Appendix 5: Advice for parents on bullying

1. Talk about bullying at home, and seek to ensure that your child understands that it is wrong to bully, or to be seen to support the bullying of another person.
2. Prepare your child for a time when they might be the target for bullying behaviour. As part of this, explore some of the reasons why someone may bully others.
3. Highlight that silence is the best friend of bullying and, therefore, the importance that is attached to letting someone know.
4. Teach your child the skills of assertiveness by modelling it at home. A willingness to listen before judging, rather than being reactive, coupled with learning to use the word "I" is one of the secrets of assertive communication. For example, "I want you to stop doing that". The assertive child will be able to: stand tall; maintain eye contact; and express him/ herself clearly and calmly.
5. Build empathy in your child, it has a key role to play in the prevention of bullying.
6. Remembering that no one is born with negative thoughts of themselves, work to raise your child's self-esteem. Recognise, praise and reward your child's effort as well as their successes.
1. Give them responsibility; ask for their help and for their opinions. Take care that an emotional response to a situation doesn't lead to saying something to or about your child that criticises or belittles them.
7. A child's resilience and their sense of self- worth are closely aligned. Fostering resilience in your child will help them to deal well with negative situations.
8. Supporting your child in the development of strong friendships will also make them less vulnerable to bullying and rejection.
9. Encourage your child to participate in activities, sporting or otherwise, that have the capacity to provide opportunities for: personal achievement; confidence building; and the promotion of self-esteem and self-discipline.
10. Help your child to master the skills of mediation and conflict resolution.
11. Encourage your child to be a defender, to help someone when they are down and unable to help themselves.
12. Finally, one of the most important things that any parent can do in terms of countering bullying is to become acquainted with the signs and symptoms that can emerge in children or young people if they are being bullied or if they are bullying others. This will support identification of a bullying problem and, therefore, early intervention. Some possible indicators that your child is being bullied include: unexplained bruises and cuts; unexplained damage to clothing; signs of anxiety and distress; changes in mood or behaviour; deterioration in academic performance; a reluctance to go to school; additional requests for money or stealing money; damage to or loss of personal belongings; negative reactions, such as getting upset, when online, coming offline or viewing text messages.
13. Parents can play a huge role in preventing cyber-bullying. Appropriate online behaviour is the same as appropriate behaviour in the 'real world'. It is also very important that parents let their child know that s/he can go to them for support if s/he is being bullied.
14. Teach your child to be respectful and responsible online. Children should be made aware of the consequences of cyber- bullying for all involved and to stop and think before they post online or send texts that may be deemed abusive or

threatening. Explain that the things they do on their social media devices can have long-term consequences: both legal and psychological.

15. Parents should look out for opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills in this area e.g. attend school talks, avail of parenting courses.

16. Be aware of your child's Internet and mobile phone use so that you will recognise if she is the subject of, or involved in cyber- bullying. The main mobile operators in Ireland have produced a booklet to explain the additional features of modern mobile phones. This can downloaded from http://www.ispai.ie/docs/mobgd08.pdf .

17. Firefly phones are considered much safer for younger children. These types of phones do not have a camera, internet or text facilities. Parents can pre-programme the phone with up to 22 numbers- these are the only numbers that your child can call or receive calls from.

18. Familiarise yourself with online chat lingo. See www.transl8it.com or www.netlingo.com.

19. Curtail use of mobiles at bedtime. By removing the phone at bedtime, adults can help remove the risk of an impulsive decision or victimisation.

20. Irish mobile phone operators offer parents a "dual access" where both child and parent have access to the records held on the account. There are also parental controls available where certain services (such as the Internet) can be limited. Parents should contact their operator to obtain more details about this service.

21. Mobile Minder is quite a new service for android and smart phones. This service allows parents to monitor all contacts to and from their child's phone. Parents are alerted if text messages contained with words linked to cyber- bullying are received or sent. For more details refer to http://www.mobileminder.com .

22. Parents need to challenge the culture of 'continuous access' to technology by setting a time in the evening when technology is turned off. Technology provides many advantages to us all, but parents need to limit the amount of control such devices take on our lives.

23. If your child is a victim of cyber- bullying, it is important to remind her that it is not her fault. So many students internalise what is being said about them and this can lead to long term problems. Encourage her to talk to you.

24. For more information on cyber- bullying through mobile phones see http://www.o2online.ie/o2/about-o2/content.php?cid=95 or through the Internet see http://www.internetsafety.ie .

25. The following websites will also give parents tips for general Internet safety. www.askforkids.com and www.google.ie/familysafety.

26. Although it is understandable that you may be reluctant to invade your child's private space, you should remember that this issue needs to take second place to the need to protect your child. Research indicates that parental guidance of Internet use increases the probability that adolescents will react to support victims of cyber- bullying. It is also important for you to use parental controls on your home computer.

27. The Trinity College website may also have some useful tips: www.abc.tcd.ie .