Plain Language Statement, Parents and Caregivers/Guardians

Amarach Research

(In research consortium with Dublin City University Anti-Bullying Centre and ADAPT Science Foundation Ireland)

CHIRP: Protecting and Empowering Children Online

This project is called: "Chirp: Protecting and Empowering Children Online." This research is undertaken by Amarach Research. Amarach is collaborating with Chirp and the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre (ABC) and ADAPT Science Foundation Ireland, which are all part of a larger consortium¹ that is undertaking the project. The project is funded by the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF)², of the Irish Department of Trade, Enterprise and Employment.

Once developed, Chirp will be a parental control technology that would allow for the filtering and blocking of harmful online content on the child's phone. Examples of such harmful online content include grooming (child solicitation online for the purpose of sexual and other types of abuse); cyberbullying (repeated hurtful behaviour such as comments, gossip or exclusion) and self-harming content (content that discusses or shows how one can hurt oneself, including suicide).

The technology is state-of-the-art because it works across the apps on the child's phone (Chirp is not a safety app but a software modification at the phone-level, which allows it to monitor all the messaging apps on the child's phone for harmful online content, including encrypted direct messaging apps such as WhatsApp). Furthermore, Chirp works by facilitating parent-child communication: If Chirp detects harmful online content, it notifies the parent/family member whose phone is paired with the child's that harmful content/behaviour/interaction has been detected. It also sends a prompt to check in on the child and with specific advice as to how to do that. Chirp does *not* spy on children and it does not allow parents and caregivers to monitor all child communication on their phone, which research suggests can negatively influence parent-child trust. You can see how Chirp should work, here.³

Clarification of the purpose of the research

More research is needed in order to build Chirp. Specifically, the research team needs to develop datasets with examples of authentic cyberbullying, grooming and self-harming content, necessary to train artificial intelligence (AI) models that allow Chirp to operate. To that end, we are looking for parents and caregivers of children aged 6-16 who have had some experience with online grooming, cyberbullying and self-harming content i.e., who have seen or actively looked for self-harming online content (doing harm to one's body, including related to anorexia also known as pro-ana and bulimia or pro-mia related content and suicide-related content).

As part of this research, we are conducting a public consultation with parents and caregivers who have children in the target age group and who would like to anonymously share examples of the language their children encountered in these incidents with us. If you choose to participate in this research, you will be asked to provide anonymised descriptions of cyberbullying or online grooming incidents that

¹ <u>https://www.chirpfamily.com/</u>

² https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/news-and-events/department-news/2022/november/202211151.html

³ Chirp Demo Video

your child encountered or examples of the type of self-harming content your child searched for or received online. We are only looking for language/text-based content, you will *not* be able to provide any photos or videos. If you consent to taking part in the study, you will be redirected to an online platform where you can fill out the requested information. For example, your child may have experienced cyberbullying by being excluded from a group on a private messaging app such as WhatsApp. If you are aware that this happened to your child and if you know the details of the incident, you can use the form to describe what happened; and also to tell us what language was used to convey to your child that they were excluded. This could be offensive language, but it need not be, in case no offensive language was used. You can also ask your child to help you by providing examples of the language used or by sharing their phone with you so that you can enter the language into the online form.

Anonymity and confidentiality

No personal information will be collected in this study. We will not be collecting your or your child's name or any other personal information that can reveal your or your child's identity. The information uploaded, stored and processed via the online platform is safe and secure, it will be treated confidentially, and no one will be able to trace the information you enter back to you or your child. We will only ask you to enter the sex and age of your child as well as the age when the incident happened/the self-harming content was received or searched for. If you should enter any other personal information by accident, we will ensure that this data is automatically deleted via a technological method called "scrubbing" which auto-deletes any personal data.

Voluntary nature of the research

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you can give up at any time. We are asking you to enter information about your child's experience with online grooming, self-harm or cyberbullying that you are aware of or that you have information about already. We encourage you to consult with your child first about the research and to explain the process to them without involving them in the data entry process. You can also ask your child if they would like to share their phone with you so that you can copy the anonymised information from the incident in; or to otherwise give you more details about the incident. If you choose to do so, you will need to show your child the assent form [provided on the landing page of the online form] and ask them to read it and consent to participating. **The form itself needs to be filled out by you.** You can ask if the child has some other information that they would like to share with you about the language used in such incidents. **If they do not wish you to enter the anonymised data based on their experience, we kindly ask that you please respect their wishes.**

Possible risks and mitigation strategies

While we will *not* be inquiring into your child's psychological states or mental health-related issues, mentioning grooming, cyberbullying or self-harming incidents to them or recalling such an incident may re-traumatise the child; and it might trigger negative emotions such as fear, sadness or anger. It might also be difficult for you. This is why the research team is partnering with the Irish Society for the Protection of Cruelty against Children (ISPCC) who are providing access to their helpline as well as dedicated therapy sessions. Links to these services and phone numbers will be provided in the form itself so that you and your child can access these services any time during or after your participation in this research.

Confidentiality, anonymity, data retention and disposal

For this particular reason, we will not be processing any of your or your child's personal data other than information about their age and sex and the age they were when the incident happened. None of

this information is personally identifiable. Any personal information you might enter into the form by accident will be automatically deleted as described above.

After you have entered the data and read the debriefing form, you will be redirected to Chirp SME website where you will be asked if you would like to participate in a follow up study. If yes, you will be asked to enter your name and email address. There will be no possibility for us to connect your personal information to your anonymous entry about the incident. Should you decide to enter your personal information, you will be provided with a separate consent form and an explanation as to data processing and storage in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation.

Destroying data

All data will be deleted following the completion of the project. The responsible parties for the data are Amarach and Chirp SME under a joint-controllership' arrangement. Should you have any questions about the data please contact [contact details provided]

Consent form

Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)	Yes/No
I understand the information provided	Yes/No
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study	Yes/No
I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions	Yes/No

Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project **[tick a box–no names collected]**

Contact detail of the researcher: alison.flannery@amarach.com

Plain language statement and Assent form for children (adapted to be understandable to children as young as 9-6-years old: animated or video-based PLS will be made for such young children to further simplify the message)

Thank you for your interest in our project called "Chirp: Protecting and Empowering Children Online."

What is this project about?

You have probably seen or maybe even used phones (or smartphones). They are called smart because they are connected to this thing called the "internet". Internet allows us to have apps through which we talk and send messages and videos to other people. For example, you may have seen Instagram, TikTok, BeReal or WhatsApp, which we call social media and messaging apps. Apps can be used for fun and great things.

But bad things can happen there too. Cyberbullying is one such bad thing. Children can be mean and hurtful to each other on social media and messaging apps. We sometimes call this cyberbullying. Chirp is trying to protect children from these bad things. Chirp also wants to help parents and families to give children better help when they need it.

Once we build Chirp, it will be something that we call a "parental control." What does parental control mean? If your phone has Chirp on it, your parent or someone who takes care of you will be able to get a message when you find something bad on social media and messaging apps. Your parent or someone who takes care of you will be able to give you better help if something bad, like cyberbullying, happens to you.

Why do we need your help?

Before we build Chirp, we need to learn more about these bad things that happen on social media apps. We need to know what these bad things look like on social media and direct messaging apps. What kinds of words are shared when these bad things happen? And we need to know how these bad things happen. If you let your parents or someone who takes care of you share what happened to you with us, you can help us make Chirp.

You are free to say no

You do not have to help us build Chirp. Your parent or someone who cares for you might want you to help us. But if you do not feel like doing that, you can say no. No one will be upset with you if you do not do it. Everything you share with your parent or someone who takes care of you is anonymous. What does anonymous mean? It means that no one will ever know about the bad thing that happened to you.

If you first say yes, but then do not feel like doing it any more, you can give up at any time. No one will be angry at you. You do not need to explain to anyone why you gave up. No one will be mad at you for doing so.

If you feel upset about something, we can help

Remembering something bad that happened to you can be hard. It can feel bad. If you feel like you'd like to talk about it, you can always talk to your parents or those who care for you. For example you can talk to your siblings, your family, your teachers, your school counsellors, friends or any grown ups you trust. You can talk to anyone that you trust and who you think can help you.

You can also call and talk to someone who can help [phone and link to the ISPCC service will be provided here]. If you would like to talk to someone and not tell your parents or someone who takes care of you that you talked about it, you can call this phone. Or send a message here [ISPCC message service link provided]. No one will know that you have talked to them, and they can help. They are grown up people who are trained to help.

So, what do you need to do?

We will ask your parent or someone who takes care of you to tell us about the bad experience you had on a smartphone. They will do that by typing (writing) the text [words] about what happened to you into a box on the internet [we call this box an online form].

This text [text means words] could be about something bad that happened to you. For example, if someone was mean to you, which we sometimes call cyberbullying. Or if a stranger tried to talk to you on social media by pretending they were a child your age. Or if you searched for or saw things online [which means on the internet, such as social media or in google for example] that talk about how someone can be very thin. Or how someone can do something hurtful to themselves.

Please know that no one will be able to know that this has happened to you. Chirp will only get text [words] about what happened, but they will never be able to connect it to you personally. This means sharing these words with us is "anonymous". Your parent or someone who takes care of you might ask you to show them your phone so that they can copy the exact same text [words] from what happened into the online form. If you do not feel like doing that, you should always feel free to say no. Your parent or someone who takes care of you cannot and should not make you participate if you do not want to.

Would you like to do this?

I would like to do this (this means: I accept to participate).

I understand that I do so voluntarily (because I want to do so), and that I can withdraw (give up) at any time.

[participants will be asked to tick a box with yes or no]

DRAFT questionnaire public consultation

- 1) Please enter your child's current age
- 2) Please enter your child's age at the time of the incident
- 3) Please enter your child's sex
- 4) Which of the following type of incident/content did your child have experience with:
 - a) online grooming
 - b) cyberbullying
 - c) self-harming content

5) Which social media or direct messaging platform did the incident take place on? [list of social media sites to be provided or 'other' option]

6) Please describe the incident to us as fully as possible. Please do not use any personal information such as your or your child's or someone else's child's name, handles/usernames/accounts, address, telephone etc. If you enter any such information by mistake, it will be automatically deleted.

7) Please provide examples of the language used in the incident

DEBRIEFING FORM

Thank you so much for participating in our project whose goal is to understand children's experiences with grooming, cyberbullying and self-harm, in order to build Chirp technology.

Your information is protected:

Your information and the information about your child will be protected at all times during the study. We are not collecting, processing or storing any personal data as part of this research. If you manually entered any personal information into the form by mistake, this information will be deleted automatically. No one can know what you wrote in the publication form.

Need help or would like to talk to someone?

If you or your child feel the need to talk to anyone about something that happened during the project or about your thoughts, emotions, or anything that you may have remembered during the project, please consider calling [ISPCC dedicated phoneline for Chirp]. If you or your child would like to talk to a professional (someone whose job it is to help children and adults), please contact [link to ISPCC counselling provided for child counselling; link to helplines providing support to adults provided here]. If you would like to report the incident you anonymously described in the form, you can do so by contacting TUSLA, Child Protection Agency [contact provided here].

You can also visit the websites listed below. The research team will ensure that the results of the research are widely available and you can contact research company Amarach about the results [details provided here]

Other Resources You may find the following resources useful: Barnardos Works with vulnerable children and their families and campaigns for the rights of all children. Website: <u>https://www.barnardos.ie/</u> Telephone: 1850 222300

BeLongTo

Supports lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans young people in Ireland.

Website: http://www.belongto.org/

Telephone: 01 670 6223

CTYI

Provides academic programmes and resources for Gifted and high academic ability students in Ireland.

Website: https://www.dcu.ie/ctyi/index.shtml

Facebook Safety Centre

Facebook Safety Centre works with external experts, including a Safety Advisory Board, gathering feedback from our community to develop policies, tools and resources to keep you safe. Website: https://www.facebook.com/safety

FUSE

An anti-bullying and online safety programme developed by the Anti-bullying Research and Resource centre in DCU.

Website: https://antibullyingcentre.ie/fuse/

Telephone: 01 884 2012

ISPCC/ Childline

Ireland's 24-hour national listening service for all children and young people (under the age of 18) in Ireland.

Website: https://www.childline.ie/index.php

Telephone: 1800 66 66 66 (24 hours a day)

Message: 50101 (10am – 4am daily)

Jigsaw

The National Centre for Youth Mental Health in Ireland.

Website: <u>https://www.jigsaw.ie</u>

Telephone: 01 472 7010

Anti-Bullying Centre, DCU

A leader in the field of research, resource development and training in bullying in Ireland and is an internationally recognised centre of excellence in bullying research.

Website: https://antibullyingcentre.ie/

Telephone: 01 884 2012

Ombudsman for Children's Office

A human rights institution and work to protect the rights of children and young people in Ireland. Website: <u>https://www.oco.ie/</u>

Telephone: (01) 865 6800

Pieta House

Residential centre for the prevention of self-harm or suicide.

Website: https://pieta.ie/

Telephone: 01 6010000

SpunOut

Ireland's youth information website created by young people, for young people.

Website: https://spunout.ie/

Telephone: (01) 675 3554

TackleBullying

Ireland's national antibullying website.

Website: http://tacklebullying.ie/

Teenline

A national active listening service for children and young people up to the age of 18 in Ireland. Website: <u>https://www.ispcc.ie/services/teenline</u>

Telephone: 1800 833 634

Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI)

Seeks to improve conditions and advance the rights and equality of trans people and their families.

Website: <u>https://www.teni.ie/</u> Telephone: 01 8733575 **Webwise**

Free information, advice and resources to help parents, teachers and students, address internet safety issues.

Website: <u>https://www.webwise.ie/</u>

If you would like to contribute (as a parent/caregiver, NOT a child) further to Chirp's research by participating in, for example, interviews or focus groups, please click the link below – you will be redirected to a separate website where you can submit your name, email address and age of your child at the time they experienced online harm. Note, your contact details will not be linked in any way to the submission/s you have just made via this portal. Should you then decide not to participate, you are free to withdraw your details from consideration.

I have read the debrief information above

No

Yes

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