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Supporting Appropriate Technology Use in Primary School Aged Children

Ealing Mental Health Support Team

Overview: About our service

Ealing Mental Health Support Team is a service designed to support the **wellbeing of children and young people** in education settings **at the first signs of difficulty** and promote overall emotional and mental wellbeing.

In primary schools, we offer two **1:1 tailored support programmes for parents/carers** of primary school children

- **Anxiety –** feeling worried, separation anxiety, phobias, avoidance
- **Behavioural difficulties -** refusing to follow instructions or routine, improving relationships at home

We also organise **workshops** and **groups** throughout the year for children, parents and teachers. This service is currently being rolled out across the borough.

What are we Covering

- **Screen time** considerations
- Most frequent uses of technology amongst children and young people
  - **Gaming**
- Common Difficulties with Technology Use
  - **Cyberbullying**
- Alternatives and Finding a Balance
- Helpful organisations and resources

Screen time: your experiences

Screen time includes any time spent using a device such as a phone, computer, TV or games console

Screen time: what is recommended?

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE 2015) suggests that **children should have screen free days or** have a **two-hour limit** on the time spent in front of screens.

Advice from the World Health Organisation (WHO 2019) recommends that **children under a year should not have any screen time** and **children aged 2 to 4 should have no more than 1 hour a day.**

It is important to consider the content and context of screen time. A limited amount of good quality child-friendly screen time can be educational but it's important to ensure the content is appropriate for your child's age.

There are two types of screen time
Passive versus Purposeful screen time

Passive

Purposeful

Passive versus Purposeful screen time

(Ofcom Report, 2017; Internet Matters, 2024)

Passive time on devices is associated with low levels of physical activity – linked to obesity and diabetes

Anxious behaviours found in 9-10 year olds when unable to access their devices: passively re-watching programmes but not enjoying themselves

Using devices close to bedtime can suppress the production of melatonin, delaying sleep

Avoidance: preferring to go on their device rather than do something offline

27% of pupils use social media to "follow friends updates" and stay connected

Able to engage in passions and practice new skills (writing, art, music)

Apps to support children's development through fine motor skills, critical thinking and problem solving

Educational apps/websites can support children's learning

Alternatives to screen time

Physical activity
- Walk by the park or shop after school
- Play a sport
- Dance breaks
- Make use of the garden

Get creative
- Board games or Lego
- Colouring/painting/craft kit
- Cooking or baking
- Science experiments

Daily routine
- Involve children in preparing/cooking/tidying the evening meal
- No phones during meal times
- Screen time after chores/homework

Gaming

Gaming is one of the top activities enjoyed online by 5–16 year olds

(OFCOM Research)

74% of young people say online gaming teaches important skills like concentration and teamwork

There is a competitive element which can build confidence and feel rewarding

Provides a social platform outside of school and gives opportunity to young people who have difficulty socialising

Gaming is routed in community: Groups and audiences can gather around a specific game, character or theme.

Gaming Tips for Parents

Be aware of what games your child is playing, show interest and monitor downloads

Be aware of appropriate **parental controls** for the game that your child plays

Have a agreed strategy for reporting and blocking chats, and offensive content

Be aware of the set up of **in-app purchases** and **subscriptions** for the games being played

Be aware of chat functions and who your child is talking to (chats can public or private)

Be aware of game **age ratings** and **content descriptors** defining why a game has been given that age rating

Cyber Bullying

Using technology such as social media, mobile phones or computers to target someone.

Cyberbullying/ negative interactions with peers online. Making young people more vulnerable to mental health struggles

According to recent research by the anti-bullying charity Ditch the Label, 69% of young people under the age of 20 have engaged in abusive behaviour online, while 17% have been victims of cyberbullying.

Having regular discussions with your child about the online world, including topics like cyberbullying, is essential. This allows you to understand whether they have encountered or witnessed online bullying and provides an opportunity to support and reassure them that you are always there to help.

Cyber Bullying Tips for Parents

UK Safer Internet Centre suggest some questions which you could ask the young person:

How can you be kind online?

What would you do if someone was being unkind online?

What do you think cyberbullying is?

How is it different to physical bullying?

What to do if your child is experiencing cyberbullying:

Let Them Talk – Give your child space to share their experiences without interruption.

Stay Calm – Avoid reacting with shock or judgment to keep communication open.

Don't Restrict Technology – Reassure them that speaking up won't result in losing their device.

Encourage Non-Retaliation – Advise against responding to cyberbullying, as bullies seek reactions.

Save Evidence – Keep screenshots or messages to report the bullying effectively.

Involve the School – Schools have anti-bullying policies and resources to address online abuse.

Contact the Police if Necessary – Report threats or immediate danger to law enforcement

Finding a balance

- Aiming for some **screen free days/times** (gradually!)

- Create **boundaries**: Having a designated place for screen time such as a particular table , no phones at meal times.

- **Being a good example** – try to limit your own use of phones and tablets, and turn the TV off if no-one is watching

- Choosing things you and your child can **watch or play together**. Your child will learn lots from having the opportunity to discuss what they are seeing on the screen.

- Make use of **parental internet and in app controls** to ensure content is appropriate
Parental controls: Explore the settings on both the phone and home Wi-Fi. Discuss these with your child, as open communication is key alongside using these tools.
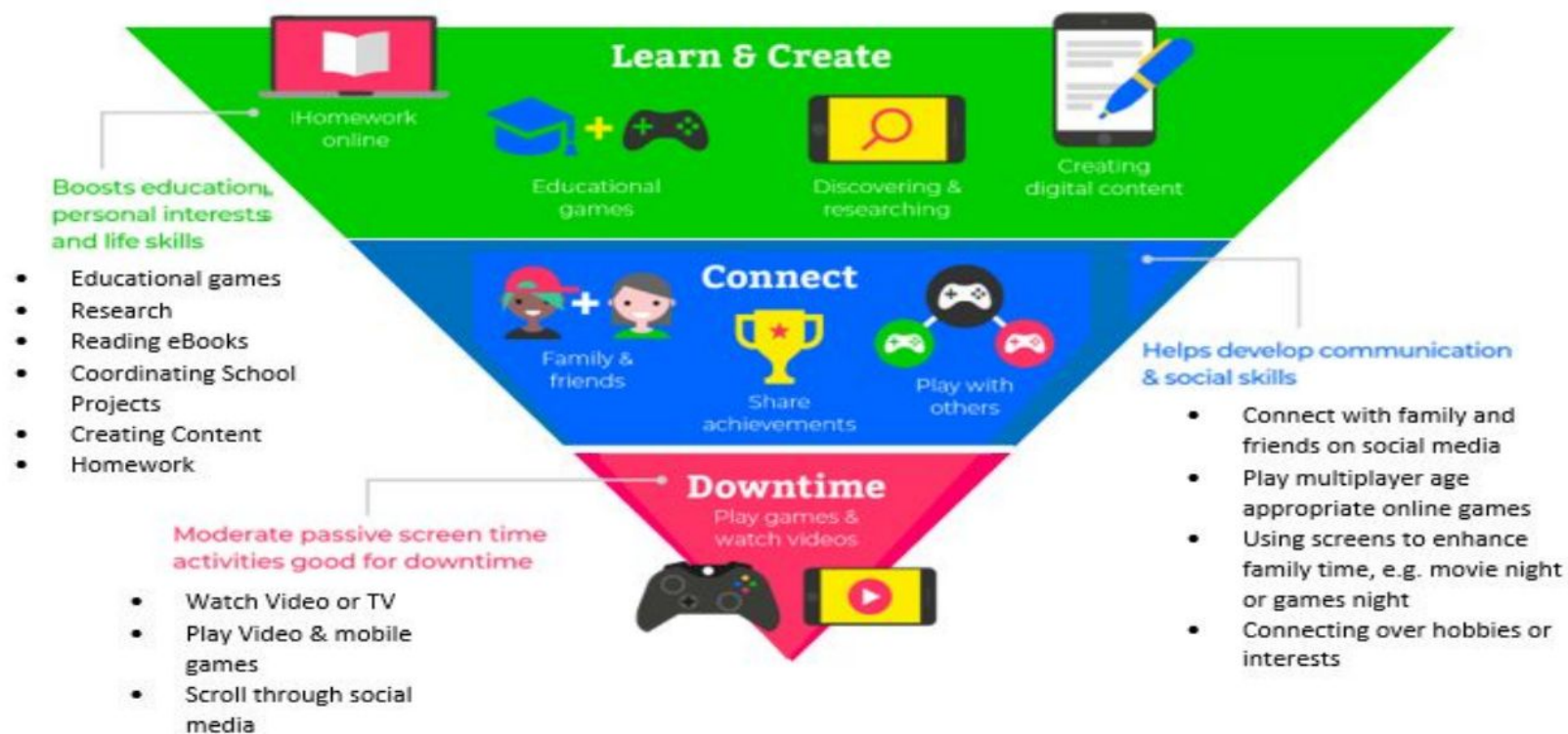
CA Internet Matters

A helpful resource

Digital Diet Tips

A healthy digital diet can help children to develop good online habits whilst also enjoying the benefits that come with using devices.

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Resources

Childnet Family Agreement

A great way to start positive family conversations around online safety, and to agree clear expectations and boundaries.

Start by discussing the questions that are most relevant to your family.

▶ Getting started
- 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?

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

✈ Sharing
- What should we check before posting images and videos online?
- Do we know how to use privacy settings and what makes a strong password?
- How can we use features like livestreaming and disappearing content safely?

🔍 Online content
- How do we decide which websites, apps, games and devices are okay for us to use?
- What can we do if we see something online which seems unreliable or untrustworthy?
- How can we stop ourselves accidentally spending money in a game or app?

💬 Communicating online
- Who can we talk, chat or play games with online? Just family? Friends? Anyone?
- How can we keep ourselves safe if we are communicating with people who we only know online?
- How can we look after our friends when we are online?

⚠ If things go wrong
- What can we do if we feel uncomfortable or upset by anything we see or hear online?
- What should we do if someone we only know online asks us for photos, a video call, to meet up or to share personal information?
- Do we know how to find the report and block buttons on the websites, apps and games we use?

☑ To finish...
- How could parental controls help our family?
- What should happen if one of us breaks the family agreement?
- When should we review our family agreement?

Want expert advice?
www.childnet.com/parents-carers-advice

Examples for different ages:

Our agreement: (Under 11s)
I will use my tablet for ___ mins a day.
I will make sure the children's favourite games are bookmarked for them to get to easily.

Our agreement: (Pre-teens)
I will tell mum and dad when I see something that worries me.
I will put parental controls in place but review it as the children grow up.

Our agreement: (Teenagers)
I will make sure all my social networking sites are private.
I won't post photos of our children without their permission.

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My Life Online

A conversation between _____ and _____

1 These are all the devices I use...

2 The things I like to do online...

3 The worries I have about life online...

4 The worries my grown-up has about my life online...

5 I can do these things to keep myself safe and happy online...

6 My grown-up can do these things to keep me safe and happy online...

7 These are the rules we will use to stay safe online...

8 If something online worries or upsets me, I should...

Thrive Online
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Our family online agreement

Child 1:

Name

e.g. check before downloading a new app.

How will we check we are doing this?

Signature

Child 2:

Name

e.g. don't share location when posting online.

How will we check we are doing this?

Signature

Child 3:

Name

e.g. check before downloading a new app.

How will we check we are doing this?

Signature

Adults:

Names

e.g. have phone free time each day for the family.

How will we check we are doing this?

Signature

When will we review what we've agreed to?

NSPCC

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR

Organisations

The National Centre for Gaming Disorders **(CNWL NHS Foundation Trust)**

A multi-disciplinary clinic in the UK providing treatment for people in England, aged 13+, who have difficulty controlling their video game use and the impact it has on their lives.

UK Safer Internet Centre

A charity partnership offering support and services to children, young people, and adults facing online harms, and professionals working with children.

SWGfL

A charity dedicated to empowering the safe and secure use of technology through innovative services, tools, content and policy, nationally and globally

Report Remove | Childline

Supports young people under 18 in the UK to confidentially report sexual images and videos of themselves and remove them from the internet.

Childnet — Online safety for young people

Helping make the internet a great and safe place for children and young people

Woodlands is becoming a smartphone free school

From September 2025, we will be joining numerous schools in Ealing to become a Smartphone free school. This means that our Year 6 pupils who walk home alone will only be able to bring in 'brick' phones which will be kept in the office securely. This is for their safety and to protect their mental health. It is also in line with the recent move that many high schools have taken to become Smartphone free so it will help with their transition to Year 7.

Please read the original letter which was sent out to parents here.

Questions?