

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2025 – Anonymous 6**

To: Scrutiny Communications <[Scrutiny@gov.je](mailto:Scrutiny@gov.je)>

Subject: Online safety & smartphone use

I am writing to add my support to the growing number of voices who are concerned about smartphone use in young people.

I am not against technology or the obvious need for our children to be taught to be tech savvy and of course, safe online, however there is no question that smartphones are addictive - to all people. Adults very much included. However we need ours now to pretty much function in our daily lives - book flights, online banking, security eye gaze & special codes for various government gateways, pay bills, check work emails etc etc, not one of these a child needs to do - especially not in their school day. So what do they use them for? For social media, music clips, videos, tik tok films (which by their very nature are for short attention spans..), scrolling through other worlds and at times sending hurtful, abusive messages and memes or video content that could upset. There is therefore no viable argument why our impressionable, young children who with their young developing brains cannot withdraw from this huge social pressure without our help - should ever need a smart phone during break times and lunchtimes (it goes without saying in lessons either).

But if the government doesn't help, and give direct, clear instructions to the heads of our schools then smartphones will forever be here to stay - hidden vibrating in a pocket, or even in a locker, but waiting for them, for them to distract, ping, display mindless content.

I had a brick phone as a teenager but we weren't huddled round a screen, craned necks, arthritic thumbs, we still larked around or went to extra activities.

I had a childhood.

I learnt to live in the present.

I learnt conversation and the simple pleasure of sitting outdoors with a book. My brick didn't befuddle my brain or distract me from learning anymore than the old fashioned landline could.

We can't stem the tide from technology in our lives, but at least as adults we can self regulate better, we don't feel peer pressure or feel terrified of a video caught of us resurfacing or going viral through the school. Let our children breathe and have the freedom to learn and make friends in person, take the pressure off them in this regard - don't leave it to parents to argue and wrangle and feel you're allowing your child either

into an online world caving to peer pressure or a forced outcast by standing firm against them in schools.

I know children who went to secondary schools without a smart phone, schools that advocate they have “banned” them & confiscate them if seen but allow them in break & lunchtime. This defeats the object entirely. Within a term those children had smartphones in school - as they were of course left out, couldn't build the “friendships” that were being created all online in the school day.

Schools argue they can't lock away 750 phones. You most definitely can. It's a poor excuse in helping our children live, the data is everywhere - it cannot be denied, as Education Minister Stephen Morgan said:

“The department knows that using mobile phones in schools can lead to online bullying, distraction and classroom disruption, which can lead to lost learning time, while research also suggests that excessive screentime can have a negative impact on children's wellbeing.”

I am anti too much screen time but also wholly support banning social media for teens - a whole additional argument for public health - but for now, as a start, limiting use in schools would help our children have a safe place for 7 hours of their day.

Listen. Please listen to us, the parents of the future.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.