



**SMARTPHONE
FREE CHILDHOOD**

Let's talk: raising kids in the smartphone era

PARENT TALK - 2026



**We're all trying
to do the best for
our kids**



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 kids



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



Nobody is happy with the status quo



94%

of **primary school parents** think smartphones are harmful

PARENTKIND POLL
2024



33%

of **parents of children with smartphones** have cried over their child's phone obsession

HMD POLL
2024



87%

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

TEACHER TAPP SURVEY
2025



67%

of **16-18 year olds** think smartphones are harmful

PARENTKIND POLL
2024



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

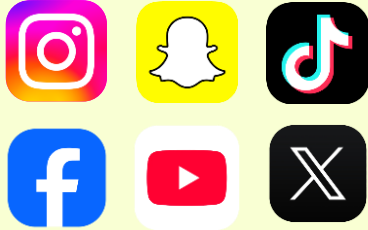
NHS GP AND CAMPAIGNER;
FOUNDER OF PAPAYA PARENTS



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
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



This problem is why the conversation started



2,917 425

daisygreenwell ⚡⚡ UPDATE - join us on this journey to unite parents, change the social norm and force government to protect our kids @smartphonefreechildhood ⚡⚡

I was chatting to another mum at our school recently and she told me that her 11yr old son has a smartphone, as do a third of the class in year 6. She hasn't got her other 8yr old child one yet because they haven't asked.

This conversation has filled me with terror. I don't want to give my child something that I know will damage her mental health and make her addicted. but I also know that the pressure to do so if the rest of her class have



- Two mums started a WhatsApp group
- It went viral on Instagram
- 1000s joined in days, across the UK



Smartphone Free Childhood is now a global movement

Feb 2024



Hundreds of thousands of parents



Famous supporters

SFC began after that WhatsApp group went viral in Feb 2024

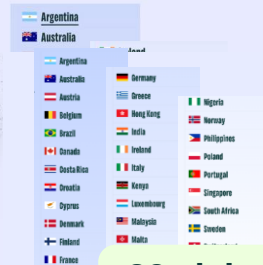


1000+ local organisers

13,750
Schools covered

Parents in 40% of UK schools

Every UK county



32 global groups

Feb 2026

SFC is now a national charity and leading global movement



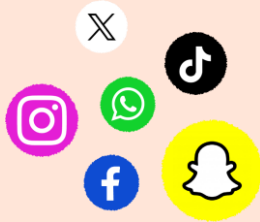
SFC isn't anti-tech, it's pro-childhood

Delay smartphones until at least 14



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



**Let's dig into
the issue**





We all want the same for our children



**Happy
today**

*Enjoy a happy,
healthy childhood*



**Thriving
tomorrow**

*Grow into confident,
capable adults*



**Safe
always**

*Stay safe as they
explore the world*



We all want the same for our children



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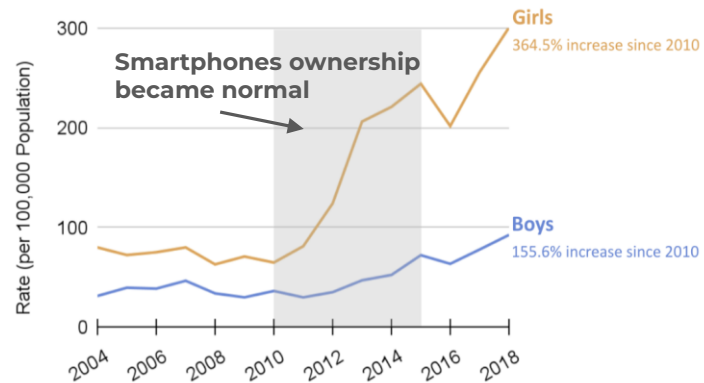
Smartphones make this all harder – and the data shows it



Happy
today

We're facing a teen mental health crisis

UK 10-12 year olds, self-harm episodes





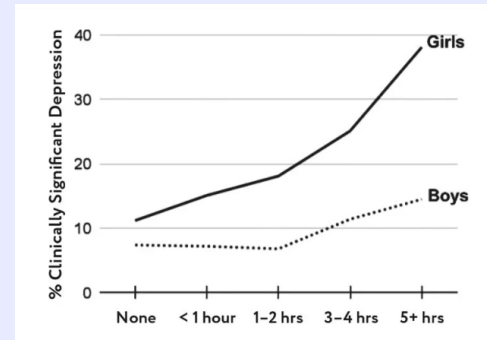
**Happy
today**

Smartphones increase the likelihood of mental illness

3x

**Depression risk
& 2x anxiety risk**

Among teens with
problematic
smartphone use





**Happy
today**

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



**Happy
today**

Smartphones expose kids to things they can't unsee

51%

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

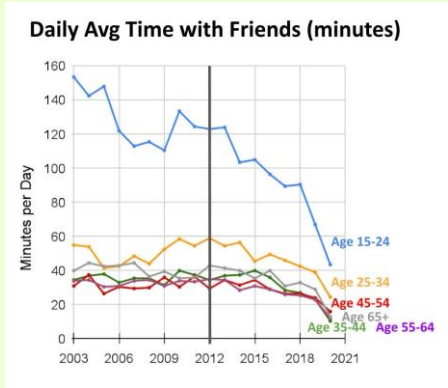


**Thriving
tomorrow**

Smartphones displace real world activities & connection

↓ 65%

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



Since smartphones became common in the 2010s



**Thriving
tomorrow**

Smartphones fragment children's attention

237

**notifications a day
on average**

Median average, Common Sense Media, 2023



**Thriving
tomorrow**

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



**Thriving
tomorrow**

**Smartphones lower
educational attainment**

1-2 grades higher

**GCSE grades among
schools with an effective
smartphone ban**



**Safe
always**

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



**Safe
always**

**The sharing of under-age
nudes is an everyday reality**

**90% of girls
50% of boys
have been sent an
unwanted explicit image**



**Safe
always**

Smartphones have increased the risk of online grooming

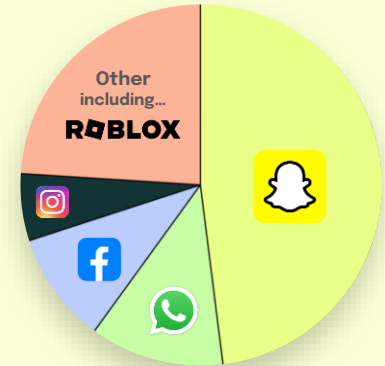
A child is

60x

more likely to be
groomed online than
abducted from the
street

Groomers go where kids 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 kids 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*



What about the government?



For a long time nothing was happening, but ... suddenly it's all change



Citizen engagement



Sustained media coverage



Global shifts, esp AUS



Opposition pressure



Lords Amendment



Backbench Labour support



SFC has been a big part of the conversation so far this year

**250,000
MP letters
sent in one week**

MPs emailed:
650 of 650

Emails sent:
252,816

Average per MP:
389



**SMARTPHONE
FREE CHILDHOOD**



What's happening now?

The Government has launched a consultation

The process will include:

- Online public consultation
- Written submissions from organisations
- Government engagement events
- MPs gathering views locally
- Community discussions across the country

You can find the Government's parent survey online by searching: *Growing up in the online world: a national consultation*

Start date:

2026

March 2nd

Close date:

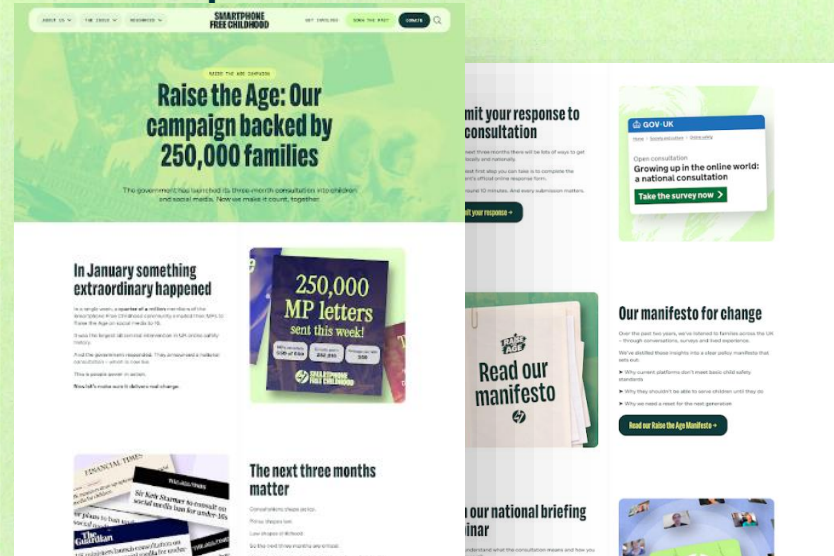
Duration:
months

26 May 2026

3

Gov't response:

Summer





The consultation covers many things including:

Curfews

Screen time limits

Design changes

But the one that we're focussed on is:

Age limits on social media platforms

By far the most impactful policy on the table

Our ask of government

**If platforms aren't safe for children,
they shouldn't have access to our
children**

In every other area of childhood, companies must prove their products are safe before children use them.

Social media should be no exception.

Our ask of government

Ban platforms until they make them safe

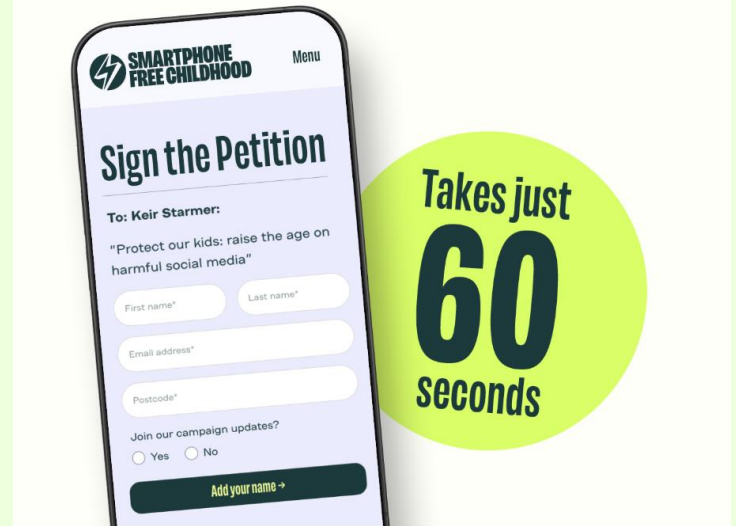
For too long, platforms have been given access to children first, with regulation attempting to catch up after harm occurs.

That model is the wrong way round.

Platforms should have to demonstrate that their products are safe for children before they are allowed to offer accounts to under-16s.

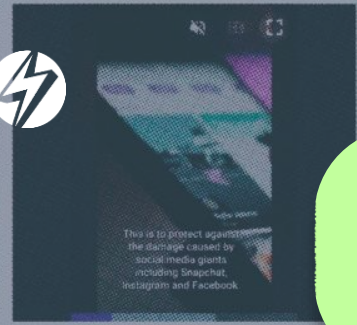
Access must be conditional on safety.

⚡ Kicking off tonight ... a petition for number 10





There is more hope now that the law will change



'Enough is enough': Fed up PM confirms nationwide social media ban - and reveals how it will work

Anthony Albanese has revealed how a nationwide age-based ban on social media accounts, including Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook, will work.

Education

Children's exposure to harmful online content a 'public health crisis', says Minister

Stronger laws may be needed to safeguard young people, according to Stephen Donnelly



said that they are open to a children using social me

Education

Mobile phones set to be banned across all



France

France to trial ban on mobile phones at school for children under 15

'Digital pause' experiment at 200 secondary schools could be extended nationwide in January

Kim Willsher in Paris

Follow Kim Willsher



The Minister for Education is clearing phones from all second-level schools research which links use of devices to distraction and cyberbullying. Photo: Barlow/PA Wire

Carl O'Brien

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By Shawn
Shawn Hul
York.

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that there is a mental health crisis among young
ers believe social media is partly to blame

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teenagers

ers are considering ways to stop children
accessing harmful content online, citing the
impact on mental health

Oliver Wright, Rachel Sylvester
Friday September 13 2024, 9:50am, The Times

The New York Times

California Schools Must Restrict Phones Under New Law Signed by Newsom

Calls for crackdowns have mounted with reports of cyberbullying and studies indicating that smartphones are harmful to children's mental health.

Listen to the story 4:42 min. Load more

Show storybook



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There is more hope now that the law will change



More and more countries are heading that way

France to trial ban on mobile phones at school for children under 15

'Digital pause' experiment at 200 secondary schools could be extended nationwide in January

Kim Willsher in Paris

Follow Kim Willsher

The Minister for Education is planning to ban mobile phones from all second-level schools from September 2025, research which links use of devices to distraction and cyberbullying. Photo: Barlow/PA Wire

Carl O'Brien

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THE IRISH TIMES Education Mobile phones set to be banned across all



By Shawn ... York

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Children's exposure to harmful online content a 'public health crisis', says Minister Stronger laws may be needed to safeguard young people, according to Stephen Donnelly





There is more hope now that the law will change

More and more countries are heading that way

But government won't solve everything for us





**The solution is to
work together**



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

Acting alone can feel impossible, but **together we're powerful.**



SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD

PARENT PACT

185,077

UK children signed up

15,375

UK schools covered

**The
PARENT PACT
makes acting
together
simple**



SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD

PARENT PACT

PARENT PACT
Live leaderboards
[← back to National](#)

Buckinghamshire

4,760
Children signed up

294
Schools covered

[Sign the Pact](#) [Share the Pact](#)

Buckingham Primary School ↗	2
Burford School ↗	111
Burnham Grammar School ↗	1
Butlers Court School ↗	90
Caldicott School ↗	10
Caroline Haslett Primary School ↗	2
Carrington Infant School ↗	9
Carrington Junior School ↗	4
Cedar Park School & Nursery ↗	11
Cedars Primary School ↗	1
Chalfont St Giles Infant School and Nursery ↗	11
Chalfont St Giles Junior School ↗	29
Chalfont St Peter CofE Academy ↗	19
Chalfont St Peter Infant School ↗	10
Chalfont Valley E-ACT Primary Academy ↗	2
Charles Warren Academy ↗	2
Chartridge Combined School ↗	37
Chenies School ↗	2
Chepping View Primary Academy ↗	3
Chesham Bois Church of England School ↗	69



The more of us 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 (UK)

158,630

CHILDREN

13,750

SCHOOLS

Sort by:

Leaderboard

Region name

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



This isn't just theory, it's working!

I heard a story today from a local school where a Year 7 kid who had an iPhone asked his parents if he could instead have a Nokia because lots of his new school mates had one. It's taking a while but the tide is turning...

19:47





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**



Parental Controls are important but not the solution

Most kids 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 kids 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



If you still have 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



What next?

Join the conversation

Join the SFC school
Whatsapp group



Sign the
THE PARENT PACT



Get involved in SFC

Spread the word in your
class and beyond





Questions for the room



What are your thoughts about the Parent Pact? What are your concerns about it?



What are your biggest concerns about managing the transition to smartphones and social media?



What else could we be doing to help our children around this topic?



Links to the videos

Nip in the bud:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDeuDvptfNM>

Thames Valley Police:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pRqyWUbGdw&t=1s>