SAFER INTERNET

FOR CHILDREN

QUALITATIVE STUDY

IN 29 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

NATIONAL ANALYSIS : IRELAND

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General Information Society and Media

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INTRODUCTION

❖ **The European Commission – Directorate-General Information Society and Media - has commissioned OPTEM and its European partners to carry out a qualitative study on the subject "Safer Internet for Children" (1).**

❖ **This study covers 29 countries (the 27 Member States, as well as Iceland and Norway) and it involves children :**

  ➢ Boys aged 9 to 10 years

  ➢ Girls aged 9 to 10 years

  ➢ Boys aged 12 to 14 years

  ➢ Girls aged 12 to 14 years

All of whom have the possibility to access the Internet (although not necessarily at their home place) and use it at least once per month.

❖ **In this context, the main objectives of the present study can be summarised as follows:**

  ➢ Improve knowledge of childrens' Internet usage, as well as mobile phone usage (by those who own a mobile phone).

  ➢ Broadly identify and improve the publics' knowledge regarding childrens' on-line behaviour.

  ➢ Improve knowledge regarding childrens' perceptions of risk and safety related questions.

  ➢ The results of the study are to be used to contribute to designing the Safer Internet Programme, and to increase the impact of awareness building actions.

❖ **The methodology used is that of group discussions – with, in each country, four groups of children** (one in each of the above categories).

❖ **This report constitutes the national analysis of results of the section of the study conducted in Ireland by TNS mrbi, the Irish permanent member of the above-mentioned network of partners.**

❖ **It includes, in the Annexes**

  ➢ The composition of the groups

  ➢ The discussion guide used by the moderators

(1) Study conducted under the aegis of the Framework Contract Eurobarometer "Qualitative Studies", set up and managed by Directorate-General Communication A/4.

CHAPTER I

THE INTERNET AND INTERNET APPLICATIONS

I.1 LEARNING TO USE THE INTERNET

❖ Overall a significant amount of self-learning or learning directly from their peers or siblings was evident. In addition, the majority of respondents in all four groups continued to learn more about the Internet from computer classes provided to them in school, albeit peers appeared to have more influence.

❖ Amongst boys and girls aged 9-10, the following patterns emerged:

➢ The majority of respondents in the main claimed to be self-taught. Despite the fact that respondents are taught how to use the Internet in school. It was predominantly felt, that most learning was attributed to "learning through doing".

➢ Those in the younger groups largely attributed their learning to their school firstly. A number of respondents attended computer classes as early as primary school where they learned how to use the Internet. Their understanding and use of the Internet was a gradual progression. Their teachers also contributed to their Internet education.

➢ Some younger respondents also learned how to use the Internet directly from their parents or their elder brothers and sisters.

➢ A couple of respondents in the younger male groups have also used an Internet Café to research information online.

❖ Amongst girls aged 12-14 years old, the following patterns emerged:

➢ The older groups appeared more independent. They contrasted with the younger discussion groups as they did not consider their parents as a source of learning to use the Internet. They were largely self-taught or learned a great deal from their peers.

   "You pick it up as you go along" (Boys group, 12-14 years)

➢ These groups contrasted with the younger groups as they do not depend on their parents to use the Internet. It emerged that parents were almost dependent on them with regards to their own learning and development of computer skills.

   "My parents do not teach me, I teach them" (Girls group, 12-14 years)

   "In primary school, I learned how to use the Internet" (Girls group, 12-14 years)

➢ The majority of female and male respondents noted that computer lessons in schools were provided once a week, which aided their general computer literacy.

I.2 INTENSITY OF USAGE

❖ Overall respondents across all discussion groups used the Internet regularly (two to three times a week). Interestingly, the older respondents Internet usage was higher compared to their younger counterparts. Respondents' intensity of usage varied amongst the discussion groups. On average, respondents would spend at least forty minutes to an hour per Internet session. The older female group in particular, appeared to spend longer on the Internet for socialising purposes. On the otherhand, the younger female discussion groups were more inclined to research the Internet for more educational content, whereas both the older and younger boys groups enjoyed downloading and playing games, music etc.

➢ In the girls group aged 9-10, each respondent had used the Internet at least once in the past week. The maximum usage was three times a week.

➢ On average, respondents in the younger groups would spend between one to two hours on the Internet per day.

➢ Female respondents in the younger groups tended to adhere more to their parents rules when using the Internet. It also emerged that parents were mostly nearby whenever they were using the Internet. These younger girls appeared more responsible and trustworthy than their younger male counterparts, who almost seemed to seek out obscure or dangerous aspects online.

"My Mum is really protective and she doesn't want me on any dangerous websites like chatrooms" (Girls group, 9-10 years)

❖ Slightly higher usage evident for boys aged 9-10 with an average usage of 2-3 days a week. A couple of male respondents stated that they would use the Internet everyday for approximately a half an hour. They appeared to use Internet regularly to play on-line games, as opposed to educational purposes.

➢ On average, male respondents used the Internet for approx 40 minutes to an hour per Internet session. A minority stated that they would spend up to two hours playing games on the Internet.

❖ Amongst the older discussion groups, the girls used the Internet regularly and like their mobiles the Internet appeared to be a "must have" accessory. All of the respondents within this discussion group had used a social networking site called "www.bebo.com", whereby they created their own blog and posted their photos on the Internet.

➢ Girls discussion groups aged 12-14, stated that they would use the Internet regularly during the weekdays after returning from school.

➢ On average respondents would use the Internet for an hour or more per session. Two respondents revealed that they had spent approx 8-10 hours on the Internet per week.

➢ The older female age group appeared to spend longer on the Internet for socialising purposes. Each respondent spent the majority of their time on Bebo to interact with their friends by uploading messages and checking out their newly taken pictures from the weekend. They also stated how they used MSN (instant messaging) regularly, which was a quick way of keeping in contact with their friends.

❖ It emerged that the boys aged 12-14, used the Internet three to four times a week for an estimated hour to an hour and half per session. MSN (instant messaging), You Tube and downloading games and music were the most commonly used websites or activities.

I.3 FREEDOM OF USAGE

❖ Respondents were subsequently asked whether they could use the Internet as freely as they wished or whether their parents restricted their usage. A significant difference emerged between the younger and older groups. Older groups tended to have more freedom regarding Internet access. In addition, boys in general across the groups were less open with parents regarding what they were accessing.

➢ Parents of girls aged 9-10 were more likely to supervise their children when they went online or at least be in close proximity. Most younger respondents stated that their parents were nearby when they used the Internet. In some cases their parents would sit with them when they used the Internet, which helped parents to closely monitor their children.

➢ Younger respondents, especially girls, in general were open with the parents regarding what they were accessing online.

"I usually show my mum or dad what websites I am on" (Girls group, 9-10 years)

➢ Respondents throughout the groups also mentioned that they were allowed to use the Internet once their homework was complete. However, the younger groups especially recalled that they were restricted to a time limit when using the computer.

"I'm not allowed to spend too long on the Internet, because it is bad for my eyes"
(Girls group, 9-10 years)

➢ Some of the younger groups had parental control software on their home computers which restricted access to certain sites. Parents also monitoring emails particularly in the younger groups especially the girls.

"My mum checks my emails" (Girls group, 9-10 years)

"I'm only allowed to go on it about three times a week for a half an hour"
(Boys group, 9-10 years)

➢ In general, respondents in all groups were restricted from accessing certain sites due to their content. Adult websites (such as sexually explicit websites) and chatrooms were mostly forbidden due to their content. Restrictions were mainly placed on younger groups.

"They don't want me going into adult websites or chatrooms" (Boys group, 9-10 years)

➢ However, despite these restrictions amongst the younger groups, boys especially appeared to have dabbled in forbidden sites.

➢ Another respondent recalled how he was forbidden from playing games or downloading games on-line.

➢ Overall, the majority of respondents in the younger groups felt that any rules or restrictions introduced by their parents were in the main justified and for their own benefit (especially for chatrooms and adult websites)

❖ In the boys group, aged 12-14 years the following limitations or rules are cited :

  ➢ Respondents were forbidden from accessing chatrooms or pornographic websites. One of the main reasons that parents restricted them from chatrooms was an attempt to stop them from meeting strangers or "weirdoes" online.

  ➢ It emerged, that schools had also introduced the latter. Respondents stated that websites such as Bebo, You Tube, MySpace and MSN are blocked in schools. One boy recalled how an alarm went off when he tried to log on to www.bebo.com

  ➢ It was also noted, that many of these rules had been introduced in an effort to combat cyberbulling in schools.

  ➢ In addition, the majority of respondents agreed with some measures which had been introduced in their schools such as blocking keyword searches, which forbids the participants from accessing adult websites such as Bebo, MSN, You Tube and MySpace. However, the majority of respondents would generally access the aforementioned sites at home.

❖ In the older groups aged 12-14 years, it appeared that limited online restrictions existed. They quickly dismissed the idea of their parents introducing rules or limits when using the Internet, as they felt they were old enough to decide what to access and not access. There was a fear of curtailment in the older groups.

❖ It is important to note, that a clear contrast amongst the older and younger groups emerged. The older groups appeared more rebellious and mischievous in nature whereas the younger groups in particular the girls group, abided in the main by their parent rules. Albeit boys still tended to be a bit more mischievous.

I.4 SPECIFIC INTERNET APPLICATIONS

❖ The access of online applications was different across the groups with age and gender distinctions evident.

➢ The most commonly used application amongst the younger groups aged 9-10 years was playing online games. The latter was more prominent amongst the boys group. Boys and girls also tended to search for information related to schoolwork (wikipedia and c/bbc.com were commonly used). Like the older groups MSN instant messaging and blogs / homepages (Bebo) were more prevalent amongst girls. Note www.bebo.com is supposed to be a teenager or older website. While both younger genders surf the Internet, in general, it was more prevalent amongst boys. The latter relates to more dubious websites which boys seek out or their peers pass on.

➢ The older girls group appeared to engage in even more online "social" communications such as Bebo and MSN compared to their younger counterparts. These sites are seen as a part of modern socialising where friends can upload their pictures and posts for their friends. It also appeared that the girls aged 12-14 used instant messaging (MSN) and emails more so than the male group, again the role of socialising online is more prevalent for older females.

➢ The older boys like their younger counterparts liked to surf the net in general (again dubious material appeared to be accessed.) Instant messaging was more prevalent in the older groups compared to the younger groups. Online games also a key past time. Some email usage evident in older groups. Slightly more downloading of material evident in boys groups, especially, the older groups.

SPECIFIC INTERNET APPLICATIONS * Applications used **Applications used most	Girls 9-10	Boys 9-10	Girls 12-14	Boys 12-14	Total
Searching for information as part of my school work	7*/6**	5*/0**	7*/0**	6*/0**	25*/6**
Searching for information on subjects which interest me/surfing for fun	5/4	7/1	3/0	7/4	22/9
Sending and receiving emails	3/0	1/0	7/0	3/0	14/0
Using instant messaging (MSN)/ chatting with friends	4/0	1/0	8/6	5/1	17/7
Engage in open chatrooms	0/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	1/0
Creating my own blog/homepage & posting my own texts, photos, music on	1/0	1/0	8/4	3/0	13/4
Reading and responding to friends' blogs/ homepages	2/0	1/0	6/3	3/0	12/3
Reading and responding to blogs/homepages of someone I have never met	1/0	1/0	0/0	0/0	2/0
Playing on-line games	6/4	10/8	3/0	4/1	23/13
Downloading music, films, videos, games or other files	2/0	7/0	8/0	4/1	21/1
Sharing files (music, films, videos, games or others)	1/1	1/0	6/0	2/0	10/1
Sharing photos	0/0	0/0	5/1	1/0	6/1
Downloading ring tones/ images for my mobile phone	0/0	4/1	4/0	1/0	9/0
Taking part in competitions	0/0	5/0	0/0	1/0	6/0
Making phone calls through the Internet	0/0	0/0	1/0	0/0	1/0
Total	**32/15**	**44/10**	**67/14**	**39/7**	**182/46**

CHAPTER II

MOBILE PHONE AND MOBILE PHONE USAGE

II.1   MOBILE PHONE USAGE

❖ All the older groups owned prepay mobiles, with a couple of the younger groups also owners.

➢ Contacting friends, arranging social gatherings and parental contact were the key reasons for usage. SMS clearly were more popular compared to voice. Cost and social trends were the key deciding factors for SMS.

• It emerged that the majority of respondents would send and receive SMS texts frequently and would only receive calls from their parents. They also stated that they would call their parents or friends only in emergencies.

• It is important to note, that amongst the younger groups both male and female, a smaller amount of them owned a mobile phone, but the aspiration for a mobile was clearly evident, with parents blocking ownership until their children were older.

"My parents don't want me to get a phone until I'm eleven"
(Girls group, aged 9-10 years)

"I'd be playing games on it all day" (Boys group, aged 9-10 years)

❖ The following mobile applications were mainly used:

➢ All of the respondents in the girls group, 12-14 years used Bluetooth. This was used to send ringtones or music to friends handsets, without having to pay for the downloads (an element of piracy evident).

➢ The majority of the groups interviewed did not avail of the Internet application provided on their phones as they deemed it as too expensive. In addition, screen size was also a barrier.

"It costs 63 cent per minute (WAP Usage).....it uses your credit too quickly"
(Girls group, aged 10-12 years)

❖ While respondents would seldomly send picture messages, the actual taking of pictures and either showing them to friends or uploading them to bebo.com was prevalent. The reason for not sending MMS was mainly due to cost.

❖ When asked whether they would participate in online chats using their mobiles. All respondents clearly stated that they would not engage in such activity. A couple of reasons evident; in general chatrooms regarded as dubious with older people (weirdos) pretending to be kids. But more importantly the cost was too much and functionality not yet available.

MOBILE PHONE APPLICATIONS USED

	Girls 9-10	Boys 9-10	Girls 12-14	Boys 12-14	Total
Making and receiving calls	4*/2**	4*/3**	8*/1**	7*/5**	23*/11**
Sending/ receiving SMSs	4/2	4/1	8/8	6/1	22/12
Taking photos/images	3/1	2/0	8/3	7/0	20/4
Sending / receiving/ sharing images	2/0	3/0	8/4	7/1	20/5
Connecting to the Internet through my mobile	0/0	2/0	0/0	3/0	5/0
Total	**13/5**	**15/4**	**32/16**	**30/7**	**90/32**

*applications used ** applications used most

❖ As per the table, detailed above, it emerged that respondents most commonly sent or received text messages. There are still a higher percentage of respondents using SMS and MMS texts compared to voice services. However, the usage of voice phonecalls (making and receiving calls) is increasing. Older groups use more voice services compared to their younger counterparts. The main reason that respondents chose text messages over voice services is mainly due to cheaper costs and ease of usage. A number of respondents also send free web texts to their friends online.

❖ WAP usage is more prevalent amongst boys, for checking football results etc.

II.2 DEGREE OF FREEDOM IN USING MOBILE PHONES

❖ In the main, there existed less rules for mobile phone usage compared to the Internet.

❖ Some respondents in the younger groups especially were dependent on their parents topping up their mobile phone credit –hence some form of a restriction.

❖ The main restriction by parents centred on banning of prank calls or offensive SMS'. However, enforcement appeared to be difficult as many, especially boys and older girls had undertaken such behaviour or at least known someone on the receiving end.

❖ The younger male groups also stated that their parents forbid them from taking disturbing or offensive pictures with their mobile phone.

"I am not allowed to take bad pictures with my mobile phone" (Boys group, aged 9-10 years)

❖ When respondents were asked how they would react if their parents introduced new rules when using their phone, they quickly dismissed this notion. Note SIM cards are often free in Ireland, and older respondents especially claimed they would simply buy another SIM or handset if too many restrictions were introduced

"I wouldn't listen to them if they tried to take my phone off me" (Girls group, aged 10-12 years)

❖ It is important to note that the older groups appeared to be more independent in nature compared to their younger counterparts.

"I have my own password so my parents can't read my text messages"
                                                    (Girls group, aged 12-14 years)

CHAPTER III

PERCEPTIONS OF INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE RELATED PROBLEMS AND RISKS

III. 1   SPONTANEOUS MENTIONS OF PROBLEMS AND RISKS

❖   Problems that were mentioned spontaneously regarding the Internet included:

  ➢   Viruses (pop ups, downloading music)

  ➢   Scams (e.g. competitions, free offers etc.)

  ➢   Chatrooms (Engaging in online relations with a stranger)

    •   Cyberbulling (e.g. Instant messaging, Bebo, etc.)

❖   Viruses:

  ➢   The majority of respondents interviewed stated that they would block all pop-ups as they generally possessed an element of danger or risk such as contracting a virus.

  ➢   Furthermore, it was widely held by all respondents interviewed that they would avoid flashing icons, as generally there was a gimmick or trick involved. Girls group aged 12-14 and boys groups aged 9-10 and 12-14 also noted that viruses can be easily contracted when downloading free music or films from peer to peer networking sites such as Limewire. The majority of respondents appeared to be well educated and fully aware of the consequences of their actions, with boys appearing to have most experiences of viruses.

❖   Scams:

  ➢   A high prevalence of pop-up messages, which offered the lucky winner a holiday or a cash prize, were mentioned. Respondents did not appear to be under any illusion when it came to the Internet. Most claimed that they would close such a message immediately as it was deemed to either be a money making scam (or indeed a way of contracting a virus). It should be noted that in many cases respondents have learned about these risks through personal experience (such as contracting a virus) or their friends or peers have advised them. Some learnings evident from teachers and parents

❖   Chatrooms:

  ➢   Chatrooms were universally regarded as problematic in all groups. Although all claimed they would not frequent chatrooms, a number especially in the older groups appeared to have personal experience or at least experience via their peers of chatrooms. It should also be noted that www.bebo.com functions as a kind of chatroom, and was deemed to be more trendy and fashionable by comparison. Public profiles on www.bebo.com could be responded to and indeed the older girls had banned some males after lude comments.

  ➢   Chatrooms were cited as a risk or problem on the Internet. This was stated in particular by the younger girl group aged 9-10.The younger groups both male and female were familiar with the dangers associated with chatrooms due to their parents' advice.

    "My Mum is really protective and she doesn't want me going on any dangerous websites like chatrooms" (Girls group, aged 9-10)

    "Chatrooms are very scary". (Girls group, aged 9-10)

"My mum said that if you ever go on to a chat room and they ask where you live, don't tell them……" (Boys group, aged 9-10 years)

❖ Cyberbullying:

➢ Cyberbullying appeared to be a prevalent theme across all four discussion groups. It was most commonly associated with Bebo, MSN instant messaging and uploading offensive pictures online. It appeared more prominent in the older groups in particular. This may be due to high interaction with online social communications. Respondents in the both the older groups had witnessed cyberbulling and some older females acknowledged that they had inadvertently bullied other class mates via MSN instant messaging or bebo.com.

❖ Respondents in the eldest girl group aged 12-14, had the strongest opinions with regards to chatrooms, with most classifying people who engaged in chatroom conversations as "weirdos" or even paedophiles.

"You might think that you are talking to another person your age, but you could be talking to   this 80 year old with sagging skin". (Girls aged12-14 years)

❖ When asked, how they were aware of these problems/risks. Many cited that their parents or their schools had warned them of the dangers associated with chatrooms, but personal and peer experience was evident.

➢ Children throughout the groups also noted that they were shown a video in school, which highlighted the dangers associated with the Internet and chatrooms in particular. Other respondents noted that they were given a computer test before they were allowed to access the Internet to ensure that they were sufficiently prepared.

The following problems associated with Mobile Phones emerged:

❖ Inaccurate Advertisements:

➢ One major problem cited by all discussion groups was inadvertent subscription to SMS/MMS messaging services. A common complaint was sending an SMS to a third party mobile phone company to receive a ringtone. However, unbeknownst to the respondent they were signed up to a subscription based service, thus using up respondents call credit.

"My friend had to buy a new sim card because she kept receiving ring-tones from "Veronica's ring tones" which was eating up all her credit" (Girls group, aged 9-10 years)

Similar such incidents occurred amongst both younger and older respondents.

❖ Bullying or Prank Phonecalls:

➢ Girls in the older group appeared to receive more prank phone calls or inappropriate text messages. Generally, these calls were practical jokes from their siblings or their brothers' friends. In most cases, the older age groups would not tell their parents, instead they would be more likely to confide in their friends etc. It emerged that they would tell their parents as a last resort (e.g. a really bad experience) for fear of losing their mobile phones.

➢ Girls in the younger age bracket 9-10 years also received prank phone calls.

"Sometimes I get prank phone calls from my friends in school. They put on a scary voice." (Girls aged, 9-10 years)

➢ Another respondent aged 9-10 also recalled how she received a disturbing text message from an unknown number. The message said:

"I'm going to kill you...." (Girls aged, 9-10 years)

➢ This respondent recalled how she told her dad who tried to trace the number. He however was unsuccessful in tracing the caller and he contacted the Gardaí regarding this matter.

➢ One respondent from the younger male group recalled how his sister received a disturbing text saying:

"I know what you are wearing..........."(Boys aged 9-10 years)

➢ The respondent's sister reacted by telling her parents. Incidentally, it turned out to be one of her friends messing.

❖ The younger age group appeared to still rely on their parents and claimed they would tell their parents of such nuance calls. They were not rebelling against their parents instead they were confiding in them.

❖ Overall, the Internet is viewed by children as having more risk associated with it than mobile phones. However, some issues of concern still exist for mobile phones.

❖ Respondents were then asked whether these problems have changed how they use the Internet. The following points emerged:

➢ Overall, while the majority were aware of certain problems and risks related to the Internet, all have grown up with the Internet and as such grown accustomed to such issues. In addition, most feel they take adequate precautions when using the Internet. The most changes were registered amongst older groups who had stopped using chatrooms, and other dubious sites. For younger respondents the state of play appeared more the norm:

"No, it's always been the same way" (Boys group, aged 9-10)

➢ However, parents appeared to be more vigilant and protective of the younger siblings and female Internet activity overall. Some respondents in the younger female group mentioned that a parental control software had been installed on their home computer. This restricted children from accessing inappropriate websites. Furthermore, parents would have to enter a password to access these sites. Also the monitoring of emails was evident amongst the younger groups, the female group in particular.

"My mum checks all my emails before I can read them" (Girls group, aged 9-10)

"My mum reads any strange emails, but I can read the emails from my friends"
(Girls group, aged 9-10)

➢ While respondents claimed to be allowed to freely access the Internet at home, it is important to note that parents are generally close by to respondents when using the Internet. (i.e. Note home computers were often located in the living room or the kitchen) This point applies in particular to the younger groups.

➢ In addition, schools appeared extremely strict with regard to Internet access. Sites such as Bebo, MSN, MySpace and You Tube are usually blocked in schools. In addition, the majority of respondents interviewed recalled taking a test before they had permission to access the Internet. The test consisted of a number of standard questions, which questioned students' Internet intentions. Respondents recalled how they had to get 100% in the test before they could access the Internet. Respondents also noted how their computer class was supervised by a teacher at all times. In many cases respondents were instructed by their teachers regularly what websites to access, again this applies to the younger groups in particular.

❖ Respondents were subsequently asked whether the problems cited have affected how they use their mobile phone:

➢ In the main, it appeared that the above problems have not restricted how young people use their mobile. Respondents in the younger female groups mentioned that they were reluctant to answer blocked numbers or private numbers. This was largely because the caller had concealed their identity.

➢ The older groups appeared heavily dependent on their mobile. It seems harder to control these older groups' usage. They appear to adopt adult like behaviour and consequently they rebel against any restrictions placed on their mobile and Internet usage. The aforementioned problems associated with mobiles have not curtailed their usage.

➢ It is important to note that, one respondent in the older female groups stated that she is allowed to take pictures with her phone, but she has been forbidden by her parents to send these pictures to others or upload these pictures online.

➢ Other females in the older groups stated that their parents would randomly check their texts as a safety measure. However, this behaviour annoyed the girls. The older respondents interviewed were very keen to maintain their privacy especially from their parents. One female respondent went as far to put a password on her phone.

➢ The older male respondents stated that with the introduction of 3G, WAP, Instant Messaging and SMS', their mobile habits have indeed changed, but rather than restricting their usage, instead it has actually expanded their overall usage.

III.2 PROBLEMS AND RISKS RELATED TO SPECIFIC APPLICATIONS

❖ Respondents were subsequently asked to complete an exercise based on their perceptions of the following applications, regarding whether they was scary or intrusive.

PROBLEMS/ RISKS RELATED TO INTERNET USAGE

	Girls 9-10	Boys 9-10	Girls 12-14	Boys 12-14	Total
Searching for information as part of my school work	0*/0**	3*/0**	0*/0**	0*/0**	3*/0**
Searching for information on subjects which interest me/surf for fun	3/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	3/0
Sending and receiving emails	4/1	7/0	2/0	2/1	15/2
Using instant messaging (MSN)/ chatting with friends	2/1	4/0	2/0	1/0	9/1
Engage in open chatrooms	7/4	8/8	8/5	7/3	30/20
Creating my own blog/homepage & posting my own texts, photos, music on	6/2	6/3	2/0	1/0	15/5
Reading and responding to friends' blogs/ homepages	3/2	3/0	3/0	0/0	9/2
Reading and responding to blogs/homepages of someone I have never met	4/2	5/0	4/0	5/4	18/6
Playing on-line games	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
Downloading music, films, videos, games or other files	5/1	3/0	3/0	0/0	11/1
Sharing files (music, films, videos, games or others)	5/1	3/0	2/0	3/0	13/1
Sharing photos	4/2	4/0	2/0	2/0	12/2

Downloading ring tones/ images for my mobile phone	6/2	1/0	3/0	1/0	11/2
Taking part in competitions	6/1	2/0	3/0	1/0	12/1
Making phone calls through the Internet	5/1	5/0	2/0	0/0	12/1
Total	**60/20**	**54/11**	**36/5**	**23/8**	**173/44**

* scary applications ** scariest applications

PROBLEMS/ RISKS RELATED TO MOBILE PHONE USAGE

	Girls 9-10	**Boys 9-10**	**Girls 12-14**	**Boys 12-14**	**Total**
Making and receiving calls	3*/3**	5*/1**	3*/0**	0*/0**	11*/4**
Sending/ receiving SMSs	3/2	5/0	2/0	2/0	12/2
Taking photos/images	0/0	2/0	3/0	4/2	9/2
Sending / receiving/ sharing images	1/1	6/0	3/0	5/3	15/4
Connecting to the Internet through my mobile	2/1	5/1	6/0	2/2	13/4
Total	**12/7**	**23/2**	**17/0**	**13/7**	**62/16**

* scary applications ** scariest applications

❖ Respondents were then asked to discuss the problems, which they associated with the Internet as cited above, in greater detail.

➢ All respondents expressed a deep concern regarding chatrooms. They believed that this individual application could involve the highest level of danger or risk. All respondents claimed that they would avoid entering online chatrooms. Younger groups were particularly wary of chatrooms, having been guided by parents, teachers and indeed the media. Despite older group's claims that they have not entered chatrooms, many had experience or at least "heard" of them.

"Chatrooms are very scary……. You could meet people online that you have never met and they could be dangerous. They might even be criminals" (Girls group, aged 9-10)

"They could try and kidnap you, if you gave all your personal details away" (Girls group, aged 9-10)

"You could be talking to weirdo's online"   (Boys aged 12-14 years)

"You might think that you are talking to another person your age, but you could be talking to this 80 year old with sagging skin". (Girls aged12-14 years)

➢ It should also be noted that females overall were more concerned and had more negative associations with chatrooms, not surprising given their social usage of the Internet and the associated negative issues.

➢ In line with concerns regarding chatrooms, the majority of respondents were also dubious regarding reading and responding to unknown blogs/ homepages. Again the potential to interact with fake people ("weirdos") and the resultant risks mentioned.

➢ Interestingly, the younger respondents saw more risks with creating their own blogs and posting photos or texts etc. online. There was a perception amongst the younger groups that engaging in online communications could be quite daunting or risky. Note most had not yet reached the age of "pure" social networking yet. Also not all respondents understood how it worked or that you could keep your profile on private. It emerged from the discussion group that respondents must be a minimum of 13 years to join www.bebo.com website. Parents and schools have in the main restricted access until the latter age.

➢ Another application that proved potentially risky for the younger groups was participating in online competitions. This was largely due to their fraudulent nature. Respondents may have been stung previously (either a virus had corrupted the computer or the competition was a fake).

➢ Problems from email communications were mainly confined to the younger groups, again these individuals did not really communicate via email to any great extent, thus it was more a perceived threat. However, some instances of spam emails gave rise to concerns.

➢ Furthermore, the younger discussion groups appeared to be more apprehensive with regard to a number of online applications such as downloading music, films, videos, games or sharing files. This may be largely attributable to the fact that their parents prohibit them from downloading files due to viruses. Girls group aged 9-10 were the only group that did not engage in downloading music due to their parents' restrictions. Older groups were aware of virus risks and as such searched out "clean" sites from their peers.

➢ According to the four groups, playing online games was cited as the safest application provided for the youngsters on the Internet. This application does not appear to pose a threat in the minds of users.

➢ The open surfing of the Internet can also lead to undesirable images/video being accessed and subsequently shared by children. You Tube was particularly mentioned in this regard.

"I saw a violent clip on You Tube of a guy getting kicked in his face"
(Boys group, aged 12-14)

"I saw a clip of a young baby on the ground on You Tube"
(Boys group, aged 12-14)

❖ Furthermore, respondents were subsequently asked to discuss the problems, which they associated with mobiles in greater detail

➢ According to both the older and younger male groups they deemed taking photos or images or sharing images on their mobile phone as potentially dangerous. Some respondents stated that offensive pictures were taken in their school and uploaded online. A particular reference to cyberbullying was noted. In some schools teachers openly discussed and lectured on bullying in particular cyberbullying. The older boys group in particular discussed this area more intently compared to the other groups.

"If you take pictures of someone and they don't like it, you can put it up on the Internet"
(Boys group, aged 12-14)

"*Some lads in school take pictures of someone after a fight and then they uploaded it to the Internet"* (Boys group, aged 12-14)

➢ According to the younger boy's discussion group. They deemed making or receiving calls or sending or receiving text messages as problematic or scary. This may be largely attributable to prank calls or disturbing text messages, which they received. Generally, prank calls were made by people or friends whom they personally knew.

➢ Note also how the older female group stated that connecting to the Internet through their mobile could be potentially dangerous due to the content of unfamiliar websites. Overall, a low level of internet access from mobiles was noted.

CHAPTER IV

REACTIONS TO THE PRESENTATION OF SIX CATEGORIES OF PROBLEMS AND RISKS

IV.1 TRUTHFULNESS OF INFORMATION FOUND ON THE INTERNET

❖ Overall the Internet was deemed less trustworthy compared to other sources. It should be noted that this view is website driven and should be understood in the context of what sites children are actually accessing (i.e. their frame of reference). Note research for school purposes is only one aspect of Internet usage and is very much outweighed by social and entertainment usage. Thus the latter will offset views on trust.

❖ However, the Internet does have the attraction of speed, ease of access and accessibility to sensitive subject matter. It is also free (at least for children). On the whole, it fits with youngsters' lifestyles.

❖ Spontaneous mentions existed regarding deceitful or inaccurate information found on the Internet included fraudulent quizzes and competitions (note related to the type of sites they accessed.)

"Congratulations you are the 1 millionth customer you have won a grand prize"
(Girls aged 9-10 years)

"You have won a holiday" (Girls aged 12-14 years)

❖ The latter's problem centred around contracting a virus instead of actually winning any money (i.e. fraud and viruses). Both the younger and older groups were wary and sceptical of claims via pop-ups, emails and banner ads.

❖ The aforementioned scenario is similar to the problems with dubious third party operators, mobile company offers.

❖ Only a couple of older boys mentioned different information (e.g. dates of events or inaccurate information on different websites, which concerned them regarding the quality of information online). Most had not encountered such problems with many just quoting the source on any school projects.

❖ Respondents from the younger boys group aged 9-10 felt somewhat cheated due to inaccurate price descriptions when they downloaded music (i.e. turned out to be expensive).

❖ Another example of inaccurate or misleading online descriptions centred in the music sphere, where downloads were promoted as free of charge, but actually resulted in a charge.

"Once my sister downloaded a movie on the Internet, which she thought was free. When my parents got the bill they were charged €150". (Girls aged 9-10 years)

The respondent revealed that her parents subsequently curtailed her sister's Internet usage.

❖ Respondents were subsequently encouraged to name the websites, which they deemed as credible or trustworthy and also those which they deemed as untrustworthy. The following sites emerged:

➢ Generally, respondents deem educational sites such as wikipedia.org as a credible and reliable source of information. Girls in the younger group aged 9-10 mentioned www.cbbc.com as a reliable source, which acts as an online book club for youngsters.

➢ Example of inaccurate or incredible websites mentioned were, theonion.com, as an inaccurate web source.

➢ In addition, the older male groups noted that limewire changed the names of songs on their website. Therefore, respondents downloaded the wrong song due to inaccurate labelling.

➢ The younger male groups also mentioned that some football websites such as the "Manchester United" website displayed inaccurate information regarding the date of their matches.

❖ Respondents were subsequently asked to compare the Internet to other sources such as teachers, newspapers and television:

➢ It was widely held amongst all four discussion groups that books and newspapers were to some extent a superior information source to the Internet. The main reason centred on their perceptions that books and newspapers are researched more thoroughly with skilled authors or journalists behind the content.

➢ Respondents in the younger groups also deemed teachers as a more reliable source than the Internet. The younger groups appeared to place a higher level of trust in their teachers than their peers. They valued their teachers' opinions more so than the Internet.

➢ Overall, the older groups appeared to be somewhat more sceptical of teachers. However, after some contemplation, the older groups deemed their teachers as a more reliable source, however again it depended on the particular teacher. Some suggested that teachers' views on certain "personal interest" subjects can be biased.

❖ On a whole, respondents agreed that the Internet lacked a degree of credibility, however in the main this was related to the social and entertainment sites which they are using.

IV.2   POTENTIALLY SHOCKING CONTENTS

❖ Respondents were asked to spontaneously mention whether they felt they were at risk of being sent or coming across deeply shocking content that included violent, brutal scenes, rascism or pornography.

❖ The majority of girls in the younger groups aged 9-10 had not encountered much deeply shocking contents, mainly due to the restrictions placed at home and parental control.

❖ One of the younger females who had encountered undesirable content recalled how she was researching her family crest for a school project when she was unwillingly directed to a pornographic website. The respondent was perturbed by such an experience.

"It could put you off going back on to the Internet for days". (Girls aged 9-10 years)

❖ Both the boys groups appeared to be more mischievous in nature. They almost seemed to seek out bad content. One male respondent aged 9-10 noted how he accidentally logged on to the playboy website and saw pornographic image. Other male respondents noted how pop-ups appeared on the sides of various websites. One such example, which they cited, was www.bebo.com.

❖ The older male groups appeared to log onto You Tube more often. One respondent recalled watching violent clips:

"There was a video on You Tube of some guy getting kicked in the face. He was almost dead"
(Boys aged, 12-14 years)

There is a picture of a guy after a fight in school uploaded online" (Boys aged, 12-14 years)

❖ Respondents were then asked who they would tell if a similar scenario happened to them. It appeared that the older female groups would confide in friends, siblings and teachers more than parents. Ultimately, it depended on the seriousness of the issue. However, it was widely felt amongst the older groups that they would tell their parents as a last resort. Older respondents feared curtailment of their Internet usage at home, if they mentioned issues regarding this topic. Most felt they could deal with any of their online encounters themselves. Also there was a certain level of embarrassment evident, especially regarding sexual sites, with young people not wishing to discuss it with the parents.

　"They might go crazy at you and blame you for going on the website. I'd also be too embarrassed to tell them" (Boys group, aged 12-14)

❖ One male respondent (12-14) stated how he would ask a Guidance Councillor/ Chaplin in school for advice. The younger groups appeared to be more responsible and stated that they would tell their parents immediately if they were sent violent or pornographic images. In addition, the younger groups would also confide in their teachers.

　"If I was in the classroom I would tell my teacher, but if I was at home I would tell my mum or dad"(Girls group, aged 9-10)

❖ Finally, one female respondent from the older group stated that if she received pestering messages from a stranger via MSN, that she would block him.

　"I'd give abuse back and then I would block him" (Girls group, aged12-14)

❖ This was the main advantage associated with MSN instant messaging. Respondents can interact freely with their friends online and avoid dangerous liaisons with strangers online.

IV.3　POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS CONTACTS

❖ When respondents were asked how they would react to the narrated example the following points emerged:

❖ The majority of the respondents across the four discussion groups interviewed claimed to have had no first hand experience of dealing or interacting with strangers online in a chatroom. Some of the claims of non-usage appeared exaggerated.

　➢ It is important to note, that the older girls in particular, appeared to have more experience with regard to this topic. Girls received more "dirty", nuisance emails or messages from guys online. One respondent recalled how an older man contacted her via MSN.

　　"There was a guy on my MSN who said he was 16 but he looked 40 in his picture. He started saying really dirty stuff to me. I just blocked him". (Girls group, aged 12-14)

　➢ When asked how she reacted to the above scenario, she stated that she blocked him on MSN so he couldn't continue to converse with her.

➢ Another female respondent from the older girls group, recalled how one of her friends engaged in relations with a stranger with whom she conversed to online. The stranger concealed his true age and identity, which only emerged when they actually met.

"My friend arranged to meet with a guy……and he turned out to be much older than he originally said" (Girls group, 12-14 years)

❖ One of the female respondents from the younger groups also depicted a similar scenario, but via a pop-up on a website.

"One time my brother was on a website and a message popped up saying lets have fun together. He told my parents immediately."

➢ When the remaining respondents of the girls group aged 12-14 were asked how they would react to the narrated example. They claimed that they would confide more in their teachers before telling their parents. (Depends on the seriousness of the encounter- the latter holds for email encounters.) The older groups both girls and boys appeared to be more reluctant to tell their parents as they feared punishment (such as grounding them) and or curtail most of their overall Internet usage.

"Your mum would go mad at you, whereas your teacher would comfort you firstly and then tell you what to do" (Girls group, aged 12-14 years)

➢ Other respondents within the older groups stated that they would confide in their siblings over their parents because they could perhaps identify more with the situation. One respondent cited how they would confide in their siblings or Chaplin initially and then if the stranger continued to harass them, they would notify their parents.

❖ With respect to the remaining discussion groups the following points emerged:

➢ It emerged that the male groups had no first hand experience with strangers online and they did not have any friends who experienced such a scenario. However, a number of respondents in the older boys group aged 12-14, recalled stories regarding kidnapping, which they had heard in the news or watched on the television or had heard other guys talking about girls having problems in this area. However, they were not personally aware of anyone who had relations with strangers online.

➢ The younger girls and boys group aged 9-10, stated that if they encountered a dangerous contact on a website they would not return to the website again. They stated that if they had divulged their personal details to the stranger they would firstly confide in their parents. However, most knew they should not engage in online relations. They also stated that if they had a friend who was in a similar scenario they would advise them to tell their parents. This was widely held amongst both younger groups. The younger groups allegiance towards their parents sharply contrasts with the older groups reluctance to confide in their parents the latter is a simply a factor of child development.

➢ The younger groups realised the seriousness of such a scenario. The older groups despite acknowledging problems in this area had a belief that "this would never happen to me". The older male groups felt that the problems associated with chatrooms were over exaggerated. The younger groups were more wary of the risks overall. Furthermore, chatrooms were perceived to be outdated and unfashionable amongst the youngsters. Despite this fact such problems can easily arise on bebo.com and via MSN instant messaging.

IV.4   BULLYING

❖ Respondents were asked to spontaneously mention how they felt regarding bullying online.

❖ Throughout all the groups both boys and girls have fallen victim to bullying both online and via SMS or MMS text messages. However, some differences were evident. The older girls group appeared slightly more prone to receiving obscure SMS messages or pestering emails or messages from guys. As one respondent in the older male discussion group stated:

"It's a part of life" (Boys group, aged 12-14)

❖ Furthermore, both the younger and older girl groups received a number of prank phonecalls and some offensive text messages or emails. However, these phonecalls were generally harmless. In general, they were made by their friends, brothers or even their brothers' friends. Most respondents considered them as a practical joke.

"I got a prank call saying I killed your goldfish……………I left the caller there for 20 minutes so I'd use up all his credit" (Girls group, aged 12-14)

❖ Older respondents did not appear unduly perturbed by such antics. However, they could be viewed as harmful especially in the younger groups. Another female respondent recalled receiving a phonecall whereby the person used a voice changer. This concealed the gender and identity of the caller. The younger male groups were more inclined to make prank phone calls to their sisters or their sisters' friends.

❖ Although a higher amount of bullying was recorded amongst the older groups. The younger groups appeared somewhat perturbed by any offensive messages or phone calls which they received. The younger female groups received nasty text messages from unknown senders. One girl recalled receiving a text saying

"I'm going to kill you" (Girls groups, aged 9-10).

❖ Another female respondent also recalled receiving a text saying:

"I am three steps away from your house" (Girls groups, aged 9-10).

❖ This however, turned out to one of her brothers messing. An element of fear was noted in the younger female groups regarding such shocking contents.

❖ Finally, another respondent in the younger female group also received an email with shocking contents. The respondent notified her teacher immediately. The affect of such messages was compounded in the younger groups.

❖ Respondents were subsequently asked whether they had fallen victim to bullying or whether they had bullied another.

❖ Respondents in the female group denied sending nasty messages to their classmates. However, it emerged that some female respondents were more prone to blocking MSN messages compared to the male groups. This was especially true of the older female groups who used Bebo and MSN frequently. One respondent recalled how she blocked one of her classmates. Actually, it appeared that she was bullying the blocked girl.

"I blocked this girl because she was really annoying, I just didn't want to talk to her"
(Girls group, aged 10-12)

❖ One respondent from the younger male group recalled a story in the news regarding cyberbullying on Bebo.

   "The two guys hacked into the girls Bebo website and posted messages saying that I am going to kill you" (Boys group, aged 9-10)

❖ It emerged that the students had been well briefed in schools on the dangers of the Internet, and in particular cyberbullying. In recent years online communities such as Bebo, blogs and MSN have increased in popularity, which have in turn given rise to cyberbullying within schools. In an attempt to combat this phenomenon schools have blocked students from MSN, Bebo and You Tube websites.

   ➢ Furthermore, respondents in the older female group stated that abuse can be reported on Bebo. Therefore, if a member has received vicious or slanderous text messages they could click on the report button and file an official complaint. If a member receives more than three complaints regarding their behaviour they are banned from Bebo.

❖ A similar pattern emerged from all four groups. The older groups would confide more in their friends, siblings or teachers prior to consulting their parents. The younger groups in particular the female groups would notify their parents or at least their teachers almost immediately.

IV.5   DECEPTION ON FREE OF CHARGE CHARACTER

❖ Respondents were asked whether they had been cheated online, for example downloading files, which appear free of charge, but subsequently have to be paid for or even taking part in competitions.

   ➢ As previously cited a number of respondents had come across misleading or fake online competitions via banner ads or pop-ups. The result was a virus or entering inappropriate sites.

   ➢ Similarly, respondents also spoke about the problems associated with Third Party companies such as "Veronica's Ringtones" offering ringtones, wallpapers and music tracks to youngsters. The adverts were felt to be misleading, particularly the ones around subscription based services. Mobile operators often incurred the blame for these offers, despite being offered by third party companies. In certain cases, they continue to harass youngsters by sending unwanted ringtones while debiting their call credit.

   "It eats your phone credit. It's a gimmick" (Girls group, aged 12-14)

   "My friend had to get a new sim card because she kept getting subscription texts".
   (Girls group, aged 12-14)

   ➢ Regarding the downloading of music content, some issues were also reported. One male respondent from the older discussion group recalled how he downloaded a song, which he thought was free, he subsequently was charged €12. Furthermore, a number of respondents mentioned that they downloaded music for free from www.limewire.com, but as a result respondents did mention how many of them had contracted viruses from this website.

➤ This area was not as big an issue, given that purchasing online has a low incidence amongst younger consumers. If an issue did arise, respondents were mostly likely to discuss with their parents (as they were more often using their credit to purchase online.)

"I was downloading music and it said that you had to   pay €5 per song"
(Boys group, aged 12-14)

IV.6   ILLEGAL DOWNLOADING

❖ Respondents were asked whether they had downloaded music, films, games or other contents without paying.

➤ Most respondents openly acknowledged that they would download music illegally. This was especially true for older boys. All respondents were aware of the risks associated with illegally downloading files. Respondents were fully aware of the consequences such as being fined by the Gardaí or facing imprisonment. However, some felt their involvement was so small that recriminations were unlikely. Boys especially had found ways around the system, by downloading demo's or illegally downloading tracks and then swapping them between friends.

➤ Overall it is likely that younger respondents will continue to download files, games or films illegally irrespective of the consequences.

❖ As one respondent stated:

"I think people generally know that it is illegal, but they will do it if they can get away with it"
(Girls group, aged 9-10)

➤ Respondents seemed somewhat indifferent towards the consequences involved. Respondents were subsequently asked what would happen if their parents found out. Respondents in the older groups and in the younger male groups stated that their parents frequently downloaded music or videos illegally. Therefore, parents were acting as a poor role model in this regard. The older groups appeared unconcerned with regards to illegal downloading. The majority of them downloaded music from www.limewire.com as cited above.

➤ Even the younger groups appeared to be slightly involved in illegal downloading. Of those in the female group aged 9-10 years, three respondents were forbidden from downloading music or films online by their parents.
"My mum told me not to download any music because you can get viruses on your computer"
(Girls group, aged 9-10)

➤ Another female respondent recalled how she illegally downloaded games. In addition, it was apparent that the younger groups were aware of and learning from their elder siblings bad Internet habits or activity. All the younger groups seemed heavily influenced by their peers' habits.

"My brother was downloading music and movies illegally" (Girls group, aged 9-10)

❖ The corresponding male group also recalled illegally downloading activity. Here it emerged that older relatives could also be aiding in the activity. The following points emerged:

➢ One male respondent aged 9-10 recalled the following example:

"www.alluc.org have all the new releases before they come out and you can download them for €5. My auntie downloaded "Happy Feet" and the graphics on them were perfect"
(Boys group, aged 9-10)

➢ It should be noted that an element of piracy was also evident on mobile phones, where children Bluetooth or send via infrared music tracks, pictures, etc to one another without cost.

➢ Downloading music was the most commonly illegal application used online. The Internet's ease of access and speed has encouraged users to download music or games for free. Some degree of illegal downloading amongst adults and youngsters alike appeared to be the norm. Respondents in the older group mentioned that it happened on an ongoing basis and in many cases without reprisal. Those parents and other adults who engaged in this online activity are setting a poor example.

➢ Respondents were extremely unlikely to report illegal downloading activity. It is part of the Irish psyche to try and get away with certain things, buck the system. In this regard, while there has been much promotion of the reasons why it is wrong to illegally download material. It still has not seeped through to everyone.

➢ In addition, children see the vast profits of films, musicians, etc. reported in the media and feel this activity enables the consumers to get something back. They think in terms of the large players and not the smaller musicians and other artists.

CHAPTER V

RISKS RELATED INFORMATION AND REPORTING

V.1 PRECAUTIONS ENVISAGED BY CHILDREN

❖ Finally, respondents were asked what precautions they would take in the future or what advice they would give others when using the Internet or mobile phones in the future:

❖ Amongst all four groups, the following patterns emerged for Internet advice:

➢ The most commonly cited precaution amongst all groups was to avoid chatrooms. Respondents were apprehensive with regard to engaging in online relations with a stranger. They also reiterated that they would (or rather should) never give their personal details to strangers online. Respondents previously mentioned a number of media examples where children had been kidnapped after divulging their details to a stranger online.

➢ It was widely held amongst all respondents to avoid clicking on flashing icons or pop-up boxes on websites. Most respondents deemed the above applications as potentially risky. The main reason cited was that many respondents within the groups had contracted a virus at one time or another. As one respondent stated:

"Think before you click" (Boys aged 12-14 years)

➢ Respondents would also advise avoiding competitions for fear of being cheated, caught out or at a minimum contract a computer virus.

➢ In addition, respondents advise others not to enter into unfamiliar websites. One younger female respondent advised the following:

"If you are bored asks your parents or siblings to recommend a website to you".
(Girls group aged 9-10)

➢ Some, albeit not all respondents advised others to avoid downloading illegal music, films or games as it could have catastrophic consequences such as fines or imprisonment. However, children appeared to be more concerned about contracting a virus, rather than the illegality of the task.

➢ The final piece of advice offered by respondents was to, restrict younger brothers and sisters from joining Bebo until they are at least 13 years of age, which is the minimum joining age.

➢ In summary, respondents appear to be well-briefed overall with regard Internet safety. On a whole the younger groups appear to act more responsibly than perhaps the older groups. Females in particular appear more vulnerable to safety issues.

❖ In addition, respondents were asked what precautions they would take or what advice they would give others when using their mobile phones in the future.

➢ It was widely held that respondents should avoid participating in competitions or subscription based services, which offer ringtones, wallpapers and music tracks (or at least read the small print relating to terms and conditions).

➢ Respondents also mentioned that they would be particularly cautious when taking pictures and indeed subsequently uploading these pictures online.

➢ Overall, respondents appear to have the propensity to act upon these precautions.

V.2 WAYS OF REPORTING ENVISAGED

❖ As previously cited throughout the report. Respondents from the younger groups appeared to be more responsible in their approach and they would firstly confide in their parents. If respondents were at school they would confide in their teachers.

❖ This contrasts with the older groups who would firstly confide in their friends, teachers, siblings or Chaplin. The older respondents were more reluctant to tell their parents, for fear of curtailment of Internet usage. It emerged that respondents would approach their parents if the issue was deemed serious.

❖ When respondents were probed even further, it emerged that they would inform the police depending on the severity of the issue. However, they would firstly inform their parents.

"I'd tell my mum and then tell the police if I was getting stalked"(Girls aged, 12-14)

❖ Respondents were subsequently asked whether they would contact a specialist organisation by calling a special freephone number. However, participants appeared positive enough towards this suggestion. However, it was felt to be similar to the "freephone childline" service, which is available.

❖ When asked whether they would contact the cited organisation by email. The majority of respondents rejected this suggestion. It seemed they would prefer to talk personally to an individual than reporting an unknown organisation (also not all respondents use their email frequently, especially amongst the younger groups).

❖ Overall, respondents gave a positive response with regards to clicking on a report button online that automatically informs the relevant authorities. Note how respondents used a similar report button on Bebo when they experienced bullying online.

V.3   ATTITUDES TOWARDS INFORMATION ON PROBLEMS AND RISKS

❖ When asked how they would like to learn more about the problems and risks related to the Internet and mobile phone usage. The following suggestions emerged.

➢ The older female groups deemed playing a DVD in school as the best method of communicating to and educating others on Internet and mobile phone safety. It is important to note, however that respondents felt an external official/guest should visit the school and talk to the students on a more personal level. The DVD should then be subsequently played.

➢ Furthermore, the older groups stated that they would be more reluctant to listen to their teachers with regards to this issue, rather than an independent adviser (young person). They felt that the DVD may be at risk of being ignored by students if teachers just played it to the students as they assume students are listening. However, they would be more attentive and they would show respect to the guest speaker.

➢ Participants responded negatively or somewhat indifferently to the remaining choices such as websites, posters or brochures. They were deemed ineffective on their own and required more support such as DVD, guest speakers (i.e. more interactive communications)

➢ The younger female groups suggested using a DVD also. They also deemed promotions such as brochures, advertisements and billboards as effective.

➢ The younger male groups thought that creating an advertisement would also be effective, he also cited that having a video link shown in school would also be beneficial with regards to educating others on the risks or dangers associated with the Internet and mobile phones

➢ Finally, it was also mentioned that a support page should be available online to victims of abuse, which basically simply outlines the report procedure in greater detail.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

❖ Overall a significant amount of self-learning or learning directly from their peers or brothers and sisters was evident with regard to Internet usage. In addition, the majority of respondents in all four groups continued to learn more about the Internet from computer classes provided to them in school.

❖ Respondents' intensity of usage varied amongst the discussion groups. Overall respondents across all discussion groups used the Internet regularly (two to three times a week). On average, respondents would spend approximately forty minutes to an hour per Internet session.

❖ Interestingly, older respondents Internet usage was higher compared to their younger counterparts. The older female group in particular, appeared to spend longer on the Internet socialising. The younger female discussion groups were more inclined to research the Internet for educational content whereas the older and younger boys groups enjoyed downloading and playing games, music etc.

❖ It is important to note, that a clear contrast amongst the older and younger groups emerged. The older groups appeared more rebellious and mischievous in nature whereas the younger groups in particular the girls group, abided in the main by their parent rules when using the Internet. Albeit boys tended to be a bit more mischievous and seemed to seek out obscure or dangerous aspects online.

❖ Older groups tended to have more freedom regarding Internet access. In addition, boys in general across the groups were less open with parents regarding what they were accessing. Parents of younger female groups tended to supervise their children when they went online or at least remain in close proximity.

❖ Problems that youngsters spontaneously associated with the Internet included:

  ➢ Viruses (via pop ups, downloading music, etc.)

  ➢ Scams (e.g. competitions, free offers etc.)

  ➢ Chatrooms (Engaging in online relations with a stranger)

    • Cyberbulling (e.g. Instant messaging, Bebo, etc.)

❖ Problems that youngsters associated with Mobiles included:

  ➢ Inaccurate advertisements

  ➢ Bullying and prank phonecalls

❖ One major problem cited by all discussion groups was inadvertently signing up to subscription SMS/MMS services. A common complaint was sending an SMS to a third party mobile phone company to receive a ring tone. However, unbeknownst to the respondent they were signed up to a subscription based service, thus using up respondents call credit.

❖ Chatrooms or engaging in online relations with strangers online were universally regarded as problematic in all groups. Although all claimed they would not frequent chatrooms, a number especially in the older groups appeared to have experience or at least knew that their peers had experience of using chatrooms. It should also be noted that www.bebo.com functions as a kind of chatroom, and was deemed to be more trendy and fashionable by comparison. Public profiles on www.bebo.com could be responded to and indeed the older girls had banned some males after lude comments.

❖ The most commonly used Internet application amongst the younger groups aged 9-10 years was playing online games. The latter was more prominent amongst the boys group. Boys and especially girls also tended to search for information related to schoolwork (wikipedia and c/bbc.com were commonly used). Like the older groups MSN instant messaging and blogs / homepages (Bebo) was more prevalent amongst girls. Note www.bebo.com is supposed to be a teenager or older website. While both younger genders surf the Internet, in general, it was more prevalent amongst boys. The latter relates to more dubious websites which boys seek out or their peers pass on.

❖ Downloading music was the most commonly illegal application used online. The Internet ease of access and speed has encouraged users to download music or games for free. Illegal downloading amongst adults and youngsters alike appears prevalent and without reprisal. Those parents and other adults who engaged in this online activity appear to be setting a poor example for their children.

❖ The most commonly cited precaution amongst all groups was to avoid chatrooms. Respondents were apprehensive with regard to engaging in online relations with a stranger. It was also widely held amongst all respondents to avoid clicking on flashing icons or pop-up boxes on websites or participating in competitions or quizzes. Most respondents deemed the above applications as potentially risky. The main reason cited was that many respondents within the groups had contracted a virus at one time or another. As one respondent stated:

➢ It was widely held that respondents should avoid participating in competitions or subscription based services on their mobile phone, which offer ringtones, wallpapers and music tracks (or at least read the small print relating to terms and conditions).

❖ When respondents were asked the best method of reporting envisaged, the following points emerged:

➢ Overall, respondents gave a positive response with regards to clicking on a online report button that automatically informs the relevant authorities. Note how respondents used a similar report button on www.bebo.com when they experienced bullying online.

➢ The older female groups deemed playing a DVD in school as the best method of communicating to and educating others on Internet and mobile phone safety. It is important to note, however that respondents felt an external official/guest should visit the school and talk to the students on a more personal level. The DVD should then be subsequently played. Whereas, the younger male groups thought that creating an advertisement would be effective, he also cited that having a video link shown in school would also be beneficial with regards to educating others on the risks or dangers associated with the Internet and mobile phones.

ANNEX I

COMPOSITION OF THE GROUPS

COMPOSITION OF THE GROUPS

	Boys group 9-10 years	Girls group 9-10 years	Boys group 12-14 years	Girls group 12-14 years
	Dublin 11.04.07	Dublin 16.04.07	Dublin 11.04.07	Dublin 16.04.07
Household social level (Socio-professional category of the head of household)				
Business owners, liberal professions, high-level managers	4	4	0	0
Mid-level managers	3	1	1	
Office employees (non-managerial)	1	1	4	6
Manual workers		1	3	2
Others	2	1	0	0
Places and means of access to the Internet				
Home (broadband))	7	8	6	8
Home (non broadband)				
School	5	1	2	
Internet cafes	1			
Others				
Personal ownership of computer				
Yes	1	8	2	8
No	9		6	
Ownership of mobile phone				
Yes	3	4	5	8
No	7	4	3	

ANNEX II

DISCUSSSION GUIDE

SAFER INTERNET STUDY

DISCUSSION GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Hello, my name is …….. and I work with …….., the research agency in charge of the study which brings us here together today.

The subject of the study is how children/youngsters use the Internet and mobile phones.

Have you a clear idea of what we are and what we do?

> ➤ Ask the children if they know the terms opinion surveys/polls and what they associate with them

> ➤ Explain to them that the purpose is to understand what people do and think – and that they should express themselves quite freely

> ➤ Reassure them that whatever they say will be dealt with confidentially – i.e. their words may be taken as examples of children's views, but without ever being associated with their names ; in particular, what a child participant says will not be repeated to his/her parents.

To start with, I will ask each of you to introduce him/herself with a few words : who you are, if you have brothers and sisters, if you have access to the Internet and how – your own computer, your parents' computer, at school, at friends', at an Internet café – and also if you have a mobile phone.

THEME I.   THE INTERNET AND INTERNET APPLICATIONS

Let us talk about the Internet.

I.1   Before we start discussing how you use the Internet, I would like to know how you learnt to use it.

> ➤ Spontaneous reactions

> ➤ Probe :

> > Self learning or learning from others
> > From whom ? Other children (Who? friends, brothers or sisters ?), adults ? (parents, teachers, other adults ?)

I.2 Could you tell me how and how often you use the Internet and how much time, roughly, you spend on it ?

> ➤ Spontaneous reactions

> ➤ Probe :

>> Regular or variable Internet usage ? What does it depend on ?
>> To how much time do the children estimate their usage of the Internet (time spent on average, per day or per week)

I.3 Can you use the Internet as you wish and as often as you wish, or do you have any limits, rules or recommendations given by your parents – or anything you think your parents would like you to do or not to do although they may not really have told you.

> ➤ Spontaneous reactions

> ➤ Probe :

>> If limits/rules/recommendations/implicit rules : what are they ?
>> For each of the limits/rules/recommendations/implicit rules : perceived justification and degree of agreement
>> If no limits/rules/recommendations/implicit rules : how would they feel if they were given any?
>> Which ones would they (or not) accept/agree with ? : perceived justification and degree of agreement

I.4 We have prepared a list with various possible uses of the Internet.
May I ask each of you :

>> To put **one green sticker** to each of the applications you use
>> To put **a second green sticker** to the applications you use most

> ➤ Distribute the table.

> ➤ Let the participants fill it in.

> Check that the one sticker/two stickers system has been understood.

> Check that each participant has written in his/her first name.

> ➤ Collect the questionnaires, and quickly identify the most frequent applications.

I.5 I can see that some applications are used more than others.

What are you particularly interested in or do you particularly like in these Internet applications?

> ➤ Spontaneous reactions

> ➤ Probe : frequent applications not elicited in spontaneous reactions

MOBILE PHONE AND MOBILE PHONE USAGE

II.1   Some of you also have a mobile phone.

For those of you who have one, please tell me how you use it ?

➢   Ask successively each of the (mobile phone owning) participants

Let each one express him/herself freely. Then probe :

With whom (friends, parents, in which circumstances ?)
What is it most often used for (verbal conversations, SMS, other applications)

Others among you do not have a mobile phone. Can you tell me why ?

➢   Probe for reasons (cost ; parents' wish that their children do not have one ; others)

II.2   Mobile phones can also be used for sending or receiving photographs (MMS), taking part in chats, or connecting to the Internet. Do you also do that ?

➢   Ask again each (mobile phone owning) participant

If he/she has already used these functions (which one(s)), what he/she gets out of it
or – if not used – why?

II.3   Do you use your mobile phone freely, as you wish and as much as you wish, or do you have any limits, rules or recommendations given by your parents – or anything you think your parents would like you to do or not to do although they may not really have told you.

➢   Spontaneous reactions

➢   Probe :
If limits/rules/recommendations/implicit rules: what are they ?
For each of the limits/rules/recommendations/implicit rules : perceived justification and degree of agreement
If no limits/recommendations/implicit rules : how would they feel if they were given any?
Which ones would they (or not) accept/agree with ? : perceived justification and degree of agreement

II.4   Here is now a short list of mobile phone uses.
In the same way as for Internet uses earlier, could you please :

Put **one green sticker** to each of the applications you use
Put **a second green sticker** to the applications you use most

➢   Distribute the table.

➢   Let the participants fill it in.

Check that the one sticker/two stickers system has been understood.

Check that each participant has written in his/her first name.

➢   Collect the questionnaires, and quickly identify the most frequent applications.

THEME III.   INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE RELATED PROBLEMS AND RISKS

III.1   Besides it being something useful and pleasant, are there also problems or risks in using the Internet or mobile phones – I mean things that you don't like or find scary ?

- ➢ Spontaneous reactions

- ➢ Probe :

> Types of problems/risks mentioned
> Problems/risks related to Internet usage/to mobile phone usage
> How are the children aware of these problems/risks
>   (Personal experience ? Being warned about them ? By whom ? Another child ?
>   Adults – which adults ? An institution/authority ?)
> How serious do they feel these problems/risks are ?

III.2A Have these problems changed the way you use the Internet ?

- ➢ Spontaneous reactions

- ➢ Probe :

> Limitations in (volume of) usage
> Precautions taken ; of their own initiative/under the influence of parents

III.2.B Have these problems changed the way you use your mobile phone ?

- ➢ Spontaneous reactions

- ➢ Probe :

> Limitations in (volume of) usage
> Precautions taken ; of their own initiative/under the influence of parents

III.3   Here is a table with the list of both Internet and mobile phone applications on which you put the green stickers earlier.
Please place **one red sticker** next to the applications which you feel may involve problems of any kind, and **a second red sticker** for those which you regard as most annoying or scary.

- ➢ Distribute the table**.**

- ➢ Let the participants fill it in.

   Check that the one sticker/two stickers system has been understood.

   Check that each participant has written in his/her first name.

- ➢ Collect the questionnaires, and quickly identify the applications most selected as involving a risk.

III.4   Let us discuss these problems more in detail, by taking each of those which you have most mentioned.
Why do you think that this application may involve a problem ?

- ➢ Take successively each application often mentioned as involving a problem or risk, and elicit the nature and the degree of problem/risk.

THEME IV   REACTIONS TO THE PRESENTATION OF SPECIFIED PROBLEMS OR RISKS

I am now going to tell you about certain problems, as they are seen by adults who worry about them – and you will tell me how **you** feel about them.

IV.1   One of the problems may be that the information you find on the Internet is not necessarily true.

How do you feel about it ? Generally speaking, do you think we can have trust in what we find on the Internet?

➢ Spontaneous reactions

➢ Probe :

What is overall the degree of credibility of the Internet ?
How does it compare with other sources (parents, teachers, friends, television, books…)
Why is the Internet more or less credible ?
Examples of inaccurate things seen on the Internet. What was it about ? How did you realize that it was not true ?
How serious is this problem/risk felt to be ?

IV.2   Another problem that worries adults is the risk of being sent or coming across images or other contents that can be deeply shocking – than can include scenes of violence, brutal scenes, racism or pornography.
How do you feel about it ?

➢ Spontaneous reactions

➢ Probe :

Has it happened to you ? What was it about ?
What did you do ? Talk to someone about it ? Who ?
What would you do if it happened to you, or what would you advise a friend to do if it happened to him/her ? Talk to someone about it ? Who ? What practical advice would you give ?
Moderator : also probe how serious is this problem/risk felt to be.

IV.3   Another risk that worries adults is that children engage in relations with a stranger with whom they have talked online – someone they have never met face to face.
Let us take an example.
X/Y is a child of your age.
He/she likes to play games or post his/her profile on the Internet, and he/she starts talking online with someone to whom he/she gradually gives personal information like his/her MSN address, his/her mobile phone number, his/her name, or where he/she lives, or starts sending pictures of him/her.
He/she thinks this person is a child of his/her age and someone really nice, but it may turn out to be someone quite different, who might encourage him/her to do things he/she should not do, or even an adult with bad intentions.
(Moderator : For boys group, use a typical masculine first name of your country (X) ; for girls groups, use a typical feminine first name (Y)).
How do you feel about it ?

➢   Spontaneous reactions

➢   Probe :

   Has it happened to someone you know ? How, in which situation ?
   Do you think it could happen to you ? How do you communicate and make friends online ?
   (If happened) What did you do ? Talk to someone about it ? Who ?
   What would you do if it happened to you or what would you advise a friend to do if it happened to him/her ?
   Moderator : also probe how serious is this problem/risk felt to be.

IV.4   Another worry that adults have is that some children use online communication to behave badly with another child because they do not like him/her. That can be, for example, by talking about him/her on MSN without including him/her, or sending him/her anonymous nasty messages.
How do you feel about it ?

➢   Spontaneous reactions

➢   Probe :

   Has it happened to you? How, in which situation ? Have you received nasty messages ? Have you maybe sent nasty messages to others yourself ?
   Do you think it could happen to you ?
   (If happened) What did you do ? Talk to someone about it ? Who ?
   What would you do if it happened to you or what would you advise a friend to do if it happened to him/her ?
   Moderator : also probe how serious is this problem/risk felt to be.

IV.5   Another risk that we have heard of is being cheated, for example when downloading a file which seems to be free of charge but has to be paid for, or when taking part in a competition.
How do you feel about it ?

➢   Spontaneous reactions

➢   Probe :

   Has it happened to you ? In which situation ?
   What did you do ? Talk to someone about it ? Who ?
   What would you do if it happened to you or what would you advise a friend to do if it happened to him/her ? Talk someone about it ? Who ?
   Moderator : also probe how serious is this problem/risk felt to be.

IV.6   Another problem may be that many children download music, films, games or other contents without paying.
Perhaps this has happened to you as well : have you downloaded something without paying ?

➢   Record responses, then continue :

In many cases, this content is material which the makers (musicians for example) need to make money from to make a living and therefore should be paid for.

Are you aware of this ? What can be the consequences, do you think ? Do those children know that it is illegal/not allowed ? How do they deal with it ?

➢   Probe :
　　　Awareness of doing something illegal/awareness of consequences
　　　What did/would the child participants do in such a situation?
　　　How serious is this problem felt to be ?

THEME V.   RISK RELATED INFORMATION AND REPORTING

V.1   When you think back about it, after our whole discussion, are there any precautions which would now feel would be useful to take in using the Internet and mobile phones – or something you would advise a younger brother or sister to do ?

➢ Spontaneous reactions

➢ Probe :

- Precautions (and related risks) which the discussion has made the children (more) aware of
- Propensity to take these precautions in reality

V.2   If you saw or experienced something you find uncomfortable or scary, and you wanted to inform someone about it, what would be the easiest way for you to do it ?

➢ Spontaneous reactions

➢ Probe :

Talk to your parents about it
Talk to a teacher about it
Inform the police
Contact a specialist organisation by calling a special free-phone number
Contact that organisation by email.
Having a report button that automatically informs the relevant authorities just by clicking

V.3   How would you like to learn more about the problems and risks related to Internet and mobile phone usage ?

➢ Spontaneous reactions

➢ Probe :
- Propensity to learn more about problems and risks
- Nature of information sought
- From which types of sources/through which channels

END OF DISCUSSION.

INTERNET APPLICATIONS USED   **First name**

Searching for information as a part of my school work	
Searching for information on subjects which interest me/surfing for fun	
Sending and receiving emails	
Using instant messaging (MSN)/chatting with friends	
Engage in open chatrooms	
Creating my own blog/homepage and posting my own texts, photos, music on the Internet	
Reading and responding to friends'blogs/homepages	
Reading and responding to blogs/homepages of someone I have never met	
Playing on-line games	
Downloading music, films, videos, games or other files	
Sharing files (music, films, videos, games or others)	
Sharing photos	
Downloading ring tones/images for my mobile phone	
Taking part in competitions	
Making phone calls through the Internet	

MOBILE PHONE APPLICATIONS USED   **First name**

Making and receiving phone calls	
Sending/receiving SMSs	
Taking photos/images	
Sending/receiving/sharing images	
Connecting to the Internet through my mobile phone	

PROBLEMS/RISKS RELATED TO INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE USAGE	First name
Searching for information as a part of my school work	
Searching for information on subjects which interest me/surfing for fun	
Sending and receiving emails	
Using instant messaging (MSN)/chatting with friends	
Engage in open chatrooms	
Creating my own blog/homepage and posting my own texts, photos, music on the Internet	
Reading and responding to friends'blogs/homepages	
Reading and responding to blogs/homepages of someone I have never met	
Playing on-line games	
Downloading music, films, videos, games or other files	
Sharing files (music, films, videos, games or others)	
Sharing photos	
Downloading ring tones/images for my mobile phone	
Taking part in competitions	
Making phone calls through the Internet	

MOBILE PHONE APPLICATIONS

Making and receiving phone calls	
Sending/receiving SMSs	
Taking photos/images	
Sending/receiving/sharing images	
Connecting to the Internet through my mobile phone	