

## **Hanafin urges parents to supervise internet access by children**

**16 July 2001**

Mary Hanafin T.D. Minister for Children today (16 July, 2001) reiterated her advice to parents to take some sensible steps to protect their children from potentially harmful material on the Internet. This advice comes in light of a present storyline on a well-known soap opera where a 14-year old female character inadvertently comes in contact with a paedophile in a chat room.

"Many parents nationwide are purchasing computers with Internet access for their children. However, all young people 'crossing the information superhighway' need the same kind of advice as they get when crossing the street," said Minister Hanafin.

"The Internet has enormous potential for supporting and enhancing the development of children. However, as identified in the National Children's Strategy, children also need to be educated on the potential negative effects of the World-Wide Web. And, whilst the children themselves may be more computer-literate, parents have a very important role to play," she added.

"The Government-established Internet Advisory Board is in on-going dialogue with the Internet service provider industry in this matter, and awareness initiatives continue to be developed. The industry hotline ([www.hotline.ie](http://www.hotline.ie)) not only focuses on child pornography, but also gives some useful advice on on-line safety. However, the issue of Internet safety for children is a complex one, particularly when one goes beyond web sites, into other facilities such as chat rooms," Minister Hanafin stressed.

Minister Hanafin highlighted the following possible measures that parents can take:

- Keeping the computer in a family room so that parents can keep an eye on its use;
- Showing an active interest in how your children use the Internet, and encouraging them to show you anything which makes them uncomfortable;
- Not letting your child give personal information on the Internet without your permission;
- Not giving your child your credit card number - even for a legitimate reason;
- Never allowing your child to have an unsupervised meeting with anyone they meet on-line.

"The Internet can be a fun place for children to explore new horizons and increase their understanding of the world. But, the 'Rules of the Road' also apply to the Information Superhighway," said Minister Hanafin "and parents play a crucial role in supervising Internet access".