



SAFER INTERNET DAY 2026



IMPACT REPORT

SAFER INTERNET DAY 2026 IN NUMBERS

Safer Internet Day 2026 saw a record number of children, young people, schools and organisations take part.

Supported by Coimisiún na Meán

Take a look at some highlights here:
webwise.ie/safer-internet-day



211,675
PARTICIPANTS



13,600,000
CAMPAIGN
REACH



12,000+
RESOURCE
DOWNLOADS



60,000+
WEBSITE USERS



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education



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VOICES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE DRIVE SAFER INTERNET DAY 2026 AS AI TRANSFORMS THEIR DIGITAL LIVES

AI Aware: Safe, Smart and in Control will see children and young people share first-hand perspectives on the impact of generative AI, as they urge industry and policymakers to prioritise their voices.

Today experts from Ireland and Europe will join members of the Webwise Youth Advisory Panel- a group of young people from across the country - to discuss how Generative AI is profoundly and fundamentally altering the digital lives of young people in Ireland.

New research shows that while young people do not trust AI - they reluctantly accept the privacy trade-offs and whilst they know about its capacity for malicious use, they increasingly rely on it.

Dublin, February 10th, 2026: Today, February 10th, marks the 23rd anniversary of Safer Internet Day, a landmark global event in the online safety calendar and marked in over 180 countries. At today's event, which is taking place in the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration and hosted by the Irish Safer Internet Centre, young people and adults will come together to discuss how they can be supported to develop the skills and confidence to engage with AI critically and responsibly.

The Irish Safer Internet Centre knows through engagement with children and young people that they are concerned about how to safely and responsibly navigate the growing influence of generative AI in their lives.

The theme for Safer Internet Day 2026 is “AI Aware: Safe, Smart and in Control”. This encourages parents, schools, educators, young people and all stakeholders to consider how AI shapes young people’s lives.

New research from UCD shows that young people accept the privacy trade-offs inherent in modern digital life, even as they acknowledge generative Gen AI’s capacity for malicious use, notably dangerous or emotionally harmful content and the generation of damaging, non-consensual images (“AI nudes”) of peers.

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One respondent referred to an incident in school: “They made AI nudes. With people... I only found out about it after the guard came in. I don't know what happened to him, but he hasn't been back since then.”

The key issues that will be discussed during Safer Internet Day 2026 include the risks and harms emerging today, as well as the practical steps, policy pathways and innovative solutions needed to ensure generative AI technologies are safe and age-appropriate for children. It will also explore potential opportunities of AI technologies to benefit children and young people.

The discussions will highlight the voices and lived experiences of young people, to ensure that their insights inform the proposed solutions.

Safer Internet Day 2026 will feature a keynote address from Dr. Mhairi Aitken of the Alan Turing Institute whose research examines AI and children's rights,. In addition, the event will include contributions from the Online Safety Commissioner Niamh Hodnett; the Webwise Youth Advisory Panel; Professor of Social Psychology Sonia Livingstone at the London School of Economics and Political Science and Dr. Claudette Pretorius, Assistant Professor in the School of Computer Science at University College Dublin.

Minister for Education and Youth Hildegard Naughton said: “With rapidly-evolving AI bringing opportunities and challenges to our world and our daily lives, it is an honour for me as Minister to join with members of the Webwise Youth Advisory Panel and international experts today in celebrating Safer Internet Day 2026. It is now more important than ever that we can empower our children and young people to develop the critical thinking and digital literacy skills needed to evaluate AI generated content, protect their privacy and make responsible decisions.

“Online safety and the safe and ethical use of digital technologies is a key component of my department's Digital Strategy for Schools. Webwise, the department's online safety initiative, is doing significant work to raise awareness in this area and I would encourage all teachers and parents to explore their wide array of resources and training programmes available at [webwise.ie](https://www.webwise.ie) promoting digital citizenship, online wellbeing and more.”

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The Irish Safer Internet Centre said:

“This Safer Internet Day will explore ways to help children and young people be safe and responsible in a complex world increasingly shaped by AI tools and digital technology. Our aim is to provide children and young people and parents with resources and advice on using Gen AI Tools. Explore ways to safeguard children online and reflect on the current state of play of GenAI, and finally to empower children and young people to thrive in the digital world through active participation and education.”

Online Safety Commissioner Niamh Hodnett said:

“I am delighted to continue our support of Safer Internet Day this year by sharing with schools across Ireland a set of educational resources designed to support teaching and learning about children’s rights online, and to encourage a critical-thinking approach to online information. Safer Internet Day is an important event in our calendar and its focus this year on AI is both welcome and timely.”

ANNUAL SAFER INTERNET DAY EVENT

AI AWARE: SAFE, SMART AND IN CONTROL



For Safer Internet Day 2026, the Irish Safer Internet Centre welcomed national and international experts to a stakeholder event to explore this year's theme AI Aware: Safe, Smart and in Control.

The Minister for Education and Youth Hildegarde Naughton TD opened the event, which is the 23rd anniversary of Safer Internet Day, a landmark global event in the online safety calendar and marked in over 180 countries.



Hosted by Gavan Reilly, the event, which took place in the Department of Justice, Migration and Home Affairs, explored ways to help children and young people be safe and responsible in a complex world increasingly shaped by AI tools and digital technology. Discussions focussed on ways to safeguard children online, reflect on the current state of play of GenAI, and finally to empower children and young people to thrive in the digital world through active participation and education.



SAFER INTERNET DAY 2026 EVENT



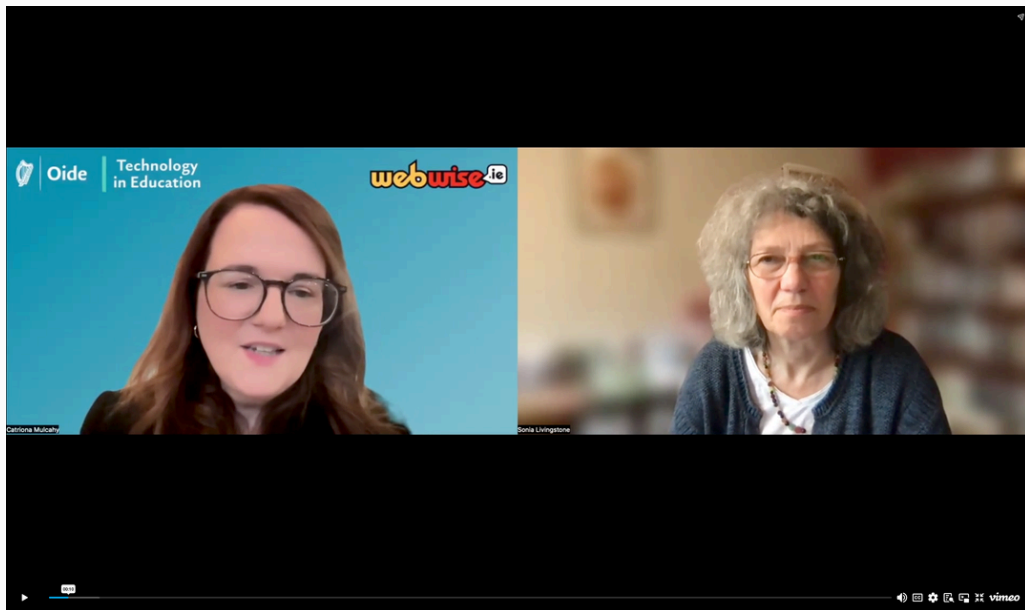
A keynote address from Dr Mhairi Aitken; Senior Ethics Fellow at The Alan Turing Institute (the UK’s national institute for AI and data science) reminded us that “Children are not the future, they are the here and now.”

A panel discussion followed, ‘AI – A Reality Check’, which took an evidence-based look at the real risks and harms emerging today, highlighting areas requiring urgent attention from policymakers, industry leaders, and safeguarding professionals. With contributions from Dr Claudette Pretorius, Assistant Professor in the School of Computer Science at University College Dublin (UCD), Mark Smyth, Senior Clinical Psychologist, Róisín Ingle (columnist, features writer and podcaster with The Irish Times, and parent.), and Orla Hanratty (member of the Webwise Youth Advisory Panel), this discussion also highlighted the voices and lived experiences of young people, to ensure that their insights inform the solutions pursued going forward.



SAFER INTERNET DAY 2026 EVENT

The event also included a contribution from Professor Sonia Livingstone, London School of Economics and Political Science. Professor Livingstone shared her insights on what we are getting right and what we are getting wrong in relation to AI and children’s rights, along with her key recommendations for policy makers to ensure these emerging technologies serve the best interests of children and young people.



Watch back: vimeo.webwise.sonialivingstone



SAFER INTERNET DAY 2026 EVENT

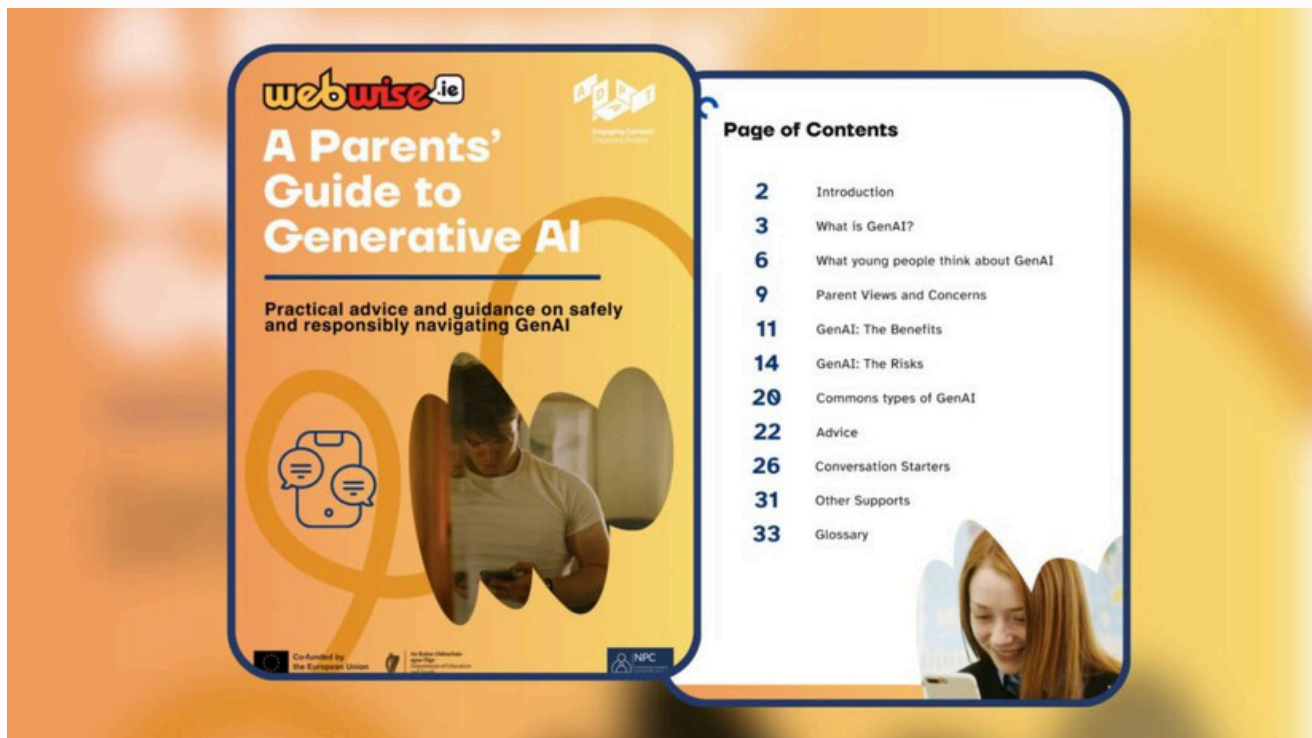
The final panel discussion featured input from Ireland’s Online Safety Commission Niamh Hodnett (Coimisiún na Meán), Dr. Barry Scannell – Partner, William Fry LLP, Anthony Kilcoyne (Oide Technology in Education), and Tadhg McDermott (Webwise Youth Panellist). This provided an opportunity to look at the path forward, focussing on the practical steps, policy pathways, and solutions needed to ensure generative AI technologies are safe and age-appropriate for children. It also examined the potential impacts of AI technologies on children and young people, as well as approaches to support children, parents, and educators in understanding and navigating generative AI safely and responsibly.



NEW PARENTS GUIDE TO GENAI LAUNCHED FOR SAFER INTERNET DAY 2026

On Safer Internet Day, Webwise published a new resource for parents. A Parents' Guide to Generative AI was developed in collaboration with the ADAPT Centre and the National Parents Council, which provides practical advice and guidance to support families to safely and responsibly navigate generative AI. The guide highlights the views of both young people and parents on the benefits and challenges of this technology, and recommendations for what changes they would like to see.

Download guide: webwise.ie/genai-guide-for-parents



It provides an overview of the opportunities and the risks associated with generative AI, and provides advice and talking points for parents to help them support their child to be safe and responsible when using generative AI.

Download guide: webwise.ie/genai-guide-for-parents

NEW AI AWARE LESSONS FOR SCHOOLS

Developed in partnership with Dr. Dónal Mulligan, Dublin City University, new lessons on safe and responsible AI use are now available for 6th class and post-primary.

AI Aware: Safe, Smart and in Control – 6th Class

This lesson will give pupils an opportunity to learn about new technologies, such as Generative AI (Gen AI), the opportunities and challenges, and how to engage with them in a safe and responsible way.

AI Aware: Safe, Smart and in Control – Post-Primary

This lesson will explore the growing presence of Generative Artificial Intelligence, in particular AI chatbots, in young people's lives including both the challenges and opportunities they present.



Access lessons: <https://www.webwise.ie/saferinternetday/sid-presentations/#SID-2026>

AI AWARE CHECKLIST FOR TEENS

Co-created by the Webwise Youth Advisory Panel, a new resource is being developed to help young people be AI Aware. The resource is a youth friendly video and poster that provides teenagers with a checklist and advice from the Youth Panel about how they can be AI Aware: Safe, Smart and in Control.

Download guide: [webwise.ie/genai-guide-for-parents](https://www.webwise.ie/genai-guide-for-parents)

SAFER INTERNET DAY AMBASSADORS

More than 70 students from schools across Ireland took part in this year's Webwise SID Ambassador Programme. The blended training programme, supported by 29 members of the Webwise Youth Advisory Panel who act as peer mentors to the Ambassadors, comprised two online training sessions, and an in-person training day which took place in Google HQ in Dublin. The training day also featured a youth-led discussion about this year's #SID2026 theme "AI Aware: Safe, Smart and in Control", with special guests Elaine Burke, journalist, broadcaster and consultant; comedian, Rachel Galvo; and Dr. Donal Mulligan, lecturer and researcher at Dublin City University's School of Communications.

Over the course of the training sessions the peer-led programme equipped students with the skills and knowledge to lead their own online safety campaigns in their schools and communities. The young people led a wide range of initiatives to raise awareness of online safety in their schools for Safer Internet Day 2026.



A video featuring highlights from the SID Ambassador training day is available to view here:
<https://www.webwise.ie/news/sid-ambassador-training-day/>



SAFER INTERNET DAY 2026 ACROSS IRELAND

Hundreds of events in schools, clubs and organisations took place right across the country for Safer Internet Day. Here are just some of the highlights!

Digital Heroes Day: Brusna NS, Co. Roscommon

- Pupils will take part in a fun, interactive day featuring lessons from WEBWISE and a local Garda visit to talk about internet safety. Parents will also be invited to join the session and receive information about online safety.

A week of events – Being Kind & Keeping Safe Online: The Reco Youth Centre

- Throughout the week, young people aged 10–24 will engage in quizzes, videos, and group activities to explore internet safety. Our Community & Detached Team will also bring the theme out into the streets, reaching approximately 400 young people across various sessions.

AI at the Academy: Smart, Safe and In Control: Patrician Academy Mallow, Co. Cork

- Students will take part in a range of AI-focused activities, including an escape room for 1st years, a Garda “Connect Safely” talk for 2nd years, and interviews, surveys, and informational sessions for staff, parents, and students. Other activities include student-led lunchtime sessions, deepfake exercises with older adults, real vs. not real exercises with special classes, a walking debate with senior students, and an AI poster competition with art classes.

AI: Cool Tech, Careful Choices: Scoil Chonail, Co. Donegal

- Children will explore artificial intelligence (AI) through games, stories, and hands-on activities. They will learn how AI can help with learning, creativity, and play, while also understanding the importance of critical thinking and safe, responsible technology use. The session encourages questions, teamwork, and discussion.

Digital Citizenship in Action: St. Patrick’s N.S, Co. Cork

- Students will explore different aspects of online safety: 1st/2nd class will consider online reliability, 3rd/4th class will focus on wellbeing online, and 5th/6th class will examine false information and disinformation using online resources. Buddy reading, presentations, and interactive exercises will take place throughout the week.

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SID AWARDS 2026

Inspired by the efforts in schools across Ireland for Safer Internet Day, the SID Awards recognise the wide range of events and positive actions that promote internet safety. These awards celebrate the work of students, teachers, and schools in raising awareness about online safety issues while also encouraging healthy and creative uses of technology.

Dominican College Sion Hill, Blackrock, Co. Dublin won the **Best Overall Campaign (Post-Primary)** with a highly creative and engaging Safer Internet Day campaign.

Rosie and Sophie, Eureka Secondary School, Kells, Co. Meath won the **SID Ambassador Leadership Award**. This award recognises the commitment, and leadership, shown by students who have participated in the SID Ambassador Programme. Through their SID campaign, Rosie and Sophie demonstrated that they had embraced the SID Ambassador Leadership values of respect, leadership, commitment, inclusion and teamwork

The **Best Overall Campaign (Primary)** Award was won Scoil Mháirtín, Kilworth, Co. Cork. For SID 2026, they ran an extensive campaign that involved the whole school community in innovative and wide ranging online safety activities.

Hundreds of students took part in the **HTML Heroes Colouring Competition**, with winning entries from Scoil Ursula in Co. Sligo, St. Michael's NS in Co. Monaghan, Shragh NS in Co. Clare, and Ballyduff NS in Co. Wexford.



THANK YOU FOR HELPING MAKE SAFER INTERNET DAY 2026 THE BIGGEST YET!



ABOUT US

The Irish Safer Internet Centre partner organisations work towards a shared mission of making the internet a safer and more inclusive place for children and young people. A partnership of Irish Internet Hotline, ISPCC, National Parents Council and Webwise coordinated by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration and co-funded by the European Union.

IRISH SAFER INTERNET CENTRE

