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| Contribution by SWGfL |
| FAMILY SMART START – EMPOWERING SAFE AND EFFECTIVE SMARTPHONE USE |
| **Purpose**This contribution shares information on the Family Smart Start project, a pilot initiative designed to support parents in managing the transition when children receive their first or hand-me-down device. It seeks to empower families to make use of existing parental control tools, improve safe device setup, and encourage recycling and responsible use.**Action required**This report is transmitted to the Council Working Group on child online protection **for information**.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**References*** *Family Smart Start:* [*https://familysmartstart.com/*](https://familysmartstart.com/)
* *SWGfL overview:* [*https://swgfl.org.uk/magazine/family-smart-start-empowering-safe-and-effective-smartphone-use/*](https://swgfl.org.uk/magazine/family-smart-start-empowering-safe-and-effective-smartphone-use/)
* *Good Tings “Know Your Tings”:* [*https://www.goodtings.nz/know-your-tings*](https://www.goodtings.nz/know-your-tings)
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**Background:**

Family Smart Start is a pilot project designed to harness the important “unboxing” moment when a child is first given a smartphone, whether new or passed down. This moment provides a unique opportunity to equip parents with knowledge, confidence and practical steps to ensure that the device is set up safely and responsibly. Inspired by the Good Tings “Know Your Tings” project in New Zealand, Family Smart Start builds on this approach to create an experience that is accessible to parents across different contexts.

The project recognises that parents often struggle to navigate the technical complexity of device management. Rather than relying on prohibition, such as movements towards “smartphone free childhood”, Family Smart Start encourages parents to engage positively and use available tools to empower safe digital use. By supporting families at the very start of a child’s device ownership, the project aims to embed safe habits and confidence from the outset.

**Project Description:**

At the heart of the project is a self-assembly cardboard “Smart Start Box” that parents can use when handing over a device. This provides the opportunity to guide them step by step through:

• Securely deleting and resetting an old device before handing it down.

• Setting up key safety features such as Apple Family Sharing, Google Family Link or Microsoft Family Safety.

• Applying age-appropriate screen time, content filters, and purchase permissions.

• Reinforcing the importance of open dialogue with children about expectations and safe use.

This combination provides both practical support for parents and a symbolic moment that marks a child’s growing digital independence, framed in a safe and supported way.

A secondary benefit is the encouragement of recycling and re-use. Many children’s first devices are hand-me-downs, and Family Smart Start ensures that these transitions happen securely, responsibly and with the right safeguards in place.

**Current Status:**

The project is currently being piloted in selected settings and has not yet been scaled. Early feedback indicates that parents particularly value the clear, accessible instructions and the opportunity to feel in control at a time that can otherwise feel overwhelming.

**Future Development:**

Pending successful evaluation of the pilot, the project could be scaled in partnership with schools, local authorities, device retailers, and recycling initiatives. It may also provide opportunities for alignment with international efforts to improve parental empowerment in child online protection.

**Conclusion:**

Family Smart Start provides a simple, practical, and parent-friendly intervention at the very moment children begin their digital journey. By empowering parents to use existing tools effectively, it contributes to safer device use, greater confidence, and stronger family engagement in the digital environment. This pilot project complements wider efforts to develop technical standards and frameworks for parental empowerment and child online protection.

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