“When you are ready for your child to stop being a child, give them a smartphone”

A smartphone-free childhood does not mean a phone-free one.

SMARTPHONE-FREE CHILDHOOD

SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD

delay smartphones.
PROTECT CHILDHOOD

(Click on banners to go to the websites)

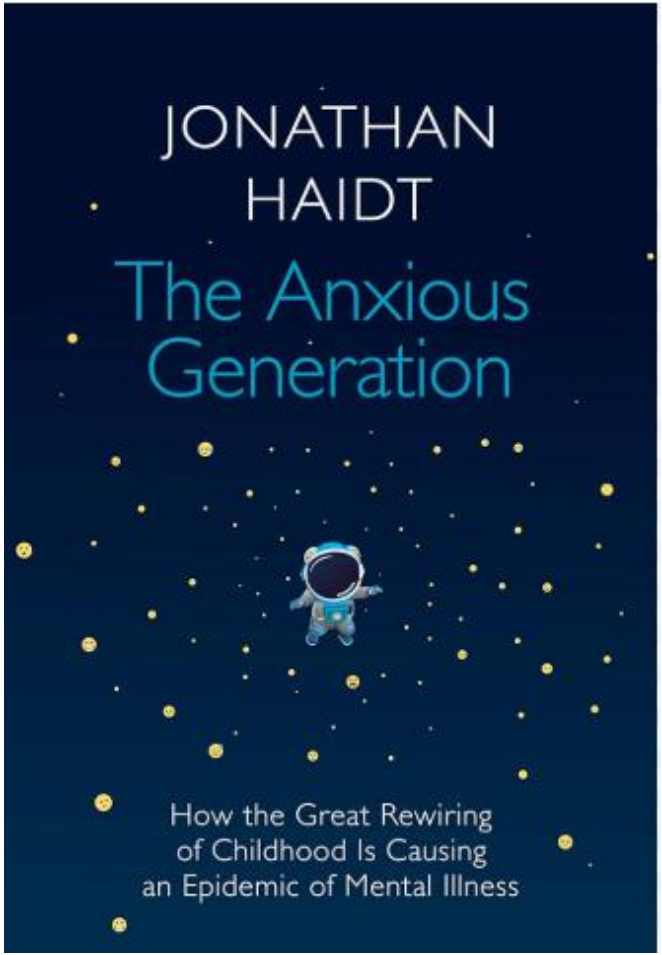
Objectives of this meeting

- Continue to promote the nationwide movement for a SMARTPHONE-FREE CHILDHOOD
- Share evidence from research around the impact of smartphones on children
- Share concerns that parents have around the use of smartphones
- Share alternatives for smartphones
- Provide details of how parents can work together to support the movement collaboratively - Parent Ambassadors
- Share the progress that has been made over the past 12 months

Smartphone-Free Childhood is a parent-led movement on a mission to protect millions of children from the dangers of using smartphones too young.

The goals for this campaign :

- A nationwide ban on smartphones in schools* with phone lockers and pouches so they are not accessible during the day.
- Ban of social media for children under 16 years old.
- Ban of smartphones for children under 14 years old.*


JONATHAN
HAIDT
The Anxious Generation
How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness

BBC

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St Albans school heads call for under-14s smartphone ban

22 May

The Telegraph

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St Albans set to be first smartphone-free UK city for under-14s

Consortium of head teachers urged parents to delay children's device access over fears of mental health impact

Steve Bird

Related Topics

St. Albans, Primary Schools, Children, Children's health, Mobile

IN DEPTH

'We wouldn't sell a child alcohol, so why give them smartphones?'

Mobiles have been blamed for a rise in anxiety, anorexia and attention disorders. Schools in St Albans plan to take action

St Albans headteachers call for smartphone-free childhoods

22nd May

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ADVERTISEMENT

St Albans bids to become the first smartphone-free city for children under 14 - with headteachers begging pupils' parents to delay buying mobiles for them

St Albans wants to be first smartphone-free city for under-14s

Head teachers in the city plead with parents of primary pupils to swap smartphones for simple 'dumbphone' handsets

Children could be banned from using smartphones in a UK city

Jasper King

Published May 22, 2024, 4:09pm | Updated May 22, 2024, 6:29pm

Comment

Headteachers from different primary schools across St Albans have written a joint letter (Picture:

Group of 17 London secondary schools join up to go smartphone-free

Measures will impact more than 13,000 pupils in Southwark, and include confiscating phones used at school

Academy chain with 35,000 pupils to be first in England to go phone-free

Exclusive: Ormiston academies trust says impact of phones on learning and mental health has been 'catastrophic'

How going phone-free taught pupils 'to socialise, old school'

Bell-to-bell smartphone ban in New York schools will take effect this fall as part of budget deal, Gov. Hochul says

CBS NEWS NEW YORK

By Jesse Zanger
May 7, 2025 / 2:36 PM EDT / CBS New York

THE STANDARD

More than 100 schools across Barnet to go smartphone-free

Noah Vickers
17 February 2025 · 3-min read

7 May 2025

Schools in Enfield to implement smartphone-free policy

Eton set to give 'brick' phones to first years

Australia approves social media ban on under-16s

DENMARK, EDUCATION, SCHOOL, SOCIETY, TECHNOLOGY

Danish government to introduce a smartphones ban in schools by law

1 min read

Labour MP Dan Tomlinson says smartphones pose 'a huge risk' to young people's mental health (PA Wire)

More than 100 schools across Barnet will go 'smartphone-free' from September, in a bid to help the borough's young people "learn, socialise and grow, free from addictive algorithms".

'Digital pause': France pilots s ban

Paris (AFP) – Tens of thousands of pupils in France are going through a slightly different return to school this autumn, deprived of their mobile phones.

THE SAFER PHONES BILL

A Bill to make smartphones less addictive to support healthier, happier childhoods

Josh MacAlister OBE MP (Labour - Whitehaven and Workington)

Swiped: The School that
Banned Smartphones

NETFLIX

UNLIMITED TV PROGRAMMES & FILMS

N SERIES

ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence

2025 | 15 | 1 Season | Drama

When a 13-year-old is accused of the murder of a classmate, his family, therapist and the detective in charge are all left asking: what really happened?

Starring: Stephen Graham, Ashley Walters, Erin Doherty
Creators: Jack Thorne, Stephen Graham

Concerns about delaying smartphones

"That's how they communicate now!"

"They can't be the only ones without one or they'll be left out!"

"But they need independence, this is part of growing up"

"But they will miss out on WhatsApp groups with their friends"

"But we promised them..."

"But their older siblings have them"

"For children with divorced parents, aren't smartphones a necessity?"

Kids can communicate with each parent on a simple phone and use an iPad for Facetime calls if required.

"Can't we just use a stripped back iPhone with parental controls?"

"But my child needs a smartphone for train tickets and bus trackers!"

"This will never work, smartphones are essential in our lives now."

https://delaysmartphones.org.uk/evidence/

EVERYONE'S GOT ONE BECAUSE EVERYONE'S GOT ONE

Most parents believe smartphones are harmful, yet almost all children have them by Year 7

Because resisting peer pressure becomes almost impossible when children's social lives migrate online

The powerful network effects of smartphones and social media mean parents and young people feel like they have no choice

PARENTS WISH THINGS WERE DIFFERENT

94%
of primary school parents think smartphones are harmful

Parentkind nationwide poll of 2,496 people, April 24

70%
of parents believe smartphones negatives impact family life

HMD poll of 10,000 parents, June 24

33%
of parents of children with smartphones have cried over their child's phone obsession

HMD poll of 10,000 parents, June 24

YOUNG PEOPLE WISH THINGS WERE DIFFERENT

67%
of 16-18 year olds think smartphones are harmful

Parentkind poll, 2024

1in5
of 16-18 year olds have felt "life is not worth living" due to social media

Parentkind poll, 2024

50%
of teens say they are "addicted" to social media

Millennium Cohort Study, 2024

...addictive

FOCUS AND BRAIN CHANGES

46% of teens say they use the internet **"almost constantly"**

23% of young people have a dysfunctional relationship with their smartphones

READ MORE

46%

of teens say they use the their phones "almost constantly"

Pew Research Centre, Aug 2022

29 hours

Per week is the average British 12-year-old now spends on their smartphone

Childwise Monitor Report, 2021

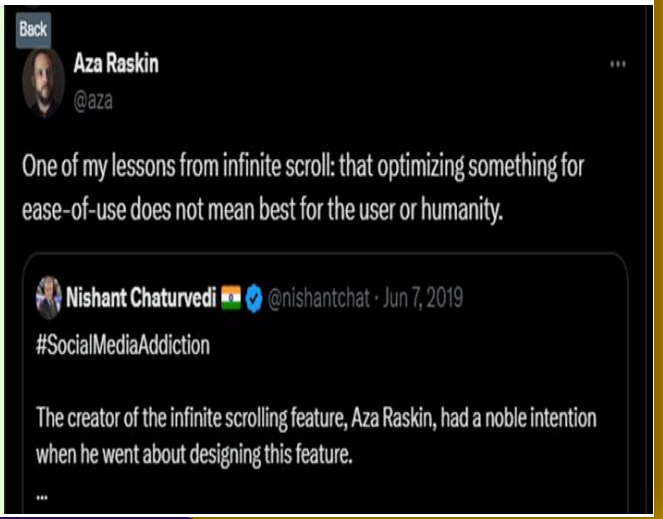
2 in 3

of 11-17 year olds 'often' or 'sometimes' find it difficult to put down their phone

Common Sense Media, 2023

"Behind every screen on your phone, a thousand engineers have worked to make it maximally addicting. Children are particularly susceptible to this kind of manipulative design."

Aza Raskin
Co-inventor of 'infinite scroll', turned campaigner



Exposure to Harmful Content

...exposing children to sexual and offensive content

18+

SEXUAL CONTENT & BEHAVIOUR

WhatsApp
Tik-Tok
YouTube
Snapchat
Instagram

"We'll look back in 20 years and be horrified by what our children were exposed to"

Dame Rachel de Souza
Children's Commissioner for England, 2022

51%
of UK 11-13 year-olds have seen hardcore pornography online

British Board of Film Classification Report, March 2022

75%
of UK 15 year olds questioned had been sent beheading videos

Digital Childhoods, children's commissioner report, 2022

90%
of girls and 50% of boys say they are sent unwanted explicit content

Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools, 2021

...making children more likely to self harm

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

...increasing depression and anxiety in children

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

3x

Teens with problematic smartphone-use are twice as likely to have anxiety and three times as likely to have depression

King's College London, 2024

1 in 5

UK 16 to 18 years olds say that their social media has made them feel that 'life is not worth living'

Parentkind Poll, 2024

53%

The number of children referred to emergency mental healthcare in England has soared by 53% in three years

Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2024

~Susie

In the last decade there have been 70% less outdoor accidents and 93% more incidents of self harm in children... as a GP I can promise you it's much easier to mend a broken bone than a broken mind.

😍 🙏 🙌 👏 24

Self-Harm Episodes, U.K. Teens

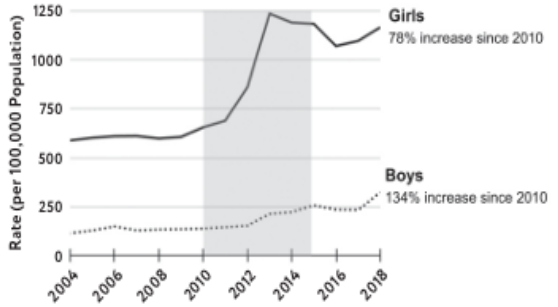


Figure 1.9. U.K. teens' (ages 13–16) self-harm episodes. (Source: Cybulski et al., 2021, drawing from two databases of anonymized British medical records.)[51]

Figure 1: Mental wellbeing in young adulthood (ages 18-24) improves with older age of first smartphone

Mental wellbeing measured by the Mental Health Quotient or MHQ increases with older age of first smartphone ownership. Correspondingly the percentage that are distressed or struggling decreases.

ROBLOX

- 80 million plays a day – 60% by over 13 year olds
- Encourages players to communicate online – filtered but not perfect
- Public servers – most games are open to everybody (can limit with VIP servers which you have to pay extra for)
- Relys on creator ratings for games
- Content of games can be adult or inappropriate themes
- Experience blocker – what else could they be doing?

"My first message would be, if you're not comfortable, don't let your kids be on Roblox." "That sounds a little counter-intuitive, but I would always trust parents to make their own decisions,“

David Baszucki – CEO of Roblox

What can parents do?

SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD

PARENT PACT

Sign the Hertfordshire Parent Pact

By signing this Pact, you're joining a growing community of parents choosing to wait to give their child a smartphone until at least 14, and social media until 16.

The Pact is anonymous (we'll never share your name publicly), but the more of us who sign, the more powerful it becomes in shifting the social norm in our community.

Plus we'll use the data to show the Government how much this matters to parents across the country, so that they take urgent action to protect children from the harms of smartphones and social media.

Your choice – and your voice – really is powerful

Select school (start typing your school's name to find it) *

Select child's school year (choose all that apply) *

I'm choosing to delay getting my child a smartphone until at least 14 and social media until at least 16 – for their wellbeing, and to help protect childhood for all our kids.

'Parents know they are not alone': UK pact to withhold smartphones until 14 gathers pace

Signatories to online pledge say it offers support in family reckonings over phone usage

The change can only be implemented by parents at home!

Parents make a pact with groups of families to delay smartphones until 14

St Albans School agreed policy to delay smartphones until children are 14

Parent Ambassadors help build support within their year groups

Parents make pacts in bigger groups within class and year group whatsapp groups to delay smartphones until 14

Parents connect with friends across St. Albans to drive change across the city

Make meaningful change nationwide by delaying smartphones until 14

Parent Blueprint for Smartphone Free Childhood

Our Goals

1. Ban use of smartphones in all St Albans schools in line with government guidance, seeking commitment to policy b on page 7 (“Mobile phone handed in on arrival”)

2. Withhold smartphones from children under 14 across St Albans

3. To ensure that all schools to have a clear policy that lessons must not require students to have use of a smartphone, and must ensure that a smartphone is not required to participate in school life

Milestones/Targets

1. (School) Demonstrate >50% support from school's parents, via Second Survey

2. (School) Create a Parent Pact, signed by >50% of school's parents

3. (St Albans) Write a letter to secondary schools from primary parents, signed by >50% of primary parents

○ Include a table of all primaries and data on volume of support

4. (St Albans) Write a letter to local MP from primary and secondary school parents, signed by >50% of parents

○ Include a table of all schools and data on volume of support

5. (St Albans) Create a city-wide Parent Pact

Alternatives to Smartphones

Internet Free Phones

When you do want to get a phone for your child make sure:

- **The phone does not support WI-FI**
- No 4G/5G
- No selfie camera
- **Use a SIM card with NO DATA**, calls and texts only
- Give it with a contract/boundaries (see below)

Sim Cards:
IMPORTANT – When you get a SIM card for your child's phone, make sure that it has NO DATA roaming, only calls and texts so that there is no chance that they can access the internet. Currently Asda are the only company that are offering this.
Asda Unlimited calls and Texts £4 per month

XPLORA GO X2 – £99

Imoo Z1 Smartwatch for Kids – £99

Nokia 5710 Express Audio – £75

Nokia 105 – £25

Nokia 3310 – £60

The Phone £100 - £105 (€100)

Tile – £25

Apple Airtag – £30

Modelling good behaviour

Parent Challenges

1. Target a reduction in your own screen time, e.g. by 10% a week over the course of a month
2. No phones in a specific area of the house, e.g. the living room, bedrooms
3. No phones after a specific time, e.g. 6pm until the kids are in bed
4. Have a lockable box where you store your phones during "down time“
5. Smartphone free Sundays

Why parental controls are a big tech cop out

58%
of teens say they've never had controls put on their phone by parents

47%
of teens with controls in place say they have bypassed them

(Parentkind poll, May 2024)

If your child has a smartphone, we'd recommend using parental controls – but ultimately they're not the solution to this problem

Many parents don't have the tech-knowledge or headspace to set them up (or to hold fast in the face of a teen lobbying for more)

And teens find multiple ways to bypass controls:

- Performing a factory reset
- Using VPN software
- Hacking the WiFi router
- Memorising your passcode

Even if your kid's phone has controls, their friends may not – so they may see or be sent inappropriate content anyway

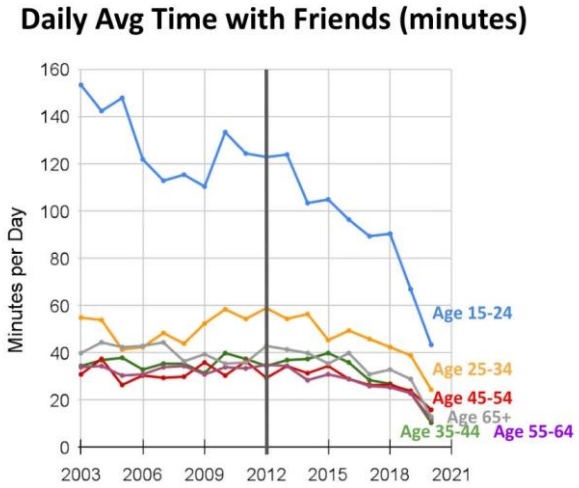
Yet big tech lobby government not to regulate them further by arguing that their parental controls are sufficient – that 'parents just need to educate themselves'

Parental controls have been around since the dawn of the iPhone – and we are where we are. Teens across the globe are experiencing an explosion in mental illness.

Other Screens/tablets

Are we as parents providing our children with the childhood that they need/we want them to have?

The opportunity cost to childhood is profound. The average UK 12 year-old now spends over four hours per day on their smartphone, displacing the kinds of activities that have shaped childhood for millennia.



43%

of US teenagers waking minutes are spent on screens

Gitnux Marketdata Report, Jan 2024

30%

Since 1975, the daily average time children spend playing outdoors has fallen by 30%, while screen-based activities have risen 23%

Zach Rausch - Mullan 2019

65%

The daily average time that teenagers spend with friends has plummeted by 65% since 2010

American Time Use Study

Is there a better alternative?

4. More independence, free play, and responsibility in the real world. That's the way children naturally develop social skills, overcome anxiety, and become self-governing young adults.

- **Jonathan Haidt,** *Anxious Generation*

#IRLREVOLUTION

SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD

To exit full screen, press and hold Esc

Smartphone Free Childhood is a grassroots movement on a mission to challenge Big Tech's colonisation of childhood

Join the growing movement. It takes 30secs - and could change the world!

SIGN OUR PACT

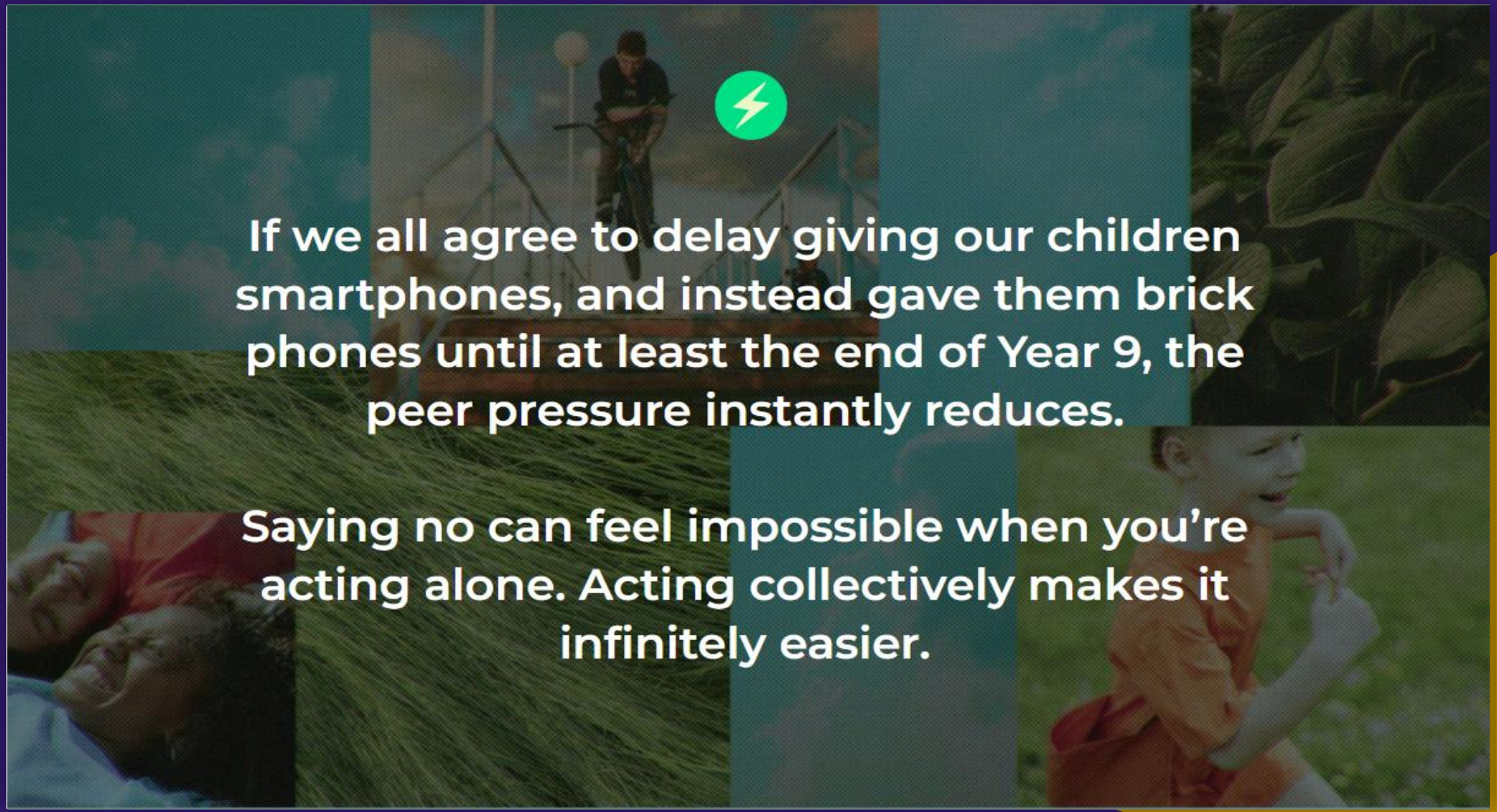
Find tools, template letters and guides to help navigate the issue.

RESOURCES

Join an international SFC group, or find out how to start one.

GLOBAL GROUPS

Activate Windows
Go to Settings to activate Windows.


If we all agree to delay giving our children smartphones, and instead gave them brick phones until at least the end of Year 9, the peer pressure instantly reduces.
Saying no can feel impossible when you're acting alone. Acting collectively makes it infinitely easier.

We are stronger together

- Anonymous to the school – just year group
- Not legally-binding
- A statement of intent
- Sign up for all your children

Parent Pact