Screen Use Policy

Key information about this policy:

Policy Reference	ECCC-042
Version Number	v1.0
Date Issued	16 September 2026
Date of Review	August 2027
Approved By	Izzy Ruddick; Co-Director - Practice

Policy Purpose

This policy sets out how ECCC manages screen use with the children in our care, in line with government guidance. We support children's learning, development, health and well-being by ensuring that any screen use is limited, purposeful, age appropriate and safely supervised.

Scope, Application, Access

- This policy applies to all staff, students, volunteers, agency staff, visitors and anyone else working with children at the setting.
- It covers all screen-based devices used with or around children, including tablets, computers, mobile phones, televisions, interactive whiteboards, smart watches, gaming devices, e-readers and toys with screens.
- The policy applies at all times and locations of work or when children are in our care.
- Policy available to: All staff, Current Parents/carers, Public

Policy

This policy should be used in conjunction with the Safeguarding children and child protection policy, Online safety policy, Mobile phone and electronic device use policy and acceptable usage agreement.

We recognise that high quality educator-child interaction is central to children's learning and development. Our aim is to make sure screen use does not replace the experiences

young children need most, such as play, movement, sleep, real-world exploration, communication and responsive adult interaction.

Our approach to screen use

We take a precautionary approach to screen use and recognise the government advice[1] whereby:

- Children under two years old will only use screens in exceptional circumstances (i.e. showing a family photo)
- Children aged two to five will only use screens for short, intentional purposes (e.g. looking at a country on a map, researching something for children to clarify/extend learning and interest, looking up translations of words/signs to support inclusion)
- Screens use will not be used to replace activities adults can lead themselves (songs, stories, movement activities, games)

Staff will consider that children may already use screens at home. For this reason, screen use in the setting will be limited and will not be part of routine daily practice unless there is a clear and agreed reason and when there is a clear purpose, with the activity supporting children's learning, communication, inclusion or well-being.

Planned screen use

Screen use can support the delivery of the curriculum, particularly where specific literature and props are not available. Screen use is supportive when it offers learning through all the characteristics of effective learning:

- **Creating and thinking critically:** adults will pause to reflect on what they have shown, ask clarifying questions, wonder together, think together and predict.
- **Active learning:** Staff ensure use of screens are interactive rather than passive. Children are supported to join in, copy, respond to and guide the process.
- **Playing and exploring:** adults will support children to be active participants in the activity (*"I wonder what happens if I press this button"*)
- **Emotional wellbeing:** adults will maintain back-and-fourth interactions whilst using screens, understanding that attuned and responsive relationships underpin children's emotional wellbeing.

Some examples of planned screen use could include:

[1] The current guidance is that screen use should be avoided for under 2s and limited to up to an hour a day for children aged 2 to 5.

- Watching a short video about a particular cultural activity (i.e. a special dance, an instrument, a feast, a carnival)
- Identifying flora, fauna and wildlife found in the garden
- Exploring a place visited on google maps
- Learning a new sign (BSL or Makaton)
- Showing children photos from their 'journey' on the Famly app.

Interactive whiteboard:

- This is available in Rainbow for children to explore the drawing function.
- A maximum of two children can use the board at one time.
- Use of the interactive whiteboard must be supervised at all times.

Screen use will:

- Be planned in advance so staff are clear about why it is being used and how it will support learning or development, having a clear learning, communication or inclusion purpose. Staff will consider whether the same aim could be met through a screen-free activity.
- Be led by an adult and kept short. Children will not be left to watch or use screens alone or with other children without adult co-engagement.
- Never be used to occupy children, manage behaviour or calm children as a routine strategy
- Will not be used during mealtimes, within an hour prior to a sleep period or be left on in the background
- Be switched off when the planned activity ends.

Screens will not replace high-quality educator-child interactions, as direct human interaction provides a much richer experience for children.

Meeting specific needs

Some children with SEND or English as an additional language may need a more individual approach when it comes to screen use. Including children with communication challenges which may or may not be diagnosed. Screen-based assistive technology can be an important tool to help these children and families communicate, take part in everyday activities, and create an inclusive learning environment. We will use our professional judgement to determine whether assistive technologies will support children's learning on a case-by-case basis and discuss these with the parent/carers.

Choosing safe and suitable content

- All digital content must be checked by a member of staff before it is used with children - we will not rely on an app, programme, video or tool being labelled as educational or child-friendly
- Content must be age appropriate, safe, calm and suitable for the children's stage of development
    - **Online videos should only be watched on Youtube, and then only signed into a Kids YouTube account** to prevent inappropriate content (i.e. from adverts) to be viewed accidentally.
- We will avoid fast-paced, over-stimulating content, adverts, autoplay, scrolling feeds and algorithm-driven platforms
- We will not use artificial intelligence tools, AI-enabled toys or AI features with children

Safeguarding and online safety

- Staff will talk to children about how to keep safe online - *"if we see something we don't like/something that makes us sad/something that makes us worried online, we must tell an adult"*
- Screen use and digital devices are managed in line with our Online Safety and IT-related Policies, which are available on BrightHR or in policy folders.
- Any concerns about online safety, unsuitable content, device use, images or children's welfare will be reported to the **designated safeguarding lead (DSL)**

Working with parents and carers

- We will share this policy with parents so they understand how, why and when screens may be used.
- Books and resources about Online Safety are available to parents/carers through the Lending Library
- Staff will offer practical, non-judgemental information where parents/carers ask for support with screen use at home. We recognise that screens are part of everyday life and so will focus on positive messaging, such as shared viewing, limiting passive screen use, protecting sleep and mealtimes and offering screen-free alternatives.

We will share resources such as:

- https://beststartinlife.gov.uk/screen-time-under-5s/
- https://www.internetmatters.org/little-digital-helps-toolkit/

- https://www.nspcc.org.uk/advice-for-families/techosaurus/#why-talk

Staff training and responsibilities

Our senior practitioners will involve staff, supporting them with:

- how to plan safe and purposeful screen use
- how to check content, and
- how to respond to safeguarding or online safety concerns.

The **Practice Lead** will monitor practice, review any concerns and ensure the policy remains consistent with current statutory requirements and guidance.