

2024
2025

Director of Public Health
Annual Report



Next Generation York:
the health of adolescents in our city

Health benefits of smartphones for teenagers

- Access to information and skills**
A UNICEF report found that ‘Done right, internet use among children can increase learning opportunities and build digital skills
- Play and leisure**
There is some evidence that e.g. video games can improve adolescent’s executive functioning
- Connection with friends**
Pew Research Centre found that the majority of teens credit social media with strengthening their friendships and providing support
- Peer support**
There is some evidence that social media provides collective platforms for e.g. those who are LGBTQ
- Support with health**
Many online resources have been shown to be effective at supporting good health and wellbeing in adolescence

Health harms of smartphones for teenagers

- Cyber bullying, and risks of grooming / sexploitation**
Ofcom research suggests that four in 10 children aged 8-17 (39%) have experienced bullying, either on or offline
- Exposure to harmful content**
BBFC data shows that a quarter (24%) of 14 year olds say they see harmful content on a daily basis.
- Internet addiction**
UCL research found that teenagers with a formal diagnosis of internet suffered from negative behavioural and developmental changes
- Effects on sleep**
There is strong evidence of a dose-response relationship between internet use and the likelihood of reporting sleep problems
- Academic Distraction**
There is weak evidence that smartphone use while studying may negatively impact on academic performance
- Negative impact on mental health**
A KCL study found that teenagers with problematic smartphone use are twice as likely to have anxiety
- Opportunity cost**
US studies estimate average face to face time for teens down 68%

Some Principles...

- 1. Take a ‘fully engaged’ approach
- 2. Use the principle of ‘gradual exposure’
- 3. Digital 5 a day
- 4. Do it together



Birth	
	Use of screens for entertainment e.g. tv watching
	Interaction with screens eg using the internet together with a parent
	Owning a phone with simple messaging abilities
	Owning a phone with full internet access but no social media
	Having social media accounts. Which parents / carers can access
	No parental oversight in technology use
18 yo	