

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our 'Parenting together in a digital world' event which took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2026. We hope that you found the event insightful and helpful and we wanted to say thank you again to our speakers who volunteered their time.

I am delighted to share the recording of the event with you here:

[Parenting Together in a digital world - Online Presentation.](#)

## **Questions and Responses**

**Question:** What is the screen time recommended for each age group please?

**Response:** For recommendations on screen time for each age group please refer to the information in these links:

- [https://healthprofessionalsforsaferscreens.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/%C2%A9Combined\\_Poster.pdf](https://healthprofessionalsforsaferscreens.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/%C2%A9Combined_Poster.pdf)
- [Baby and toddler screen time guidance - Best Start in Life](#)

**Question:** Do you have or know of a simple guide to kids' online safety that can be given to grandparents or other family members to help them understand the risks and safeguards we are trying to implement as parents?

**Response:** For simple guides and advice to support families understand risks and safeguards, we suggest you check out the information from these websites:

- [Smartphone Free Childhood | Resources for Parents](#)
- [RESOURCES — Papaya Talks](#)
- [Resources for parents - Health Professionals For Safer Screens](#)

**Question:** For those of us with teens who already have a smart phone, what can we do to lock down the most harmful aspects and keep them safe, other than just banning social media apps?

**Response:** For recommendations on protecting teens who already have a smartphone please refer to the information in these links:

- [RESOURCES — Papaya Talks](#)
- [Parenting in the smartphone era: top tips from Dr Rangan Chatterjee | Journal | Smartphone Free Childhood](#)

**Question:** There were requests from attendees in the chat for a single, consistent approach across all Dorset schools, driven by the council.

**Response:** We work with both local authority-maintained schools and those within Multi-Academy Trusts. This means we do not set a single approach for all schools in relation to mobile phones, but we do share guidance and best practice to support schools in making their own decisions.

Guidance was issued to all schools in January 2026, followed by the Parenting Together event in April. We will continue to review emerging research, policy developments, and the government's position over the summer. Updated guidance will be published in Autumn 2026 to reflect any changes.

**Question:** Do you see any correlation with AI use & anxiety and depression?

**Response:** At present, we do not yet have the same depth of long-term evidence for AI use as we do for social media and its association with issues such as low mood and anxiety. However, early research and emerging reviews are beginning to suggest similar patterns and potential links.

Current guidance recommends delaying access until children have had sufficient opportunity to develop critical thinking, interpersonal communication, and emotional resilience. These skills help young people question information, manage challenges, and engage confidently with others - capabilities that are increasingly important when interacting with highly persuasive technologies.

**Question:** Does Neurodivergence make a difference in recommendations? Do you have any advice about digital safety for children with communication differences such as autism or developmental language disorder?

**Response:** For recommendations on screens and neurodivergence please refer to the information in this link:

- [A4\\_download\\_SEN\\_and\\_Screens.pdf](#)

**Question:** A query was raised about digital bus passes for children travelling to school - how can they access this without a smartphone?

**Response:** Smartphone Free Childhood Dorset has worked closely with MoreBus, who have reviewed and amended their policy for children travelling by bus in Dorset. From September 2026, they will introduce a smartphone-free option for all under-19s.

This will involve the reintroduction of physical smartcards, with pricing aligned to the app-based fares. We appreciate MoreBus's support in enabling more inclusive access to travel.

**Question:** Can you share this with all schools in Dorset

**Response:** The recording link has been shared with all schools in the education bulletin.

**Question:** Are you able to recommend any apps that are felt to be more safe, and have some educational element.

**Response:** Professional guidance recommends reducing screen time where possible and prioritising alternative educational approaches, for example:

- [The Summer Reading Challenge - Dorset Council](#)
- [Unplugging Ideas — Global Day of Unplugging Moments that Matter - a guide from Health Professionals for Safer Screens, for parents of younger children.](#)

It is important to note that many apps, including those labelled as educational, often incorporate features designed to increase engagement and prolong use. These can include streaks, gamification, and short-form content, which may not suit all children.

If you are still considering an app, suitability will depend on the child's age, as most are designed for specific age groups. **BBC Bitesize** ([Home - BBC Bitesize](#)) offers educational content, although it does include games and short-form material that may be challenging for some children.

For younger users requiring a search engine, **Kiddle** ([Kiddle - visual search engine for kids](#)) can be a helpful option. However, it is always recommended that children are

supported by an adult when using internet-connected devices, as no platform can guarantee complete safety.

**Question:** How do we manage play dates/sleep overs with families who do not share the same views on social media/phone usage?

**Response:** For support with sleepovers and playdates please refer to the information in this link for ideas:

- [How should I navigate sleepovers and playdates with kids who have smartphones? | Questions | Smartphone Free Childhood](#)

**Question:** Is there any medical insight on the psychological impact of tracking children?

**Response:** Currently, there isn't any long-term medical insight into the psychological impact of tracking children. If you would like to hear more about emerging views on tracking, please refer to the information in these links:

[Generation Focus - YouTube](#)

[What About Tracking? – Generation Focus](#)

### Other Resources and Signposting:

- [https://healthprofessionalsforsaferscreens.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/%C2%A9Combined\\_Poster.pdf](https://healthprofessionalsforsaferscreens.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/%C2%A9Combined_Poster.pdf)
- [Final why is -everyone talking about .pdf](#)
- [©Combined\\_Poster.pdf](#)
- [Smartphone Free Childhood](#)

This website also has great resources for parents and schools:

- [Generation Focus – Giving every child the benefits of a smartphone free school day.](#)
- [RESOURCES — Papaya Talks](#)
- [Our Mission](#)
- [Let Grow - When Adults Step Back, Kids Step Up.](#)
- [A4 download SEN and Screens.pdf](#)
- [Unplug-28\\_11.pdf](#)



Parenting together in a digital world



Links to the books James (Headteacher at Milldown) mentioned

- [Anxious Generation](#) – Haidt
- [Amazing Generation](#) – Haidt
- [Hold Onto Your Kids](#) – Mate & Neufield
- [The Brain at Rest](#) – Jebelli
- [Stolen Focus](#) – Hari

If you're looking for support or to connect with like-minded parents and carers across Dorset on this subject, you could join the Dorset Smartphone Free Childhood group on WhatsApp. You can access this here:

[https://chat.whatsapp.com/lqurJh1kjWJ6czi2Ju0Oqi?mode=gi\\_t](https://chat.whatsapp.com/lqurJh1kjWJ6czi2Ju0Oqi?mode=gi_t)