



EMBARGOED until 00.01 Monday 4th November 2024

Tim Arnold Unites Health Professionals and Entertainment Figures in Open Letter to urge Mayor of London to Address the Normalisation of Digital Connectivity for Children

Tim Arnold, the creative driving force behind **Super Connected**—an album, film, and theatre show examining the relationship between technology and well-being—has written an open letter to London Mayor **Sadiq Khan**, calling for a public campaign to promote balanced digital norms for children.

Co-signed by prominent figures including **Midge Ure OBE**, **Sandy Powell OBE**, songwriter **Guy Chambers**, actor **Stephen Fry** and leading health professionals including the campaign group **Health Professionals for Safer Screens**, the letter challenges Transport for London's recent advertising, the imagery of which implicitly endorses constant connectivity for young people. Arnold's message is clear: alongside digital access, children should be encouraged to develop offline, screen-free connections for their well-being and development. [Read the letter.](#)

A mocked-up advert created by Arnold as a suggestion for the kind of messaging that could help guide families and children towards a healthier balance with digital connectivity is included in the letter.

Tim, an independent artist, has been researching the impact of screens and social media on mental health since 2017, resulting in his own diagnosis of autism in 2022 followed by The Tim Arnold Company's nationally acclaimed film & theatre show, [Super Connected](#).

The film, based on the true story of a teenage girl struggling with screen addiction will be screened at [The Harroddian School](#) this month before touring schools in 2025. Through his open letter, Tim aims to raise awareness about the vital work being carried out by campaign group **Health Professionals for Safer Screens**, led by **Dr Becky Foljambe**.



The letter does not advocate for a ban on smartphones or 5G but does call for an open discussion between London’s leaders and health professionals on how digital norms are presented in society, particularly in public messaging and advertising.

Supporters

The letter is supported by notable co-signatories, including the founders of **Health Professionals for Safer Screens—Dr. Sanjiv Nichani OBE, Dr. Rebecca Foljambe**, and children’s speech and language therapist **Sandy Chappell**—as well as prominent figures from the entertainment world: actor **Stephen Fry**, costume designer **Sandy Powell OBE**, actress **Sophie Winkleman** (Lady Frederick Windsor) and singer **Chrissie Hynde**. The letter is also backed by educators and health professionals who share a commitment to prioritising children’s well-being in an increasingly digital world.

Quotes (Tim Arnold, Sophie Winkelman, Guy Chambers, Dr Sanjiv Nichani OBE, Sandy Chappell)

Tim Arnold said:

“It feels out of touch for TfL to display an image of a young woman seemingly lost in her smartphone—a look that so many now recognise as ‘doom scrolling’, particularly during a time when parents and multiple campaigns are striving to change the phone-based childhood back to a play-based childhood.

What we really need in our public spaces are images of young people engaged in activities that nurture their well-being, not images that boost the profit margins of tech companies, unregulated app developers and smartphone manufacturers. It’s time we shifted our focus from selling remote connectivity to families and encouraging the moments together that genuinely connect us in shared space.”



Sophie Winkleman (Lady Frederick Windsor) said:

“‘Hyper-connectivity’ is a misnomer. ‘Hyper-isolation’ is a more honest term for what this ‘5G on the Underground’ announcement means. Millions of commuters will now be face-down in their phones on the tube, the last refuge of peace from the digital onslaught. Books will exhale a final breath along with noticing older people who might need a seat and any recognition of one’s fellow travellers.”

Guy Chambers said:

“The typical skip rate of a “user” on Spotify is 7 seconds. Long gone are the days when people would sit down with friends and listen to a 40-minute album. We are cultivating a generation of people who are struggling with connection; this leads to anxiety, depression and a hyper critical neediness. I believe social media should be illegal for children under 16”

Dr Sanjiv Nichani OBE, NHS Consultant paediatrician who developed the [NHS ‘Five-A-Day Healthier Screen Time’](#) infographic said:

“We are already submerged in a SCREEN DEMIC which has badly affected growth and development and mental health in children and young people. Having screen free times in the underground network is a welcome respite from the 24/7 virtual world that youngsters live in. To enhance connectivity in the underground will be to the detriment of youngsters and flies in the face of all the overwhelming evidence about the Screen Demic and its damaging effects on children and young people.”



Sandy Chappell (NHS Speech and Language Therapist) said:

“A child is watching you, learning from you. They can’t see your eyes or your smile. They can’t hear your voice or your laughter. They feel more alone. So, they pick up their phone. Make a difference to a child. Put down your phone.”

~ ENDS ~

1. For media enquiries for Tim Arnold/Super Connected, please contact The Tim Arnold Company on info@timarnold.co.uk
2. For media enquiries for **Health Professionals for Safer Screens**, please contact Arabella Skinner at **Safe Screens** on arabella@usforthem.co.uk

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★★★★★

WE ARE CULT **GRTR**
★★★★ ★★★★★

MOJO **THE TIMES**
★★★★ ★★★★★

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★★★★★

THE QUIETUS **PROG**
★★★★ ★★★★★

ROCK N REEL **CLASH**
★★★★★ ★★★★★

SUPER CONNECTED
A SCREEN OPERA **BY TIM ARNOLD**

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