

Well-being, care and healthy living: ECEY5009

Presentation Script Notes: Exploring Screen Time

AI Declaration –

I acknowledge the use of Google Scholar [<https://scholar.google.com/>] between period:

27/05/2025 - 21/06/2025 to help search for relevant academic journals and literature which are not always available via the university online library.

Prompts in relation to the impacts of excessive screen time on young children were used.

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide as evidence.

Link to Presentation Recording:

ECEY5009 - Wellbeing, care and healthy lifestyles - E Downs 2416175 'Screen Time'
Presentation.mp4

Presentation Script Notes

Hello, my name is Emily Downs, and I am an undergraduate student at UWTSD in Cardiff studying for a BA Hons in Early Years Education and Care.

According to Weale (2025), children in England and Wales are starting school without the ability to climb stairs or hold a pencil. Grant (2025) informs us that children are spending considerable time alone on digital devices scrolling and have forgotten how to play! Gordon (2025) highlights the divisive concept of screen time as its benefits and drawbacks are considered differently amongst children themselves, parents, and professionals. Garcia (2025) explores the effects of screentime on young children in the North of England, and states that we are now at a 'crisis point' as children are now increasingly unable to regulate emotions and experiencing significant delays in speech and language development.

In this presentation, I will be reviewing the current and topical concept of screen time and how it might affect young children in areas such as health, well-being, and development.

Aswell as exploring the potential risks of excessive screen time use, I will also highlight certain benefits and give suggestions as to how caregivers and professionals can manage a healthy balance so that children can access technology in a positive way that minimises harmful effects as McDowall Clark (2016) reminds us that technology and its use in everyday life and society is ever increasing!

So, what exactly is 'screen time' and how can we define it?

According to the Department for Education (UK Parliament, 2023), 'screen-time' is the duration of which a person engages with screen-based devices. These devices include; computers, mobile telephones, tablets, televisions, and gaming devices of which the use can be categorised into two types -

- Using the device actively – for example for research or posting information
- Using the device passively – for example, scrolling through social media feeds

Why should we consider the use of screen time, particularly for children?

Caton and Green (2023) state that younger children, especially in the global North engage with digital technology frequently – and more so since the COVID 19 pandemic where families were restricted to spending time at home and establishing different lifestyle habits. In Wales, being digitally literate makes up part of the curriculum objectives, as educators support children to be ‘ambitious and capable learners’ who can use digital technologies creatively to communicate as well as finding and analysing information (Welsh Government, 2022). Alongside learning requirements, children’s rights to be digital citizens are underpinned by Article 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which through having freedom of expression, children are entitled to access all types of lawful information. (UNICEF, 2022).

Therefore, owing to children’s significant and often prolonged access to screen time both at home and in the educational environment, practitioners and caregivers are responsible monitoring the appropriate and safe use of digital technologies (Grigg, 2015).

Guidance on screen time usage:

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2019), the guidelines for children’s use of screen time are as follows:

- Infants (less than 1 year old) = screen time is not recommended
- Children (between 1 and 2 years of age) = ‘sedentary’ screen time (watching TV, playing games on digital devices) not recommended for one year old children
- Children aged between 2 – 4 years old, screen time should be no longer than one hour.

The benefits of technology and screen-time:

When used carefully, children's use of technology and screentime has been shown to aid development and learning in the following ways:

- **Education and creativity**

For example, using software to improve phonological awareness (Monster Phonics, 2024), completing creative problem-solving challenges in Minecraft Education (Microsoft, 2023), learning Welsh language songs with Caru Canu (Caru Canu, 2025), or learning about conversation and sentence structures and repetition in television programmes such as CBeebies or In The Night Garden (Cowie, 2019).

- **Digital competency**

Another benefit includes how the frequent use of technology improves children's confidence in using it effectively, which will support them both in everyday life, education and beyond (Potter, 2018).

- **Communication and social connection**

Children can use technology to assist with communicating with those they are unable to see in person which may include distant family and friends as a result of displacement (Alencar, 2020) and its uses during the COVID 19 pandemic have shown to have support children's wellbeing (Goldschmidt, 2020).

Although there are positive aspects to children's use of technology, it is important to consider relevant research that highlights the concerns and negative aspects of children's excessive screen time use and its influence on aspects of their health and wellbeing which I will now explore.

Screen time and its effects on a child's cognitive development:

Children's brains are developing at a rapid pace throughout early childhood (need ref), and there is concerning evidence that shows how excessive screen time can actually impact the development of a child's brain's 'white matter' which enables the brain to communicate effectively with different cognitive functions which include thinking, learning and motor skills (Hutton *et al.*, 2020).

Further negative effects of screen time on a child's cognitive development include:

- **Executive function and problem solving** (Jannesar *et al.*, 2023), which is a child's mental ability to manage and organise tasks, control impulses, problem solving and adapt to changes, could lead to difficulties with gaining independence.
- **Working memory**, research completed by Zhang *et al.* (2022) discovered that excessive screentime use in preschoolers in Canada was 'unfavourably' associated with working memory.
- **Attention span**, a research project in 2018 which studied 4500 children in Canada found that children who did not meet the suggested guidelines for screen time (95% of 4500 children!) had poorer cognitive abilities which included attention (Wise, 2018).
- **Language development**- increased use of screen time can impact a child's language development. Research in Canada found that three-year-old children who regularly engaged in three or more hours of screen time daily, doubled the likelihood of experiencing language acquisition delays and problems (McArthur *et al.*, 2022).

Screen time and its effects on a child's physical health:

I will now look at evidence which supports the negative influences of screen time on a child's physical health:

- **Physical activity and increased risk of obesity**, research by Fang et al (2019) discloses a clear link between screen time and increased risk of child obesity it is likely that children will engage less in active play as well as eating more convenience/ 'snacky' foods which are often of poor nutritional value. Fang also suggests that there are more opportunities here for children to be exposed to marketing (adverts) which promote unhealthy food and drinks.
- **Effects on posture and musculoskeletal development** (Howie *et al.*, 2017), children leaning forward or bending down when using technology which can affect muscle development and bone density.
- **Fine and gross motor development**, Martzog and Suggate (2022) and Felix *et al.*, (2020) agree that excessive screen time use can affect development of fine and gross motor skills.
- **Vision problems**, research by Huang et al. (2020) and Ha et al (2025) agree that extensive screen time use can cause vision problems in children such as Astigmatism and Myopia.
- **Sleep problems**, Wu *et al.*,(2017) , Zhou *et al.* (2024) and Axelsson *et al.*(2023) agree that there is screen time can cause sleep problems in children which can are likely to be cause by later bedtimes, disruption of melatonin levels (the hormone that regulates sleep) levels by blue light exposure which can affect the child's sleep cycle by causing overstimulation.

Screen time and its effects on a child's emotional and social health and behaviour:

I will now look at links between screen time and a child's emotional health and behaviour:

- **Emotional regulation and behaviours**, A study by Liu *et al.*, (2021) found that children with prolonged access to screen time by age four displayed emotional problems which included signs of hyperactivity, issues with regulating emotions may bring about tantrums or challenging behaviour, and ability to interact well with peers owing to poorer social behaviour qualities such as being able to share, cooperate and show compassion.
- **Dependency and addiction to screen time**, extensive screen time can cause issues such as dependency and addiction as children's screen time habits cause them to 'crave' to play or watch content which studies show has worsened post COVID 19 Pandemic (Işıkoğlu *et al.*, 2025).
- **Affects ability to form relationships**, as they hinder the development of essential social skills including communication (Aishworiya *et al.* 2022), and lack understanding of non-verbal communication such as interpreting body language and reading facial expressions (Carson *et al.* 2019).
- **Exposure in inappropriate content**, children are more likely to be exposed to inappropriate content when engaging with digital technology, examples of this can be gaming which includes violence and images or videos of a sexual or violent nature (Roffey, 2024).

What can we do to support children with digital technology and prevent excessive use of screen time so that risks to development, health, and wellbeing are not affected?

As Early years practitioners we can ourselves and support children, other professionals and caregivers to:

- Understand the risks around excessive screen time by educating on the negative effects and set limits which adhere to guidelines (Penjeti and Ranganathan, 2023).
- Promote 'screen-free' times (Sellgren, 2016) or areas which can include utilising outdoor spaces for play and learning, use real books to read stories rather than digital devices (BBC, 2023) and be creative with learning using kinesthetic resources such as crafting, building or musical instruments to develop motor skills (Travers, 2024).
- Use technology with children to safeguard access to inappropriate content but to also learn and engage with digital media together (Rutty, 2023).
- Prioritising screen time for learning rather than a replacement for real life interactions (Nelson, 2024).

Conclusions and thanks

To conclude, technology and children's access to screen time is not going to diminish with time, if anything opportunities are increasing owing to new technology and access to it both at home and in early years provision.

There are many issues surrounding excessive screen time use including impacts to the child's cognitive, physical and emotional development but evidence shows that if used in right way, children can benefit from technology as both a tool for learning, play and communication, however Kerai *et al.* (2022) and Liu *et al.* (2022) that more research into the impacts of young children's excessive screen time use is needed.

Thank you very much for listening to my presentation, I hope you found it informative and would welcome any questions you may have. Thank you again.

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