

A group of children are playing outdoors under a blue sky with clouds. One child in the center is holding a smartphone, and another child to the right is holding a tablet. The image has a teal overlay.

Edmund Waller's smartphone ban

and raising children in the smartphone era

**SMARTPHONE
FREE CHILDHOOD**





Our aims

In this meeting, we will:

- share key details from the school's mobile phone policy, coming into effect in September
- highlight evidence of the impact of smartphone use
- share ways to help you limit screen time for your child and delay the introduction of smartphones
- explain changes we will be making within the school





Edmund Waller's updated mobile phone policy

- From September, smart mobile phones and watches will be banned from the school premises.
- Only Year 5 and 6 children will be permitted to bring in a non-smart (brick) mobile phone to school.
- This must be turned off before entering the school and handed in at the school office on arrival at school. It can be collected at the end of the day.
- If the phone needs to be used for medical reasons, this must be in the presence of a member of staff.
- In specific cases, there may be an exemption from the smartphone ban, for example for medical reasons.





In two decades, everything's changed

2006



2026



2006

**Nokias ruled...
texts, calls & snake**

2007

**The first
iPhone launches
"A computer in our
pocket"**

2012

**4G UK launch,
internet always
available,
everywhere**

2020s

**Explosion of short-
form content & AI
powered algorithms**

2026

**Smartphones have
transformed
society... and
childhood**



Smartphones have become 'normal' for children



Age
12

90%
of children have
a smartphone



Age
9

Average age
a child gets a
smartphone in
the UK



Age
6-7

1 in 3
children have a
smartphone



Doctors are speaking up too

“I believe this is the most **urgent public health issue** of our time.”



Dr Rangan Chatterjee

NHS GP, AUTHOR, BROADCASTER

“Every day doctors see the **damage** smartphones are doing to children’s mental health and wellbeing.”



Dr Susie Davies

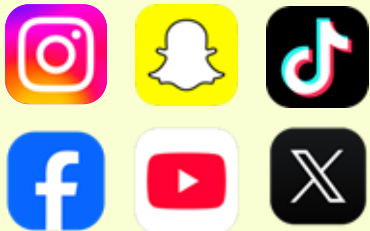
NHS GP AND CAMPAIGNER;
FOUNDER OF PAPAYA PARENTS



The only winners are the tech companies

The Attention Economy

We don't pay them.
The more **time** we spend, the
more **money** they make.



Attention =

The business model of social
media giants is based on
Profit
addiction

Tech companies make

\$40B+

per year from under 18s*

The attention economy profits from lost childhoods

* Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health study, 2023 - \$11B of revenue for US; \$43B is extrapolated to a global figure for 2025



It can feel like an impossible position

Either we...

Give our children an addictive product



Or we...

Risk alienating them from their peers



It's a lose-lose: for parents, young people & society



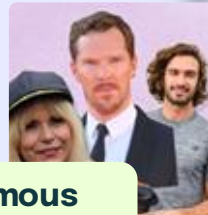
Smartphone Free Childhood is now a global movement

Feb 2024

SFC began after that WhatsApp group went viral in Feb 2024



Hundreds of thousands of parents



Famous supporters



1000+ local organisers

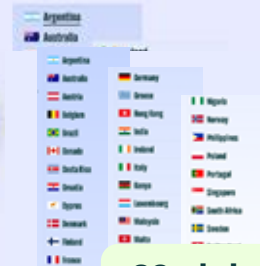
13,750
Schools covered

Parents in 40% of UK schools

Feb 2026

SFC is now a national charity and leading global movement

Every UK county



32 global groups



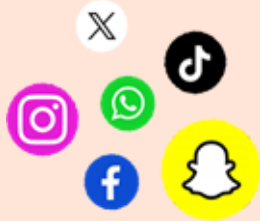
SFC isn't anti-tech, it's pro-childhood

**Delay the
introduction of
smart phones**



SMARTPHONE

**Delay social
media until at
least 16**



SOCIAL MEDIA

**A simple phone
to stay in
contact**



SIMPLE PHONE

**Shared access
to a family
computer**



**FAMILY
COMPUTER**

**Alternative
trackers
(or go without)**

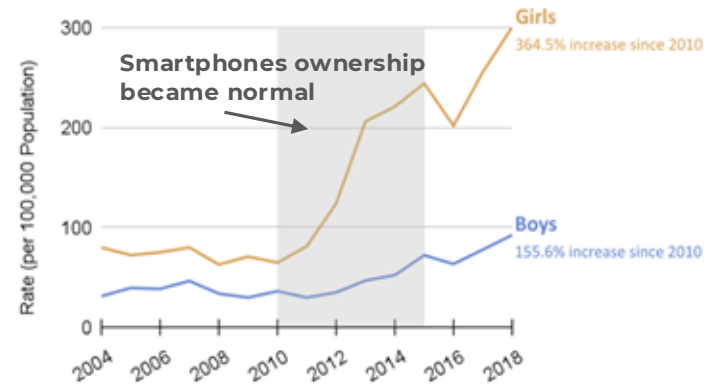


TAGS OR GPS



We're facing a teen mental health crisis

UK 10-12 year olds, self-harm episodes



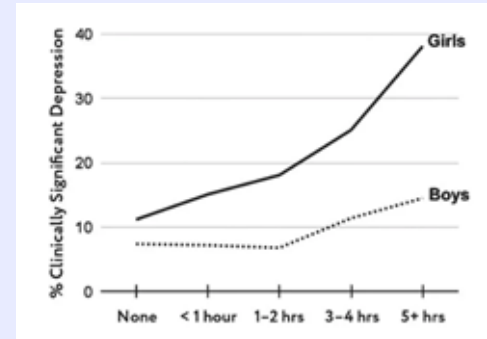


Smartphones increase the likelihood of mental illness

3x

**depression risk
& 2x anxiety risk**

Among teens with
problematic
smartphone use





Smartphones are designed to be addictive

4-6 hours

**Average daily time teens
spend on smartphones**

Among UK 12-15 year olds;
nearly a full-time job



Smartphones expose children to things they can't unsee

51%

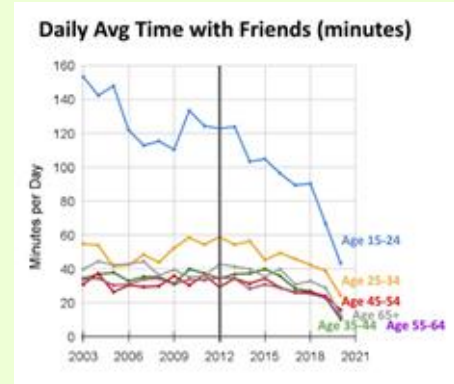
**of 13 year olds have seen
violent, hardcore porn**



Smartphones displace real world activities & connection

↓ **65%**

**Reduction in time
spent in real life with
friends**



Since smartphones became common in the 2010s



Smartphones fragment children's attention

237

**notifications a day
on average**

Median average, Common Sense Media, 2023



Smartphones disrupt sleep - critical to healthy development

1 night / week
heavy social-media
users lose one night's
sleep each week

UK Millennium Cohort Study, 2019
(11,872 adolescents, age 13-15)

“Our teenagers are truly
addicted... The vast majority
of teenagers tell me they are
awake until the small hours
on their phones.”

“In 20 years of teaching I have
never before experienced so
many instances of children
falling asleep in lessons as
now.”

Teacher testimonies
shared with SFC, 2025



Smartphones make bullying harder to escape

24/7

Bullying in children's pockets

Issues no longer stop at the
school gate; they can amplify
and exacerbate overnight

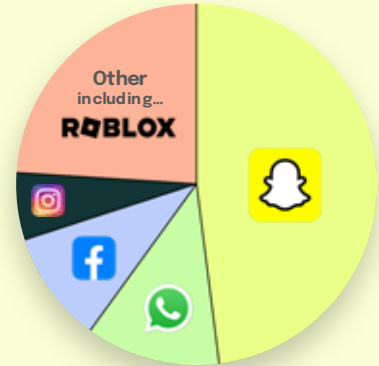


Smartphones have increased the risk of online grooming

A child is
60x
more likely to be
groomed online than
abducted from the
street

Groomers go where children
are

% of reported incidents



NSPCC FOI, 2023/4
(7,062 reported online grooming cases);
Home Office / PACT / CEOP
(116 estimated stranger child abductions 2024/5)

NSPCC 2024



Smartphone-free children have more chance to



Have happier childhoods

*Better mental health
More time for play
More presence*



Thrive in the future

*Stronger social skills
Better concentration
Improved school results*



Be safe as they grow up

*Less exposure to harm
Less exposure to predators
Lower likelihood of bullying*



The UK government's social media ban for under-16s



Social media ban for under-16s



- From Spring 2027, social media platforms will be blocked from offering services to under-16s
- The ban will include platforms like Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and X.
- It will not extend to messaging services like WhatsApp or gaming platforms like Roblox.



**The solution is to
work together**



If enough of parents agree to delay giving our children smartphones the **peer pressure reduces.**

Acting alone can feel impossible, but **together you are powerful.**



SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD

PARENT PACT

190,709

UK children signed up

16,116

UK schools covered

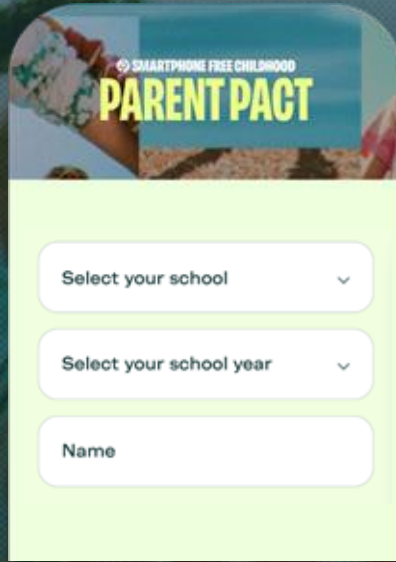
**The
PARENT PACT
makes acting
together
simple**



The more parents who sign, the more powerful it becomes

STEP 01

Search for your
child's school



SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD
PARENT PACT

Select your school ▾

Select your school year ▾

Name

STEP 02

Sign the Pact to delay
until at least 14



SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD
PARENT PACT

**Sign the
PARENT PACT**

Sign now >

STEP 03

View results for your
region, school & class



SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD
PARENT PACT

National (U

158,630

CHILDREN

13,750

SCHOOLS

Sort by:
Leaderboard

Region name

REGION	PACTS
Bedfordshire ↗	937
Berkshire ↗	3286
Bristol ↗	2510
Buckinghamshire ↗	2911
Cambridgeshire ↗	2936



What will we be doing differently at Edmund Waller?

- Staff will be able to bring in mobile phones for their own personal use.
- These must be kept in bags or cupboards and are not allowed to be used in the classrooms when children are present or in school play areas.
- If emergency phone calls need to be made, staff must do this from a school phone, make a call outside of the school premises or use their mobile phone in a discrete place away from children.
- Should staff need to call SLT for support, they should send a message to the leadership office or do so on a school phone.
- If there is an occasion where using their personal phone is necessary for safeguarding reasons, where possible this should be done away from children.
- Mobile phone use on school visits should be limited to contact with the school office or venues being visited.





What if my child already has a smartphone?



**Take an interest
& have open
conversations**



Set clear boundaries

- No phones overnight
- Screen-free meals
 - App time limits
- Delay social media



**Review your own
smartphone
behaviours**



**Invest in parental
controls & monitor
constantly**



Common concerns:

**I have controls, I know what
they're doing.**



Parental controls are important but not the solution

**Most children
don't have
parental
controls**

58%

of teens say
they have never
had parental
controls

Parentkind Poll,
May 2024

**If you have them, invest time
understanding how children
get around them**

47%

of teens with
controls have bi-
passed them

Parentkind Poll,
May 2024

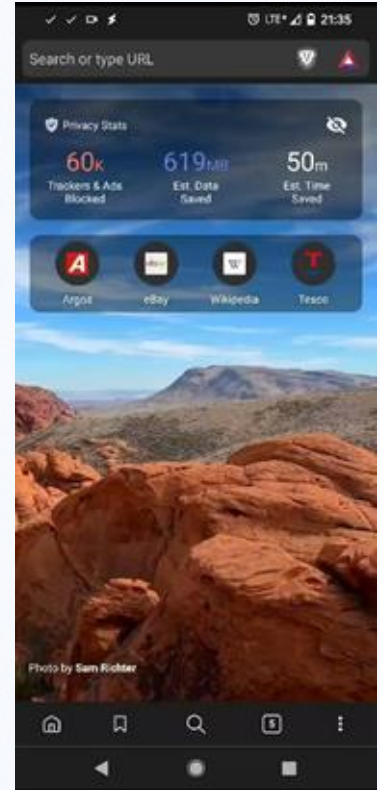
Performing a factory reset

Using VPN software

Hacking the router

Memorising your passcode

Using a proxy





Common concerns:

**My child needs a smartphone
to stay safe on the journey to
and from school.**



Carrying smartphones

We all want kids to be safe — and families often assume a smartphone is the best way to ensure that. But smartphones don't just offer connection — they also open the door to harmful content, group chats, and pressure to respond at all hours. Even with good intentions, they can expose young people to things they're simply not ready for.

There's also a growing issue with phone theft. Around 500 children are mugged for their phones every day in the UK (ONS, 2019), 200 of which are in London, and many secondary students admit to using their phones while walking, leading to accidents and near-misses.

A simple brick phone (call and text only) is more than enough for emergencies or last-minute changes — and in many ways, it makes their journey safer, not riskier.





**Do you have any questions for
us about the Edmund Waller
smartphone ban?**



If you have any further questions...



**Find answers
to common
questions**



**Explore 'Child-
friendly' phone
options**



**Learn how to
talk to kids
about
smartphones**



**View the latest
data and
research**

SMARTPHONEFREECHILDHOOD.ORG