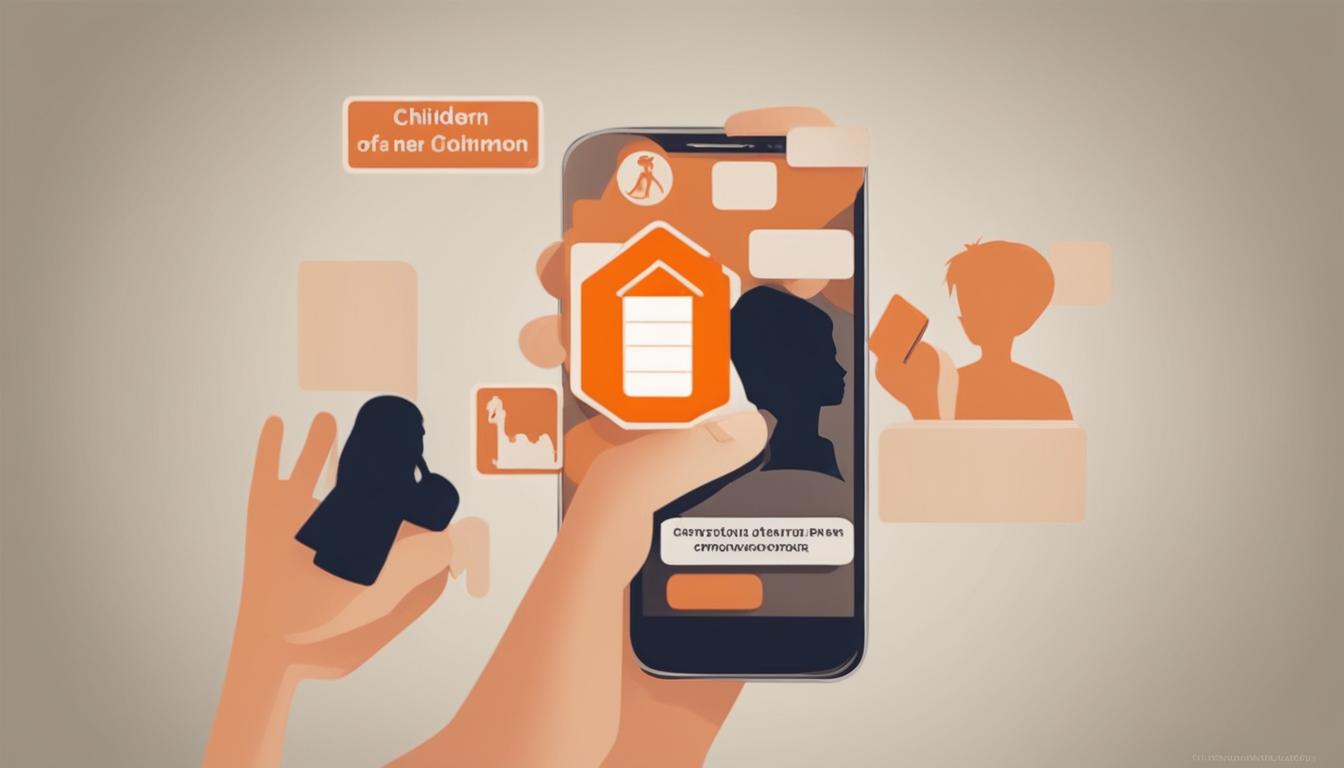
# UK Education Committee Urges Ban on Smartphones for Under-16s Amid Concerns Over Screen Time Impact



The House of Commons Education Committee has released a report urging the next UK government to consider imposing a total ban on smartphones for children under 16 and introducing a statutory ban on mobile phone use in schools. The recommendations come in response to rising concerns over the impact of screen time on children's mental and physical wellbeing, highlighted by a 52% increase in children's screen time from 2020 to 2022.

Robin Walker MP, Conservative chair of the committee, emphasized that excessive smartphone use has a "clear negative impact" on young people's wellbeing. The report calls for collaboration with Ofcom, the UK communications regulator, to enforce measures such as default parental controls on phones and restrictions in app stores to prevent children from accessing inappropriate content.

The committee also suggested raising the age of digital consent from 13 to 16, aligning it with other legal age thresholds in the UK, like driving and voting. According to the report, nearly a quarter of children and young people use smartphones in an addictive manner, while Ofcom data shows that half of children under 13 use social media and a quarter of children as young as three and four own smartphones.

Online safety campaigner Ian Russell, whose daughter Molly took her life after encountering harmful material on social media, argues for stronger regulation over outright bans, suggesting that banning smartphones and social media could lead to "worse outcomes."

The report has sparked a debate about the most effective ways to protect children online, with proposals ranging from regulatory measures to outright prohibitions.