

16 January 2026

Rt Hon Wes Streeting

Rt Hon Liz Kendall

Cc: Prof Lucy Chappell, DHSC
Prof Sir Chris Whitty, CMO

Sent by email

The impact of tech and devices on children and young people

Dear Secretaries of State,

We warmly welcome your moves to look at the evidence of the impact on children and young people's physical and mental health both from excessive screen time as well as exposure to harmful online content – Professor Viner's review of the use of screens by under-fives is very welcome as is Jonathan Haidt's input to the wider discussions.

You may also be aware, via the CMO's office, that the Academy recently hosted a roundtable focusing specifically on the accumulating evidence of health harms from tech and devices being witnessed by frontline clinicians. In attendance were more than 20 representatives drawn from a range of medical specialties and other professional groups with an interest in this subject. It was jointly chaired by The Baroness Cass and The Baroness Kidron, both of whom have extensive experience of the issue from other work they do.

By any measure it was an extraordinarily moving meeting, with clinicians giving personal testimony about the horrific cases they have treated in primary, secondary and community settings throughout the NHS and across most medical specialties.

It is now our plan to develop this work and host a series of sessions to gather evidence in a systematic way of the impact of tech and devices to the physical and mental health of children and young people. In the coming weeks we will be hearing from a range of voices, not just from the medical profession, but those involved in health more widely. The focus will be not just on one-off anecdotes, but also what healthcare professionals and specialists are seeing repeatedly that may be attributed to tech and devices.

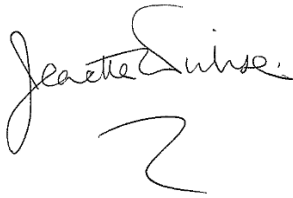
Separately we will be writing to ask for a small financial contribution to this work, but in the meantime, we wanted formally to alert you to the fact this work is underway and to offer any help we can in raising awareness of the issue especially among the clinical constituency.

We would very much hope to complete this work within three months and as we see it there are two main outputs:

- Illustrate the risk to children and young people of the, sometimes hidden, dangers to health from access to unrestricted content and / or screen time across many health domains.
- Provide guidance to the medical profession and others about how to identify and manage the harm being done to children and young people from tech and devices.

We are, of course, happy to meet with any or all of you to discuss this further if you feel this would be a valuable project to support.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeanette Dickson', with a large, stylized flourish underneath.

Dr Jeanette Dickson
Chair of Council, Academy of Medical Royal Colleges

+ 23 other signatories