



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Investigation into Consistency in Child
Protection across the CAL Remit:
BeattheCyberbully Briefing

24 January 2013

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Miss Michelle McIlveen (Chairperson)
Mr William Irwin (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr David Hilditch
Ms Rosaleen McCorley
Mr Michael McGimpsey
Mrs Karen McKeivitt
Mr Oliver McMullan
Mr Cathal Ó hOisín
Mr Robin Swann

Witnesses:

Mr Wayne Denner	Beattheycyberbully
Ms Elaine Montgomery	Beattheycyberbully

The Chairperson: Good morning, and I apologise for keeping you waiting. We had departmental officials in talking about the review of arm's-length bodies, and it went slightly longer than anticipated; so, many apologies. You are welcome to the Committee. May I ask you to make an opening statement, and we will follow up with some questions?

Mr Wayne Denner (Beattheycyberbully): I start by thanking the Chairperson for the invitation and the opportunity to talk about something that I believe is a very important issue in Northern Ireland. I would like to follow that up by thanking the Committee for its attention and the opportunity to highlight this issue.

I am here today to talk about the Committee's investigation into gaps in child protection and safeguarding across the culture, arts and leisure sphere. After reviewing the NSPCC submission on safeguarding in sport, we are here to assist and to provide insight into specific areas. Your terms of reference include:

"Members will examine the issues around 'cyber-bullying' and Social Media, including education on safe and effective use of the internet for children and young people".

My background is that I have been involved in the digital communications industry for about 15 years. I class myself as being very much a "digital native"; I have grown up with technology. It is how I communicate and engage with people. About 18 months ago, I started to look into cyberbullying. I asked Elaine Montgomery to volunteer her time to carry out a bit of unpaid research into how young people are communicating online.

We have come up with a number of different areas that we want to highlight today. I want to focus on cyberbullying and bystanding; negative online culture, which I believe to be a big issue in Northern Ireland and the UK; and education and training, specifically looking at volunteers at risk.

I have been involved in a number of community festivals in south Down over the past couple of years, such as the Maidens of the Mourne and Youth Fest. As a volunteer, I have had to attend a number of training courses on child protection and stewarding, and I think that an area that is lacking is how volunteers are at risk from cyberbullying and the use of online communications. The NSPCC course that I attended is compulsory for those who want to volunteer at culture, arts and leisure events, and I believe that it should include a programme for safeguarding children from cyberbullying.

It should specially look at education and training on online sharing and inappropriate connections between adults and children, which is a big area right now; adults using Facebook, and young people and children wanting to connect with adults on such platforms, which is not always the most appropriate thing to do. There is also the issue of the photography, the videoing of children and content sharing online. We all want to video our kids, but it is a question of where and how that content is shared online and who is sharing it. Are other children commenting on that content online? What comments are they making on that content? Is that content having a negative impact on a child's life?

Specifically, I want to look at good practices. I also want to talk about the links to suicide and self harm; I think that is very important. I want to talk about vulnerable children and about recommendations and improvements around how all these things can be targeted.

I am having discussions with a number of organisations. I am talking at length to Jim Gamble, founder of the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP), about some stuff that I am hopefully going to be doing with him. The Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) youth service has also expressed an interest in working with me. There are also the Health Protection Agency and the Public Initiative for the Prevention of Suicide and Self Harm (PIPS) in Newry, who I am working very closely with in developing programmes on how to use social media responsibly. That is the big challenge; how to educate young people in the use of social media. There are also the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF) and the Southern Regional College, where I am a part-time lecturer.

As regards progress to date and creating awareness, I have been aggressive in my efforts online, specifically on the Twitter channel, in pushing out awareness to parents and educators. I released an e-book called 'Beat the CyberBully', which is available as a free download from the website for parents and educators, again all in a voluntary capacity.

Programmes have been developed and are ready to be piloted through PIPS and other organisations. So, we have spent time writing up the programmes. We are hoping to get one of the programmes accredited by the Open College Network, which means that anyone who takes part in the course will receive certification. We are looking for other options as well.

That wraps up my overview. I will be happy to take any questions.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much, Wayne. You named some of the people with whom you had discussions. Have you had conversations with Departments?

Mr Denner: No.

The Chairperson: Nothing at all?

Mr Denner: Nothing, bar this invite today to the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee.

The Chairperson: So, this is your first invitation. It may be useful for us, then, to develop some of the issues that you discovered through your research. Perhaps you may want to share some of that with us.

Mr Denner: Yes, we have been looking at how children form online relationships. About 43% of 5-year-olds to 15-year-olds have a social networking profile. I have been talking to schools, and there is a big gap in the delivery of training to young people. I am the parent of a child who turned five today.

I went into his school, Carrick Primary School, Burren, to give a presentation to the P1s and P7s, and they did not have any awareness about keeping safer online.

I believe there is a big gap for facilitators to go into schools and talk to and engage with young people on how keep safe online. I want to talk to more schools and organisations. I specifically want to deal with volunteers at risk because I believe there is a big aspect where volunteers are at risk. A lot of volunteers are involved in community groups and organisations and maybe do not have the correct understanding of the appropriate use of technology when it comes to how they engage with young people. I believe there is a massive gap in the market there to deliver those programmes.

I believe there is very little out there to tackle cyberbullying. It is an issue that needs to be addressed across a number of Departments. It is not just this Department or the Department of Education. It is government-wide.

The Chairperson: Can you really define cyberbullying?

Mr Denner: It is difficult to find a World Health Organization definition for cyberbullying. There are a number of definitions. To me, it is using technology to bully young people. They say that bullying stops at the age of 18. It does not; it is up to 18 years of age. So, it is using e-mail, Twitter, Facebook and text messaging; it is sharing content; it is making malicious comments about other people; and it is making a person feel withdrawn from society. That is how I understand it.

The Chairperson: I am showing my age because I had never heard of Snapchat until yesterday.

Mr Denner: Yes.

The Chairperson: Will you talk to us about that? I think there is an understanding that images on Snapchat disappear, but I read up a little about this last night and discovered that that is not necessarily the case, which in itself presents quite a danger.

Mr Denner: I believe that to tackle cyberbullying, we need to be responsible for the content that we create. That is very important. Each of us creates content online, and it is that content that we need to be responsible for. Our children are creating content online. Take Snapchat and that sort of platform. Kids are taking pictures freely, appropriate or not appropriate, and are sharing those pictures with friends and family. The issue is how those pictures are used further on.

Take a case that happened recently in the States, for instance: a young couple of 14 or 15 years of age were in a relationship; the boyfriend was sitting with all his friends and asked the girl to take a picture; the girl agreed to take a picture. There was a ripple effect in how that picture was shared through his friends, and then his friends sharing it with their friends on Facebook. It was a ripple effect. That particular picture was created for a specific purpose, but it was then used maliciously for enjoyment, and then it went full circle to cyberbullying.

Technology is a wonderful part of modern childhood. It is very useful in the classroom; it is how children are learning now. I believe that the problem is in how we are using it, and I believe that we need to create more education on the responsible uses of technology.

The Chairperson: None of us will argue with the fact that the internet and technology presents huge opportunities for all of us, particularly children. However, there are risks associated with that. It is about making sure that there are sufficient safeguards in place for those who are, I suppose, vulnerable. I suppose that there are a number of levels on which that responsibility needs to be taking place. Do you believe that the industry does enough to safeguard those who are using technology.

Mr Denner: Certain aspects of the industry are taking steps. Platforms such as Facebook work a lot with authorities and give information. If there is evidence of cyberbullying in certain spaces, it will remove pages or content. Recently, a parent contacted me about children at a school who had set up a Facebook page against their daughter. Children were posting comments on the page and sharing pictures on it. The problem that the parent had was that she did not know where to go. She did not know who to turn to. The school did not know what to do. It is not, fundamentally, only the fault of the school; it is everyone's responsibility. We have a duty of care as parents, educators, politicians, teachers and friends. We all have a responsibility, and we have a duty of care not to become bystanders in the area of cyberbullying.

I believe that not enough is being done in education or at legislative level. There are changes, and delivery is another key area. It is about going out and talking to young people; it is about talking to P1s. It is also about looking at community groups and organisations throughout culture, arts and leisure and working with volunteers. If we can build an army of potential volunteers who are aware of what constitutes cyberbullying, they will be able to look out for the signs and symptoms of somebody being cyberbullied. They will know the correct course of action to take after that. They will know what to do when they have identified somebody who has been cyberbullied.

In my conversations with PIPS about suicide prevention, I have seen that there is a vacuum and that there are people in that vacuum. They are seeking advice and are actively looking for someone to talk to. I believe that there are two sets of people; those who are in the vacuum now, and those, such as my son, whom we can educate now to be responsible in the use of social media. If those people are educated now, they will be less likely to get caught up in the vacuum because they will be aware of it. They will know how to use technology responsibly and they will know how to engage in responsible communications online.

The Chairperson: There are very high-profile discussions on the mainland around the use of Twitter. As a result, there have been discussions by the legislators on the use of social media and whether the internet can be regulated. Do you think that that is possible?

Ms Elaine Montgomery (Beatthecyberbully): In the past few days, Facebook admitted that it cannot monitor children under 13. It finally admitted that it cannot do anything about that. Facebook, along with Twitter, are probably the most powerful people out there.

Mr Denner: In 2011, there were probably more than 7.5 million under-13s using Facebook. That is a lot of users of that age on that platform. I believe that parents have a duty of care to understand what their children are doing online. It is very simple. We need to start understanding the internet as a space or a place where children go to. You would not bring your children to the park and let them go up and talk to people freely. You would want to know who they are talking to; you would want to know who that person is, and you would want to give them advice about who it is appropriate to talk to. If we can start to understand the internet as a very useful place where children go to, we will be able to educate them a lot more easily. It is like riding a bike at school; you learn the green cross code. You would not put your child into a car at 16 and say, "Away you go" without insurance, MOT, road tax or driving lessons.

We are handing smartphones and technology to children, and we are just saying, "Away you go; the world is your oyster." It is a great platform; it is very useful. It is a great learning tool. I am a big advocate of it. However, we need to learn about and start working on the responsible use of social media. The bottom line is that we need to educate not just the children but the parents, the community volunteers and our politicians. Everybody needs to be educated about it. I believe this because I have spent so long in it; it is how I communicate, how I get stuff done and how I connect. I share these positive stories when I talk to children and young people about it. This is another positive story; I am here today only because I have campaigned for change online. There is no other way. It is by connecting with like-minded people who have similar ideas. This is a positive story that I can take away from this experience and share with children and young people.

The Chairperson: I am glad that you find this to be a positive experience; I do not think that everyone who comes here finds it to be. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Denner: Any platform that I can get is a positive experience.

Mrs McKeivitt: Thank you very much for addressing the Committee. As a parent of five children, I am not sure whether I have moved with the times. When I was growing up, people probably did not have a telephone even in the home. When you wanted to communicate with your friends, you met them in school, when getting off the bus, or when you walked to their house. Now, it is all at the touch of a button — if you can get a signal.

It is 20 years since the first text message was sent, and education has evolved around computers. Information and communication has totally changed now. You made a good point about the lack of knowledge and education about the damage that can be done. We all see how you communicate, but if somebody put their photograph on Facebook, I do not fully understand how that can change and turn around so quickly. It could go right around the world. I really commend the work and research

that you have done. I looked into your BeattheCyberbully book, which I found very useful. In fact, it has probably educated me a wee bit more on how to tweet and how to do all different things.

I am delighted to hear that you are communicating with organisations such as PIPS. The news headlines just before Christmas were of two sisters who were allegedly cyberbullied, and they both committed suicide. That is tragic for the family, their friends and all who knew them. Your link with the Southern Regional College is the right way to go. There is an opening across the Departments to educate. We are mad keen to open up doors for that. The PSNI is now engaging in neighbourhood watch schemes and neighbourhood policing. It should go back to the days when your local policeman knew wee Bobby or wee Jimmy. We need to educate our police teams and stuff. I would be keen to work with you locally on that, if I can, because you are from south Down.

Mr Denner: Of course.

The Chairperson: Was there a question?

Mrs McKeivitt: No, it was just that I agree with Wayne on the gaps and the lack of knowledge and how you grow with that. It was well highlighted. Perhaps the Committee could propose a motion in the future around cyberbullying or the inclusion of the gaps that need to be addressed.

Mr Denner: Ultimately, when I talk to people, the common denominator is those issues. Parents are not sure about what to do; they may not be on Facebook. They wonder whether they should snoop on their children. We need to start thinking about the internet as a place. If snooping is what you need to do a little bit of just to get an understanding, then that is what you need to do. There is technology out there to help. Jim Gamble is doing some very good stuff, and there are people out there who are champions for change.

I do not want to see what is happening in the South happening here. There have been some suicides directly connected with the type of bullying we are talking about, and I do not want to see anything like that happening up here. We have a great opportunity. I am trying to champion it as much as I can in a voluntary capacity to take it to the next level to try to engage with as many schools, Departments, youth organisations, Radio Ulster — whoever I can talk to — just to get the message pushed out there that we have a growing problem, and that if we do not take some sort of action, something will happen.

The Chairperson: You raised the issue of privacy. Is there a problem about moving into the realms of an invasion of privacy of children and young people by parents?

Ms Montgomery: I was having a discussion with Lee Kane from the NIABF yesterday, and I very much agree with his view. As Wayne said earlier, if you brought your child to a park, would you hide in the bushes? You would not. You should be openly communicating with your child asking, "Who were you talking to there?" It is about opening channels of communication with your child and trying to keep them open.

Obviously, our kids are not going to tell us everything. My sons are at a young age and do tell me everything, but that is going to change. As regards teenagers especially, and young people generally, there has to be some balance where you are openly saying, "Who are you chatting to now?" and "Who are your friends now?" We have to bring it all out into the open.

It is the same with suicide-related cyberbullying. As regards the recent developments with suicide, people are bringing the issues out into the open and are talking about them, saying, "These are important. We need to talk about them and take the taboos away." As regards children's privacy, there has to be a balance. There is a duty of care, and parents, educators, teachers and community leaders need to say to themselves, "We are giving them all of this technology, we are placing it in their hands and we have a duty to be responsible and teach them about that technology and communicate with them."

The Chairperson: The challenge obviously is the mobile aspect of technology. It is in your hands.

Ms Montgomery: Yes.

Mr Denner: We need to understand that when I was at school, I might have come across a bully and got a quick box or whatever. That would have been it and things would have calmed down. Now, the bully is potentially in my pocket 24 hours a day. The bully is at the side of my bed, in the bathroom with me, in the car, on the bus and under my pillow. The bully is everywhere. We have a duty of care as parents. If we have this technology in our house; we need to make sure that we know what kids are doing with it upstairs in their bedrooms.

One parent took their 12-year-old son out for a meal recently, and the first thing the child said to the waiter when he got to the restaurant was, "What is the Wi-Fi password?". He did not say, "Can I have a drink?" or "This is what I want". He asked for the Wi-Fi password because he wanted to use Facebook to connect with his friends.

Equally, another friend contacted me recently and said that it was his 13-year-old's birthday and that she was really upset. I asked what was wrong with her and he told me that she was not upset about the number of birthday cards she got or the number of presents she got; she was upset about the number of Facebook "likes" she got and the number of people wishing her a happy birthday on Facebook. That tells me that there has been a big change in the way that young people communicate online. That is a self-esteem issue, and not enough people liking her Facebook status and not enough people wishing her "happy birthday" on Facebook has potentially knocked her self-esteem because that was the channel in which she communicated.

Ms Montgomery: The other thing is that although children and young people are unbelievably confident in what they do online and with the technology, unfortunately they are not emotionally equipped to deal with negative comments or experiences that they have online.

Mr Ó hOisín: Thank you very much, Wayne and Elaine. Obviously, you are very passionate about what you do. It is not just young people who are miffed by the fact that somebody does not "like" them on Facebook. I know quite a number of politicians who think likewise.

My mother was a district nurse, and because of that we had one of the very few phones in the village. Things have come a long way since then. Somebody recently compared cyberspace with a country that has a different language and a different set of morals. Thinking like that may be the way to deal with it. However, I also heard a very cogent argument on the radio yesterday evening about the rights of young people to their own space. It is not the same as going through your daughter's diary, as it would have been some years ago. However, those of us who are parents still have worries.

At the start of the meeting, we talked about the written and oral evidence that we would need to take to have consistency in the investigation. This is a very useful exercise, in that we could tie in, particularly with you, Wayne, and get that expanded to include the organisations on the coalface, including Lifeline, PIPS, Divert, and all the rest. Perhaps that would be an idea.

We were scratching about earlier trying to think of organisations that we should contact. We cannot underestimate the extent and the influence of the internet. My 11-year-old has informed me that he is learning Russian online. I do not know what his intentions are. He helps me with phrases every now and again.

Those are the things that come up day and daily, and most people in the room are not over it. You are right, Wayne: schools, youth groups and many of the organisations that we have been talking to are not over this at all. I contend that online is where most bullying takes place now.

Ms Montgomery: Much of it is moving to that platform.

Mr Ó hOisín: We should be working closely with the likes of Wayne and getting together his thoughts on how best we advance our investigation.

Mr Denner: I want to follow up on the point about schools. From what I hear, schools are struggling, and many of them are saying that it is not really their area. However, I believe that it is. Children spend a great deal of time at school and in community groups. There is a massive opportunity to infiltrate schools, to educate kids and to talk to them about being responsible. You should talk to kids about etiquette online and the appropriate conversations to have with people and how the internet can be used responsibly. Last year alone, I had two trips to the Middle East, purely off the back of conversations that I had online — appropriate and responsible conversations. People wanted to bring me out to talk to them. I share those positive stories and tell them how they can use the internet

effectively and what they can achieve out of it. I tell them how they can build their profile online and what they can do. However, I also tell them about the pitfalls and the dangers and what they need to be aware of. I talk to them almost like a big brother; that is how I rock up. I have a connection with them. It is not someone in a suit or an ICT professional; it is someone dressed the way that they would dress when they go out. They are getting information and building a rapport. I talk to them on their level, because that is how we need to talk to them. Those are the messages that I push out. It is very much focused around that.

Equally, there is a different message for parents, and we need to have that awareness and do that campaign.

Mr Swann: Thank you for your presentation. Earlier, you talked about the wee girl and how she was concerned about how many "likes" she had. Not long ago, I heard two MLAs talking about how many followers they had on Twitter, and that seemed to be a status for them.

Wayne, have you any connection or interaction with the Internet Watch Foundation in your work?

Mr Denner: No. I have spent about 18 months looking at that, and I have spent a lot of time trying to build connections with various groups, fundamentally focusing in and around the area that I started this thing out in and gradually trying to move it forward. I am constantly looking for new people to connect with and to talk to and new opportunities for pushing out my message. I am open to talking to any organisation or any group that has an interest in helping me — and in my helping them — to tackle cyberbullying.

Mr Swann: It might be a useful organisation. I think that it is one of BT's sponsored charities for the year, so they have quite a good standing.

Ms Montgomery: We have come across quite a bit of research from the Internet Watch Foundation. One of the points that we made in our written submission was that there are loads of excellent online stuff from CEOP, Childnet, NSPCC, Childline, BeatBullying, NIABF and the Internet Watch Foundation. Again, however, much of it is about delivery to schools, parents and community groups. There is a massive gap in delivery. There is a guide down South by Mr Mulrine. He is an IT person, but he is making the effort and going out and talking to people; he does parent workshops, talks to teachers, and so on. It is not really delivered in the best way possible, but at least he is trying. That is how the few people who are doing it do it.

Mr Denner: Among the community and voluntary sector, it is about groups in the culture, arts and leisure sector: the likes of the Maiden of the Mourne festival and the World Police and Fire Games. There will be so many volunteers, and we need to have a handle on cyberbullying. We need to have a handle on what issues may crop up down the line in relation to taking content from people who are involved in those events and where that content goes. We need to educate the volunteers about what is appropriate and what is not appropriate through technology during those games and events.

Mr McGimpsey: Thank you for your presentation. I am interested to hear what you said around suicide and the role that the internet and providers play in that. A number of years ago, when I became the Minister of Health, I saw that there was a clear connection between a suicide cluster in Northern Ireland and internet advice on how to commit suicide. I met the providers in London; Google and Yahoo!, and so on. Their issue was that they just provide the service; they said it was nothing to do with them. We, therefore, took it to the next stage. The Byron Report came out of Downing Street through Gordon Brown. Byron set up a task force. The head of social services here, Sean Holland, who was then grade 5, sits on that task force. What is your assessment of where that task force is now? That is to say, is it making providers — Google and Yahoo!, and so on — police their own systems? As I said, the providers told me that, frankly, what goes on is nothing to do with them. They simply provide the system; how it is used is not their problem. They had a psychiatrist there to talk to me and all the rest of it. They are multi-billion dollar businesses based in places like Texas or California. We are small fry. The UK is small fry. I just wonder where you think that is now. What effect has that had?

This cannot be done by a few volunteer groups; it cannot be done by one Department in a small government. This has to be done collectively throughout the UK and the Irish Republic. We are all working together on this. It is about government dealing with this at the highest level.

Mr Denner: You are absolutely right. I have come across cases where providers have said that they just build the platform and provide the service; that is as far as they go. Look at the recent articles about ask.fm. I spent a bit of time looking at what is going on there. The questions that are being asked of 13-, 14- and 15-year-old girls on that platform are absolutely shocking. The founder came back with a statement that he just provides the platform, and that perhaps children in the UK and Ireland are meaner than in other parts of the world.

Ms Montgomery: Ask.fm should be shut down because of the anonymous posting. I say that unequivocally. People of whatever age can go on and say whatever they want; it is completely anonymous. The comments are unbelievably shocking. At least on Facebook and Twitter, you have a profile; people know who is making the comments.

The Chairperson: You might want to explain what ask.fm is, as you may be just a wee bit ahead of members.

Ms Montgomery: Sorry.

Mr Denner: Ask.fm is a media platform where you put up your profile and ask questions. Karen may have a question about how to fix her car. That is an appropriate use of it. She would post that question so that other people can come back to her. For example: "I have a problem with my headlights; how do I replace the bulb?" The reply might come back: "You take the back panel off, screw the bulb out and put the new bulb in." That is an appropriate use.

Some children use the platform to communicate and engage with friends. However, other people use it anonymously and completely inappropriately to ask questions of minors. Recently, I saw a girl based in the UK who was no more than 14 being asked what her bra size was. When you see such questions being posed to young people, it is kind of scary. Those are the kinds of questions being asked on this platform.

Let us not forget: this platform is making money. Advertisers need to take responsibility for the advertisements that they push. That is another battle that I will start to ramp up with major brands — I will not mention any names here today — that use those platforms to advertise their products, services and stores in the UK and Ireland. Surely advertisers have a responsibility if children are taking their lives as a result of what is on those platforms. They have a duty of care. The platforms also have a duty of care, and they need to work a lot more with organisations.

When the issue of music piracy was raised because of file-sharing on the internet, the UK Government and internet service providers (ISPs) shut the providers down. Why can they not shut down those other providers if people are taking their lives? That is how I see it.

Ms Montgomery: Ask.fm has been associated with at least three cyberbullying-related suicides in the South of Ireland. In the UK, Canada and America, ask.fm is associated with many more cyberbullying-related suicides.

Mr Denner: It is based in Latvia, so it is outside our control, but it is pushing content into the UK.

Mr McGimpsey: Google's headquarters in Europe are in the Irish Republic.

Mr Denner: Dublin.

Mr McGimpsey: Therefore, it is accessible. The Irish Republic's Government, of course, —

Mr Denner: And Facebook and Twitter.

Mr McGimpsey: — are a wee bit shy about taking the stick to them. It is through the advertisers and their home offices in the US, but they are huge generators of cash for the US Government, and that is the issue.

Ms Montgomery: They are too powerful.

Mr Denner: We need to start looking at that. If they can close down ISPs and file-sharing websites, surely we can get something passed that says, fundamentally, that if this takes place and it is found that cyberbullying came from there, we will take action and prosecute.

It boils down to education. Young people need to understand that words can cause harm online and can be around for a very long time and that what you say online can haunt you down the line.

Mr McGimpsey: You educate young people by educating their parents.

Mr Denner: That is exactly what I think.

Ms Montgomery: We have started looking at an online social and moral code and researching that with a psychologist and with people in mental health organisations. We have looked at an online social and moral code with very young children at primary school who are four or five years old. It is very simple stuff such as saying, "If you would not say that to your granny, you would not post it online". Obviously, they will say different things to their friends, but it is along those lines. For example, "If you would not say that to your friend in the street, or make fun of them, or do this or do that, do not do it online". It is about doing really simple stuff from a very young age. If you start looking at safety and an online moral code in those formative years, you can address those problems. It is about looking at prevention as well as intervention.

Mr Denner: You are always going to have cases.

Mr Hilditch: Sorry for missing the start of your presentation. You mentioned events with schools, Departments, the media and youth clubs. Have you had any interaction with the sporting sector on the internet issue? Vast numbers of kids are driven to sports, and there are large numbers of volunteers in that sector, which has policies and what not. Associations and clubs are continually looking for partners from the voluntary and charitable sector to campaign with. Have you done anything on the group side of things?

Mr Denner: We have not really done a great deal on that. We have been trying to highlight the issues and whatever policies are in play and to update those accordingly in order to bring in aspects of cyberbullying. There is an action plan so that if something happens, we are not sitting scratching our heads and looking at each other saying, "What do we do next?", because cyberbullying tends to escalate very quickly.

We have all seen how quickly stuff can be shared online when it goes viral. It only takes someone to video something in a club for it to go round the world.

Mr Hilditch: The young ballboy last night got 70,000 hits on Twitter minutes after the incident.

Mrs McKeivitt: The photos were all edited to suit.

Mr Hilditch: There is an opportunity for awareness of the campaign.

Mr Denner: If we look at the road safety campaign —

Ms Montgomery: From the NSPCC report on safeguarding in sport, it looks as though great progress has been made. However, we need to focus specifically on cyberbullying and online safety.

Mr Denner: Yes, because those platforms will continue to grow. Apps such as Snapchat will continue to come out, and there will be something next week, next month and next year. People like me who are involved in this space need to be thinking about what is coming down the line next and what we need to be thinking about. It is about bringing information out to educate.

Ms Montgomery: Gaming through social networking is massive.

Mr Denner: Girls are more likely to be bullied online than boys, and girls send an average of 221 texts a week. All that research is out there. How we use digital communications to connect and engage with people is rampant. That is another reason why public houses are suffering: people are staying in and chatting to their friends on Facebook; they are not going to restaurants and bars. There has been

a fundamental shift in communications. When I left school in 1995, there were three computers in the Southern Regional College in Newry, and we asked, "What is this internet all about? It looks interesting." Now, every student in the classroom has a computer. When I am in there to deliver a lecture, much of the time they are not listening because they are on Facebook. As educators, we need to find a way of engaging with students so that their learning evolves through the use of technology, because that is what they are doing, and that is how they want to be communicated to.

The Chairperson: I can understand the problem. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Denner: I do it, too.

Mr Swann: I am listening, Chair.

Mr McGimpsey: You can do more than one thing at a time.

The Chairperson: Are you multitasking?

Mr McGimpsey: I can even chew gum at the same time.

Mr Swann: It is an Ulster Unionist thing.

Mr Irwin: Most areas have been covered. Among the public, adults and parents are not fully aware of the dangers. I may be a bit old-fashioned. You mentioned a child in a restaurant whose first question was about connecting to the internet. There is also a danger of addiction, and that is an issue for parents.

Ms Montgomery: Yes, definitely, and of mental health problems because of the noise when you are sitting using an iPad.

Mr Irwin: I know of a housewife who sat for six or seven hours a day on Facebook. I do not think that the husband was too happy. Perhaps when children are very young, it is a good thing because it gets them out of the way. It is important that parents are made fully aware. Most parents have no idea of the dangers. How that is done, I am not so sure.

Ms Montgomery: We are running a parenting workshop next week at our son's school.

Mr Denner: Parents need to be educated. That is what the schools are doing. Some schools are proactive and have contacted me. They have reached out and said that they would like me to come in. I cannot go around volunteering for the rest of my days — I would love to. This kind of thing has evolved almost as a corporate social responsibility for me, and it is consuming a lot of my time. I am passionate about it, and it needs to move forward. However, we need to look at implementing programmes. The school that we mentioned is Carrick Primary School in Burren. The principal said that he wants us to come in to deliver a parents' workshop on how to keep their children safe online and what they should look out for. Let them know what Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare and Snapchat are and how they can take proactive action in their homes and how they can look out for opportunities to carry on the message and educate their children. That is very important.

Mr Irwin: It will be impossible for you to do that on a widespread basis.

Mr Denner: I am trying to train people. My next thing is to develop training programmes through which I can train facilitators to go out to community groups.

Ms Montgomery: We have already developed a programme to facilitate a training programme that PIPS will run as a pilot; we hope to get it accredited by the Open College Network.

Mr Denner: The health trust in Newry and Mourne has also been in touch about coming in. Nuala Quinn from Protect Life contacted us about running something in its department and educating not only parents but youth leaders. That is what the Southern Education and Library Board wants me to do. It wants to train 20 volunteers from its service who work with youth clubs to go out and be the messengers on the ground, if you will. I will relay the information to them. You cannot be everywhere.

Ms Montgomery: We are going to the meeting of the Union of Students in Ireland on 6 March. We are also meeting the youth service of SELB on 5 February. At least that will get the awareness out a bit more easily than having to visit individual schools.

Mr Denner: That is an all-Ireland conference for all the student union officers of the Union of Students in Ireland. They want me to do a 45-minute keynote presentation. They are contacted all the time by people who are being cyberbullied, and they do not know what to do. They do not know where to signpost them, and that is a problem. If someone knocks on your door and tells you that they are being cyberbullied, where do they go? Do they go to Facebook? Facebook does not care. We get e-mails all the time asking how someone can remove content. I am working with a law firm in Belfast that does a lot of media litigation on Twitter and Facebook. We are working together to write blogs to educate people on what is appropriate and inappropriate to say on Twitter. More and more of those cases will crop up.

The Chairperson: Thank you for the time that you have spent with us this morning. You have certainly educated members on the various forms of digital communication. No doubt they will be investigating that further themselves. The message coming across today is one of awareness, signposting and education. That has been incredibly useful for us.

Again, on behalf of the Committee, I thank you for your time. If there is anything further that you would like to share with us, contact the Committee office and we will relay it to members.

Mr Denner: Thank you very much.

Ms Montgomery: One last thing that I would like to say is that the e-book provides a really good background for what we have been talking about today. If you get a chance, download it and take just a few minutes to skim over it. We would really appreciate it. Thank you.

Mr Denner: Brilliant. Thank you.