

NEWS FEATURE

Galway children a key voice in new anti-bullying initiative

• Parents urged to listen more



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“PROVIDING a safe space for children to express themselves is of great importance in today’s world.”

That’s the view of a Tuam-based Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist, Charlotte Donnellan, who is currently leading a new initiative to raise awareness among children against bullying and cyber-bullying.

‘Little Voices, Big Ideas’ will be hearing from children across Co Galway in particular and helping with the creation of a new educational module.

Charlotte, who has worked with the Irish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC) for the last seven years and is the project lead, told *The Tuam Herald* that they are hoping to equip children with the crucial skills and confidence to say ‘No’ to inappropriate behaviours online



Children love connection time and talking to their family, be that a parent or another trusted adult in the child’s life.

and offline.

The project funded under Daphne Child Programme has been co-granted by Euro Child and is co-funded by the European Union.

“A Planet Youth Report in 2022 had identified that 24 per cent of girls and 14 per cent of boys have experienced cyber bullying in Galway. When Daphne Child came to us asking for a project in terms of peer-to-peer violence, we decided to include this,” explained Charlotte.

“Peer-to-Peer violence can look like a lot of different things for different children, and we knew from listening and working with children that bullying and cyber bul-

lying is a problem which also falls under this.”

Working with children at the ISPCC has taught Charlotte that young children are often unable to articulate their thoughts and feelings in words and hence she decided to study Children’s Therapy, to understand them better and help them communicate.

“Sitting and talking is not their natural form of communication, children feel more comfortable playing and they communicate through it.

“They feel that they are seen, and they are heard and not pressurised to say things because they might not have the vocabulary to articulate their thoughts and feelings,” stated Charlotte.

Under this project Charlotte will be working with children between the ages of eight and 12 years to co-create an educational module that will make them aware of the wrong behaviour and their right to safety.

“We are specially focusing on children of that age to give them a voice, a platform to share their issues and ideas instead of creating something based on an assumption that this is how it’s going to be good for children.”

She stressed that this kind of early prevention is crucial to reach the children before the issue gets bigger.

Charlotte believes that since children are getting devices at a young age and accessing social media or online games, they are experiencing behaviours that are not appropriate or acceptable at an early age.

“Providing this education module to that age group would ensure that children are aware of the red flags, they are aware of their rights to safety, and they know that they can have boundaries in place and build their confidence.

“We are equipping these children with really crucial skills by building their confidence to say ‘NO’,” she added.

The initiative ‘Little Voices, Big Ideas’ is focused on Galway and will see a panel of 30 children from schools in both Galway city and county being selected.

Children have been recruited from a wide range of areas.

“The diverse selection is to bring in children from all different backgrounds to make sure we have got a broad



PROJECT lead for the new initiative is Charlotte Donnellan.

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