



Phones that can keep tabs on children

Hi-tech mobiles boost for parents

By Linda McKee

MOBILE phone technology similar to that used to track the Omagh bombers could soon help Ulster parents to keep tabs on their children.

An Irish security firm is offering a service that will allow parents to follow their children's movements through mobile phones.

Top Security, based in Dublin, is planning to launch the service early next month.

The company has already been surveying parents in the Republic to gauge how often they ring their children to check their whereabouts.

They said the service would offer parents "peace of mind in knowing where their children are without bothering them with telephone calls".

This latest service is a commercial alternative to phone surveillance which is often used by police to locate suspects in criminal cases. The phones are tracked by telecommunications base stations as soon as they are switched on.

A similar technique was used to convict Colm Mur-

phy of plotting the Omagh bombing that took the lives of 29 people and two unborn children.

A mobile phone mast sited at Omagh College of Further Education picked up six calls to and from Murphy's mobile phone on the day of the blast.

The evidence helped to convict the 49-year-old, from Jordan's Corner, Ravensdale, Co Louth, but a retrial has since been ordered.

Parents who sign up to the new Toplocate system will be able to use a password to access a website. This will allow them to find their child's phone on a map, pinpointing it to within metres of its location.

In order to use the Toplocate service, parents will have to inform their children that they are being monitored.

Children will also receive regular text messages from the company informing them that their phone is part of the location service for parents.

However, the child will not know when or how often their location is tracked on the Internet.

Details of the exact ser-

vice are as yet unclear, and the company has declined to offer extensive information until the official launch next month.

There are now more phones than people in Ireland, north and south, with several people owning multiple handsets. In the 12 to 18-year-old age group, over 90% own mobile phones.

HOW MOBILE NETWORK LOCATES YOUR CHILD

