“When you are ready for your child to stop being a child, give them a smartphone”

A smartphone-free childhood does not mean a phone-free one.

SMARTPHONE-FREE CHILDHOOD

SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD

delay smartphones.
PROTECT CHILDHOOD

(Click on banners to go to the websites)

Objectives of this meeting

- Introduce the nationwide movement for a SMARTPHONE-FREE CHILDHOOD
- Share evidence from research around the impact of smartphones on children
- Share concerns that parents have around the use of smartphones
- Discuss concerns about delaying smartphones for children
- Share alternatives for smartphones
- Provide details of how parents can work together to support the movement collaboratively
- Gain an insight into parental views on the subject to inform further developments
- Share the progress that has been made over the past 6 months

SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD

WHO? WHAT? WHY?

OUR FOUNDERS

Daisy Greenwell

An experienced journalist, Daisy spent ten years at The Times as a writer and commissioning editor. Since then she's edited the renowned constructive journalism magazine Positive News and contributed to national news and features titles.

Clare Fernyhough

Clare is a business psychologist with a background in broadcast journalism at ITN and Channel 4. She's now Principal Psychologist at Pearn Kandola LLP where she uses psychology to achieve behaviour change in organisations.

Joe Ryrie

As the founder of a successful branding consultancy, Joe has a background in launching and building high profile consumer startups. An experienced strategist, creative director, investor and advisor to founders, he's also Daisy's husband :)

Smartphone-Free Childhood is a parent-led movement on a mission to protect millions of children from the dangers of using smartphones too young.

The goals for this campaign :

- A nationwide ban on smartphones in schools* with phone lockers and pouches so they are not accessible during the day.
- Ban of social media for children under 16 years old.
- Ban of smartphones for children under 14 years old.*

Concerns about delaying smartphones

"That's how they communicate now!"

"They can't be the only ones without one or they'll be left out!"

"But they need independence, this is part of growing up"

"But they will miss out on WhatsApp groups with their friends"

"But we promised them..."

"But their older siblings have them"

"For children with divorced parents, aren't smartphones a necessity?"

Kids can communicate with each parent on a simple phone and use an iPad for Facetime calls if required.

"Can't we just use a stripped back iPhone with parental controls?"

"But my child needs a smartphone for train tickets and bus trackers!"

"This will never work, smartphones are essential in our lives now."

https://delaysmartphones.org.uk/evidence/

...addictive

FOCUS AND BRAIN CHANGES

46% of teens say they use the internet **"almost constantly"**

23% of young people have a dysfunctional relationship with their smartphones

READ MORE

...contributing to the huge increase in cyberbullying

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

84% of bullying in children with smartphones, takes place online.

Children **no longer have respite** from bullies at home.

READ MORE

...encouraging children to turn to peers over parents for direction

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Peers are now children's primary attachment. Children are in almost constant contact with their peers shifting the primary relationships away from their parents/guardians

READ MORE

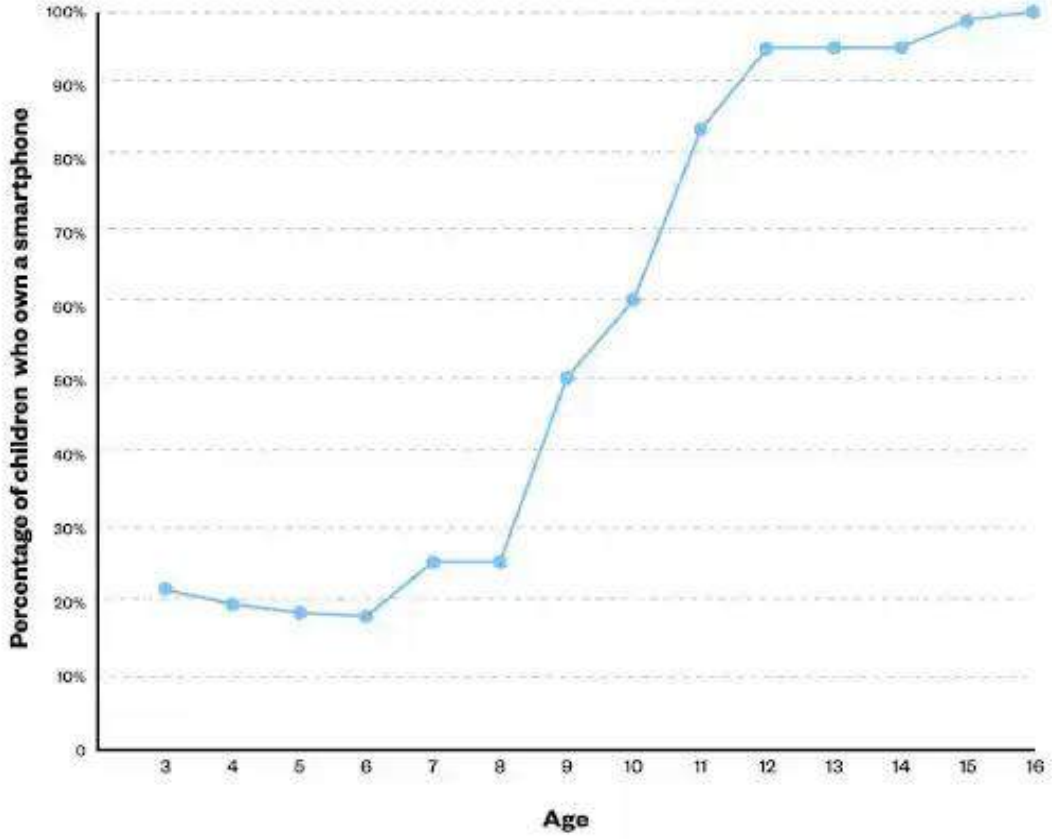
...exposing children to sexual abuse & grooming

18+

SEXUAL CONTENT & BEHAVIOUR

There has been **a 1,058% increase since 2019** of webpages showing sexual abuse of 7-10 yr-old children

READ MORE



(Source: Ofcom)

A breakdown of the percentage of children that use mobile phones to go online

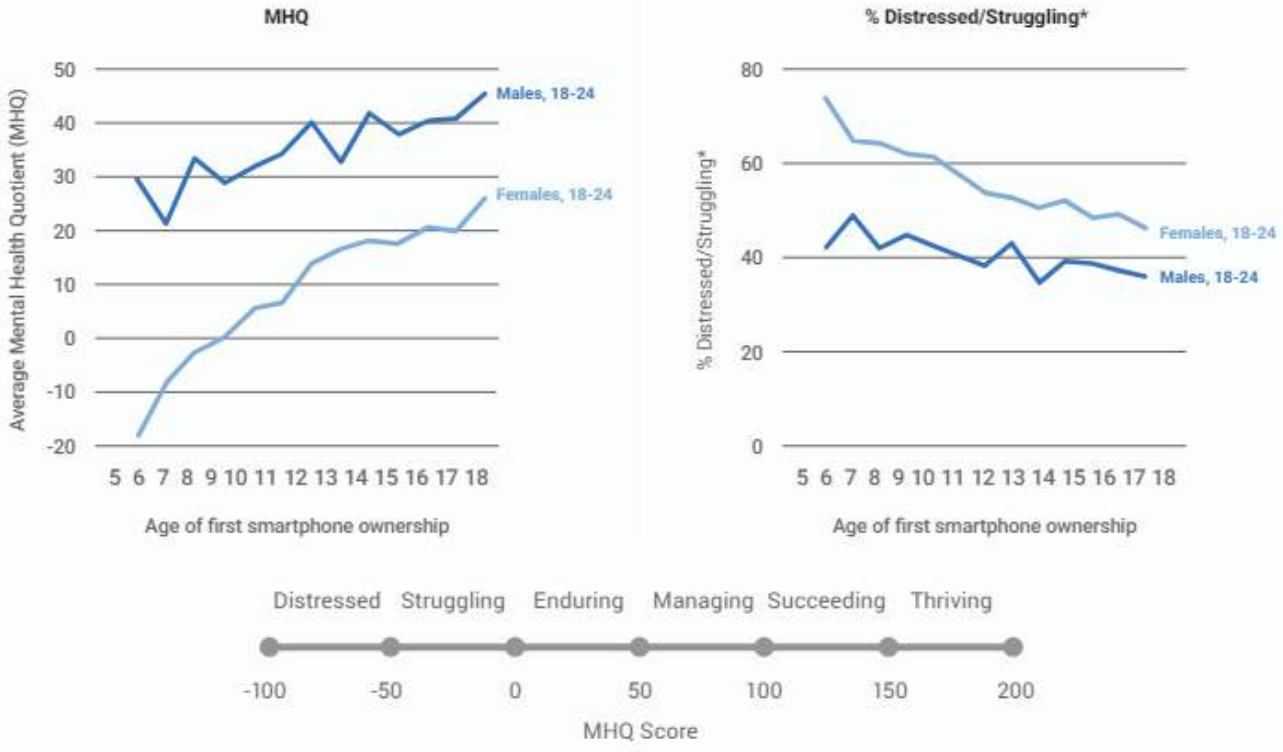
Age	% of children that use mobile phones to go online
All ages (3-15)	68%
3-4	39%
5-7	50%
8-11	71%
12-15	94%

(Source: Ofcom)

By the age of 10, the majority of children (61%) possess their own smartphones. This will go some way to explain why 71% of this age group use a mobile phone to access the internet.

Figure 1: Mental wellbeing in young adulthood (ages 18-24) improves with older age of first smartphone

Mental wellbeing measured by the Mental Health Quotient or MHQ increases with older age of first smartphone ownership. Correspondingly the percentage that are distressed or struggling decreases.



...creating structural changes to children's brains

FOCUS AND BRAIN CHANGES

Excessive smartphone use is associated with **psychiatric, cognitive, emotional, medical and brain changes**

READ MORE

...damaging children's eyes

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Children's **myopia risk** (shortsightedness) is linked to smartphone use.

READ MORE

...affecting children's ability to focus

FOCUS AND BRAIN CHANGES

Nearly **40% of children** have experienced reduced levels of concentration due to their smartphones

READ MORE

...making children more likely to self harm

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Hospitalisation rates for self-harm have increased by **140% since 2010.**

24% of UK girls aged 17 have self-harmed.

READ MORE

Alternatives to Smartphones

Internet Free Phones

When you do want to get a phone for your child make sure:

- **The phone does not support WI-FI**
- No 4G/5G
- No selfie camera
- **Use a SIM card with NO DATA**, calls and texts only
- Give it with a contract/boundaries (see below)

Sim Cards:
IMPORTANT – When you get a SIM card for your child's phone, make sure that it has NO DATA roaming, only calls and texts so that there is no chance that they can access the internet. Currently Asda are the only company that are offering this.
Asda Unlimited calls and Texts £4 per month

Nokia 5710 Express Audio – £75

Nokia 105 – £25

Nokia 3310 – £60

Watches

These are watches designed specifically for kids, unlike the phones mentioned above. It is less likely to get lost, it has an in-built tracker and introduces kids to technology in a safer way. This is what we would recommend to start with:

[Imoo Z1 Smartwatch for Kids] – £99

[XPLORA GO X2] – £99

Tracking devices

Many parents want to be able to track them for safety and peace of mind. If you are getting them a phone from the list above, these will not come with tracking devices so if this is something you want you can get a tracking sticker to attach directly onto the phone.

[Tile](#) – £25

[Apple Airtag](#) – £30

[Karri.io - £25](#)

What can parents do?

The change can only be implemented by parents at home!

Parents make a pact with groups of families to delay smartphones until 14

St Albans School agreed policy to delay smartphones until children are 14

Parent Ambassadors help build support within their year groups

Parents make pacts in bigger groups within class and year group whatsapp groups to delay smartphones until 14

Parents join county whatsapp groups agreeing to delay smartphones until 14

Make meaningful change nationwide by delaying smartphones until 14

Parent Blueprint for Smartphone Free Childhood

Our Goals

1. Ban use of smartphones in all St Albans schools in line with government guidance, seeking commitment to policy b on page 7 (“Mobile phone handed in on arrival”)

2. Withhold smartphones from children under 14 across St Albans

3. To ensure that all schools to have a clear policy that lessons must not require students to have use of a smartphone, and must ensure that a smartphone is not required to participate in school life

Milestones/Targets

1. (School) Demonstrate >50% support from school's parents, via Second Survey

2. (School) Create a Parent Pact, signed by >50% of school's parents

3. (St Albans) Write a letter to secondary schools from primary parents, signed by >50% of primary parents

○ Include a table of all primaries and data on volume of support

4. (St Albans) Write a letter to local MP from primary and secondary school parents, signed by >50% of parents

○ Include a table of all schools and data on volume of support

5. (St Albans) Create a city-wide Parent Pact

Modelling good behaviour

What has happened in the past 6 months

- Letter sent out to parents at all St Albans primary schools 33/36 schools supporting the idea.
- Highly positive response locally and across the country
- Continued local and national press coverage which has greatly raised the profile of the campaign
- Rapid increase in members of county WhatsApp groups showing support and commitment to the campaign
- Southwark Secondary Schools have agreed to ban smartphones in school and implementing stronger consequences for those children caught with smartphones as opposed to mobile phones.
- Bushey Primary Schools have sent a joint letter out to parents to show support for SFC
- Ormiston academy trust has banned smartphones from their school day in all of their 44 schools – 35000 pupils.
- 3 of the secondary schools in St Albans have said that they do not require children to have smartphones and 1 has said that it will change its policy for September to do the same.
- Australia are introducing a ban on children access social media – age between 14 and 16
- Better Phone Project launched by HMD (they make Nokia phones) to develop a child-friendly phone based on the ideas of parents.

Why parental controls are a big tech cop out

58%
of teens say they've never had controls put on their phone by parents

47%
of teens with controls in place say they have bypassed them

(Parentkind poll, May 2024)

If your child has a smartphone, we'd recommend using parental controls – but ultimately they're not the solution to this problem

Many parents don't have the tech-knowledge or headspace to set them up (or to hold fast in the face of a teen lobbying for more)

And teens find multiple ways to bypass controls:

- Performing a factory reset
- Using VPN software
- Hacking the WiFi router
- Memorising your passcode

Even if your kid's phone has controls, their friends may not – so they may see or be sent inappropriate content anyway

Yet big tech lobby government not to regulate them further by arguing that their parental controls are sufficient – that 'parents just need to educate themselves'

Parental controls have been around since the dawn of the iPhone – and we are where we are. Teens across the globe are experiencing an explosion in mental illness.

SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD

To exit full screen, press and hold Esc

Smartphone Free Childhood is a grassroots movement on a mission to challenge Big Tech's colonisation of childhood

Join the growing movement. It takes 30secs - and could change the world!

SIGN OUR PACT

Find tools, template letters and guides to help navigate the issue.

RESOURCES

Join an international SFC group, or find out how to start one.

GLOBAL GROUPS

Activate Windows
Go to Settings to activate Windows.

SMARTPHONES ARE HIGHLY ADDICTIVE

Tech companies spend billions on making apps and devices intentionally addictive, affecting young brains in a way that is similar to gambling. One study found one-in-five teens looked at YouTube “almost constantly”.

2022 Study into teens and social media

SMARTPHONE USE CORRELATES TO MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

They’ve been directly linked to poor mental health and low self-esteem, especially in girls. And social media use in teens correlates directly to rates of anxiety and depression.

Depression and social media use in teens

SMARTPHONES EXPOSE CHILDREN TO HARMFUL CONTENT

The internet is a gateway to pornography, bullying, grooming and all sorts of harmful content. Social has been proven to increase self-harm and suicidal tendencies amongst adolescents.

2020 study on smartphones and mental health.

SMARTPHONES REDUCE ATTENTION-SPANS

They’re changing the way children’s brains develop, and fundamentally affecting their ability to concentrate.

2021 Study by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights

SMARTPHONES ROB CHILDREN OF THEIR CHILDHOOD

Even harmless content isn’t harmless. Time spent on a device is time not spent with other children; playing, exploring, interacting and developing vital social skills.

Must-watch Jonathan Haidt Talk