achieving
for **children**

Screen time & Online Safety Resource Pack

Positives of gaming and online media

Maintaining relationships with friends or family who they might not be able to see in person

Enhance critical thinking skills.

Teamwork and Creativity

Online communication is easier for some children, especially those with neurodevelopmental conditions.

Access to educational materials and different ways of learning.

Negative consequences

Less time being active and outside

Limited use of senses

Decreases mental imagery skills and emotional regulation skills

Too much screen time can affect sleep patterns

Amplifying anxiety - screen time increases central nervous system arousal

Risk presented regarding who they are talking to

Evaluating Screen Time

Screen time guidelines include four key questions for families to help examine their use of technology:

1. **Is screen time controlled?**
2. **Does screen use interfere with what your family want to do?**
3. **Does screen use interfere with sleep?**
4. **Are you able to control snacking during screen time?**

Screen time recommendations

- Until 18 months limit screen use to video chatting along with familiar adults
- Between 18 - 24 months limited screen time to watching educational programs with a caregiver
- 2-5 years old limit non-educational screen time to about 1 hour per day and 3 hours on the weekend
- 6+ encourage healthy habits and limit activities that include screen

- Turn off all screens during meal times and family outings
- Learn about and use parental controls
- Avoid using screens to regulate emotions/behaviour
- Turn off screens 60 minutes before bedtime.
- Avoid the use of any screens in bedrooms as a rule

What are the signs of poor screen time balance?

One size does not fit all when it comes to screen time; it varies based on an individual's needs. However, some signs a child spends too much time on screens include:

- finding it difficult to turn off/stop using their device
- feeling anxious or stressed about not having their device
- feeling anxious or stressed while using their device
- lack of sleep due to late nights on devices
- limited physical activity. However, there are apps and games that keep kids active as well
- distancing themselves from friends in the offline space

Why might a possible link exist?

Why is there are link between screen time and mental health?

- Games and Apps are designed to create hyper arousal in the brain.
- This leads to an increase in dopamine.
- Dopamine increase is linked to the feeling of being happy and rewarded.
- We can get used to a certain amount of dopamine, so when the screens are removed the dopamine levels drops resulting in a reduced sense of satisfaction and irritability.

achieving
for children

Opening Up the Conversation

- Find a neutral time to discuss the use of screens as a family
- Include yourself as parents/carers in the conversation
- Start with the positives:
  - Which games to you enjoy most?
  - Why do you like playing that game?
  - What have you learnt about recently online?
  - Tell me more about it
- Recognise that gaming/online media is a social thing and a way for them to interact with their friends

- Be curious about why they may want to spend a lot of time playing
  - Is it a coping strategies for social anxiety
  - A way to escape,
  - Is it simply that it's fun, stimulating and enjoyable.

- Outline reasons why it may not be good to spend too much time
  - Let whole family come up with ideas i.e.
    - less time outdoors,
    - bad for our eyes to be staring at a screen,
    - not real life,
    - avoiding other responsibilities, etc.

achieving for children

Alternative Activities

Play with Play Dough:	Read together	Outdoor Play	Cook Together

If you're in the habit of encouraging screen time while you're cooking dinner or folding a load of laundry, Play Dough is a great way to keep your little one busy and independent. Besides being fun, manipulating playdough helps children develop fine motor skills and creativity.

It also helps introduce them to words they might not encounter in everyday conversation, expanding their vocabulary. For older children, why not try a family book club where you read a book or magazine with articles that they are interested in

There's no better way to encourage your child's mental and physical development than having them play outdoors. There are so many ways to be active, that don't involve your typical sports. Why not look into what lessons or classes are on offer at your local youth or community centre.

Try and get your children involved in the planning and or preparing of the family meal It may take a little bit longer to prepare dinner, but your child will be engaged in the process.

What could be helpful

Think together about how to end a gaming session

Explore and learn things on the internet together

Avoiding Screens 1 hour before bedtime

Making a family agreement for the whole family

Facilitate real world connections with peers.

Talk to your child about what they do online

www.youngminds.org.uk

achieving
for children

Family Agreement

Things to consider:
- What do we enjoy doing online?
- What apps, games and websites do we use the most?
- Do we already have any rules about use of tech we want to include in our family agreement?
- What devices, tech, toys or games do we have with internet access?

Managing time online
- How long do we spend on our devices?
- How do know when our screen use is interfering with family life?
- How does it feel when we use tech for too long?
- What can we do to help avoid overusing tech?

Sharing
- What is or isn't okay to share online?
- How do we keep personal information belonging
- to ourselves and others safe?
- Do we know how to use privacy settings and strong passwords, and why these are important?
- How can we use features like live streaming and disappearing content safely?
- What should we check before posting images and videos online?
- Do we need a family email address to use when signing up to new accounts?

Online Content
- Which websites are okay for us to use?
- Do we know what the age requirements, or ratings, on the games and apps we use mean?

Who is this agreement for:

We agree to

……………………………………………
……………………………………………
……………………………………………
……………………………………………
……………………………………………
……………………………………………
……………………………………………
……………………………………………
……………………………………..

Who is responsible for this?...
....
....
....
....
....

What happens if someone doesn't follow the agreement

Review date:

Signature

achieving for children

Additional resources

Books for parents/carers:

- Helping Your Child with Fears and Worries: A Self-help Guide by Cathy Creswell & Lucy Willetts

- The Anxious Generation by Jonathan Haidt

- Hold On to Your Kids by Gordon Neufeld & Gabor Mate

Story books:

- The Adventures of Smartie the Penguin (childnet.com)
- Digiduck's Big Decision (childnet.com)

- What To Do When You Worry Too Much by Dawn Huebner

- The Colour Monster by Anna Llenas

You can buy these books online using Amazon OR visit your local library to see if they have copies.

Websites & apps:

- The Smartphone Free Childhood https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/

- Relax Kids website https://relaxkids.com/

- Keeping children safe online: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/

- UK Safer Internet Centre: https://saferinternet.org.uk/ https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/digital-resilience-toolkit/digital-resilience-toolkit-6-10-year-olds/

- Government guidance (last updated 22 February 2021) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online

- Online Safety for Young People: https://www.childnet.com/