

Note of Meeting of the NACOS Research Subgroup, 1 November 2018

Present: Professor Brian O'Neill (DIT)
Ana Niculescu (Hotline.ie)
Ryan Meade (Google)
John Church (ISPCC)
Alex Cooney (Cybersafe Ireland)
Triona Quill (PO – DCCAIE)
Ciarán Shanley (AO – DCCAIE)
Dualta Ó Broin (APO - DCCAIE)

Apologies: Professor James O'Higgins Norman (DCU)

The research Subgroup of the National Advisory Council for Online Safety was established at the first meeting of the Council on the 4 October 2018.

The establishment of this Subgroup by the Council was in recognition of the Council's role in reviewing national and international research into online safety and broadening public and Government awareness of key findings. In that context, the following issues were discussed:

Chairperson:

- It was agreed by the members of the Subgroup that Brian O'Neill would serve as the chairperson for the Subgroup.

Council discussion on research role

- TQ & DÓB provided an overview of the discussion that took place at the first Council meeting on 4 October on the role of the Council and the Subgroup in relation to research into online safety issues, in particular that:
 - There is a lack of Irish specific research into online safety issues which makes it difficult to contextualise and direct policy responses,
 - The Secretariat is seeking funding of 80-100k from Government to support a research project in 2019 that would be commissioned by the Council and that the Subgroup could propose a potential research question.

- One approach noted at the Council meeting would be to commission a project which took stock and reviewed existing research.

Existing & future research

- AN noted that online safety is a wide ranging issues and that there are specific gaps in relation to both research into preventative projects in relation to the perpetrators of child sexual abuse, for example the Stop It Now project in the UK.
- RM expressed the view that any initial research project by the Council would need to help to establish an evidence base on which the Council could make recommendations to the Government.
- JC agreed with this approach, citing an extensive research project into children and online safety that the ISPCC had conducted with the support of Vodafone and is in the process of finalising, and noted that the ISPCC's research could usefully inform the research of the Council.
- TQ noted the views of JO'HN, conveyed prior to the meeting, that it should be possible to commission a piece of primary research that would constitute a first step in establishing an evidence base in Ireland on online safety, drawing on internationally tested survey instruments.
- Both AC and AN agreed that there was no need to reinvent the wheel when it comes to research but that it is important to have research based evidence that is relevant to the Irish context.
- BON stressed that it was important to distinguish between evidence and research and that there is a lack of up to date and high quality evidence, especially regarding the issues young people face in their digital lives. He stated that he supports conducting a piece of research that could provide baseline evidence in the Irish context and that would be designed to be ongoing.
- BON & JC noted that there are a number of existing templates, including ones developed for the EU Better Internet for Kids project (2012), which could be adapted for the Irish context.
- TQ noted that the Subgroup appeared to be moving away from a stocktaking approach to supporting a piece of primary research and asked what the potential timeframe would be.
 - BON stated that it would depend on the methodology but that he could estimate that it would take between 6 to 9 months.

- RM suggested that an event could be held when the research is completed to publicise its results and that the Council could further formulate and think about its recommendations to Government in that context.
 - The members of the Subgroup agreed that this would be a useful approach.
- DÓB raised the possibility of the Council or the Subgroup taking on a monitoring role in relation to new research, which would enable it to better disseminate key pieces of research.
 - The members of the Subgroup agreed that this could be considered in the future.

Actions:

The following actions were agreed by the Subgroup:

- BON agreed to speak to JO'HN to see if they could scope out a potential research question for the Council and to provide a short document to the Secretariat for circulation.
- The remaining members of the Subgroup agreed to provide their observations on this potential research question when it is circulated.
- BON will give a short update on the first meeting of the subgroup at the next meeting of the Council, likely to take place in late November.

Ciarán Shanley
Policy Officer
NACOS Secretariat
6/11/18