**OMBUDSMAN FOR CHILDREN LAUNCHED DONEGAL WEB SAFETY SURVEY RESULTS**

The Ombudsman for Children, Dr Niall Muldoon, recently launched the results of a Web Safety Survey for Donegal, which explores online activity of young people and their parents/guardians in Co Donegal.

The survey was commissioned through the Donegal Web Safety Working Group, which is chaired by Donegal ETB Youth Officer, Paddy Muldoon. This is a working group of the Donegal Children and Young People's Services Committee, which includes members from Donegal ETB, HSE Health Promotion, Foróige, Donegal Youth Service and Donegal Domestic Violence Service. The report was completed by young people, staff and volunteers from Donegal Youth Council and Donegal Youth Service.

The survey on “Young People and Internet Use” targeted young people from Donegal between the age of 8 and 17 years old. Youth Councillors distributed questionnaires across Post-Primary schools in the county, with a small number also completed through youth clubs.

Key findings identified through the study include:

* The majority of children in Donegal start using the Internet between 7 and 11 years old. In Donegal 25% of children begin using it between 7 and 8.
* The report identifies differences between girls and boys from Donegal in their use of social media, with females reporting twice as much social media use as males.
* The report also identifies a difference between girls and boys in relation to their awareness of Internet Safety Information, with females reporting greater knowledge.
* A significant proportion of the students who took part in the survey (43%) have met face-to-face with people they have first been in contact with on chat rooms, or by means of social media, with 22.5% of the sample having met 5 or more people.
* Up to 11% of those surveyed acknowledged to have been “harassed, upset, bothered, threatened or embarrassed by someone on a social networking site, or chatting online” in the previous 6 months.
* Up to 32% of interviewed students acknowledged having been personally cyberbullied or to have a friend who has had this problem. A difference between males and females has been identified again, with the majority of boys not reporting the cyberbullying to anyone, while girls are generally more likely to tell parents, teachers or friends.
* Finally, the report identified that teenagers and young people from Donegal spend a significant amount of time on the Internet - the majority of them at least 2-3 hours daily.

At the launch Donegal Youth Councillors made further recommendations on how they would like to see some of the issues tackled, which included a more consistent education of students about online safety through SPHE classes, poster campaigns, as well as the introduction of a web safety week across Donegal schools.

The report can be downloaded from [www.donegaletb.ie](http://www.donegaletb.ie)

**Photo**:

Back l-r: Maria McInnes Regional Manager Tusla; Dr Martin Gormley, Education Officer Donegal ETB; Paddy Muldoon, Youth Officer, Donegal ETB; Seamus Neely, Chief Executive, Donegal Co Council; Martin Keeney, Co-Ordinator, Donegal Youth Council; Gareth Gibson, Manager Letterkenny Youth Information Centre; Mchelle Maguire, Foróige. 

Front l-r: Anne McAteer, HSE Health Promotion (Co-Ordinator, CYPSC); Eamon Conaghan, Chairperson, Donegal Youth Council; Dr Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children; Aoife Gillespie vice-Chairperson Donegal Youth Council, Donegal Youth Council; Councillor Gerry McMonagle, Donegal Co Council.