Solihull IRL Reading List

Understanding Smartphones, Social Media and Childhood in the Digital Age

A note before you begin

The books below have been selected to help parents, carers, educators and professionals better understand the impact of smartphones, social media, gaming, online platforms and digital technology on children and young people.

These books represent a range of perspectives from psychologists, journalists, neuroscientists, former technology executives and researchers. Whilst many raise concerns about aspects of modern technology, there remains active debate within the research community about the scale of these impacts and the best ways to respond. We encourage readers to approach all books with curiosity, critical thinking and an open mind.

No single book has all the answers, but together they provide a valuable foundation for understanding the opportunities, risks and challenges facing children growing up in a connected world.

1. The Anxious Generation
Jonathan Haidt

The book that has sparked much of the current debate around smartphone-based childhoods, social media and young people's mental health. Haidt explores the shift from a play-based childhood to a phone-based childhood and examines links between technology use, wellbeing and adolescent development.

2. Careless People
Sarah Wynn-Williams

A former Meta executive provides an insider account of the culture, decision-making and priorities within one of the world's most influential technology companies. Offering a rare behind-the-scenes perspective, the book raises important questions about the responsibilities of technology companies and the impact of their products on society.

4. Stolen Focus
Johann Hari

Explores the growing crisis in attention, concentration and distraction in the digital age.

5. Reclaiming Conversation
Sherry Turkle

Examines what happens when screens replace face-to-face communication and why conversation matters for human development.

6. Alone Together
Sherry Turkle

A landmark exploration of how technology changes relationships, identity and social connection.

7. Digital Minimalism
Cal Newport

Practical strategies for creating a healthier and more intentional relationship with technology.

8. Irresistible
Adam Alter

Explains the psychology behind behavioural addiction and why many digital products are designed to keep us engaged.

9. Glow Kids
Dr Nicholas Kardaras

Explores concerns around excessive screen use and its potential impact on learning, behaviour and wellbeing.

10. How to Raise a Healthy Gamer
Dr Alok Kanojia

A practical guide for parents navigating gaming, technology and online life with children and teenagers.