Westmorland & Furness Council

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Screens for the 0-2s?

Advice and tips for parents

Screens are everywhere and can be accessed easily. There are so many apps promoted for early learning that sometimes it all becomes overwhelming!

But did you know that screen time can cause many negative impacts a child's physical and cognitive development without us even knowing.

- Young children's core strength muscles that are responsible for sitting up and balancing do not develop when children are sitting or lying down using a screen.
- Young children are unable to develop their fine motor skills when using a screen which can create problems as they begin to write. Their finger muscles need to flex and gain strength in order to write.
- Young children need adults to help them to regulate their feelings from birth, offering comfort when big feelings arise. Screens can prevent a tantrum, but do not teach children how to regulate successfully. This can result in bigger problems with behaviour and mental health issues as children grow and develop.
- Young children, between the age of 0-2 are learning how to communicate with back-and-forth sounds and speech with their parent/carer. Screens prevent this from happening, which can result in language delay.
- Screens are designed to hold a person's interests and attention, but this can impact a parent's interactions with their child if used frequently which can impact on a child's communication and emotional development.
- Screen time at mealtimes prevents the day-to-day chatter that children need to hear to develop language and communication skills.
- Screen time before napping and bedtime causes poorer sleep patterns.
- WHO (World Health Organisation) recommends no screen time for children aged 0-2 years old

Carter et al 2024, Children and screens 2025

Top tips for supporting your child's early development without a screen

- When driving in the car, instead of offering a screen, talk and sing with your child. Name what you can see, spot the animals in the field of sing some favourite nursery rhymes.
- Let your baby hear you talk about what they can see when out at the shops. Offer comments when they point and chat away about what is on your shopping list.
- When your young baby is feeling frustrated and angry, offer a calm voice, a cuddle and reassurance
- Read simple stories with your baby. Offer board books that they can touch and explore with their hands
- Play games such as 'peek-a-boo' to engage your baby in the to-and-fro of communication and play
- Let your baby lie on their tummy and join them in doing so. Provide a toy for them to reach by stretching out their arms. Support and encourage them and praise them when they do manage to grab it. This all supports their physical and cognitive health as well as boosting confidence
- Turn off the TV if no one is watching it to allow your baby to hear the voices and communication going on around them
- Play with your baby. Get outdoors and let them feel the wind in their hair and the grass beneath their feet. This supports their sensory development and their wellbeing.
- Consider implementing a simple bedtime routine where no screens are present. Read a book or sing a calming nursery rhyme and share in some quiet cuddly time before bed.

Have fun with your baby. You can't get go wrong when you're playing and talking together!