



**MOTION TO EAST LOTHIAN COUNCIL**  
**Tuesday 28 October 2025**

**Ban on Smartphones and Similar Devices in East Lothian Schools**

That East Lothian Council:

Notes the growing body of evidence showing the detrimental impact of smartphones on children and young people, including:

- Significant negative effects on learning outcomes, attention spans, and behaviour in schools;
- Widespread exposure to harmful online content, including bullying, sexual harassment, and explicit material;
- Increasing concerns from teachers, parents, and international organisations regarding the safeguarding, health, and wellbeing of young people in the context of smartphone use.

Further notes that international comparators such as France, the Netherlands, South Australia, and Denmark, alongside UK local authorities such as Barnet Council, Moray Council, and Edinburgh City Council, have already moved to implement comprehensive bans on smartphones in schools.

Additionally notes that evidence from the Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association (SSTA) behaviour survey shows that 71% of members reported mobile phones were negatively affecting behaviour and learning, while 92% reported lessons are interrupted by mobile phones.

Believes that East Lothian Council has a duty under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 3, 19, and 31) to act in the best interests of children and to take steps to safeguard them from harms.

**Council is asked to:**

1. Consult on how to introduce a full ban on smartphones, smartwatches, and similar devices on all primary school estates in East Lothian.
2. Consult on the introduction of a ban on smartphones, smartwatches, and similar devices for students in S1 to S6 during the school day (“bell to bell”), including break and lunchtimes, enforced through the use of lockable pouches or a similar system to ensure devices are securely and safely stored away from students.
3. Consult on permitting, at the discretion of individual Headteachers, the creation of pre-designated areas where S6 students may access smartphones outside of class time.
4. Consult on the establishment clear exemptions for students with medical needs (e.g. medication reminders) or Additional Support Needs where smartphone use is required.
5. Instruct officers to bring forward an implementation plan for the above, following consultation with headteachers, parents, carers, pupils, and trade unions, to ensure smooth and consistent delivery across all schools in East Lothian.
6. Agree that the outcomes of the consultation, an integrated impact assessment, and the financial implications of the ban be reported back to full Council before the end of the current school year, in order to allow a final decision and implementation for the 2026/27 academic year.

Proposed by Councillor Lachlan Bruce

Date: 13/10/2025

Seconded by Councillor Jeremy Findlay

Date: 13/10/2025

Received by Lel Gillingwater, Team Manager – Democratic & Licensing

Date of receipt: 13/10/2025