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Children and Technology

presented by Damian Walshe

(Waterford Institute of Technology)

Overview

- The current situation
- Social networking
- The setbacks to children's access to the internet
- The positives to children's access to technology
- Safeguarding children's internet use
- Conclusion

The current situation

Risks and safety for children on the internet The Ireland report (2011)

- Children accessing the internet using a handheld mobile device (iPod, smartphone) is at the upper end of equivalent European findings.
- Nearly all children go online at home (93%), much more so than at school (66%) or at a friend's home (64%).
- Children's use of the internet at home is somewhat above the European average (87%).
- Most (64%) children still access the internet via a shared personal computer (PC) or shared laptop (51%), though access via mobile phone or games console are the next most common (46% and 44%).

Social networking

- 59% of all 9-16 year olds in Ireland report having their own social networking profile. Age is the main factor in the use of SNS.
- One fifth (20%) of the 9-10 year olds report having their own profile, compared with half (52%) of 11-12 year olds. The fact that younger children under the age of 12 also use social networking sites is interesting (32% of boys and 41% of girls), despite the fact that for many services the minimum age is 13.
- Among social network users, the majority (63%) keep their profile private so that only their friends can see it. A further 22% report that their profile is partially private so that friends of friends and networks can see it. 12% report that their profile is public so that anyone can see it.

Social Networking continued.....

- Remembering that 12% of children's social networking profiles are public,
 - 8% of children include an address or phone number.
 - 24% of children also said that they reported an incorrect age compared to 16% at a European level.
 - 39% of those aged 11-16 say 'it is a bit or very true of them' that they find it easier to be themselves on the internet than with people face to face.
 - A quarter (24%) say they talk about different things than when speaking to people face to face
 - 15% say they speak about private things which they do not discuss face to face.
- Most children who communicate online are in touch with people they already know in person face-to-face (88%). One quarter of children aged 11-16 (23%) says they communicate online with people who they met online and who have no connection with their offline social networks.

What are the setbacks to children's access to the internet?

Seeing sexual images online

- One in five (23%) say that they have seen obviously sexual images in the past 12 months, whether online or offline. This is broadly in line with the European average. Around half have seen this at least once or twice a month, while half have seen it less often. Nearly half of 15-16 year olds (45%) have seen such images compared with just 8% of 9-10 year olds; teenagers also see such images more often.

Bullying

- Younger children in the 9-10 year old range are the most likely to have been bullied but this is nearly always face to face rather than by mobile phone or online. It is teenagers who experience more electronically mediated forms of bullying, 15-16 year olds report the greatest levels of cyberbullying – 9% on the internet and 10% by mobile phone. Social networking sites provide the main platform for online bullying.

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Sending and receiving sexual messages online ('sexting')

- The experience of 'sexting' in Ireland is below the European average (11% vs. 15%) and is among the four lowest countries in Europe. Just 3% also say they have posted such messages which is the same for Europe overall.
- The most common among these generally rare practices is being sent a sexual message on the internet – 7% of all 11-16 year olds.
- While involving few younger children, being sent a sexual message online is reported by 13% of 15-16 year olds.
- However, for the 11% of children overall who have received sexual messages online, just 21% of parents were aware that this had happened. 27% did not know **but 52% said that this had not occurred when, according to the child, it had.**

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Meeting online contacts offline

- Nearly one third of children (28%) have made contact online with someone they did not previously know offline. The older the child, the more likely they are to have made contact with new people online: 10% of 9- 10 year olds vs. 43% of 15-16 year olds have made new contacts this way.
- Overall, just 4% of 9-16 year olds have gone to a meeting face to face with someone that they first met on the internet. This primarily relates to older teenagers and for 15-16 year olds, 10% or one in ten teenagers have met an online contact offline.

Personal data misuse

- The most common form of personal data misuse is someone using the child's password or pretending to be them. This was experienced by 10% of children overall, and more by older teenagers than younger children.

What are the positives to children having access to technology

Physical development

- Muscular Development
- Enhance hand-eye co-ordination
- Fine motor skills

Cognitive development

- Memory
- Spatial and logical problem solving
- Critical thinking
- Concentration
- Comprehension

Social Development

- Increases communication and social skills
- E-mailing
- Chatrooms
- Instant messaging
- Electronic

Safeguarding children's internet use

Parental supervision

- The vast majority of parents (91%) mediate their children's internet use in some way. This is above the European average of 87%.
- Most parents (72%) stay nearby children when using the internet, particularly for younger children. This is the most popular way to actively mediate children's internet use.
- Many parents also talk to their children about what they do on the internet (67% overall and over 75% for younger children).

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Teachers

- Also have a responsibility to ensure the supervision and mediation of children's usage and duration on the internet.

Peers

- Previous research has often shown that children would rather turn to their friends than to an adult when something online bothers or worries them. But little is known about whether or how children really support each other in terms of internet safety.

Conclusion

- The Irish children of the 21st century are more advanced in the techniques and skills required for the use of information technology than other generation.
- Children's access, awareness and exposure to the Internet and other technological devices are prevalent.
- Therefore, although there are many positive aspects to children's use of technology, one major necessity is to raise awareness of the possible negative aspects to ensure the safeguarding on children using the Internet.



Thank you.