

Press Release - 12% of teenagers publicly display their mobile phone number on social networking websites

"The Anchor WATCH_YOUR_SPACE Survey" is the first survey in Ireland to look at how young people are using social networking websites such as Bebo, My Space and YouTube. Widespread use of these sites has radically changed how young Irish people are sharing personal information online. There is cause for concern that one in eight teenagers surveyed said that they displayed their mobile phone number on these social networking sites.

Jerome Morrissey, Director of the NCTE, calls on owners of social networking websites to stop asking children for their mobile phone numbers in online registration forms. "The WATCH_YOUR_SPACE campaign demonstrates our commitment to raising awareness amongst young people of how to use these sites positively, creatively and safely. However, we are fighting the tide as websites continue to ask young children to enter their contact details, including mobile phone numbers, on registration forms. The time has come for owners of websites targeting children to accept their responsibilities and take action to protect their users."

Luison Lassala from the Anchor Youth Centre said, "Social websites provide a platform for discussion and shaping of minds beyond the influence of parents and educators. They affect the way young people engage emotionally with each other. The implications for parents are enormous: they need to engage with children about what they are writing, reading, seeing and contributing online. They need to teach them how to use their freedom well: to choose what is beneficial and suitable and to avoid the inappropriate and harmful."

About the Survey

A short survey on young people's use of social networking websites was drawn up by the leaders of Anchor Youth Centre following consultation with the group members and with Internet safety experts in the NCTE. Members of the Anchor Youth Centre surveyed 400 peers from 20 counties across Ireland.

Key Findings:

- 69% of young people surveyed were accessing social networking websites more than 3 times a week, over a third were doing this on a daily basis.
- 15% of those surveyed said that they had more than one profile on their favourite social networking websites.
- The young people surveyed identified the ability to post comments on friends' profiles as their preferred activity, followed by sharing/watching videos, and then sharing/viewing photographs.
- Their least liked features were the whiteboards, bands, and polls.
- 91% of young people are accessing social networking sites primarily from their home
- 71% of the respondents said that their profile was public
- 12% admit to displaying their mobile phone number on their profile, 8% display their home address, 49% display their date of birth, and 79% display their full name.
- Young people are primarily using the communications capabilities of these sites to stay in touch with friends that they see often.
- One in eight says that their main reason for using these sites is to make new friends.

- Three-quarters of social networking site users have 'added' other website users who they have only met online as 'friends'.

Download report from – <http://www.webwise.ie/GenPDF.aspx?id=1744>

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WATCH_YOUR_SPACE

WATCH_YOUR_SPACE is a new campaign to raise awareness and promote safe, responsible practice by young people when using online interactive services such as Bebo, MySpace and YouTube. The key messages of the campaign are: be creative, be yourself, but be in control.

The campaign has a strong peer-to-peer perspective and centres on an interactive online service, www.watchyourspace.ie developed by the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE). This site offers practical tips and advice and supports teenagers who use the web. A key feature is the advice given from teenagers to teenagers on how to cope with the fall-out from abuses and misuse of social networking and picture -sharing websites.

Anchor Youth Centre

Anchor Youth Centre is an educational initiative for young people from Artane and neighbouring suburbs. It undertook to carry out a survey on young people's usage of social websites as part of an activity on local social research. The aims of the Anchor are eminently educational, rather than just to provide a safe environment for the entertainment of local young people. With that in mind, the Anchor runs activities with high educational content such as metalwork, music appreciation, website design, communication and leadership skills, social community involvement, Christian guidance, etc.