

New UK Bill Aims to Tackle Addictive Phone Use by Children

HONG KONG, CHINA, October 22, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In a significant step towards curbing the growing problem of phone addiction among young teens, a new bill backed by cross-party support from Labour, Conservatives, and child protection advocates is poised to reshape how social media companies engage with children. The proposed legislation seeks to protect those under 16 from the potentially harmful effects of algorithm-driven content, as concerns over youth addiction to smartphones and social media platforms intensify.



Smartphone Addiction

Rising Concerns Over Smartphone Addiction

A study conducted by the Millennium Cohort showed a big problem with social media addiction among teenagers, with nearly half (48%) of respondents aged 16-18 acknowledging they feel addicted. The research also uncovered a notable gender disparity, with 57% of girls expressing feelings of addiction, compared to 37% of boys.

This has raised alarms among parents, educators, and mental health professionals who worry about the impact on children's well-being, social development, and academic performance.

The addictive nature of social media platforms has been tied to their use of algorithms that deliver personalized, engaging content. For young users, this creates a feedback loop that can lead to excessive screen time and decreased attention spans. With the majority of teenagers now owning smartphones, concerns about mental health and social isolation are on the rise.

Main Content of the New Bill

Labour MP Josh MacAlister, who supports the bill, will meet with Science and Technology Secretary Peter Kyle this week to discuss potential government backing for measures in the bill. The new bill targets several key areas to protect children from the negative effects of mobile

phone and social media use:

Algorithm Exclusion for Young Teens: One of the most significant aspects of the bill is the mandate for social media companies to exclude children under 16 from algorithm-driven content recommendations. This is designed to reduce the addictiveness of the content they consume by preventing the targeting of content that keeps them endlessly scrolling.

Mobile Phone Use Restrictions in Schools: The bill also seeks to ban the use of mobile phones during the school day. Proponents argue that this will help students focus on their studies, improve face-to-face interactions, and reduce the anxiety often linked to constant notifications and social media updates.

Raising the Age of Data Consent: Another central provision calls for raising the age at which companies can collect data from children without parental consent from 13 to 16. This aims to limit how much personal data is harvested from young users, which is often used to fine-tune algorithms designed to keep them engaged.

Strengthening Ofcom's Powers: The bill also proposes empowering the UK's media regulator, Ofcom, to take stronger actions against apps and platforms that are designed to be addictive to children. This could include penalties for companies that do not comply with child protection guidelines.

Future Regulatory Reviews: In a proactive move, the bill commits the Government to continuously review and adjust regulations surrounding the design, supply, marketing, and use of mobile phones by children. This allows for the flexibility to introduce further protections as technology evolves.

Social and Political Implications

The introduction of this bill reflects the growing consensus among policymakers and experts that stronger action is needed to combat the risks associated with early smartphone use. With support from both Labour and Conservative parties, it signals a rare area of political unity focused on child welfare.

Child protection groups have long raised concerns about the unregulated nature of social media use among minors. The bill represents a key opportunity to address these concerns, as more children are growing up in a digital world that prioritizes engagement over well-being.

How Parents Can Help

Parents can play an active role in helping their children avoid smartphone addiction by encouraging healthier habits and interests. For instance, spending quality time outdoors through family hikes, sports, or camping can offer a refreshing alternative to screen time. Additionally, cultivating hobbies such as painting, music, or reading can help children develop interests beyond their devices. For parents seeking to make these activities more affordable, consider to check coupon sites like [Vouchersgo.co.uk](https://www.vouchersgo.co.uk), which offers a range of [promo codes and deals on](#)

[sports gear](#), books, and outdoor equipment, making it easier to support these lifestyle changes [without breaking the bank](#).

In conclusion, the proposed bill represents a crucial step in addressing the growing concern of smartphone and social media addiction among children. By enforcing stricter regulations and encouraging parents to take proactive steps, such as engaging their children in alternative activities, the harmful effects of excessive screen time can be mitigated. As technology continues to evolve, safeguarding the mental well-being of young people remains a top priority, and this legislation offers a promising path forward.

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