



This film includes content which some viewers may find distressing and may be unsuitable for children.



**SMARTPHONE
FREE CHILDHOOD**

Children, smartphones and how West Leigh Junior School can help

Primary School Presentation

April 2025



**Smartphones are a new
frontier: for parents, for young
people & for educators**



In two decades, everything's changed



2005

Nokias ruled; the
iPhone wasn't invented
until 2007

2025

Smartphones have transformed
the experience of childhood



Smartphones have become the norm



25%

of 5-7 year olds
in the UK own their
own smartphone

89%

of 12 year-olds
in the UK own their
own smartphone





Despite growing concerns about their impact

94%

of parents think
smartphones
are harmful

Parentkind nationwide poll of 2,496 people,
April 24

67%

of 16-18 year olds
think smartphones
are harmful

Parentkind poll, 2024

87%

of teachers agree
for teens the
negatives of
smartphones
outweigh the
benefits

Teacher Tapp survey, 2025



Everyone's got one because everyone's got one



Most parents believe smartphones are harmful, yet the average age of ownership is 9



Because resisting peer pressure becomes almost impossible when children's social lives migrate online

The powerful network effects of smartphones and social media mean parents and young people feel like they have no choice



The only winners are the tech companies



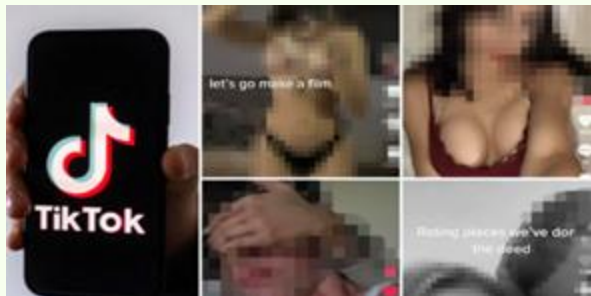
The status quo only benefits the most powerful companies on the planet - who make billions from capturing our children's attention



**So what exactly
is the problem?**



The three major concerns



CONTENT

Smartphones are gateways to extreme content and viewpoints that we'd never expose children to in real life.



CONTACT

Sites like TikTok, Snapchat and Roblox are used by sexual predators to target children with their first smartphones.



TIME

Smartphones are fundamentally changing childhood - distracting children from engaging in real world activities.



**“We’ll look back in 20 years
and be horrified by what our
children were exposed to”**

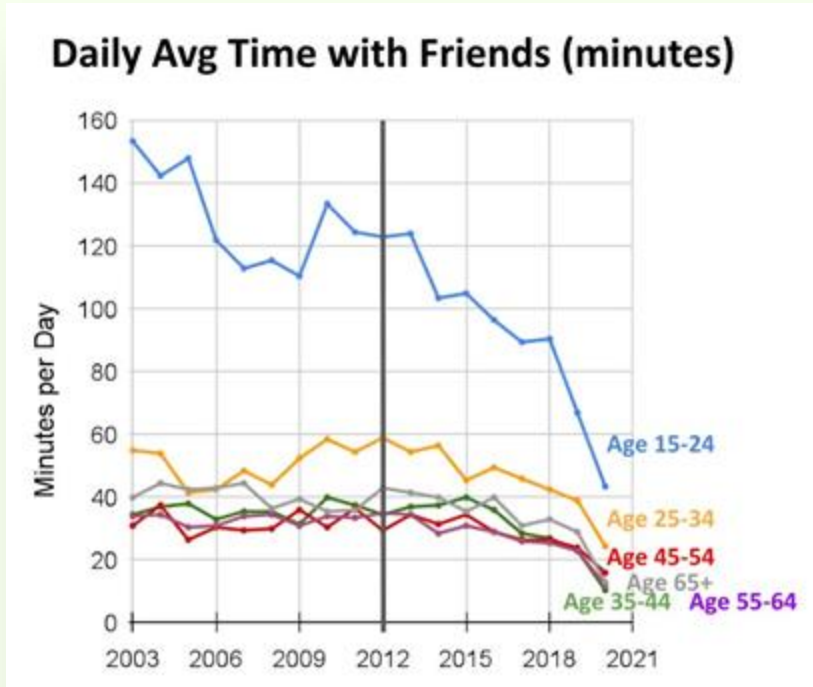


Dame Rachel de Souza

Children’s Commissioner for England, 2022



Smartphones are rewiring childhood



35hrs

the average time
British teens spend
on their smartphone
per week



What are we losing?



**Less time
outdoors**



**Less time
playing,
reading &
exercising**



**Less social
interaction and
face to face
communication**



**More time
scrolling,
alone**



How can Primary schools help support parents?

SFC is building a huge parents' movement

100,000+

Parent Pacts have been signed, agreeing to delay smartphones until at least the age of 14





The movement is growing in Essex

3423

Parent Pacts have been
signed in Essex

45

Parent Pacts have been
signed in West Leigh Junior
School



But parents can't tackle this alone.

**Schools are in a powerful position
to protect childhood.**

Making your school fully smartphone-free



Set a clear boundary that primary school children do not need a smartphone



Being explicitly smartphone-free helps change the culture in your school community



Keeping in Touch

I want to track my child's location

If you want to be able to see your child's whereabouts, a fitness watch with inbuilt tracking is a good option. This must not have a camera or internet access. They're not perfect, but they're cheaper than smartphones, less likely to be stolen, and don't come with the risks of social media and screen addiction.

Before you buy a tracking device, ask yourself if you really need to know your child's location all the time. GPS tracking might seem reassuring, but it can erode trust, delay independence, and create a false sense of security. It tells you *where* your child is but can't protect them from real risks. Many parents find that a basic phone (calls and texts only) and teaching real-world safety skills are better ways to keep children safe while building their confidence and independence.



How will I keep in touch with my child on their way to and from school?

Every family wants to keep their child safe. But here's the thing: a basic phone (calls and texts only) does the job without exposing them to the risks of social media and the internet.

In fact, a smartphone might actually make their journey *less* safe. Since smartphones became the norm, child muggings have soared – 500 children are targeted every single day in the UK.

Then there's the distraction factor: 1 in 5 secondary school students who use their phone while walking have been hit or had a near miss with a car, and the vast majority (84%) admit to looking at their phone near roads. A basic phone keeps things simple. And safe.



Alternative Phones



Nokia 105 £19.99 ↗

Sim-free mobile phone

- Talk, text and wireless FM radio
- Amazing battery life
- Torch and snake game



Nokia 2660 Flip £50-60 ↗

- Texts and phone calls
- Very long lasting battery
- Range of colours
- Bright, colourful display (non pixelated text)
- Built in FM radio, MP3 player and torch
- Snake (and Tetris but you need to pay for the full game)
- Single rear facing camera (no selfies!)



Nokia 5710 £74.99 ↗

- Like an iPod with in-built wireless earbuds which charge when not in use
- Inbuilt mp3 player with storage for thousands of songs
- Inbuilt speaker
- Wireless FM radio
- Great sound quality
- Great battery life
- No wifi or whatsapp



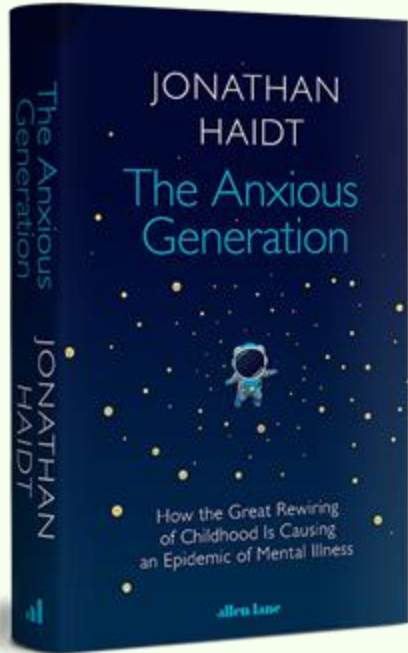
Alternative Phones

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.



Recommended reading: The Anxious Generation



“We have made childhood smaller, lonelier, and sadder— wrapped up in the glow of a screen. It’s time to unplug our children from a system that was never designed to protect them and give them back the gift of a real childhood”



Dr Jonathan Haidt

Professor of Social Psychology, NYU

 **Recommended watching: Swiped, the school that banned smartphones, on Channel 4**



“Children’s access to smartphones and social media is the defining public health crisis of our time”



Dr Rangan Chatterjee
Presenter, Swiped



“In a world where fast-changing technology is actually impacting the development of our children's brains, it is up to us to stand up for them, and their futures. If not us, then who?”

St. Albans Heads group, May 2024



SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD

Find our more information at:

www.smartphonefreeschools.co.uk

www.smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk

@smartphonefreechildhood