

Screen time and Online Safety

Mental HEALTH

Screen time

Medical advice regarding screen time focusses on eye and vision health - current recommendations advise a limit to recreational screen time of around 2 hours a day. They suggest the screen should be no closer than the young person's elbow and they should take a break of at least 20 seconds, per 20 minutes.

Paediatricians and psychologists base their guidance around the importance of having open conversations with young people about what they are using screens for, and prioritising "off-screen" activities such as socialising face to face and physical exercise.

Some potential consequences of excessive or unhealthy screen time could be:

- Decreased physical activity and obesity
- Sleep problems (the blue light emitted from screens can suppress the production of melatonin, a hormone that regulates sleep)
- Impaired attention
- Anxiety (particularly around social media and online interactions)
- Impaired social skills (if prioritising online interactions over face to face)
- Preventing the development of emotional regulation
- Delayed language development

www.healthyyoungminds.com/what-does-too-much-screen-time-do-to-kids-get-the-facts/

Online Safety

There are 4 main concerns of online safety (the 4 C's):

CONTENT - Content is anything posted online - it might be words or it could be images and video. Young people may encounter lots of different kinds of upsetting, harmful or illegal content online.

CONTACT - Contact is about the risk of harm young people may face when interacting with other users online. This could come from other young people, or adults posing as young people with the aim of grooming or exploiting them.

CONDUCT - Conduct means the way people behave online. Some online behaviour can increase the likelihood of or cause harm, such as bullying or sharing explicit images.

COMMERCE - Commerce is about the risk from things like online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing or financial scams.

It is important to be aware of **laws** that apply to behaviour online, both to educate young people and to know what concerns may need reporting.

Most apps will also have **user guidelines** such as age limits - these are there for a reason, but are also always a **minimum**. Understanding how different apps work and potential risks will help you to decide on whether it is appropriate for each young person.

Privacy settings on online platforms should always be discussed - not just for young people. What information can other users see and what risks could this pose?

Top Tips

- **Model healthy screen use yourself as an adult/parent/carer**
- **Agree on limits and boundaries together with clear reasoning**
- **Have open conversations around what apps young people are using and how they work**
- **Set bedtimes/app restrictions to prioritise sleep and downtime**
- **Plan and encourage activities away from screens**

Additional Support

www.saferinternet.org.uk/

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

www.internetmatters.org/

- School nursing service
- TARGET (Service Six)