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Baroness Barran,
House of Lords,
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20 January 2026

Dear Diana

I want to thank you for your contribution to the oral question on 14th January 2026 on the impact of investment in early years education on children's long-term outcomes. I am writing today to address your question on guidance for early years settings on the use of screens.

New government research published this month showed links between high screen use and poorer language development for two-year-olds, and we agree wholeheartedly on the need to take action here. This is why we are planning to publish new practical, evidence-informed guidance on early years screentime. The guidance will give parents clear, practical and judgement-free support on how to use screens in ways that support their child's development. It will help families understand how screen use can sit alongside activities like talking, playing and reading together, which are crucial in the early years.

The guidance will be evidence-informed, developed with health and child development experts, and shaped by what parents tell us they need. This will be published in April this year and made available through the Best Start in Life website, giving parents the clarity and support they're asking for to navigate screentime with their youngest children. Given the timescales they are working toward, the expert group will only focus on guidance that helps parents balance screen use with activities that support children's lives. Those are the current terms they are working to as set out in their terms of reference.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory frameworks sets the standards and requirements early years providers must meet to ensure that children have the best start in life and are kept healthy and safe. The EYFS outlines that early years educators should carefully organise enabling environments and cultures for high-quality play and learning, and are encouraged to create games and must provide opportunity for indoor and outdoor play. Early years settings would not be able to meet the learning and development requirements through use of excessive screen time.

The department has already published non-statutory guidance on Internet safety, which is available on the Department's Help for Early Years Providers platform.

This guidance makes clear that electronic device usage in settings should be used as a tool for learning and development and that sedentary screen time should be avoided. The guidance also provides information on the World Health Organisation's guidance on screen time for children under 5 years of age.

Once the EY screen time guidance has been published, we will update the Help for Early Years Providers guidance to appropriately align, and where needed go beyond, the EY screentime guidance for parents. This will reflect the role of early education settings and focus on how settings deliver the EYFS learning, development and welfare requirements. We will also look to see if additional changes are needed to the requirements within the EYFS statutory framework. Secondary legislation is required to make changes to the EYFS framework and requires appropriate consultation with experts and the sector, which will have to happen before any changes are agreed.

We are working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care and the NHS to ensure that screen time guidance and messaging to parents is delivered through the most suitable and impactful channels to ensure all professionals, including health, have simple, practical messages to offer parents.

We will take a multi-channel communications approach, extending beyond owned government channels, raising awareness of it amongst parent audiences. This will involve a range of communications activity, including content and activity to reach parents where they are, at different touchpoints. This will include communications with parent facing platforms and organisations as well as government and NHS channels.

We know parents welcome clear, practical and non-judgemental guidance on screen time from trusted sources. The Best Start in Life website is designed to provide trusted and supportive information for parents with children aged 0–5. This website will therefore host parent-friendly advice, reflecting the full guidance on publication.

Thank you for your engagement in this important matter. I will place a copy of this letter in the House library.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Blake".

BARONESS BLAKE OF LEEDS, CBE