



**SMARTPHONE  
FREE CHILDHOOD**

**Let's talk: raising kids in  
the smartphone era**

PARENT TALK - FEBRUARY 2026

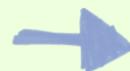


**We're all trying  
to do the best  
for our kids**



# In two decades, everything's changed

2005



2026



2005

Nokia's ruled...  
texts, calls & snake

2007

The first  
iPhone launches  
“A computer in our  
pocket”

2012

4G UK launch, internet  
always available,  
everywhere

2020s

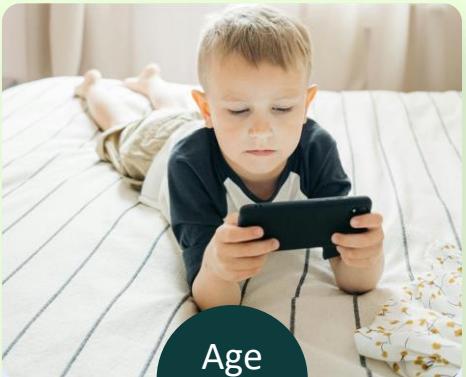
Explosion of short-form  
content & AI powered  
algorithms

2026

Smartphones have  
transformed society...  
and childhood



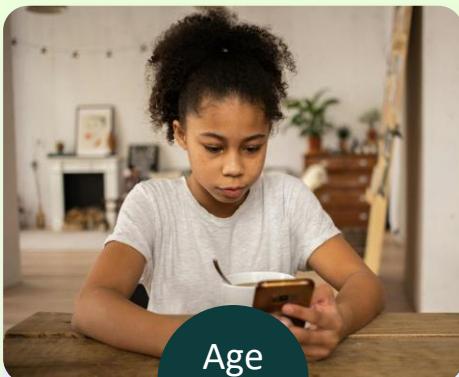
# Smartphones have become 'normal' for kids



Age  
6-7

**1 in 3**

children have a  
smartphone



Age  
9

**Average age**

a child gets a  
smartphone in the  
UK



Age  
12

**90%**

of 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



NIP IN THE BUD: A STOLEN CHILDHOOD



# 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 = Profit 💰

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

**It went nuts: Thousands join UK parents calling for smartphone-free childhood**

Local WhatsApp group started by two mothers concerned about online safety attracts more than 4,000 members

It found that 91% of children in the UK own a smartphone by the time they are 11. 90 parents have joined a group committed to barring young children from using smartphones, as concerns grow about online safety and social media on mental health.

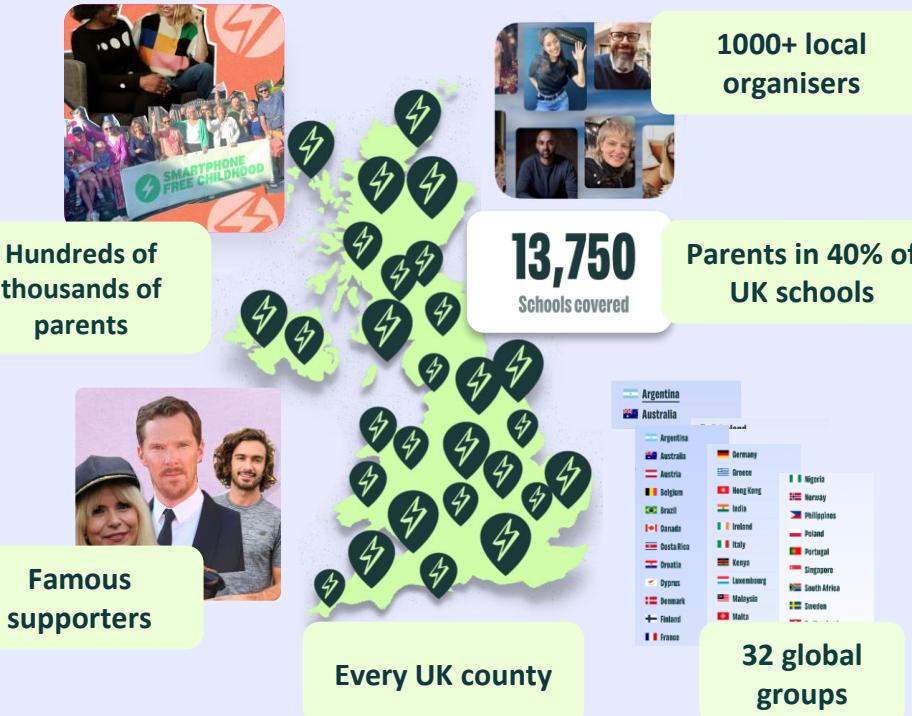
- Two mums started a WhatsApp group
- It went viral on Instagram
- 1000s joined in days, across the UK



# Smartphone Free Childhood is now a global movement

Feb 2024

SFC began after that WhatsApp group went viral in Feb 2024



Feb 2026



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

Delay  
smartphones  
until at least  
14

Delay social  
media until at  
least 16

A simple  
phone to stay  
in contact

Shared access  
to a family  
computer

Alternative  
trackers  
(or go without)



SMARTPHONE



SOCIAL MEDIA



SIMPLE PHONE



FAMILY  
COMPUTER



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



**Happy today**

*Enjoy a happy, healthy childhood*



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**Smartphones make this all harder – and the data shows it**

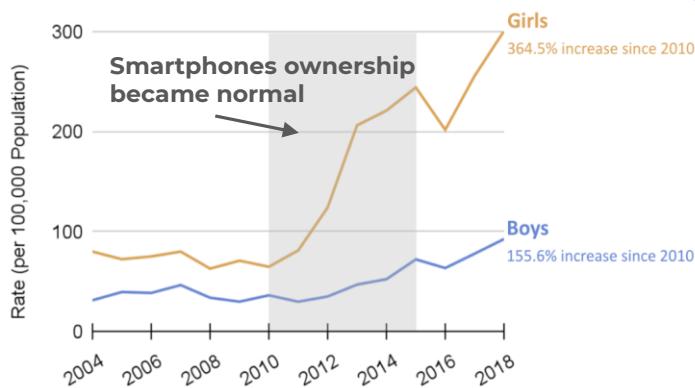


Happy  
today



# We're facing a teen mental health crisis

UK 10-12 year olds, self-harm episodes



Cybulski et al, 2021



Happy  
today

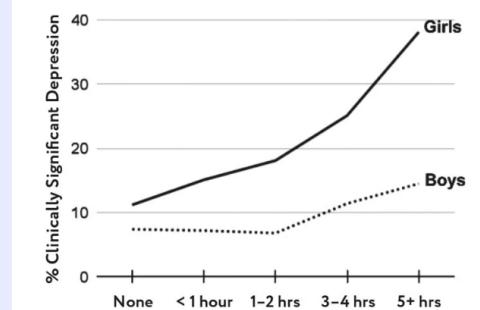


# Smartphones increase the likelihood of mental illness

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

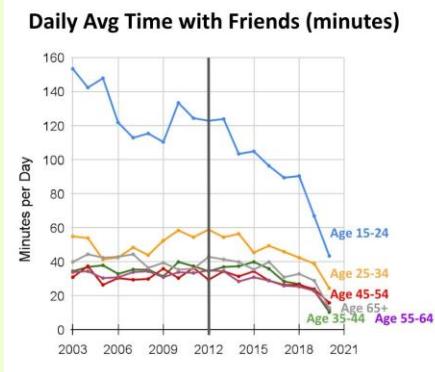


# Thriving tomorrow

## Smartphones displace real world activities & connection

↓ 65%

Reduction in time  
spent in real life  
with friends



Since smartphones became ubiquitous in the 2010s

American Time Use Study



**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 higher grades  
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 ubiquitous**

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



Safe  
always



**Grooming & sextortion are  
ever present threats**





Safe  
always

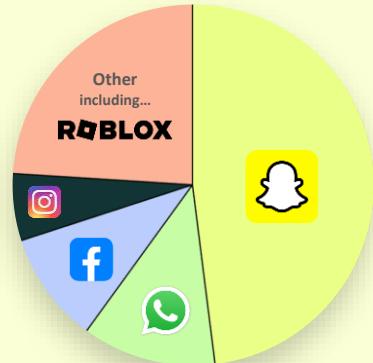


# Smartphones have increased the risk of online grooming

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

Groomers go where kids are

% of reported incidents





# 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*



**'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.

TI

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 children using social me

THE IRISH TIMES

Education

Mobile phones set to be banned across all

## There's a lot of talk about the law needing to change



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 planning phones from all second-level schools research which links use of devices to distraction and cyberbullying. Photo: Banu PA Wire

Carl O'Brien

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**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.

Update to this article 4:42pm 14/09/2023

Share this article

By Shawn  
Shawn Hol  
York.

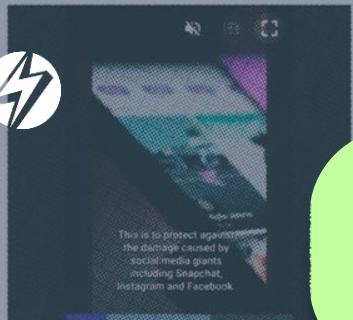
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## There's a lot of talk about the law needing to change

## Some countries are making progress



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Kim Willsher in Paris

Follow Kim Willsher

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Some countries are  
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But the radical change we need  
won't happen in time for our kids

Kim Willsher in Paris

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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

**179,229**

UK children signed up

**15,107**

UK schools covered

The  
**PARENT PACT**  
makes acting  
together  
simple



# The more of us who sign, the more powerful it becomes

STEP 01

Search for your child's school

The mobile application interface for Step 1 shows a header with the "PARENT PACT" logo and "SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD". Below is a "Select your school" dropdown menu and a "Select your school year" dropdown menu. At the bottom is a "Name" input field.

STEP 02

Sign the Pact to delay until at least 14

The mobile application interface for Step 2 shows a header with the "PARENT PACT" logo and "SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD". The main text reads "Sign the PARENT PACT" in large, bold, black letters. Below is a large green "Sign now >" button.

STEP 03

View results for your region, school & class

The mobile application interface for Step 3 shows a header with the "PARENT PACT" logo and "SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD". The top section displays "National (U.K.)" and "Sort by: Leaderboard". Below are two large green boxes: one for "CHILDREN" (158,630) and one for "SCHOOLS" (13,750). The bottom section is a table with columns "REGION" and "PACTS". It lists regions with their respective pact counts: Bedfordshire (937), Berkshire (3286), Bristol (2510), Buckinghamshire (2911), and Cambridgeshire (2936).

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



# It's happening in Hurst Green Primary School

# 25

Parent Pacts have been signed in  
Hurst Green Primary School

25% of a year =  
**BREAKTHROUGH POINT**

## Year / Age      Pacts

Year 1 (5 - 6)      5

Year 2 (6 - 7)      3

Year 3 (7 - 8)      1

Year 4 (8 - 9)      13

Year 5 (9 - 10)      1

Year 6 (10 - 11)      2



# 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



26



# 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



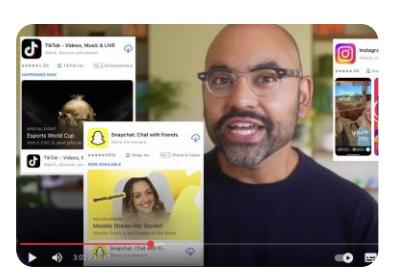
# If you still have questions...



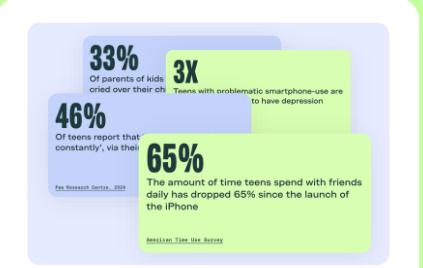
Find answers  
to common questions



Explore 'Child-  
friendly' phone  
options



Learn how to talk to  
kids about  
smartphones



View the latest data  
and research

[SMARTPHONEFREECHILDHOOD.ORG](http://SMARTPHONEFREECHILDHOOD.ORG)



# What next?

**Join the conversation**

Join the SFC school WhatsApp group



**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?