

**20<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

**Press Release**

**The Children's Rights Alliance welcomes expert group report as one of the most significant inputs to the ongoing debate on how to hold big tech accountable**

Today, the Department of Tourism, Culture Arts, Gaeltacht Sport and Media published the Expert Group Report on an Individual Complaint Mechanism which recommended the introduction of an individual complaints mechanism on a phased basis, prioritising those complaints where the online content in question relates to children.

Responding to today's publication, Chief Executive of the Children's Rights Alliance, **Tanya Ward stated:**

"The publication of the expert group report recommending the introduction of an individual complaints mechanism is a landmark change in how we protect children and young people online. The introduction of an individual complaints mechanism to the Online Safety and Media Regulation (OSMR) Bill will establish a vital safety net for children and young people and would place a responsibility on platforms to make their services a safer space for children."

Over the past decade, big tech, online and media companies have rapidly revolutionised their services and in Ireland and our laws have failed to keep pace. Now, the Government have a real opportunity to revolutionise how these platforms serve the best interests of the people that use them. Ireland can be at the forefront of the global movement to regulate big tech that looks to hold online services accountable but in order to do so, our laws must be ambitious. They need to set a high standard of safety, redress, accountability and transparency for all platforms that wish to operate here and hold them accountable when they fail to meet that standard."

"The 1,2,3 Online Safety Campaign led by the Children's Rights Alliance has been calling for the inclusion of an individual complaints mechanism in the Online Safety and Media Regulation (OSMR) Bill for over a year. An individual complaints mechanism would ensure that for children and young people who experience harm online, there is a clear and effective route to a remedy. Without it, a vital safety net is pulled out from under them. It is an effective way of holding platforms accountable to the safety standards we want to see in place for our children and young people who spend so much of their lives online.

Those advocating for children and young people's rights to be respected will be relieved to see this important intervention being made today. We commend the work of the Expert Group and in particular, their careful consideration they have given to the rights and wellbeing of children and young people in the online world. The proposed amendments will strengthen the Online Safety and Media Regulation (OSMR) Bill and position Ireland alongside other leaders globally who are ambitiously putting the rights and needs of children and young people ahead of business interests."

Tanya Ward continued:

“We wish to acknowledge the members of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media for their relentless efforts to get this important amendment over the line.

Minister Catherine Martin has stated her commitment to delivering this change and today’s report provides her with the roadmap to do so. It is essential that her colleagues in Government support this amendment to ensure that the OSMR Bill is worth the paper it is written on. We need an Online Safety Commissioner supported by the full weight of the law to hold big tech and online services to account and the inclusion of an individual complaints mechanism will ensure that children and young people do not have to rely on the platforms alone for redress when they experience harm online. It is rightfully placing the responsibility firmly back on the platforms to improve their own complaints handling processes so they meet a standard of safety we want for our children and young people. If we are serious about bringing an end to the era of self-regulation, then we should accept nothing less.”

**ENDS**

**Contact:**

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**Notes to Editor:**

- Spokespeople for the campaign are available for interview upon request.
- Read the campaign’s concept paper on the individual complaints mechanism [here](#).
- Findings from public polling commissioned by the #123OnlineSafety Campaign [here](#).
- The #123OnlineSafety national campaign is co-ordinated by the Children’s Rights Alliance which sees 18 member organisations leading in online safety, digital rights and youth participation unite to push for critical changes in the area. Members include Alcohol Action Ireland, Barretstown, Barnardos, BeLonG To, CyberSafeKids, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, Foróige, Irish Heart Foundation, ISPCC, National Youth Council of Ireland, One in Four, Psychological Society of Ireland, Rape Crisis Network Ireland, Safe Ireland, Scouting Ireland, SpunOut.ie, Women’s Aid and Young Social Innovators.
- The campaign is supported by The Community Foundation for Ireland via The RTÉ does Comic Relief Fund #RTEComicRelief