

Meeting 5 of the Steering Committee to Review the Action Plan on Bullying 2013 Minutes

Tuesday 10th May, 2022, 10.30am

Webex

Attendees:

Aileen Hickie, CEO, Parentline
Aine Doyle, Advisor to Minister Foley
Bridget Wilson, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.
Ciarán Shanley, Senior Policy Analyst, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
Deirdre Shanley, Assistant Secretary, Schools Division, Department of Education.
Dr Eamon Raji, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, CAMHS CHO2 (Galway and Roscommon)
Emer Neville, President, Irish Second-Level Students' Union.
Emer O'Neill, Anti-Racism Activist, Teacher, Presenter
Jane McGarrigle, Project Officer, Webwise
John Kennedy, Her Majesty's Inspector, Assistant Regional Director, London, Ofsted UK
Judith Lyons, Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education
Julie Ahern, Children's Rights Alliance
Kate Waterhouse, Social Inclusion, Department of Education.
Mai Fanning, President, National Parents Council Post-Primary.
Maria Bracken, Digital, Teacher Supply, Teaching Council Section, Department of Education.
Michelle Kelly, Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education.
Moninne Griffith, CEO, Belong To.
Niamh Molloy, Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education.
Dr Noel Purdy, Director Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement (CREU) Stranmillis University College, Chair of Committee
Dr Philip Dodd, Consultant Psychiatrist/Clinical Professor, Clinical Advisor of National Office for Suicide Prevention
Rebecca Galligan, Post-Primary Senior Inspector, Inspectorate, Department of Education.
Ronan Kielt, Teacher Education Section, Department of Education.
Sharon Eustace, Regional Director, National Educational Psychological Service, Department of Education.
Susan Moss, Public Policy and Government Relations Manager, TikTok
Tanya Ward, CEO, Children's Rights Alliance
Yvonne Keating, Deputy Chief Inspector, Inspectorate, Department of Education.

Apologies:

Áine Lynch, CEO, National Parents Council Primary.
Prof. James O'Higgins Norman, Director, UNESCO Chair on Tackling Bullying and Cyberbullying, Director, DCU Anti-Bullying Centre.
Majella O'Dea, Teacher Education Section, Department of Education.
Maria Joyce, Co-ordinator, National Traveller Women's Forum.
Sarah Benson, CEO, Women's Aid.
Seónaid Ó'Murchadha, Board member, Independent Living Movement Ireland.
Zak Moradi, Anti-racism Activist

Purpose of the meeting:

The fifth meeting of the Steering Committee to review the Action plan on Bullying

1. Welcome, overview of agenda, minutes of meeting of 26th April

Dr Purdy welcomed the committee and gave a brief overview of the agenda for the meeting. As members received the minutes of the previous meeting this morning, Dr Purdy requested any amendments to the minutes in writing following the meeting. Judith Lyons provided a brief update on the work of the Working Group. The Working Group met remotely on 29th April and had inputs from the Department of Education Inspectorate on the implementation of Anti-Bullying Procedures in schools, and by Dr Noel Purdy, Director, Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement (CREU), Stranmillis University College on the approaches for preventing and tackling bullying in Northern Ireland, including legislation, how bullying is recorded and oversight mechanisms. The working group briefly discussed the theme of 'looking at data' in breakout rooms, how schools are recording bullying data, and what more needs to be done in this area.

Dr Noel Purdy reminded members of the steering committee of the opportunity to submit accompanying papers providing more detailed information on their five minute presentations given in earlier meetings. Consultations will be opening soon so there will be additional opportunities to engage formally if members wish to do so.

2. Presentation by Emer O'Neill, Anti-Racism Activist, Teacher, Presenter

Emer has been working with a colleague on anti-racism school policy for over a year and a half, as they saw a gap where there was no policy in this area. Emer has been a practising teacher for more than 13 years and has a Masters in Educational Leadership and Administration. Emer spoke about her belief that all schools should have an anti-racism policy, and is excited about the opportunity to contribute to the Anti-Bullying Action Plan, particularly regarding the section on racist bullying. Emer spoke about her family and her own experience of racism growing up in Ireland. She is a mum of two children who are both mixed race, but look completely different from each other. Emer advised that her son has experienced racist bullying, and that education is needed to protect children from racist bullying. This can only be facilitated through classrooms. Reform is needed in education and in policies.

Emer gave her views on the current anti-bullying action plan and procedures, which mention racist bullying. She feels that racist bullying needs to be referenced in every sentence where bullying is mentioned, and needs to be on par with homophobic bullying. Bullying and racist bullying shouldn't be used interchangeably. She stressed the importance of having definitions and statistics regarding racist bullying, separately from other forms of bullying. Statistics will help to inform the changes that need to be made so that we are aware of the extent and type of bullying that takes place, and where it is happening. Racist bullying is defined as when someone is belittled, mocked, intimidated, vilified or shamed because of their physical appearance, ethnic background, religious culture or practices, or the way they talk or dress. The way it is currently defined in the document makes it sound like the person who is from an ethnic minority background is more susceptible to bullying because of their

ethnicity, but that is not the true definition of what racist bullying is. Emer reiterated that racist bullying should be recorded separately and not fall under the broader umbrella of bullying. She stressed the importance of gathering statistics regarding where, when, why and how racist bullying is taking place, and how it is dealt with. Emer receives messages from parents every day because their children are dealing with this every day.

The document asks what are schools doing to tackle bullying? This needs to be asked in terms of racist bullying also. Overall policy framework for anti-bullying, and a curriculum relevant to preventing and tackling bullying. If you change this question to what are schools doing to tackle racist bullying, then the answer is that there is no policy framework, no standards and no examples or resources in Ireland, which is why Emer and her colleague Thomas created the anti-racism policy. They had to look abroad to US, Australia and New Zealand to find resources to create the policy as there was nothing in Ireland. Currently there are four schools in Ireland that have ratified their policy. In order for schools to be able to develop anti-racism policies, we need to give them guidelines. Emer is happy for schools to use or adapt their policy as a framework.

With regard to curriculum to tackle racist bullying in schools, Emer noted that another government group is currently working on an anti-racism action plan, and that curricular changes need to be made with regard to slavery in History, and Traveller history in order for our curriculum to be diverse.

Key messages:

- Consistent recording of bullying behaviour is so important.
- We need education and training for teachers in anti-racism.
- We also need unconscious bias training.

“Black and Irish” (an organization that highlights and celebrates the identity of black and mixed-race Irish people) conducted a survey and responses indicated that:

- Irish teachers did believe it was up to them to deal with racist bullying in schools but don’t feel they have the training.
- 98% of children from ethnic minority background have suffered from racist incidents in school.

Dr Purdy thanked Emer O’Neill for her input and opened up the floor for questions

3. Question and Answer Session

Judith Lyons thanked Emer for her offer that the content of her anti-racism policy could be used by the Department when updating the anti-bullying procedures.

Emer responded that a copy has been sent to the Minister.

Jane McGarrigle and Moninne Griffith echoed Judith’s response and look forward to seeing the policy.

Dr Purdy commented that he is surprised that Ireland doesn’t have statistics or a policy on racist bullying.

Mai Fanning (NPC-PP) has received communication from parents that incidents of racist bullying aren't reported to schools, so families are trying to deal with it outside of the school. Parents need to be encouraged and have confidence to report these issues to the school. NPC-PP finds that policies don't make something happen. Having communication and confidence is most important. Mai commented on her own family, which is multicultural and stated that she finds it difficult that parents don't have that level of confidence to report racist bullying and that there isn't the understanding by schools. Mai noted that it was emotional to hear that racist bullying is happening in our schools.

Emer agreed with Mai, and responded that even though she is an anti-racism activist and approached the principal in her school to ask what is being done about racist bullying, the response from the principal was not satisfactory. Emer suggested that training for anti-racism, anti-bias training for teachers etc. should be considered, but the Principal hadn't thought of that.

Mai gave an analogy about recycling: when recycling was first introduced, it didn't take off until children were learning about it in school. Going to parents to solve bullying doesn't work. Needs to be targeted at young people who don't have pre-conceived ideas.

Aileen Hickie agreed with what Emer said. Parentline get a substantial proportion of bullying queries that are related to racist bullying. Parents are not confident that schools will deal with it effectively.

Emer thanked the committee for the support.

Dr Purdy thanked Emer for her input.

4. Presentation by John Kennedy, Her Majesty's Inspector, Assistant Regional Director, London, Ofsted UK

John comes from a teaching background initially, so he has a good understanding of the Irish education system. He was involved in organising the Ofsted's sexual abuse review, the report on which was published in June. He was also responsible for training the inspectors that took part in the survey.

Some key points from John Kennedy's presentation:

- The survey highlighted some significant concerns about harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour in English schools.
- As part of the training, inspectors needed to have a very clear understanding of what was meant by harmful sexual behaviour: *'Sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others, or abusive towards another child, young person or adult.'*
- Continuum of sexual behaviour can move from normal behaviour, to inappropriate, to problematic, to abusive, to violent. It is helpful to consider what this looks like in sexual behaviour as opposed to other types of bullying behaviour.
- In terms of our Action plan it is important to identify children and young people early on who need support because their behaviour is inappropriate. The earlier it is identified, the less likely it is to escalate to the violent end of the continuum. Development needs of children need to be taken into consideration as this does affect their behaviours.

Some details of the findings from the survey:

- The inspectors spoke with c.1000 children and young people and visited 33 schools
- Imbalance between the impacts on girls vs boys – 92% of girls said that sexist name-calling happens to them a lot. 88% of girls said they were sent explicit videos of things they didn't want to see. Many of these incidents included pressure to share nude images or produce sexual imagery without consent. This was not challenged by schools.
- Spoke to boys and girls separately and they had different perceptions of what was acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
- Spoke to LGBT+ students about their experience of inappropriate sexual comments made to them consistently.
- Children and young people said that inappropriate sexual behaviour was commonplace and felt they couldn't do anything about it because it was normalised, or they would get blamed or ostracised, or would get in trouble with their parents. They were unsure of how it would be dealt with if they did report it.
- Professionals in the schools visited underestimated the scale of the problem. Staff and leaders were relying on pupils reporting. If it wasn't reported, it wasn't considered an issue by leaders.
- Not just a issue for schools. What was happening in schools was happening in other areas too.
- School curriculum in this area wasn't pitched at the right level – it was a case of too little, too late. There was insufficient teaching about consent and online safety. Teachers lacked confidence in delivering this aspect of the curriculum.
- Inspectors have been looking since September at the kind of incidents that are being recorded, what analysis is being done, how the data is being used, and to ensure that both the victim and perpetrator are being supported.
- Good practice identified included an implemented curriculum, spotting trends and intervening early, finding ways of listening to students' voices.
- Inspectors now speak separately to girls and boys and this is quite telling, due to the different experiences of genders within the same school.
- Where there was very effective work with parents, external agencies, police and social care, it made a difference.
- During interviews with parents of primary school children, parents felt they weren't empowered enough to help their children at home because the links with schools weren't strong. They felt unequipped to deal with their child's use of media and accessing inappropriate content.

Recommendations for the Action Plan:

- This is not just a secondary school issue. It needs to go back as far as primary and even Early Years education to teach children from a very early stage about respect – age-appropriate education.
- Important not to leave out the older age group in secondary school
- There is a need for more emphasis on sexual harassment and inappropriate sexual behaviour in the context of bullying.

Dr Purdy thanked Mr. Kennedy for his input and noted the overlaps with a previous input by Cliona Sadlier from the Rape Crisis Network.

5. Presentation by Ciarán Shanley, Senior Policy Analyst, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

Key points from Ciaran's presentation:

- The Online safety and Media Regulation Bill is currently going through Oireachtas. Overlap with cyberbullying.
- The bill does four things: establishes a new regulator, dissolves an older regulator, implements a revised audio-visual media services directive, and creates a regulatory framework for online safety.
- Two pillars in the regulatory framework: scope of content, and scope of services.
- In terms of cyber-bullying category of harmful online content, there is a continuum with regard to online insult, going from ordinary insult to stalking or grossly offensive messages, which are subject to criminal penalty. The cyberbullying category is supplementary to the harassment act.
- The wording of the category is online content that bullies or humiliates another person. This is subject to a legal test, which is where there is a risk of life, or significant harm to a person's physical or mental health.
- There are binding online safety codes. The purpose of these is to minimise the availability of categories online harmful content.
- The commission has education, cooperation and awareness raising functions. They cooperate with education bodies.
- The commission has regulatory powers such as conducting investigations and imposition of financial sanctions. It can issue notices to end contraventions which have associated criminal liabilities, content limitation notices, etc.
- The bill is currently at committee stage. Over 230 amendments have been tabled, so this will take some time. It is hoped to be at report stage by June, and the process will have to be repeated in the Dáil. The report of the online safety expert group on an Individual Complaints Mechanism is due soon. This is considering whether individuals can complain to the regulator about individual pieces of harmful online content.

6. Question and Answer Session

Moninne Griffith, BelongTo, commented on John Kennedy's presentation: Sexual harassment and behaviour is mostly experienced by girls and young women, but it is the same route as homophobia and transphobia. Research shows that this kind of bullying behaviour is used to police gender norms. Boys and girls who did not conform with whatever the gender norms were in their schools were targeted more for example boys who were seen as 'effeminate' or girls who were seen as 'tomboys' because of their clothes, hair, behaviour, interests. Agrees that it is something we need to be mindful of. Moninne also commented on Ciaran's presentation regarding the importance of having an individual complaints mechanism, otherwise it's difficult for large corporations to regulate themselves. Moninne referenced an agency in Germany called HateAid working in this area. Germany has an individual complaints mechanism. It makes it possible for students and parents to complain to an impartial agency that could investigate it. Experience of working with online platforms is that it takes a long time and is difficult and intimidating for members to make complaints. Moninne would like to hear more about how regulation on education for online safety will be dealt with.

Ciaran responded that the report will be available shortly. An individual complaints mechanism is being considered by the expert group at the moment.

Jane McGarrigle (WebWise) commented to John Kennedy about the Irish experience. Irish schools contacted Webwise about these issues. She agrees that it is a problem in Ireland, we need to look at it from an earlier age, and it is something that is under reported. Would like to see some research in Ireland similar to Ofsted's as Webwise see it as a growing issue.

John Kennedy: Welsh Inspectorate have also published a report in secondary schools in December. Findings were identical to what was found by Ofsted.

Noel Purdy asked John about the curriculum and RSE. Can you outline what is happening with regard to updating curriculum content in an English context?

John Kennedy responded that there is now a statutory requirement to deliver RSE in primary and post-primary schools in England. The key issue is not so much the content of the curriculum, but the quality of the teaching (linked to CPD), and teacher confidence and time for delivery. RSE is a difficult subject to teach and teachers need support to deliver it.

7. Tea Break

8. Presentation by Susan Moss, Public Policy and Government Relations Manager, TikTok

Dr Purdy welcomed Susan Moss.

Susan Moss presented on TikTok and what they do in terms of combatting bullying, challenges around context-based bullying, and processes that they have in place for teenagers and parents.

Key points from the presentation:

- TikTok is an entertainment platform (15 second videos).
- Use technology and human interface to moderate videos and comments.

- Safety advisory council in Europe made up of experts in minor safety and mental health – their advice on new products feeds into TikTok’s internal decision making.
- [Article](#) in Wall Street Journal – found that TikTok has the most comprehensive safety settings.
- Action Plan for Bullying 2013 states: *Online communication between young people is often hidden from adults and free from supervision.* This does not need to be the case in 2022.
- Emphasis should be on socialisation tools that parents can access. Parents need to take into account the developmental needs of their children, as TikTok does with its policies and processes. Policies and processes will only work if parents engage meaningfully with them.
- TikTok has introduced a system called family pairing (youth safety features). Parents can control how long teens can spend on TikTok, and what type of content teens can search for.
- Important to provide teens with appropriate privacy settings and comments. Users can create their own safety experience.
- TikTok believes it is important for parents to set the parameters. Default privacy setting is set to ‘private’ for all teenagers under 16. Settings include parameters on messages, comments, reporting, blocking and restricted mode.
- Reporting content on TikTok: issues can be reported directly – important with regard to context-based bullying.
- Sophisticated detection model. Latest data report showed that 94% of violated content was removed before anyone reported it. 87% of content removed before anyone watched the video.
- If parents/adults are not satisfied with reporting, it can be escalated to community partners.
- Features in TikTok to promote kindness – encourage users to stop and think before posting videos or comments – high success rate (60%).
- Committed to partnership with parents and teens. Focus group last year regarding online safety. Came up with some tips for online safety: Teens want parents to help them to understand the rules, they want parents, guardians and peers to be available to discuss, they want parents not to panic when things go wrong, they ask to be trusted and to have their privacy respected.
- TikTok has taken part in a number of campaigns including Safer Internet Day, in partnership with Webwise.
- Irish teenagers listen to their peers and to celebrities. Irish teens took more steps than other countries in protecting themselves online when presented with the correct information.

Recommendations for the 2022 Action Plan:

- TikTok is supportive of any in-school campaigns, and will fund what needs to be funded but need access to schools.
- With regard to educational experiences, teens listen to their peers. Peer to peer education is needed. We don’t need more legislation in addition to the Media Regulation Bill.
- Need to establish an evidence-based intervention strategy (suggests a pilot scheme to educate parents on tools available).

- We need to address every link in chain: mobile phone companies, media companies, parents, children.

9. Presentation by Dr Philip Dodd, Consultant Psychiatrist/Clinical Professor, Clinical Advisor of National Office for Suicide Prevention and Dr Eamon Raji, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, CAMHS CHO2 (Galway and Roscommon)

Key points from Dr Philp Dodd:

- Focusing on negative impact of bullying and mental health outcomes.
- Suicide prevention and mental health supports available.
- Negative outcomes from bullying persist into adulthood.
- Two mental health strategies:
- *Connecting for Life* programme – Ireland’s National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015-2024
 - 2019 National Self-Harm Registry identified that young women aged 15-19 had highest rates of self-harm. Trend is rising. (Figures are based on hospital presentations so doesn’t give the full picture)
 - Rise in boys is less significant but is still rising.
 - Suicide rates in Ireland are dropping or staying the same.
 - *Connecting for Life* programme is based on international best practice – whole-system, multi-factorial agency approach
 - Suicide is complex – there isn’t just one factor that leads someone to suicide. Best practice suggests a multi-action approach.
 - Strategy is divided into 7 main goals, associated with 69 actions, and involving a number of government agencies.
 - Goal 3 relates to young people. They are a priority group for mental health and its negative outcomes.
 - The anti-bullying work being carried out by the steering committee is listed under action 3.3.4 in *Connecting for Life* as part of the cross-sectoral monitoring group with colleagues from the Dept. of Health, Dept. of Education reporting to the group on anti-bullying policies and strategies within schools and the education system – seen as a pivotal part of self-harm and suicide reduction.
 - Monitoring of social and print media is another key element of the strategy - descriptions of self-harm and suicide in media can often respond to inappropriate or sensationalist reporting. Research shows that the cause and effect relating to bullying and self-harm is not a direct line.
- Sharing the Vision – National Mental Health Policy
 - Aiming to optimise mental health services for young people (innovations to increase access to services)
 - Envisages development of mental health services for the whole population – not just focused on specialist mental health services (based on pyramid Fig 1.3 in slides)
 - Implementation plan 2022-2024 – roadmap for the next three years
- Action Plan 2013. Does reference the association between poor mental health outcomes and bullying.
- Bullying in Ireland: My World Survey – 2% of respondents said they were experiencing bullying on a daily basis. Population sample of 17,000 young people. Showed that self-harm is 6 times higher in those that are bullied, and 3 times higher in bullies. Confounded by the

presence of depressive illness, anxiety disorders and parental conflict. Not a clear cause and effect between bullying and self-harm. Vast majority of young people who are bullied do not necessarily self-harm.

- National Office for Suicide Prevention published a [study](#) on the impact of cyber-bullying.
- [UK study](#) on the associated cost of bullying in February 2022.

Dr Eamon Raji gave a presentation on the impact of bullying on children accessing the CAMHS service from the perspective of Child Psychiatry

Key points:

- CAMHS provides Mental Health Service for Irish people under the age of 18 with moderate to severe mental disorders.
- CAMHS is an evolving model – following the Mental Health Act.
- CAMHS has roughly 70 outpatient teams, 4 public hospitals and 2 private hospitals.
- CAMHS treats moderate to severe anxiety, depression, ADHD and eating disorders, and suicidal behaviour ideation accompanied by another mental disorder.
- Most conditions dealt with in the community.
- Treatment in psychiatry focuses on Bio-Psycho-Social model – e.g. medication, re-feeding, psychological interventions such as CBT, and social interventions (family support, psycho-education), school.
- Social interventions can be far more powerful than Prozac!
- Two common themes in child psychiatry – parental separation and bullying in school.
- The work of the steering committee has the potential to be far more powerful than the work of medication and hospital type interventions.
- Dr Raji outlined some typical scenarios of patients that present to his service: Scenario 1 - 14 year old girls referred to CAMHS with school refusal, depression, anxiety and a history of bullying/family issues etc. Such patients tend not to respond to medication or CBT. Questions whether there is a need to provide CBT to help the child to develop a thicker skin, or whether there is a need to change the environment (not going back to school). Scenario 2 - 16 year old girls referred to in-patient setting for self-harm, suicidal behaviour, overdose.

10. Presentation by Tanya Ward, CEO, Children's Rights Alliance. Joined by Julie Ahern, legal policy and services director, Children's Rights Alliance.

Key points:

- Bullying is the most fundamental issues impacting on children and young people in school today.
- Affects all children but particularly affects children coming from minorities.
- School climate survey published by BelongTo showed that 9/10 young people did not feel safe in their school environment. 14% had been exposed to cyberbullying. ¾ had been exposed to verbal harassment.
- Study from Cybersafe kids – ¼ of 12 year olds had experienced bullying in the online world.
- Ombudsman for Children has reported that about 10% of complaints have involved bullying cases. In the most severe of these cases the bullying had resulted in welfare and protection issues which hadn't been referred to TUSLA.
- Huge impact on emotional wellbeing of young people – anxiety and self-harm.

- Huge levels of school non-attendance.
- Some children in alternative education settings have left school because of bullying that wasn't addressed – can have a long-term impact on them reaching their full potential in employment.

Julie Ahern presenting on children's rights perspective.

- All children have the right to be protected from abuse and neglect (free from bullying including cyber-bullying).
- Committee recommends that education measures need to be put in place including provision of accurate age appropriate information on cyberbullying.
- High rates of mental issues related to bullying.
- Mental health services needed for all young people, especially those impacted by bullying.
- Recent research with children and young people where they were co-researchers – study of rights, barriers to the realisation of rights, and what they know about rights. Key barrier identified as violence against children, particularly bullying. Recommended special protection to be put in place for the most vulnerable – this included adequate spaces and policies for participation, and school accountability for bullying

Views on action plan:

- Welcomes the Anti-bullying website - very useful resource

Gaps:

- Availability of supports for children experiencing bullying (don't appear in the 2013 plan).
- Some support in appendix 4, but not being consistently provided.
- Should clarify how children can access the right the right mental health supports when they need them.
- Anti-bullying procedures do note that supports for children experiencing bullying should be provided and these could include counselling and activities that would help resilience.
- Research with principals' shows that high levels of uncertainty for school leaders regarding accessing support - 40% of principals found that students could access counselling when they experience bullying.
- Responsibility falls to teachers who are rarely adequately skilled to deal with the issues.
- Need adequate in-school model of mental-health supports – providing support when needed.
- Lack of data – don't know the extent of bullying in schools – rates, types etc.
- Comprehensive monitoring system needed to understand the prevalence of bullying and help to tackle it more effectively.
- School leaders need to be supported to prevent and tackle bullying – DoE should provide CPD, support and professional advice.
- Research shows supports for leaders is essential to effect change.
- More focus on online and cyber bullying - Bully is now in the pocket - Oireachtas education committee dealt with this well in their recommendations for mandatory training for all staff.

Tanya Ward:

- OSMR bill – Application to Minister Martin – Educating children about their behaviour to other children

- Also looking for the regulation of providers working in this area to ensure quality provision
- Need to provide alternative education spaces for children who leave school due to bullying – ensuring that bullying doesn't have lifelong consequences.
- Report looking at why children leave school and what needs to be put in place to provide an alternative – there is an opportunity with this review of the action plan and procedures to get this piece of work going.

11. Question and Answer Session

Judith Lyons asked Susan Moss to expand on her comment about addressing every link in chain and the role of mobile phone manufacturers.

Response from Susan Moss: This is something that is not addressed enough globally. Ultimately, it begins with mobile phone manufacturers but ends at social media platforms. Phone manufacturers can put parental controls in place on phones. Some do this. They could carry out media campaigns to explain mechanisms that they have in place to parents to prevent inappropriate apps being downloaded.

Moninne Griffith, BelongTo, acknowledged the great work done by TikTok. Research done by GLAAD in US – all online platforms are unsafe for LGBT people, but Tiktok is safer than others. Moninne encouraged Susan Moss to continue moving forward with content moderation. Lies, anger and hate spread further and faster than facts.

Moninne thanked Dr Raji and Dr Philip Dodd for their honesty regarding the move away from medication, and commended the move towards a psycho social approach/model.

Moninne echoed the point that Dr Dodd made regarding investment. A lot in the 2013 action plan was right, but it is now about resourcing the implementation and the actions. She echoed the importance of school leaders. Moninne referenced a conference recently attended in the U.S. run by ILGA World, where she heard from colleagues working in GLSEN who have been working in this area for over 20 years and advocate for a whole-school approach. When she asked GLSEN about the top 3 things to make schools safe – staff training is the biggest thing. Give teachers and managers time off to do policy work and training.

Dr Philip Dodd responded that the investment piece is really important. We need to get economists working with us. We need to look at best practice in prevention which will be costly but actually result in significant savings both from a quality of life perspective, but also a reduction in expenses for utilisation of services.

Niamh Molloy agreed with Susan Moss about links in chain. Another link is mobile phone service providers – the ability to block callers when experiencing harassment. The phone companies have a mechanism for blocking unwanted calls, but the service provider isn't able to block the person from receiving voicemail messages.

12. Breakout rooms:

Group 1 Maria: Manufacturer to end user – important to curriculum regarding rights and implementation. Professional development. Funding and access to CPD. ITE – need to improve focus. Racist bullying - no specific guidance. Whole school whole community approach. Parental control – more difficult as teens get older.

Group 2: Bridget. Long term impact of bullying was striking. Return in investment piece. Not clear cause and effect. Difficult for parents to tackle controls. School and community charter could help here. Anti-racism policy could be useful. Note that racism is still an issue. Disproportionate effect of bullying on girls. Need for better quality data and drilling into stats are available.

Group 3: Ronan – requirement for collection of sexual harassment data. Helpful engagement with TikTok but need to spread to other social media companies, Strategic approach to bullying/wellbeing etc. More strategic approach now available. Need to speak to anti-racism group. Minister for Education needs to be a strong voice at cabinet about funding for these supports.

13. Summary and close

Dr Purdy thanked the presenters and commented on how powerful and helpful they were, and thanked the committee for attending.

Next meeting on 24th May (face-to-face) in Dublin. Further details will be sent to committee members in advance of the meeting.