

Is a smartphone and social media ban the best way to protect young people from internet dangers?

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The members of the WhatsApp group Smartphone Free Childhood have an unrealistic expectation if they believe that banning under-14s from possessing smartphones and trying to prevent under-16s accessing social media is a practical way of protecting them from the very real dangers that the internet can unveil ('It went nuts: Thousands join UK parents calling for smartphone-free childhood', 17 February). If the first duty of any parent or guardian is to provide a safe and healthy environment for their children, then showing them how to access and use the internet safely is their responsibility. Roads are also potentially dangerous for children, but we do not ban cars – instead we spend time teaching young people the safe way to navigate through busy traffic. Having an open and honest relationship, and setting clear boundaries at home, will be far more likely to help young people understand and recognise the dangers associated with an uncensored internet than the imposition of draconian blanket bans. Making social media “adults only” will only make it more attractive to curious and tech-savvy children. It could also make them less likely to ask for help if exposed to any disturbing content or unwanted attention. Stuart Harrington Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset • Giving children access to a smartphone can be damaging, as we have seen so tragically with Brianna Ghey and many others. However, the wider debate about the appropriateness of smartphone access needs to be seen from all perspectives. I went through school in the smartphone era, and I saw first-hand the benefits of having access to a smartphone. I used mine to download and use a smart bus ticket, to access journalism, news and weather apps, to research topics online for assignments and to communicate with my cadet group on Facebook. There are many positive uses for a smartphone, and I don't think I could have managed without one. However, more parental controls on social media and monitoring could only be a positive thing. Even in the few years since I was in education, there has been a dramatic shift in online threats, and more control for parents should be encouraged and welcomed. Oscar Acton Murton, County Durham • Do you have a photograph you'd like to share with Guardian readers? If so, please click [here](#) to upload it. A selection will be published in our Readers' best photographs galleries and in the print edition on Saturdays.