



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

[cybersafekids.ie](https://cybersafekids.ie)



## 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



Prof. Joseph Carthy



Mrs. Avril Ronan Naughton



Mr. John Fitzsimons



Ms. Derval Blehein



Mr. Michael Moran



Ms. Geraldine Cashman



Ms. Mary Mitchell O'Connor

## COMPANY SECRETARY

Ms. 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

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## FOREWORD | Professor Brian O'Neill

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It is a privilege to once again be invited to write the Foreword to this year's CyberSafeKids Year in Review 2020-2021. This has been a year like no other and I wish to add my congratulations to the team at CyberSafeKids for another extraordinary year of educational support and much needed training in online safety for primary school children in Ireland. Amid an extraordinary transitioning to the digital environment over the past year, CyberSafeKids educators were able to overcome challenging conditions to reach over 6,700 children across diverse settings, delivering online safety workshops of the highest quality and meeting a vital need shared by parents, educators, and children themselves.

A highlight of the CyberSafeKids programme of online safety delivery is listening to what children have to say and gathering unique data about their experiences, both positive and negative, of digital technologies and online life. As in previous years, data from CyberSafeKids workshop surveys provides a real insight into an age group that is under-researched and not always well understood. Children of this age, as the data shows, are active users of a host of digital devices and services, rapidly developing new kinds of literacies as they navigate the digital environment though not always an environment that is designed for them or meets their needs as young digital users.

From this year's review, we learn that 8 to 12-year-olds have wide access to connected devices such as tablets, smartphones, and games consoles, have contact with lots of people online including on gaming sites, use diverse social media and messaging apps many of which require users to be at least 13 and, regrettably, encounter various less than positive experiences online. A quarter of participants in the CyberSafeKids review experienced something negative online that they would not want their parents to know about or saw something that bothered or upset them. This may include some type of scary or disturbing content that the child has come across, an unwanted contact that they may have received or experienced being bullied online, an occurrence that remains all too prevalent. Of concern, as the report points out, is that a third of these children do not tell anyone about such experiences, keeping it to themselves.

The importance of maintaining open dialogue about online safety is a key CyberSafeKids message. Whether this is between parent and child, teacher and school children, or any trusted adult, the importance of reaching out when something is not right in the online world cannot be overstated. Parents and teachers must be proactive in starting conversations about children's well-being online. As the data will only too clearly show, positive online experiences for children cannot be taken for granted. Careful planning, nurturing and active engagement is needed by everyone in the child's circle to foster safe, responsible, and beneficial experiences in the digital world.

As Covid-19 has demonstrated, digital technologies are now front and centre in how we live our lives, without which we struggle to enjoy the normal things of everyday life – going to school, playing, shopping, meeting new friends, and so on. But just as digital has become central to our lives and the lives of 8 to 12-year-olds, so too is the need for the detailed, specific, and targeted skills of online safety. CyberSafeKids fills a crucial gap in supporting children in this age group and through the kind of research demonstrated in this review is able to respond in an age-appropriate and sensitive fashion to children's evident desire to be more confident and competent in their digital journey.



Professor Brian O'Neill

*Professor Brian O'Neill, Technological University Dublin, 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 advisor for CyberSafeKids. He is the co-author of Towards a Better Internet for Children? Policy Pillars, Players and Paradoxes published by Nordicom.*

# POINTS OF INTEREST

## CHILDREN

- **93% of 8 – 12 year olds owned their own smart device.** Boys were significantly more likely to own a gaming console than girls (73% vs. 26%)
- **84% of 8 - 12 year olds had their own social media and/or instant messaging account.**
- **YouTube was the most popular app (74%) followed by TikTok (47%), WhatsApp (39%) and Snapchat (37%).** If they are posting videos of themselves online however, children are more likely to do so on TikTok (80%) or Snapchat (30%) than YouTube (16%).
- **28% of children with social media or instant messaging accounts had friends or followers they didn't know offline.**
- **17% of children reported playing over-18s games** with boys (29%) much more likely to do so than girls (7%)
- **36% of children game online with people they don't know offline** (41% of boys vs. 31% of girls). 16% increase on last year. **61% said they had been contacted by a stranger in an online game** either 'lots of times' (18%) or 'A few times' (43%).
- **A quarter of kids (25%) have seen or experienced something online in the last year that bothered them.** Almost a 3rd of those children (30%) kept it to themselves rather than report it to their parents or someone else.
- **29% of children have experienced bullying online** with being kept out of messaging groups (15%) being the most reported experience followed by being sent hurtful messages online (14%). Over a quarter of those children (29%) did not tell anyone about it but kept it to themselves.
- **Most children (77%) are speaking to parents or carers about what they are seeing and doing online with some regularity** but 10% never do and 2% only once a year
- In terms of rules for going online, most children reported having some rules in place but **13% reported that there were 'no rules' and 30% said they could go online 'whenever I want'.**

## TEACHERS

- **Almost 80% of teachers (79%) told us that online safety was a significant issue in their school.**
- **The majority (61%), had dealt with at least one incident over the last school year:** 21% dealt with one incident and 32% dealt with 2 – 5 incidents (slightly up on last year when it was 30%). **A minority of teachers (9%) dealt with more than 5 in the course of the school year.** *This figure (those dealing with more than 5 incidents) is a significant increase on last year, which was only 3%.*

# INTRODUCTION | Avril Ronan Naughton, Chairperson

Welcome to CyberSafeKids' sixth annual Cyber Safety Report. It provides evidence-based research on children's technology use in Ireland and it is invaluable to us all; whether we are parents, teachers, carers, government, or CyberSafeKids; the organisation who conducted the research report. With this knowledge comes awareness which is a driving force for positive change and improvements to all our digital lives; whatever age we are. We all have a right to be online, to be safe, to achieve and to be successful online and this report will continue as it does each year to inform the work CyberSafeKids does nationwide.

As a parent of two children myself, and like every parent out there, I am faced daily with the challenges of digital life. Children always want more time online and access to more apps and games. They are also still developing as little humans and that includes their social skills as well as all the wonderful digital skills that technology and the internet has to offer. I know as a parent and educator that once safety and privacy measurements are put in place across all devices, apps, and games, once rules are agreed and regularly reviewed with your children and once parents nurture a safe and trusting relationship with their children, that life online can be an enjoyable place for all.

You know your own child and you will know when your child is ready to embark on the next level of digital citizenship. While your child may feel they are ready, it is us as parents that carry the responsibility of determining what is appropriate and what is not. Remember, a device is a privilege not an entitlement. The internet must be acknowledged and respected for all of its usefulness and its dangers. You can see from this detailed report, that 93% of children 8 -12 year olds owned their own device and were using apps and games; many of which have a 13+ minimum age requirement. So please, be informed. Use the internet and do your research online with your child before you decide together whether it is appropriate or not. Then manage the safety and privacy settings within each app/game. CyberSafeKids website ([www.cybersafekids.ie](http://www.cybersafekids.ie)) is full of practical resources and useful information.

We want our kids to make the right decisions online when we are not around. It is a bumpy journey guiding and nurturing them online until they reach that maturity level. They will make lots of mistakes. That is why I would ask you to download that app or game that your child loves, set up your own account and play with them. You will learn so much about your child's life online, their creativity, their skills, achievements, and indeed where they need your help and support. This is where the importance of constant open communication comes in. From the report you will see that 14-15% of children were sent hurtful messages and were excluded from

chat groups, a large contributor to unkindness online. The only real way to tackle this is through regular conversation, nurturing and developing a child's social emotional skills. We do this in the real world with our children, now we must take the time regularly to be there online with them

too. Find the time and make the time. If your child knows that you understand what they do online, and you have that trusting relationship with them, they will come to you with their worries, and indeed their online achievements.

This report strongly compounds the important need for the government to pass the Online Safety Media Regulation Bill. The office of the Online Safety Commissioner, once appointed, will also play a critical role in leading public awareness campaigns and sharing useful resources to provide that support to parents, carers, and teachers everywhere.

Thank you, Alex Cooney, CEO of CyberSafeKids for your passion and commitment to fulfilling the Vision of CyberSafeKids; that of a world in which children are using technology in a safe, positive, and successful manner. Alex has an amazing team at CyberSafeKids who under her leadership are also truly inspirational. If you would like to avail of the educational services of CyberSafeKids, know that they are here for you.

I cannot conclude my introduction without also thanking all those that support CyberSafeKids' work, including my fellow board members who have dedicated so much time and expertise to CyberSafeKids over the years; to our funders over the last year including Life's2Good, Permanent TSB, Rethink Ireland, Social Entrepreneurs Ireland and the Community Foundation for Ireland and to our regular donors - Sara Emmanuel and CommSec. Thank you for your generosity and your support.

Every time you read this report you will take something different away; pass this onto others in your community so that together we can learn and together we can empower youth and communities 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 financial year ended 31 December 2020.

The financial statements are prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2014, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

The Directors' Report contains the information required to be provided in the Directors' Annual Report under the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) guidelines. The directors of the company are also charity trustees for the purpose of charity law and under the company's constitution are known as members of the board of trustees.

In this report the directors of CyberSafeIreland Company Limited by Guarantee trading as CyberSafeKids present a summary of its purpose, governance, activities, achievements and finances for the financial year 2020.

The charity 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 applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015), the organisation has implemented its recommendations where relevant in these financial statements.

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

## MISSION, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY

### Objectives

The charity's main object 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.

The following objects support the attainment of the main object.

- A** To engage in research and development and to organise, promote and provide training and development through seminars, conferences, discussions and other meetings to promote the main object.
- B** To make, print, publish, computerise, distribute training materials or general information in connection with the main object.
- C** Sharing safe and responsible online practice to enrich the education of children, parents and teachers in furtherance of the main object.
- D** 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.

The main area of the company's activity in 2020 were as follows:

- The delivery of the Education Programme to 5,883 children and 891 parents between January and December 2020, including introducing a summer online "boot-camp" for children aged 8 – 13.
- Pivoted the Company's activities by moving services online from April 2020 as a result of COVID-19 and launched a new 'Stuck At Home' hub with lots of resources for parents and teachers whilst children were home-schooling.
- Developed a new 3-year organisational Strategy (2021 – 2023), which was signed off by the Board in December 2020.

## Our Staff

The team of staff is made up of:

- Alex Cooney as co-founder and CEO (since 2015)
- Philip Arneill as Head of Education (since 2019)
- Cliona Curley as co-founder and an advisor (since 2015)
- Aoife Keogh as Marketing and Admin Officer (since 2019)
- Louise O'Hagan as Education Officer (since 2019).
- Mattia Messina as Research Officer whilst completing a 4-year PHD (since 2020) focused on children's digital wellbeing, co-sponsored by the Irish Research Council and the Community Foundation for Ireland.

Huge thanks to all the staff for their work and dedication towards the delivery of CyberSafeIreland's Mission throughout 2020.

## Our Panel of Trainers

Much of our outreach work in schools, libraries and workplaces is delivered by a dedicated team of trainers. The Company receives very positive feedback and this is attributed to the high degree of professionalism and enthusiasm of CyberSafeIreland's trainers. In 2020, the Company had 7 trainers on its panel: Ann Harte, Aoife Boyle, Brendan Noone, Enda McGahern, Martyn Wallace, Olwyn Beresford and Rachel Lynch with further recruitment planned in 2021.

## Our Volunteers

The trustees are very grateful to the unpaid volunteers who have supported the organisation over the past year. Particular thanks and recognition must be extended to the diligent team of "CyberNinja" volunteers led by Michelle Garigan who provide technical research and who help us to keep on top of the constantly changing landscape of what kids are doing online.

## STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

### Structure

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee. The company does not have a share capital and consequently the liability of members is limited, subject to an undertaking by each member to contribute to the net assets or liabilities of the company on winding up such amounts as may be required not exceeding one Euro (€1).

The charity was established under a Constitution which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Constitution and managed by a Board of Directors.

### Governance

At the start of 2020, the Company had eight members on its board of directors, with Avril Ronan as Chairperson. Three members stepped down in April 2020 after four years of service. The Company would like to acknowledge the support and dedication of those members: Professor Brian O'Neill, Fiona Conway and Ursula McMahon and thank them for their service. Ms. McMahon will remain on as Company Secretary and both Ms. Conway and Professor O'Neill will remain as Advisors to the Board. Geraldine Cashman was appointed as Treasurer in April 2020 and Mary Mitchell O'Connor and Orla McDermott joined the Board in October and December respectively. The Company is delighted to welcome these new members who bring a wealth of experience to the Board and thanks to all the members for their continued support and valued contributions.

The Board normally meets on a quarterly basis but in 2020 as a result of the challenging circumstances, they met on five occasions. The Board are responsible for the strategic direction of the charity. The charity is run on a day to day basis by the chief executive officer, who is responsible for ensuring that the charity meets its long and short term



aims and that the day to day operations run smoothly. The CEO and Head of Education and Innovation have delegated authority, within terms of delegation approved by the trustees, for operational matters including finance, employment and programme development.

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## Management

There is clear division of responsibility at the company with the Board retaining control over major decisions. The board of directors retain overall responsibility for the strategic development of the company in close liaison with the executive officers. All directors have signed the charity's Code of Conduct as well as the Child Safeguarding Policy.

Directors are unpaid and no director received any payment during this period.

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## Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance

The main achievements of the company during the year were:

- Whilst COVID-19 and the restrictions that resulted from it presented many challenges, the Company successfully pivoted its services online. It launched a new 'Stuck At Home' online hub within 1 week of the first lockdown, providing lots of resources and advice to families in newly restricted circumstances.
- It also moved its services online with parent webinars offered from April 2020 and bootcamps for children offered from June 2020. Bootcamps continued throughout the summer months and new online educational webinars were launched for schools in September.
- The Company accessed the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme for some of its staff between April and August 2020.
- Overall the Company delivered workshops to 5,883 children, 891 parents and 113 teachers in 2020.
- Ahead of the election in February 2020, the Company developed a series of policy 'asks', which were circulated to representatives of all of the political parties to include in their election manifestos. The 'asks' focused on calling for a national strategy on online safety, with key measures including the regulation of online service providers and a comprehensive education programme in all schools focused on digital literacy and healthy online behaviours.

- Once the new Government was established, the Company partook in a campaign coordinated by the Children's Rights Alliance to promote the inclusion of key online safety measures into the new Programme for Government.
- The Company continued to be represented at the National Advisory Council on Online Safety (NACOS) meetings.
- The Company was delighted to be selected as one of the chosen charities for the Cannes Young Lions competition in 2020 and was represented in three categories.
- The Company launched its 2019 Annual Report on 10th September 2020.
- The Company launched a campaign called 'Cyber Break' on 16th October, a 24-hour break from devices, as part of its community partnership with Permanent TSB. It is envisaged to be an annual campaign.
- The Company implemented a new CRM system.
- The Company developed the CyberSafe Tool for Schools and tested it with five schools, ready for launch in 2021. This project was supported by the Rethink SED Fund and Lifes2Good Foundation.
- The Company developed its new 3-year Strategic Plan and budget between September and November 2020, with the support of Rethink Ireland's Social Enterprise Development Fund and this was approved by the Board at the December board meeting.

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## Financial Review

Against the backdrop of limited resources and insecurities over funding, it has continued to be challenging to plan or develop services. Nevertheless the charity, with the aid of sound financial management and the support of its staff, trainers and volunteers generated a very positive financial outcome for the period.

The principal sources of funding for the charity are philanthropic grants and fees generated through services. Philanthropic grants were continued from Trend Micro, Social Entrepreneurs Ireland and the Ireland Funds Flagship Awards as well from donations through the year from CommSec and others. Further philanthropic funds were secured from Rethink Ireland and the Community Foundation of Ireland. Particular thanks to all of our funders listed here, as well as Lifes2Good and Jim Quinn. We really couldn't do what we do without that invaluable support.

## Financial Results

At the end of the financial year the charity has assets of €152,956 (2019 - €52,322) and liabilities of €7,379 (2019 - €7,696). The net assets of the charity have increased by €100,951.

## Reserves Position and Policy

The charity has a draft Reserves policy in place, which will be reviewed and signed off at a Board meeting in 2021.

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
- Be adequate to cover 3 months of current expenditure.

The total restricted funds at year end are €50,614 (2019 €8,088), which are not included in the trustee's view of the charity's reserve needs because these restricted funds are held by the charity only for as long as is necessary to organise the necessary programmes. Normally these funds are spent within 12 months of receipt.

The reserves includes funding from both restricted and unrestricted sources. The unrestricted funding remaining was €94,963 (2019 €36,538).

## Principal Risks and Uncertainties

At the time of approving the financial statements, the company is exposed to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic that has restricted activities since the year end. In planning its future activities, the directors will seek to develop the company's activities whilst managing the effects of the difficult trading period caused by this outbreak.

## Reference and Administrative details

The organisation is a charitable company with a registered office at 93 Upper Georges Street, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. The Charity trades under the name CyberSafeIreland CLG. Its Company Registration 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 21711 and is registered with the Charities Regulatory Authority with the charity number 20104108. The charity has a total of 8 trustees.

The CEO is Ms. Alex Cooney who has over 20 years of experience in the not-for-profit sector. She is a co-founder of the charity. The day to day management of the charity is also directed by the Head of Education & Innovation: Mr Philip Arneill who has over 20 years of experience in the field of education.

## Directors and Secretary

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

- Ms. Geraldine Cashman (Appointed 23 April 2020)
- Ms. Mary Mitchell O'Connor (Appointed 20 October 2020)
- Ms. Ursula McMahon (Resigned 23 April 2020)
- Prof. Joseph Carthy
- Prof. Brian O'Neill (Resigned 23 April 2020)
- Ms. Avril Naughton
- Mr. John Fitzsimons
- Ms. Fiona Conway (Resigned 23 April 2020)
- Ms. Derval Blehein
- Mr. Michael Moran

The secretary who served throughout the financial year was Ms. Ursula McMahon.

## Compliance with Sector-wide Legislation and Standards

The charity engages pro-actively with legislation, standards and codes which are developed for the sector. CyberSafeIreland Company Limited by Guarantee trading as CyberSafeKids subscribes to and is compliant with the following:

- The Companies Act 2014
- The Charities SORP (FRS 102)
- The Governance Code

## Future Developments

The Company will continue to be impacted by the uncertainties brought about by the global pandemic, including further periods of school closures and lockdowns. It will continue to offer its services online for the foreseeable future and it will further diversify its services in 2021 and beyond.

## Auditors

The auditors, Veldon Tait have indicated their willingness to continue in office in accordance with the provisions of section 383(2) of the Companies Act 2014.

## Statement on Relevant Audit Information

In accordance with section 330 of the Companies Act 2014, so far as each of the persons who are directors at the time this report is approved are aware, 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.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 27 May 2021 and signed on its behalf by:



Ms. Derval Blehein  
Director



Prof. Joseph Carthy  
Director

## TEACHER TESTIMONIAL

"Some of the content was eye-opening for my students.  
Really worthwhile!"

MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS GIRLS NATIONAL SCHOOL, DUBLIN

# DIRECTORS' RESPONSIBILITIES STATEMENT

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The directors are responsible for preparing the financial statements in accordance with applicable Irish law and regulations.

Irish company law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under the law the directors have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the Companies Act 2014 and FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" issued by the Financial Reporting Council. Under company law, the directors must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the charity as at the financial year end date and of the net income or expenditure of the charity for the financial year and otherwise comply with the Companies Act 2014.

In preparing these financial statements, the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities (2015);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the relevant financial reporting framework, identify those standards, and note the effect and the reasons for any material departure from those standards; and
- 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 ensuring that the charity keeps or causes to be kept adequate accounting records which correctly explain and record the transactions of the charity, enable at any time the assets, liabilities, financial position and net income or expenditure of the charity to be determined with reasonable accuracy, enable them to ensure that the financial statements and the Directors' Annual Report comply with Companies Act 2014 and enable the financial statements to be audited. 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 charity's website. Legislation in the Republic of Ireland governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 27 May 2021 and signed on its behalf by:



Ms. Derval Blehein | Director



Prof. Joseph Carthy | Director

# INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

## Report on the audit of the financial statements

### Opinion

We have audited the charity financial statements of CyberSafeIreland Company Limited by Guarantee trading as CyberSafeKids for the financial year ended 31 December 2020 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account), the Balance Sheet and the notes to the financial statements, including the 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" and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the charity as at 31 December 2020 and of its surplus for the financial year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland", as applied in accordance with the provisions of the Companies Act 2014 and having regard to the Charities SORP; 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 described below in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of financial statements in Ireland, including the Ethical Standard for Auditors (Ireland) 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

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the directors with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

### 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.

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 course of 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

In our opinion, based solely on the work undertaken in the course of the audit, we report that:

- the information given in the Directors' Annual Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

We have obtained all the information and explanations which, to the best of our knowledge and belief, are necessary for the purposes of our audit.

In our opinion the accounting records of the charity were sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited. In our opinion 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 charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified any material misstatements in the Directors' Annual 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 complied with by the company. 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 in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework that 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 charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, if applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, 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.

.....



## 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 , 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 charity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by 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 charity's ability to continue as a going concern. 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 charity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- 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.

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

Our report is made solely to the charity's members, 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 charity's members 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 charity and the charity's members, 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 Audit Firm

5 Rogan's Court, Patrick Street, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin

27 May 2021

# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

(Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account)

For the financial year ended 31 December 2020.

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds 2020	Restricted Funds 2020	Total 2020	Unrestricted Funds 2019	Restricted Funds 2019	Total 2019
<b>Incoming Resources</b>							
Voluntary Income	3.1	€28,711	-	€28,711	€2,010	-	€2,010
Charitable Activities							
Grants from governments and other co-funders	3.2	€167,329	€106,525	€273,854	€137,223	-	€137,223
<b>TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES</b>		<b>€196,040</b>	<b>€106,525</b>	<b>€302,565</b>	<b>€139,233</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>€139,233</b>
<b>Resources Expended</b>							
Charitable activities	4.1	€137,615	€63,999	€201,614	€138,055	€44,576	€182,631
Net incoming/outgoing resources before transfers		€58,425	€42,526	€100,951	€1,178	(€44,576)	(€43,398)
Gross transfers between funds		-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS FOR THE YEAR</b>		<b>€58,425</b>	<b>€42,526</b>	<b>€100,951</b>	<b>€1,178</b>	<b>(€44,576)</b>	<b>(€43,398)</b>
<b>Reconciliation of Funds</b>							
Balances brought forward at 1 January 2020	11	€36,538	€8,088	€44,626	€35,360	€52,664	€88,024
<b>BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD AT 31 DECEMBER 2020</b>		<b>€94,963</b>	<b>€50,614</b>	<b>€145,577</b>	<b>€36,538</b>	<b>€8,088</b>	<b>€44,626</b>

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the financial year.

All income and expenditure relate to continuing activities.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 27 May 2021 and signed on its behalf by:



Ms. Derval Blehein | Director



Prof. Joseph Carthy | Director

# BALANCE SHEET

		2020	2019
<b>Current Assets</b>	<b>Notes</b>		
Debtors	8	€16,416	€4,818
Cash at bank and in hand		€136,540	€47,504
		€152,956	€52,322
<b>Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>(€7,379)</b>	<b>(€7,696)</b>
Net Current Assets		€145,577	€44,626
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		€145,577	€44,626
<b>Funds</b>			
Restricted funds		€50,614	€8,088
General fund (unrestricted)		€94,963	€36,538
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>€145,577</b>	<b>€44,626</b>

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure relate to continuing activities.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 27 May 2021 and signed on its behalf by:



Ms. Derval Blehein | Director



Prof. Joseph Carthy | Director

## PARENT TESTIMONIAL

"The CyberSafeKids (age 8-13) webinar was really interesting and informative. At the end I felt much more equipped and less daunted by the online world my two young children are starting to inhabit. Would definitely recommend CyberSafeKids as a resource to other parents."

PARENT, DUBLIN CITY LIBRARY

# NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## 1 | GENERAL INFORMATION

CyberSafeIreland Company Limited by Guarantee trading as CyberSafeKids is a company limited by guarantee incorporated in the Republic of Ireland. The registered office of the company is 93 Upper George's Street, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin which is also the principal place of business of the company. The CRO number is 568651. The financial statements have been presented in Euro (€) which is also the functional currency of the company.

## 2 | SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The following accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items which are considered material in relation to the charity's financial statements.

### Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared on the going concern basis under the historical cost convention, modified to include certain items at fair value. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015)".

The charity has applied the Charities SORP on a voluntary basis as its application is not a requirement of the current regulations for charities registered in the Republic of Ireland.

As permitted by the Companies Act 2014, the charity has varied the standard formats in that act for the Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet. Departures from the standard formats, as outlined in the Companies Act 2014, are to comply with the requirements of the Charities SORP and are in compliance with section 4.7, 10.6 and 15.2 of that SORP.

### Statement of compliance

The financial statements of the charity for the financial year ended 31 December 2020 have been prepared on the going concern basis and in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015)" and FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland".

### Cash flow statement

The charity has availed of the exemption in FRS 102 from the requirement to produce a cash flow statement because it is classified as a small charity.

### Incoming Resources

Voluntary income or capital is included in the Statement of Financial Activities when the charity 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## Debtors

Debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due. Income recognised by the charity from government agencies and other co-funders, but not yet received at year end, is included in debtors.

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## Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and in hand comprises cash on deposit at banks requiring less than three months notice of withdrawal.

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## Taxation

No current or deferred taxation arises as the charity has been granted charitable exemption. Irrecoverable valued added tax is expensed as incurred.

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

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## TEACHER TESTIMONIAL

"Our class built upon their cyber safety knowledge so much in this 40 minute session. The content and delivery was engaging and thorough. *Go raibh maith agaibh!*"

REALT NA MARA NATIONAL SCHOOL, SKERRIES

### 3 | INCOME

3.1   DONATIONS AND LEGACIES	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	2020	2019
Donations	€28,711	-	€28,711	€2,010

3.2   CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	2020	2019
Services	€48,941	-	€48,941	€57,223
Grants	€118,388	€106,525	€224,913	€80,000
	€167,329	€106,525	€273,854	€137,223

### 4 | EXPENDITURE

4.1   CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	Direct Costs	Other Costs	Support Costs	2020	2019
Delivery of services	€55,469	-	€141,764	€197,233	€178,355
Governance Costs (Note 4.2)	-	-	€4,381	€4,381	€4,276
	€55,469	-	€146,145	€201,614	€182,631

4.2   GOVERNANCE COSTS	Direct Costs	Other Costs	Support	2020	2019
Charitable activities - governance costs	-	-	€4,381	€4,381	€4,276

4.3   SUPPORT COSTS	Charitable Activities	Governance Costs	2020	2019
Audit and accounting fees	-	€4,381	€4,381	€4,276
Salaries,wages and related costs	€114,195	-	€114,195	€87,478
General office	€27,569	-	€27,569	€24,439
	€141,764	€4,381	€146,145	€116,193



## 5 | ANALYSIS OF SUPPORT COSTS

	Basis of Apportionment	2020	2019
Audit and accounting fees		€4,381	€4,276
Salaries,wages and related costs	Time	€114,195	€87,478
General office	Support	€27,569	€24,439
		€146,145	€116,193

## 6 | EMPLOYEES AND REMUNERATION

### Number of employees

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

	2020 Number	2019 Number
Administration	3	3
Training	1	1
	4	4
<b>The staff costs comprise:</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
Wages and salaries	€102,888	€119,252
Social security costs	€9,188	€12,753
	€112,076	€132,005

## 7 | EMPLOYEE REMUNERATION

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

## 8 | DEBTORS

	2020	2019
Trade debtors	€16,416	€4,818

## 9 | CREDITORS

Amounts falling due within one year	2020	2019
Trade creditors	1,036	20
Taxation and social security costs	€1,761	€3,099
Other creditors	€1,332	€1,327
Accruals	€3,250	€3,250
	€7,379	€7,696

## 10 | RESERVES

	2020	2019
At 1 January 2020	€44,626	€88,024
(Deficit)/Surplus for the financial year	€100,951	(€43,398)
At 31 December 2020	€145,577	€44,626

## 11 | FUNDS

11.1   RECONCILIATION OF MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds
At 1 January 2019	€35,360	€52,664	€88,024
Movement during the financial year	€1,178	(€44,576)	(€43,398)
At 31 December 2019	€36,538	€8,088	€44,626
Movement during the financial year	€58,425	€42,526	€100,951
At 31 December 2020	€94,963	€50,614	€145,577

11.2   ANALYSIS OF MOVEMENTS ON FUNDS					
	Balance 1 January 2020	Income	Expenditure	Transfers between funds	Balance 31 December 2020
<b>Restricted income</b>					
Restricted Funds	€8,088	€106,525	€63,999	–	€50,614
<b>Unrestricted income</b>					
Unrestricted General	€36,538	€196,040	€137,615	–	€94,963
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>€44,626</b>	<b>€302,565</b>	<b>€201,614</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>€145,577</b>

11.3   ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BY FUND	Current assets	Current liabilities	Total
Restricted funds	€50,614	–	€50,614
Unrestricted general funds	€102,342	(€7,379)	€94,963
	€152,956	(€7,379)	€145,577

## 12 | STATUS

The charity 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 €1.

.....

## 13 | POST-BALANCE SHEET EVENTS

In the first half of 2020, the Covid-19 virus spread worldwide. In common with many other countries, the Irish government issued guidance and restrictions on the movement of people designed to slow the spread of this virus.

This has had a negative impact on the company since the year end and trading activity has reduced as a result. The directors are confident that the company will be able to adapt its operations to trade through these restrictions as outlined in the directors report.

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## 14 | APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Board of Directors on 27 May 2021.

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### PARENT TESTIMONIAL

"The webinar was really informative and engaging. I was relieved to see that we as a family had already put some of the suggestions in place but the webinar was also full of useful tips and information that I hadn't been aware of. Would highly recommend!"

PARENT, ST. FERGAL'S/ST. KILLIAN'S NS, WICKLOW

CyberSafeIreland company limited by guarantee trading as  
CyberSafeKids supplementary information relating to the financial  
statements for the financial year ended 31 December 2020 not covered  
by the report of the auditors

	2020	2019
Income	€302,565	€139,233
<b>Cost of generating funds</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
Subcontract costs	€14,668	€16,148
Consultancy fees	€16,857	–
	€31,525	€16,148
<b>Gross surplus</b>	<b>€271,040</b>	<b>€123,085</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
Wages and salaries	€102,888	€119,252
Social security costs	€9,188	€12,753
Staff training	€2,119	€606
Meetings	€228	€1,700
Rent payable	€4,718	€9,401
Insurance	€515	€475
Repairs and maintenance	–	€349
Printing, postage and stationery	€1,249	€1,846
Advertising	€22,974	€10,787
Telephone	€346	€206
Software subscription	€19,400	€367
Motor expenses	–	€111
Travelling and entertainment	€742	€3,346
Accountancy	€1,041	€1,006
Auditor's/Independent Examiner's remuneration	€3,340	€3,270
Bank charges	€128	€134
Subscriptions	€1,213	€874
	€170,089	€166,483

# CYBERSAFEKIDS'S ACADEMIC YEAR IN REVIEW 2020 – 2021

## Overview

In this part of the report, we provide an overview of the data we have collected over the past academic year (September 2020 up to June 2021) and also a more in-depth focus on some of the key findings. The data is gathered from children via an anonymous online survey before we visit a school or deliver our services via live webinar. This allows us to get a picture of trends and usage within the 8-12 year old age bracket and also to tailor our sessions more specifically to their needs. Where appropriate and of interest, we have also provided a comparative analysis of the data against last year's data. Finally, there is both data and testimonials collected from parents and teachers following our sessions to them.

## Key Numbers

- Since January 2016, we have spoken to **28,828** children aged between 8 and 13.
- In this academic year, we spoke directly to **6,742** children (+13% on 2019/20 - 5,986) and to 1,762 parents (+13% on 2019/20 - 1,554)
- We have gathered data from **3,979** children<sup>1</sup> over the 2020/21 academic year. As the responses from 13-year olds numbered less than 100, we discounted their data from our overall results and the findings outlined in this report are based on responses from **3,904** children aged between 8 and 12 with the breakdown provided in Table 1 below:

### #kids

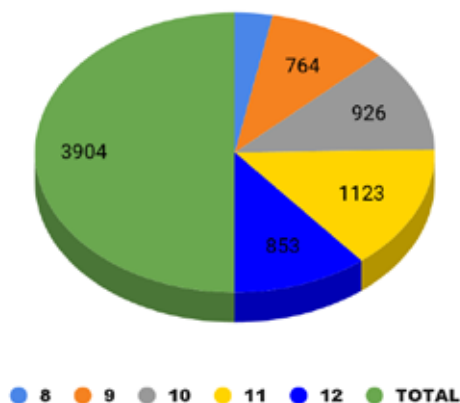


TABLE 1

<sup>1</sup> Not all children to whom we deliver sessions completed the survey and this year was more challenging than most because of COVID-19 and the difficulty of sharing devices within the classroom for each pupil to fill in the survey.

- The gender breakdown is provided in Table 2 below

GENDER	#KIDS	%
Male	1801	46
Female	2103	54
TOTAL	3904	100

TABLE 2

- We provided sessions to children in 67 different settings - schools, libraries or via online bootcamps. Much of the delivery was online because of restrictions related to COVID-19. The county breakdown is as follows (Table 3):

## County Breakdown from Sept 2020 – June 2021

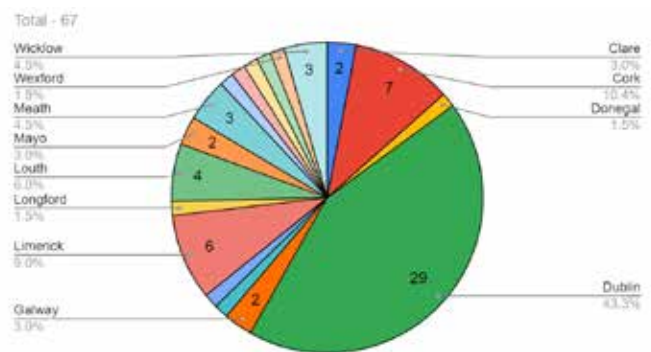


TABLE 3

## Children who own a smart device

By smart devices we mean touch-screen devices, games consoles and PCs. We asked children the following question: "Which smart devices do you own yourself? Please tick any that you own yourself (don't tick if it is a device that your parents own and just let you use sometimes)" and a list of devices is provided with boxes that they can tick. There was also the option to tick a box that says "I don't own any smart device". The figures outlined below indicate that ownership of smart devices for the 8 – 12 age group was high. Our data shows that **overall 93% of the children surveyed stated that they own a smart device** and this is entirely consistent with the 2019/20 figures. A breakdown by age is provided in Table 4 below. This shows that device ownership was consistently high across all age groups with 89% of 8-year olds and 97% of 12-year olds owning their own device.

## Smart device ownership by age

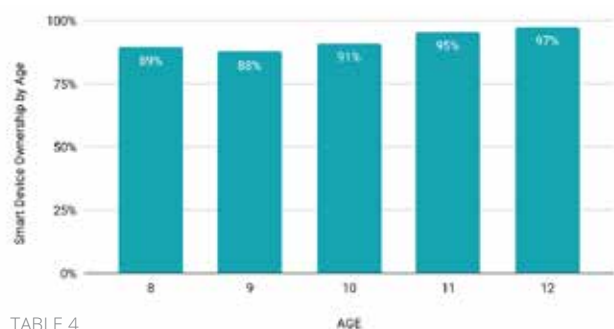


TABLE 4

In line with last year's findings, the most popular devices were tablets (54%) and games consoles (48%) with smartphones being the third most popular (47%). There was a considerable gender difference in relation to the ownership of games consoles with 73% of boys owning one vs. 27% of girls (Table 5).

## What smart devices do you own?

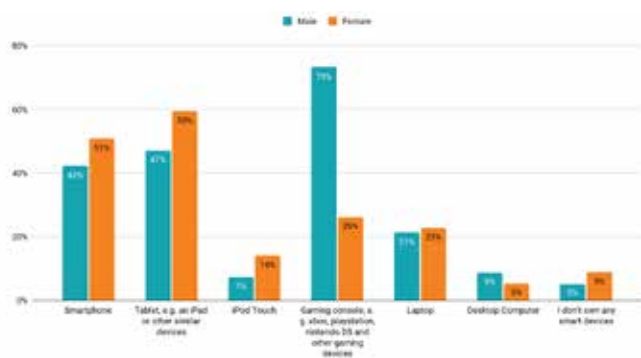


TABLE 5

The ownership of tablets remained fairly consistent across all ages with 54% of 8-year olds and 55% of 11-year olds stating that they owned one (see Table 6). The ownership of smartphones and games consoles however, rose with age. This was more notable with smartphones with 24% of 8-year olds and 25% of 9-year olds owning one as compared to 56% of 11-year olds and 75% of 12-year olds.

As we noted in last year's report, this suggests that many parents are holding off on buying their child their first smartphone until 11 or 12. Many parents ask us what the right age is to give a child 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 readiness of the parent to assume the ongoing responsibility that comes with their child's use of the device and being active online.

## What smart devices do you own?

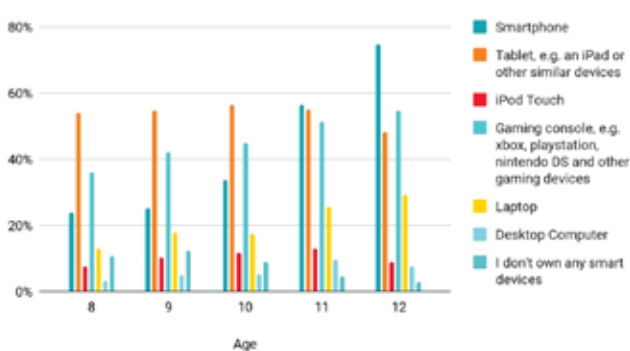


TABLE 6

## Use of Social Media & Messaging Apps

We asked children the following question: "If you are using any of the following social media and messaging apps WITH YOUR OWN ACCOUNT, please tick the box beside it (please choose only the apps that you use yourself and have your own account for!)". We provided a list of social media and messaging apps as well as the option to include one that is not listed under 'other'. We also provided the option to say 'I'm not using any social media or messaging accounts'. Our data shows that **84% of the 8 - 12 year olds we surveyed were using social media and messaging apps** and 16% said that they weren't using any.

As we have noted in previous reports, **all of the popular apps have a minimum age restriction of at least 13** (WhatsApp has a minimum age restriction of 16). Tables 7a and 7b below provide an age breakdown and they show that 81% of the 8-year olds surveyed and 75% of the 9-year olds reported that they had a social media and/or instant messaging account in their name. Table 7b provides another level of detail by showing what apps are being used by different age groups.

## Using Social Media & Messaging Apps (by Age)

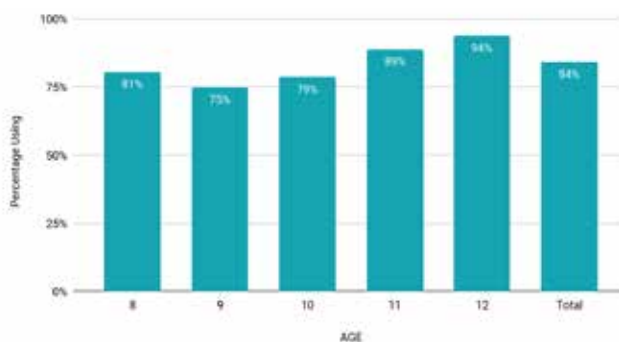


TABLE 7A



## Apps use by Age

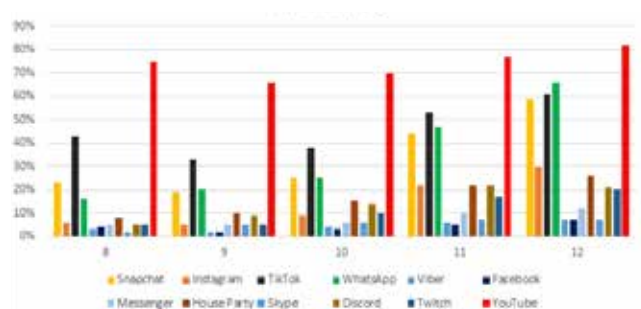


TABLE 7B

We were able to identify the most popular apps through the survey data. Table 8 below shows the top 7 most popular apps overall. YouTube was extremely popular with 74% of respondents stating that they had their own YouTube account (for which 13 is also the minimum age requirement). This was followed by TikTok with almost half (47%) of 8 - 12-year olds signed up to it. WhatsApp and Snapchat continued to be well used by children in this age group with over a third of all children surveyed with their own accounts (WhatsApp - 39% and Snapchat - 37%). Houseparty (18%) rose in popularity over the last year; it featured fairly low on our list last year (8%)

## Top Seven Apps

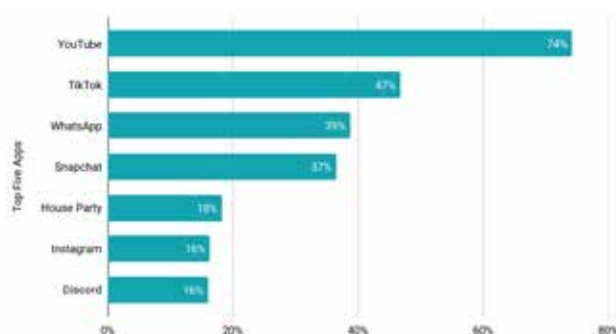


TABLE 8

There were some interesting gender differences in relation to children's use of social media and messaging apps as can be seen in Table 9 below. YouTube was popular with both boys and girls but TikTok was used by more girls (54%) than boys (37%). WhatsApp and Snapchat were also both more popular with girls and particularly Snapchat (girls - 42%, boys - 29%). The other notable difference was in the use of Discord, with 22% of boys using it as compared to 10% of girls: this is likely down to the fact that it is an app used to add a chat/message facility to online gaming, which is, in general, more popular with boys.

## Top Seven Apps (by Gender)

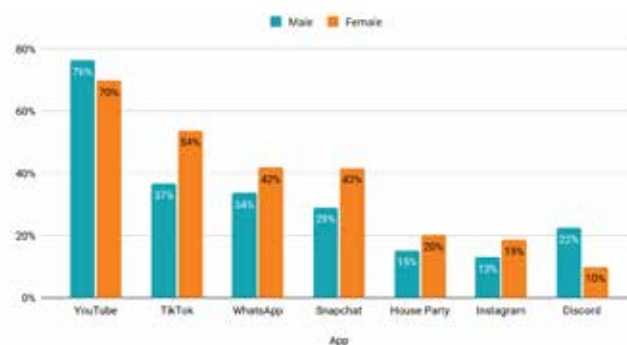


TABLE 9

There is no question that over the long periods of social distancing and restrictions around gatherings, the online world has offered many opportunities to children to interact with their friends and family online. Social media, messaging apps and multiplayer gaming sites all offered that opportunity in abundance. The concern however, is over children accessing sites that are not appropriate for their age either because of the type of content that they host or because of the opportunities to interact with people they don't know offline.

Clearly, **existing age restrictions are not working and are relatively easy to by-pass for a determined child.**

Given what we know from the figures, many children are lying about their age in order to access these apps and whilst we don't have data on this, we have to assume that parents are, in many cases, letting them do so. It's hard to provide an ideal age for a child to start using social media and messaging apps but age-restrictions are certainly worth bearing in mind, as well as the fact that many of these environments were not designed with children in mind. If children are using social media and messaging apps under the minimum age requirement, then they need guidance, support and oversight when using such platforms.

Some safeguards are available on a number of platforms for those aged 13 - 16 (TikTok<sup>2</sup> for example, strengthened their safeguards for this age group in January 2021 and more recently, Instagram<sup>3</sup> and Google<sup>4</sup>) likely in response to regulation coming down the track like the UK's 'Age Appropriate Design Code'<sup>5</sup>. What we don't know however, is what age a child is using to sign up for an account. It could even be that some are bypassing age-restrictions as well as any safeguards on offer altogether by putting in an age over 16.

2 TikTok to tackle grooming with safeguards for young users' (Jan 2021), Source: TikTok: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/jan/13/tok-tok-to-tackle-grooming-with-curbs-for-young-users>.

3 Perez, Sarah, TechCrunch (21.07.21) "Instagram to default young teens to private accounts"; Source: <https://techcrunch.com/2021/07/27/instagram-to-default-young-teens-to-private-accounts-restrict-ads-and-unwanted-adult-contact/>

4 O'Brien, Ciara, Irish Times (10.08.21) 'Google to introduce new privacy protections for young users', Source: <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/technology/google-to-introduce-new-privacy-protections-for-young-users-1.4643847>

5 <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/ico-codes-of-practice/age-appropriate-design-code/>

## What kids are doing online

As noted above, the use of video-sharing platforms was very popular with 8 - 12-year olds. In this year's survey, we asked children if they posted videos of themselves online. Most children (68%) said 'no' but almost a third (32%) said 'yes' in response to this question (see Table 10).

### Do you post videos of yourself online?

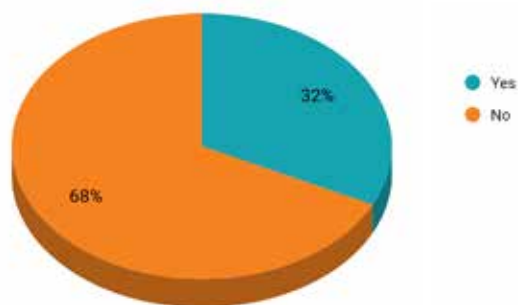


TABLE 10

Interestingly, girls were much more likely to post videos of themselves than boys (see Table 11 below) with 41% of girls saying 'yes' vs. 22% of boys who answered 'no'.

### Do you post videos of yourself online?

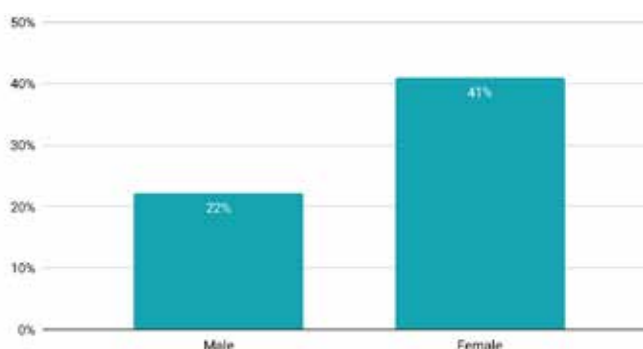


TABLE 11

We asked those children that had responded 'yes' to posting videos online where they posted them. Table 12 below shows that **TikTok was by far the most popular place to post videos online**, with 80% of children who posted videos of themselves online posting on TikTok, followed by Snapchat (30%). YouTube, perhaps surprisingly given its popularity among this cohort of children, only accounted for 16% (closely followed by Instagram at 14%). This suggests that many children are consumers of YouTube content as opposed to content creators on that platform.

### If you do post videos of yourself, where do you post them?

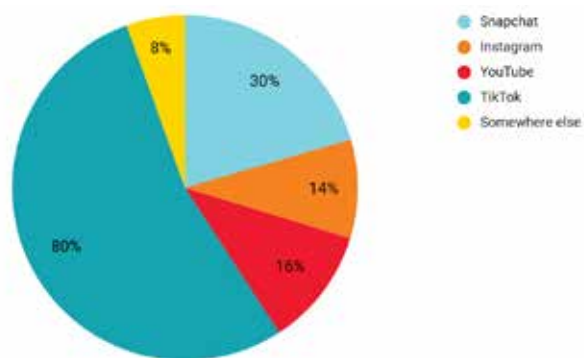


TABLE 12

We often discuss sharing personal information in the classroom with children and this includes posting videos of themselves online because they could be sharing more than they intend to - for example, if they are in their school uniform or in a personal space at home such as a bedroom, or giving away geolocation information about where they live. This is particularly important if they have friends and followers online that they don't know in real life, which we will explore in the next section.

## Contact with strangers online

In previous years we have focused on asking children if they ever chat to strangers online but more recently we wanted to explore the *context* in which children engage with strangers online.

### Friends and followers on social media

We asked children if they have friends and followers on social media apps that they have not met in real life. As Table 13 shows below, most children (63%) responded 'no', which is certainly positive. Over a quarter (28%) said that they did have friends and followers that they didn't know. Almost 1 in 10 (9%) said they weren't sure. This latter cohort's response could be related to open accounts, where privacy settings are not enabled and when the user doesn't have to vet incoming friend requests. Consequently, they could be less aware of who is on their friends/follower list.

#### Kids on social media who have added people that they don't know in real life

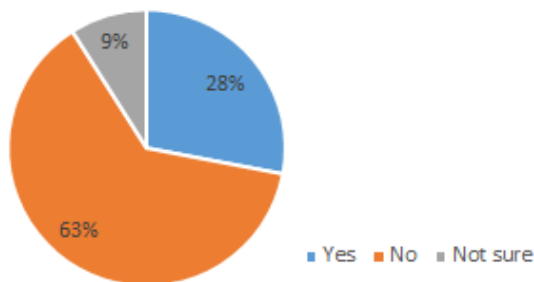


TABLE 13

The gender breakdown in Table 14 shows that the proportion of boys who accepted a friend request from someone they didn't know was slightly bigger than the number of girls who said yes (26% of boys vs. 22% of girls), which was in line with last year's findings.

#### Do you have friends and followers on social media apps that you have not met in real life? (by gender)

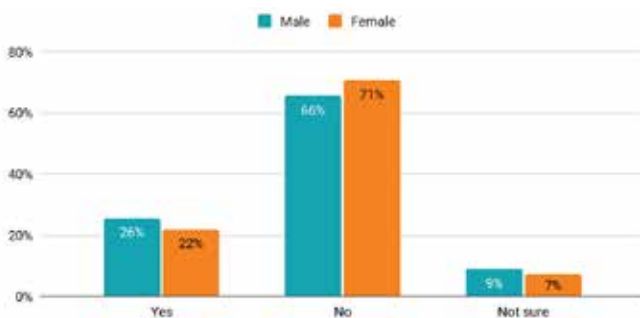


TABLE 14

There was a degree of consistency across the age groups in terms of their response to this question as can be seen in Table 15, with 22% of 8-year olds responding 'yes' to this question and 28% of 12-year olds.

#### Do you have friends and followers on social media apps that you have not met in real life? (by age)

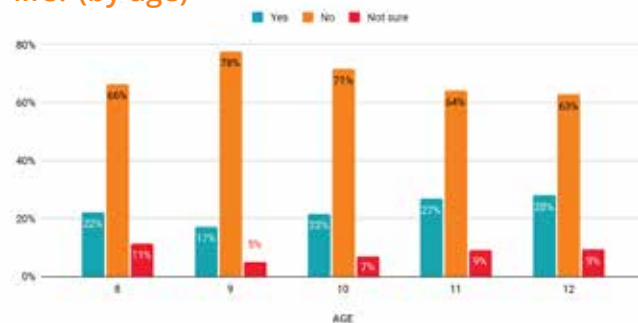


TABLE 15

We wanted to explore this further so we asked those that had said 'yes' to this last question why they had decided to accept the friend request and we provided a number of options as can be seen in Table 16 below. **The most common response was because 'They were a friend of a friend' (44%)** and this reason increased with age, with 38% of 8-year olds and 47% of 12-year olds providing this as their reason. We know from talking to children in the classroom that they think a 'friend of a friend' seems like a safer option than a total stranger, but (as we remind them) they could still be a total stranger! A third of respondents (33%) said 'I don't know' and girls were much more likely to provide this as their response (37% vs. 28% of boys) than boys. 26% reported that they'd accepted friend requests on the basis of perceived shared interests and 19% said they added them because they wanted more followers. These numbers serve to illustrate that we need better strategies for educating children on the importance of keeping their friends and followers lists to just those people they know well offline.

#### If you have friends and followers on social media that you have not met in real life, why did you decide to accept them?

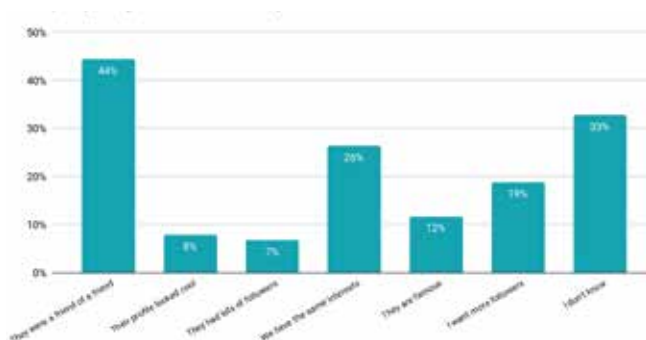


TABLE 16

Whilst many children will tell us in the classroom that they know they shouldn't be engaging with people online that they don't know offline, they don't always apply this knowledge in practice, as some of the data in this report will illustrate. This is of concern for younger children in particular, because of the way social media and messaging apps are inherently designed and structured, which is part of their business model: users are encouraged to share, to engage with others and to have lots of followers.<sup>6</sup> Accounts have traditionally been set to 'Public' by default, which has meant that it is up to the child (or parent) to ensure that this is switched to 'Private', although we are starting to see changes to this in 2021. Children may not be aware that they even need to take such a step unless being closely monitored by a parent. There is also a real and growing concern around online grooming and reports show that this, as well as the sharing of child exploitation material, increased online during COVID.<sup>7</sup>

## Gaming online

We know from our conversations with children in the classroom that online gaming is very popular, with about **80% of the children we surveyed stating that they played at least one online game**. Roblox was the most popular online game with this cohort of children, with 32% stating that they play it, closely followed by Minecraft (30%), Among Us (19%) and Fortnite (19%).

### Children under 13 playing over-18s games

We also asked children whether or not they played games with an age-rating of over-18 in the last year. As can be seen in Table 17 below, **whilst most children responded 'no' or 'I don't game' to this question (71%), 17% stated that they did** and 12% said they weren't sure. The percentage of children responding 'yes' is actually slightly lower than last year's figure.

### Have you played a computer or video game that has an age rating of over 18s in the last year?

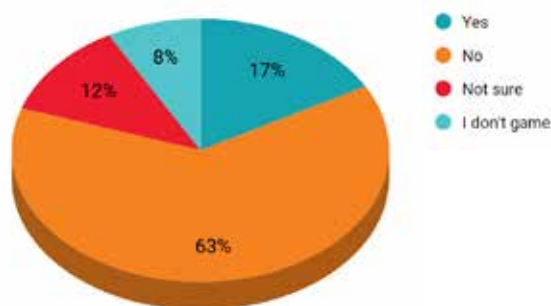


TABLE 17

The gender breakdown in Table 18 is also interesting in that it shows that **the overall figure was heavily weighted towards boys with almost a third of all the boys surveyed (29%) stating that they had played an over-18s game vs. only 7% of girls.**

### Have you played a computer or video game that has an age rating of over 18s in the last year? (by gender)

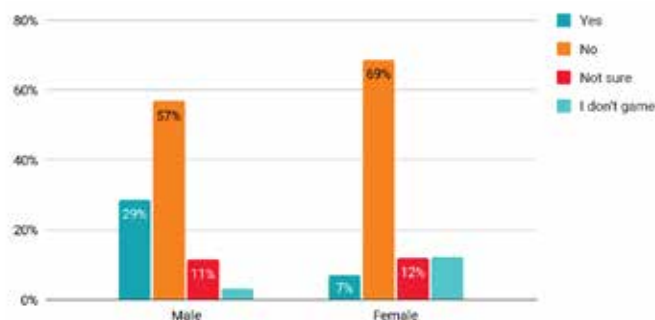


TABLE 18

The age breakdown is provided in Table 19 below and showed considerable variation between the age-groups with, somewhat surprisingly, 22% of the 8-year olds (which equates to 52 of the 238 8-year olds surveyed) reporting that they'd played over-18s games vs. 15% (or 140) of the 926 10-year olds.

### Have you played a computer or video game that has an age rating of over 18s in the last year? (by age)

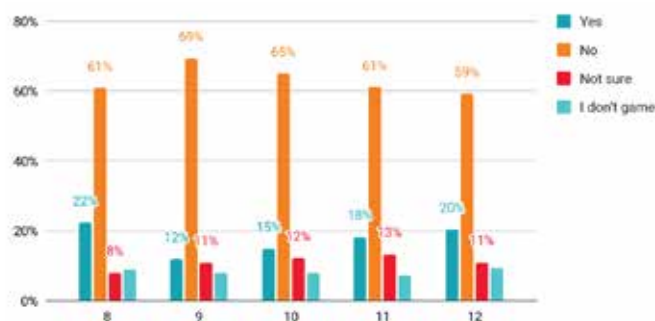


TABLE 19

<sup>6</sup> See 5Rights Foundation: Pathways: How digital design puts children at risk (July 2021): <https://5rightsfoundation.com/uploads/Pathways-how-digital-design-puts-children-at-risk.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse threats and trends: COVID-19 Impact, INTERPOL, (September 2020), Source: <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2020/INTERPOL-report-highlights-impact-of-COVID-19-on-child-sexual-abuse>

We decided to look more closely at this group of children who answered 'yes' to the question about playing over-18s' games **and we found that in this group of children the percentage of them that had engaged in more risky activities was greater in comparison to the total group** (see Table 20). They were more likely to have been bullied online, to have seen something that they wouldn't want their parents to know about, to game with people they do not know and to have seen or experienced something online that bothered them.

Children who report playing over-18s games	% of these	Total Population
Been bullied online	48%	29%
Playing with people they don't know in online games	60%	36%
Have seen something that has upset them online	38%	25%
Have seen something online in the last year they wouldn't want their parents to know about	38%	22%

TABLE 20

As we have noted in previous reports, the concern with children playing overage games is that they contain content that is not appropriate for a child. They may contain content of a sexual nature, content related to extreme or gender-based violence or simply bad language.

## Engaging with strangers in the context of an online game

We asked them in the survey if they ever play online games with people they have not met in real life. Table 21 below indicates that most children (46%) said they did not. **More than a third (36% - 1,405 children) however said 'yes'**, 10% said they weren't sure and 8% said they didn't game. **Those reporting 'yes' represents roughly a 16% increase on last year**, which was 31% (or 1,167 children).

### Do you ever game with people you have not met in real life?

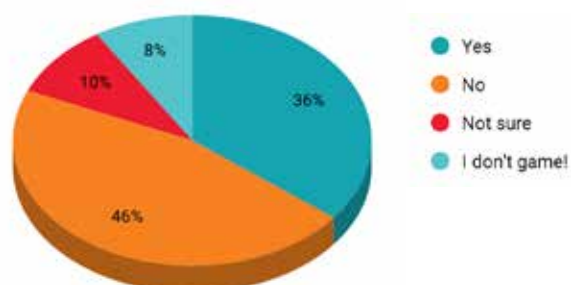


TABLE 21

These numbers were fairly consistent across all ages with 30% of 8-year olds and 39% of 10- and 11-year olds reporting that they had played online games with people they did not know offline (see Table 22).

### Do you ever game with people you have not met in real life? (by age)



TABLE 22

There was some difference in how boys and girls reported on this (as shown in Table 23) with 41% of boys reporting that they had played online games with people they didn't know as compared to 31% of girls. **Boys were therefore more likely to play games with people they don't know.**

### Do you ever game with people you have not met in real life? (by gender)

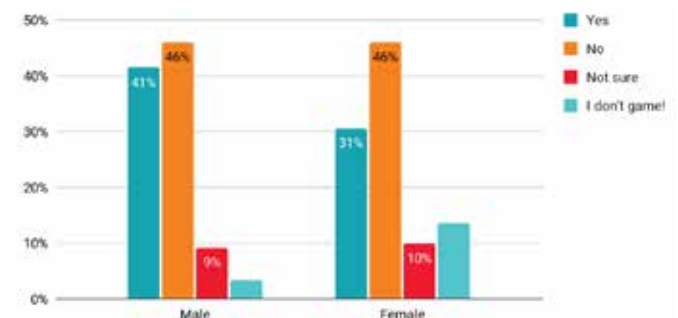


TABLE 23

We also asked children if a stranger (defined as someone they had not met in real life) had ever tried to chat to them or add them as a friend in a game. Table 24 below illustrates that 29% of children said 'never' (as compared to 40% in the 2019/20 findings) whilst **most children (61%) said that a stranger had tried to contact them in a game with 43% saying that this had happened 'a few times' and 18% saying it had happened 'lots of times'**. This overall finding was consistent with last year. The remaining 9% said that they didn't game online.



## Has anyone ever tried to chat with you or add you as a friend in a game that you have never met in real life?

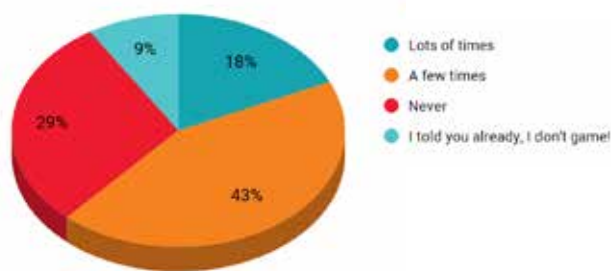


TABLE 24

Table 25 below illustrates that as with previous questions, there was a difference in how the genders report on this with regard to a stranger contacting them in a game with more boys saying that this had happened lots of time (20%) and 'a few times' (48%). This is likely explained by a higher proportion of boys gaming online.

## Has anyone ever tried to chat with you or add you as a friend in a game that you have never met in real life? (by gender)

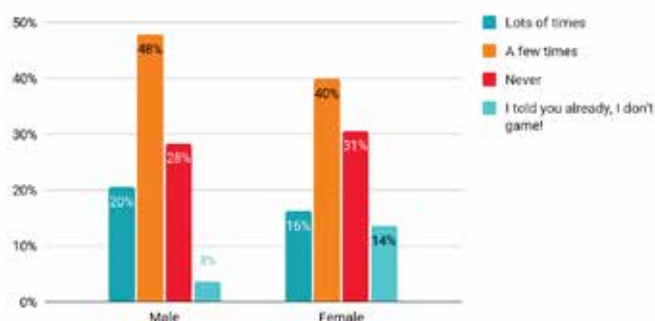


TABLE 25

Whilst most of these interactions are unlikely to be sinister in nature, they open the door to the possibility of the few that might be and we need children to be wary about people they don't know that they encounter online. Many games are designed to encourage online interactions with others and the figures in Table 24 above illustrate how common it is for a child to be approached in a game by someone they don't know. Asking children to never chat to people they don't know can be a challenging message to get across however, since many see it as part of any game that offers a multiplayer function and therefore entirely normal. Whilst we would always encourage children to never engage online with people they don't know offline, we add that if they were ever to find themselves in that situation in a game, that they should never take it any further - for example, by sharing personal information, by adding them as a friend or by engaging in private messaging with someone they don't know. We also urge them to talk to a trusted adult if anything or anyone they encounter online makes them feel scared or uncomfortable.

## Negative experiences online

We asked children if they had seen something online in the last year that they wouldn't want their parents to know about. From focus group discussions we have held with children in the past, this content could relate to horror movies, games that their parents don't know they play (for example in someone else's house) or violence/sexual content either in a game or that has come up during an online search. On a positive note, **the vast majority of children (78%) said that they had not**, but nearly a quarter of children (22%) said that they had (see Table 26)

## Have you seen something online in the last year you wouldn't want your parents to know about? (8-12 year olds)

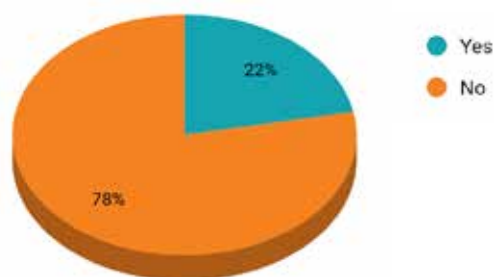


TABLE 26

Table 27 below shows the age breakdown and the figure remains fairly consistent across the age groups with 20% of 8-year olds and 24% of 9-year olds reporting that they had seen something online that they wouldn't want their parents to know about, and 24% of all 12-year olds that we surveyed.

## Has anyone ever tried to chat with you or add you as a friend in a game that you have never met in real life? (by age)

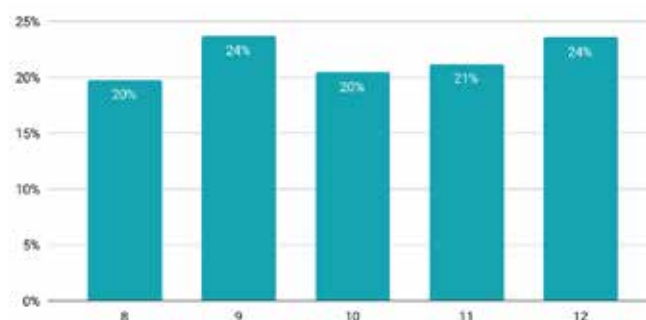


TABLE 27



As we found last year, there was a gender difference in those reporting that they had seen something in the last year that they wouldn't want their parents to know about, with more boys (27%) than girls (18%) providing this answer (see Table 28 below).

Has anyone ever tried to chat with you or add you as a friend in a game that you have never met in real life? (by gender)

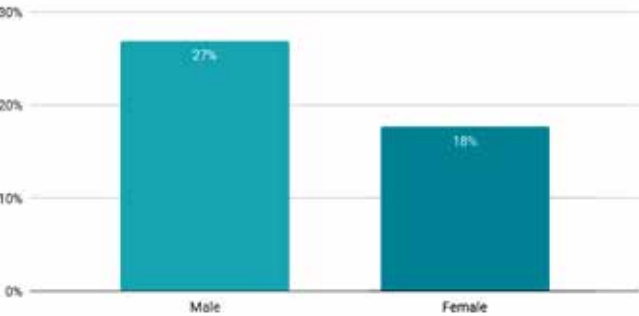


TABLE 28

Our experience from talking to children in the classroom indicates that children are largely positive about their online lives and that they generally feel safe when they are online. In our survey, we asked children 'In the last year, have you seen or experienced something online that bothered you? (e.g. made you upset, or scared, or wish you had never seen it)' and happily, for almost two thirds of children (62%) the answer to this question was a clear 'no', as can be seen in Table 29 below. A **quarter of children (25%) however, stated that they had seen something that bothered them online** with 13% saying they weren't sure. Whilst this is concerning, it's important to note that it is actually slightly lower than last year when almost a third of children (31%) stated that they had been bothered by something they'd seen online.

In the last year, have you seen or experienced something online that bothered you?

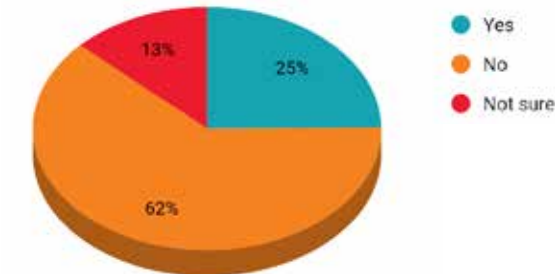


TABLE 29

Interestingly, the age breakdown (in Table 30 below) shows that whilst there was a reasonable amount of consistency across all age groups, it was slightly higher at the younger ages with 27% of 8-year olds and 24% of 12-year olds reporting this. There was absolute consistency across the gender responses with 25% of both boys and girls reporting that they had been bothered by something online.

In the last year, have you seen or experienced something online that bothered you? (by age)

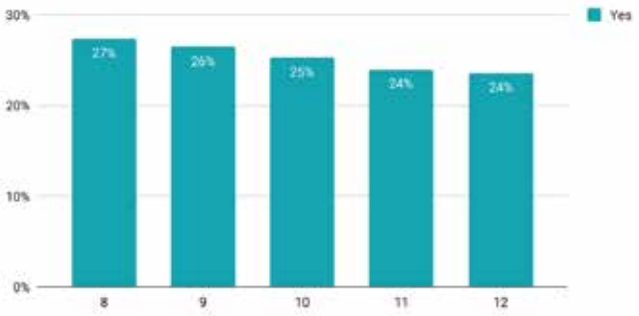


TABLE 30

When we ask a question like the one above, we always want to gain some insight into what children did when this happened, so our follow-on question is, 'If you answered 'yes' for the last question, what did you do about it? (you can choose more than one answer)' and we provide a range of options for them as is outlined in Table 31 below. **It is certainly positive to see that more than half of the children (54%) said that they had told a parent or a trusted adult**, which is absolutely the best strategy. Worryingly however, **nearly a third of children (30%) said that they kept it to themselves**. This is a concern, especially if it was something that required intervention. This was also higher than last year when only 20% of children gave this response.

If a child was bothered by something, what did they do? (8-12 year olds)

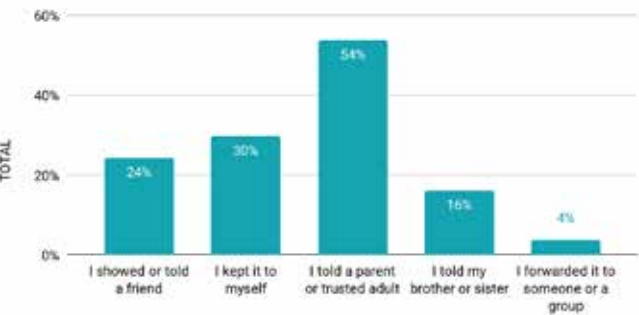


TABLE 31

The gender breakdown, provided in Table 32, in relation to action taken is quite revealing in that more girls told a parent or trusted adult than boys (60% vs. 47% of boys) and more boys said they had kept it to themselves (37% of boys vs. 24% of girls).

### If a child was bothered by something, what did they do (by gender)

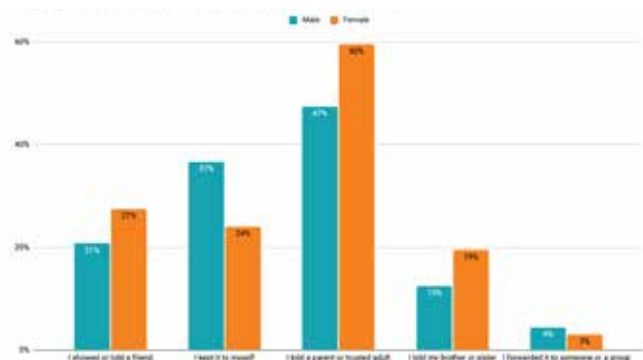


TABLE 32

## Online Bullying

For the first time, we decided to add an additional question into the survey related to online bullying. We avoided use of the word 'bullying' but instead outlined a number of negative experiences online that constitute bullying and asked children to tick any experiences that were personally relevant to them. The option was also provided to say 'I haven't experienced any of these'. Fortunately, most children (71%) hadn't had any of these experiences, which means that **the overall percentage of children who had experienced some form of bullying online was 29%**. Some children ticked more than one box.

Considering only the group of those who reported at least one of the bullying experiences, **the most common experience was being kept out of chat/messaging groups (experienced by 15% of children)**, followed by 14% of children who had been sent hurtful messages and 9% who had had nasty comments posted about them. A full breakdown is provided in Table 33 below, which takes into account only the 29% who had at least one bullying experience:

### Bullying experiences

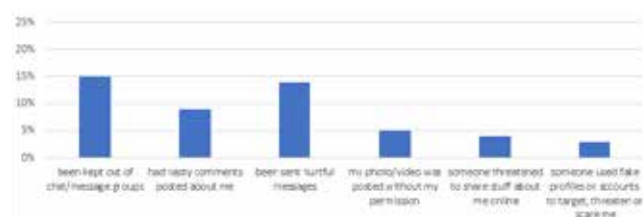


TABLE 33

The age breakdown provided in Table 34 below shows that the numbers were reasonably consistent across the age group, although 11-year olds were the group most likely to have experienced bullying (32%) followed by 12-year olds (30%).

### Experiences of bullying that kids have had online (by age)

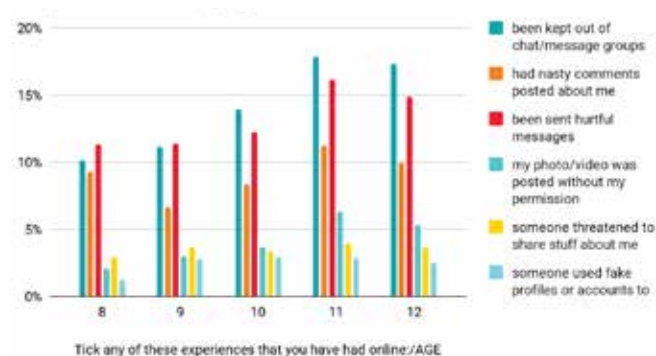


TABLE 34

The gender breakdown (provided in Table 35 below) was relatively consistent overall with 29% of girls and 28% of boys having some sort of negative experience online, but on closer inspection, some small variations are apparent: being excluded from messaging groups had more frequently happened to boys than girls (16% vs. 14%) whereas being sent hurtful messages was more common for girls than boys (16% vs. 11%).

### Experiences of bullying that kids have had online (by gender)

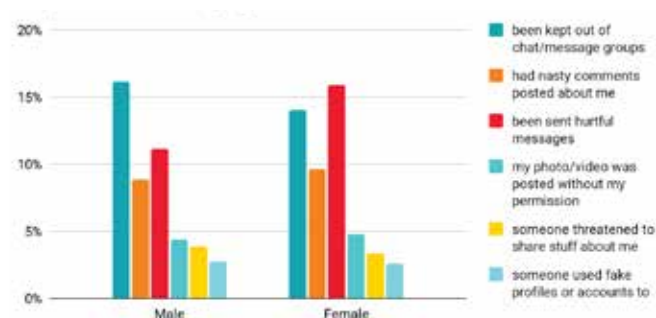


TABLE 35

Again, we asked those children who reported one or more of these experiences, what they did when this happened and **most children (60%) told a parent or trusted adult**, which is positive (see Table 36). About a third of children showed or told a friend and **29% kept it to themselves**. As with the finding related to children who had been bothered by something online, it is worrying that any child would keep this information to themselves, but especially so when it is such a high percentage of children are affected overall.

## What did they do about it?

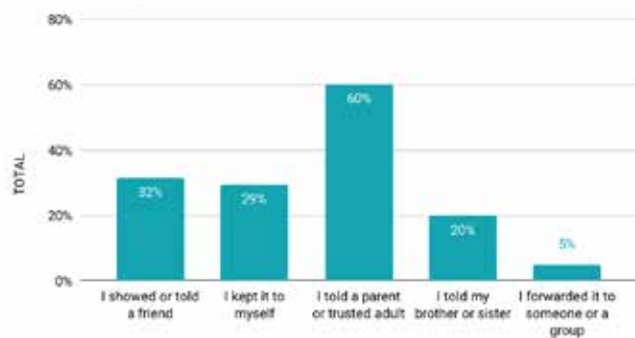


TABLE 36

The age breakdown shows that 12-year olds were the least likely age to have told a parent (43%), followed by 8-year olds at 46%. The gender breakdown in Table 37 below shows that more girls told a parent or trusted adult (57% vs. 44%) and more boys kept it to themselves (a third of boys 32% vs. 19% of girls), which indicates the need to do more work with boys in particular to report negative online experiences to a trusted adult.

## If a child was bullied, what did they do (by gender)

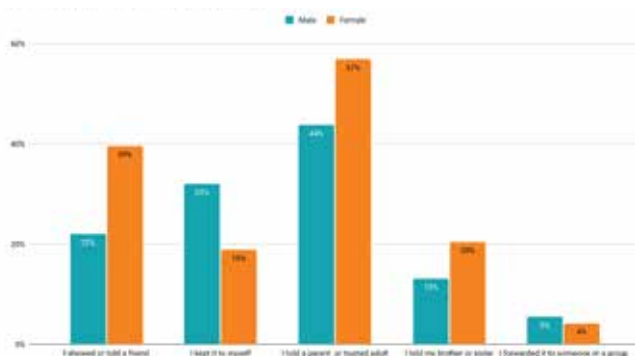


TABLE 37

## Parental Mediation

### Conversations with a trusted adult

Parental engagement in their children's online lives is one of the most important strategies for both protecting and empowering them online. Regular conversations between parent and children is central to effective mediation, as well as keeping an eye on what they're doing, building a good communication channel, putting in place good boundaries around use and access, modelling good practice and behaviour and utilising technical controls where possible and appropriate.

We asked children how often they talked to their parents about what they see, hear and do online. As you can see from Table 38 below, the vast majority of children were talking to their parents regularly with most (42%) saying that they had talked to their parents 'most days' and 27% saying that they spoke to them 'about once a week' or 'once a month' (10%). So overall, **79% of children reported talking to their parents pretty regularly**. This is something that we've seen improve year on year. Last year, this overall figure was 72% so it's encouraging to see this increase, which was possibly due to families spending more time together under one roof and having to more directly mediate online use more frequently.

## How often do you talk to your parents about what you see, hear and do online?

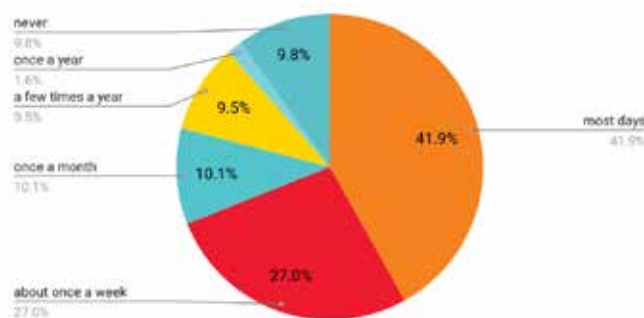


TABLE 38

A few children however, tell us that they 'never' talk to parents or carers about online safety (10%) or rarely do so (2%). The age breakdown in Table 39 below shows that 8-year olds were the most likely to have 'never' talked to their parents about online safety (14%) followed by 10-year olds (11%). Given we know that a significant proportion of children aged 8 - 10 years were active online and owned their own devices, it underlines the importance of getting support from, and having conversations with, a parent or carer.

## Percentage of children who never talk to their parents about when they see, hear and do online (by age)

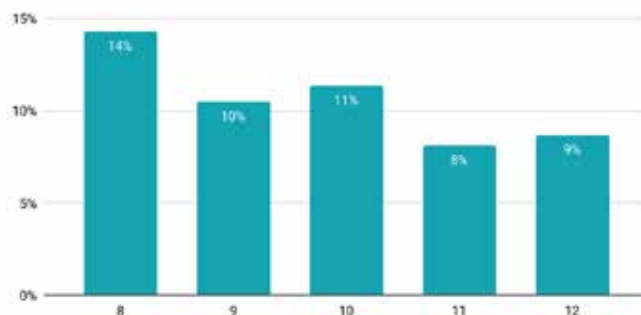


TABLE 39

The gender breakdown provided in Table 40 below shows that girls spoke to a parent more regularly than boys (82% are speaking to them 'most days', 'about once a week' or 'once a month' vs. 75% of boys). The percentage of boys who 'never' spoke to a parent or carer was greater than the number of girls (13% vs. 7% of girls).

### How often do you talk to your parents about what you see, hear and do online (by gender)

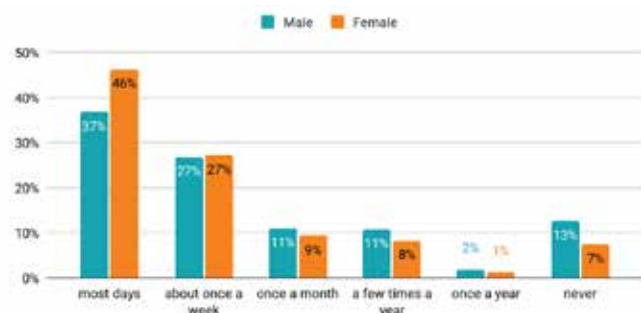


TABLE 40

We also wanted to get a sense of who children have spoken to in general about online safety over the last year. They could tick more than one answer. As the numbers in the previous section indicated, the results were largely encouraging with 68% of children reporting that they had spoken to a parent or carer (see Table 41) and 37% saying they'd spoken to a teacher. Like the 10% of children who have 'never' spoken to a parent or carer about online safety, **10% of children reported that they 'haven't talked to anyone in the last year about staying safe online'.** The gender breakdown follows a similar pattern to the question above with 13% of boys and 7% of girls reporting that they hadn't spoken to anyone in the last year.

### Who have you talked to in the last year about how to stay safe online?

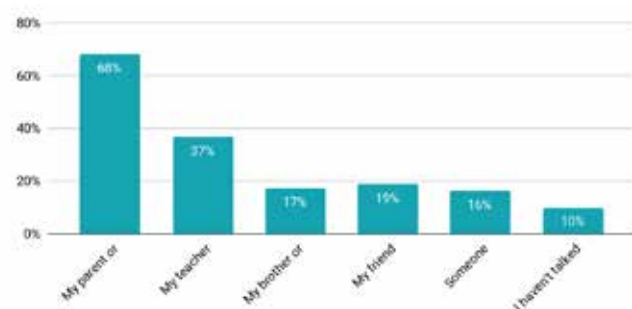


TABLE 41

## Rules for going online

As noted above, putting in place boundaries for going online is a helpful mediation strategy for many parents. We asked children, 'If you have rules at home for going online, which answers best describe those rules?' and we provided a number of options and they can tick any that apply. Rules will differ between households but as with other areas of children's lives that involve any kind of risk, such as learning to cross the road or ride a bike, it's important to have good strategies for helping to mitigate against those risks, including rules, conversations, education and training.

### If you have rules at home for going online, which answers best describe the rules?

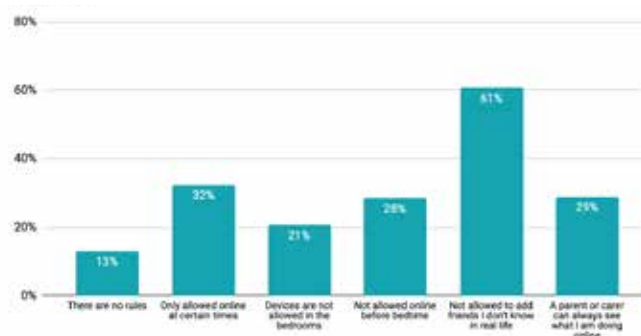


TABLE 42

As can be seen in Table 42, **most children had some sort of rules in place, which is really positive.** The responses varied from 'I'm not allowed to add friends I don't know in real life' (68%) to 'I'm only allowed online at certain times' (32%), to 'A parent or carer can always see what I'm doing' (29%) to 'I'm not allowed online before bedtime' (28%) or devices not being allowed in bedrooms (21%). **A small but notable percentage of children (13% - 508 children) stated that there were 'no rules' at home for going online.** Boys were more likely to give this response than girls (16% vs. 10% of girls). Surprisingly, the most likely age cohort to report that there were 'no rules' is the 8-year olds with almost a fifth of them (19%) giving this as their response followed by 14% of 12-year olds (see Table 43).

### What rules do you have at home? (by age)

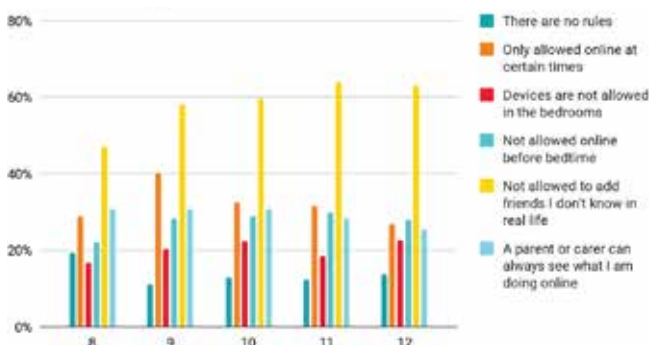


TABLE 43

Whilst many of these results are positive, since they show overall that most parents have put some rules in place, there is also another side to each statistic. **If 21% of children say they weren't allowed to use devices in their bedrooms, that would suggest that this was not a rule in most households and that most children could use them in bedrooms.** Ideally, for younger children, there would be rules in place around where children are online in the household because if they are in their bedrooms with the door shut, the parent or carer is really excluded from what their children are doing online. We also have to recognise that as children get older, as their capacities evolve and their need for privacy becomes greater, this particular rule may no longer be appropriate. For younger children however, this is an important one to consider having in place, as it will provide a good opportunity to both engage with them and keep an eye on what they're doing online.

We asked children when they were usually allowed to go online and Table 44 provides an overview of the responses. A very small proportion of children (2%) said they were never allowed to go online and 6% said 'not very often' and these responses were fairly consistent between boys and girls. The vast majority of children however, were allowed to go online to some degree and most of these (62%) indicated that there were some rules in place for doing so. **It is notable that almost a third of children (30%) answered 'I can go online whenever I want to',** which is a slight increase on last year when 28% gave this response.

### When are you usually allowed to go online? (8-12 year olds)

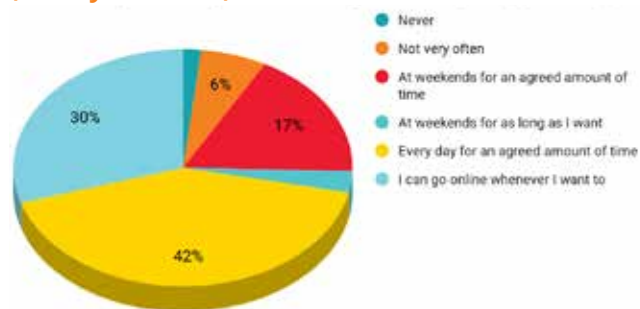


TABLE 44

Interestingly, as Table 45 below highlights, more girls gave this as their response than boys (33% vs. 27%), which is the exact reverse of last year (29% of boys vs. 27% of girls).

### I can go online whenever I want (by gender)

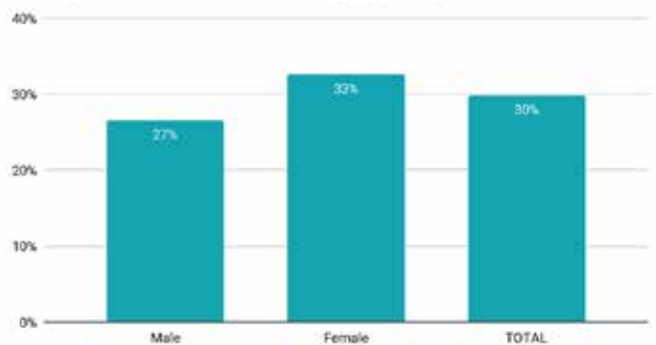


TABLE 45

We delved more deeply into this specific response 'I can go online whenever I want to' and, with the exception of almost a third of 8-year olds (30%) who were outliers in this regard, we noted that it steadily increased with age (see Table 46 below) with 18% of 9-year olds providing this response rising to 26% of 10-year olds, 33% of 11-year olds and 40% of 12-year olds.

### I can go online whenever I want (by age)

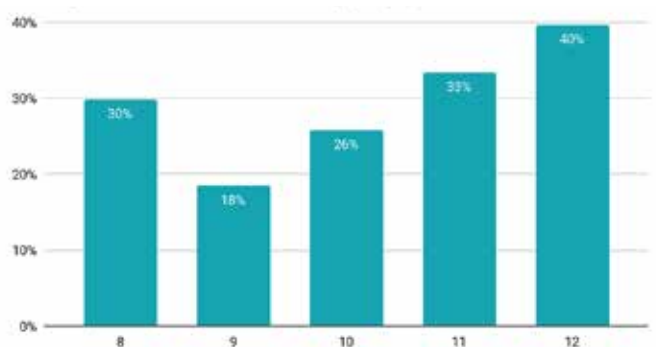


TABLE 46

We decided to look more closely at this cohort of children (who reported that they can go online whenever they want) and we found that in this group of children, the percentage of them that had engaged in more risky activities was greater in comparison to the total group. Table 47 below compares this cohort of children with the overall population findings and the figures show that they were more likely to be playing an over-18s game, much more likely to add people they don't know as friends and followers, play games with people they don't know, to see something that has upset them online and to have seen something that they wouldn't want their parents to know about. This underpins the importance of putting in place clear, agreed rules around use and access.



Children who report 'I can go online whenever I want to'	% of these	Total Population
Playing over-18s game	27%	17%
Adding strangers to their social media sites	40%	28%
Playing with people they don't know in online games	48%	36%
Have seen something that has upset them online	30%	25%
Have seen something online in the last year they wouldn't want their parents to know about	29%	22%

TABLE 47

## Feedback from Teachers and Parents

We gather feedback from parents following our parents' talks and also from teachers following the sessions with their classes. Feedback is voluntary and is anonymous, unless the respondent wishes to add their name to a testimonial. We have not used any names in this report, but have identified the school or body with which they are associated. As noted in the earlier part of this report, most of our delivery was online this year so the comments largely related to live webinars.

### Teachers

We collected a range of data from 57 teachers this year. The number was down on previous years not because we spoke to fewer teachers - there were in fact more - but COVID-19 measures meant that gathering the data was more challenging and there was less opportunity to follow up when sessions were delivered remotely. These teachers are all teachers that sat in on our sessions with children. We have separate data, not reported on here, from our teacher workshops.

Some of the data we collected 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 and further improve our offering. In terms of quality, the results were encouraging: 95% rated the sessions 'good' (24.6%) or 'excellent' (70.2%). 95% also said that the students were either 'very' (54.4%) or 'mostly' (40.4%) engaged in the session and 97% said the presenter was 'good' (3%) or 'excellent' (93%). 90% thought

that the session had enhanced the pupils' awareness of cybersafety either 'a lot' (58%) or 'hugely' (32%). We have highlighted some other categories in the section below.

### How significant is online safety as an issue in your school?

We asked teachers whether they considered online safety to be a significant issue in their school. Table 48 indicates that the vast majority of teachers (79%) felt that it was a significant issue in their school.

### Would you consider online safety to be a significant issue in your school? 57 responses

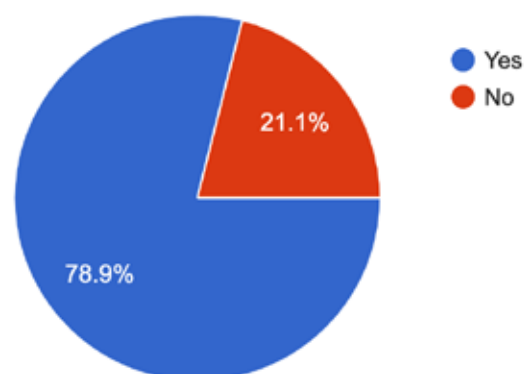


TABLE 48

### Teaching online safety in the classroom

We asked teachers how often they delivered online safety education in the classroom and Table 49 paints a positive picture with 56% covering the topic 2 - 4 times a year and 16% covering it five times or more in a year. 26% are covering it just once a year and a tiny minority of less than 2% said that they never cover it.

### How often do you as a teacher deliver online safety education in the classroom? 57 responses

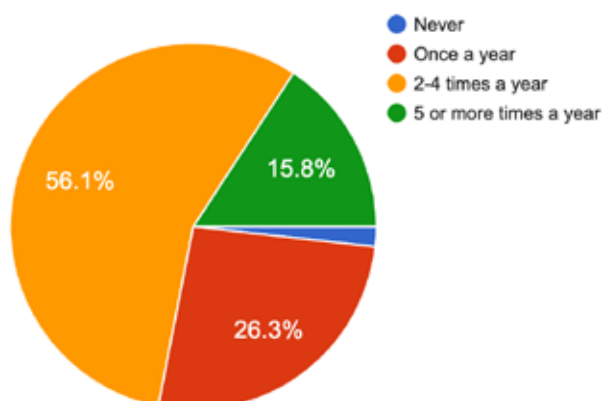


TABLE 49

## Do teachers feel equipped with the skills and knowledge to teach online safety to children?

The good news is that most teachers (61% - see Table 50) said that they did feel that they were, as compared to 39% who did not. This is a slight improvement on last year's responses and this is a positive trend we have noted over the last 6 years of reporting on it. The need for more training and support for teachers should also be highlighted however, with well over a third responding 'no' to this question.

## Do you feel you have sufficient knowledge/skills to effectively deliver educational messages relating to online safety?

57 responses

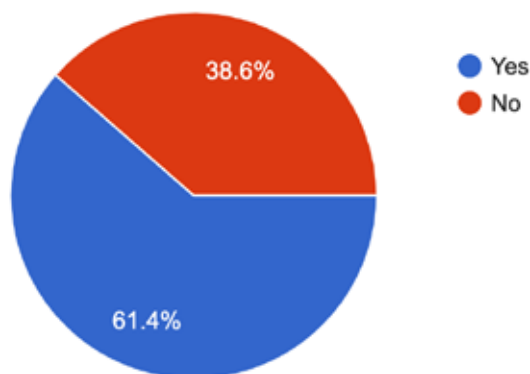


TABLE 50

## Dealing with online safety issues 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 incidents relate to some form of cyberbullying. Table 51 below shows that 39% of teachers did not have to deal with any incidents, which is slightly less than with last year's figures (41%). **The majority however (61%), had dealt with at least one incident:** 21% dealt with one incident and 32% dealt with 2 – 5 incidents (slightly up on last year when it was 30%). **A minority of teachers (9%) dealt with more than 5 in the course of the school year.** This figure (those dealing with more than 5 incidents) is a significant increase on last year, when only 3% reported this.

## How often have you had to deal with online safety incidents (cyberbullying etc) in your school over the past year?

57 responses

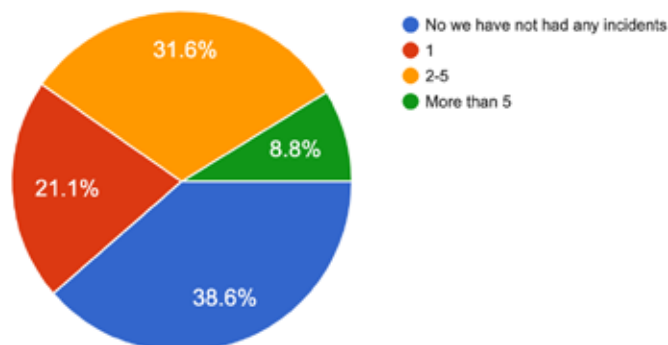


TABLE 51

## How is cyberbullying dealt with in your school?

Table 52 provides an overview of the responses to a question on whether or not schools have a policy in place that covers cyberbullying. The vast majority of teachers (81%) stated that their school did have such a policy. A small minority (2.5%) responded 'no' and 18% respondents said they weren't sure if such a policy was in place.

## Do you have a policy which covers cyberbullying in your school?

57 responses

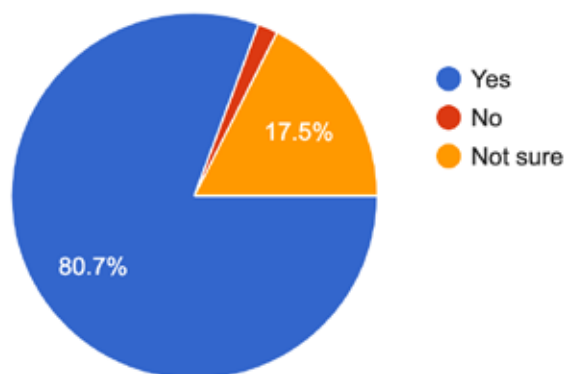


TABLE 52

In follow-up to the above question, we asked those teachers who had responded 'yes', if they felt confident of the steps they would take in response to an incident. Table 53 below indicates that the majority of teachers (58%) felt 'mostly' confident and almost a third (31%) 18.5% said they were 'very' confident that they would know the steps to take. A minority (10%) said either 'not really' in response to this question.

**If you answered 'yes' to the question above, are you confident of the required steps to take if there has been an incident?**

48 responses

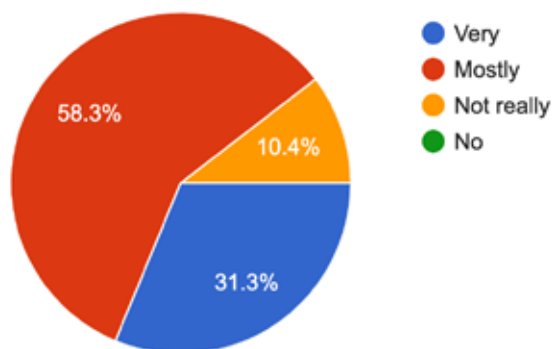


TABLE 53

## Parents

We spoke to 1,762 parents over the course of the school year both in schools and in the workplace. Only 8% (136) completed the online survey following the sessions so feedback is based on those responses. We diversified the range of talks that we offered this year, to include a specific talk on gaming since so many parents have asked us to provide more in-depth information on this topic. We also introduced a session on 'Digital Media Literacy'. Both new talks have been very well received by audiences.

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 reach parents and enhance their awareness of the risks, opportunities and safeguards relating to internet use, so we also gather data around what they've learnt. In terms of quality, 98% of the respondents rated the session 'good' (18%) or 'excellent' (80%) and 97% would recommend them to others.

We ask parents how confident they feel that they can apply what they've learnt in the session at home. As Table 54 illustrates, the vast majority (91%) felt 'very' (33%) or 'quite' (58%) confident that they could apply what they'd learnt at home. This is very important in terms of achieving the objective we have set around empowering parents to take simple steps towards online safety at home.

**How do you feel about being able to apply something you have learned in the session to your own setting or context?**

24 responses

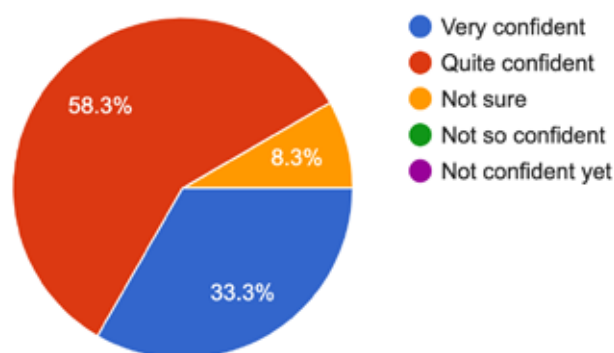


TABLE 54



# CONCLUSION

COVID-19 has brought children's online use into sharper focus for both positive and negative reasons. On the positive side, it has highlighted how versatile the internet can be in terms of meeting needs. When children were largely restricted from their normal daily activities and physically distanced from their friends, it proved itself a lifeline as it left them feeling less socially isolated. It meant that education could continue through the various periods of lockdown whilst children were stuck at home. It provided sources of entertainment when so many of their activities were limited physically. It kept extended families who were living apart, connected. It assured contacts with peers could be maintained. It is not an exaggeration to say it is hard to imagine surviving lockdown without access to the internet.

On the other hand however, COVID restrictions have meant that parents' rule books around use and access occasionally went out the window. In some cases their ability to monitor their children's online activity was limited by the need to work from home themselves. They often had to allow greater access and more time online. It undoubtedly increased everybody's reliance on devices. Children's need for social interaction meant that some children were put at risk of online harm. The UK Internet Watch Foundation, which deals with reports of child sexual exploitation material, noted a sharp increase. It compared 15,000 reports in September 2020 with 5,000 reports in the same month in 2019.<sup>8</sup> In Ireland, Hotline.ie's recent annual report noted a 142% increase in child sexual abuse material which appeared to be self-generated images or videos compared to 2019.<sup>9</sup>

The data we have highlighted in this report paints a varied picture. We can see many positives with most children talking to a parent or trusted adult on a regular basis (with noted increases in this regard compared to last year's figures) and most children reporting that they would tell a parent or a trusted adult if something had bothered them or if they had been bullied online. These are really important strategies for keeping children safe online, as well as building their resilience. We can also see that lots of children are also making good choices. The opportunity however, always has to be balanced against the risks that children face online. We have outlined in this report where there are vulnerabilities - for example, some children engaging with strangers online, or children not talking to parents or a trusted adult when things go wrong online.

There also appears to be significant variations between households in relation to managing online safety, with lots of good practice being highlighted, as well as many gaps in this regard. What we need is a much more consistent approach to digital parenting so that most children have the support and guidance online that they need. To get this right, we must provide more support to parents and we hope to see the office of the Online Safety Commissioner, once appointed, leading public awareness campaigns and sharing useful resources to provide that support.

Risks that children face online can and must be minimised by equipping children with the skills and knowledge they need to safely and smartly navigate the online world both in school and crucially, at home, with oversight and support from parents and carers. It is useful sometimes to use the analogy of riding a bike: as parents, we know that we need to adequately prepare children to ride a bike safely and responsibly; we use safeguards like helmets and training wheels; we take them to safe places to practice under our watchful eye; we introduce them to more independence by taking them out on the road and at a certain point, we have to trust that we have adequately prepared them to go out on their own and to make good choices whilst doing so. Ultimately, as a society we believe that the benefits of riding a bike outweigh the risks and whilst we can't completely eliminate them, we do what we can to mitigate against those risks.

There are some positive changes in terms of the digital landscape and these are much needed in terms of protecting children online and upholding their rights. Laws are being drafted that will provide online users with greater control and more powers to address online harms: *Coco's Law: the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act*, which makes it an offence to share intimate images (with or without the intention to cause harm) and will also address more serious incidents of cyberbullying, was enacted earlier this year. *The Online Safety Media Regulation Bill*, which should put greater onus on the online service providers to address harmful content, if amended to include an individual complaints mechanism, is undergoing pre-legislative scrutiny. In the international context, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child published its **General Comment 25** earlier this year, described as a "game-changer"<sup>10</sup> in terms of its recognition of children's rights in the digital environment.<sup>11</sup>

8 Grant, Harriet, 'Deeply dark criminal activity' drives rise in child abuse images online' (Dec 2020). Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/dec/03/deeply-dark-criminal-activity-drives-rise-in-child-abuse-images-online>

9 Hotline.ie Annual Report 2020: Source: <https://www.hotline.ie/publications/>

10 Livingstone, Sonia, 'Children's rights and parental responsibilities in a digital world' (May 2021) <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/parenting4digitalfuture/2021/05/05/gc25/>

11 General Comment on children's rights in relation to the digital environment (2021), Source: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/GCChildrens-RightsRelationDigitalEnvironment.aspx>

We still have some way to go however, to ensure children will have a safe and positive experience online. The responsibility lies in a number of places. We have talked a lot in this report about the central importance of the parents' role. We have also talked about the role of schools and how they are increasingly impacted by children's online use. Their role in supporting and educating children is also incredibly important.

Whilst it was not within the remit of this report to discuss the role of the online service providers, they clearly also have a hugely important role to play in ensuring children

have a safe and positive online experience, particularly those services used by children. A child-centred approach and design needs to be given much greater priority within their respective business models. There also needs to be far greater onus placed on these services to put appropriate safeguards in place and to provide timely and effective responses when things go wrong on their platforms. It is positive to see some changes being put in place for users under the age of 18 in 2021, but we still have some way to go.

## PARENT TESTIMONIAL

"Great and useful information, very up to date!"

PARENT, CASTLEGAR NS, GALWAY

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- We urge the Government to pass the **Online Safety Media Regulation Bill** at the earliest opportunity. It must:
  - Be amended to include an **Individual Complaints Mechanism** so that all users have greater power to address online harms and to make the online service providers more accountable to their users
  - Explicitly state that an Online Safety Commissioner will be appointed.
  - Provide robust power to the Online Safety Commissioner and their office, as well as adequate resources to fulfil their mandate.
  - Ensure that the 'Codes of Conduct' are independently developed, robust in nature and in line with best practice.
  - Intend to provide an oversight role with regards to education and public information campaigns
- We need to put in place guidelines on ensuring **the safe and ethical design of apps and games** so that all users, but particularly the most vulnerable, benefit from a safer user experience.
- **Education:** There needs to be much greater focus given to the education of children and parents on online safety and digital well-being:
  - We believe that it is essential that all children benefit from a good Digital Literacy education at both primary and secondary level in schools. Digital literacy will need to become the fourth pillar of our education system, alongside reading, writing and arithmetic, so that children may develop those digital skills of paramount importance for their safe and positive use of technologies. This will require investment in curriculum development, teacher training and supplementary support materials resources.
  - Every school needs a digital champion (a teacher or principal) who can lead on policy development, support and delivery of digital literacy and digital wellbeing education to children, parents and teachers. This will involve training teachers, developing new resources and signposting to the many good resources that are available.

### TEACHER TESTIMONIAL

"Very good session and well adjusted to suit an online platform."

CLAREGALWAY EDUCATE TOGETHER NATIONAL SCHOOL

This report (and much of the work that has gone into it)  
was produced with the kind support of:



Jim & Diane Quinn



Sara Emmanuel



**[cybersafekids.ie](https://cybersafekids.ie)**



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