

Kids & smartphones – what’s the big deal?

When children first started getting smartphones a decade ago, there was no research about their impact. Now there is, and it’s overwhelming.



HARMFUL CONTENT

Smartphones act as a gateway to pornography, violent and extreme content. Often kids don’t seek them out but are exposed to them via algorithms and messaging apps. Once seen, these things can never be unseen. 90% of girls and 50% of boys say they’re sent explicit content they didn’t want to see.



ADDICTION

Tech companies intentionally make apps addictive, because the more time we spend, the more data they harvest, the more money they make. By leveraging dopamine circuits, they trigger brain responses akin to slot machine gambling. 1 in 4 young adults show signs of behavioural addiction to smartphones.



ACADEMIC DISTRACTION

The average teen receives 237 smartphone notifications a day – one every few minutes – making focusing on schoolwork hard. Studies show that excessive smartphone use has negative impacts on academic performance. Children at schools with effective smartphone bans get GCSE’s 1-2 grades higher.



GROOMING

Sites like TikTok, Snapchat and Roblox are used by sexual predators to target children with their first smartphones, blackmailing them into sharing sexual content. Sextortion is now the fastest growing crime against teens. Since 2022, there has been a 66% rise in ‘self generated’ sexual abuse imagery of children under 10.



CYBERBULLYING

Disagreements between pupils used to stop at the school gate, now they follow kids wherever they go, 24/7. Young people who experience cyberbullying are twice as likely to attempt suicide and self-harm. One in six teens report being cyberbullied in the past month, according to the World Health Organisation.



MENTAL ILLNESS

Rates of depression, anxiety and suicide in young people have spiked globally since 2010, when children first began getting smartphones. The first generation to grow up with smartphones are now adults – data shows that the younger they got their first smartphone, the worse their mental health today.



OPPORTUNITY COST

Underpinning all these harms is one that is potentially the most significant of all. For the first time in human history, children are spending more time on devices than they are playing – an activity crucial to our healthy development. Smartphones are experience blockers, distracting children from engaging in the real world. The average UK 12-year-old now spends 29 hours a week – equivalent to a part-time job – on their smartphone. This leaves little time for the real world activities and relationships that enable us to learn the essential life skills we need to transition into adulthood. The average daily time that teens spend with friends has plummeted by 65% since 2010.

Join the grassroots parents movement to protect childhood from Big Tech

www.smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/join

For all links to stats references see www.smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/the-problem



Smartphone Free Childhood is a grassroots movement of parents who believe childhood's too short to be spent on a smartphone

We're on a mission to

01.

Bring parents together to start new and positive conversations about the problems of smartphones and social media in childhood

02.

Empower parents to wait to get their kids a smartphone until at least the end of Year 9, through signing up to the Parent Pact in their region

03.

Demonstrate that parents are demanding change at scale, and therefore force the government and tech companies to act

Why we're doing this now

We've been put in an impossible position by the tech companies. It's a lose lose - either allow our children access to something all the evidence tells us is damaging, or say no and risk alienating them among their peers at a crucial stage of their social development. **We believe something needs to change, and it starts with all of us.**

How you can get involved

Sign the Parent Pact - Join the growing movement of parents choosing to delay - it takes 30 seconds
parentpact.smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk

Join your WhatsApp community - Find solidarity, support and inspiration - we have one in every county in Britain
whatsapp.smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk

Help build the movement - Volunteer to be a Regional Leader and start making change in your community
regionalleadersignup.smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk

Sign up to our newsletter - Get the latest news and campaign updates from SFC HQ
smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/newsletter

Follow us on Instagram/LinkedIn
[@smartphonefreechildhood](https://www.instagram.com/smartphonefreechildhood)
[smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk](https://www.linkedin.com/company/smartphonefreechildhood)



Scan to sign the Parent Pact
 #smartphonefreechildhood