullied others, and 15 per cent reported having cyberbullied others. Furthermore, most targets of both bullying and cyberbullying did not report having been bullied. The non-reporting of bullying behaviour among young people has been identified as a major inhibitor of the effective dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour,<sup>11</sup> and a phenomenon which has generally been unaffected by the implementation of most intervention programmes.<sup>12</sup> Small wonder that Li referred to a 'new bottle, but old wine'.

In the study of 92 11–16-year-old students undertaken for the UK's Anti-Bullying Alliance, Peter K. Smith and colleagues (2006) found that 20 students (22 per cent of the sample) had experienced cyberbullying at least once, and that five students (6.6 per cent) had experienced cyberbullying frequently in the last two months. Of the seven sub-categories referred to above, phone call bullying, text-message bullying and e-mail bullying were the most common types, and chat-room bullying was the least common. Video-clip / phone calls were perceived by the students as having more impact than 'traditional' (that is to say, 'non-cyber') bullying; website bullying and text message bullying were perceived as having the same impact as traditional bullying; and chatroom bullying, Instant Messaging bullying and E-mail bullying were perceived as less impact than traditional bullying. There were few age differences; however, girls were more likely to be cyberbullied than boys (especially via text messages).<sup>13</sup>

### **WHAT CAN AND SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT CYBERBULLYING**

First of all, it should be noted that there are number of points upon which the principles of dealing with cyberbullying coincide with those pertaining to dealing with more 'traditional'



(i.e., non-cyber) forms of bullying. In the first place, the so-called 'whole-school' approach<sup>14</sup> is still warranted. In the 'whole-school' approach it is acknowledged that the problem of school bullying is a complex, multi-layered one; consequently, a sophisticated, multi-level solution is appropriate. Hence, a series of co-ordinated and simultaneous interventions at the school management, school staff, parent and community and student levels is planned and undertaken. In other words, schools, parents, community interest groups, health, educational and psychological professionals, and young people themselves all have a role to play. Additionally, as with all such interventions, awareness-raising of bullying and cyberbullying as real problems is a key 'first step', and changing attitudes towards oppression and violence are outcome goals.

## A target of cyberbullying does not even have to be on the same continent as the perpetrator of the attack.

However, cyberbullying raises issues of its own. In the first place, those targeted can be attacked (via electronic means) outside conventional space and time limits. A target of cyberbullying does not even have to be on the same continent as the perpetrator of the attack. Furthermore, cyberbullying is easily hidden – the fact of the matter is that potentially intervening adults may be far less familiar with technical media than are the young people involved. In the case of the ready distribution of cyberbullying material (for example, the posting of abusive messages or threatening / embarrassing material on the Internet) each episode of bullying can reach a much wider 'audience' than 'traditional' forms of bullying. It is one thing to be humiliated in the loss of a fight in front of one's classmates; it is quite another to have a film of one being physically beaten posted on a website and thereby available as a download for (at least potentially) millions.

## ...each episode of bullying can reach a much wider 'audience' than 'traditional' forms of bullying.

Crucially, cyberbullying may take place outside of school hours and premises, and therefore who has responsibility for the investigation and dealing with such incidents is far from clear. Aside from restricting the use of mobile phones in schools and the blocking of certain web-sites from school computers, schools can be uncertain as to how best to play their role in countering and preventing cyberbullying. However, Peter Smith and his colleagues<sup>15</sup> have suggested certain guidelines. At the *School Management Level*, cyberbullying should be

included in school anti-bullying policy. Managers should ensure that teachers have enough knowledge to deal with cyberbullying, and can tell students about cyber-safety. Furthermore, schools should work with police and other support agencies (i.e., counselling services) on preventing and dealing with cyberbullying, and parents and students should be updated and involved in forming new anti-bullying strategies.

At the *School Teaching Staff Level*, staff should be familiar with their roles and responsibilities in implementing anti-bullying policies; they should be able to take action if a child is cyberbullied, and to teach young people e-etiquette and cyber-safety. *Parents* should make sure that they and their children are aware of the risks of technology use, and that they know what to do if the child is bullied. Parental control software for home computers should also be considered.

As regards *Targeted Young People*, they should remember that regardless of the excuses that bullies use to justify their unacceptable behaviour, that being bullied is never one's own fault – bullying is always the fault of the perpetrator of that behaviour. Bullying should never be ignored; however, it is important to try and keep calm, rather than just reacting. In the case of phone call, e-mail, text message and video-clip bullying, messages and images should not be deleted, but kept as evidence. Non-response is important; it may be worth turning off incoming texts for a few days or even changing one's number. If one is being bullied via phone calls, the advice is not to hang up right away (this may gratify the callers sadistic need to cause fear) but to walk away, and to hang up after a few minutes. Always tell someone, and don't give out personal details. It should be recalled that almost all calls can be traced, and that malicious calls and texts are illegal.

## It should be recalled that almost all calls can be traced, and that malicious calls and texts are illegal.

In terms of Internet-based bullying, one should never respond to 'flames' (unwanted e-mails), or open files from people you don't know. For e-mail bullying, incidents should be reported to the Internet Service Provider – write 'abuse@' then host (e.g., abuse@hotmail.com). For website bullying, follow the on-line safety links. In using Instant Messaging, Internet chat rooms or social networking websites, it is important to remember to never give out personal details, photos etc. (use a nickname) and to recognise that who you think you are communicating with on-line might not actually be that person. Young people should think very carefully about what they write, and tell their parents or teachers if they are worried.



## CONCLUSION

First of all, it must be acknowledged that the evidence that we have on cyberbullying – that referred to above – is essentially small-scale, provisional or anecdotal. As a researcher, this is neither empirically nor – in terms of adhering to evidence-based practice – professionally satisfactory. Hence, a large-scale study is desirable, and indeed such a project is due to be undertaken this year by Trinity College Dublin's Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre. From the evidence that we do have, however, it must surely be concluded that the seriousness of cyberbullying can not and should not be underestimated. There are points of similarity with 'traditional' forms of bullying, but it has been seen that cyberbullying does present fresh challenges. School anti-bullying policies, skills and strategies should be updated, but schools will need to be supported on this; hence, governmental support of school communities in getting to grips with this worrying form of aggressive behaviour between young people is surely warranted.

## HELPFUL WEBSITES

The following have been suggested by Peter Smith and his colleagues:<sup>16</sup>

[www.anti-bullyingalliance.org](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org)

(many helpful resources and organisations; also, includes the full results of Smith et al's 2006 UK survey referred to in this article)

[www.antibullying.net/cyberbullying1.htm](http://www.antibullying.net/cyberbullying1.htm) (Code of Conduct)

[www.becta.org.uk](http://www.becta.org.uk) (Internet Safety Policies)

[www.bpl.org/kids/Netiquette.htm](http://www.bpl.org/kids/Netiquette.htm)

(Guidelines for on-line safety for young people)

[www.childnet-int.org](http://www.childnet-int.org) (Chat Room Safety DVD)

[www.cybersmartcurriculum.org](http://www.cybersmartcurriculum.org)

(Lesson plans for dealing with Internet-based bullying)

[www.nch.org.uk](http://www.nch.org.uk) (Information on a range of issues relating to Cyberbullying)

[www.stoptextbully.com](http://www.stoptextbully.com) (SMS Classroom Resource Pack)

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**For teachers, school managers, parents, students, or indeed anyone concerned about any sort of school-based or workplace bullying:** The Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre, School of Education, Trinity College Dublin. Tel: 01 896 2573

E-mail: [lmcguire@tcd.ie](mailto:lmcguire@tcd.ie) or [mjsmith@tcd.ie](mailto:mjsmith@tcd.ie)

Web-site: [www.abc.tcd.ie](http://www.abc.tcd.ie)

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# Internet safety life skills

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## **AN ONLINE LIFE**

The Internet is now part of our lives. Online and offline have merged, a fact that is particularly true for teenagers who use social networking sites as an extension of their social lives and daily activities. The Internet has become part of mainstream youth culture and there is almost universal access to it by young people in Ireland. Sixty nine per cent of Irish students access social networking sites (Bebo, MySpace etc.) more than three times a week and over a third do so on a daily basis (Webwise and Anchor Survey, 2007). Children and teens are growing up digitally, in a world of connected, mobile, interactive personal media. They are now the creators and producers of content rather than mere consumers, they are 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2001), a generation that has grown up immersed in modern technology such as their mobile phone, Instant Messaging, webcams and their web-space on the Internet.

The Internet is used by young people as a tool for entertainment, social networking, information and support. What was once solo surfing as an individual sat in front of a PC or laptop has now become a social outing where a person can literally chat online across the globe to anyone in an instant. As parents and educators, we need to guide children and young people in developing digital literacy skills and competencies to help them communicate and socialise in safety in their online communities.

In order to reach them, to engage with these 'digital natives' and show them how to be safe, we, in the main mere 'digital immigrants', need to understand their use of it and we need to use it to reach them. Children and young people may have the tech know-how to get online but they are still inexperienced about the world and may be vulnerable online. We have to match their passion for technology with the emotional, personal and social learning skills necessary to keep them safe on- and off-line.



### **//:Be SAFE\_Be WEBWISE://**

Webwise.ie, the Internet safety initiative of the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE), has worked with the post primary Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) Curriculum Support Team, to devise practical social networking and personal safety lessons and classroom activities for Junior Certificate students. The programme, which is the first educational programme of its kind in Europe, is designed to address the personal safety needs of our young people when online and to help them to become safe and responsible Internet users for life. The //:Be SAFE\_Be WEBWISE:// lesson and resource pack contains 13 exemplars each mapped to the Junior Certificate SPHE Curriculum and the ICT Framework of The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). The lessons and workshops aim to help students to reflect on the needs, rights and responsibilities of their behaviour online.

SPHE in primary and post primary education aims to provide students with the opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves, to care for themselves and others, and to make informed decisions about their health (emotional, mental and physical), their personal lives and their social development. The SPHE Personal Safety Unit enables children and young people to discuss and consider their own safety, some of the hazards they may meet in daily life and some precautions they might consider taking in order to keep themselves safe.

Enabling discussion of the personal safety risk areas in relation to Internet use is the first step and the new //:Be SAFE\_Be WEBWISE:// programme reaches further, aiming to give students the opportunity to explore their attitudes and their safety when using the Internet and to affect change in their own behaviour. Through discussion and group techniques, the programme enables students to learn from their peers, consider their online safety and establish ethical codes of practice for themselves by themselves.

### **ANYONE AND EVERYONE CAN SEE IT...**

Until recently, harmful and illegal content that children could see or download from the Internet was considered the main risk. This risk still exists but now there is also the issue of what they can upload and share about themselves, their families and others. Social networking sites such as Bebo, with the interconnectivity of mobile phones, webcams and digital cameras, are being used to document and publish the intimate details of teenagers' lives with the easy-to-use tools of what is being called the Read/Write Web or Web 2.0.

In SPHE class, the concept of confidentiality within the classroom is discussed from the outset and teachers try to establish from the beginning that it is inappropriate to disclose some personal information. We explain the need to respect the privacy of each student and his or her family and the need to

draw boundaries for all discussions, but on the Web some students are passing on personal and intimate information indiscriminately. This is developed further through the new personal safety lessons of //:Be SAFE\_Be WEBWISE:// where students are made aware of the importance of their own privacy and the privacy of their families and others when online.

**...on the Web some students are passing on personal and intimate information indiscriminately.**

In the lessons 'Secret Codes' and 'Identity Parade', teenagers come to understand and recognise that the Internet is not a private place and that any information they post online is available to the whole world, online perhaps forever, and can be copied, manipulated and easily altered by anyone without their permission. They learn that the Internet is not the context for the disclosure of personal, private and intimate information.

**...any information they post online is available to the whole world, online perhaps forever, and can be copied, manipulated and easily altered by anyone without their permission.**

**They learn that the Internet is not the context for the disclosure of personal, private and intimate information.**

### **A COMPLETE E-SAFETY PROGRAMME**

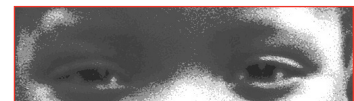
The new E-Safety Programme was launched by The Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin T.D. to help celebrate Safer Internet Day on 12th February 2008. Minister Hanafin said:

*'This new initiative will support both parents and schools in assisting our children to develop the new life skills necessary to ensure safe and worthwhile experiences with Internet technologies.'*

### **THE INTERNET SAFETY PROGRAMME CONSISTS OF THREE PARTS**

**PART 1: The //:Be SAFE\_Be WEBWISE:// lesson and resource pack for teachers and students.**

Thirteen Internet Safety lessons using participative learning methodologies such as group work, debate, discussion, role play and artwork are mapped to the Junior Certificate SPHE unit on 'Personal Safety'. All lessons are also available for download at [www.webwise.ie/LearningResources](http://www.webwise.ie/LearningResources)



## **PART 2: SPHE inservice for teachers in //:Be SAFE\_Be WEBWISE://**

A specifically designed module of in-service in the delivery of the new lessons for SPHE teachers is being facilitated regionally by the SPHE Support Service. Inservice details are available at: 01 8057718 and [www.sphe.ie](http://www.sphe.ie)

## **PART 3: //:Webwise\_Parents://**

To accompany the new eSafety lessons, the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) and the National Parents Council (NPC) have created a Parents' Internet Safety Seminar, for parents of primary and post primary children. The NPC will arrange a free Internet Safety speaker for parents' evenings. Details available at: 01 8874475 and [www.npc.ie](http://www.npc.ie)

## **ADDRESSING CYBERBULLYING**

Having access to the Internet and a social networking site has become an important part of life and self esteem for young people. Belonging to an online social network of one's peers, therefore, has become nearly ubiquitous for Irish teens. Indeed a social life would be impossible for many without their online social network; some would consider themselves social pariahs without their personal media devices and their 'online buddies'. However, just as in the real world, online relationships can fall apart, feelings can become hurt and harassment and bullying can be a feature when friendships go wrong. We are used to teaching our children that bullying is wrong, now we also need to help them to develop strategies to recognise and avoid online harassment or cyberbullying.

Bullying behaviour affects not only those immediately involved, it affects everyone in the classroom and in the school community. The three lessons dealing with cyberbullying in the //:Be SAFE\_Be WEBWISE:// lesson pack fit into a school's preventive anti-bullying programme.

**Cyberbullying is especially frightening and hurtful to a child as the tormenter is invisible and it occurs in public, visible to all one's peers online.**

As part of preventative measures in a school, teachers encourage students to make friends and promote positive wellbeing rather than just focusing on anti-bullying strategies. In SPHE class, the focus is on the whole person, building self esteem, developing communication skills, looking at issues such as friendships and the skills for establishing and maintaining relationships. The SPHE class, with its participative and experiential methodologies, is an ideal forum to enable the active participation of students whose own experience and ideas are explored helping them to understand their own behaviour on and off line and consider wiser and safer choices.

Cyberbullying is especially frightening and hurtful to a child as the tormenter is invisible and it occurs in public, visible to all one's peers online. Once children were safely out of the reach of the bully in the sanctuary of their home or bedroom but in the mobile connected world of our teenagers even these places may no longer be a safe haven from the bullies.

The first of the three lessons '*What is Cyberbullying?*' aims not only to aid an understanding of this form of bullying but to help teenagers to become aware of the damaging impact of cyberbullying on its victims. Many teens do not think of the consequences of their bullying behaviour, they are disassociated behind their screen from the impact their behaviour is having on the other person. Teenagers often say they are only 'messing' or joking and think their online comments are funny. They have a lack of awareness surrounding their online behaviour and often teens say things online that they wouldn't say in person, mainly because they can't see the other person's reaction.

For the victim, not knowing who is responsible for bullying messages can add to his or her insecurity and anxiety. The ease of the Web 2.0 tools mean that it is easy to post a nasty comment on a website for the whole world to see and, even if taken down, the added worry of content resurfacing can make it difficult for a child to cope with online bullying. The discussion exercise in Lesson 1 will help the class to understand the harmful and hurtful effects of bullying. Teenagers should be able to draw up their own action list to undertake if they are being cyberbullied and strategies to avoid being cyberbullied.

The SPHE/Webwise suite of cyberbullying lessons also addresses text and photo bullying and links to the NCTE's teen advice and advice site [www.watchyourspace.ie](http://www.watchyourspace.ie). The lessons and the watchyourspace.ie site, with its links to Childline Online, provide a forum to help students understand the consequences of bullying or harassing others online and also what to do if they are being bullied. The Childline Online site [www.childline.ie/moresupport](http://www.childline.ie/moresupport) offers teens support and a listening service on a range of issues affecting children and teenagers.

The //:Be SAFE\_Be WEBWISE:// lessons also acknowledge the critical role of the bystander in creating an anti-bullying environment. Bystanders need to understand that by observing the bullying and not taking appropriate action they are condoning the bullies' behaviour. Resources, lesson plans and detailed background notes and information guides can all be found online at [www.webwise.ie/LearningResources](http://www.webwise.ie/LearningResources).

## **ASKING FOR HELP**

Despite the downsides of how some people misuse the Internet, the overwhelming evidence shows that it is a wonderful communication and informational tool and can be used to help, inform and support people. The 'Asking for Help' lessons



set out not only to provide young people with the knowledge of available agencies that can help them, but to give them the skills to enable them to make contact with such support structures. All such resources today have a web presence and young people need to know how to access them should they need help. There are many pressures and influences on children and teenagers today and they have a right to feel safe and secure. The lessons not only help students to look at some of the life problems with which young people may need help them, but through role play and discussion to empower them to make contact with a helping agency so that they can find appropriate help and support.

### E-SAFETY RESOURCES

In order to understand how children and young people are using the Internet, it is necessary to investigate children and young people's online activities. To this end the NCTE participated in several studies that sought to gain knowledge on online risk behaviours. The findings of these surveys have been the foundation for all the Internet safety programmes and resources developed by the NCTE and Webwise.

In 2006, 848 students across the country between the ages of 9 and 16 were surveyed on their use of the Internet. In January 2007, the Webwise and Anchor Social Networking Survey of 400 teenagers identified changes in Internet use due to the arrival of social networking sites. The findings from the NCTE/ Webwise surveys inform the development of all Webwise Internet Safety educational resources, programmes, advice and tools.

An NCTE **Webwise Internet Safety Education Pack** was sent to every school in the country in March 2007. Among the resources for schools and classrooms were *The Webwise Information and Advice Booklet for Schools*, *The Webwise 2006 Survey of Children's Use of the Internet*, *The Surfwise Educational Resources* and the two hard-hitting *Watchyourspace.ie* posters. Each of the resources can be downloaded from the 'Publications Area' of Webwise.ie.

### E-SAFETY TRAINING FOR TEACHERS

The Watchyourspace.ie campaign and the new **//:Be SAFE\_Be WEBWISE://** programme address the risk areas resulting from the advent of social networking and widespread use of the new media in the lives of young adolescents. The risks associated with disclosing personal information online, cyberbullying, social influencing online and the need for digital literacy skills are all explored and addressed in the eSafety programmes of the NCTE for children and young people, their teachers and schools and their parents.

The NCTE, as part of its continuing professional development programme, is also offering a new Internet Safety course for primary and post primary teachers. The aim of the course is to embed safety messages, which happen to centre on Internet use, within everyday teaching and learning.

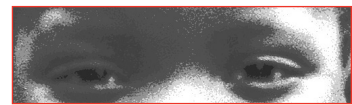
The course, **//:Integrating Internet Safety into Teaching + Learning://**, addresses Internet safety issues within the curriculum by highlighting the life-skills issues of personal safety, social responsibility, ethical and human rights issues raised because of Internet use by children and young people. Teachers are offered an array of awareness materials, lesson plans, tools and instruction materials so that they can not only become confident users of the new technologies but also incorporate Internet safety practice and strategies into their daily classroom use.

The social networking module of the course is currently being offered as a two-hour practical hand-on workshop called: **//:Bebo What's going on!://**. The full course and the two-hour workshop on social networking for teachers are available in all 21 Education Centres, details also at [www.ncte.ie/ICTTraining](http://www.ncte.ie/ICTTraining).

As education is about developing skills for life as well as skills for learning, the new Internet Safety Programme offers essential life skills for today's 'digital natives' and support the efforts of parents and teachers in their concern for the health, safety, security and well-being of our children and young people.

### REFERENCES

- **//:Be SAFE\_Be WEBWISE://** An Internet Safety Lesson and Resource Pack for SPHE Teachers published by NCTE December 2007 is available with inservice from SPHE, post primary [www.sphe.ie](http://www.sphe.ie)
- Childline, a 24-hour service for children and young people up to 18 years of age. Childline offers support to young people through the Childline listening service over the phone and through the website Childline Online. [www.childline.ie](http://www.childline.ie)
- ICT Framework, a structured approach to ICT in Curriculum and Assessment by the NCCA, The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)
- **//:Integrating Internet Safety into Teaching + Learning://** a teachers' course on Internet Safety published by NCTE, June 2007 [www.ncte.ie/ICTTraining](http://www.ncte.ie/ICTTraining)
- Learning Resources [www.webwise.ie/LearningResources](http://www.webwise.ie/LearningResources). This is the onsite resource area for teachers looking for primary and post primary classroom Internet Safety exemplars and lessons.
- National Centre for Technology in Education is an agency of the Department of Education and Science with the responsibility for managing the implementation of the Government's ICT in Schools policy. [www.ncte.ie](http://www.ncte.ie)
- National Parents Council, (primary) a partner in the **//:Be SAFE\_Be WEBWISE://** Programme is facilitating **//:Webwise\_Parents://**, the Parents' Internet Safety seminars for post primary and primary parents' evenings. [www.npc.ie](http://www.npc.ie)
- Prensky, M (2001), 'Digital natives, digital immigrants' in *On the horizon* 9(5). October, NCM University Press.
- Social, Personal and Health Education Programme (SPHE) Support Service, post primary, is facilitating inservice in the delivery of the new teaching and learning Internet safety resources **//:Be SAFE\_Be WEBWISE://**. [www.sphe.ie](http://www.sphe.ie)
- Watchyourspace.ie The Watchyourspace.ie site and poster campaign is part of the NCTE's Webwise Internet Safety initiative targeted at teenagers and young adults. [www.watchyourspace.ie](http://www.watchyourspace.ie)
- Webwise.ie is the NCTE's Internet safety initiative focusing on raising awareness of online safety issues and good practice among students, their parents and teachers. Webwise is co-funded by the Department of Education and Science and The European Commission working together to ensure safer Internet experiences for children and young people. [www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie)
- Webwise and Anchor Social Networking Survey 2007, available at [www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie)
- **//:Webwise\_Parents://** A school may book a Parents' Internet Safety Seminar by contacting the National Parents Council [www.npc.ie](http://www.npc.ie)



# Useful Resources on Children & the Internet

You can search Barnardos' Training and Resource Service library catalogue on [www.barnardos.ie](http://www.barnardos.ie)

The following resources are available from Barnardos' Training and Resource Service

**Child Abuse: Towards a Knowledge Base**

Open University Press, 2006

**Child Pornography: Crime, Computers and Society**

Willan Publishing, 2007

**Get With It! A Parent's Guide to Social-Networking Websites**

Internet Advisory Board, 2008

**Get With It! A Parent's Guide to Filtering Technologies**

Internet Advisory Board, 2007

**Internet Safety Pack**

Webwise, 2006

**Just One Click: Sexual Abuse of Children and Young People Through the Internet and Mobile Telephone Technology**

Barnardo's, 2004

**Paedophiles, Child Abuse and the Internet: A Practical Guide to Identification, Action and Prevention**

Radcliffe Publishing Ltd, 2007

**The Seduction of Children: Empowering Parents and Teachers to Protect Children From Sexual Abuse**

Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2004

**Webwise Survey of Children's Use of the Internet: Investigating Online Risk Behaviour**

National Centre for Technology in Education, 2006

**Now available free from Barnardos' Training and Resource Service**

**CHILDREN AND TECHNOLOGY**

This comprehensive tool-kit aims to provide assistance to those who wish to introduce information and communications technology (ICT) into their services. The tool-kit provides information on a range of topics from the role of technology in child development, choosing hardware and software and ergonomics and Internet safety. Using case studies and examples it also provides ideas and practical advice on the implementation of ICT into the learning environment.

Free (+ €3 p+p) ISBN 1 898662 07 X

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# New Titles

**This list refers to resources added to the library stock of Barnardos' Training and Resource Service. For a further list of resources on a specific topic please contact us.**

(Please note that these titles are not sold by Barnardos)

## **CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

**Boys adrift: the five factors driving the growing epidemic of unmotivated boys and underachieving young men**

Basic Books, New York, 2007.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

**Child protection, domestic violence and parental substance misuse: family experiences and effective practice.**

J. Kingsley, Philadelphia, 2007.

## **CHILDREN IN CARE**

**Direct Work – Social Work with Children and Young People in Care.**

British Association for Adoption and Fostering, 2008.

## **DIVERSITY**

**An Education Toolkit for the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008**

National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI), 2008

## **DOMESTIC ABUSE**

**Domestic Violence and Abuse Experienced by Children and Young People Living in Families with Alcohol Problems.**

European Network for Children Affected by Risky Environments within the Family ENCARE, 2007.

## **EQUALITY**

**Stereotyping of Young People Resource Pack. Give Stereotyping the Boot.**

National Youth Council of Ireland, 2008.

## **JUVENILE JUSTICE**

**National Youth Justice Strategy 2008–2010**

Irish Youth Justice Service, 2008.

## **PARENTING**

**Working with parents of young people: research, policy and practice**

J. Kingsley Publishers, Philadelphia, 2007

**Kids' Need... Parenting Cards for Families and the People who Work With Them.**

Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007.

## **PLAY THERAPY**

**If you Turned into a Monster: Transformation through Play: A Body-Centred Approach to Play Therapy.**

Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London, 2007.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS**

**Helping a Child with Nonverbal Learning Disorder or Asperger's Disorder: A Parent's Guide.**

New Harbinger Publications, Oakland, CA, 2007.

*(All photographs posed by models)*