

Press Release

Safety Net for Children: Call for Co-location of Services

Galway, 8 February 2017. 200 parents and professionals working with children gathered in NUI Galway today to discuss online safety for children and young people and hear about the supports available for parents and professionals. ‘Keeping children safe online – a collaborative approach to internet safety’ was organised by the Galway and Roscommon Children and Young People’s Services Committees (CYPSC) and featured a keynote address from Dr Geoffrey Shannon, Galway native and Ireland’s Special Rapporteur on Child Protection.

Speaking at the event, Dr Shannon said “the importance of this issue cannot be overstated. No one government department or non-governmental organisation, working on its own, will be able to provide the supports to ensure our children are safe online. Events like this are a great way to encourage the collaboration that will be needed to achieve this. Ideally, I would love to see services co-located so that professionals from different disciplines will be able to work side by side toward this end.”

The event was opened by Minister of State for Equality, Immigration and Integration, David Stanton, who outlined the Government’s actions in safeguarding children and young people online. Opening the event, he said “The internet is a marvellous tool. It allows for enhanced access to education, entertainment and social contact. However, there are traps for the unwary. It is essential for parents and professionals who work with children to educate themselves on the potential dangers of the internet and, in particular, on how children and young people interact with it. In relation to legislative updates, you will be interested to know that the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill contains provisions to significantly strengthen existing criminal law in combating child exploitation and, in particular, address the use of modern communication technologies as a tool which may lead to child sexual exploitation. This Bill is expected to be enacted in the coming weeks.”

The event also saw the launch of a new e-health and eco-health programme for transition year students by the Insight Centre for Data Analytics, which is being piloted in secondary schools in Galway, as well as presentations by UNICEF and the ISPCC.

Speaking at the event, Caroline Duignan, Coordinator of the Roscommon CYPSC said “When I meet with children and young people of all ages across Galway and Roscommon one of the issues constantly raised is internet safety. The Internet Safety Sub-Group was set up to address these concerns”.

Aidan Waterstone, Service Director with Tusla closed the event by saying that “there is a great breadth of work being done to help promote online safety. We must ensure that children are at the heart of this. We must work with children to ensure the best outcomes for children”.

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For further information contact:

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About the event

This event was organised by the Internet Safety Sub-Group of Galway and Roscommon Children and Young People's Services Committee and is the result of a collaboration of many agencies including Empowering People in Care (EPIC), Tusla Family Support Services, Foroige, Insight Centre for Data Analytics, NUI Galway, ISPC, the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals, Treo Nua Garda Diversion Project, Vita House Family Centre, Roscommon, Tusla Workforce Development, the Youth Advocacy Programme and Youth Work Ireland Galway.

About the Galway and Roscommon Children and Young People's Services Committees

Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs) are a key structure identified by the Government to plan and coordinate services for children and young people in every county in Ireland. Their overall purpose is to improve outcomes for children and young people through local and national interagency working. For more information on CYPSCs, please visit www.cypsc.ie.

The Internet Safety Sub-Group of the Galway and Roscommon CYPSCs was formed following consultation with young people in Galway and Roscommon in 2015. The Sub-Group aims to coordinate statutory and community / voluntary service providers in their approaches to internet safety and cyber-bullying in Galway and Roscommon.