



ANNUAL REPORT 2017



OUR VISION

A world in which children are using technology in a safe, positive and successful manner.

OUR MISSION

To empower children, parents and teachers to navigate the online world in a stronger, smarter and safer way.

DIRECTORS



Ursula McMahon



Joseph Carthy



Brian O'Neill



Avril Ronan Naughton



John Fitzsimons



Fiona Conway



Derval Blehein

COMPANY SECRETARY

Ursula McMahon

CHARITY NUMBER

20104108

COMPANY NUMBER

568651

REGISTERED OFFICE

93 Upper George's Street
Dun Laoghaire
Co Dublin

AUDITORS

Veldon Tait
4 Clarinda Park North
Dun Laoghaire
Co. Dublin

BANKERS

AIB
93 Upper Georges Street
Dun Laoghaire
Co Dublin

CONTENTS

Foreword.....	Professor Brian O'Neill.....	2
Report Highlights		3
Introduction.....	Avril Ronan Naughton, Chairperson.....	4
Directors' Annual Report		5
Directors' Responsibilities Statement		7
Independent Auditor's Report.....		8
Statement of Financial Activities		11
Balance Sheet		12
1 Accounting Policies.....		13
2 Analysis of Resources Expended.....		14
3 Analysis of Support and Governance Costs		14
4 Employees and Remuneration		14
5 Employee Remuneration.....		15
6 Debtors.....		15
7 Creditors.....		15
8 Taxation and Social Security.....		15
9 Analysis of Net Assets by Fund.....		15
10 Analysis of Movements on Funds		16
11 Status.....		16
12 Cash and Cash Equivalents.....		16
13 Post-Balance Sheet Events.....		16
14 Approval of Financial Statements.....		16
Cybersafeireland's Academic Year in Review 2017 – 2018		17
Conclusion.....		26
Recommendations		27

TEACHER TESTIMONIAL

“Excellent presentation and highly practical, informative and engaging. Trainer was patient and a great source of knowledge”

SEAN MAC MATHUNA, GAELSCOIL CHOLÁISTE MHUIRE

Foreword | Professor Brian O'Neill

Trust in the online world has unquestionably suffered some major setbacks during 2018. After many years of enthusiasm for all things digital, the technology that supposedly connects humanity has over the course of the last year appeared to be beset by crisis. Whether it is the persistent cyberbullying experienced online, or pervasive negative online commentary, misinformation, misuse of personal data or threats to personal privacy, the population as a whole have been given ample cause for concern about the health of the digital environment. For children, who never lack for enthusiasm though sometimes in digital competence and experience, these concerns are always amplified. Hence, the importance of Cybersafelreland's key mission: to empower children – and their parents – to navigate the online world *'in a stronger, smarter and safer way'*.

Nonetheless, advances in technology continue to evolve and promise extraordinary opportunities to benefit children, enhance learning and overcome disadvantage. Children make up a very significant proportion of all Internet users worldwide and are estimated to make up one third of the global Internet population. Children are also among the early adopters who are exploring the new horizons of virtual and augmented reality, gaming technologies and inter-connected devices of all kinds. To ensure this is a positive experience, as free from harm as possible, and supportive of their development as confident citizens of the digital age, there is a consensus that more needs to be done and greater attention is needed to promote children's online safety, quality of online provision and greater opportunities for positive online participation.

Recent months have seen a number of important policy developments in this space. In early 2018, the European Parliament's Culture Committee hosted a special workshop on 'Protection of Minors in the Digital Age', a precursor to the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive promised later this year which will extend regulation to video sharing platforms. Notably, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into effect in May bringing a suite of new regulations to protect personal data with important implications for children's online use. The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Children and Youth Affairs also held hearings on online safety throughout 2017/18 and published its report on *'Cyber Security for Children and Young Adults'*. Finally

in July, the government published its *'Action Plan for Online Safety 2018-19'* setting out 25 actions to bring about better online protection and resilience.

The issues that each of these policy developments seek to address are the very ones highlighted in Cybersafelreland's survey of children's internet use. This valuable data, collected from participants in each of the workshops hosted by Cybersafelreland, highlights widely aired concerns about younger children's use of smartphones, the pervasive use of social media by under-13s, concerns about the amount of time spent online, and the adverse impact this may have on children's wellbeing, family communication and on school. As the commentary on the data argues, there are no easy or right answers to these dilemmas. What is needed, however, to help young people is authoritative, clear and technically accurate guidance that will assist them to better understand digital technology and their use of it so that they are empowered by it, prepared for the problems it may prompt and better able to help themselves and others to create a better digital world. Cybersafelreland plays a key role in this educational effort and through its ongoing training and awareness raising engages children, parents, carers and teachers in a shared vision of safe, positive and successful technology use.



Professor Brian O'Neill

Professor Brian O'Neill, Dublin Institute of Technology, is a researcher of young people's use of digital technologies, online safety and policy for the digital environment. He is member of the Internet Safety Advisory Board for the Safer Internet Ireland programme. He also leads the EU Kids Online project in Ireland and is a board director for CyberSafelreland. He is the co-author of Towards a Better Internet for Children? Policy Pillars, Players and Paradoxes published by Nordicom.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- 68% of 8 – 13 year olds own their own smartphone.
- 70% of 8 - 13 year olds are using social media.
- 13% of children are spending 4+ hours online including almost 20% of 12 year olds and 10% of 8 year olds.
- 32% of children are talking to strangers online every week (18% every day).
- 30% of children are rarely or never talking to their parents about online safety
- Snapchat remains the most popular app for children aged between 8 and 13 with 47% of children overall on it, followed by Instagram (36%) and WhatsApp (33%).
- 33% of children have played over-18 games with significantly more boys (53%) playing them than girls (13%). 41% of 8 & 9 year old boys have played over-18s games.
- The majority of teachers (62%) are dealing with online safety incidences in the classroom with 35% dealing with between 2 and 5 incidences in the last year.

TEACHER TESTIMONIAL

“Definitely eye opening for me. I could tell from class engagement that there are things they’ve learnt or that they had never thought about before.

Very beneficial”

EIMEAR MARTIN, GAELSCOIL LIOS NA NÓG

Introduction | Avril Ronan Naughton, Chairperson

I am delighted to present this report on behalf of CyberSafelreland CLG in my capacity as Chair of the Board of Directors. The report provides audited accounts and an organisational overview, including governance, for the period January to December 2017 and in the second part of the report we provide a presentation of the data we have collected over the 2017/18 academic year.

It has been a busy year for the organisation with a focus on the strengthening of the Education Programme through the recruitment of a panel of trainers, who were all trained, garda-vetted and out delivering in schools by March 2017. Other key achievements for the period included the launch of a 3-minute scribe animation video entitled '*The Simple Steps*', targeting parents, as part of a Safer Internet day campaign in February 2017 and the introduction of an online survey to capture key data from children, allowing us to gather significantly more data, in a much more accurate way, in September 2017. CyberSafelreland was asked to appear before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Children and Youth Affairs in October 2017 as part of their review and subsequent report on online safety.

There was also the Tatler Social Entrepreneur Women of the Year award for our founders in November 2017, which was collected by our Programme Director Cliona Curley on behalf of the organisation at the awards ceremony in November 2017.

The organisation won a coveted place on the Social Entrepreneurs Ireland '*Impact Partner Finalists Programme*' in September 2017. This was a huge honour but more importantly, it provided an opportunity for the team to focus on the strategic development of the organisation, which was a major focus of the last quarter of the year. I am delighted that the hard work has paid off and that we now have a three-year strategy in place, which aims to increase impact and reach over the course of three years. The strategy is based around four pillars: Education, Collaboration, Advocacy and Innovation and it envisages the organisation reaching 500,000 families through education, training and awareness raising campaigns by the end of 2020. This is a major and very welcome step forward for a young organisation and I personally look forward to working with the Board in support of the roll-out of this strategic plan.

On a final note, anyone who has had the pleasure of working with our CEO Alex Cooney and Programme Director Cliona Curley will know that their passion for the education of our nation's pre-teens goes well beyond their remit, it's personal; and this is



why the board are committed to achieving CyberSafelreland's Vision and Mission. I would like to thank all of those who have supported us so tirelessly over the past year. We really could not have achieved what we did without this support. I would like to extend particular thanks to our funders, including Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, EY, Trend Micro, the Ireland Funds and those generous individuals who donated amounts, both big and small. I would also like to thank our small but dedicated team of volunteer "*cyberninjas*" Michelle and Caroline and I'm delighted to note that their ranks have swelled to four in 2018. This team does ongoing research on new apps, games and YouTubers, which allows our programme team to stay so up-to-date and in tune with what children are doing. I also want to thank our staff and trainers, without whom, we wouldn't be able to achieve what we do - thanks for the passion, dedication and commitment to keeping children safe online! It has continued to be a very challenging funding environment and the team achieves an enormous amount on a shoe-string budget and with limited salaries. And finally to my fellow board members who give up their time to meet four times a year and who offer their expertise and support both inside and outside of the meetings.

2017 was a tremendous year in so many ways but I can see that 2018 is shaping up to exceed achievements made so far. The data in this year's annual report speaks for itself; education is key in our community. If you can contribute to the ongoing success of CyberSafelreland, please do get in touch! There are so many great ways to support CyberSafelreland - so that we can continue to fulfil our mission to empower children across Ireland to be stronger, smarter and safer online!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Avril Ronan Naughton". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Avril Ronan Naughton | Chairperson

DIRECTORS' ANNUAL REPORT

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The directors present their Directors' Annual Report, combining the Directors' Report and Trustees' Report, and the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2017.

The company is a registered charity and hence the report and results are presented in a form which complies with the requirements of the Companies Act 2014 and, although not obliged to comply with the Statement of Recommended Practice Charities SORP (effective January 2015) in accordance with FRS 102, the organisation has implemented its recommendations where relevant in these financial statements.

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Principal Activities

CyberSafelreland is a not-for-profit organisation established to provide expert, balanced and professional guidance to schools, children and to parents in the safe and responsible use of all communications technologies. It has a particular focus on supporting children aged 8 to 13 when they are first exploring many aspects of online communication.

The company is limited by guarantee not having a share capital.

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Directors

The directors who served throughout the year, except as noted, were as follows:

- Ursula McMahon
- Brian O'Neill
- John Fitzsimons
- Derval Blehein
- Joseph Carthy
- Avril Naughton
- Fiona Conway

In accordance with the Constitution, the directors retire by rotation and, being eligible, offer themselves for re-election.

Objectives and Activities

The main object for which the Company is established is:

To advance, promote and provide education and training to children, parents and teachers in the community to ensure safe and responsible navigation of the online world.

To that end, the Company will:

- Engage in research and development and organise, promote and provide training and development through seminars, conferences, discussions and other meetings to promote the main object.
 - Make, print, publish, computerise and distribute training materials or general information in connection with the main object.
 - Share safe and responsible online practice to enrich the education of children, parents and teachers in furtherance of the main object.
 - Work directly with parents, schools, children and other persons as may be required to build a strong framework for high standards in furtherance of the main object.
-

Achievements and Performance

CyberSafelreland is the award-winning Irish children's charity for online safety. It's achievements in 2017 include:

- Speaking directly and in small groups to over 10,000 children and almost 2,000 parents
- Gathering significant data on parents, children and teachers on an on-going basis
- Producing 2 annual reports to date
- Establishing a significant media profile
- Speaking in front of the Joint Committee of Children and Youth Affairs in October 2017.
- Winning an SEI Elevator award and a KBC Bright Ideas award in 2016 and the founders won the Tatler Social Entrepreneur Women of the year award in 2017.

Financial Review

Against the backdrop of limited resources and insecurities over funding, it has continued to be difficult to plan and develop services. The retained loss for the financial year amounted to €8,203. The principal source of funding for the charity is fees from delivery of services and grants from public bodies and private companies. Grants of €43,708 were received in the current year of which €19,420 were considered as restricted.

At the end of the year the company had assets of €22,764 (2016: €36,110) and liabilities of €4,093 (2016:€9,236). The directors are satisfied with the level of retained reserves at the year end. Of the net funds at 31 December 2017 of €18,671, €10,982 of this is attributable to restricted funds.

Reserves policy

The charity needs reserves to:

- Ensure the charity can continue to provide a stable service to those who need them.
- Meet contractual obligations as they fall due;
- Meet unexpected costs;
- Provide working capital when funding is paid in arrears;
- Meet the costs of winding up in the event that was necessary

Based on this, the trustees are satisfied that it holds sufficient reserves to allow the charity to trade successfully.

Structure, Governance and Management

CyberSafelreland has a board of directors in place with 7 directors, including a Chair, a Company Secretary and a Treasurer. The Company has a small staff including a CEO and a Programme Director along with a panel of trainers who work on a contractual basis and 2-3 volunteers. The CEO reports directly to the Chair.

CyberSafelreland became fully compliant with the Governance Code in 2017.

Reference and Administrative details

The organisation is a charitable company with a registered office at 93 Upper Georges Street, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. The companies registered number is 568651.

The charity has been granted charitable tax status under Sections 207 and 208 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, Charity No CHY 20104108 and is registered with the Charities Regulatory Authority. The charity has a total of 3 trustees.

Auditors

The auditors, **Veldon Tait**, have indicated their willingness to continue in office in accordance with the provisions of Section 380 of the Companies Act 2014.

Statement on Relevant Audit Information

There is no relevant audit information of which the statutory auditors are unaware. The directors have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and they have established that the statutory auditors are aware of that information.

Accounting Records

To ensure that adequate accounting records are kept in accordance with Sections 281 to 285 of the Companies Act 2014, the directors have employed appropriately qualified accounting personnel and have maintained appropriate computerised accounting systems. The accounting records are located at the company's office at 93 Upper George's Street, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin.

Signed on behalf of the Board



Avril Ronan Naughton
Director

John Fitzsimons
Director

14 May 2018

14 May 2018

DIRECTORS' RESPONSIBILITIES STATEMENT

.....

The directors are responsible for preparing the financial statements in accordance with applicable Irish law and Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland including the accounting standards issued by the Financial Reporting Council.

Company law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the net income or expenditure of the charity for that year. In preparing these financial statements the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether the Charities SORP (effective January 2015) in accordance with FRS 102 has been followed;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The directors confirm that they have complied with the above requirements in preparing the financial statements.

The directors are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements are prepared in accordance with accounting standards generally accepted in Ireland and with Irish Statute comprising the Companies Act 2014, and all Regulations to be construed as one with those Acts. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The directors are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the company's website. Legislation in the Republic of Ireland governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

In so far as the directors are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information (information needed by the charity's auditor in connection with preparing the auditor's report) of which the charity's auditor is unaware, and
- the directors have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

Signed on behalf of the Board



Avril Ronan Naughton | Director

14 May 2018



John Fitzsimons | Director

14 May 2018

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of CyberSafelreland Company Limited by Guarantee (*'the company'*) for the year ended 31 December 2017 which comprise the Income Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Reconciliation of Shareholders' Funds, the Cash Flow Statement and the related notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies set out in note 2. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is Irish Law and FRS 102 *"The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland"*.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the company as at 31 December 2017 and of its profit for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with FRS 102 *"The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland"*; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2014.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (Ireland) (ISAs (Ireland)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the company in accordance with ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of financial statements in Ireland, including the Ethical Standard issued by the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA), and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which ISAs (Ireland) require us to report to you where:

- the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the directors have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the company's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other Information

The directors are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our Auditor's Report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2014

Based solely on the work undertaken in the course of the audit, we report that:

- the information given in the Directors' Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- in our opinion, the Directors' Report has been prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2014.

We have obtained all the information and explanations which we consider necessary for the purposes of our audit.

In our opinion the accounting records of the company were sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited. The financial statements are in agreement with the accounting records.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

Based on the knowledge and understanding of the company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified any material misstatements in the Directors' Report. The Companies Act 2014 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion, the disclosures of directors' remuneration and transactions required by sections 305 to 312 of the Act are not made. We have nothing to report in this regard.

RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities of directors for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Directors' Responsibilities Statement, the directors are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the directors are responsible for assessing the company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable,

matters related to the going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the company or to cease operation, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditor's Report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (Ireland) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is contained in the appendix to this report, located at page 10, which is to be read as an integral part of our report.

The purpose of our audit work and to whom we owe our responsibilities

Our report is made solely to the company's shareholders, as a body, in accordance with section 391 of the Companies Act 2014. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the company's shareholders those matters we are required to state to them in an Auditor's Report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume any responsibility to anyone other than the company and the company's shareholders, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Keith Murphy
for and on behalf of VELDON TAIT Statutory auditor
4 Clarinda Park North, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin

14 May 2018

Further information regarding the scope of our responsibilities as auditor

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (Ireland), we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the company's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the directors.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the company's ability to continue as going concerns. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our Auditor's Report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our Auditor's Report. However, future events or conditions may cause the company to cease to continue as going concerns.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

PARENT TESTIMONIAL

*"Excellent -
the session provided me with so much information
I learned a lot more than I hoped for."*

GRAHAM FAGAN

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

(Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account)

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	Unrestricted Funds 2017	Restricted Funds 2017	Total 2017	Total 2016
Notes	€	€	€	€
Incoming Resources				
Generated funds	-	-	-	-
Voluntary Income	-	-	-	-
Donations	7,385	-	7,385	-
Charitable activities				
Services	39,182	-	39,182	14,883
Grants	24,288	19,420	43,708	58,352
Total incoming resources	70,855	19,420	90,275	73,235
Resources Expended				
Net Incoming Resources available for charitable application	70,855	19,420	90,275	73,235
Resources Expended on Charitable Activities				
Delivery of services	63,695	34,783	98,478	46,361
Total Resources Expended	2 63,695	34,783	98,478	46,361
Gross transfers between funds	-	-	-	-
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	7,160	(15,363)	(8,203)	26,874
Net movement in funds for the year	7,160	(15,363)	(8,203)	26,874
Reconciliation of funds				
Balances brought forward at 1 January 2017	529	26,345	26,874	-
Balances carried forward at 31 December 2017	7,689	10,982	18,671	26,874

Approved by the Board of Directors on 14 May 2018 and signed on its behalf by:



Avril Ronan Naughton | Director



John Fitzsimons | Director

BALANCE SHEET

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	Notes	2017 €	2016 €
Current Assets			
Debtors	6	250	18,850
Cash and cash equivalents		22,514	17,260
		22,764	36,110
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	7	(4,093)	(9,236)
Net Current Assets		18,671	26,874
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		18,671	26,874
Funds			
Restricted funds		10,982	26,345
General fund (unrestricted)		7,689	529
Total funds	10	18,671	26,874

Approved by the Board of Directors on 14 May 2018 and signed on its behalf by:



Avril Naughton
Director



John Fitzsimons
Director

	Notes	2017 €	2016 €
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net movement in funds		(8,203)	26,874
		(8,203)	26,874
Movements in working capital:			
Movement in debtors		18,600	(18,850)
Movement in creditors		(5,143)	9,236
Cash generated from operations		5,254	17,260
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents		5,254	17,260
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January 2017		17,260	-
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 December 2017	12	22,514	17,260

1 | ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice Charities SORP (effective January 2015) in accordance with FRS 102 and with generally accepted accounting principles in Ireland and Irish statute comprising the Companies Act 2014. They comply with the financial reporting standards of the Accounting Standards Board, as promulgated by Chartered Accountants Ireland. The following accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items which are considered material in relation to the charitable company's financial statements.

Incoming Resources

Voluntary income or capital is included in the Statement of Financial Activities when the company is legally entitled to it, its financial value can be quantified with reasonable certainty and there is reasonable certainty of its ultimate receipt. Income received in advance of due performance under a contract is accounted for as deferred income until earned. Grants for activities are recognised as income when the related conditions for legal entitlement have been met. All other income is accounted for on an accruals basis.

Resources Expended

All resources expended are accounted for on an accruals basis. Charitable activities include costs of services and grants, support costs and depreciation on related assets. Costs of generating funds similarly include fundraising activities. Non-staff costs not attributed to one category of activity are allocated or apportioned pro-rata to the staffing of the relevant service. Finance, HR, IT and administrative staff costs are directly attributable to individual activities by objective. Governance costs are those associated with constitutional and statutory requirements.

Trade and other debtors

Trade and other debtors are initially recognised at fair value and thereafter stated at amortised cost using the effective interest method less impairment losses for bad and doubtful debts except where the effect of discounting would be immaterial. In such cases the receivables are stated at cost less impairment losses for bad and doubtful debts.

Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash at bank and in hand, demand deposits with banks and other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less and bank overdrafts. In the balance sheet bank overdrafts are shown within creditors.

Trade and other creditors

Trade and other creditors are initially recognised at fair value and thereafter stated at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method, unless the effect of discounting would be immaterial, in which case they are stated at cost.

Taxation

The company is exempt from Corporation Tax as it is a registered charity with a registered charity number 20104108.

2 | ANALYSIS OF RESOURCES EXPENDED

	Delivery of services 2017	Total € 2017	Total € 2016
Other costs			
Direct costs of delivering services	58,455	58,455	39,640
Support costs	32,371	32,371	4,893
Governance Costs	7,652	7,652	1,828
Totals	98,478	98,478	46,361

3 | ANALYSIS OF SUPPORT AND GOVERNANCE COSTS

	€	
Salaries, wages and related costs	28,228	Time
General office	4,143	Support
	32,371	
Governance	2017	Basis of Apportionment
	€	
Salaries & Wages	5,200	
Audit Fees	1,500	Governance
Legal and professional	952	Governance
	7,652	
Total	40,023	

4 | EMPLOYEES AND REMUNERATION

Number of employees

The average number of persons employed (including executive directors) during the year was as follows:

	2017 Number	2016 Number
Administration	1	1
Training	1	1
	2	2
The staff costs comprise:	2017 €	2016 €
Wages and salaries	62,400	29,076
Social security costs	6,708	3,126
	69,108	32,202

5 | EMPLOYEE REMUNERATION

There are no employees who received employee benefits of more than €70,000 for the reporting period.

6 | DEBTORS

	2017 €	2016 €
Trade debtors	250	18,850

7 | CREDITORS

Amounts falling due within one year	2017 €	2016 €
Taxation and social security costs (Note 8)	1,266	2,322
Other creditors	1,327	5,414
Accruals	1,500	1,500
	4,093	9,236

8 | TAXATION AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Creditors	2017 €	2016 €
PAYE / PRSI	1,266	2,322

9 | ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BY FUND

	Current Assets €	Current Liabilities €	Total €
Restricted income			
Restricted Funds	10,982	-	10,982
Unrestricted income			
Unrestricted funds	11,782	(4,093)	7,689
	22,764	(4,093)	18,671

10 | ANALYSIS OF MOVEMENTS ON FUNDS

	Balance 1 January 2017 €	Incoming resources €	Resources expended €	Balance 31 December 2017 €
Restricted income				
Restricted Funds	26,345	19,420	(34,783)	10,982
Unrestricted income				
Unrestricted Funds	529	70,855	(63,695)	7,689
Total	70,855	19,420	90,275	73,235

11 | STATUS

The company is limited by guarantee not having a share capital.

The liability of the members is limited.

Every member of the company undertakes to contribute to the assets of the company in the event of its being wound up while they are members, or within one year thereafter, for the payment of the debts and liabilities of the company contracted before they ceased to be members, and the costs, charges and expenses of winding up, and for the adjustment of the rights of the contributors among themselves, such amount as may be required, not exceeding € 2.

12 | CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

	2017 €	2016 €
Cash and bank balances	22,514	17,260

13 | POST-BALANCE SHEET EVENTS

There have been no significant events affecting the Charity since the year-end.

14 | APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Board of Directors on 14 May 2018.

CYBERSAFEIRELAND'S ACADEMIC YEAR IN REVIEW 2017 – 2018

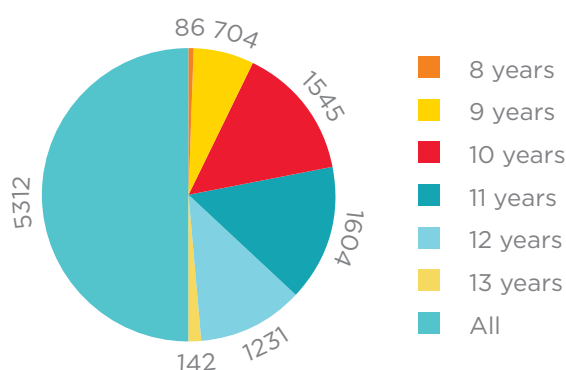
Overview

In this part of the report, we provide an overview of the data we have collected over the past academic year (September 2017 – June 2018) and also a more in-depth focus on some of the key findings and any areas of interest or concern. The data is gathered from children via an anonymous online survey before we go into each school. This allows us to get a picture of trends and usage within the classroom and also to tailor the session more specifically to their needs. In addition, we use the report as a basis for reporting back to parents, in general terms, about what their children are doing online. Finally, there is some data and testimonials collected from parents and teachers following the sessions.

Key Numbers

- Since January 2016, we have spoken to over **13,000 children aged between 8 and 13**.
- In this academic year we spoke directly to **5,905 children and to 1,560 parents**. **45%** of children reached overall and **58%** parents reached were over the last academic year.
- We visited 60 schools and a third (32%) required at least one additional day because of large numbers.
- We have gathered data from **5,312 children** through our anonymous online survey, 49% of which were female and 50% were male, with 1% not stating their gender.
- A breakdown of ages is provided below:

#Kids



Children who own a smartphone

We ask children in the survey if they own a smartphone and we clarify that we mean a phone that connects to the Internet. As Table 1 below indicates, overall 68% of the 5,312 children surveyed state that they own a smartphone. Smartphone ownership rises incrementally with age, starting at 34% of 8 year olds and rising to 92% of 13 year olds. There wasn't a significant gender deviation with just slightly more girls overall (70%) owning a smartphone versus 66% of boys.

We are often asked what the right age is to give children a smartphone. The reality is that the age at which you give a child any smart device should depend on the maturity levels of the child in question and the availability of the parent to be involved and engaged in their child's use of the device. At whatever age a parent decides to give their child a smart device, this should be an informed decision, and not resulting solely from significant pressure from their child or their peers. An added benefit of collecting the data from children is that we can report back to parents in a parents talk on exactly how many children in a particular class own a smartphone as parents will often hear from their children that 'all' their peers have one, when it is certainly not always the case. It's also important to note that even if they don't yet own a smartphone, most of the children in the age group we are talking to and younger, would have, or have access to, a smart device, be it a tablet, an iPod Touch or a gaming console.

Do you own a smartphone by age

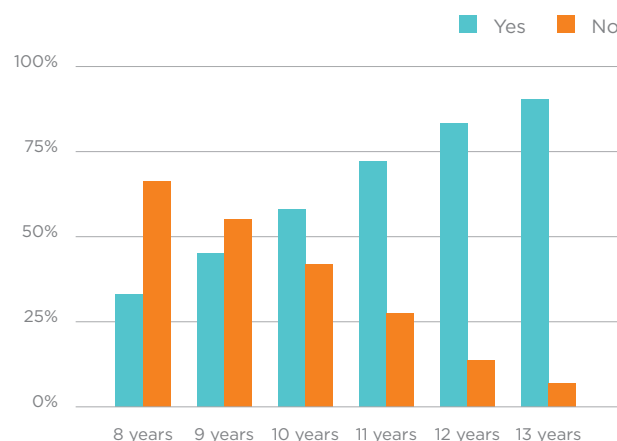


TABLE 1

Children who own a smartphone by gender

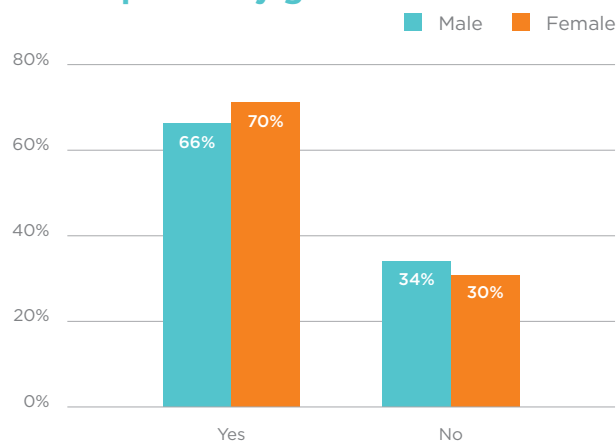


TABLE 2

Use of Social Media & Messaging Apps

Our data shows that 70% of the children we surveyed are using social media and messaging apps and 27% are not (see Table 3). In the survey we ask them to tick a box if they are not using any social media and messaging applications and if they are, to state what apps they are using.

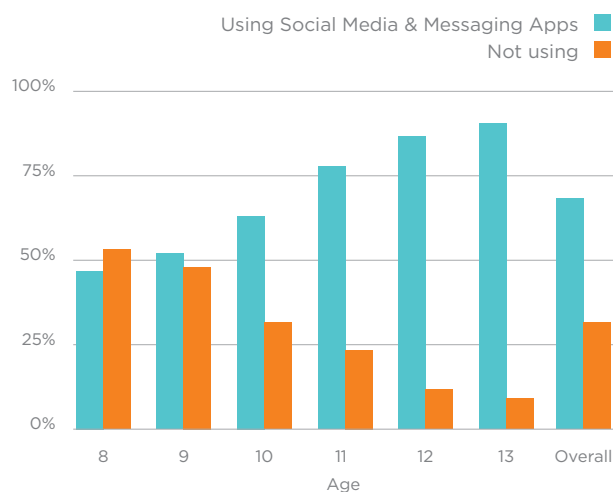


TABLE 3

Most applications have a minimum age restriction of 13 and historically this was as a result of US legislation called the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). This was strengthened in Europe through the recent introduction of the 'Digital Age of Consent' under the EU-wide General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), which came into effect on 25th May 2018. It refers to the age at which young people may sign up for online services such as social media without needing the explicit consent of their parent or

guardian. Each EU Member State was asked to set its own Digital Age of Consent somewhere in the range of 13-16 years. After much internal negotiation and consultation, Ireland opted for 16 in May 2018.

This context is significant because **all of the children that we speak to who are signed up to online services are under 16 and 97% of them are under 13**. It's also important to note that many of the children we speak to have parental consent in order to access services but we need to question if this consent can be considered informed consent? Too many parents we speak to are giving in to pressure from their children to get the latest device or to download a particular app or game and they are doing so without proper research or with the conversations that are so important for keeping our children safe online.

The six most popular apps with the 8 - 13 year olds are listed in Table 4 below in order of their popularity. Snapchat is the most popular app again this year with 47% of children using it and it is most popular with 12 and 13 year olds (67% and 70% respectively) but also popular with children as young as 8 (27%). Instagram also remains popular with 36% of children on it, although again it is most popular with children aged 12 (60%) and 13 (68%). WhatsApp has increased in popularity with 33% of children using it, up from 25% in last year's review and Musical.ly¹ is slightly less popular than last year (down to 21% from 30% last year). They all have a minimum age restriction of 13 with the exception of WhatsApp and Musical.ly, which now have age restrictions of 16 laid out in their terms and conditions.

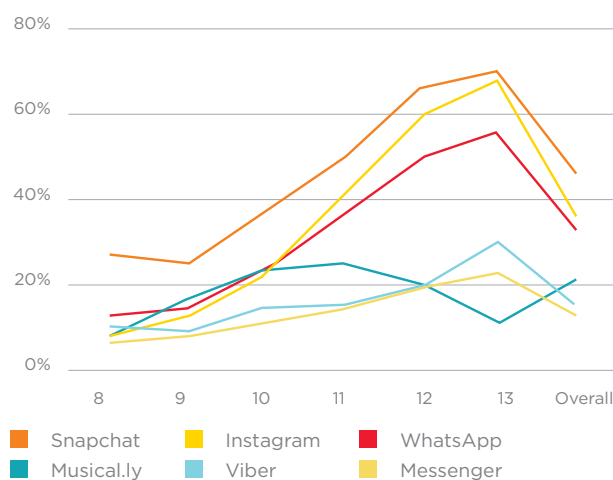


TABLE 4

¹ Musical.ly is now known as TikTok and has an age rating of 16+

The GDPR has brought with it requirements for tighter measures around age verification, but as we can see from the data above, the new measures will not be prohibitive to an under-age child wishing to access online services. The online service providers need only show ‘reasonable effort’ and essentially the measures they have introduced are still easy to circumnavigate and it will continue to be almost impossible to verify genuine parental consent. Unfortunately, a likely side-effect of these non-effective age verification controls is that children will simply state that they are a higher age in order to completely bypass them, thus negating any data protection or child protection measures that might be put in place for children.

Time Spent Online Daily

Again, a question we are frequently asked is what is the “right” amount of screen time for children and it is very difficult to provide a specific answer as not all screen time is the same and what works in one family may not work in another. There is a much greater focus now on the quality of the screen time: what are children doing while online? A video chat with friends or family could be a very productive and healthy use of time whereas time spent playing a first person shooter game may be far less beneficial, especially played over an extended period. What is essential however, is to find the right balance between online and offline lives. The American Association of Paediatrics (AAP) introduced new guidelines on screen time in October 2016. The key recommendation for children aged 6 and older was the need for consistent limits around time spent using digital media and that the time spent should not interfere or replace adequate sleep, physical activity, socialising and other requirements of healthy living.² It further recommends that families develop a Family Media Use Plan to help find the right balance but also to ensure the consistent application of rules. It is worth noting that the policy document goes on to state that children **“who overuse online media are at risk of problematic Internet use”**.³

In our survey we asked children to indicate how much time they spent online every day and the results in Table 5 show that the majority of children were spending 1 – 2 hours online every day (31%). There wasn’t a significant gender deviation though in general girls were spending less time online overall than boys (Table 6). Table 7 shows that there was a significant proportion of children who were online for more than

4 hours a day (13%) and this becomes particularly notable at 12 years (19%) and 13 years (18%). 10% of 8 year olds are also online for more than 4 hours a day.

Number of hours spent online daily

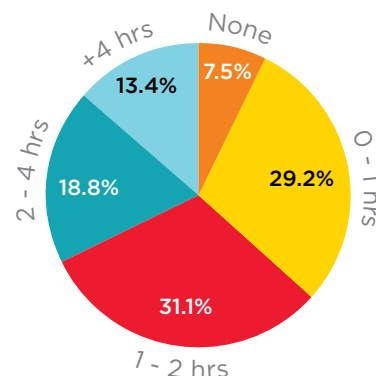


TABLE 5

Number of hours spent online daily by Gender

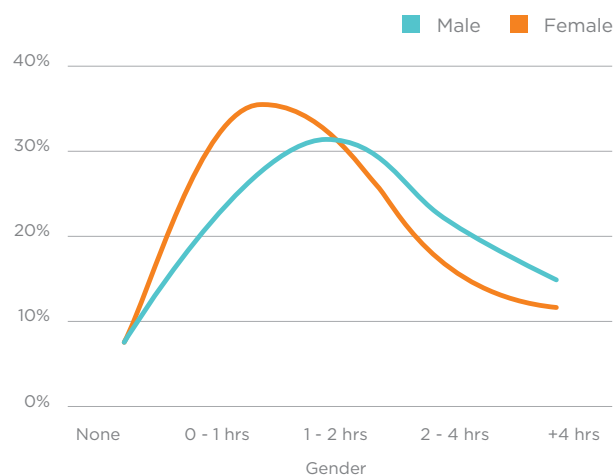


TABLE 6

Number of hours spent online daily

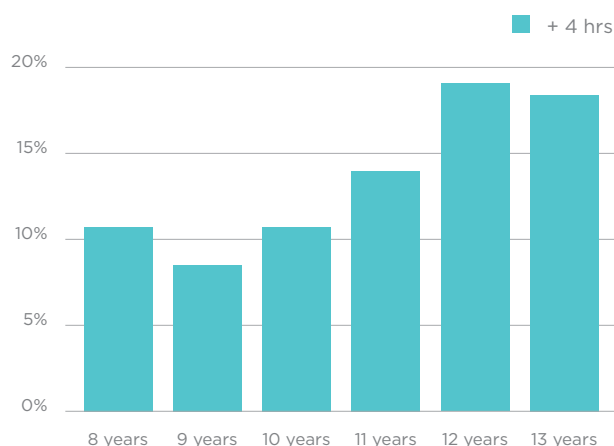


TABLE 7

² Media Use in School-Aged Children and Adolescents, Policy Statement from the American Association of Paediatrics (October 2016)

³ Ibid.

Whilst these figures seem very high given the age group in question, it is important to reiterate that it is not just about how long children are online but also what they are doing online. The growing popularity of the game Fortnite has brought this discussion into sharp focus. We started hearing about it in the classroom more significantly around February/March this year and by May it was discussed in almost every classroom that we visited. Almost every parents talk we did in the last few months of the academic year featured discussions on Fortnite and many parents expressed serious concern about how addicted their children were to the game. We also received phone calls from anxious parents and heard of schools issuing temporary bans on the game because of the impact in the classroom (children coming in tired after gaming into the night, children falling out over the game, children feeling left out if their friends were allowed more time on it than them and so on). Fortnite is only one example of many but it had broad appeal because it is free to download on almost any smart device and like many games, is designed to be addictive and to get the user to make in-app purchases.

This discussion is put into stark context by the World Health Organisation's recent decision to classify '*gaming disorder*' as a disease. It is defined as 'a pattern of gaming behavior ("*digital-gaming*" or "*video-gaming*") characterised by impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities, and continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences'.⁴ This announcement was followed by news that the NHS was to fund a gaming addiction treatment facility in the UK, which indicates that the problem is sufficiently widespread to warrant such measures⁵.

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4 <http://www.who.int/features/qa/gaming-disorder/en/> (January 2018)

5 <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/jun/22/nhs-internet-addiction-clinic-london-gaming-mental-health>

Talking to Strangers

In our survey we ask children how often they chat with someone online that they have never met in real life. Most children (58%) responded that they never speak to strangers online but a sizeable proportion do. Table 8 below indicates that 42% of children overall are talking to people online that they don't know in real life. 14% speak to strangers at least once a week and 18% speak to them every day.

Children talking to strangers online by age

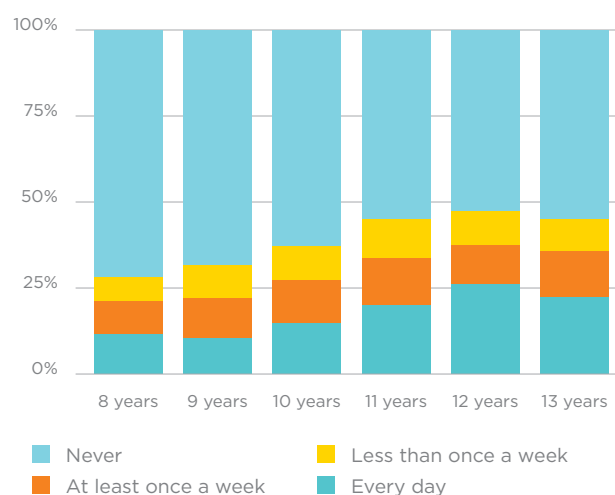


TABLE 8

Male and Female

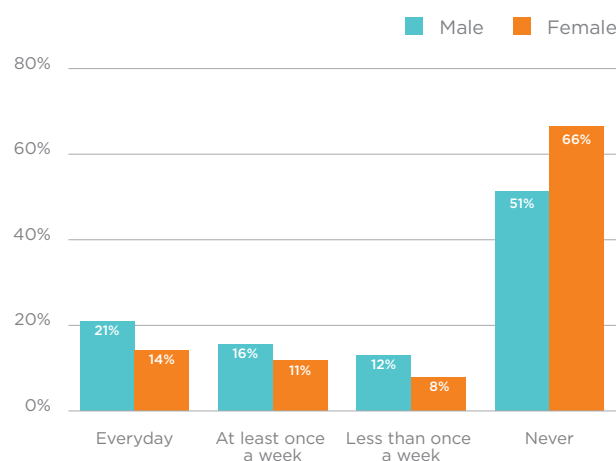


TABLE 9

It is noteworthy that **22% of 8 and 9 year olds are talking to someone they don't know either every day (8.5%) or at least once a week**. This rises to 38% of 12 year olds. In terms of gender, significantly more boys (49%) than girls (34%) are talking to strangers online and this possibly due to a greater prevalence of gaming among boys.

The nature of the contact with strangers varies, for instance, some children will tell us that they are chatting to others online through games; camaraderie can be quickly established for example, by being on the same side of a winning team. **We know that 64% of those who are speaking to strangers everyday are also gaming and that 91% of those speaking to strangers everyday are also on social media and messaging apps so this helps us understand more clearly in what capacity children are in contact with strangers online.** Sometimes it might be that they have accepted a friend request on a social media site from someone who is a *'friend of a friend'*, which in our experience seems more familiar to them than a complete stranger, even if it is a complete stranger. We have found that whilst many children understand the concept of *"stranger danger"*, they don't always apply this knowledge in reality to their online lives and that ultimately many will value popularity higher than privacy. One child noted in a classroom that if he only had real friends as followers then he would lose a significant proportion of his followers. Many children are influenced by their favourite YouTubers, who have amassed thousands or millions of followers and who appear to live lives that many aspire to themselves.

It is important to note that not every interaction online with a stranger is necessarily sinister; in all likelihood most won't be; but there remains a concern around children having contact with people they don't know online. Recent court cases have demonstrated that the Internet offers many opportunities for people to meet and groom children online and that they will do so through popular online games and social media and messaging apps. We always take the opportunity to discuss friendships and online connections with children in the classroom and the peer on peer discussions around these themes can be particularly helpful.

It is interesting to note that there is a significant increase in children talking to strangers compared to last year's figures (in Table 10), which are highlighted in Table 11. Last year's sample of survey responses was based on significantly fewer children (628 children) in the same age range. 78% of those children said they had never spoken to a stranger online compared to 58% this year and only 6% spoke to someone they didn't know every day compared to 18% this year. It is difficult to provide a clear reason for this increase but it could be as a result of the increasing availability and affordability of smart devices as well as the growing popularity in, and availability of, games like Fortnite that have a multiplayer function.

How often do you talk to people online that you haven't met in real life?

(Ref 2016-17 data)

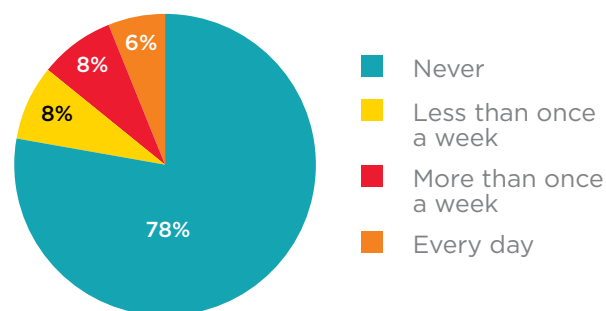


TABLE 10

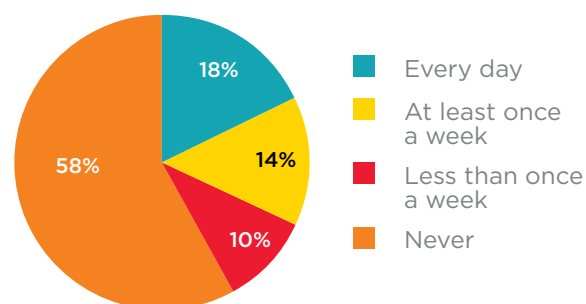


TABLE 11

Children on YouTube

YouTube continues to be a hugely popular with children, as it is with many adults. They are mainly consumers of YouTube content but an increasing number of children are also YouTube *'creators'* who post videos themselves. It's easy to understand the appeal of YouTube – it is after all is the largest and most popular video sharing service in the world, but as parents and carers, it is important that we are aware of what our children are watching and what they are being exposed to online. We encourage parents to use YouTube Kids for younger children (3 – 8 years) and to enable restrictions in the main platform in order to filter out what YouTube know to be adult content. Neither of these technical controls is fool proof however, so parental supervision remains crucial, particularly with young children.

We come across many children who upload videos on YouTube and Table 12 illustrates the number of respondents who do so by age. Overall, 24% of respondents had posted a video, which is significantly higher than last year, which was 12% for the overall

group. 22% of 9 year olds had posted a video rising to 25% of 11 year olds. Again, it is worth noting that YouTube has an age-restriction in place of 13 so no children should be using the platform as creators without parental consent. Anecdotally, we often come across cases where parents are completely unaware that their young child is publicly sharing videos of themselves on YouTube.

Have posted a video on Youtube by Age

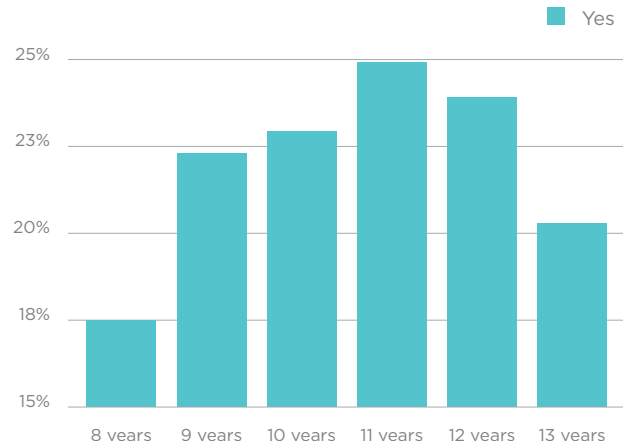


TABLE 12

Have posted a video on Youtube by Gender

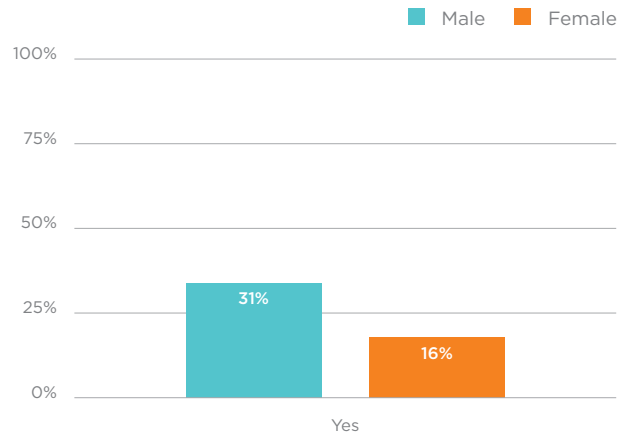


TABLE 13

Table 13 illustrates the gender breakdown, which indicates that significantly more boys (31%) are posting videos online than girls (16%).

Even if children are not posting their own videos online, we are aware of many children who have appeared in YouTube videos that their friends or siblings are making. Table 14 below indicates that 35% of the boys had appeared in videos compared to 23% of girls. Table 15 breaks this down by age and shows that nearly 25% of 8 year olds have appeared in videos rising to 31% of 11 year olds.

Have appeared in a video on Youtube by Gender

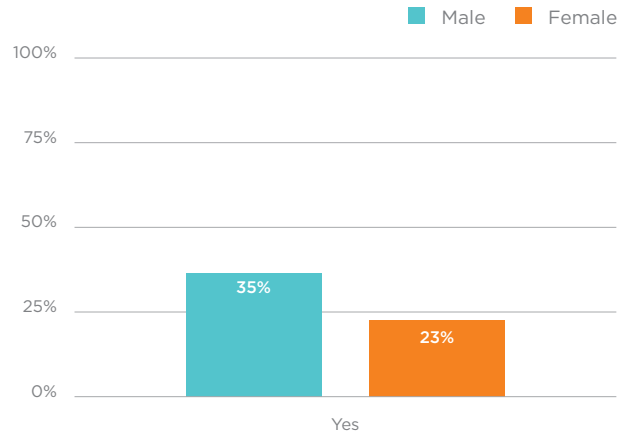


TABLE 14

Have appeared in a video on Youtube by Age

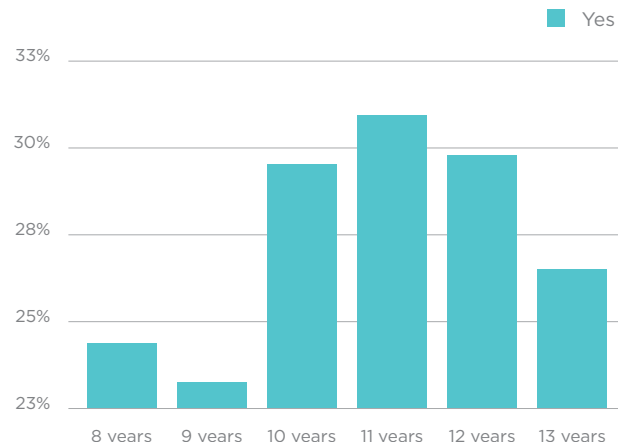


TABLE 15

We talk to children about the importance of not sharing too much personal information and showing their faces in videos that are to be posted publicly online is something we advise against. YouTube is a very public platform on which users actively seek as many followers as possible. This exposes them to a wide audience of people that they do not know in real life, making the children vulnerable to receiving abusive comments, or sharing too much information about themselves. There is also a heightened risk on such a public platform of their videos being collected and abused, for sexual or other purposes.

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Over 18s games

In the online survey, we ask children if they have ever played a game that has an age-rating of over 18. Table 16 below shows that the majority of children (53%) had not but 33% said 'yes' and 14% said they weren't sure.

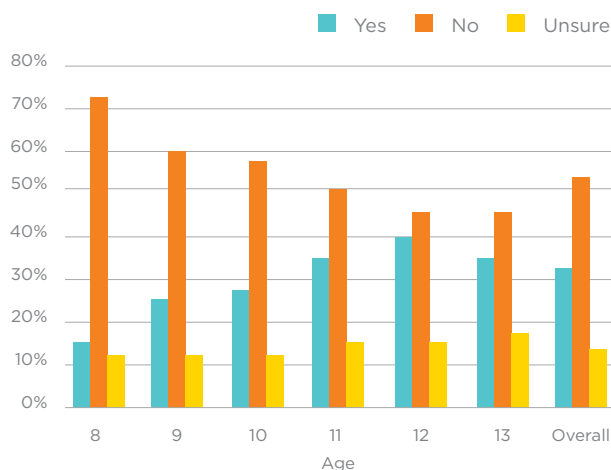


TABLE 16

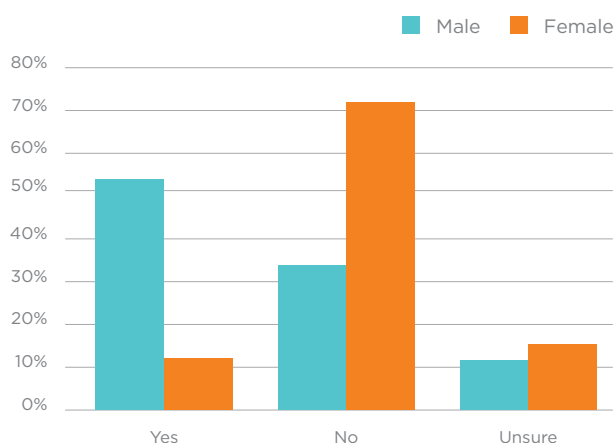


TABLE 17

There was a very clear gender dimension to the results, with 53% of boys overall playing over 18s games compared to only 13% of girls (Table 17). Table 16 also shows that 15% of 8 year olds and 26% of 9 year olds are playing over 18s games. If we disaggregate further by gender, we find that **41% of 8 and 9 year old boys are playing over-18s games.**

PEGI ratings provide an age-specific classification system for games and other entertainment media. The PEGI rating considers the age suitability of a game, rather than the level of difficulty. In our experience, this is not always something that is well understood by parents and we frequently reiterate in our parent talks that the PEGI rating has nothing to do with skill level but is focused on appropriateness of content. The jury

is still out on the long-term effects of such use online and there is also limited evidence in terms of the impact on children exposed to violent video games from a young age (below age 10) because of the ethical implications of exposing young children to violent content for the purposes of a study. A longitudinal study in 2008 however, found that violent video game use by children significantly increased the likelihood of displaying physically aggressive behaviour in later life. The report states: *"These longitudinal results confirm earlier experimental and cross-sectional studies that had suggested that playing violent video games is a significant risk factor for later physically aggressive behaviour.... As a whole, the research strongly suggests reducing the exposure of youth to this risk factor"*.⁶ A 2017 study further found that *"longitudinal studies are consistent with the hypothesis that violent video game use is associated with growth in aggressive behaviour over time"*.⁷

Talking to Parents

It is impossible to overestimate the important role that parents and carers can have in keeping their children safe online. Parents can set the tone in terms of the family's relationship with technology from the outset by modelling good behaviour around technology use themselves but also by establishing good communication with their children, agreeing clear and consistent rules, and keeping a firm eye on what their children are doing online

We asked children when they had last talked to a parent or carer about staying safe online and gave them the options of *'this week'*, *'this month'*, *'this year'*, *'more than a year ago'* or *'never'*. The majority of children had spoken to a parent or carer relatively recently and most had spoken to their parents this year (30%) or this this month (24%). Table 18 shows that 30% of respondents had rarely (more than a year ago) or never spoken to their parents about online safety and this was particularly notable for children aged 8 and 9 (37%).

6 Anderson, Craig A., et al, Longitudinal Effects of Violent Video Games on Aggression in Japan and the United States, Pediatrics, November 2008, VOLUME 122 / ISSUE 5

7 Calvert, Sandra L., et al, The American Psychological Association Task Force Assessment of Violent Video Games: Science in the Service of Public Interest, American Psychological Association 2017, Vol. 72, No. 2, 126 -143

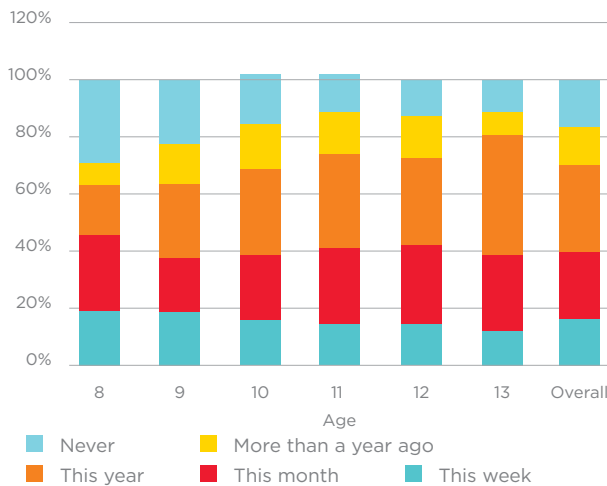


TABLE 18

There was a clear gender deviation on 'never' with 20% of boys and only 10% of girls giving this response (Table 19). Given that 47% of 8 year olds and 53% of 9 year olds are using social media, it is clear that these conversations with parents and carers need to start at least when they are first starting to use the Internet more independently and ideally, at an even earlier stage. It is fundamentally important that any child using the Internet is having regular conversations with their parents about what they are doing and seeing online.

Last talked to parent about online safety by Gender

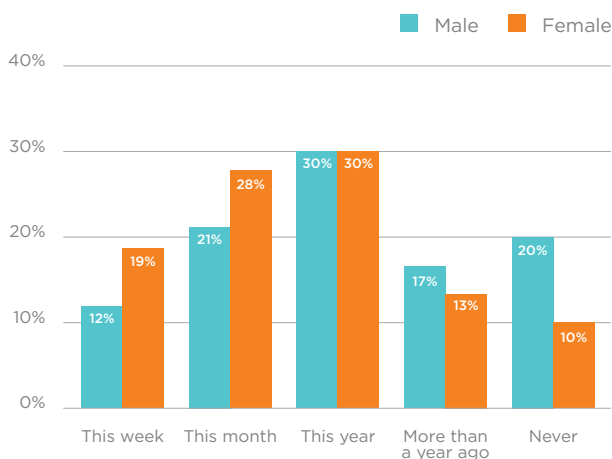


TABLE 19

Feedback from Teachers and Parents

We gather feedback from parents following our parents' talks and also from teachers following the sessions with children. Feedback is voluntary and can be anonymous unless the respondent wishes to add their name to a testimonial.

Teachers

We collected a range of data from 188 teachers, some of which was qualitative to give us a sense of how well they felt the session was presented to the children, whether the content was comprehensive or if anything was missing. Other questions were geared towards helping us to understand trends. We will focus on two or three of the categories in the section below.

How well-managed was the session?

We asked teachers how well they felt that the presenter delivered the session and managed the group of children; Table 20 below illustrates that 99% of teachers rated the session as either good or excellent. In addition, over 98% of teachers told us that they would recommend our sessions to other teachers.

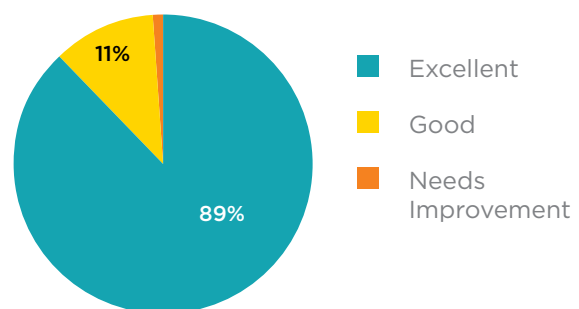


TABLE 20

How many online safety issues have you had to deal with over the past year?

We asked teachers to outline how many online safety issues they have had to deal with over the past year. In our experience, most incidences relate to some form of cyberbullying. Table 21 below shows that 38% of teachers did not have to deal with any incidences but the majority had dealt with at least one incident with **35% dealing with 2 – 5 incidences**, 22% dealing with 1 incident and 5% dealing with more than 5. Anecdotally, when we talk to teachers and principals, we find that access to the online world has created a significant impact in the classroom. Teachers are not just dealing with cyberbullying incidences but also children coming into the classroom tired because they have been up gaming or on social media late into the night and in some cases of children having shorter attention spans as a result of time spent online. We've also heard stories of girls' self-esteem being impacted because of social media and in one case a child receiving physio for 'text neck' from time spent gaming.⁸ The reality is that many schools are calling us in as a result of cyberbullying incidences and that there is still quite a reactive response to online safety as opposed to something that is proactively and regularly addressed within the classroom.

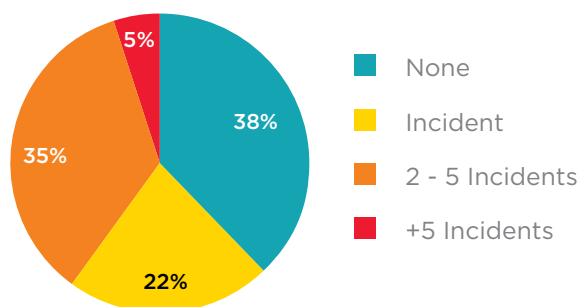


TABLE 21

We also asked teachers if they felt sufficiently resourced to effectively deliver educational messages relating to online safety in the classroom and most (51%) did not, which has significant implications in terms of educating children in this important area in the future. On a positive note, this figure has decreased from last year (69%) which shows a rising comfort level among teachers.

⁸ "Text neck is the term used to describe the neck pain and damage sustained from looking down at your cell phone, tablet, or other wireless devices too frequently and for too long". <https://www.spine-health.com/blog/modern-spine-ailment-text-neck>

Parents

We spoke to 1,560 parents over the course of the school year both in schools and in the workplace. Just less than 10% completed the online survey following the sessions so feedback is based on 145 parent responses. Like the teacher feedback forms, many of the questions are focused on the quality of delivery but a key objective of our education programme is to enhance the awareness of parents to the risks, opportunities and safeguards relating to Internet use so we consequently gather data around what they've learnt. We ask parents how confident they feel that they can apply what they've learnt in the session at home. As Table 21 below illustrates the vast majority (94%) felt 'very' or 'quite' confident that they could apply what they'd learnt at home, which is very important in terms of achieving the objective we have set around empowering parents to take simple steps towards online safety at home. We also asked them how much the session had enhanced their knowledge and as Table 22 illustrates, 90% said either 'hugely' or 'a lot'. 99% of parents would recommend our session to other parents.

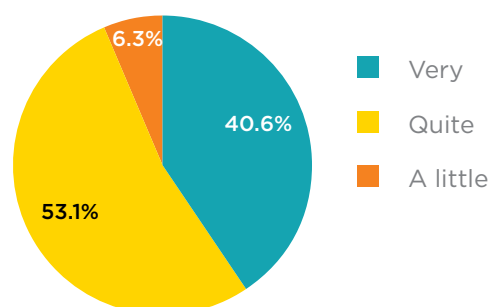


TABLE 22

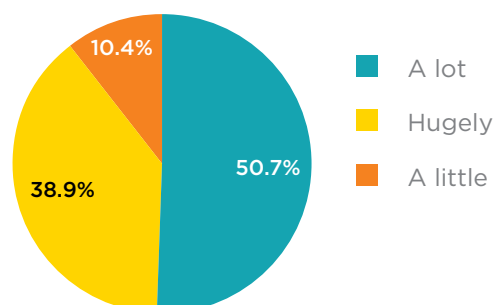


TABLE 23

CONCLUSION

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The data we have gathered from over 5,000 children this year has enabled us to form a very complete picture of how children in Ireland aged between 8 and 13 are engaging with technology. It is clear that this age group is very engaged and that technology plays a significant role in their lives. The data further suggests that some of the online use is not always healthy or positive and that over the longer-term it may have a detrimental impact on their lives for example, time spent online, chatting to strangers, and the potential for young children being exposed to inappropriate content through apps and games.

As a nation, we need to shift the focus towards a more healthy and balanced use of technology, particularly for our children. Children are often referred to as ‘digital natives’ and many certainly navigate the online world with fluency, but this does not mean that they are equipped to do so alone: they fundamentally need guidance and support in order to have safe and

positive online experiences. Children should learn digital literacy skills from a young age as these skills will play an important role in their lives. This education should not just be about basic computer literacy but should be aimed at increasing children’s critical thinking skills so that they can assess content in a more objective way and learn how, for example, apps and games are very often designed to be addictive. We need to empower our children to be able to see and manage risk online. We also need to encourage them to communicate with respect, to show empathy and to essentially treat people online as they would in real life. They will not be able to do this without good education and clear guidance from parents or carers. There are so many ways for children to positively engage with technology and as parents, educators and policy-makers we have a responsibility to ensure that this forms the basis of their relationship with it.

PARENT TESTIMONIAL

“Very well presented - the format of surveying students and talking with students beforehand was an excellent idea to inform parents of the reality of the pervasive usage of internet-enabled devices.”

DAMIEN GALLAGHER

RECOMMENDATIONS

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- We welcome the recent launch of the **Government Action Plan on Online Safety and the proposals to set-up a National Advisory Committee**. It is important that clear and time-bound targets are set so that it is evident how each measure will impact on children's online safety.
- **All children need to be empowered to use the Internet in a safe and responsible manner through effective education based on best practice methods**. We need to listen to children of all ages to fully understand their online experiences, to help them develop responsible behaviours online, to help them understand and manage risk, and build their resilience. Whilst schools can clearly benefit from periodically engaging external experts on Internet safety, this issue needs to be addressed throughout the school year and across the curriculum to achieve meaningful change for children. In order for this to happen, we need to find ways of increasing teachers' confidence in this area.
- **At a minimum** We would also recommend proper investment in the training of "*digital safety champions*" in schools so that this expertise is available in-house, in every school, and every county across Ireland
- **We need a national awareness campaign targeting parents** along the lines of ones that exist for road safety and healthy eating. We need to create social norms around safe and responsible internet use and avoid a situation in which any parent can say that they genuinely didn't know better. Parents need guidance, resources and support. We would recommend developing awareness campaigns and public education programmes targeting parents on how to support their children to stay safe online and be responsible digital citizens.
- **Social media and gaming platforms need to do more**. Whilst some companies are doing more than others to address the risks associated with children's use of their services, there must be greater acknowledgement of the existence of under-age users, more consistent and better application of safeguards and greater investment in education.
- **We strongly urge the Government to create an office of the Digital Safety Commissioner** to ensure greater accountability of the technology platforms and to ensure that there is greater action and responsiveness by them. We would further recommend that this office has an education mandate and that there is effective coordination with others working in the area of education. This office must be appropriately and adequately resourced.

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