THE LIGHT REPORT

What Digital Minimalism Means for Families Today

Focusing on the Light Phone II, this research by Tim Arnold examines how minimalist technology can reduce screen dependency and encourage healthier digital habits for both children and adults.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface

The pervasive role of technology in modern life has raised urgent questions about its impact on well-being, relationships, and children's neurodevelopment. *The Light Report* seeks to contribute to this critical dialogue by examining one of the most pressing challenges of our time: how to navigate the influence of digital devices on our daily lives.

Central to this exploration is the Light Phone, a device intentionally designed to encourage less engagement with screens and more time spent in the real world. Unlike traditional smartphones, the Light Phone operates without apps, social media, or internet connectivity. Its E Ink display is easy on the eyes, but its defining feature is its simplicity, offering only essential features such as calling, texting and a selection of functional and practical tools designed for purposeful use, encouraging minimal interaction and easy disconnection. By reducing the reasons to look at a mobile device, the Light Phone shifts focus back to in-world, offline activities.

This report does not advocate for a rejection of technology but calls for a reassessment of how it is designed, used and integrated into our lives, particularly in the lives of children. The Light Phone represents a case study in how a more considered approach to technology can reduce digital overload with healthier habits and stronger connections to each other. Its design raises broader questions about what types of devices we provide to children and the example set by the devices adults choose to use in front of children.

By drawing on insights from health professionals, mental health professionals, parents and children, *The Light Report* examines how devices like the Light Phone could help address the societal challenges linked to screen dependency. These insights serve as a foundation for rethinking how technology can better serve individuals and communities in the digital age.

This report aims to inform policymakers, educators, and families about the potential for not only a more balanced relationship with technology, but a fuller and richer relationship with each other and the natural world. By critically engaging with these issues, we hope to contribute to a broader understanding of how new technology can support—not undermine—our collective well-being.

Report Summary

The increasing ubiquity of smartphones and their influence on daily life has sparked growing concern about the effects of digital dependency, particularly on young people. This report investigates these concerns, focusing on the Light Phone (specifically the Light Phone II) as a tool to address screen-related issues and as a healthier alternative for adults and children.

Purpose

The Light Phone is designed to minimise digital distractions, offering a simplified experience that prioritises essential communication and mindful technology use.

This report highlights its potential to serve as an introductory phone for children, its benefits for reducing screen dependency in adults, and its alignment with broader efforts to encourage intentional technology use. It has also emerged through the research made in this report, as an ideal phone for individuals recovering from addiction.

Key Findings

- **Impact on Children**: 3% of UK 12-year-olds don't have a smartphone. The Light Phone offers significant benefits as a first phone for children that conventional smartphones do not. Its E Ink display minimises eye strain, and its lack of apps or internet connectivity shields children from exposure to addictive algorithms and harmful online content. By focusing on communication rather than entertainment or distraction, the Light Phone supports healthier developmental outcomes, nurturing creativity and patience.

- **Role of Adults**: The devices children see being used by the adults in their lives play a pivotal role in shaping their understanding of technology's purpose. When parents or caregivers choose simpler devices like the Light Phone, they model healthy digital habits and demonstrate that technology can serve as a tool rather than a source of constant distraction.

- **Screen Dependency**: For adults, the Light Phone provides an alternative to app-driven devices that contribute to overstimulation and fragmented attention. Its minimalist design encourages users to break free from digital overload and embrace more intentional habits.

- **Human Connection**: The absence of apps and social media facilitates deeper in-person connections and enhances present-moment awareness, fostering a sense of calm and focus often lost in traditional smartphone use.

- **Educational Relevance**: In educational contexts, the Light Phone offers an opportunity to rethink the integration of technology into young people’s lives. By avoiding overstimulating features, it allows for a more measured introduction to technology that complements, rather than hinders, learning.

• **Potential for Public Sector Investment:** The Light Phone, as a product of a small company, reflects the higher production costs associated with limited demand and the premium nature of E Ink technology. While E Ink is highly effective for minimising eye strain and the Light Os known within its growing community as supporting in-world, offline activities, the device's limited adoption contributes to its expense.

With targeted investment from the UK Government or public sector initiatives, the cost of this technology could be significantly reduced. This would enable broader adoption, ensuring inclusivity and providing all children with a healthier introduction to mobile connectivity. Such a measure would align with the Department for Education's goals of safeguarding children's well-being while promoting balanced and intentional use of technology.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this report underscore the importance of adopting a mindful approach to technology practices to counteract the negative effects of digital dependency. The Light Phone shows enormous promise as a viable solution, not just as a device but as a philosophy of simplicity and intentionality, that functions outside of the existing ecosystem of smart connectivity devices, whilst also employing some of the smartphone conventions we are used to, albeit in a more intentional and less addictive manner. It represents an important step toward redefining our relationship with technology and prioritising human well-being in an increasingly digital world.

Study Focus and Methods

This study is driven by the growing necessity to understand the role of mobile technology in shaping children's early experiences with connectivity and its broader societal impact. At its core, the focus is on the Light Phone's potential to provide a healthier, more intentional alternative to traditional smartphones. Particular attention is given to:

- **The Light Phone's Unique Role**: Exploring its USP of encouraging more time spent in the real world by offering fewer reasons to interact with a mobile device.
- **Child-Focused Benefits**: Assessing how its E Ink display reduces eye strain, and its lack of internet connectivity and apps minimises digital distraction, fostering in-world, offline activities.
- **Modelling Responsible Use**: Considering the influence of the devices children observe being used by adults in their lives, alongside those they use themselves.

Methods

To comprehensively address these focus areas, the study employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods:

1. **User Trials**
   Controlled trials with families, educators, and health professionals using the Light Phone are being conducted. These trials focus on gauging usability, children's engagement, and behavioural changes observed when using the device. Adults' patterns of use and their influence on children are also being studied.
2. **Expert Consultations**
   Interviews and panel discussions with child development specialists, educational professionals, and technology ethicists inform the findings, offering expert perspectives on digital minimalism for children.
3. **Comparative Analysis**
   Evaluating the Light Phone alongside conventional smartphones to identify its impact on factors like screen time, attention, creativity and interpersonal interactions.
4. **Case Studies**
   Real-world examples of families adopting the Light Phone are documented to highlight successes, challenges and key learnings.
5. **Policy Research**
   Reviewing existing government strategies on technology, education and child welfare to explore how a device like the Light Phone could align with and support these policies.

The findings will provide valuable insights into how to shape healthier digital experiences for children and pave the way for informed policy and investment decisions.

MAIN FINDINGS

1. Going Light

1a. The Philosophy of Digital Minimalism

The philosophy of digital minimalism challenges the pervasive belief that technology, in its most advanced form, is inherently beneficial. Instead, it advocates for deliberate, intentional use of technology—tools that serve specific purposes without overtaking the mental and emotional space we need to thrive. The Light Phone II exemplifies this approach, stripping back to essentials and creating an opportunity to rethink our relationship with mobile devices.

As cognitive neuroscientist, author and Director of the *UCLA Centre for Dyslexia*, Maryanne Wolf, known for her work on the effects of digital media on the brain notes:

"Our computer-based sense of time is habituating us to ever faster and shorter units of thought and perception."

For children, this convergence of overwhelming information and diminishing processing time poses a profound risk to their development. Consultant Paediatrician Dr Sanjiv Nichani (OBE) who has been working at the Leicester Children's Hospital in the University Hospitals of Leicester for the last 25 years says:

"I've been seeing teenagers presenting with headaches, lethargy, irritability, and other symptoms tied to spending excessive time on screens—four to six hours daily in some cases. At the other end of the spectrum, I'm witnessing developmental delays in younger children who spend their entire waking hours in front of a screen, leading to significant issues with communication, interaction, and focus. This pervasive 'phone-controlled childhood' is causing profound developmental and mental health challenges."

Digital minimalism invites us to pause, reflect, and resist these forces. It asks:

What kind of tools truly support human flourishing?

Timely insights from computer scientist and author Joseph Weizenbaum, renowned for his work on artificial intelligence and the human-technology relationship, echo this sentiment.

He warned that the introduction of computers often creates the illusion of solving problems while pushing deeper issues into obscurity. In his words:

> "The introduction of the computer into any problem area, usually creates the impression that grievous deficiencies are being corrected... But often it's principal effect is to avoid confrontation with the need for fundamentally critical thinking."

The Light Phone II serves as a quiet counterargument to this pattern. It does not promise a solution to every problem but instead offers a way to step back, consider what truly matters, and create space for critical thinking. This philosophy is not about rejecting technology but refining how we use it—an approach that amplifies clarity, purpose and a sense of calm often absent in our hyperconnected world.

Why The Light Phone? There are simply no other manufacturers of mobile phones in the world, whose goal is to make its customers use their phones…less.

1b. The Role of the Light Phone II in Reducing Screen Dependency

Screen dependency is not a modern myth; it is a visible and measurable challenge. As psychologist and author Eva Hoffman, specialising in the intersection of digital media and cognitive development, highlights:

“We are inundated with information, but the time to process it diminishes with every passing innovation.” “In children,” she writes:

“The convergence of more information and less time to process it may well pose the greatest threat to the development of attention and memory.”

This is where tools like the Light Phone II come into their own.

The Light Phone II is built around simplicity. It reduces the pull of notifications, addictive interfaces, and endless scrolling by offering only functional and practical tools—calling, texting, and a selection of essential utilities designed for purposeful use. These are tools to be used when needed and then left alone. The absence of apps and social media is not a blanket restriction, but a specific *mobile* invitation to reimagine how we spend our time.

It would be unfair to accuse all tech companies of not having their heart in the right place. There have been genuine attempts to integrate technology meaningfully into our lives.

Yet, as co-founder and former CEO of Apple, Steve Jobs observed in reference to trying to solve the problems of modern education with computing:

“No amount of technology will make a dent... It’s bad only if it allows us into thinking we’re doing something to solve the problem.”

The Light Phone II sidesteps this trap by refusing to play into the same metrics of attention capture that dominate the tech industry.

The company is also unique, in that, since it began trading at the end of 2014, it has still not used traditional advertising to promote its products, relying instead on organic growth through word of mouth, community engagement and a steadfast commitment to its philosophy of digital minimalism. This is a company of 10 in a small building in Brooklyn.

This unconventional approach sets it apart in a marketplace saturated with aggressive marketing tactics designed to create dependency and perpetuate constant upgrades.

It's business model further distinguishes itself by not advocating for Light Phone users to purchase a new device every year, as is common with other mobile phone manufacturers.

Instead, The Light Phone II is designed with longevity in mind, and the company is committed to supporting its existing models through ongoing updates, ensuring that users can continue to rely on their devices without the pressure to upgrade. This aligns perfectly with their ethos of intentional, sustainable, and distraction-free technology.

Light Phone CEO **Kaiwei Tang** sums up his take on the device in a recent interview:

"Creativity thrives when we have space to reflect, and boredom is the birthplace of great ideas. It's in those quiet moments, like sitting in a park or taking a walk, that our minds wander and we tap into our most imaginative thoughts. That's what I hope the Light Phone encourages—giving people permission to disconnect and rediscover the joy of just being.

When we're not constantly stimulated by notifications or infinite feeds, we remember what it's like to sit with ourselves and create something meaningful from within. Kids especially benefit from these moments; they come up with the most creative games and ideas when they're not glued to screens. The Light Phone is designed to protect those moments, letting us engage with the world around us and, more importantly, with ourselves."

1c. Encouraging Real-World Engagement

Real-world engagement has become a casualty of the digital age. When screens mediate our relationships, our environments and even our leisure, we risk losing the rich, embodied experiences that make us human. The Light Phone II's greatest achievement lies not in its own features, but in its ability to encourage in-world, offline activities. It does so not by dictating behaviour but by creating fewer reasons to look at a mobile device.

The Light Phone's philosophy also embraces the idea that, if you are on the move, you are between engagements, and thus, experiencing an 'interval' in one's life. Such as the intermission format of theatre devised by the ancient Greeks, the two distinct sides of a vinyl record requiring a physical pause to flip, the natural cycles of sleep where intervals between deep and light stages allow for repair and memory consolidation, the restorative pause in ecosystems where fallow periods or regrowth after a wildfire rebuild balance, and the heart's rhythm, where intervals between beats signal health and vitality—intervals offer essential opportunities for reflection, regeneration, and recalibration.

However, having a portable device such as a smartphone on one's person at all times can erase these vital intervals, a condition that may be sustainable for the fully developed adult brain but constitutes a profound disruption to the healthy brain development of children.

As historian of technology and author Edward Tenner, known for his research on unintended consequences of technological innovation once observed:

"It would be a shame if brilliant technology were to end up threatening the kind of intellect that produced it."

This is the risk of over-reliance on digital tools—they can hollow out the very abilities they were meant to enhance. The Light Phone II reorients this trajectory, gently nudging users toward activities that are inherently fulfilling and meaningful, that actually have nothing to do with the device.

German American computer scientist and a professor at MIT Joseph Weizenbaum warned against the disassociation between action and consequence that technology can create, especially for younger users: "In most cases, the computer programs kids and not the other way around." By limiting features and promoting real-world utility, the Light Phone II places agency back in the hands of its users. It is not designed to captivate attention but to free it.

The consequences of this shift are profound. When screens demand less of our focus, we become more present with those around us. Family relationships benefit from reduced distractions, while children learn by example that technology is a tool, not a drug. This emphasis on presence and connection is a philosophy embedded in the Light Phone II itself—a philosophy that reminds us that the most meaningful moments happen away from screens.

This research is not anti-technology. Rather, it is written with the belief that analogue and digital communication are like two distinct languages, each suited to particular contexts.

“Each language, has its own rules and useful characteristics, which include its own best purposes, pace and rhythm.”
– Maryanne Wolf, Reader Come Home

There are ways to communicate using analogue methods that are neither natural nor effective with a digital medium, and vice versa.

For instance, you would not send an email to inform someone of the death of a loved one; this would require a face-to-face interaction or, at the very least, a voice call. Similarly, you would not attempt to develop a website coding project using paper and pencils.

Yet, here we are applying mobile digital tools to every aspect of human interaction, that have now proved to be irresistible to put down and cause withdrawal in the young who have tried to abstain from smartphone and social media use.

This research paper is written with the presupposition that we have rushed headlong into the new language of digital communication and applied it as a wholesale replacement for everything that preceded it, instead of using it for what it is: a complementary and revolutionary tool best suited for specific contexts, purposes and age groups.

Just as a bilingual child applies each of their languages to the appropriate context, humanity has yet to fully discern when to apply digital practices and when to rely on analogue ones.

Neuroscientist Maryanne Wolf’s research into the "biliterate brain" supports this idea, highlighting how the shift to digital formats has diminished the depth of reading and reflection in ways that analogue mediums foster naturally.

Wolf notes that:

“The circuit for reading is not given to us by nature; it has to be built over time”

She cautions that over-reliance on digital mediums risks under-developing the critical capacities nurtured through deeper, analogue experiences.

In the meantime, stepping back to reassess our approach may help us take actual giant leaps forward in the future. If we are to continue embracing a 24/7 culture of mobile connectivity, this rebalancing might be more achievable by adopting digital minimalist devices like the Light Phone II.

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2. Light Phone II Case Studies

Profiles of individuals who have personally used the Light Phone II

The following case studies explore the Light Phone II's potential through the insights of five participants, each offering a unique professional or personal perspective.

Dr Toby Zundel, a clinical psychologist specialising in child and adolescent development, Rose Pepper, a 16-year-old sixth-form student, Kate Alderton, an advanced communication skills facilitator and David Smallwood, an addiction specialist and psychotherapist, each trialled the Light Phone II for varying periods.

Their feedback provides valuable observations on the device's strengths and limitations, highlighting its potential to address the challenges of modern technology in different contexts, for both children and adults.

2a. David Smallwood MSc, PG Dip, NCAC
Addiction Therapist, Director of Treatment

"The simpler the technology used, the more likely it is that an individual will engage on interaction at a human level"

David Smallwood, an experienced addiction therapist and treatment director of 9 addiction facilities in the UK, including renown rehab group The Priory, provided profound insights into the potential of the Light Phone II as a tool for recovery.

With a career devoted to helping individuals navigate addiction, Smallwood's expertise highlights parallels between smartphone dependency and other classic forms of addiction and underscores the transformative role that minimalist technology like the Light Phone II can contribute to developing healthier habits on a path to recovery.

Smallwood, who has used the Light Phone II for several months, shared how it's features and impact of usage aligns with recovery practices. He began by addressing how the simplicity of the Light Phone II can support individuals recovering from addiction.

He explained that for those grappling with addiction—whether to substances or processes—re-entering society can feel overwhelming.

"The Light Phone II helps with at least two aspects. Firstly, to simplify the process of just living. Trying to re-enter society can be a daunting prospect, and secondly, the temptation to engage with, and judge yourself on social media is taken away, and it's more likely that you will engage with recovery people."

Reflecting on parallels between smartphone dependency and other addictions, Smallwood noted how smartphones often serve as interfaces for risky behaviours.

“There is often a parallel between addiction and smartphone use. Quite often, it’s the interface between meeting people for sex, using a discrete app to order drugs, looking for approval from other users, etc.”

On the subject of digital detoxes, Smallwood offered a nuanced perspective, recognising the diversity of approaches in the field.

“Digital detox is a minefield of opinions from those engaged in the treatment of digital addiction. It ranges from total abstinence to controlled use. The Light Phone II seems to offer a way back to functional communications, especially for adolescent use, which can be very problematic.”

“The very absence of apps and notifications means a more functional use of the phone and a means of communication”

Smallwood emphasised how this minimalist approach could mitigate triggers for individuals prone to addictive behaviours. Furthermore, he identified the impact this could have on anxiety levels during recovery.

“The simple design of the Light Phone II means that the anxiety (anticipation) from the use of a smartphone—and therefore less arousal—can help with bringing down a state of anhedonia.”

A recurring theme in Smallwood’s observations was the way smartphones often substitute real-life interactions, contributing to isolation. In contrast, the Light Phone II offers a pathway to reconnect with face-to-face interactions.

“Use of a Light Phone II could help with re-establishing face-to-face communication. Because smartphones can substitute for real-life exposure, they lead to subsequent isolation.”

Smallwood further underscored the importance of the Light Phone II’s focus on communication rather than entertainment.

“In this respect, the Light Phone II is a great tool in actual demarcation between entertainment and communication. It is probably the most fundamental benefit of this device”.

This delineation aligns with therapeutic goals for addiction recovery, where development of meaningful connections takes precedence over distracting stimuli.

Drawing from his own experiences, Smallwood shared how simplifying technology has tangible benefits in recovery.

“The most obvious benefit of simplifying the use of technology is in attending 12-step meetings instead of using messages or WhatsApp to avoid personal contact and reduce every feeling to a one-line process.”

He suggested that the Light Phone II’s design could serve as a vital tool in digital wellness programs, though he cautioned that many programs currently rely on smartphone technology. “It would depend on the sophistication (less effort needed) in some remote working programs,” he noted.

Smallwood also touched on the societal implications of technology use, especially the boundaries it creates. “The simpler the technology used, the more likely it is that an individual will engage on interaction at a human level, meeting with a sponsor face-to-face as opposed to messaging or WhatsApp.”

Smallwood expressed enthusiastic support for an initiative by the UK Department for Education to consider the Light Phone II for 11 to 14-year-olds as a potential first phone.

“I would readily support any such initiative that helps to stop the lack of actual communication, especially in young people. I understand the need for parents to feel that they can always be contacted by their kids. I think that the Light Phone II fulfils that need without the downside of exploitation. However, it’s futile to tell an 11-year-old that they cannot have a smartphone if the parent is indulging in the very activity that they don’t want their kid to engage in.”

2b. Rose Pepper (Secondary School Student, age 16)

“It’s the moments without distractions that stay with me.”

Rose Pepper, a 16-year-old student, participated in a month-long trial of the Light Phone II, providing invaluable insights into how minimalist technology impacted both her own life and the lives of young people of her generation, in general. Her experience offers a unique perspective on the potential benefits and challenges of adopting a device designed to limit distractions and promote intentional use of mobile technology.

As a Light Phone II user, Rose reflected on how the absence of social media significantly altered her daily life.

“It definitely made me conscious of how much news I get from social media platforms, which are obviously filtered to my algorithm and catered towards me,” she explained.

Instead of passively absorbing information, Rose found herself taking deliberate actions to stay informed, such as reading physical or online newspapers.

“It was very peaceful to not be constantly aware of the latest trends or recommendations you receive from smartphone apps” she shared, adding that being part of a family that discusses world matters helped her stay informed without relying on a smartphone. I could take a deep breath and just slow down for a bit”.

She observed that children between the ages of 11 and 14 might especially benefit from such a break from digital exposure.

> “When I first got a phone, around 11, I didn’t need to witness everything online all the time. I think 11-, 12-, or 13-year-olds should be able to take a breath.”

The month-long trial also prompted Rose to examine her relationship with technology in a broader sense. One challenge she encountered was her inability to immediately access reviews and discussions about films while she was watching them—an activity she enjoys.

However, this limitation unexpectedly led to a positive outcome.

“I came up with my own opinions without any other input... It was quite a balanced positive and negative,” she explained. “In the 10 minutes afterwards or half an hour after a film, I was just processing what I’d seen myself, which was an interesting experience because there hasn’t been a time recently where I’ve done that.”

As author and MIT sociologist Sherry Turkle writes in *In Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*:

"If we don't teach our children to be alone, they will only know how to be lonely. In solitude, we find ourselves; we prepare ourselves to come to conversation. If we cannot gather ourselves, we cannot fully engage with others."

Rose's experiences points towards an opportunity to meet oneself—a rare moment of reflection where an individual processes their thoughts and experiences on their own terms before being influenced by an external bias.

By taking in a film without external influences, Rose was able better to find, identify and understand her own personal reactions and develop a sense of personal agency.

Another striking revelation for Rose came when she returned to her smartphone after the trial. "I hadn't realised how much is crammed into such a tiny device," she said.

The transition back highlighted the overwhelming nature of smartphones and the addictive qualities of instant gratification and constant stimulation. Despite resuming use of her regular phone, Rose reported that she now feels more comfortable leaving it behind, describing the Light Phone II as "a brilliant sort of detox."

"Using the Light Phone II has definitely given me a wider perspective of my relationship to mobile technology," she said. "When I went back on my phone, it felt so alien, even though it was only a month." She added, "I didn't really notice how much is in a smartphone... It's so much information crammed into a tiny little thing that can fit in your pocket."

Another notable discovery during the month was that, while it is possible to manually add music to the Light Phone II, Rose realised that she prefers to keep her music separate from her phone. For her month of 'Going Light', she preloaded an old iPod, which has no internet access, with a selection of both new and old favourite tracks. This decision allowed her to enjoy her music without the distractions associated with a smartphone or the Light Phone II.

Rose highlighted that this separation made her music experience more intentional and enjoyable, as it freed her from the constant notifications and interruptions typical of a smartphone.

Rose also reflected on the Light Phone II's E Ink screen, which she found significantly easier on the eyes compared to traditional smartphone screens. This revelation was particularly meaningful as Rose shared her struggles with dyslexia:

"I'm dyslexic, and I find black text on a white background really hard to read because everything blurs together." For dyslexic individuals like Rose, the Light Phone II's gentler E Ink technology provides a stark contrast to conventional screens.

“I noticed I could definitely read better on the Light Phone II,” she said. “It made me realise how difficult I found reading on my phone or laptop because the E Ink is so much easier on the eyes, so it's easier for me to process.” She did note, however, that E Ink is harder to read in the dark. Fortunately, the backlight option on the Light Phone II solves this issue, making it versatile for various lighting conditions.

She also observed that “E Ink is so much less enticing to use, which is part of its purpose. It doesn’t make you want to stay on it.”

On the topic of age appropriateness, Rose observed that while the Light Phone II could be beneficial for teenagers her age, it might be even more useful for younger children.

“At age 16, there’s a feeling that it’s too late to get rid of or minimise phone usage. Many teens would love the idea or wish they could have waited to get a phone, but it would be much less challenging for someone who is younger”

Reflecting on her own experiences at age 11, she noted that while she felt it was important to be online at the time, she now realises she didn’t miss much by being disconnected for a month. “After a while, it didn’t feel different at all,” she said.

Rose’s observations extend to broader social trends among her peers. While some teenagers are heavily immersed in social media, she noted a growing interest in digital minimalism.

“Many young people find the idea of a digital-free life appealing, so much so that it has already become a trend,”.

She expressed optimism that devices like the Light Phone II could provide a balanced approach, offering connectivity without the overwhelming presence of social media and apps. She also commented on the addictive nature of smartphones:

“It’s easier to let space just be space and not instantly feel like I have to fill it.”

She added, “Even just sitting and looking out the window on the train felt nicer than staring at my phone. It’s nice to be in the world and notice the world around me.”

With a renewed perspective of two radically different experiences of mobile phones, Rose offered a glimpse into how her generation might evolve in their relationship with technology

“I definitely think there’s a balance between the two, somewhere between the two, where I think most people at least of my generation will eventually follow.”

While she anticipates moving away from platforms like TikTok as she matures, she acknowledges how deeply apps like Instagram are integrated into the social life of her and her generation, and that it won't be easy for those who have grown up with such apps to stop using them.

Rose's final thoughts underline a growing awareness among young people of the impact of technology:

"As I get older, I think social media and my phone in general will take up less space in my life. I'm confident my relationship with it will become more balanced over time."

When asked if she would use The Light Phone II again, Rose said:

"Yes, I liked it. I'm not sure if I'd do it permanently—completely never going on my iPhone again feels strange. But I like the idea of doing a month on, a month off, or a few weeks with my regular phone to catch up. It's a great digital detox device."

2c. **Dr Toby Zundel** MBBS MRCPsych
Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist

Dr. Toby Zundel completed his medical training at Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in London and pursued general psychiatric training at the Maudsley NHS Trust and in Australia. He later specialised in child and adolescent psychiatry at the Tavistock NHS Trust and is a Member of The Royal College of Psychiatrists.

With extensive experience working as a consultant in NHS adolescent inpatient units and outreach teams across Hertfordshire, Kent, and London, Dr Zundel has developed a deep understanding of the mental health challenges facing young people today. His professional interests include adolescent self-harm and emerging personality disorders, and he co-developed the Therapeutic Assessment for Self-Harm in adolescents, a novel approach aimed at improving engagement in young people presenting with self-harming behaviours.

In November 2024, Dr. Zundel trialled the Light Phone II for six weeks, gaining first-hand experience of how minimalist technology could serve as a beneficial tool for adolescents and their families. His observations underscore the potential of the Light Phone II in addressing the complex relationship between young people, smartphones, and mental health.

Dr. Zundel highlighted the critical difference between childhood and adulthood when it comes to exposure to digital phenomena. He expressed concern over the prevailing assumption that early exposure to complex digital environments prepares children for adulthood.

"You can't expose younger kids to the kind of phenomena that are designed for adults in smartphones on the basis that you expect them to be able to do better as adults because you've trained them up at the earliest possible age," he explained.

"When the reality is that you might actually be undermining or harming their potential to succeed in a pressurised adult world by over-stressing them with those phenomena. It isn't really that hard a concept to understand, but so many people just can't get their head round it. We're so used to this idea that the more you practise something, the more you get used to it and the better you'll be at it. But we forget that being a child isn't the same thing as being an adult."

Dr. Zundel identified several mental health challenges tied to smartphone use among children and adolescents, including contagion effects related to self-harming and suicidal behaviours, struggles with parenting boundaries around online content and social media, invalidating content (especially for girls), cyberbullying, and excessive screen time that detracts from other activities.

These issues collectively highlight the urgent need for healthier technology solutions tailored to young people.

When discussing how the Light Phone II might address these challenges, Dr Zundel pointed to its utility in environments where smartphone use is restricted.

He suggested that the device could be particularly effective in school settings where smartphone bans are enforced. “The Light Phone II could help particularly in the context of a school-based ban in smartphones,” he noted, adding that its minimalist design helps reduce exposure to the harmful effects of social media and excessive screen use. This, he argued, could play a vital role in alleviating diminished attention spans and heightened anxiety.

On the topic of first phones for children aged 11 to 14, Dr Zundel expressed strong support for the Light Phone II as a healthier alternative to traditional smartphones, describing it as a tool likely to promote healthier developmental outcomes for most young people in this age group. He also emphasised the importance of parents modelling healthy technology habits.

He observed that children often emulate the behaviours they see in adults, particularly when it comes to technology use. He stressed the need for parents to adopt simpler devices, to send a clear message about the purpose of mobile phones. His broader support extended to societal initiatives, including the potential for the UK Department for Education to promote minimalist phones for younger users. He agreed that such a programme could benefit all children, leading to healthier relationships with technology.

One of the Light Phone II’s most significant benefits, according to Dr. Zundel, is it’s absence of apps and constant notifications which help create an environment where individuals, particularly young people, are more likely to engage in face-to-face communication.

“The absence of the screen-based smartphone features on the Light Phone II could *indirectly* help to promote more direct interpersonal interaction and communication,” he explained.

Reflecting on E Ink technology, Dr Zundel noted its potential benefits for reducing overstimulation and protecting children’s eyesight.

“I think that E Ink displays are less stimulating to the brain and so preferable, especially at night,” he remarked. Although he admitted to not having specific expertise in eye development, he recognised that extended use of small screens—regardless of technology—poses risks to children’s vision. He pointed out that the Light Phone II’s E Ink screen offers a gentler alternative, aligning with efforts to minimise these risks.

When considering whether the Light Phone II could serve as an effective tool for families, Dr Zundel agreed that it strikes a balance between connectivity and avoiding the harmful distractions associated with traditional smartphones. He suggested that it offers parents the reassurance of staying in contact with their children without the negative effects of addictive apps or social media.

Finally, Dr Zundel highlighted the potential benefits of the Light Phone II in facilitating healthier communication habits. By reducing distractions and encouraging face-to-face interactions, the Light Phone II could help young people engage more meaningfully with those around them. Dr Zundel suggested that such changes in individual behaviour, particularly among young people, could address some of the mental health challenges associated with technology overuse.

2d. Kate Alderton (Advanced Communications Skills Facilitator)

"The most valuable thing we can offer each other in a conversation is true attention."

Kate Alderton is an advanced communication skills facilitator at *Frontline Communication* – the UK's No. 1 provider of Communication Skills & Emotional Intelligence training in Health Care. She has worked extensively with the NHS and offers a profound perspective on how technology impacts communication, drawing from her extensive experience facilitating meaningful interpersonal interactions in the UK health sector.

Her insights, combined with her personal experiences using the Light Phone II for over six months, demonstrate its potential to improve *presence, mindfulness*, and *healthier communication habits.*

Kate begins by addressing the role of technology in shaping communication today.

"While technology has done a huge amount of good creating systems and ways for us to communicate, in my work as a communication skills facilitator some of the most important aspects of meaningful communication are our ability to be present, embodied where possible and distraction free.

One of the most valuable things we can offer each other in a conversation is *true attention.*

It makes space for emotion, depth and authentic connection. Smartphone technology is incredibly addictive and is really contributing to our inability to be in the present moment with each other. The Light Phone II does the opposite, it's not trying to vie for our attention. There's no feeling of needing to check anything or do anything. It mostly stays in your pocket so you can stay in the room."

This theme of presence is central to Kate's reflections on the Light Phone II's design.

"What's surprising about the Light Phone II is it just allows you do more real-life things. The simplicity of it is so profound. It's not trying to grab at you and 'make' you do other things as soon as you pick it up. It's only in the business of being what it's meant to be: a phone. So you can get back to the business of being what *you're* meant to be: a person."

In her work, Kate identifies common barriers to effective communication, many of which are exacerbated by smartphones.

"Successful communication in fast-paced, highly pressurised environments can be extremely challenging. When people are stressed, upset, fearful or angry, giving them full attention is key to creating ease of communication. Being distracted by a smartphone, or interrupted by notifications in the midst of a challenging conversation can make an already challenging conversation much harder to navigate.

I think we've all become so used to trying to manage multiple things at the same time, with smart phones and technology in general helping facilitate that, but it also creates a sense of nobody being completely present for each other which is exactly the opposite of what's needed when communication is key."

Kate's personal experiences with the Light Phone II offer compelling examples of its benefits.

"My experience of Light Phone II was very impactful. I switch between Light Phone II and my old smartphone now. I've since removed all social media from my smartphone and broken the addiction to those spaces. With Light Phone II I've really enjoyed the returning human experiences: asking people for directions, asking for recommendations instead of googling for answers, meeting people at a specific time and place instead of incessant WhatsApp-ing map/pin drops. It's slowed me down and brought back a bit of wonder into the world."

Reflecting on the Light Phone II's influence on family dynamics, Kate envisions its role in reshaping societal norms around technology use.

"I think if I'd have used a Light Phone II when my kids were little, they'd have absorbed a very different message about mobile phone use: namely that phones are for finite communication, and when you're finished with that communication, you put them down and get back to the people you're sharing real space with.

The monumental difference I felt using the Light Phone II was not getting 'lost' or 'sucked into' the device. Having a break from my smartphone also really pulled into stark focus what we as a society collectively *look like* when we're all using them."

On the subject of E Ink technology, Kate highlights its potential benefits for eye health.

"I'm a complete newbie to E Ink technology and the thing that stood out most for me was the ease I felt in my eyes when using the Light Phone II screen. Given that myopia is on the rise in the general population, I think anything we can do that helps contribute to protecting children's eyes as they grow has to be considered when making choices about which mobile phones they eventually get."

Kate also advocates for the Light Phone II as an ideal first phone for younger users.

"Given that parents want to be able to contact their children by phone when they get to a certain age but do not want their children to have a device that connects to social media and powerful algorithms that have been proved to be addictive, I think the Light Phone II would be a radically different, but far healthier start to the world of phones for 11-14 year-olds."

3. E Ink: A Safer Alternative for the Digital Age

In an age dominated by screens, it's crucial to evaluate not only the content we consume but the devices through which we consume it. Recent studies have brought attention to the health implications of prolonged exposure to blue light emitted by traditional LCD screens, particularly for our eyes. E Ink, however, provides a safer, more sustainable alternative that offers significant benefits for both visual health and user well-being.

A peer-reviewed study from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health examined the effects of different display types on retinal cells, specifically focusing on the impact of blue light. The study found that devices equipped with E Ink's ComfortGaze™ front light were up to three times less stressful for retinal cells than LCD screens. This revelation is important given that blue light exposure can lead to the production of reactive oxidative species (ROS), which, when accumulated over time, can cause photo-oxidative retinal damage. As Dr Rick Rogers, the study's principal investigator, highlighted, "Existing recommendations for blue light safety of displays are based on the spectrum of the light they emit. This study sought to measure the actual response of retinal cells when exposed to commercially available displays." E Ink displays, in contrast, reflect ambient light and use front lights only when necessary, significantly reducing the strain placed on the eyes.

The harmful effects of blue light exposure are well-documented. According to the study, "Spectra of light from displays is a leading trigger for stress on retinal cells." This stress is particularly concerning for those who spend prolonged periods staring at screens. Research shows that adults, on average, spend 13 hours a day using screens, according to Nielsen. For children, the effects can be even more pronounced, as their developing eyes are more sensitive to high-energy visible (HEV) blue light. By avoiding the need for backlit screens, E Ink devices offer a healthier way to engage with technology.

E Ink's unique ability to mimic the appearance of paper—reflecting light, rather than emitting it—means that it places far less strain on the eyes compared to LCD screens. Devices using E Ink, such as e-readers and the Light Phone II do not emit blue light unless their front light is engaged, and even then, it is far less intense than traditional backlighting systems. E Ink's ComfortGaze™ front light, designed to reduce blue light emission while offering a comfortable reading experience, ensures that E Ink users are protected from the harmful effects of excessive screen time.

In a practical sense, E Ink technology can transform how we approach extended screen use. As Lynne Garone, Associate Vice President of E Ink, explains, "Shifting a portion of screen time to a healthier display for reading and writing allows us to remain connected without sacrificing eye health." This is especially crucial for families with children, who often spend significant time in front of screens, both for education and entertainment. The Light Phone II, for example, capitalises on E Ink's natural properties, offering a distraction-free mobile experience with a focus on essential communication, making it a healthier alternative to traditional smartphones.

Beyond the health benefits, E Ink technology also supports environmental sustainability. Unlike OLED and LCD screens, which require constant power to emit light, E Ink displays

consume significantly less energy, making them an eco-friendlier option. In fact, E Ink has been found to offer substantial CO2 savings in large-scale applications, from e-readers replacing paper books to electronic shelf labels reducing the need for printed materials. As technology continues to advance, E Ink's energy efficiency positions it as a future-proof solution that balances human health with environmental responsibility.

The growing adoption of E Ink technology is a step towards a more sustainable, eye-friendly, and intentional digital landscape. By prioritising user well-being and reducing harmful light exposure, E Ink offers an alternative that allows us to enjoy the benefits of technology without compromising our eye-health. E Ink provides a compelling choice—one that is both easier on the eyes and better for the planet.

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4. Health Professionals for Safer Screens

Perspectives from experts in the UK health sector advocating for safer screen use

4a. Dr Becky Foljambe MBBS BSc DRCOG DFSRH MRCGP

The Impact of Smartphones on Child Development

Dr Becky Foljambe, an NHS General Practitioner and founder of Health Professionals for Safer Screens, has been at the forefront of addressing the impacts of smartphones on children's development. Over the past decade, she has witnessed a significant deterioration in child well-being through her work in general practice and school-based sex education programmes. In March 2019, she launched a petition advocating for the removal of smartphones from schools, a reflection of her growing concerns about the intrusion of technology into childhood.

Dr Foljambe's clinical experience has revealed the pervasive influence of smartphones on young people's mental and physical health. She described an alarming trend:

"We're seeing a lot more self-harm, particularly in pre-teen and early teenage girls. In my area, there's been a 200% increase in eating disorders, and this is mirrored across the world." Dr. Foljambe directly linked these issues to harmful online content, explaining, "They're looking at self-harm content, eating disorder content, and idealised images of the female body online. This exposure has led to lower self-esteem, body image issues, and even a growing inclination toward cosmetic surgery among young girls."

The role of algorithms in perpetuating addictive behaviours among children is another concern. Dr Foljambe noted,

"These devices create a fast surge and false reward pattern in the brain, similar to what we see with drugs and alcohol. The algorithms keep feeding content, whether you want it or not, and up to 50% of adolescents are showing signs of behavioural addiction to their smartphones."

In her practice, smartphones have become an unavoidable topic in consultations with parents and young patients. "No consultation is finished now without asking about screen use," she stated. "Teenagers struggling with mental health, body image, or bullying invariably have the smartphone playing a significant role in their struggles."

Dr Foljambe's concerns extend beyond individual cases to systemic issues in schools and society. She criticised the normalisation of digital devices in educational settings, particularly when children's homework is sent to them via smartphones or tablets.

“When schools are sending children’s homework on screens, they’re doubling their screen time quota. This is despite organisations like NICE, UNESCO, and the World Health Organization warning about excessive screen use.”

She also highlighted the inequalities exacerbated by technology. “The most vulnerable children are often the hardest to reach,” she explained. “Smartphones in schools create a perfect storm for children from deprived backgrounds, who are already at higher risk of being drawn into harmful online spaces.”

Dr. Foljambe believes the solution lies in early intervention and proactive parental involvement. “For younger children, the advice is simple: don’t give them a smartphone until they are ready. Parents should feel confident in saying no if their child is not ready, even if it seems like every other child in their peer group has one. You can always let them use your device under supervision when necessary.” For parents of teenagers, she advocates for periods of tech-free time, stating, “Taking the phone away, even temporarily, can work wonders. I often hear parents say that after doing so, their child is sleeping better, calmer, and more engaged with family activities.”

Dr Foljambe is optimistic about a cultural shift in attitudes towards technology use. Reflecting on conversations with her own teenage children and their peers, she shared, “Many of them are adamant that this was a mistake. They’ve experienced the negative effects first-hand and are saying they would never give these devices to their own children.”

Looking forward, Dr Foljambe stressed the need for systemic change. “Governments need to step up. Parents cannot be left to carry this burden alone. We need legislative action to create a healthier environment for children, starting with banning smartphones in schools for under-16s.”

4b. Dr Sanjiv Nichani MBBS, MNAMS(I), MRCP
Consultant paediatrician

Examining the Screen Demic: The Impact of Smartphones on Children

Dr Sanjiv Nichani OBE is a paediatrician with over three decades of experience in critical care and congenital heart disease. His career has also extended to addressing emerging mental health challenges, particularly those linked to technology and screen overuse among children and adolescents.

Recently, Dr Nichani has focused on what he terms the “screen demic,” a rising epidemic of developmental issues and mental health disorders caused by excessive screen time and social media use. Through his work with the campaign group Health Professionals for Safer Screens and his impactful 5-a-day infographic, now recognised by NHS England, Dr Nichani is advocating for systemic change in how we approach children’s exposure to screens.

In his interview, Dr Nichani reflected on his clinical observations that first drew his attention to the screen demic. He explained, “I’ve been seeing teenagers presenting with headache, lethargy, listlessness, and irritability. When you delve deeper into what’s happening in family life or school life, one common feature is that far too many teenagers are spending 4 to 6 hours every day on screens and social media.”

This overuse, he noted, extends to even younger children, highlighting a disturbing trend: “I’ve been seeing non-verbal children, toddlers, two- or three-year-olds, walking into my clinic… they don’t say a word. They come in with a glazed expression on their faces, and they don’t look at you. They are immediately attracted to inanimate objects. In most cases, these children’s entire waking hours are spent in front of screens, including during meals, travel, and other daily activities.”

Dr Nichani outlined the broader implications of these trends, warning that screen dependency impacts the development of essential life skills. He noted, “What I’m witnessing is a phone-based childhood or a phone-controlled childhood, which is having lots of ramifications, lots of knock-on effects.”

He coined the term "screen demic" to describe this phenomenon:

“The screen demic is the epidemic of mental health illness in children and young people secondary to excessive screen time and social media, as well as early developmental problems with communication and interaction.”

When discussing the neurological effects of screen overuse, Dr Nichani highlighted the role of algorithms and dopamine release in creating addictive behaviours. “These algorithms… cause the release of the hormone dopamine, which makes you feel elated, even happy. But when you put it down, the dopamine level drops, and to replenish that dopamine, you want to keep picking it up again and again. That becomes repetitive behaviour, leading to addiction.”

For parents and educators, Dr Nichani emphasised the importance of moderation and public awareness campaigns to counteract these harmful effects. He explained, “It’s not your fault. This has become the norm, embedded in our lives. But at the same time, you’ve got to lead by example. That’s the only way we can get back to a reasonable, moderate, sensible position on screen time and social media app use.”

Dr Nichani’s proposed solutions are both practical and actionable. He described his 5-a-day infographic, tailored for different age groups, as a framework for healthier screen use. For younger children, he advises against using screens as digital pacifiers and stresses the importance of sleep hygiene, recommending no screens at least two hours before bedtime. For teenagers, he suggests limits on recreational screen time and incorporating regular physical activity to counteract the effects of screen overuse on both mental and physical health. “There was a very large study in Taiwan—nearly two million participants—that showed that those who were physically active had less mental health difficulties, less ADHD, less depression, and were better adjusted.”

Dr Nichani also pointed out systemic barriers to change, expressing frustration with governmental and institutional inertia. “We’ve sleepwalked into this problem,” he said. “To turn the Titanic around is going to take a long time, and in the meantime, the damage is going to carry on until everybody wakes up—this needs to start at a government. level”

When asked about potential solutions, Dr Nichani expressed optimism about systemic interventions such as school-based smartphone bans. He argued for a shift in cultural norms around technology, advocating for children to engage in more green time and less screen time. Reflecting on the broader societal implications, he noted, “If you know that something you’re doing is potentially causing your child harm… most self-respecting parents are going to sit up and take notice.”

4c. Sandy Chappell- Children's Speech and Language Therapist

Sandy Chappell: The Language of Connection

Sandy Chappell, a paediatric speech and language therapist with over three decades of experience, has dedicated her career to understanding how young children develop communication skills. From her early days in the NHS to her private practice, her focus has always been on fostering connection between children and their caregivers. Today, Sandy's insights into the impacts of smartphones and screens on early development are more crucial than ever.

When Chappell began her career, the television was the primary screen parents needed to manage. "Even background noise from a TV impacts how much a child will speak while they're playing and how much the parent will speak to the child," she recalls.

"But now, screens have become omnipresent—mobile devices follow children in pushchairs, cars, and even into their bedrooms. That would have sounded horrific to me then, and it is horrific now," she notes. Her concern is not rooted in nostalgia but in the clear evidence of harm these devices can cause, especially for young children.

A key part of Chappell's work has been advocating for what she calls the "serve and return" nature of early communication. "Babies are born social creatures," she explains. "They look for faces and listen for voices. That's how bonding happens—through interaction." But smartphones, tablets, and other screens disrupt this process. Children need back-and-forth exchanges with their parents or caregivers to develop language skills, and screens simply cannot replicate this. "A screen can't see the child or react to them," she says. "It's always a one-way interaction."

Chappell also highlights a significant societal shift: the integration of entertainment and communication into a single device. This, she argues, has normalised patterns of screen use that are deeply problematic for young children. "Children are watching their parents on screens, and that kind of habit forms early," she explains.

This mirrors broader societal changes, much like the way smoking was once seen as a harmless adult activity. Just as parents now take care to avoid smoking in front of their children, Chappell believes we must extend this principle to our use of screens. "Children naturally mirror what they see," she says. "Families where parents spend less time on screens naturally have children who do the same."

Her observations on how screens are often used to pacify or distract children are particularly poignant. "During the lockdowns, screens became a substitute for social interaction," Chappell recalls. "Now, even though the lockdowns are over, children are still locked down by their screens." She cites examples from her work with schools and nurseries, where children arrive each day clutching devices and leave with them in hand. "Screens reduce children's opportunities to play," she explains, pointing out that play is the foundation for learning. Whether it's imaginative play, messy play, or just the freedom to be bored, these experiences are irreplaceable in childhood.

Chappell's concerns extend to the normalisation of apps marketed as "educational." Many parents, she says, are misled into thinking these tools benefit their children. "For under-fives, screens do more harm than good," she states unequivocally. "Most of these so-called educational apps simply aren't."

Despite the challenges, Chappell believes the solution lies in a collective shift in norms. "If as a group, parents decide not to give their children smartphones until a certain age, or if a school decides to ban phones, it can make a difference," she suggests. But for this to happen, parents need honest information about the potential harms. "We need to help parents make informed choices," she says. "Parents are trying their best, but they're being misled. It's up to us to tell the truth."

As Chappell puts it, "We must act as a collective." Just as society once re-evaluated its stance on smoking, it's time to rethink the role of screens in young lives. Her message is clear: "We need to give children back their childhood—a time to play, to dream, and to bond with the people around them."

4d. In Summary: Perspectives on Healthier Tech Habits for Children

The perspectives of Dr Sanjiv Nichani, Dr Becky Foljambe, and Sandy Chappell converge around the critical need for a re-evaluation of how children interact with technology, offering insights that resonate with the principles behind the Light Phone II. Dr Nichani highlights the unhealthy nature of prolonged screen use for children, underscoring the importance of devices that actively discourage this behaviour. As 16-year-old Rose Pepper noted, the E Ink screen on the Light Phone II is deliberately designed to make the user less inclined to look at it, suggesting an intentional step away from the attention-grabbing nature of modern smartphones.

Dr Foljambe's concerns about the "fast surge" effect of screen content, which she connects to behavioural addiction, contrast with the Light Phone II's slower, simplified design. Her observations echo David Smallwood's assertion that slowness can be a valuable trait in technology, particularly for young users. A device that allows connection through voice and text alone, without the pull of additional apps or visual distractions, aligns with her vision of fostering healthier digital habits in children.

Similarly, Sandy Chappell emphasises the foundational importance of bonding through sound and conversation. Her belief in the value of serve-and-return interactions between parents and children finds a natural parallel in Kate Alderton's reflection: "One of the most valuable things we can offer each other in a conversation is true attention." A device like the Light Phone II II, which prioritises functionality over stimulation, seems well-suited to preserve the attention necessary for these meaningful exchanges.

As Dr Toby Zundel reminds us, it is also crucial to acknowledge the profound difference between a child's experience of technology and that of an adult. Every aspect of a smartphone's perceived usefulness, as viewed through an adult lens, carries a completely different meaning when experienced by a child. This underscores the importance of designing technology that supports a child's unique developmental needs, rather than imposing adult paradigms onto their experiences.

Together, the insights of these experts highlight a growing awareness of the need for technology that aligns with human development, rather than undermining it. While the Light Phone II is just one example, its design philosophy points toward a broader movement of digital minimalism that prioritises well-being over convenience or novelty.

5a. Smartphones – A Timeline

List of Some Significant Events Internationally in Regulating the Use of Mobile Phones

2000 U.K. Government report Mobile Phones and Health (Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones). A clear recommendation was given in Para. 6.90: "...we believe that the widespread use of mobile phones by children for non-essential calls should be discouraged..."

2014 Yondr phone locking pouches first utilised in schools. On entering the school, the phone is placed in a screened pouch which is then locked. The user keeps the pouch with the phone in it until the end of the school day when it is then released from the pouch.

2015 French law passed which bans Wi-Fi in nursery schools and exposure to Wi-Fi to be reduced in primary schools (Wi-Fi routers must be switched off when not being used). A new principle in French law introduced — that of sobriety — can be described as the obligation to be conscious of continuously expanding environmental influences, in this case electromagnetic radiation. This impulse of obligation to increased consciousness is also reflected in public awareness and education measures regarding mobile phones which are incorporated into the legislation.

2017 Government of Bangladesh banned both students and teachers bringing mobiles into school and college classes.

2018 French law passed which bans mobile use by children in all primary and middle schools, including on breaks.

2022 PhoneAwayBox company founded by two ex-school staff. It supplies transparent lockable boxes for pupils' phones that attach onto school lockers.

May 2023 The U.S. Surgeon General, Dr Vivek Murthy, backed by multiple leading figures in U.S. healthcare, issues an advisory cautioning about health effects of social media on the mental health of young people.

May 2023 The "It Takes a Village" initiative in Greystones, Ireland makes news — parents acting in community to prevent their primary school aged children from having smartphones. By acting in community, individual children need not feel like 'the odd one out' if prevented from having a smartphone. Supported by the Irish Government Minister for Health and later, the Minister for Education.

July 2023 UNESCO publishes a report which questions the value of digital technology in schools and calls for a global ban on smartphones in schools.

August 2023 The Chinese Government is considering restricting under 18s to a maximum of 2 hours smartphone use per day and a ban on internet access to this age group from 10pm to 6am (to encourage better sleep habits). China already has a ban on under 18s playing online games from 10pm to 8am.

August 2023 The Irish "It Takes a Village" initiative spreads to another county - Co. Waterford, with plans for a no smartphone or social media voluntary charter for parents with regard to their primary school aged children.

December 2023 Mobile phones banned in classes in Russian schools with concerns relating to effects of electromagnetic radiation on pupils.

January 2024 The Netherlands bans pupils from using mobiles in school, including during breaks.

January 2024 The Swedish Government has pulled back on digital technology in schools, with a new emphasis on traditional methods in learning.

February 2024 The U.K. Government issues a non-statutory ban on pupils' use of mobiles in schools in England during the school day and on breaks.

February 2024 Daisy Greenwell and Claire Ferneyhough start the Smartphone Free Childhood campaign.

April 2024 Jonathan Haidt publishes The Anxious Generation.

May 2024 St. Albans Primary School Consortium, which involves head teachers across the district, has issued a letter asking parents not to give smartphones to their children before the age of 14.

May 2024 The U.K. Government House of Commons Education Committee publishes a strongly critical report entitled "Screen time: impacts on education and wellbeing".

June 2024 The U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, calls for mental health warnings on social media platforms for teenagers.

September 2024 N. Ireland Education Minister Paul Givan issues guidance that pupils should not use mobile phones at any time during the school day.

September 2024 Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announces that children will be banned from using social media, with the lower age limit to be decided - between 14 — 16 years old.

September 2024 The Smartphone Free Childhood campaign has attracted more than a thousand mums and dads in Gloucestershire to sign up to a pact to withhold smartphones from children until they are 14 years old.

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Australia plans to ban children from using social media. The Straits Times 10.0924.

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5b. Smartphones in 2024

Tik Tok Knows it's Harming Children
5Rights Foundation publishes evidence of TikTok exploiting dopamine systems in children to increase screen time, further implicating the app in mental health crises among teens.

https://5rightsfoundation.com/tiktok-knows-it-is-harming-children/

Health Professionals in Parliament
Health Professionals for Safer Screens presented evidence in Westminster for MP Josh MacAlister's Safer Phones Bill and has been referenced in two parliamentary debates.

https://techround.co.uk/news/health-professionals-health-risks-smartphone-use/

Testimony of Zamaan Qureshi
Zamaan Qureshi testifies to Congress about the harms of social media on youth, highlighting the necessity of designing tech for younger audiences responsibly.

https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2024/WorkGroups/Senate%20Economic%20Development/Bills/S.289/Witness%20Documents/S.289~Zamaan%20Qureshi~Build%20It%20For%20Us%20Testimony~2-27-2024.pdf

MP Launches Safer Phones Bill
Press release details an MP launching a bill in the UK Parliament to tackle addictive phone use by children, emphasizing safeguarding measures.

https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/oct/14/new-bill-could-force-social-media-firms-to-make-content-less-addictive-for-children

Oxford Word of the Year Reflects 'Trivial' Use of Social Media
'Brain rot' is selected as Oxford's Word of the Year, reflecting harmful use of social media.

https://www.theguardian.com/media/2024/dec/02/brain-rot-oxford-word-of-the-year-2024

Apple Told TikTok It's Unfit for Children and Young Teens, Lawsuit Says
Apple expressed concerns about TikTok being unsuitable for children and young teens

https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2024/10/31/tiktok-lawsuit-teen-child-safety-apple/

Execs on Tech — Turning Life On
Executives in the technology industry explore digital wellness and advocate for 'turning life on' by reducing screen dependency.

https://www.turninglifeon.org/execs-on-tech

Forgetting How to Read
A significant discussion about declining reading habits due to digital distractions.
https://www.educationnext.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ednext_XIX_2_book_lemov.pdf

I Tried the Light Phone for a Week – Could I Survive on Just Texts and Calls?
A journalist recounts their experience using the Light Phone for a week.

https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/sep/20/light-phone-one-week

Myopia: One in Three Children Are Short-Sighted
A study highlights increase in myopia among children, linked to prolonged screen time.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0m099zm4wyo

Second Screening: Has Television Become Background Noise?
An exploration of 'second screening' behaviour, where television is often relegated to background noise due to multitasking with mobile devices.

https://www.verdict.co.uk/second-screening-has-television-become-background-noise/#:~:text=The%20rising%20second%20screening%20phenomenon&text=This%20reduced%20attention%20span%20has,primary%20content%20for%20sustained%20periods.

Tech Giants Ignoring Harm to Children, Says Rachel de Souza
Tech companies neglecting the harmful impacts of their platforms on children.

https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/10/28/tech-giants-ignoring-harm-to-children-says-rachel-de-souza/

The NHS Case Study in How Technology is Ruining Our Lives
An analysis of how technology impacts the NHS, highlighting inefficiencies and challenges posed by overreliance on digital tools.

https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/03/28/nhs-is-a-case-study-in-how-technology-is-ruining-our-lives/

Keeping Childhood Smartphone Free
Irish Department for Education publishes official guide for parents and parents associations regarding internet safety and access to smartphones for primary school children.

https://assets.gov.ie/283424/d5f331c8-a417-410e-8f8d-1be58518317c.pdf

The Real Reason You're Seeing More Reality TV Than Ever
An article discussing the surge in reality TV, linked to algorithmic preferences and the digital entertainment economy.

https://www.telegraph.co.uk/tv/0/netflix-second-screening-more-reality-tv/

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