

# The National Youth Assembly on Youth Online Health

## Summary Report 2025



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



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#### Space

Children and young people must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their views.

#### Voice

Children and young people must be facilitated to express their views.

#### Audience

The views must be listened to.

#### Influence

The views must be acted upon, as appropriate.

### Appendix A

**Report prepared for:**

Online Health Taskforce & The Department of Health

**Report Writers:**

Dr Alexis Carey, Sophie Kathryn, and Siofra McCrum.

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## 1. Key Themes from the Assembly

The National Youth Assembly on Youth Online Health: 'Creating Safe and Healthy Digital Spaces for Ireland's Young People', held on 9th July 2025, in Miesian Plaza, Dublin was jointly convened by the Department of Health and the Department of Children, Disability, and Equality (DCDE). Six key themes were identified to help shape the public health response to the harms caused to children and young people by certain types of online activity. These were: (1) Regulation; (2) Age Restrictions; (3) Artificial Intelligence; (4) Body Image; (5) Healthy Online Spaces; and (6) Language that works.



# National Youth Assembly on Youth Online Health **2025**

## Creating Safe and Healthy Digital Spaces for Ireland's Young People

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Youth Assembly on Youth Online Health took place on the 9th of July 2025. 51 youth delegates aged 12-24 years from across Ireland attended, representing youth organisations, Comhairle na nÓg (Youth Councils) and other interested organisations. The delegates attended a preparation session in advance of the Assembly where they heard from guest experts on online health and from members of the Online Health Taskforce, and then took part in a day of discussions. They have produced twelve key recommendations for the Online Health Taskforce, the Department of Health and The Government to consider. These are outlined below.

#### Age Restrictions

There needs to be **age verification** in place, with **official** ID/documents required.

There should be **bans** and **consequences** for sharing intimate images.

#### Artificial Intelligence

There should be a **ban** on the distribution and creation of **deepfake content** online.

Increase the **education** in schools about **Artificial Intelligence**, especially on how to use it sustainably and not become overly reliant on it.

#### Regulation

Real people should be **monitoring** platforms for violent, inappropriate and sexualised content accessible by **under 18s** and not Artificial Intelligence. Such content should be restricted or potentially banned for under 18's.

Ensure tech companies use clear and concise **language** in terms and conditions and legal documents to ensure that people can clearly read and understand them.

#### Healthy Online Spaces

Many apps overlook **harmful content** and don't remove it. The responsibility for removing damaging content (e.g NSFW - Not Safe For Work) should rest with the administrators of the platforms/ apps.

Platforms should make it more difficult for a user to make another account after being banned.

#### Language that works

While recognising the **positive impact** of friendlier language on young peoples interactions online, it is an issue that shouldn't be of such high importance to the taskforce.

**Consultations** on the topic of language should be carried out with **young people**, especially those under 18 years of age.

#### Body Image

We recommend that the government should fund **educational programmes** based on body image, as it will help prevent things such as eating disorders and negative body image. We recommend a focus on primary students to try to prevent issues before they become prevalent in children's lives.

Increase **protections** for children by increasing **transparency** and **accountability** from influencers and corporations. This can be achieved through influencers disclosing photos that are edited, platforms hiding/ flagging content with edited or potentially harmful/ unhealthy aspects for younger users and banning body image corporations from using targeted ads for younger users e.g. shapewear, diets etc.

In 2024, the Minister for Health established the Online Health Taskforce to develop a public health response to the harms caused to children and young people by certain types of online activity. The Taskforce recognised that young people must have a voice in shaping the policies that affect them and commissioned a Youth Assembly to consider the online health and wellbeing of children and young people. The Assembly's recommendations will inform the work of the Online Health Taskforce as they develop their recommendations.



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Image 1: National Youth Assembly on Youth Online Health Key Themes

## 2. Summary

The National Youth Assembly on Youth Online Health: 'Creating Safe and Healthy Digital Spaces for Ireland's Young People', held on 9th July 2025, was jointly convened by the Department of Health and the Department of Children, Disability, and Equality (DCDE). This Assembly marked a key step in informing the work of the Online Health Taskforce, established by the Minister for Health in September 2024 to develop a public health response to the harms caused to children and young people by certain types of online activity.

The Assembly provided a national platform for young people to directly shape the policy conversation on digital wellbeing and online safety. The event was co-designed with a Youth Advisory Group (YAG) to ensure that the process and outcomes were authentically youth-led and rights-based.

### 2.1 Background and Purpose

The Online Health Taskforce, chaired by children's rights advocate Jillian van Turnhout, includes experts from healthcare, education, digital safety, youth work, and law. It was created in response to growing evidence linking some online activity with serious health and wellbeing impacts, including anxiety, sleep deprivation, disordered eating, self-harm, and suicidal ideation. The Taskforce's Terms of Reference commit to reviewing existing evidence, identifying harms across social, mental, physical, sexual, and societal domains, and making national recommendations to mitigate these harms.

This Assembly served as a key mechanism for the Taskforce to hear directly from young people affected by these issues, helping to ensure that their final report reflects lived experience and youth priorities.

#### 2.1.1 Members of the task force

The Task Force is chaired by Jillian van Turnhout, a Chartered Director accredited in corporate governance by INSEAD. A former independent Senator, she played a key role in influencing public health legislation and championing the rights of children and young people. Her previous leadership roles include Chief Executive of the Children's Rights Alliance, President of the National Youth Council of Ireland, Board Chair of Early Childhood Ireland, and Co-founder of the European Youth Forum.



Online Health Taskforce in attendance at the Assembly

Other members of the Task Force include:

- Noeline Blackwell, human rights lawyer and Online Safety Co-ordinator at the Children's Rights Alliance.
- Dr Abigail Collins, Consultant in Public Health Medicine and National Clinical Lead for Child Health Public Health within the HSE.
- Alex Cooney, Chief Executive Officer and Co-founder of CyberSafeKids (formerly CyberSafe Ireland), promoting online safety for children.
- Eoghan Cleary, Assistant Principal and SPHE and Wellbeing Coordinator at Temple Carrig Secondary School, Greystones.
- Professor Philip Dodd, Mental Health Policy and Clinical Specialist at the Department of Health, supporting the implementation of *Sharing the Vision* and *Connecting for Life*.
- Brianna Faughnan, delegate of the National Youth Assembly of Ireland and former Chair of Leitrim Comhairle na nÓg. She has worked as a consultant providing youth perspectives to various organisations.
- Professor Debbie Ging, Professor of Digital Media and Gender at Dublin City University and Director of the DCU Institute for Research on Genders and Sexualities.
- Rachel Harper, school principal, educational leader, and founder of *It Takes A Village*, a community-wide wellbeing initiative in Greystones and Delgany.
- Professor Mary Horgan, Interim Chief Medical Officer and Professor of Infectious Diseases at University College Dublin and Mater Misericordiae University Hospital.
- Niamh Hodnett, Online Safety Commissioner.
- Megan Johnston, representative of Coimisiún na Meán.

- Donnacha Lenehan, youth advocate and former UNICEF representative in the National Youth Assembly. He is dedicated to promoting youth well-being.
- Professor Pete Lunn, behavioural economist and founder and head of the Behavioural Research Unit at the Economic and Social Research Institute.
- Dr Brian Mac Namee, University College Dublin Site Director at the Insight Science Foundation Ireland Research Centre for Data Analytics and Co-founder of the Applied Intelligence Research Centre.
- Minister Jennifer Carroll MacNeill, Minister for Health.

## 2.2 Preparation and Participant Involvement

### 2.2.1 The Youth Advisory Group

The Youth Advisory Group (YAG) played a key role in shaping the structure, themes, and activities of the Assembly. The group was made up of 13 Delegates, selected to reflect a diverse range of regions, backgrounds, and lived experiences (see Record of the Online Health Youth Assembly 2025 proceedings; Appendix C, for more details). At the time of writing, the YAG had met seven times, with further meetings planned to review the outcomes of the Assembly.

Working in partnership with the National Participation Office, DCDE, the Chairperson of the Taskforce, and the Department of Health, the YAG contributed to the design of the Assembly in several important ways. These included testing methodologies, co-developing accessible and inclusive materials, creating fictional personas for use in Assembly activities, and taking on facilitation, hosting, and social media responsibilities during both the preparatory sessions and on the day itself.

The contributions of the Youth Advisory Group were central to the success of the Assembly.

### 2.2.2 Preparation session

On 25th June 2025, a virtual meeting was held via Zoom, with a total of 65 delegates in attendance. The event included 14 adult participants, 35 sitting delegates, and 16 guest delegates. Delegates represented both rural (27) and urban (24) areas, and came from 21 different counties. Twenty five organisations were represented and 18 Comhairle na nÓg. For more details refer to Appendix A..

This virtual meeting was designed to inform and engage delegates in preparation for the upcoming Assembly. It featured interactive elements such as icebreaker breakout rooms,

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<sup>1</sup> Comhairle na nÓg are child and youth councils, which give young people all over Ireland the chance to have their voices heard on the issues affecting their lives, both today and in the future.

keynote addresses, and a panel discussion. Staff from the National Participation Office, and members of the YAG facilitated the flow of the session, introduced speakers, and supported engagement throughout. Keynote speakers included Amanda McLoughlin (DCDE), Jillian Van Turnhout (Taskforce Chairperson), Stephanie Comey (Coimisiún na Meán), Brianna Faughnan (Former National Youth Assembly of Ireland<sup>2</sup>) Delegate and Taskforce Youth Member), and Olwyn Beresford (Education Programme Analyst, Cybersafe Kids). The session concluded with a Question and Answer session, addressing practical considerations for the Assembly and closing reflections from the YAG.

### 2.2.3 The National Youth Assembly on Online Health

The National Youth Assembly on Online Health took place on 9th July 2025 at Miesian Plaza. A total of 51 youth delegates attended, including 36 sitting delegates and 15 guest delegates, with representation from both rural (26) and urban (25) areas. This topic was really important to all the delegates, with one delegate explaining during a Vox pop with delegates on the day.

*“On this issue we need to hear young people’s perspective mostly. We hear adults talking all the time on how harmful social media is, and it’s not always like that. Of course there are spaces that aren’t great for especially younger teens are around 12 and 14 but is a great community for people who want to find those who have stuff in common with them”.*

Delegates represented 21 counties across Ireland and were affiliated with 24 different youth organisations, including Spunout, Jigsaw, Foróige, Scouting Ireland, TENI, and UNICEF. In addition, 16 Comhairle na nÓg were represented at the event. For more details refer to Appendix A.



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<sup>2</sup> The National Youth Assembly of Ireland is a consultative forum for young people between the ages of 12 – 24 years. It is one of a number of youth participative structures in Ireland to ensure the voice of children and young people are heard by government and decision-makers



Image 2: Quotes from Young People

## 2.3 Assembly Structure

The day's agenda combined interactive workshops, structured dialogue, and the development of themes and recommendations. Several key officials attended the event. From the hosting department, the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE), Minister Norma Foley, Minister for Children, Disability and Equality, was present, alongside Bairbre Meaney, Principal Officer, and Amanda McLoughlin, Assistant Principal Officer.

The Department of Health, as the commissioning department, was represented by Minister Jennifer Carroll MacNeill, Minister for Health, together with Brian Callaghan, Assistant Principal Officer, Peter Holohan, HEO and James Monagle, EO.

### 2.3.1. Who Am I?

In this activity, delegates explored digital life through the lens of fictional youth personas. Fifteen personas were created by the YAG prior to the Assembly and then three personas were created by delegates during the Assembly. See Image 3 below for an example..

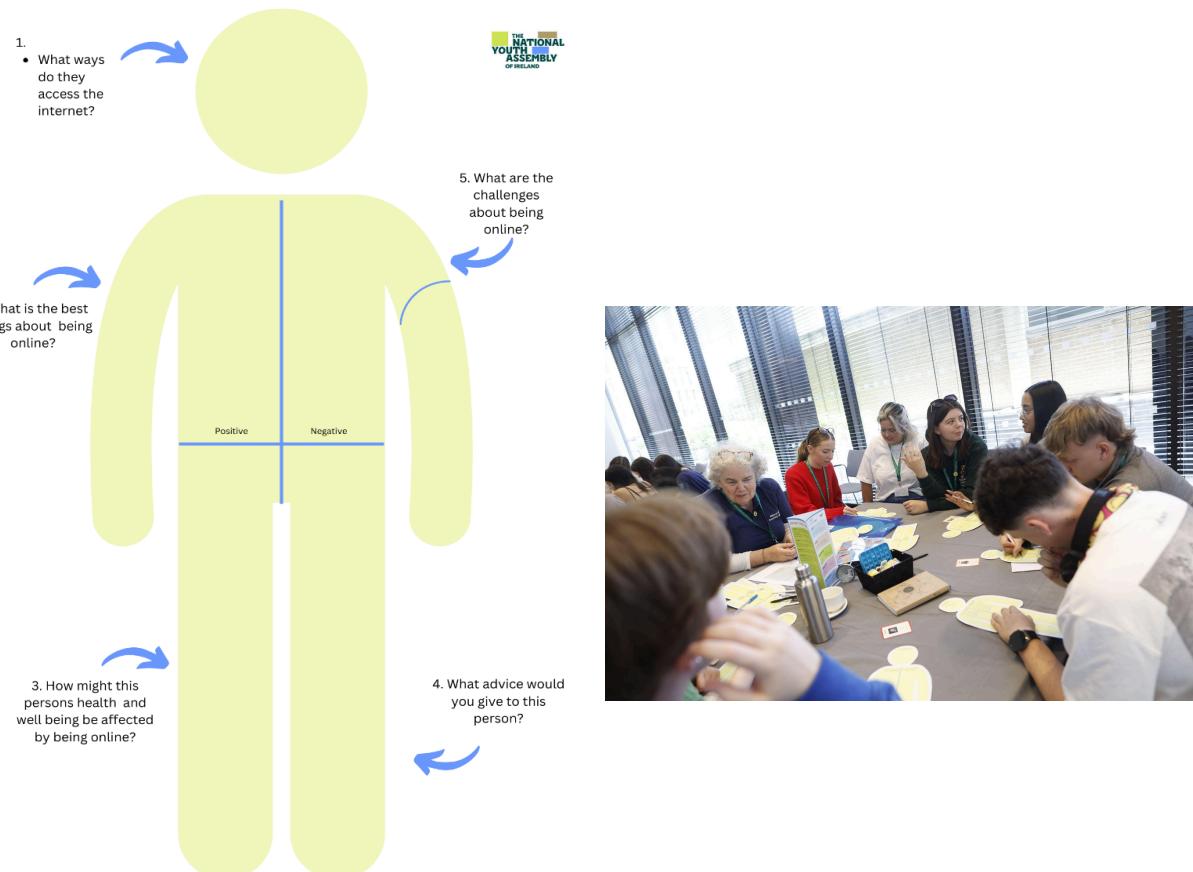


Image 3: Image of a created persona

This activity promoted empathy and broadened perspectives on how online experiences vary across different age groups, backgrounds, and circumstances. For each persona, delegates reflected on their internet access, the positives and negatives of their digital experiences, the potential impact on their health and wellbeing, and the advice they might offer.

### 2.3.2. Delegates' Den

Delegates participated in a workshop called 'Delegates' Den'. This session was facilitated by youth taskforce members Brianna Faughnan and Donnacha Lenehan and was designed to simulate real-world policy decision-making. Delegates were invited to act as members of the Online Health Taskforce and respond to a series of hypothetical proposals related to online safety and digital wellbeing.

The purpose of the activity was to encourage critical thinking, stimulate debate, and provide delegates with the opportunity to evaluate potential online health interventions from a policy perspective. Votes were recorded anonymously, and discussion captured both support and concern around each idea. This also allowed the Taskforce to gain insight into how young people assess the trade-offs, feasibility, and impact of various regulatory ideas.

Brianna and Donnacha presented three main proposals to each group:

- A ban on social media for users under 16
- Stronger regulation of advertising and influencer content
- Restrictions on phone or smartphone sales to those under 13



Given that Group 3 had additional time for discussion, they also spoke about:

- A ban on the use of generative AI on school WiFi and devices

Delegates engaged with each proposal through a show-of-hands vote followed by open-floor discussion. They were also invited to submit further anonymous comments, suggestions, or objections via a ballot box at the end of the session. This multi-format approach allowed delegates to voice both immediate reactions and more reflective contributions.

### 2.3.3. One Big Question

A facilitated workshop session was conducted with delegates to explore the central question:

***“What should the Taskforce focus on to positively impact young people’s online health and wellbeing?”***

The session involved a structured, two-step process. Initially, facilitators introduced pre-selected themes:

- 1) language that engages young people and
- 2) characteristics of a healthy online environment.

They invited delegates to propose additional focus areas through roundtable discussions. Delegates then individually recorded their ideas on colour-coded post-it notes, one idea per note. These were collectively displayed and categorised in real time by facilitators and delegates. The thematic grouping process was collaborative, allowing delegates to reposition notes under relevant categories. The themes with the highest number of post-its were prioritised for further discussion at the ‘Thematic Carousel’ activity, with potential subcategories created to capture nuanced issues. Taskforce members were available throughout the activity to clarify scope and feasibility. Responses were captured on post-it notes, which were categorised into priority themes by facilitators and delegates together. See Image 4 below.



Image 4: Image of One Big Question Activity

#### 2.3.4. Thematic Carousel

Within this activity, delegates rotated between six tables representing the highest-priority themes. At each table, they discussed:

- *Why is this issue important to young people?*
- *What changes are needed to improve young people's online health?*

For an example of a tablemat refer to Image 5 below. Each group developed two key recommendations per theme. These were then refined and voted on by the wider group. The

top recommendations were submitted directly to the Taskforce and form part of its broader consultation evidence base.

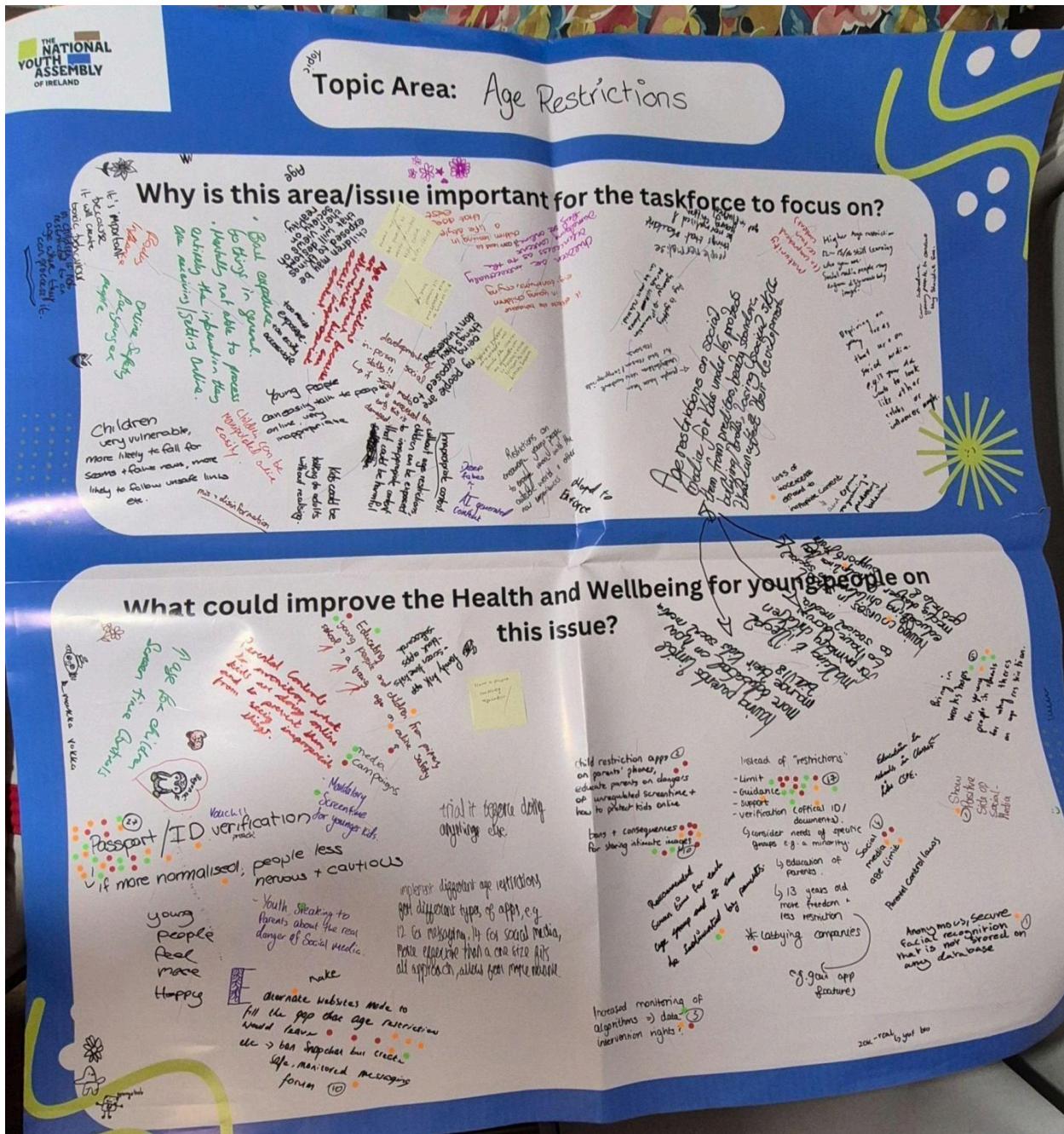


Image 5: Table mat for Age restrictions Theme

## 2.4 Data Collection and Reporting

Trained facilitators and note-takers documented each session. All outputs, including written materials, post-it notes, persona analyses, and carousel recommendations, were reviewed by the report writers and carousel data were transcribed and analysed for common themes based on thematic analysis by Braun & Clarke (2006)<sup>3</sup>.

The report was reviewed by the YAG and representatives from the Department of Health, the Department of Children, Disability and Equality and the national Participation Office before submission to the Online Health Taskforce, who will provide a formal response indicating how the Assembly's recommendations have influenced their final report to the Minister for Health, due in October 2025.

## 3. Discussions

### 3.1. Who Am I?

Delegates explored digital life through the lens of fictional youth personas. Fifteen personas were created by the YAG and three more were created by Delegates during the Assembly. Table One below summarises the fictional personas developed for the "Who Am I?" workshop. These profiles were used by delegates to consider how young people with different backgrounds, interests, and circumstances engage with the online world. For each persona, delegates reflected on their internet access, the positives and negatives of their digital experiences, the potential impact on their health and wellbeing, and the advice they might offer. This exercise helped build empathy and highlighted the wide-ranging realities young people face in online environments (See Table 1 below).

The data from delegates' personas were transcribed and analysed for common themes based on thematic analysis by Braun & Clarke (2006). The themes were then summarised under each of the following headings; "What ways do they access the internet?", "What is the best things about being online? Positive", "What are the challenges being online? Negative", "How might this person's health and wellbeing be affected by being online?" and "What advice would you give to this person?"

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<sup>3</sup> Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3 (2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

Table 1: Summary of fictional youth personas used in the “Who Am I?” workshop to explore diverse online experiences, challenges, and wellbeing impacts and the answers by the delegates.

Name & character description	What ways do they access the internet?	What are the best things about being online? Positive	What are the challenges being online? Negative	How might this person's health and well being be affected by being online?	What advice would you give to this person?
<b>Abbie</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 14 years old</li><li>• Hasn't many friends at school</li><li>• Spends most of her time on her phone</li></ul>	- Phone - Laptop - iPad	-Making friends -Entertainment -Learning	-Cyberbullying -Less social -Impacts body image	-Isolation -Impacts attention span -Social issues (e.g., anxiety, can't make friends)	-Socialise more -Limit screen time -Spend time outside and doing hobbies
<b>Alex</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 15 years old</li><li>• Junior Cert Year</li><li>• Loves gaming</li></ul>	- School (e.g., Studyclix) - Online gaming - Phone	-Gaming -Connecting with friends -Education	-Impacts attention span -Danger online, e.g., predators, online bullying -Isolation	-Pressure from others -Difficulty studying and achieving goals	-Take breaks from phone -Be careful who you speak to -Don't compare yourself to others
<b>Blessing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 16 years old</li><li>• Creates</li></ul>	- Phone - Computer	-Sharing her art -Education	-Risk of bullying and racism	-May get more confidence from	-Trust your art and don't compare

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>videos/digital art</li> <li>Has created a YouTube channel for her art</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Drawing tablet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Making connections, e.g., with other artists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Comparison and doubt</li> <li>-Others copying her work, e.g., AI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sharing art</li> <li>-May become self-conscious, e.g., from comparison to other artists, or from being bullied</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Don't listen to people who insult the work</li> <li>-Continue doing you, some day people will look back at you and admire you for following your dreams</li> </ul>
<b>Clare</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24 years old</li> <li>Likes to read</li> <li>Works and is a student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Phone</li> <li>- Laptop</li> <li>- Kindle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Connecting with others e.g., friends, family, classmates</li> <li>-Education and research</li> <li>-Entertainment (e.g., book recommendations )</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Cyberbullying</li> <li>-Using screen too much, distracts from school work</li> <li>-Seeing harmful content/misinformation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Impacts attention span</li> <li>-Mental health issues, e.g., anxiety, eating disorders</li> <li>-Addicted to screens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Take breaks from social media</li> <li>-Check sources of information</li> <li>-Balance screentime with other downtime/hobbies</li> </ul>
Create your own: <b>Elissa</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15 years old</li> <li>Uses a lot of TikTok &amp; Snapchat</li> <li>Is outgoing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Phone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Talk with friends</li> <li>-Stay updated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Judged by strangers</li> <li>-Not meeting people face to face</li> <li>-Losing yourself in social media drama</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Connect with people through mutual interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Meet up with people in person.</li> <li>-Take time away from phone.</li> </ul>
Create your own: <b>Cian</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- iPad</li> <li>- Laptop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Social media</li> <li>-Google</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Scammers</li> <li>-Hackers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-They don't go outside</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Go outside</li> <li>-Talk to other</li> </ul>

-15 years old -Likes pandas and fruit	- Phone	-Looking at fruit	-Trolls -Fake images of fruit	-Stay at home -Don't socialise -Eyesight	people
Create your own: <b>No name or description</b>	- Playstation - Devices - YouTube video played by teachers	-Bonding online with friends -Educational purposes	-Offensive language being said in anger by players -Pornography from oversexualisation of women & men in video games	-Affect their views on different genders -Not age appropriate -Body dysmorphia	-Have parents manage access -Stick to age limited games
<b>Laura</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 8 years old</li><li>• First Communion age</li><li>• Likes art &amp; basketball</li><li>• Wheelchair user</li></ul>	- TV - Parents' Phone	-Watching videos, e.g., Youtube videos, educational videos, art tutorials -Learning basketball skills -Watching basketball matches	-Hate for disabled people in videos -Inappropriate content -Naive and vulnerable	-May develop self esteem issues -May be exposed to harmful content -Eyesight and attention span affected	-Openly communicate worries with parents -Stay away from online platforms -Don't trust people or information so easily online
<b>Lauren</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 16 years old</li><li>• In transition year</li><li>• Likes horse riding and socialising</li></ul>	- Phone - Laptop	-Able to socialise with friends -Entertainment, e.g., watching funny videos, playing games -Learn new things, e.g., help with homework, enhance	-Access to misleading information -Dealing with comparisons between other people on social media, e.g., body image -Hate and bullying	-Spend less time socialising -Spend less time exercising -Get negative ideas, e.g., body dysmorphia, consumerism, anxiety	-Spend less time online and spend more time in-person with friends -Remember that social media is fake -Be yourself and don't let the haters get you down

		knowledge on her interests	for her interest in horses		
<b>Marco</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 15 years old</li><li>• Lives in the city</li><li>• Popular with friends</li></ul>	- Phone - Computer - Schoolwork	-Connecting with friends -Gaming improves communication and helps to relax -Learning, e.g., helps with school work	-Negative group chats with his friends -May get hate or be cyberbullied because he is popular -Harmful content e.g., body image, negative ideologies, stigma, grooming	-Low self-esteem, e.g., negative body image -May feel more connected and improve communication -May develop health issues, e.g., anxiety, poor sleep, eye strain, stress, poor mental health if bullied	-Set screen time limits -Spend time in person with friends -That even though you may be popular remember that it's okay to be yourself and don't change for other people
<b>Marcus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 11 years old</li><li>• 5th class</li><li>• Likes gaming</li></ul>	- iPad - Games consoles (e.g., Playstation, Xbox) - Parent's phone	-Learning new things, e.g., meeting new people from different cultures -Gaming - inclusive space -Social interaction	-Safety risks (e.g., Not aware of AI, exposed to harmful ideas, language, or images) -People being annoyed at him for losing games online -Online world being too addictive and not doing other activities	-May take a toll on his mental health as he is not used to being online -Exposure to inappropriate media -Being addicted to video games may affect his memory and attention span	-Be careful who you talk to -Be mindful and vigilant of your social interactions and posts -Only do it as a hobby, don't spend a lot of time online
<b>Marie</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 21 years old</li><li>• College student</li><li>• Hopes to become a</li></ul>	- Phone - Laptop	-Entertainment (e.g., watching medical shows like House MD, Gray's Anatomy) -Helps with	-Exposed to medical misinformation -Low self-esteem, e.g., career insecurity	-May not really be affected -May be distracting -May impact health, e.g., being anxious, affecting eyesight	-Stay offline -Use to relax but don't forget to prioritise -Don't forget to meet your friends in

doctor		college e.g., research, ChatGPT, using “studytok” (TikTok educational content)	-Distraction leads to her putting off studying		person not just online
<b>Mohammad</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 19 years old</li><li>• Lives very rurally</li><li>• Farms with family</li></ul>	- Phone - Computer	-Connection with others and wider world as living rurally can be isolating -Learning new skills	-Can be addicting, distracting Mohammed from his farming work & his connection with nature -Could be exposed to harmful content online, e.g., cyberbullying, harmful ideas, misinformation	-May experience pressure online if he compares his farm to others' -If he posts his farm he may receive hate online which will affect his passion and work -He may learn more from educational content	-Keep focused on his farm work & keep connected with nature. -To not get addicted to social media -Be safe online, e.g., only take information from trustworthy sources
<b>Molly</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 18 years old</li><li>• Lives city centre</li><li>• Likes dancing</li></ul>	- Phone - Laptop	-Meeting friends -Finding new interests -Learning more about dancing and meeting new people in dance community online	-May be exposed to bullying and hate comments when sharing dancing -Balancing school and being online -Navigating stress about the Leaving Cert.	-Could help them learn more about themselves -Could become more proud of dancing or could feel upset if being bullied	-Don't take anything too seriously -Don't let hate comments bring you down
<b>Patrick</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7 years old</li><li>• Loves lego and minecraft</li><li>• Can be shy</li></ul>	- Parent's phone - Gaming consoles, e.g., Xbox,	-Entertainment, e.g., watching videos, looking at cool new lego sets	-Not enough in-person interaction, affecting social development	-May affect self-confidence and self-image (e.g., cyberbullying, comparison)	-Keep comments off any post on social media and try not to compare yourself to others

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Playstation</li> <li>- Computer</li> <li>- Tablet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Develop creativity and skills through inspiration online</li> <li>-Gain a sense of community through playing on a public server</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Exposed to cyberbullying, e.g., when he posts his lego builds online</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Could have positive effects, e.g., having fun, developing confidence, and making new friends</li> <li>-May impact his focus and attention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Regulate time spent on public servers, don't share information or talk to strangers</li> <li>-Keep pursuing creative ideas</li> </ul>
<b>Sarah</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 12 years old</li> <li>● 6th class</li> <li>● Not allowed a phone until secondary school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- School</li> <li>- Tv</li> <li>- Laptop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Educational group projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Can't do homework</li> <li>-Can't ask internet for help</li> <li>-Can't talk to friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-It'll be good for their future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ask for a phone</li> </ul>

### 3.2. Delegates' Den

During the 'Delegates' Den' Activity, delegates responded to a series of hypothetical proposals related to online safety and digital wellbeing, as if they were members of the Online Health Taskforce. The following section summarises the responses across three delegate groups to each proposal presented in the 'Delegates' Den'. These findings highlight the diversity and nuance of young people's views and will inform the Online Health Taskforce's consideration of possible actions and recommendations.

Table 2: Delegate Responses to Hypothetical Online Safety Proposals (Delegates' Den Workshop)

Proposal	Group	Votes in Favour	Votes Against/ Undecided	Key Themes Raised in Discussion
<b>1. Ban on Social Media for Under 16s</b>	Group 1	9 / 15	6/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hard to enforce; Identification concerns</li><li>• May delay, not solve the issue</li><li>• Could be effective short term, but lacks long-term vision</li></ul>
	Group 2	8 / 16	8/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 16 may be too old; suggested bans for under 12s or under 13s instead</li><li>• Social media used for education and friendships</li></ul>

	Group 3	11 / 18	7/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ban could delay harm but not prevent it</li> <li>• Emphasis on education and earlier intervention</li> <li>• Concern about long-term impact of bans</li> </ul>
<b>2. Stronger Regulation of Online Advertising</b>	Group 1	15 / 15	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undisclosed ads mislead followers</li> <li>• Platforms must also be accountable</li> </ul>
	Group 2	16 / 16	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggested fines based on earnings or commission percentage</li> <li>• Consider content takedown instead of just fines</li> </ul>
	Group 3	16 / 18	2/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enforcement challenges, especially with influencers abroad</li> <li>• Suggested platform responsibility and audience age-based restrictions</li> </ul>
<b>3. Ban on Phone Sales for Under 13s</b>	Group 1	10 / 15	5/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for safety and communication acknowledged</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed views on banning all phones vs. just smartphones</li> </ul>
	Group 2	8 / 16	8/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong concerns about enforceability and practicality</li> <li>• Safety and accessibility were major considerations</li> </ul>
	Group 3	Not voted	—	—
<b>4. Ban on Generative AI in Schools (WiFi/Devices)</b>	Group 3	17 / 18	1/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed views on enforceability</li> <li>• Concerns about losing educational potential</li> <li>• Suggestions to teach responsible AI use, not ban it entirely</li> </ul>

The ‘Delegates’ Den’ session highlighted both common ground and contrasting perspectives among young people regarding online safety proposals. There was overwhelming support for stronger regulation of online advertising, with 100% of delegates in groups one and two, and 89% of group three (16 out of 18) voting in favour. Delegates emphasised the need for transparency in influencer content, platform accountability, and age-appropriate protections, including suggestions for fines linked to advertising revenue and responsibility placed on social media platforms.

In contrast, the proposal to ban social media for under-16s generated mixed responses. Group one showed 60% support (9 out of 15), Group two was evenly split at 50% (8 out of 16), and group three had 61% in favour (11 out of 18). Concerns focused on enforceability, the effectiveness of bans, and negative impacts on education and peer connection. Many delegates proposed alternative age thresholds, such as under-twelves or under-thirteen, and stressed the importance of digital education and early intervention.

The proposal to ban phone sales for under-13s also received divided feedback, with 67% of group one (10 out of 15) and 50% of group two (8 out of 16) voting in favour. Discussions raised issues of safety, practicality, and the distinction between smartphones and basic mobile phones. Group three did not vote on this proposal.

The ban on generative AI in schools was only considered by group three, where 94% (17 out of 18) supported it. However, even among supporters, there were strong concerns about educational limitations, technological overreach, and a loss of learning opportunities. Delegates recommended responsible integration of AI tools, digital literacy training, and guidelines over prohibitions.

Overall, delegates showed a clear preference for practical, rights-based approaches over outright bans. Across all proposals, themes of education, youth autonomy, platform accountability, and realistic enforcement emerged as priorities in shaping online safety policy.

Following the 'Delegates Den' workshop, young people were invited to submit further reflections on the hypothetical proposals and topics discussed through a ballot box. These comments provided an insight into any additional comments they did not have an opportunity to share within the workshop or if they did not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts verbally during the session. For more detail refer to Table three below.

Table 3: Additional comments through the ballot box

Proposal	Key Themes Raised in Ballot Responses
<b>Social media Ban for those under the age of 16.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasis on education and digital literacy in schools.</li> <li>Limitations of a complete ban.</li> <li>Exploration of alternative &amp; constructive solutions e.g. change the age limit to 14, online safety classes in schools, etc.</li> <li>Advocating for regulation over prohibition.</li> </ul>
<b>Further regulation on advertising and product promotion online.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement fines for non-compliance.</li> <li>Enforce regulation beyond fines e.g. restrict videos and demonetise content.</li> <li>Disclosure of body modifications by influencers.</li> </ul>
<b>A ban for purchasing a phone for those under the age of 13.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support for restrictions in early childhood.</li> <li>Acknowledgment of growing independence and need for phones to communicate with parents and friends.</li> <li>Need for non-digital alternatives for entertainment and engagement e.g. youth clubs and third-spaces.</li> <li>Advocacy for limited-function devices e.g. phones without social media and apps like YouTube Kids.</li> </ul>
<b>Banning generative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote responsible integration over outright bans.</li> </ul>

<b>AI services on school WiFi/devices.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns about academic integrity and critical thinking development.</li> <li>• Challenges in enforcement and home use.</li> <li>• AI as a supportive educational tool</li> </ul>
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These additional comments broadly reflected the views expressed during the workshop discussions and voting, reinforcing key concerns around feasibility, balance, and the need for education-led approaches to all of the hypothetical online safety proposals. The ballot responses emphasised balanced, education-led approaches to online safety over outright bans, highlighting the importance of regulation, responsible tech use, and alternatives for youth engagement. Delegates advocated for nuanced solutions that consider feasibility and children's growing independence. Their reflections added nuance to the group findings, highlighting their thoughtful consideration and offering further insight into their desire for practical and proportionate approaches to digital wellbeing.

### 3.3. One Big Question

Delegates identified several key themes for the Taskforce to prioritise. The two previously selected themes [by the taskforce] were: Healthy Online/Digital Spaces and Language That Works. In addition, new priority areas identified by the delegates emerged, including Regulation, Age Restrictions, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and concerns related to Body Image. These themes reflected the delegates' collective focus on both the structural and cultural factors influencing young people's online health and wellbeing. These themes were then discussed in depth in the Thematic Carousel.

### 3.4. Thematic Carousel and Recommendations

To deepen the discussion, Delegates explored the six priority themes that emerged during the “One Big Question” session. Each table focused on one theme and considered two guiding questions:

- ***Why is this area important for the Taskforce to focus on?*** and
- ***What could improve the health and wellbeing of young people on this issue?***

The themes examined were:

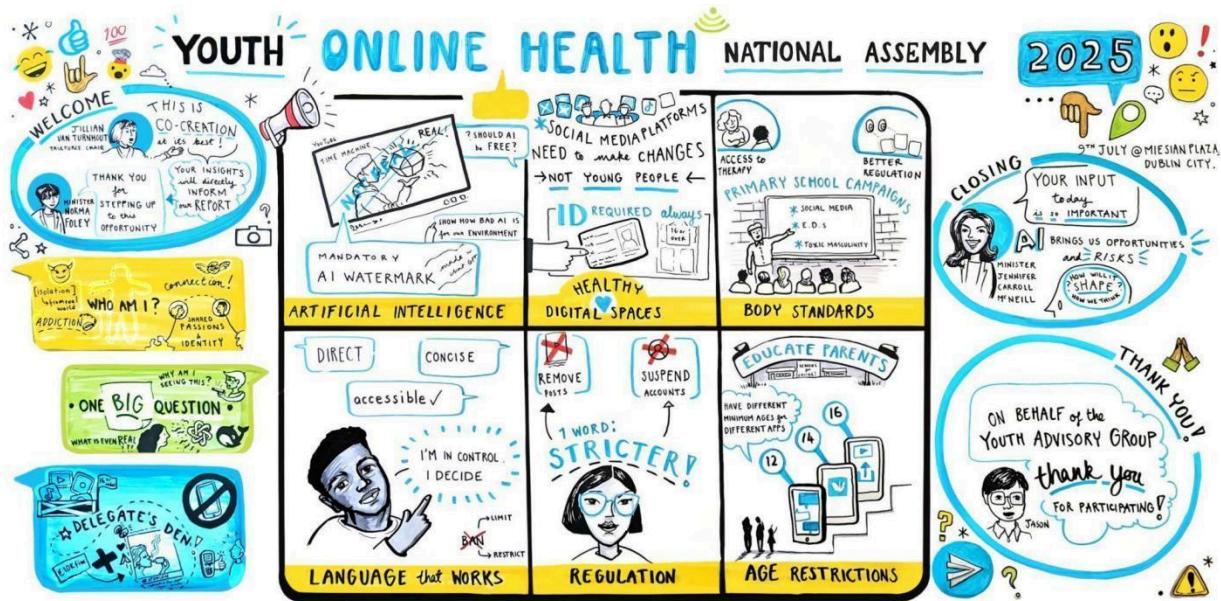


Image 6: Six identified themes from the Youth Online Health Assembly

- **Regulation**,
- **Age Restrictions**,
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**,
- **Body Image**
- **Healthy Online/Digital Spaces**, and
- **Language That Works**.

Finally, as part of the thematic carousel, each group used their placement mat and a checklist to guide their discussion and shape clear, actionable recommendations. Delegates worked collaboratively to refine their ideas, resulting in draft versions that were later finalised into concrete recommendations for the Taskforce to consider.

### 3.4.1 Regulation

#### **Guiding Question 1: Why is this area important for the Taskforce to focus on?**

During the thematic analysis of participants' responses to Guiding Question 1, three key themes emerged regarding the importance of focusing on regulation: (1) protecting young people from harmful content, (2) strengthening regulation and accountability, and (3) addressing youth vulnerability and parental awareness.

### 3.4.1.1. Protecting Young People from Harmful Content

Delegates repeatedly emphasised the prevalence of harmful and inappropriate content online, to which young people are increasingly exposed during critical stages of development. As one delegate noted, “*Young people are more exposed to violence or porn at a young age – not always obvious.*” They highlighted that such content is not confined to fringe platforms but can appear in mainstream spaces, including the comments sections of reputable websites. “*Inappropriate content can pop up or be posted in the comments section – sometimes even news outlets.*”

Delegates also stressed the growing need to regulate new forms of harmful content, including AI-generated media. “*AI deep fakes are becoming increasingly believable, it's important that they are regulated.*”

This theme reflects a broad concern that, without robust regulation, young users may continue to encounter distressing or damaging material, often unintentionally and without effective tools for filtering or reporting it. Delegates warned that such exposure can negatively impact mental health, body image, and overall development.

### 3.4.1.2 Strengthening Regulation and Accountability

Delegates expressed a strong perception that current regulations are inconsistent, poorly enforced, and inadequate in addressing the scale and complexity of online harassment. As one delegate observed, “*Reporting systems are not good enough.*” They emphasised that clearer laws and stricter access restrictions, particularly for younger users, could play a critical role in reducing harm “*Regulations on social media for laws/limits on children accessibility on it (under 16y).*”

They acknowledged the challenges governments face in regulating online spaces, particularly when tech companies are headquartered abroad. “*Sometimes the companies are not based in Ireland so it can be harder to [implement] censorship.*”

Delegates called for clearer standards, more robust enforcement mechanisms, and greater accountability from platforms. In addition to regulating harmful, sexually explicit, and violent content, they highlighted issues such as the amplification of negative comments. “*No regulation on negative comments being rated as top comments.*”

Crucially, delegates saw regulation not just as a reactive measure, but as a proactive tool to define norms and create safer digital environments. As one delegate stated, “*It's the first line of defense for all of the issues that face young people.*”

#### 3.4.1.3 The Need for Parental Supervision

A notable concern raised by delegates was the vulnerability of children and young people, particularly when they access digital platforms without adequate supervision or an understanding of potential risks. Delegates highlighted that many parents are ill-equipped to guide or monitor their children's online activity. As one delegate explained, "*Parents are very unaware of the impact and [are] giving [devices] to very young children.*"

Delegates viewed regulation not only as a protective measure but also as a way to set clear expectations for safe digital engagement. This theme reinforces the need for regulatory approaches that support not just young users, but also families and caregivers, ensuring they are better informed and empowered to navigate online environments responsibly.

#### **Guiding Question 2: What Could Improve the Health and Wellbeing of Young People on the Issue of Regulation?**

In response to the question of how regulation could better support the health and wellbeing of young people, five core themes emerged from the discussion. These reflect a balance of structural change, educational support, and recognition of young people's broader environments, both online and offline.

#### 3.4.1.4 Stronger Regulation and Enforcement for Safer Platforms

Delegates placed very strong emphasis on regulation and enforcement, describing it as the first line of defence against harmful online content and practices. This was one of the most detailed and engaged discussions of the day, with delegates repeatedly returning to the theme of regulation as essential for protecting health and wellbeing.

A central concern was the ineffectiveness of existing reporting systems. Delegates expressed frustration that harmful posts often remain online even after being reported. One participant summarised:

*"When posts get reported they rarely get taken down."*

Delegates stressed that regulation must include clear consequences when platforms fail to act, and that penalties must be meaningful. Monetary fines were seen as insufficient deterrents, with suspensions, removals, or geo-blocking proposed instead.

They also highlighted the need for stronger content controls, including:

- Censorship of violent, pornographic, or distressing material.

- Regulation of AI-generated materials and bot-promoted content, described as an *“increasingly believable and dangerous”* source of harmful content.
- Limits on harmful comments, ensuring they cannot be promoted to the top of threads.

At the same time, delegates recognised the limits of regulation, acknowledging that:

*“Only so much regulation can be done.”*

This underscored the importance of coupling regulation with other supports such as education and awareness.

Concerns were also raised about regulatory loopholes and avoidance. Delegates cited frustration with GDPR being *“almost cited as an excuse”* by companies to avoid meaningful action. To counteract this, they advocated for more statutory powers for regulators such as Coimisiún na Meán, as well as greater international cooperation, especially at the EU level, to ensure platforms outside of Ireland cannot evade responsibility.

Overall, delegates were clear: stronger, enforced regulation is crucial to protecting young people’s mental health and wellbeing, reducing exposure to harmful content, and ensuring that tech companies are held fully accountable for their platforms.

#### 3.4.1.5 Robust Age Verification and Age-Appropriate Design

A major concern was the lack of adequate safeguards to prevent underage access to inappropriate content. Delegates proposed stricter identity checks, such as passport or PPSN verification, and clear age thresholds for platform and content access. *“Basic regulation for any app that is dependent on the age of the user.”*

Support was also voiced for the development of children-only digital environments, including age-separated platforms or servers. One delegate suggested, *“Protections for children: separating out age groups.”*

Delegates also called for standardised screen time recommendations based on age and safer, age-appropriate digital design.

#### 3.4.1.6 Education, Awareness, and Digital Literacy for Youth and Families

Delegates recognised that regulation alone is not sufficient. They stressed the importance of education, both at home and in schools, for helping children, young people, and parents to navigate online risks. One suggested, *“Primary school courses for parents about social media regulations.”*

This included awareness campaigns on image-based harm, acceptable behaviour online, and digital boundaries. *“Individuals need to be continuously shown what’s acceptable and unacceptable to post.”*

There was strong support for collaboration with tech companies to co-create these initiatives: *“Work with tech companies to launch talks with young people & children & parents – awareness campaigns!”*

Parents were identified as needing tailored support, potentially through school-based programmes or nationwide initiatives to help them manage and understand digital risks.

#### **3.4.1.7 Protection from Exploitation: Ads, Influencers, and Platforms**

Delegates voiced concern about the commercial and social exploitation of young people online. They called for clearer labelling and tighter regulation of advertising practices: *“Advertising regulations: Clearer labelling of ads + restrictions on targeted ads.”*

They also advocated for restrictions on targeted marketing to minors and proposed consequences for parents or influencers who profit from their children online. *“Parents face consequences for profiting off their children online.”*

The normalisation of adult content, particularly through influencer and OnlyFans culture, was highlighted as problematic. *“OF [OnlyFans] models/sex work being normalised for younger audiences.”*

Delegates also asked for greater transparency in how platforms operate, including simplified and accessible terms of service: *“Simplified policies & terms of service – more simple language.”*

#### **3.4.1.8 Holistic Wellbeing: Offline Supports**

Finally, delegates acknowledged that digital regulation is only part of the solution. They called for investment in youth-friendly spaces and community-based alternatives to online engagement. *“More development & funding for child/youth friendly areas.”* One participant proposed a cultural shift: *“National awareness promoting the creative arts rather than digital media.”*

Delegates also raised concerns about youth safety in offline environments, including employment settings. *“Not allowing underage teenagers to work & use stricter youth safety laws.”*

### 3.4.1.8 Summary

Across both guiding questions, delegates emphasised the critical role of regulation in shaping a safer and more supportive digital environment for children and young people. Under **Guiding Question 1: Why is this area important for the Taskforce to focus on?**, three key themes emerged:

- **Protecting Young People from Harmful Content**
- **Strengthening Regulation and Accountability**
- **Addressing Youth Vulnerability and Parental Awareness**

Delegates highlighted how unclear, inconsistent, or poorly enforced regulation contributes to the persistence of harmful online content and limits the accountability of digital platforms. They stressed the inadequacy of current reporting mechanisms and the risks posed by early and unfiltered exposure to violence, sexually explicit content, and other online harms. The need to support parents and caregivers, many of whom they perceived as ill-equipped to guide children's and young people's digital lives, was also a prominent concern.

Under **Guiding Question 2 What could improve the health and wellbeing of young people on the issue of regulation?**, five core themes emerged:

- **Stronger Regulation and Enforcement for Safer Platforms**
- **Robust Age Verification and Age-Appropriate Design**
- **Education, Awareness, and Digital Literacy for Youth and Families**
- **Protection from Exploitation: Ads, Influencers, and Platforms**
- **Holistic Wellbeing: Offline Supports**

Delegates expressed a clear desire for stronger, more enforceable regulatory frameworks that reflect the complexity of today's digital landscape. They called for improved age verification, better design standards for child-friendly content, greater transparency in how platforms operate, and stronger consequences for those who violate content standards. They also recognised that regulation alone is not sufficient. Education, digital literacy, and public

awareness, particularly for parents and carers, must work hand-in-hand with legal and technical solutions.

Importantly, delegates recognised the limits of regulation and urged investment in offline supports such as youth-friendly spaces and creative alternatives to digital engagement. They stressed the need for collaborative, cross-sector approaches, including action at a European level, to ensure regulation is meaningful, consistent, and protective.

In sum, Delegates view regulation not only as a protective mechanism, but as a foundational issue underpinning the digital wellbeing of their generation. They are calling for adults, policymakers, companies, and institutions to act with urgency, clarity, and shared responsibility. The Taskforce is being asked to provide a comprehensive and coordinated response that places the safety, rights, and voices of young people at its core.

#### **3.4.1.8 Recommendations for the Theme Regulation:**

Finally, considering their recommendations to the taskforce under the theme of **Regulation**, delegates expressed concern about the normalisation of sexualised content, including the promotion of platforms like OnlyFans and the role of AI bots in amplifying violent or inappropriate material. They emphasised the need for content aimed at or accessible to under-18s to be more strictly monitored, preferably by real people rather than AI, to ensure harmful content is identified and restricted effectively.

Additionally, delegates highlighted the complexity and inaccessibility of current terms of service. They called for tech companies to present policies in clear, simple language that young users can easily understand.

Based on these discussions, two key recommendations were made: (1) that violent, inappropriate, or sexualised content for under-18s should be monitored by real people and restricted or banned, and (2) that tech companies ensure terms of service are written in concise, user-friendly language.



### 3.4.2 Age Restrictions

#### **Guiding Question 1: Why is this area/issue important for the taskforce to focus on?**

This section explores why delegates believe age restrictions on social media are a crucial focus for the taskforce. Analysis of their responses revealed seven key themes, highlighting concerns about children's developmental readiness, digital safety, and the limitations of current protections.

##### 3.4.2.1. Inappropriate Content and Online Risk

Delegates consistently expressed concern that children are exposed to online material beyond their emotional and cognitive maturity, often leading to confusion, misinformation, and unrealistic expectations. One delegate noted that children are "*mentally not able to process entirely the information they are receiving*," Several noted the psychological risks of young users engaging with material "*children may be exposed to things that will destroy their view on society or reality*", underscoring the emotional toll of content that is far beyond their capacity to understand or contextualise.

Alongside this, there was strong emphasis on the dangers of unsupervised online interactions, particularly grooming and predatory behaviour, with one delegate warning of the "*loss of innocence*" that can occur when young people are "*exposed to inappropriate content –and exposure to grooming and predatory behaviour*." Others raised the issue of children unknowingly interacting with adults online, noting that "*kids could be talking to adults without realising*." There was also concern that some adults actively exploit children's presence online, with one delegate commenting that "*people have been using children to view content for bad/inappropriate reasons*."

##### 3.4.2.2. Mental Health and Behavioural Impacts

Delegates linked early and unregulated access to social media with adverse effects on children's mental health and behaviour. The pressure to emulate influencers or live up to unrealistic lifestyles was said to cause emotional harm, with one comment highlighting how social media "*can lead to children believing in a lifestyle that doesn't exist*." The behavioural consequences were also evident, such as children experiencing increased emotional dysregulation. As one delegate noted: "*It affects the behaviour in young children, e.g., tantrums, crying.*"

##### 3.4.2.3. Undermining Social Development

Many delegates reflected on how digital engagement, when introduced too early, may inhibit the development of real-world social skills. They noted that "*development of in-person social skills*"

can be “damaged” by excessive reliance on online communication. This concern extended to older young people as well, with some pointing out that prolonged use without boundaries could lead to “*losing social skills that can affect their development.*”

#### 3.4.2.4. Inadequate Enforcement & Bypassable Restrictions

There was a general consensus that existing age restrictions lack the robustness needed to be effective. Delegates described them as “*hard to enforce*” and pointed out how easily children can create accounts by providing false information. As one delegate stated, “*It is so easy to trick websites and lie about your age,*” illustrating the urgent need for more secure and reliable age verification systems.

#### 3.4.2.5. Parental Influence & Gaps in Digital Literacy

The role of parents emerged as both a protective factor and a challenge. Some delegates observed that today’s “*first-generation parents with phones can be more relaxed,*” suggesting that many adults may not fully grasp the risks their children face online. Others called for greater parental awareness and involvement, noting the need for “*parents [to] be more educated on how to manage kids’ social media*” effectively.

#### 3.4.2.6 Rights & Regulation Debate

Finally, a small number of delegates drew attention to the complex balance between protecting children and upholding their digital rights. For example, one delegate reflected on how a “*13-year-old wants to look like other celebs or influencers,*” highlighting how children themselves may feel entitled to access digital spaces and participate in online culture. This raises important questions about how age restrictions can be applied in a way that safeguards wellbeing while respecting children’s rights under frameworks such as the UNCRC<sup>4</sup> (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).

### **Guiding Question 2: What could improve the health and wellbeing of young people on this issue?**

Delegates provided a wide range of recommendations aimed at enhancing the health and

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<sup>4</sup> The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty that outlines the rights of children and young people under the age of 18.

wellbeing of young people in relation to social media age restrictions. From their responses, four overarching themes emerged, each reflecting a distinct but interconnected area of focus:

#### **3.4.2.7 Education, Awareness, and Parental Involvement**

Delegates consistently highlighted the need to educate both young people and their parents about online safety, the risks associated with early social media use, and the purpose of age restrictions. Several emphasised the importance of starting this education early, suggesting it be embedded within school curricula, particularly in CSPE (Civic, Social and Political Education). One delegate proposed *“educating young people and children from primary school and a young age on online safety.”*

In addition to school-based learning, delegates advocated for increased public awareness campaigns and open dialogue between children and parents. As one noted, *“youth speaking to parents about the real danger of social media”* was seen as essential for fostering mutual understanding.

Parental involvement was also framed as a critical component of effective online safety. Delegates called for enhanced digital literacy for parents and greater access to practical tools such as *“family link app – screen time limits, block apps, safe search.”* Strengthening parental capacity to support young people online was seen as a necessary counterpart to formal education efforts.

#### **3.4.2.8 Regulation, Verification, and Platform Accountability**

Recognising the limitations of current enforcement mechanisms, delegates expressed a strong desire for more robust and nuanced regulatory frameworks. This included proposals for age verification systems using official ID or passport checks, with the intention of normalising such measures to reduce resistance. There was also interest in differentiated age thresholds, for example, *“12 for messaging, 14 for social media”*, to reflect varying risk levels across platforms.

Delegates suggested lobbying efforts to ensure platform accountability, improved oversight of algorithms, and consequences for companies that fail to protect young users. Some proposed the creation of safer alternative platforms that preserve social functionality while minimising harm, such as a supervised version of Snapchat.

#### **3.4.2.9 Thoughtful and Supportive Implementation**

Rather than relying solely on restrictions or blanket bans, delegates emphasised the value of supportive and phased implementation. This involved using language that empowers rather than alienates, replacing terms like *“restrictions”* with *“limit, guidance, support, verification.”* One delegate stressed that measures should *“foster understanding rather than simply impose bans.”*

Delegates supported age-appropriate recommendations that evolve as young people mature, and called for pilot programmes to trial initiatives before broader implementation. Consideration for specific groups, such as marginalised or minority communities, was also emphasised, ensuring that safety measures are equitable and sensitive to diverse needs.

#### [\*\*3.4.2.10 Technological Safeguards and Privacy Protection\*\*](#)

Delegates welcomed the role of innovative technology in supporting safer online experiences, provided it respects user privacy. Proposed solutions included “*anonymous and secure facial recognition systems that do not store biometric data*,” which could enable effective age verification without compromising individual rights.

There were also calls for stricter enforcement against harmful behaviours, including the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, and greater monitoring of disinformation and scams targeting vulnerable youth. Delegates viewed these safeguards as essential to building a digital environment that is both safe and trustworthy.

### 3.4.2.11 Summary: Age Restrictions

Across both guiding questions, delegates emphasised the critical role of age restrictions in shaping a safer and more supportive digital environment for children and young people. Under **Guiding Question 1: Why is this area important for the Taskforce to focus on?**, six key themes emerged:

- **Inappropriate Content and Online Risks**
- **Mental Health and Behavioural Impacts**
- **Undermining Social Development**
- **Inadequate Enforcement and Bypassable Restrictions**
- **Parental Influence and Gaps in Digital Literacy**
- **Rights and Regulation Debate**

Delegates' responses reveal a multifaceted picture of why age restrictions on social media demand urgent focus. Concerns centre on children and young people accessing inappropriate content and the very real risks posed by online predators, including grooming and exploitation. The potential for negative mental health outcomes and behavioural issues, driven by unrealistic body images and influencer culture, further highlight children's vulnerabilities. In addition, early and excessive social media use was seen as undermining offline social skills essential for healthy development. Compounding these risks, current age restrictions are often inadequate and easy to bypass, limiting their protective value. Parents play a crucial role in managing these risks, but gaps in digital literacy and varying levels of parental engagement present challenges. Finally, delegates acknowledged a tension between protecting young people and respecting their digital rights, underscoring the complexity of the issue.

Under **Guiding Question 2 – What could improve the Health and Wellbeing for young people on this issue?** Four themes emerged.

- **Education, Awareness and Parental Involvement**
- **Regulation, Verification, and Platform Accountability**
- **Thoughtful and Supportive Implementation**
- **Technological Safeguards and Privacy Protection**

To improve young people's health and wellbeing, delegates emphasised early and continuous education on online safety for both children, young people and parents. Strengthening parental controls and improving digital literacy were viewed as essential tools for empowering families to manage social media use effectively. Enhanced regulation, including more nuanced age verification and increased platform accountability, was recommended to better protect young users. Delegates also stressed the importance of thoughtful and flexible implementation strategies that prioritise guidance and support rather than strict prohibition, allowing for diverse needs and contexts. Finally, technological safeguards were suggested to improve safety while protecting privacy, such as secure facial recognition and better monitoring of harmful content and misinformation. Together, these themes offer a comprehensive framework for future policies aimed at balancing protection, empowerment, and rights in digital spaces.

#### **3.4.2.13 Recommendations for the Theme Age Restrictions:**

In drafting recommendations for the taskforce under the theme of **Age Restrictions**, delegates considered alternatives to “regulation”, including using terms such as “limit”, “guidance”, or “support”. They also emphasised the importance of considering the needs of minority groups, educating parents, and having stricter verification processes when it comes to age restrictions on online platforms.

Furthermore, the delegates emphasised the importance of child protection and safety. They specifically highlighted a need for bans and consequences for the sharing of intimate images, citing “Coco’s Law” as an example of this.

Based on these discussions, two key recommendations were made: (1) that there needs to be age verification in place, with official ID/ documents required and (2) that there should be bans and consequences for sharing intimate images.



### 3.4.3 Artificial Intelligence (AI)

#### **Guiding Question 1: Why is this area/issue important for the taskforce to focus on?**

This section explores why delegates identified Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a critical area for the taskforce to address. As AI continues to expand its presence across digital platforms, education, and the creative industries, delegates expressed a broad range of concerns about its impact on learning, wellbeing, and society. Four key themes emerged from their responses.

##### 3.4.3.1 Misinformation and Decline in Critical Thinking

A dominant concern was AI's role in spreading false or misleading information, particularly through everyday platforms such as search engines. One delegate noted, "*AI overview on Google gives wrong information – people take it as fact*," highlighting how AI-generated content can appear authoritative even when inaccurate.

Several responses linked this to a wider decline in independent thought. Delegates expressed concern that AI tools, when used uncritically in educational settings, may weaken young people's ability to think for themselves. As one delegate noted, "*AI discourages critical thinking – further negative consequences down the line*," while another added, "*People don't use their heads anymore*."

This erosion of critical thinking was seen not just as an educational issue, but as a broader threat to how young people engage with knowledge, form opinions, and participate in democratic life.

### 3.4.3.2 Unregulated Access and Lack of Oversight

A frequently raised issue was the ease of access to AI tools, especially by children, without meaningful regulation. Delegates described this as “*too normalised*” and pointed to the “*little to no restrictions on usage*.” This overexposure, they argued, poses risks, particularly when young users interact with platforms such as Snapchat AI or character-based bots. One delegate warned, “*Snapchat AI is dangerous for children.*”

Others raised broader concerns about the absence of international controls, noting that “*AI is incredibly easy to access*” and “*It’s difficult to regulate because most AI companies are international.*”

While delegates were not calling for AI to be banned outright, they emphasised the need for stronger governance frameworks, clearer access boundaries, and protective systems to safeguard young users.

### 3.4.3.3 Erosion of Creativity and Artistic Integrity

Delegates expressed strong concerns about AI’s impact on creativity, particularly in the arts and education. Many felt that AI undermines the value of original work and exploits human creativity. One delegate stated, “*AI art has to be labelled*,” while another said, “*it rips off artists.*”

These views were often grounded in a sense of injustice, especially in how AI systems are trained on creative content without consent. One delegate emphasised, “*Make it illegal to sell artwork learned from and copied from artists.*” Others highlighted AI’s role in enabling plagiarism in academic settings: ““*AI ruins creativity.*”

There was a clear call to preserve human originality and ensure fair treatment of artists and creatives in the age of AI.

### 3.4.3.4. Environmental and Ethical Consequences of AI Growth

Delegates also raised concerns about the environmental footprint of AI technologies. Several highlighted the high energy and water consumption associated with AI systems. One delegate urged, “*Show how bad it is for the environment!*”

This concern was often accompanied by ethical reflections about control, profit, and long-term harm. As one delegate noted, “*There’s a lack of will to tackle the issue due to the conveniences it offers,*” pointing to a broader tension between short-term benefits and systemic responsibility.

Delegates also raised the misuse of AI in areas such as deepfakes, scams targeting the elderly, and AI-generated explicit content. These ethical concerns reflect a pressing need for transparency, regulation, and accountability in the development and use of AI technologies.

### **Guiding Question 2: What could improve the health and wellbeing of young people on this issue?**

In response to this guiding question, delegates offered a range of ideas on how the risks associated with AI could be reduced and how young people's wellbeing could be supported in an increasingly AI-driven world. While delegates acknowledged that AI is not inherently harmful, they were clear in calling for greater accountability, stronger regulation, and meaningful education. Four key themes emerged from their responses.

#### **3.4.3.5 Education on Responsible Use of AI**

Many delegates highlighted the need to educate young people about AI, its capabilities, limitations, and appropriate use. Rather than banning AI tools entirely, they argued that schools should play a central role in teaching responsible and ethical engagement with these technologies. As one delegate noted, *"There should be more education in schools about AI."*

This included helping young people understand how to spot misinformation, reduce over-reliance, and recognise AI's limitations. *"Teach how to use AI,"* stated one delegate. Delegates proposed integrating these lessons into existing curricula, especially in secondary schools, so that critical digital literacy is treated as a life skill.

There was also a call to support students with diverse learning needs, using AI in tailored ways without replacing genuine learning.

#### **3.4.3.6 Regulation, Oversight and Platform Restrictions**

Delegates consistently called for tighter regulation of AI tools, particularly on platforms frequently used by young people. They felt that AI should not be freely accessible without limits or safeguards. One suggestion was to *"require the flagging of AI-generated content on social media apps,"* ensuring users are aware of what content is human-made and what is not.

There was also support for opt-in models of data use: *"Social media companies should need permission before using your content to train AI,"* one delegate argued. Others wanted clearer limits on where AI could appear: *"AI shouldn't be on school laptops,"* and *"AI should be banned from search engines—it's better how they used to work."*

Some responses suggested that schools and governments should work together to block harmful or inappropriate AI models. One delegate proposed: “*Ban certain AI models in Ireland as a whole*,” while another urged that “*taskforces make strict regulations for AI use in schools—only accessible for kids with educational problems*.”

#### 3.4.3.6 Ethical and Transparent AI Development

Another theme was the call for ethical standards in the development of AI systems. Delegates expressed concern that current AI models are trained on data, including creative works, without consent, and that this exploitation goes unchallenged. One delegate said: “*Make it illegal to take and sell artwork learned from artists without permission*.”

There were strong calls for transparency, especially in areas like AI-generated art and media. Suggestions included: “*AI art should have a watermark*,” and “*Ads shouldn’t be allowed to use AI art or AI-written scripts*.” These changes were seen as important for ensuring honesty, protecting creators, and discouraging deception.

Some delegates also spoke about removing emotional or human-like features from AI to avoid confusion or attachment. “*Stop attaching emotional values to AI*,” one delegate wrote, particularly in reference to mental health tools or chatbot-based systems.

#### 3.4.3.7 Sustainability and Environmental Awareness

The environmental impact of AI was a notable concern. Delegates called for greater awareness of the energy and water demands of AI systems. One stated, “*Show how bad it is for the environment!*” while another recommended, “*Use more eco-friendly search engines like Ecosia*.”

A few delegates proposed creative solutions to address this issue, such as “*fining companies for AI usage and using that money for aiding the environment*,” and encouraging the public to choose sustainable tech options. This theme reflected a broader desire to align AI use with climate justice and sustainable development.

### 3.4.3.7 Summary:

Under guiding question 1, *why is this area/issue important for the taskforce to focus on?* four themes emerged in relation to AI.

- **Misinformation and Decline in Critical Thinking**
- **Unregulated Access and Lack of Oversight**
- **Erosion of Creativity and Artistic Integrity**
- **Environmental and Ethical Consequences of AI Growth**

Delegates identified AI as a critical area of concern due to its widespread and growing influence in everyday life, especially within education, media, and creative industries. They expressed serious concerns about AI's role in spreading misinformation, weakening critical thinking, and diminishing students' ability to engage meaningfully with knowledge. The ease of access to AI tools, particularly for children, without adequate regulation was seen as a major risk, while the unchecked use of AI in art and education raised strong objections around plagiarism and loss of creativity. Delegates also pointed to AI's environmental toll and the lack of ethical oversight in its rapid development.

Under guiding question 2 *What could improve the health and wellbeing of young people on this issue?* four themes emerged.

- **Education on Responsible Use of AI**
- **Regulation, Oversight and Platform Restrictions**
- **Ethical and Transparent AI Development**
- **Sustainability and Environmental Awareness**

To support young people's wellbeing in an AI-driven world, delegates advocated for meaningful education on AI, including its limitations, risks, and ethical use. They called for stronger regulation of AI platforms, including age-appropriate access, labelling of AI-generated content, and restrictions in educational settings. Transparency in AI development, particularly around data use and creative rights, was seen as essential to protect users and uphold fairness. Finally,

delegates highlighted the environmental impact of AI technologies, urging the taskforce to promote sustainability through policy, awareness, and incentives for eco-conscious alternatives.

### **Recommendations:**

Delegates considered a number of issues when drafting recommendations for the taskforce under the theme of **AI**. These included a ban on creating and distributing deepfake content, which they defined as “a video of a person in which their face or body has been digitally altered so that they appear to be someone else, used maliciously”.

Secondly, the delegates considered the importance of education in schools around appropriate use of AI. Specifically, they emphasised the need for students to learn how to use AI in a sustainable way, so as not to become dependent on its use.

Based on these discussions, two key recommendations were made: (1) that there should be a ban on the distribution and creation of deepfake content online, and (2) to increase the education in schools about Artificial Intelligence, especially on how to use it sustainably and not become overly reliant on it.



### 3.4.4 Body Image

#### Guiding Question 1: Why is this area/issue important for the taskforce to focus on?

This section explores why delegates identified Body Image as a critical area for the taskforce to address. Delegates raised a wide range of concerns about unrealistic beauty standards, often amplified by social media, filters, influencers, and curated content, and the serious consequences these create for young people's wellbeing. Four key themes emerged from the analysis.

##### 3.4.4.1 Digital Distortion: Media, Misinformation and Influencer Culture

Delegates expressed serious concern about the ways in which digital media platforms and influencer culture distort body image perceptions and contribute to unrealistic standards. These digital forces were described as some of the most powerful and pervasive influences shaping young people's self-perception.

Social media was identified as a particularly potent driver of distortion. Delegates discussed how filters, editing tools, and AI-generated content make it increasingly difficult for young people to distinguish between authenticity and manipulation. As one delegate explained, "*AI women being created with impossible body builds*" are setting new, entirely unachievable standards of beauty. Another noted, "*Social media creates a false image of body standards with filters/editing which can negatively affect viewers who think these are natural.*"

Delegates also criticised influencers who present themselves as "natural" while relying on digital enhancements or promoting cosmetic procedures. This was seen to fuel toxic comparisons and negative self-image among impressionable audiences. One delegate remarked, "*Influencers claiming to be natural when they are not,*" while another shared, "*Young people feeling they need plastic surgery or fillers due to unrealistic standards.*"

In addition to misleading appearances, the monetisation of insecurity was a major concern. Delegates highlighted the role of influencers in promoting diet culture, body "fixes," and cosmetic products without transparency or accountability. As one delegate stated, "*Influencers with fake/edited accounts can result in young people getting insecure,*" while another noted, "*Celebrities/influencers promoting plastic surgery to a younger demographic... can lead the younger audience to feel insecure about themselves.*"

This deceptive content, particularly when left unchecked, was seen to thrive due to platform algorithms and limited content regulation. Delegates expressed concern that platforms not only host but actively amplify such content. As one explained, "*Lack of censorship in youth on negative body-image related content and diet-culture content affects development and creates built-in negative perspectives on one's body, even when young and growing.*"

The combined effect of algorithmic exposure and influencer deception was described as a powerful feedback loop: platforms promote idealised content, influencers benefit from it, and young people internalise these harmful ideals. Delegates agreed that this creates an

inescapable environment where unrealistic expectations are normalised, and self-worth becomes increasingly tied to unattainable body standards.

#### 3.4.4.2: Mental Health Risks

The mental health consequences of unrealistic body standards were raised as a critical concern. Delegates shared that constant exposure to idealised images erodes self-worth and can lead to serious psychological harm, including disordered eating and self-harm.

One delegate warned, *"It can lead to dangerous self-harming behaviour,"* while another noted the worrying *"glorification of eating disorders"* circulating online. These pressures were seen to significantly affect emotional wellbeing, particularly during formative years.

Delegates described how persistent comparison and negative body image foster chronic insecurity. As one observed, *"Can badly affect mental health, making people think negatively about their bodies — especially the mental health of young people."*

The effects were not considered short-term. Several delegates pointed to the long-term impact on identity development and self-esteem: *"The majority of young people are affected one way or another and it influences mental health through many years of a young person's life."*

This theme emphasises the need for early and sustained intervention to protect young people's mental wellbeing in an environment saturated with unattainable ideals.

#### 3.4.4.3 Societal and Gendered Pressures

Delegates recognised that body image issues are deeply influenced by rigid gender norms and societal expectations. These pressures manifest differently across gender identities and were noted as particularly intense for both young men and women.

For boys and young men, toxic masculinity and fitness culture were major concerns. Delegates pointed to content promoting excessive muscularity and steroid use. One explained, *"Social expectations — young boys are heavily influenced by a young age about toxic masculinity,"* while another noted the *"increased impact on young boys, particularly in relation to gym content and the substances you can take to build up muscle."*

Girls and young women face parallel but distinct pressures to conform to narrow and idealised beauty standards. These expectations were described as persistent, invasive, and increasingly embedded in social interactions.

There was also recognition of the challenges faced by trans and non-binary youth. As one delegate succinctly noted, *"Gendered norms — trans people."* These individuals may face compounding pressures related to identity, visibility, and acceptance.

Delegates additionally raised concerns about bullying, stigma, and exclusion stemming from non-conformity to appearance norms. The result is a social environment where deviation from expected standards is met with shame, ridicule, or efforts to alter one's appearance for social acceptance.

#### 3.4.4.4 Consumerism and Capitalism

Finally, delegates discussed how profit-driven consumer culture capitalises on body dissatisfaction. Many commercial actors, from influencers to brands, were seen to fuel insecurities by marketing products as solutions to imagined flaws.

One delegate pointed out, *"Consumerism — shops opening and no longer looking for high-end customers, but the people that will influence the sales (telling people they need it)."* Delegates critiqued products such as diet supplements, *"slimming teas,"* and gym-focused beverages that falsely promise transformation.

Advertising strategies were flagged as particularly manipulative when aimed at youth. *"Targeted ads — forced to watch for a set time — especially on Snapchat,"* one delegate noted. Another added, *"False advertising of food & drink e.g. Monster energy for gym goers."*

The language of fashion and marketing was also seen to reinforce body ideals. Delegates called for more inclusive practices and less stigmatising language: *"Remove the word 'plus' size from clothing. At the end of the day someone just needs clothes."*

This theme highlights how body standards are reinforced not just by culture, but by commercial incentives that profit from insecurity and exclusion.

#### **Guiding Question 2: What could improve the health and wellbeing of young people on this issue?**

Delegates identified a range of practical, systemic changes to support young people's health and wellbeing in relation to body image. Their responses reflected a strong desire for policy-led action across education, media, regulation, and mental health. Four key themes emerged from the analysis.

#### 3.4.4.5 Education and Early Intervention

Delegates strongly advocated for early, school-based education that empowers young people to critically engage with body standards and resist harmful norms. Prevention was a core priority, with many calling for body positivity and media literacy to be embedded in SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) and RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education) curricula from primary level. As one delegate put it, *“Having courses in primary school level to teach them about body positivity before they start developing.”*

Others stressed the need to challenge toxic gender norms and promote inclusive, accurate information around physical appearance, mental health, and digital content. For example, *“Education in school about toxic masculinity – enforce!”* and *“School campaigns (primary) to educate youth on EDs, toxic masculinity, etc.”* There was also a strong emphasis on recognising body diversity and understanding conditions such as body dysmorphia and eating disorders. As one Delegate stated: *“Education on all body types – body dysmorphia, EDs.”*

Education was not just seen as preventative, but also empowering. One delegate urged, *“Letting young people know that their body image is more than good enough and that they don’t need to be perfect 24/7.”*

This theme emphasises a proactive approach, where schools become spaces for building self-acceptance, and critical thinking skills.

#### 3.4.4.6 Media Representation and Digital Environments

Delegates called for more inclusive and realistic representation across social and traditional media. Concerns about the prevalence of heavily edited or AI-generated imagery led to suggestions for greater transparency in how content is created and presented online.

Several delegates proposed that platforms should visibly flag or watermark manipulated content. Examples included:

*“Identify on apps if filters are being used.”*

*“Apps like FaceTune should have watermarks built in so you know what’s edited.”*

Content moderation was also seen as necessary, particularly for protecting younger audiences. Delegates recommended restricting harmful or unrealistic content and tailoring algorithms to support wellbeing. As one delegate suggested, *“Age restriction on certain body-focused content.”* Another added, *“Platforms could flag or hide content with edited or unhealthy stuff for younger users.”*

Diverse representation was a recurring priority. Delegates wanted to see a broader range of body types, skin tones, and appearances reflected in the media, with one stating, *“Media and film represent real body types and skin types,”* and another urging, *“Show the real bodies and features of a population.”*

This theme reflects a broader call for a safer, more transparent, and more affirming digital and media environment.

#### 3.4.4.7 Commercial Accountability and Regulation

Many delegates expressed concern about how commercial actors, especially influencers and advertisers, contribute to body dissatisfaction. A strong demand emerged for greater regulation of harmful content and profit-driven messaging.

Influencers were seen as particularly problematic when promoting cosmetic procedures or unattainable standards to young audiences. One delegate proposed, *“Make [it] illegal for influencers [to] post body influence options towards younger audiences,”* while another warned, *“Celebrities/influencers promoting plastic surgery to a younger demographic... can lead the younger audience to feel insecure about themselves.”*

Delegates supported the introduction of financial penalties for monetising harmful or misleading content. For example:

*“Fines based on audience + income from specific promotion, i.e. fine per video.”*

*“Regulating whether or not influencers can monetise potentially harmful content.”*

Advertising practices were also criticised, especially when targeting vulnerable users. One delegate remarked, *“Regulate targeted ads and what companies are allowed to use them — shapewear, diet companies, etc.”* Another pointed to platform design issues: *“Targeted ads – forced to watch for a set time – especially on Snapchat.”*

There were also calls for change within the fashion industry, particularly in relation to sizing and language. One delegate proposed, *“Use numbers for clothing sizes more often rather than sizes such as XL.”*

This theme makes clear the need for stronger oversight and accountability in commercial messaging that influences young people's body perceptions.

#### 3.4.4.8 Access to Support and Positive Messaging

Delegates emphasised the importance of making support services accessible and promoting a cultural shift toward body positivity. Many called for increased investment in youth mental health services to help address the emotional toll of body image pressures. As one delegate simply stated, *“Increased therapy supports.”*

Alongside therapeutic support, delegates advocated for the promotion of diverse, affirming content that celebrates body differences and promotes healthy self-esteem. One suggestion

was, “*More body positive content being promoted.*” Another stressed the need to, “*Promote influencers to create realistic content, look realistic in videos, etc.*”

Delegates felt that visible, authentic, and supportive content could play a critical role in reshaping how young people relate to their bodies. As one summed up, “*Promote positive body image.*”

This theme reflects a shared desire for both structural support and everyday affirmation, combining clinical care with health promotion and cultural change.

#### 3.4.4.9 Summary of Body Image Themes

Guiding Question 1: Why is this area/issue important for the taskforce to focus on?

Four key themes emerged from the analysis:

- **Digital Distortion: Media, Misinformation and Influencer Culture**
- **Mental Health Risks**
- **Societal and Gendered Pressures**
- **Consumerism and Capitalism**

Delegates emphasised how unrealistic body standards, often amplified by social media and influencer culture, distort young people’s perceptions and contribute to harmful mental health outcomes. The pressure to conform to gendered and societal expectations leads to exclusion, bullying, and self-harm. Commercial interests exploit these insecurities, reinforcing unattainable ideals and negatively impacting wellbeing.

Guiding Question 2: What could improve the health and wellbeing of young people on this issue?

Four major themes were identified as areas for improvement:

- **Education and Early Intervention**
- **Media Representation and Digital Environments**
- **Commercial Accountability and Regulation**

- **Access to Support and Positive Messaging**

Delegates called for comprehensive education programmes to build self-acceptance from an early age, greater transparency and regulation of digital content and advertising, and more inclusive media representation. Enhanced mental health support and promotion of positive body image were seen as essential to fostering healthier attitudes and behaviours among young people.

#### **Recommendations:**

Delegates reviewed a number of issues when considering their recommendations for the taskforce under the theme of **Body Image**. These are related to media representation, education, and healthy online environments. A key concern was raised regarding unrealistic beauty standards and the role of social media in promoting harmful ideals. They highlighted a greater need for transparency and accountability from influencers and social media platforms.

Delegates also advocated for the introduction of educational programmes focused on healthy body image which should take an early intervention approach from primary school. Emphasis was put on age appropriate content and a promotion of supportive positive messaging.

Based on this, two key recommendations were made, (1) the government should fund educational programmes based on body image, as it will help prevent things such as eating disorders and negative body image. We recommend a focus on primary students to try to prevent issues before they become prevalent in children's lives. (2) Increase protections for children by increasing transparency and accountability from influencers and corporations. This can be achieved through influencers disclosing photos that are edited, platforms hiding/ flagging content with edited or potentially harmful/ unhealthy aspects for younger users and banning body image corporations from using targeted ads for younger users e.g. shapewear, diets etc.



### 3.4.5 Healthy Online/Digital Spaces

#### **Guiding Question 1: Why is this area important for the Taskforce to focus on?**

A safe, inclusive, and respectful online environment was viewed as essential for young people's wellbeing. Delegates discussed how toxic online cultures and exposure to hate or bullying can severely impact mental health. Four themes emerged.

##### 3.4.5.1 Safe and Age-Appropriate Digital Environments

Delegates stressed the critical need to create digital spaces that protect young people from harmful content and inappropriate interactions. They emphasised that young children should be shielded from unregulated messaging platforms, with one noting that "*young children shouldn't have access to message boards or messaging.*" Age verification and grouping by peer ages were highlighted as important safeguards, with delegates expressing the view that "*same ages group together*" and digital spaces should be "*age appropriate*" to ensure safety.

The risk of children being exposed to false or dangerous information was a repeated concern, as one delegate shared: "*children could be talking to dangerous? Adults feeding them false info on what the kids believe is a healthy digital space.*" Delegates urged for better regulations and parental education to help manage children's internet use, stressing that "*better regulations and age restrictions especially for younger children*" are essential.

##### 3.4.5.2 Digital Wellbeing: Mental Health and Ethical Platform Design

Delegates underscored how digital spaces directly affect young people's mental health, with many negative comments damaging self-esteem, especially regarding body image and behaviour. As one delegate observed, "*Negative comments affect everyone – especially on body image, way they talk or act,*" while another warned, "*Young people with no support system can use social media – leads to extreme behaviour – unhealthy behaviours.*"

At the same time, delegates expressed concern about platform designs that promote addictive behaviours. One delegate commented, "*It's intentionally designed to addict people. Refresh animation on TikTok replicates gambling,*" revealing a critical awareness of manipulative features. The early exposure of children to such technology, described as "*iPad kids,*" raised further developmental concerns.

These insights underline the need for ethical reform in digital design that prioritises young people's mental health alongside technological innovation.

### 3.4.5.3 Creating Inclusive, Respectful, and Supportive Online Communities

Delegates highlighted the urgent need to combat the growing toxicity in digital spaces, which undermines feelings of safety and belonging. The rise of hate speech and misogyny was a key concern; one delegate said, "*We seeing a lot more hate speech making our digital spaces not safe,*" while another noted the normalisation of "*Toxic masculinity – comparing women – negative viewpoints have become normalised.*"

Despite this, delegates recognised the potential for digital platforms to foster connection and cultural exchange. They stressed the importance of safe spaces where young people can learn about others' perspectives beyond their immediate communities. One delegate expressed: "*It's important to have a safe space where young people can connect outside of their immediate community and learn about others' perspectives.*" However, these positive communities are often "*Not obvious – small communities – have to go looking for them,*" underscoring the need to increase their visibility and accessibility.

### 3.4.5.4 Policy, Regulation, and Education: Foundations for Change

Delegates identified gaps in policy and regulation as fundamental barriers to safer, healthier online environments. They called for stronger enforcement powers and better regulatory frameworks to hold platforms accountable, highlighting that "*better regulations and age restrictions especially for younger children*" are urgently needed.

In addition, delegates stressed the need for comprehensive education, not only for young people but also for parents, to navigate and manage online risks effectively. As one delegate stated, "*Parents need to be more educated to help manage children on internet and social media.*" The combination of informed adults, effective regulations, and enforcement bodies was viewed as essential to creating meaningful and lasting improvements.

## **Guiding Question 2: What could improve the health and wellbeing of young people on this issue?**

This section explores delegates' perspectives on what practical steps could improve the health and wellbeing of young people online. Their suggestions centred around regulation, education, design reform, and the protection of vulnerable users. Four themes emerged:

### 3.4.5.5 Regulation, Enforcement, and Platform Accountability

Delegates consistently highlighted the necessity for stronger and clearer regulations, coupled with rigorous enforcement, to create safer digital environments. They stressed the role of bodies like *Coimisiún na Meán* as an enforcement authority with the power to fine companies that fail to remove harmful or inappropriate content. One delegate emphasised the importance of "*more*

*regulations across Ireland and the EU via enforced directives,"* while another noted that "consequences for actions" online must be enforceable and meaningful.

Age verification was a particular focus, with calls to "*require age verification with ID, not just to insert your age*" to better protect younger users.

Delegates also spoke about reducing anonymity online, pointing out that "*it becomes harder to hide behind a screen*" and that users should "*face consequences for actions.*"

Furthermore, delegates urged platforms to take greater responsibility by improving moderation practices and actively removing damaging content, including "*ragebaiting – purposefully posting negative content for engagement.*" Transparency was also seen as crucial, with calls to "*disclose when posting edited pictures/videos online*" to foster trust and accountability.

#### **3.4.5.6 Education, Awareness, and Community Involvement**

Schools were identified as key venues for this learning, through "*mandatory workshops and consultations with parents about online safety*" and practical, hands-on use of technology like tablets. Delegates recommended that online safety education should not present a one-sided view but should teach both "*the benefits and the risks*" of social media to all generations.

Community involvement was also encouraged, with suggestions to "*start local – principals, youth workers, parents' council*" to create a more supportive ecosystem around young people.

#### **3.4.5.7 Design and Algorithmic Reform for Wellbeing**

Concerns about the addictive nature of digital platforms and the impact of algorithms on mental health were prominent. Delegates described how certain features, such as TikTok's refresh animation, are "*intentionally designed to addict people,*" comparing them to gambling mechanics. There were strong calls to "*reform addictive features and designs*" to prioritise users' wellbeing.

Delegates also urged that algorithms be adjusted so they "*shouldn't push vent accounts with triggering or concerning content to young people.*"

To empower users and their families, delegates suggested the introduction of new digital tools, including "*tools to remove yourself from certain content*" and "*a tool for parents to review their kids' time spending.*" Delegates also stressed the importance of encouraging healthy breaks from digital spaces without intrusive monitoring, supporting digital balance over digital withdrawal.

### 3.4.5.8 Protection of Vulnerable Groups and Age-Appropriate Safeguards

A strong focus was placed on safeguarding younger and more vulnerable users from harmful and exploitative content. Delegates supported a "*complete ban of sexualised ads*" and voiced serious concern about deepfakes, advocating for the "*banning of deepfakes*," which are increasingly weaponised, particularly in the context of misogynistic online abuse.

The rise of such misogynistic ideologies was recognised as a growing problem. Delegates called for enforced "*age restrictions on certain content*" and proposed that children under 13 should not have access to messaging functions.

Creating digital spaces free from discrimination, harassment, and harmful content was seen as vital to ensuring that all young people feel protected and supported online. As one delegate summarised, "*apps should take responsibility for removing damaging content*" to foster an inclusive and respectful environment.

### 3.4.5.9 Summary of the Theme Healthy Online/Digital Spaces

Guiding Question 1: Why is this area important for the Taskforce to focus on?

Four themes emerged:

- **Safe and Age-Appropriate Digital Environments**
- **Digital Wellbeing: Mental Health and Ethical Platform Design**
- **Creating Inclusive, Respectful, and Supportive Online Communities**
- **Policy, Regulation, and Education: Foundations for Change**

Delegates emphasised that toxic digital environments and unregulated access pose serious risks to young people's wellbeing, particularly in relation to mental health, exposure to harmful content, and lack of online safety. They highlighted the need for age-appropriate safeguards, ethical design, inclusive community standards, and stronger regulatory frameworks to make the digital world safer and more supportive for young people.

Guiding Question 2: What could improve the health and wellbeing of young people on this issue?

Four themes emerged:

- **Regulation, Enforcement, and Platform Accountability**
- **Education, Awareness, and Community Involvement**
- **Design and Algorithmic Reform for Wellbeing**
- **Protection of Vulnerable Groups and Age-Appropriate Safeguards**

Delegates proposed a combination of regulatory reform, educational initiatives, and platform-level changes to enhance young people's digital wellbeing. They called for robust age verification, transparency, ethical platform design, and targeted protections for vulnerable groups. Involving schools, parents, and local communities in online safety education was seen as key to long-term impact.

## Recommendations:

Delegates considered many topics when creating their recommendations for the taskforce under the theme of **Healthy Online Spaces**. They highlighted that their wellbeing can often be impacted by toxic environments online where many young people bear witness to harmful content and hate speech, and also a lack of support and personal control of their algorithms and content they are exposed to. They advocated for social media platforms to take greater action in removing hateful/inappropriate content (videos, posts, messages) and accounts to protect young people's safety and wellbeing.

Delegates also discussed concerns around regulation and safeguarding. They made reference to age verification, age restrictions, and reducing anonymity to improve accountability and safety online.

Given this discussion, the following two recommendations were made, (1) many apps overlook harmful content and don't remove it. The responsibility for removing damaging content (e.g NSFW -Not Safe For Work) should rest with the administrators of the platforms/ apps. (2) Platforms should make it more difficult for a user to make another account after being banned.



### 3.4.6 Language That Works

#### Guiding Question 1: Why is this area/issue important for the taskforce to focus on?

The Language that works theme was identified by the Taskforce. This question invited delegates to reflect on the significance of language in shaping young people's experiences, behaviours, and development within online health contexts. Through their responses, six key themes emerged that illuminate different perspectives and considerations surrounding the use of language and its broader impact.

##### 3.4.6.1 Language Tone and Respect

A predominant theme among delegates centred on the importance of tone and respect in language directed at young people. Several delegates emphasised that language can sometimes be "*condescending*" and that maintaining "*equal respect*" is essential. This reflects a shared concern that patronising language risks alienating youth and undermining their sense of agency. One delegate articulated this by stating, "*Treat young people like people not a less competent version - they want to have a say, to feel like they have control over their lives.*" There was consensus on the need for language that "*includes young people not excludes them*," reinforcing the desire for communication that recognises their competence rather than diminishes it.

However, some divergence was noted where a few delegates suggested that the issue of language tone might be less critical than maturity itself, with comments such as "*You shouldn't baby people, it's maturity problem.*" This viewpoint shifts responsibility onto the young individuals rather than the language used, highlighting differing views on where the primary focus should lie.

##### 3.4.6.2 Clarity and Accessibility of Language

Another significant theme was the necessity for language to be clear, simple, and accessible. Delegates expressed the need to avoid complexity, advocating for "*concise, not vague - positive*" language and "*simple language is not complicated.*" This theme highlights the practical importance of language in ensuring young people can easily understand information, particularly when it concerns health or legal content such as terms and conditions, which delegates recommended should be "*shortened.*" While there was broad agreement on the value of clarity, some delegates cautioned against over-simplifying, suggesting that clarity should not come at the expense of meaningful content.

### 3.4.6.3 Youth Agency and Participation

Delegates raised the theme of young people's agency and participation. Many underscored the importance of providing an "*illusion*" or real opportunity for input, noting that "*both sides have input (illusion) makes it feel fairer.*" This suggests that fostering a sense of control and respect in communication is vital for engagement. The balance between independence and parental oversight was highlighted, with delegates advocating for "*independence with parental oversight - illusion of control to build accountability - respect.*"

This theme converges with the previous one on respect, reinforcing that language should empower rather than patronise. However, some delegates felt that too much oversight might limit genuine autonomy, underscoring the tension between protection and rights in digital spaces.

### 3.4.6.4 Content Influence and Regulation

Concerns about the content young people consume and how language shapes their understanding featured prominently. Delegates referred to harmful influences, such as "*manosphere content*," which impacts development and perspectives. Several advocated for "*media censorship for young people*" to prevent "*anti-social behaviour as a result of entitlement and lack of perspective.*"

Within this theme, there was also discussion around regulatory approaches, with delegates favouring "*limit rather than 'ban'*" and supporting verification methods like "*LinkedIn type verification (ID).*" These perspectives reveal a nuanced approach to regulation, balancing protection with respect for youth autonomy. Some delegates felt regulation should not be overly restrictive, reflecting divergence in views on the extent of control appropriate in online environments.

### 3.4.6.5 Perceived Importance of the Topic

Delegates expressed varying opinions on the priority this topic should hold. Some considered it "*not a big issue*" or argued that "*this topic shouldn't be priority for young people.*" Others believed language was less significant compared to broader maturity or behavioural issues, as reflected in the comment: "*I think it doesn't really make a difference and out of all the things we need to talk about I don't think it's language.*" This divergence highlights differing perceptions of the impact language has on young people's health and wellbeing, with the majority believing it not important to focus attention on.

### 3.4.6.6 Psychological and Behavioural Responses to Language and Restrictions

Lastly, delegates recognised how language can shape emotional and behavioural responses. It was noted that “*the phrasing of a sentence can dictate how people feel about a topic*” and that language can evoke emotions that affect engagement, ranging from “*happiness vs disgust*,” which can influence how messages are received. Furthermore, the phenomenon where “*people want to do things more when they are forbidden*” was acknowledged, indicating that restrictive language or policies might provoke reactance rather than compliance.

### **Guiding Question 2: What could improve the Health and Wellbeing for young people on this issue?**

Delegates were invited to suggest ways in which language and communication could be improved to better support young people’s health and wellbeing, particularly in the context of online safety and health information. From their responses, five overarching themes emerged.

### 3.4.6.7 Clarity, Simplicity, and Accessibility

A strong consensus among delegates highlighted the importance of using language that is clear, simple, and easy to understand. Many emphasised that communication should be “*straightforward, simple, child-centric language*” and avoid “*strong and complicated words*” or confusing slang.

Alongside verbal clarity, delegates recommended the use of “*visuals and graphics*” and dissemination through “*official channels*” such as hospitals, schools, and busy public spaces to maximise reach and accessibility. These approaches were seen as critical to ensuring young people feel included and capable of engaging meaningfully with health information.

### 3.4.6.8 Respectful, Inclusive, and Empowering Language

Delegates underscored the need for language that is respectful, mindful, and inclusive. This included calls for “*gender neutral terms*” to promote inclusivity and replacing negative labels like “*child lock*” with more positive alternatives such as “*child wellbeing*.”

Beyond tone, many emphasised the importance of transparency and explanation: rather than simply altering language, young people should be helped to understand “*why things e.g. parental controls are needed & what they do*.” This transparency was considered key to fostering a sense of control or an “*illusion of control*” in young people, thereby empowering them and reducing feelings of frustration. One delegate summed this up succinctly: “*Be respectful.*”

#### 3.4.6.9 Avoiding Negative and Authoritarian Language

A distinct concern was the use of language that might feel controlling or restrictive. Delegates cautioned against words such as “*ban*,” “*control*,” and “*restriction*” because these could provoke resistance or rebellious behaviour. For example, it was noted that “*words like ban & control could make people feel controlled & not free to make their own decisions - frustrated*,” and that changing “*banned*” to “*not available*” could soften the message. This theme highlights the psychological impact that language choices have on young people’s responses and underscores the need for careful wording to avoid unintended negative consequences.

#### 3.4.6.10 Youth Participation and Consultation

Many delegates highlighted the value of involving young people directly in shaping language and policies that affect them. There was a clear call for “*consultations with young people especially under the age of 18*” and for “*voting for young people*” to ensure their voices are heard. This theme reflects a broader commitment to youth agency and participation, recognising that communication is more effective and respectful when young people are engaged as active contributors rather than passive recipients.

#### 3.4.6.11 Perceived Priority of the Issue

While the majority of delegates offered constructive suggestions, some expressed scepticism regarding the priority of language issues within the broader spectrum of youth health and wellbeing concerns. One delegate commented simply, “*This topic is not a priority in my opinion.*” This divergence in views signals the importance of balancing language-focused interventions with other pressing challenges faced by young people.

### 3.4.6.11 Summary of the Theme Language That Works

Guiding Question 1:

Why is this area/issue important for the taskforce to focus on?

From the discussion, five key themes emerged:

- **Respect and Equality in Language**
- **Impact of Media and Content on Youth Development**
- **Effect of Language Tone on Engagement and Behaviour**
- **Youth Autonomy and Control**
- **Varied Perceptions of Priority**

Delegates emphasised that respectful and equal language fosters fair engagement, while the media content young people consume significantly shapes their development and outlook. The tone and phrasing of language were seen to influence emotions and behaviour, underlining the importance of how messages are framed. Many highlighted the need to support youth autonomy by using language that gives a sense of control and respect. However, some Delegates questioned the priority of language issues relative to other challenges facing young people, reflecting a diversity of opinions on the matter.

Guiding Question 2

What could improve the Health and Wellbeing for young people on this issue?

From the responses, five overarching themes emerged:

- **Clarity, Simplicity, and Accessibility**
- **Respectful, Inclusive, and Empowering Language**
- **Avoiding Negative and Authoritarian Language**
- **Youth Participation and Consultation**

- **Perceived Priority of the Issue**

Delegates agreed that language should be clear, simple, and accessible, supported by visuals and official communication channels. Respectful and inclusive language was deemed essential, coupled with transparent explanations to empower young people and foster understanding. Avoiding harsh or authoritarian terms like “ban” was viewed as crucial to prevent frustration and rebellion. Furthermore, involving young people directly in consultations was seen as vital to ensure communication resonates with them. Nonetheless, some delegates felt that language-related issues might not be the highest priority within broader youth online wellbeing concerns.

#### **Recommendations:**

When drafting recommendations for the taskforce under the theme of **Language that Works**, the delegates acknowledged that language has an impact on young people and their experiences online and interacting with content. They mentioned that simpler, more accessible language gives young people more control.

They concluded that language is not a defining factor, as long as young people feel respected and in control. They also emphasised the importance of consulting with young people on the topic, especially those under the age of eighteen.

Based on these discussions, two recommendations were made: (1) that while recognising the positive impact of friendlier language on young people’s interactions online, it is an issue that shouldn’t be of such high importance to the taskforce, and (2) that consultations on the topic of language should be carried out with young people, especially those under eighteen years of age.



## 5. Assembly's Procedures

Delegates to the National Youth Assembly of Ireland are aged between 12 and 24 years and come from across the country, representing a wide range of youth organisations, community groups, and Comhairle na nÓg (Local Youth Councils) (see Appendix A).

Fifty-one young people attended the National Youth Assembly on Youth Online Health 2025, including 36 sitting delegates from the National Youth Assembly of Ireland and 15 guest delegates from organisations with a particular interest or focus on youth digital safety and wellbeing. Delegates represented a broad range of local Comhairle na nÓg (18) and national youth and community organisations (24), reflecting diverse lived experiences and digital realities. Twenty-one counties were represented across rural and urban locations.

The National Youth Assembly of Ireland is convened according to rights-based, best practice in child and youth participation, as set out in the National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making<sup>5</sup>. This involves the principle of participation with purpose, so that the views of children and young people are listened to, taken seriously, and given due weight by decision-makers with the intention that these views will influence an outcome in relation to policy making.

The Assembly also conforms to the nine key principles of participation, which require that processes to include the views of children and young people are transparent and informative, voluntary, respectful, relevant, child-friendly, inclusive, supported by training, safe and sensitive to risk, and accountable. The key approach adopts the Lundy Model<sup>6</sup>, which conceptualises Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in terms of Space, Voice, Audience, and Influence.

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<sup>5</sup> The National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, outlines principles, structures, and best practices for involving children and young people in decision-making processes across government and public services in Ireland. It serves as a key reference for ensuring meaningful, rights-based participation in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

<sup>6</sup> The Lundy Model (2007) provides a rights-based framework for child participation, emphasising four key elements: space, voice, audience, and influence. It is widely used to guide meaningful engagement with children in policy and decision-making processes. Lundy, L. (2007). 'Voice' is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *British Educational Research Journal*, 33(6), 927–942. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920701657033>

## Space

### **Children and young people must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their views.**

Young people were given supportive, inclusive opportunities to share their perspectives on how to improve the online health and wellbeing of their generation. The Assembly arose in response to ongoing national conversations about digital safety and mental health and reflects a Government commitment, through the Department of Health and the Department of Children, Disability, and Equality to involve young people in digital policy development.

A dedicated Youth Advisory Group (YAG) played a central role in designing and supporting the event. YAG members hosted and facilitated aspects of both the preparation and Assembly sessions and joined post-Assembly review activities to ensure youth ownership of the process.

Delegates were nominated through Comhairle na nÓg and national youth networks to ensure a balance of voices. Materials were accessible and inclusive, developed using guidelines from the Dyslexia Association of Ireland. Signposting to different support agencies were also provided to delegates in case the topic of the assembly raised any questions or concerns for them. Subtitled videos, printed documents, sensory accommodations, and staff supports were provided throughout the process.. Requests for support were met, and bathrooms were stocked with period products to ensure comfort for all attendees.

A Code of Conduct was shared and discussed ahead of time to ensure a safe, respectful environment. Facilitators were trained in youth participation methodologies and were briefed on how to support young people to engage fully. Icebreakers, name tags, and designated quiet spaces supported relationship-building and comfort throughout the day.

## Voice

### **Children and young people must be facilitated to express their views.**

The National Youth Assembly on Youth Online Health: ‘Creating Safe and Healthy Digital Spaces for Ireland’s Young People is an inaugural assembly jointly convened by the Department of Health and the Department of Children, Disability, and Equality. Young people were facilitated to share their views through interactive and structured discussions. In the morning, delegates explored core topics around online health and wellbeing, including language, healthy digital environments, and positive online experiences. The “One Big Question” session invited delegates to propose new priority issues. Post-it note contributions were grouped by theme through a collaborative process between delegates and facilitators.

Six themes emerged as central concerns: Regulation, Age Restrictions, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Body Image, Healthy Online/Digital Spaces, and Language That Works. Delegates then

explored these themes through a Thematic Carousel, considering why each area matters and how the Taskforce could improve young people's wellbeing in that space. Each table produced draft recommendations, refined using placement mats and checklists provided.

Delegates could express their views verbally or in writing, and all contributions were taken seriously. Voluntary participation was reiterated throughout the event and facilitators were prepared to support any delegate wishing to opt out at any time.

## Audience

### **The views must be listened to.**

Key policymakers were present to hear directly from the delegates. Senior representatives from the DCDE and the Online Safety Commissioner's Office attended the Assembly, listening to young people's recommendations and engaging in Q&A sessions. Delegates were introduced to these decision-makers and informed about how their views would be communicated beyond the Assembly. From the hosting department, the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE), Minister Norma Foley, Minister for Children, Disability and Equality, was present, alongside Bairbre Meaney, Principal Officer, and Amanda McLoughlin, Assistant Principal Officer. The Department of Health, as the commissioning department, was represented by Minister Jennifer Carroll MacNeill, Minister for Health, together with Brian Callaghan, Assistant Principal Officer and Peter Holohan, HEO, and James Monagle, EO.

## Influence

### **The views must be acted upon, as appropriate.**

The views and recommendations shared by young people during the Assembly are intended to directly inform the work of the Online Health and Wellbeing Taskforce, as well as broader youth digital safety strategies. While not all recommendations may be adopted, Delegates were assured that their input would be given serious consideration and reflected where possible.

The Youth Advisory Group helped shape how the final report would be presented to the task force and were informed about how the task force would use this report to inform their work over the course of their preparations, on the day of the Assembly and post Assembly through direct communication and press releases.

The Minister for Health Jennifer Carroll MacNeill and Minister for Children, Disability and Equality Norma Foley paid tribute to members of the National Youth Assembly of Ireland (NYAI) for their contributions at the Youth Online Health Assembly in a Press release on July 10th 2025. Minister Carroll MacNeill noted "By listening to their insights and recommendations, we

gain a better understanding of the risks and the opportunities that exist. Bringing their experiences to the fore, we can create a safer and more supportive digital space for everyone." Minister Foley stated "The delegates will bring insights through their lived experiences that will make invaluable contributions to the final recommendations of the Taskforce." Chair of the Online Health Taskforce, Jillian van Turnhout further added the "National Youth Assembly will directly influence our recommendations to Government, ensuring our final report reflects the authentic voices and experiences of those most affected by online harms."

The final report is made available to all participants and shared publicly online.



## Appendix A

### **Organisations & Comhairle na nÓg present at the preparation session:**

- Nexus Youth Integration Project
- Jigsaw
- Spunout
- TENI
- Scouting Ireland
- Youth Theatre Ireland
- Foróige SAFE Project
- The Early Learning Initiative
- NYCI
- Foroige
- Feach
- YMCA Ireland
- Irish Girl Guides
- Citywise
- An Taisce - Climate Ambassador Programme
- Inclusion Ireland
- Mammies for Trans Rights
- Girls Friendly Society
- Bodywhys
- Dyslexia Ireland
- Youth Work Ireland
- Youth Work Ireland Galway
- Vision Ireland
- ISSU
- Young Social Innovators
- Carlow Comhairle na nÓg
- Cavan Comhairle na nÓg
- Cork City Comhairle na nÓg
- Donegal Comhairle na nÓg (Youth Council)
- Fingal Comhairle na nÓg
- Kerry Comhairle na nÓg

- Kildare Comhairle na nÓg
- Kilkenny Comhairle na nÓg
- Leitrim Comhairle na nÓg
- Limerick Comhairle na nÓg
- Longford Comhairle na Óg
- Meath Comhairle na nÓg
- Tipperary Comhairle na nÓg
- Waterford Comhairle na nÓg
- Wexford Comhairle na nÓg
- Wicklow Comhairle na nÓg

#### **Organisations & Comhairle na nÓg present at the Assembly**

- Jigsaw
- Spunout
- Castlebar Foróige Club
- Girls Friendly Society
- Foróige NFTE
- Scouting Ireland
- An Tasice Climate Ambassador
- TENI
- Vision Ireland
- Young Voices
- Foroige SAFE
- ISSU
- NYCI
- UNICEF
- Young Social Innovators
- YMCA Ireland
- Youth Work Ireland
- Feach
- National Youth Assembly of Ireland
- Citywise
- Childhood Development
- No Name Club

- Irish Girl Guides
- Youth Theatre Ireland
- Carlow Comhairle na nÓg
- Cavan Comhairle na nÓg
- Clare Comhairle na nÓg
- Cork City Comhairle na nÓg
- Donegal Comhairle na nÓg (Youth Council)
- Fingal Comhairle na nÓg
- Kerry Comhairle na nÓg
- Kildare Comhairle na nÓg
- Kilkenny Comhairle na nÓg
- Leitrim Comhairle na nÓg
- Limerick Comhairle na nÓg
- Longford Comhairle na Óg
- Meath Comhairle na nÓg
- South Dublin Comhairle na nÓg
- Tipperary Comhairle na nÓg
- Waterford Comhairle na nÓg

