



Happy Friday from the Quality Improvement Officers – 06/02/2026

As you may be aware, there has been recent media coverage highlighting concerns about children's screen

time and the potential impact on learning and development, mental health, and overall well-being. As a Quality Improvement Team, we wanted to share some useful information and links that you may wish to pass on to your staff teams and to parents/carers.

Screen time- is there a balance?

As you may be aware, there has been recent media coverage highlighting concerns about children's screen time and the potential impact on learning and development, mental health, and overall well-being. As a Quality Improvement Team, we wanted to share some useful information and links that you may wish to pass on to your staff teams and to parents/carers.

The government has announced that new national guidance on screen use for children under 5 will be published in April 2026. This guidance is expected to support practitioners and families in making informed decisions about how digital devices are used in early years settings and at home.

A newly published survey (2026) exploring screen use among families with 2-yr olds highlighted that:

- (98%) of 2yr olds use screens daily
- Higher screen time is associated with poorer vocabulary, weaker developmental outcomes, and more socio-emotional difficulties
- Family stress, socioeconomic circumstances, and parental mental health influence how much screen time children receive
- Balanced environments - with talk, play, reading, and shared interaction - are protective, while excessive screen use can displace these critical early learning experiences

[Children of the 2020s: second survey of families at age 2 - GOV.UK](#)

The World Health Organisation's (WHO) guidance from 2019 on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep for children under 5 states that to grow up healthy, children need to sit less and play more.

The WHO has the following recommendations for screen time:

- Children under 1yr - Screen time is not recommended
- 1yr olds - Sedentary screen time (such as watching TV or videos, playing computer games) is not recommended
- 2yr olds - Sedentary screen time should be **no more than 1 hour; less is better**
- 3-4yr olds - Sedentary screen time should be **no more than 1 hour; less is better**

Reflection - How do you reflect on your professional use of screens in your setting?

- What is your intention when you choose to use a screen with children?
- How does your use of screens support children's learning and development rather than replace other experiences?
- What would children miss out on if this activity was screen based rather than hands on?



Why not look at developing your provision to celebrate children's love of books and reading?

2026 marks the National Literacy Trust's "Go All In" – National Year of Reading, providing a brilliant opportunity for early years settings to highlight the joy and importance of reading for young children.

The National Literacy Trust website offers a wealth of information, ideas, and toolkits to support you in creating a reading-rich environment. These resources can help you:

- Inspire a love of books through high-quality story experiences
- Embed reading opportunities across your continuous provision
- Engage families in supporting early literacy at home
- Introduce special activities, events, and book-related themes throughout the year

Exploring these materials can help you strengthen your provision and ensure that children experience the magic and excitement that reading can offer. Find out more by visiting the National Literacy Trust website:

[Resources for early years, primary and secondary schools | National Literacy Trust](#)

Early reading experiences will have a significant influence on children's views and feelings about reading as they get older. It is crucial for children to develop a love of early reading to enable them to learn the necessary skills to become successful readers themselves. The BookTrust published a recent (2023) overview of children's early years reading habits across the UK. This is a summary of the findings:

- 95% of carers see reading as important for their child
- 77% of families start sharing books with their child before their first birthday
- 28% of parents and carers don't find reading with their child easy
- 21% of parents and carers don't feel confident choosing books that their child will enjoy
- 20% of parents and carers say they don't read with their child due to lack of time

[Children's reading habits in the early years | BookTrust](#) (2023)

Reflection- How do you support the love of books and reading within your setting?

- What do you notice about how children engage with books in your environment?
- Which moments today showed you that children were enjoying stories or reading experiences?
- How do you model enthusiasm and curiosity about books to children?
- What do your book areas say to children about the value you place on reading?
- How do you ensure every child sees themselves represented in the books you offer?
- How do you use your interactions during book-sharing to deepen children's language and imagination?
- What barriers might be preventing some children from developing a love of books - and how could you reduce these?
- How do you involve families in nurturing children's enjoyment of reading?