

# GOOD FUTURES HORIZON SCAN GEN ALPHA

HORIZON

SCAN



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# FOREWORD

When thinking of younger audiences, Gen Z may be the first generation to spring to mind. But as they're hitting their early twenties, moving into higher education and the workforce, we're looking at the new kids in town: Generation Alpha.

Born between 2010 and 2025, this generation counts approximately **7.5 million people in the UK**. Right now, these Alpha kids occupy the lifestage between infancy and adolescence, with the eldest of them just having started secondary school. So why are we talking about them?

First, they're expected to number **2 billion people by 2025**, and are predicted to be the largest, more racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse generation in the history of the world. They'll be setting the trends agenda sooner than expected. In fact, many of them already are, with their Millennial parents giving them **more agency and influence over household financial decisions** than ever before.

Already, they're an economic force, with **81% of Gen Alpha kids** significantly influencing their family's shopping decisions to the tune of some **\$500b a year**. For charities – engage this generation to engage their parents. Gen Alpha will be an advocate for your mission, both in their household and online.

Secondly, they're the first true digital natives. Their eldest were born the year the first iPad hit the market (you've probably heard them be called iPad kids before), and after social media was already big business. They've literally grown up attached to a screen. On top of that, they're the generation that went through Covid lockdowns during crucial developmental phases.

It would be impossible to generalise such a large cohort, especially as they continue to find their footing in the world. Instead, this report is a snapshot of the various pivotal developmental and learning milestones they're going through.

As this generation heads into adolescence, we're examining the impact the lost Covid years have had on them (not good, but they're a remarkably resistant cohort); the state of education (heavily impacted by said Covid delays, as well as the rise of AI); the impact of growing up online and with social media (long-term effects are still unclear, but the risks are there); how they engage with activism and where they get their information from (they have a strong appetite for social change, but are falling prey to content fatigue); their mental health (still feeling the effects of lockdown); how they spend their free time (gaming is their #1 pastime); how to market to them (having an online presence is key); and last but not least, how they engage with charity (beginning to donate their own money, and advocating for their parents to do so too).

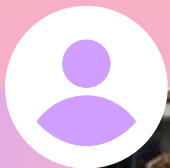
Let us introduce you to Generation Alpha.

**Eef Leurs**

Good Futures Trend Consultant



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# INTRODUCING GEN ALPHA





## // Profile

Generation Alpha, or Gen Alpha for short, consists of people born between 2010 and 2025. They're typically born to Millennial parents, and are the only generation to be entirely born and raised in the 21st century. The eldest among them were born the year the iPad was invented. As such, they're the first generation made up entirely of digital natives.

## // Key Characteristics

### **DIGITAL NATIVES**

The eldest among this group were born the year the iPad was invented. This is the first generation of true digital natives, having been exposed to digital devices, screen time, non-stop entertainment, and social media from very young ages.

### **SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS**

This generation is acutely aware of social issues like climate change, equality, and social justice – they've learnt from their liberal parents. Even from young ages, they expect brands and organisations to take clear stands on these issues and demonstrate genuine impact.

### **DIVERSE**

Gen Alpha stands to be the most diverse generation in history, across a number of factors. This generation is being raised with fewer preconceived notions of traditional gender identities and sexualities, and will likely be more fluid and accepting.

### **EDUCATED**

Gen Alpha is predicted to be the most educated generation in history. They're growing up with parents that value education, an environment that's increasingly focussed on STEM, and the payoff of years of gender equality initiatives. Many of them are expected to work in jobs that don't exist yet, because of technological advancements.

### **RICH**

They have unprecedented spending power – and they know how to use it. With access to online shopping, spending can occur at the drop of a hat. It's not just their parents' money either, their entrepreneurial spirit means that they look for ways to earn their own money from young ages onwards.



# // THE COVID GENERATION

One of Gen Alpha's most enduring formative experiences will no doubt be their time during the Covid lockdowns. While the pandemic was difficult for everyone, the impact has hit hardest with the youngest generation, who were deprived of education, physical activity, social connection, and a whole slew of other crucial milestones during key developmental periods in their lives.

While it's impossible to know the long-term impact of this for certain, early research paints a bleak picture. While we address Covid's impact throughout the report, we wanted to first paint a picture of its overarching effect on this cohort.

## // Education

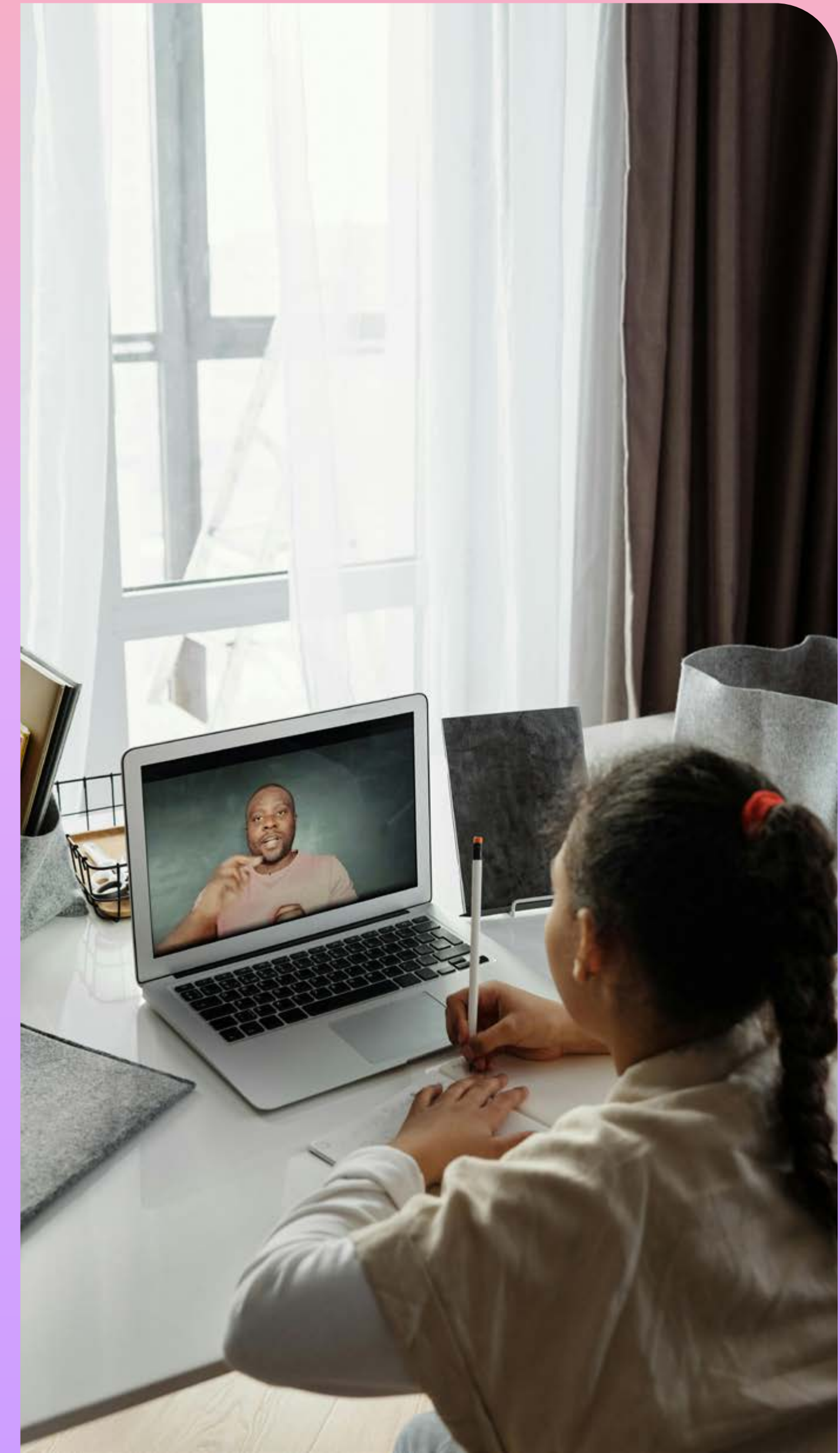
With schools closed, Gen Alpha pivoted to remote learning. But remote learning isn't anywhere near as effective as learning in schools: it can only make up for between **15% to 60% of learning losses**. As such, there's a significant **attainment gap** between pre-Covid cohorts and those who were in school throughout the pandemic. It's so significant, that some estimates are putting the overall learning loss at a shocking equivalent to **two decades of positive progress**.

## // Social Development

Lockdowns also led to significant isolation for children, affecting Gen Alpha's social and emotional development. Kids missed out on crucial social interactions with peers, at a time in their lives where those interactions would form the **basis of their future communication and interpersonal skills**. While research shows that these gaps have largely closed post-Covid, there is one glaring exception: Covid children are lagging behind in **communication skills**.

"Covid children are lagging behind in communication skills"

There's also been a **noticeable increase in anxiety and stress** among kids, following the uncertainty and disruptions of the pandemic. Despite the pandemic having ended, these heightened levels of stress show **no signs of letting up**.



## // Family Dynamics

This one's a mixed bag. As they were locked in their houses together for months on end, many families spent more time together during Covid, and found **stronger family bonds**. Parents had more opportunities to be involved in their children's education and daily activities, and built closer relationships. With the rise of remote work post-Covid has allowed this trend to continue on after the pandemic as well.

Unfortunately, the pressures of balancing work-from-home responsibilities with supporting their kids' education, and managing the transition to lockdown led to **increased stress for parents**, which may have had an impact on Gen Alpha children. For instance, children whose mothers had Covid during pregnancy are shown to have **small developmental delays**. Not because of the disease, but because of their parents' higher stress levels.

Not to mention, **not all families were able to work from home**, had the technology or the time to support their kids over lockdown. This social inequality led to an **increase in the access and inclusion** gap in the attainment of kids which has yet to decrease again.

## // Physical Exercise

Lockdowns also limited Gen Alpha's opportunities for physical activities, like sports and outdoor play, which are crucial parts of growing up. There have been concerns about the **long-lasting effects on children's physical health and well-being**, with brands and organisations pushing to encourage kids to spend more time outside. So far, there has not been any evidence of significant developmental impact due to this.



## // Resilience

Despite these challenges, Gen Alpha have shown serious resilience. They've adapted to new ways of learning and socialising, showing flexibility and a childlike capacity to bounce back from change. Parents report their kids being **"confident," "calm in adversity" and "adaptable"**. There's certainly a market for brands to create opportunities for Alphas to build on and expand the coping skills they're already establishing post-Covid. But not all of these challenges are easy to bounce back from – some will have repercussions that echo through various aspects of this generation's life for decades to come, unless we make a concerted effort to help them overcome these challenges through specialised interventions.



One of Gen Alpha's defining hallmarks is actually their relationship with their Millennial parents. This generation of parents is focussed on changing the parenting game, and being more present than ever in their children's lives. In fact, **70% of Millennial parents** think that they're closer to their children than their parents were to them, and **83% of Millennial parents** even consider their children to be one of their best friends. This diligent approach to parenting is at least partially because they see their kids as an **extension of themselves**. The end result? We're looking at a generation that's being raised **empathetic and compassionate**, after enjoying their parents' nurturing and kindness throughout their childhoods.

**"70% of Millennial parents think that they're closer to their children than their parents were to them"**

They've benefited from Covid in the sense that they've had more time to spend building closer relationships with their children, thanks to lockdowns and the shift to remote working. The increased amount of time spent together has meant that household decision-making is **more evenly distributed**.

**"This generation is being raised to have agency, and be aware of it."**

They might be young, but Gen Alpha has a serious impact on their family's purchases and decision making. **94% of Millennial parents** consult their kids' opinion when buying anything, and when Gen Alpha kids are asked who decides what they wear, eat, or play with, they're **more likely than previous generations** to say they pick them or choose with their parents. This generation is being raised to have agency, and be aware of it. They will advocate for their own needs and preferences. Ignore them at your peril.

For more information about Millennial parents, check out **our Horizon Scan here**.



# EDUCATION



Generation Alpha has been dealt a tough hand when it comes to education: Covid disruption led to months of missed classes, with **significant developmental impacts as a result**; the rise of AI is fundamentally changing education, but no one quite knows how; boys are falling behind academically and struggling to re-engage; and gender polarisation in classrooms is out of control.

But it's not all doom and gloom – these issues are an opportunity for us to reimagine what our education system looks like. We have the opportunity to inject the fun back into learning and create a generation of life-long learners.

We can't talk about Gen Alpha in the classroom without first acknowledging the time they have spent outside of the classroom; specifically, the time they spent learning remotely during the Covid pandemic. These two years were characterised by learning via screens, the inevitable Zoom fatigue that followed, glitchy internet, inaccessible teachers, lenient grading, constant schedule changes and a lack of social interaction. All of this has had significant and lingering effects on education, health, and social well-being – **even after students have gone back to school.**

The gap between remote learning and learning in-school is massive: a study by World Bank researchers concluded that in the best-case scenario, virtual learning could compensate for as little as **15% up to a maximum of 60% of learning losses.** As such, there's a **notable attainment gap** between pre-Covid cohorts and those who were in school through the pandemic for both maths and reading, with the youngest students being hardest hit. Chronic absenteeism has skyrocketed, with **21.2% of pupils being recorded as "persistently absent" in 2022/23,** compared to the usual 4.5 – 4.8% pre-Covid. The overall learning loss is the equivalent of **two decades of positive progress.** Virtual learning can't compensate for schools' other functions either:

they're hubs for counselling, therapeutic services, childcare, protection, and nutrition. And although the pandemic had negative effects on everyone's education, it exacerbated **an existing gap for disadvantaged students.**

**"The overall learning loss is the equivalent of two decades of positive progress"**

So what can we do? Some of the solutions being floated around include increased tutoring, smaller class sizes, supplemental education online/on the weekend/over summer/after normal school hours, etc. But one-off interventions aren't enough to create fundamental, lasting change. Without large-scale publicly financed programmes, there will be **inequities in who benefits and who doesn't.** People who can afford to supplement their kids' education will do so, while others fall behind. Unfortunately, current spending on education is slow – the English pupil funding is still at the **same real-term level as 2010.**

These figures are just the numbers for the kids that were already in schools during the pandemic. It's harder to measure the effect on the learning of babies born during lockdown, but early studies paint a grim picture. They suggest that children born during the pandemic have nearly **twice the risk of delays in communication and social development,** and score lower on tests of gross motor, fine motor, social, and problem-solving skills compared to those born before the pandemic. This is essentially down to fewer interactions, their parents' stress-levels, increased screen time, and masks covering mouth movements and facial expressions during crucial developmental times. Meanwhile, the NHS lockdown backlog and increased demand for speech and language development services mean that **many of these kids haven't been able to access** the help they need. Without widespread intervention, we risk leaving this whole generation of kids behind.



# // GENDER DIVIDES IN EDUCATION

Historically, women and girls have faced significant barriers to equal education. But over the past 50 years, they've made significant progress in academic achievement. Instead, boys and men have experienced much slower growth, or in some even decline, over the same time period. Boys are now at a **higher risk of repeating grades, failing to complete their education, and struggling to learn while in school**. Worldwide, universities now admit **88 men for every 100 women**. The gulf is widest when it comes to reading – in almost every country that collects data, **girls outperform boys at ten years old**. On top of that, boys also lag behind in international science tests, and have lost a historical advantage in mathematics.

Despite these challenges, there are **few dedicated programmes** to improve outcomes for boys' education. Although men continue to hold more structural power in society, there's a growing number of young boys who struggle in education. We have to make sure that our pursuit of parity in education does not leave behind young boys. For more on why young boys are increasingly disengaged from education, please read our **Future of Men report here**.

**“70% of teachers report witnessing a rise in sexist language in the classroom over the past year”**

Meanwhile, the gender divide between boys and girls in classrooms is growing. New research found that **70% of teachers** report witnessing a rise in sexist language in the classroom over the past year, and one in five parents saying they've also noticed a change in the language their sons use to talk about women and girls. Female teachers **report struggling to get the respect of their male students**. The main culprits: social media, the expanding manosphere, and anti-feminist influencers. As young boys **continue to feel left behind by educational and societal systems**, they're turning to external influences to satisfy a need for guidance that they're not getting: a handbook for masculinity, as such.

**“Worldwide, universities now admit 88 men for every 100 women”**



# // GENDER DIVIDES IN EDUCATION

For Gen Alpha, all of this was exacerbated by Covid. Children working remotely, often with unsupervised internet access and sometimes in homes with entrenched attitudes towards the roles of men and women, meant that many pupils (**particularly the younger ones**) returned to the classroom with more extreme attitudes and behaviours. All of this is then exacerbated by the fact that increasingly personalised social media algorithms mean that young men and women now increasingly find themselves **inhabiting separate spaces and cultures online**.

**“Many pupils returned to the classroom with more extreme attitudes and behaviours”**

This phenomenon is affecting society beyond the classroom: the political gap between today's young men and women is growing significantly. In the UK, the gap between conservative young men and progressive female young women is a whopping **25 percentage points**. This ideological gap concerns everything from gender identity, to immigration and racial justice – and it is growing among young people.

While this research mostly concerns Gen Z, evidence from Gen Alpha's educational experiences suggests that they may be on the same path, and research shows that **people's formative political experiences are hard to shake off**. Without intervention, we risk Gen Alpha becoming one of the most politically polarised generations of our time. Embedding open discussion about gender, gender identity, positive masculinity, and feminism from early ages in education will be crucial to mitigate the impacts of this shift.



Since the release of ChatGPT-1 in late 2022, it has become obvious that Generative AI will fundamentally change the way we learn. Potentially, it already has. A whopping **77% of parents and 92% of students** are interested in AI-powered education tools that could help students learn. In the UK, an estimated **67% of secondary school students** have used AI to complete their homework, while **66% of teachers** say they're now regularly receiving AI-generated assignments. Meanwhile, the Gen Alpha kids that are still being born today will grow up with AI shaping their childhoods. Smart AI toys are growing in popularity, with the global market **expected to reach \$35b by 2030**. For instance, the Miko 3 and Roybi AI Robot are billed as **"emotionally intelligent educational robots that are safe for children."**

What does this mean for the future of education?

Let's start with the good news: we can use AI to **tackle educational challenges**. This is where AI's main benefit to education lies. For instance, AI can take the **burden of lesson planning and preparation off of teachers**, to allow them to spend more time with students. Or it could help us **individualise lesson plans, transcend language barriers in education**, etc.

But we need to educate students (and, generally, society) about AI so that they can use it safely and effectively. From being able to identify AI-generated material and disinformation; making sure to double-check the information it generates; to understanding the ethical implications of the tool. What data goes into training it? What is the environmental impact? What biases does this technology have?

**"We need to educate students about AI so that they can use it safely and effectively"**

The safe and effective use of AI is a skill that's not only crucial for students right now, but will prepare them for a changing job market after they graduate. Unfortunately, the UK is lagging behind in this area. **Only 20% of kids have access to AI learning tools**, far behind the European average of 40%. While **56% of students** consider tech development (including AI, VR, and AR) to be a crucial skill going forward, there are concerns that the digital divide could leave current students unequipped for a future job market dominated by these technologies.



// **Future Learning...?****2020s – Introducing AI**

AI enters the education sector, mostly used for assistance. Your personalised learning-bot can answer basic questions, make lesson plans, or explain that tricky maths problem to you. This decade is spent perfecting these basic tasks until misinformation and AI hallucinations are minimal, and quality of responses is maximised.

**2030s – Autonomous Systems**

AI will now act as an agent, working on behalf of humans to carry out tasks we don't have time (or simply don't want) to do. It is smart enough to take over menial tasks and doesn't need a savvy prompt engineer to direct it towards best outputs. Some jobs become fully automated, whilst others are partially automated to free up time for more interesting tasks.

**2040s – Immersive Tech**

VR finally goes mainstream and the Metaverse gets off the ground. VR goggles become less clunky (and wearing them actually becomes cool!). These technologies will create fully immersive experiences for education. Socialising with others now happens in fully phygital environments.

**2050s – Brain-Computers**

Knowledge gets beamed directly into your brain-computer interface. You think of a question and the answer appears almost instantaneously. These computers share a hive mind, and knowledge is shared easily across groups.



# // THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

Of the UK's current Gen Z students, **57% say that school alone** is not preparing them for their dream job. We can only imagine that this number will increase for their Gen Alpha successors, if there is no meaningful change in our educational systems. Regardless, whether we want it or not, that change will happen anyways. The AI genie has come out of the bottle, and will fundamentally change how we learn and consume information. So let's consider these technological changes, as well as Gen Alpha's needs and wants, to make some predictions about what the future of education might look like. This is an opportunity to reimagine how we teach and learn, and how we can make learning fun and engaging for future generations.

## 1// Personalised Education

One-size-fits-all education won't work for this demographic. Firstly, these tech-savvy kids are **increasingly used to technologies that intuitively respond to their needs**. They'll be looking for that same kind of personalisation in their learning experiences. At home, they're **actively encouraged to participate as stakeholders and opinion formers**,

and their spare time is spent in sandbox games where they **co-create new content**. They want to use their creativity and agency to co-create their learning plans. In the future, this means that learning will need to be driven by the student's own purpose and passions.

Some countries are already tapping into this. For example, Taiwan has **piloted a new curriculum** which encourages students to start setting their own projects, based on their own interests, from as young as seven years old. This co-creative approach is intended to inspire a cohort of students who enjoy their time spent in education. **More than a third of school kids who struggle to focus when studying** attribute this to boring curriculums – allowing them to have a say could improve educational outcomes for students who have historically struggled to stay engaged.

Over the coming years, expect to see AI help guide personalisation in classrooms, with curriculums becoming more bespoke. We may see students becoming **grouped by skill, rather than age**. Groups who have been disengaged from education, such as young boys, could re-engage with learning through this process.

**“In the future, this means that learning will need to be driven by the student's own purpose and passions”**



# // THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

## 2// Immersive Learning

Welcome to the **phygital future**. These digital natives are growing up in a world where they expect the digital world to blend seamlessly into the physical world, and vice versa. They'll want the same connectivity between digital and physical spaces in their learning environments. In fact, **83% of kids in Europe** are interested in learning in the Metaverse, and 57% think it will allow them to learn more effectively.

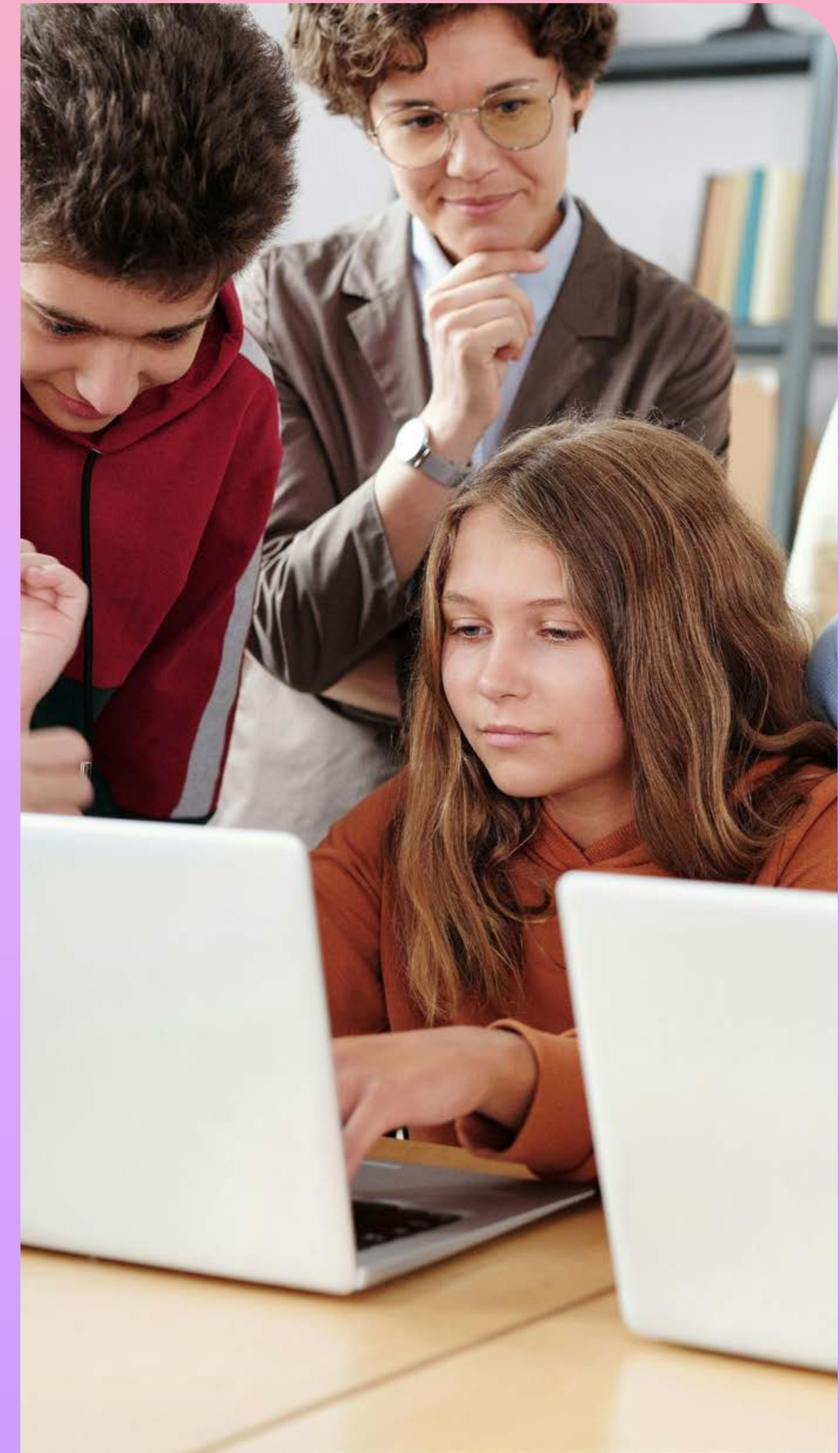
As Extend Reality, or XR, technologies (like Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, etc.) develop, they'll offer **unique learning experiences**. Picture learning history amongst the Romans, discovering marine life whilst being under water, and Albert Einstein personally dropping in to teach his theory of relativity. Subjects like medicine will benefit from having these safe environments to practise in. Teachers and students alike could drop in from anywhere. Some companies are **already tapping into this need**, while some universities are starting to implement **hologram lecturers**.

## 3// New Skills

Currently, children in school don't think they're being prepared for what's important. And parents agree: **half of parents in Europe** think that kids learn more from common life skills than from school. We'll need to adapt our curriculums to align with societal shifts.

Skills related to computer science, coding, data analytics, cybersecurity, and programming are **already growing in importance**, yet they're **not commonly taught in schools**. These skills will be crucial in preparing kids for the more technical job market that they will likely graduate into. We need better **computational intelligence**. And technological skills aren't the only ones that will be important for Gen Alphas to learn - we'll need to learn creative language and critical thinking skills as well in order to be able to talk to AI and draw out its best results.

Furthermore, **green skills are gaining importance** too. For example, the US is expecting **nine million new green jobs** over the next decade - but who is training the people going into those jobs? We'll need to embed sustainable skills into curriculums, and introduce kids to green study and job opportunities that they can pursue later in life.



## 4 // Creativity & Self-Expression

The school curriculum, particularly in England, is largely focussed on the memorising of facts, rather than creative thinking. In fact, there's a so-called "creativity crisis" facing schools, with arts provisions dropping off significantly over the past decade. Since 2010, the enrolment in arts GCSEs has fallen by 40%, with state schools bearing the brunt of this reduction (private schools, meanwhile, have invested more resources in art and music provision, creating a class divide in creativity). Yet engagement in the arts and creativity is crucial for child development. It makes people more open-minded and imaginative, and shapes their complex thinking. Crucially, it also helps encourage self-expression and explore identities.

"Since 2010, the enrolment in arts GCSEs has fallen by 40%, with state schools bearing the brunt of this reduction"

Generation Alpha is set to be the most diverse in history. They crave learning experiences that let them explore their ideas and opinions, and help them safely explore their own sense of self. They're also growing up with creative platforms like TikTok, Roblox and Minecraft driving their appetite for world-building and creative curiosity. We should see these attributes of Gen Alpha as unique strengths, and adapt curriculums to stimulate their creativity, rather than stifle it.

Looking further into the future, human creativity is likely to become increasingly important as technology develops. As more knowledge becomes outsourced to AI, rather than being retained and learnt, we'll need to distinguish human intelligence through skills like collaboration (with each other and with machines), critical thinking, and crucially, creativity. At school, this means that teaching could focus on high-level thinking capabilities, and finding a way to use AI to supercharge human intelligence and learning. Of course, literacy and numeracy are still fundamental, but other subject areas could become a playground for critical thinking and increased creativity. We need to focus on developing the skills that AI doesn't have.



# CASE STUDIES



Prof Jim

## PROF JIM

### Prof Jim

This Generative AI platform is built to transform textbooks, training manuals, PDFs, emails, whitepapers, and essentially any other text, into classroom-ready slides, interactive videos, and personalised assessments. The video content is narrated by personalised avatars, and can all be generated in minutes. The platform says that student outcomes with their learning materials are similar or better than those to teacher-built lesson plans.

**So What:** AI will allow teachers to make their textbooks come alive in the classroom, with personalised plans for every student. Although this technology isn't flawless right now, it can build the foundations for strong lesson plans and allow teachers to use the time saved on spending more time with students one on one, or focussing on personalising the lessons and keeping more students engaged.



Twin Science

### Twin Science

Twin Science, a teaching platform, is focussing on equipping young kids with the skills needed to become sustainable actors. Their STEM classes focus specifically on sustainability education, and include hands-on activities, electronic modules, and an app that gives kids access to interactive sustainability content, games, challenges, trivia quizzes, and additional learning resources. On the teaching side, they provide curriculum materials and teacher support. The company is also exploring the use of XR to enhance students' understanding and engagement.

**So What:** We need to teach current student cohorts about climate change – and traditional teaching methods aren't cutting it. Too often, these are abstract, outdated or defeatist. Sustainability learnings need to be embedded across subjects, with students engaged positively around the actions that they **can** take, so that they understand the difference they can make.



# CASE STUDIES



## KINDER

This project operates across a number of European countries, to provide teachers of young kids with positive educational tools for gender equality and identity. Their online playroom hosts various multilingual resources to help address topics of gender equality and norms, with options for multiple age groups. They also work with parents to promote diversity in- and out-of-schools.

**So What:** Engaging kids around gender equality from young ages will be crucial for reducing the gender polarisation currently found in schools. These resources focus on positivity to ensure that no child is left behind, and hopes to minimise the impact of patriarchal gender norms at later ages.



## Lunchables

This year, Lunchables is launching a campaign to prove that human creativity is still king. They're providing kids and a generative AI bot with the same prompt ("imagine a mozza stick as something fantastical"). While the AI churned out slick and unexciting images of mozzarella sticks, the kids drew outlandish characters, like a red-sauce octopus with a mozzarella narwhal. Building on this concept, they're now recruiting their first Dunkables Head of Imagination. Kids aged 5 to 13 are invited to apply, by showcasing their best imaginative lunchable drawings, and the winner will join 'imagination sessions' at Lunchables HQ.

**So What:** This campaign simultaneously champions human, and particularly Alpha, creativity, while also affirming kids' creative skills and love for the fantastical. On top of that, they're introducing kids to AI's strengths and limitations from an early age.



# // GEN ALPHA: 2034 PREDICTIONS

## // Positive Outlook

### REIMAGINED EDUCATION

Spurred on by the rise of AI and lingering Covid aftershocks, we have rethought and redesigned education. Gen Alpha (and future generations) enjoy an educational system that encourages love of learning, and sees their creativity supercharged by machines. Increasingly personalised curriculums meant that no one was left behind and has stayed uniquely engaged. We have fostered a generation of life-long, passionate learners.

## // Murkier Outlook

### STAGNATING LEARNING

Without attention to the developmental impact of Covid, rapidly changing technology, and student disengagement, Gen Alpha fell behind previous generations. Educational outcomes stayed low, and we failed to close the Covid attainment gap due to a lack of targeted intervention. Crucially, students became disengaged and disenchanted with learning.



# GROWING UP ONLINE



Generation Alpha is the first generation of true digital natives. They're glued to their screens from younger ages than ever before. Unfortunately, we don't really know what the long-term impact of this is on child development yet. For parents, screen time and social media have been a confusing conundrum over the past years, and there's no apparent consensus about best practice on the horizon.

So how does Gen Alpha actually use technology and social media, and what do we actually know about the long-term impacts of this?

# // PLATFORMS & USAGE STYLE

Generation Alpha, also dubbed the 'iPad kids', are the first entirely digital native generation. Its oldest members were **born the year the iPad debuted**, and social media pre-dates the eldest Gen Alphas by more than five years. This generation is growing up immersed entirely in technology, and will never know a world without it. They're connected from younger ages than ever before. In fact, Millennial parents are giving kids their first smartphones at **9 years old on average**. The 'iPad kid' moniker isn't just a stereotype either – 49% of these children **own a tablet**, although they spend more time at desktop computers.

**“Millennial parents are giving kids their first smartphones at 9 years old on average”**

It's not just screens they have access to, it's social media as well. A whopping **79% of Millennial parents** say that their kids are on social media, with **YouTube and TikTok** being the most popular platforms. YouTube's importance, in particular, cannot be overstated – 81% of parents with kids **aged 3 or 4** say their children watch YouTube videos. While this is due in-part to its convenience, its main benefit is actually the fact that it's Millennial parents' **most trusted brand**.

For the majority of these kids, social media is **primarily entertainment**, rather than personal connection. In fact, the use of social for finding funny and entertaining content has seen a **6% increase YoY since 2021**, and **61% of Gen Alpha social users** say mainly they use it for finding funny posts. While this may seem aimless for some of us, the eldest Gen Alpha are actually rather conscious consumers of social media. Essentially, they want to use social media to enhance their lives, rather than waste time on it. The use of social media for aimlessly filling time among this demographic has seen an **11% drop since 2021**.



However, technically speaking, the vast majority of Gen Alpha shouldn't have access to social media at all – most platforms have a 13 and over policy. Some, like YouTube, have incorporated **child-friendly accounts**, so that parents can hand off devices to their children without having to be worried. Others, like TikTok, don't have the same kid-friendly offer, as they're not intending to accommodate a demographic that is technically banned from their platform. Despite these restrictions, the **majority of kids under 13** have their own profile on at least one social media app or site. Shockingly, a whopping **33% of parents of 5 to 7 year olds** say their child has social media, as well as 60% of 8 to 11 year olds. Potentially related: just **4 in 10 parents** of 3 to 17 year olds know the minimum age requirement for using most social media platforms.

**“A whopping 33% of parents of 5 to 7 year olds say their child has social media, as well as 60% of 8 to 11 year olds”**



# // SCREEN TIME

It's a tale as old as time (or at least, as old as technology): parents, teachers, and legislators worry about the damage that screens might be causing to young people's health and general development. The more technology develops, the worse the worry gets, as kids spend more and more time online. And while it certainly sounds scary, we're still not really sure how bad screen time actually is for kids. Research is frequently conflicting, or **doesn't come to clear conclusions**. We know screen time has **an** impact, we just don't know **how much** of one.

Broadly, 23 years of neuroimaging research have shown that screen time for kids under twelve **changes the prefrontal cortex of the brain**. The outcomes are a mixed bag. Screen time generally **improves focusing and learning abilities** in the frontal lobe, although it simultaneously causes lower functionality in areas of the brain dealing with **language and cognitive control**, and tablet use specifically has been found to cause trouble with problem-solving tasks. Meanwhile, studies have found that people with internet access report **higher levels of social wellbeing and life satisfaction**, and smartphone use actually **boosts teenagers' moods**. The verdict on screen time: more research still needed.



# // GROWING UP WITH SOCIAL

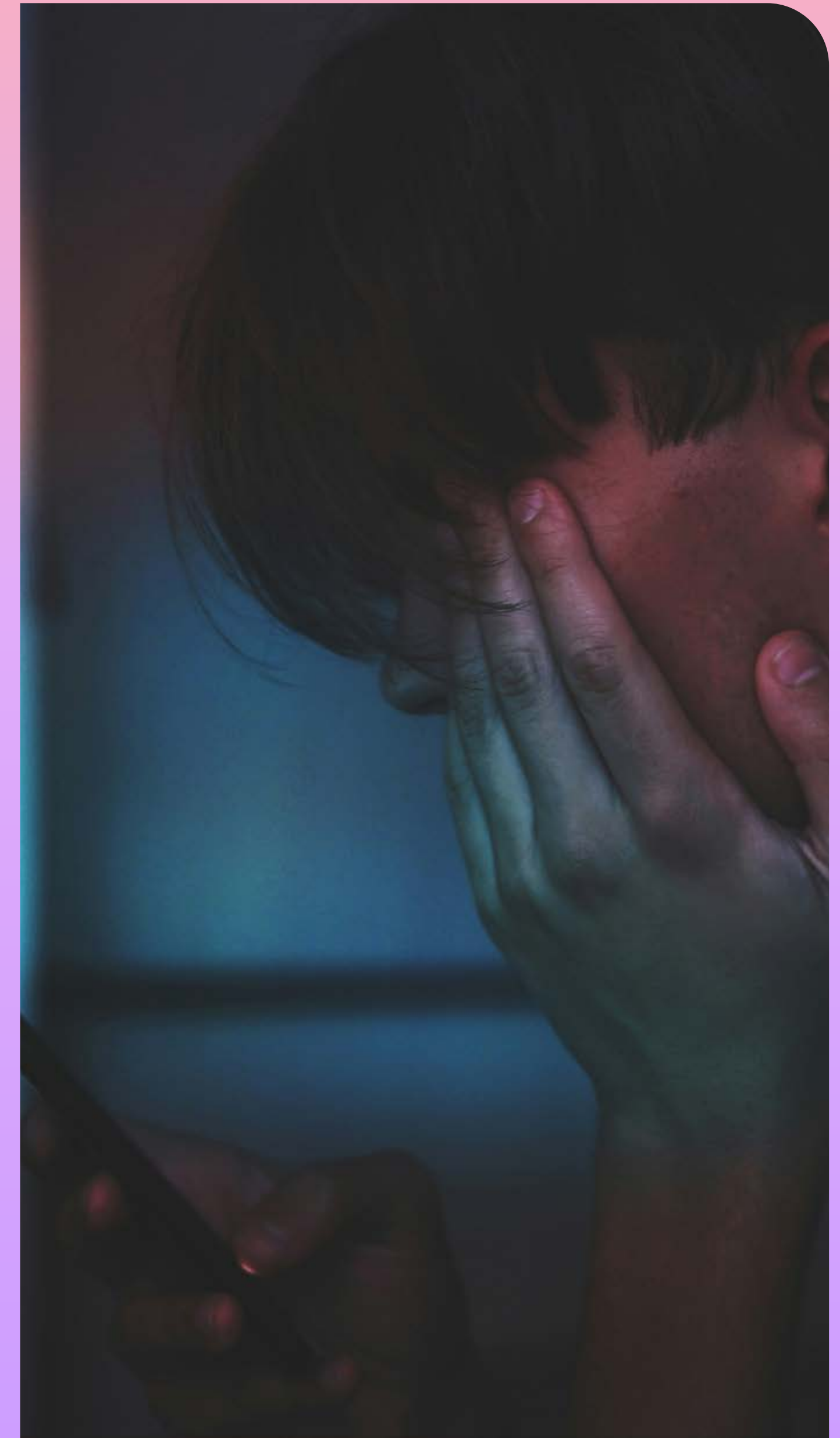
The real concern with screen time is access to social media. We're writing this report at a time when negative headlines about teens and social media abound. Meta is facing a probe over its **addictive effect on kids**, following two similar probes opened into TikTok earlier this year. Meanwhile, Facebook's own leaked documents show that they know **Instagram is toxic for teen girls** but aren't doing anything about it. In the UK there have been talks of **banning social media use for under 16s**, or even **banning the sale of smartphones** to them entirely.

We have some **evidence** that social media plays a role in the teen mental health epidemic. We also have a **fair amount of data** that doesn't fit with this nice, clean narrative. Horror stories and headlines have gotten out in front of the science – which **isn't as settled as you may think**. In short, we know that social media is a problem for teen mental health, but it also has its benefits. Most importantly, it is not the sole culprit for the teenage mental health crisis. Restricting social media use in teenagers is not a golden bullet.

Most of the risks fall into two broad categories:

**OVERUSE:** When we become so **addicted** that it begins to interfere with other activities that are important to well-being, like sleep or face-to-face time with friends. Could also include **oversharing online to later detriment** (such as a future employer seeing your 13-year-old self's idea of a funny TikTok). Social media companies exist to make money, so they exist to encourage overuse. They maximise their addictiveness through features like endless scroll, notifications, and autoplay. Teens are **more susceptible to these features than adults are**, and are more likely to overuse their social media.

**HARMFUL EXPERIENCES:** Exposure to things that teens shouldn't be seeing, like problematic mental health content, or doing, like obsessing over likes. Currently, social media platforms aren't very good at preventing these harmful experiences. TikTok's algorithm has been exposed for **pushing suicide to vulnerable kids**; The New York Times has published a cutting exposé of how **social media platforms fail to protect children from sexual exploitation**; and Snap Inc. has found that almost **half of their young social media users** had been targeted in an online sextortion scheme.



Maybe the most insidious harmful experience is **social media's impact on self esteem**. Gen Alpha is growing up with a constant conveyor belt of influencers, selling them the perfect look, perfect clothes, perfect life. Usually, these people are rich, photoshopped, and unrealistic portrayals of the modern beauty standard. Log onto TikTok and half of the influencers are using beauty filters that are literally undetectable to the naked eye. And these filters are literally everywhere. Snapchat claims that **200 million daily active users** play with or view Lenses to "transform the way they look, augment the world around them, play games, and learn." They're so prevalent that people have coined terms like '**Snapchat Dysmorphia**' and '**Instagram Face**'. This re-wiring of self-image is gradually fed to teenagers through social media.



Where has that left us? **Record rates of plastic surgeries**, with younger clients than ever before; young women asking their surgeons to make them look like **Snapchat filters**; a surge in **teenagers getting Botox**; and rising rates of **facial dysmorphia, body dysmorphia, and eating disorders**. We need to offer teenagers better alternative representations of life, that depict real people, with real bodies, living real lives.

**"We need to offer teenagers better alternative representations of life"**

After that barrage of negative headlines and information, is there really anything positive to say about social media? Yes. Social media, and the connectivity that it offers, has the ability to **keep teens in touch with their friends, help them meet like-minded peers, find community, learn and discover**, as well as build digital skills. These things are especially true for teens who might feel marginalised in their IRL lives, like LGBTQ+ teens, **who often feel safer to express their full identities online**. Safeguarding information and education hasn't been entirely useless either: **nearly all children aged 12-17**

are aware of at least one safety feature to help keep themselves safe online, and **84% had put those into practice**. Kids who are educated about the risks of social media are able to help keep themselves safe, in the same way that kids fifty years ago were taught how to keep themselves safe from the dangers of a real-world environment.

Social media's negative effects don't impact everyone in the same way either. **The kids who struggle the most with social media** are kids who are already being left out, bullied, or excluded in real life; people who take more risks offline; and teens who are having emotional difficulties already. Its effects therefore heavily depend on who is using it, as well as how they're choosing to use it. An hour of texting their BFF will have very different effects to an hour spent comparing themselves to an influencer's photos. Essentially, social media is an amplifier of pre-existing problems, rather than a root cause.

**"Social media is an amplifier of pre-existing problems, rather than a root cause"**



# // GROWING UP WITH SOCIAL

A wholesale ban on social media is unlikely (and tech-savvy teens would find a way around this faster than you can say 'TikTok'). What we can do is continue to make digital environments safer for those using them. How do we do that? **Here's four pillars for the protection of children** growing up online:

**REGULATIONS:** Drive continued regulation efforts from various government bodies. Protect and safeguard access to and use of social media. Continue iterating on these regulations as the technology (and associated risks) changes.

**EDUCATION:** Educate leaders that are responsible for regulating social media; parents, teachers and other leadership figures; and young social media users about how to use social media safely.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** Hold corporations accountable for promoting and encouraging the healthy use of technology, just like we do with sustainability. Demand transparency and change.

**INTENTIONALITY:** Challenge brands, marketers and advertisers to use connectivity to drive IRL connection, through the intentional use of technology and social media.



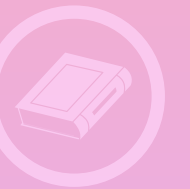
And it's not just the teenagers' use of social media themselves, their parents' social media habits while growing up are impactful too. About **42% of parents in Britain** share photos of their children online. On average, parents share **71 photos and 29 videos** of their child every year on social media. So, by the time a child is 13, parents will have posted **1,300 photos and videos** of them. As the Instagram generation ages into parenthood, we're expecting to see more and more of these uploads.

On top of that, with more influencers becoming parents, some of their Gen Alpha kids are turned into content for their influencer lifestyles, or even **get turned into child influencers** in their own right – often before they're old enough to consent to this. Although platforms like Instagram don't allow kids under 13, parents can open "**parent-run**" accounts for them. These can be incredibly lucrative for parents (children **often don't see any of the profit**). Unfortunately, just because the child themselves isn't running the account, doesn't mean that there is no risk involved. A study recently found that **500,000 child Instagram accounts** had "inappropriate" interactions every day. Account owners who report these interactions to the platform are typically met with silence or indifference, and those who block 'too many' abusers have their own accounts' features limited.

**"42% of parents in Britain share photos of their children online"**

We don't know much about the long-term effects of a childhood mined for content yet, but the first of these social media babies are just reaching adulthood. Many of them are now **pushing for laws** to protect kids from their parents' oversharing. Their experiences are an insight into what's in store for Gen Alpha (and future generations) should nothing change. As much as we need regulations for teen social media use, their parents should be equally educated and regulated in their social use when it pertains to their kids.

**"A study recently found that 500,000 child Instagram accounts had "innappropriate" interactions every day"**



# CASE STUDIES



Gabb

## Gabb

The Gabb phone is a smartphone designed specifically for kids, hoping to balance the benefits of connectivity with minimal risks. It limits some features of traditional smartphones, like eliminating access to social media, app stores, and internet browsing. The phone is equipped with calling and texting features, as well as pre-vetted apps like Gabb Music and Gabb Move, and some third-party approved apps. The simplicity is meant to keep kids focussed on necessary communication, without giving them unrestricted access to the whole internet.

**So What:** With phones increasingly becoming a 'must-have' for teenagers, how do we minimise the risk they pose? The Gabb phone allows kids to access important features of connectivity without compromising their safety.



Dove

## Dove

In 2023, self-care brand Dove launched the Campaign for Kids Online Safety as a part of their Self-Esteem Project, to address the rise in youth mental health issues linked to social media. As part of the campaign, they've partnered with celebrities and charities, as well as releasing a short film called the 'Cost of Beauty' about the experiences of young people whose mental health has been affected by social media. Their ultimate goal was to move the needle on the Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA) in the US.

**So What:** Dove's campaign looks to move beyond what brands and consumers can do on their own, and focuses on driving much-needed legislative action that could help safeguard kids and young people.



# CASE STUDIES



## Deutsche Telekom

Deutsche Telekom has launched the “ShareWithCare” campaign to raise awareness for the responsible handling of photos and data, as well as the risks of ‘Sharenting’. Their short-film shows the dangers of sharing photos and other personal data of kids online and calls for the education of parents about responsible data handling online, especially in the age of AI.

**So What:** Experts predict that by 2030, **two-thirds of all identity theft cases** will involve photos shared online. By ‘sharenting’, parents risk unintentionally exposing their kids to any number of threats to privacy and security. Deutsche Telekom recognises that the way to combat this is better education – for both kids and their parents.



## Vodafone

For Safer Internet Day 2024, Vodafone unveiled its ‘The Rise of the Aggro-rhythm’ campaign, spotlighting the dangers of AI algorithms pushing misogynistic and violent content towards boys aged 11-14. According to the brand, nearly 70% of this demographic encounter online content promoting misogyny. Alongside the campaign video, they’re working with NSPCC to develop a toolkit to guide parents in navigating online safety discussions.

**So What:** The campaign shows the importance of developing and promoting inclusive technologies, that are safe by design, and don’t perpetuate harmful stereotypes. For organisations, this means creating educational resources and advocating for responsible AI development, until the tech landscape is safer for young people.



# // GEN ALPHA: 2034 PREDICTIONS

## // Positive Outlook

### **FULLY REGULATED**

While social media, like the real world, will likely never be entirely safe for young people, this outlook sees its risks minimised. Organisations, authorities, and brands alike have successfully pushed for better regulation (which is iterative as technology develops), and social media companies are held accountable for the content they host and their effects on young users. Meanwhile, young generations are educated technological users, aware of best practices, and minimise their own risky behaviour. This education is supported by comprehensive programmes embedded in Gen Alpha's community spaces, such as schools or online platforms, to ensure equitable access.

### **BALANCED CONNECTIVITY**

Generation Alpha will grow up native to advanced digital tools and platforms, lending them unprecedented technological know-how. This is the first generation to maximise the benefits of digital connectivity, both for their own lives, and for their communities. They will be adept at using digital tools for education, social interaction, and professional development, and use technology to supercharge their own creativity.

## // Murkier Outlook

### **ONLINE CHAOS**

Without decisive action, social media companies are allowed to run rampant. In order to maximise profit, they continue to invest in addictive technologies and fine-tune the algorithm to sort people into hyper-specific online echo changes. Kids from increasingly young ages start replacing their social time with social media, and their play time with doom scrolling. Lack of regulation and education mean that there are no guardrails to prevent kids from seeking out (purposefully or accidentally) harmful experiences.



# ACTIVISM & INFORMATION



This generation has been dubbed an Activist Generation, as well as the Mini-Millennials, after adopting their parents' liberal views. They care about equality and the environment, and they're willing to stand up for those ideals. Gen Alpha wants to be heard and make a tangible impact.

However, they're growing up at a time where the information landscape is becoming increasingly complex. On one hand, they're struggling with the fatigue of constantly being inundated with shocking headlines and non-stop content. At the same time, AI misinformation is making it harder to navigate what's true or false.

The majority of Gen Alpha will still be getting their news from their parents, with their parents' views and opinions **largely informing their own**. When they do branch out on their own, many of them will be directly and indirectly exposed to news and current affairs through social media. In fact, **21% of Gen Alpha** use social media to access the news. For young people, social media platforms are the most popular news sources overall (with **Instagram, TikTok and YouTube leading the charge**). Crucially, most of the news that teens will find on those platforms will be sourced by **people they follow (47%)**, rather than from news outlets' own accounts (24%). Essentially, that means that Gen Alpha is getting their news mostly from bite-size graphics on Instagram or influencers talking about the latest news on TikTok – neither of which are fact-checked, nor do they offer comprehensive accounts of current affairs.



Add to that the increasing amount of AI-generated content flooding social media, and you've got a recipe for disaster. In the UK, young voters in key election battlegrounds are currently being recommended **fake AI-generated videos, featuring party leaders, misinformation, and clips littered with abuse comments**. While some of these are described as satire in the captions, the comments suggest the audience is confused about which claims are true or not. With AI's rapid development, it's becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between what's real and fake. It won't be long before it's almost impossible to.

**“21% of Gen Alpha use social media to access the news”**

While the majority of teenagers are confident that they can tell the difference between what's real and fake online, only **11% of them** could actually correctly identify reliable signs of misinformation. A significant **22% of 12 to 17 year olds** were unable to detect a fake online social media profile. Although the people surveyed for this research are slightly older than Gen Alpha, we can expect similar levels of confusion amongst them, as media literacy education has

yet to make significant progress, especially when it comes to AI. Younger Gen Alphas, in particular, are unlikely to have had media literacy training, and may be more susceptible to misinformation. We need to create widespread awareness of digital media literacy through robust training programmes, ideally integrated in the school curriculum, and raise awareness of existing resources.

This is a generation growing up with algorithmic echo-chambers; a sense of unreality turbo-charged by AI; the falling legitimacy of legacy media platforms; and crumbling fact-checking mechanisms in place on social media platforms. Nothing is true, and you can say anything you want.

Encouraging open conversations about current events between parents and children, as well as in schools, will be key for keeping Gen Alpha informed and aware. Organisations too will need to adapt their communications to the formats native to this group to keep them engaged in the long-run, and there is an opportunity to become a trusted voice for news and information on Gen Alpha's favourite platforms.



So how does all this information influence Gen Alpha's worldview? While they're generally too young to have formulated in-depth opinions on policy, they're **more informed than you might think**. In fact, **84% of 8-14 year olds** say they discuss the news at least once a week, with 25% discussing it daily. We can attribute this to their role models – their Millennial parents are **one of the most liberal generations ever**, and the celebrities and influencers they like are increasingly speaking and acting on important issues (for example, Billie Eilish is planning an **'eco-friendly' album release**, and Olivia Rodrigo is promoting **reproductive health freedom at her concerts**). As such, this generation is more inclined to believe that everyone should be treated the same, and consider it their **top priority** when asked what's most important to them, followed by interest in the environment and recycling.

**"84% of 8-14 year olds say they discuss the news at least once a week, with 25% discussing it daily"**

**"A whopping 82% of kids think that they should have a say on issues that affect them"**

For this group, lockdown will likely be a formative civic memory. Add to that the huge cost of Covid, on top of a welfare state that's overwhelmed (at best), pushed further past its limit by an ageing population – Gen Alpha is likely to grow up with a healthy dose of **anti-establishment sentiment**. Expect them to want to take matters into their own hands. A whopping **82% of kids** think that they should have a say on issues that affect them. In the UK, Keir Starmer, leader of the Labour party, recently announced his support for **lowering the the voting age to 16** – if this were to pass through parliament after the upcoming election, Generation Alpha would be the first to benefit from this. Which is exactly what Gen Alpha wants: they want to be engaged with current affairs, and they want to have their say. Give them a platform to share their opinions, and help them have a tangible impact where they can.



Millennial parents are raising Gen Alpha to be the activist generation that may finally hold some answers for the world's biggest problems – **53% of Millennial parents** think Gen Alpha will help solve the problems caused by previous generations. Their strategy is working (at least in terms of engagement), with **a quarter of UK kids between 7 and 14** having already attended a march or protest. From taking to the streets during global school strikes, to protesting against single use plastic at home, these kids are **speaking up for their ideals** from a young age. They've been taught to think critically and question everything, from stereotypes on gender to climate change denial. And though many of Gen Alpha's views can be attributed to their parents', activism in these households flows up as well as down. **69% of Millennial parents** admit that their children influence them to make better for the planet.



**“53% of Millennial parents think Gen Alpha will help solve the problems caused by previous generations”**

Although they're keen to get stuck into the action, Gen Alpha are still reliant on parents to enable their activism – they can't quite hop on a train to London and dive headlong into crowds at Trafalgar Square yet. Instead, many Gen Alphas are **taking their voices to the digital spaces**, where their digital know-how and reach makes them the perfect actors to raise awareness. Last year, we saw people digitally protesting on Roblox (Gen Alpha's favourite website), where they showcased their opinions on the war in Gaza. These virtual spaces are an opportunity for kids to take charge of their creative agency. Child political engagement is often limited by external factors, whether it's physical access to protests; safety concerns; disengaged parents; the idea that they're 'too young for politics', etc. While previous generations may have struggle to overcome these barriers, Gen Alpha has access to unprecedented digital spaces for activism. Through these spaces, and their parents' encouragement, they're becoming political actors earlier than ever.

Unfortunately, Roblox and many similar platforms have resorted to **blocking political content** as part of their 'safeguarding' policies. But depoliticising children's online experience is the wrong way to go about this. We have to acknowledge that children can (and will) be political and give them platforms to express themselves. Raising a generation of engaged and caring activists is a good thing for the planet – we should champion their efforts, rather than shut them down.

**“A quarter of UK kids between 7 and 14 have already attended a march or protest”**



# // CRISIS FATIGUE

Keeping Gen Alpha engaged isn't easy though – they're already starting to experience content fatigue. They're a generation that's been 'plugged in' from birth – constantly exposed to a media and content churn. Between headlines about global conflict or videos of the world burning, it can be a lot to take in. We've seen a whopping **16% decrease** in the number of 12–15 year olds saying they watch the news, and their interest in big issues is decreasing as well. In fact, there's been an **8% drop** in the number of teens who say they're interested in the environment since 2021.

**“Putting all of this responsibility on a single generation is too much pressure”**

We're already telling this generation that they're going to have to be the ones to save the world – or be the first to live in a world ravaged by climate change with no return. It should be noted that we told Gen Z the same thing while they were growing up, and that generation now has **rising rates of climate denial**. Putting all of this responsibility on a single generation is too much pressure. Solving climate change will require cross-generational cooperation.

So Gen Alpha is growing up with the knowledge that they're inheriting a dying planet, and that current generations aren't making sufficient effort to fix it for them. Unsurprisingly then, **43% of them** say they're worried about the future. One in six say that they often worry about how **climate change will affect their adult lives**. When asked what they think 2050 will look like, the general opinion **isn't great**. Per one of the interviewees: “Well, I heard that if we don't save the Earth in a few years, it'll be too late. So when I'm 30, I don't think I'll be here anymore.” Yikes.

We need to make sure that this generation doesn't feel so overwhelmed by the responsibility of having to 'save' the planet, that they disengage from philanthropy and activism entirely. News organisations, brands, and charities will need to encourage healthy relationships between Gen Alpha and their core values, focussing them on solutions, rather than just problems.

**“There's been an 8% drop in the number of teens who say they're interested in the environment since 2021”**



# CASE STUDIES

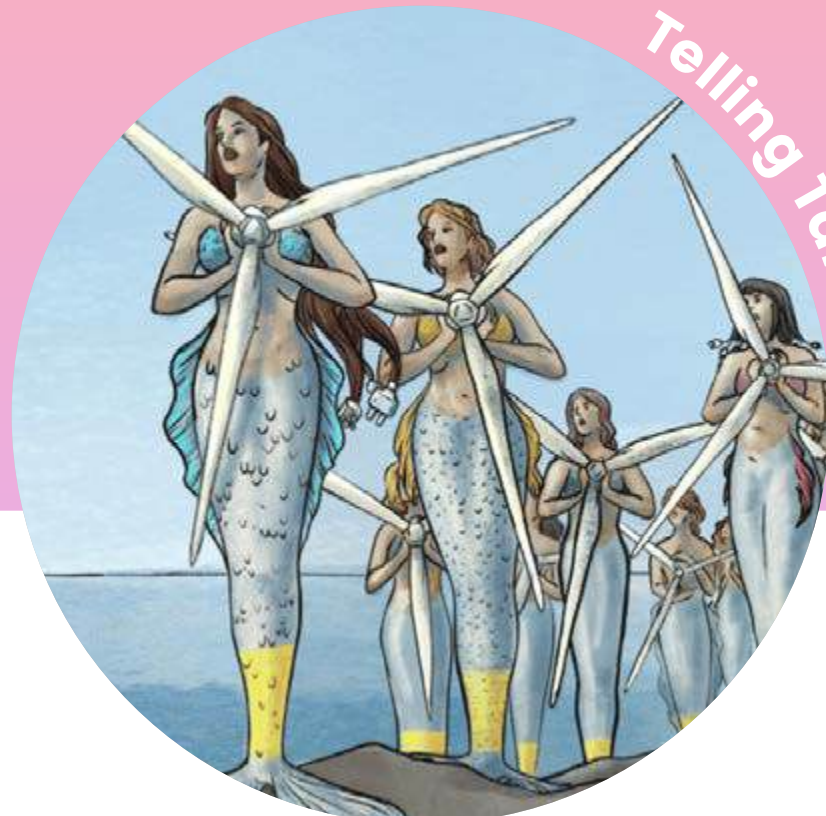


Topical Talk

## Topical Talk

Topical Talk by The Economist is a digital initiative designed to engage young audiences with current events, and teach them critical thinking along the way. The platform offers child-friendly news and media literacy training. Its videos and articles break down complex global issues into bite-sized segments for their younger viewers.

**So What:** By simplifying big, complex news stories and making them relatable (and fun to talk about), Topical Talks is able to foster much-needed critical thinking and media literacy in children. As today's information landscape becomes more complex to navigate, we'll need more initiatives like this one to help Gen Alpha understand the world they live in.



Telling Tales

## Telling Tales

The 'Telling Tales' initiative is a programme integrating traditional fairy tales with contemporary metaphors for climate change. Designed by researchers and educators together, it's designed to leverage the power of storytelling to educate young children on big issues. Through these stories, children learn about the causes and impacts of climate change.

**So What:** The approach is designed to make complex concepts accessible for Gen Alpha kids by embedding them within familiar narratives. By making environmental education fun and relatable, we can inspire young audiences to develop an interest in sustainability and become proactive in addressing climate change.



Digital Protest Spaces

## Digital Protest Spaces

In 2023, 2750,000 teens and tweens flooded the virtual streets of Roblox to protest the war in Gaza. It's not the first time young users have used these virtual platforms in protest – everything from Club Penguin to Habbo has seen young people speaking up for their opinions, especially in situations where they aren't able to make their voices heard previously (such as election results).

**So What:** Gen Alpha wants to be heard, but it doesn't always feel like it has the platform, resources, or independence to protest in real life. Digital spaces offer the agency and freedom to take a stand safely (and likely with parental permission).



# CASE STUDIES



## De Koffiejongens

Dutch coffee brand De Koffiejongens has always had an emphasis on sustainability. Now, it is connecting that mission to the planet's future inhabitants, and forming a 'Board of Little Directors'. They're recruiting a board made up of 8 to 12 year olds, that enjoy creatively colouring outside the lines. Later this year, they'll be invited to attend The Great Children's Meeting, which will be a full-day of fun and educational workshops about nature, food, sustainability, and more. They received over 500 applications within days of launching this campaign.

**So What:** Gen Alpha is the generation that is likely going to grow up bearing the brunt of the consequences of climate change, and they want their voices to be heard in this space. Actively seek out the perspectives of young people when you're discussing decisions and campaigns that will impact their futures.



## School Strike 4 Climate

Last year, School Strike 4 Climate (SS4C), a youth-led environmental group in Australia, mobilised students to skip school and protest against the federal government's approval of new fossil fuel projects. We've seen a number of these similar protests across the world, with varying levels of success. What set SS4C apart is that they introduced a Climate Doctor's Certificate, signed by prominent climate scientists, to allow students to take part in the protest without getting in trouble at schools.

**So What:** Gen Alpha wants to act, and they're ready to. Already, we see them showing up at protests with their parents (and often, they're the ones encouraging their parents to go). To mobilise this group to their full potential, organise protests that actively welcome them in and give them the final nudge they need to participate.



# // GEN ALPHA: 2034 PREDICTIONS

## // Positive Outlook

### **HEALTHY INFORMATION**

Growing up in an era of significant technological advancement, all the world's information constantly at their fingertips, and their signature social awareness, this generation will be well-informed and critically engaged with the world around them. Extensive media literacy education will be commonplace by the time they finish their schooling, helping them navigate the information landscape effectively and efficiently, and sniffing out misinformation. Through their advocacy, along with other generations, there will be stronger guardrails on online misinformation.

### **ACTIVIST TO THE CORE**

Having had their voices lifted up and supported throughout their lives, Gen Alpha will have all the tools they need to advocate for their beliefs and pursue their activism goals. This generation will be empowered to take action on issues like climate change, social justice, and equality. Digital platforms will be their tool of choice, leveraging them to organise, mobilise, and amplify their voices.

## // Murkier Outlook

### **MISINFORMATION MAZE**

With no regulation or guardrails, the internet becomes increasingly dark, confusing, and misleading. Gen Alpha may find themselves lost in the complexities of the algorithmic internet, struggling to navigate the AI-driven content landscape. With misinformation rife and media literacy levels low, they become overwhelmed by the sheer volume of (primarily negative) content. They risk becoming a generation marked by digital disillusionment and disengagement, struggling to find their footing in an increasingly complex and overwhelming information ecosystem.



# MENTAL HEALTH



Being a teenager is tough at the best of times – Gen Alpha is dealing with the compounded struggles of lockdowns, social media, and a healthy dose of poly-crisis and societal upheaval. It's no surprise then that mental health continues to be a top concern for parents and teachers alike.

They're right to be worried: Gen Alpha is experiencing a mental health crisis, with higher rates of anxiety and depression. Meanwhile, accessing help is becoming increasingly difficult as the NHS struggles to deal with increased demand.

# // CURRENT OVERVIEW

Gen Alpha has been dealt a difficult hand when it comes to mental health. Imagine your average adolescent struggles and throw limited socialisation throughout lockdowns, increased screen time and a vicious algorithm, and existential global crises in the mix. When surveying teachers, student mental health is now a **top, consistent concern**, and **76% of parents** now have some level of concern about their child's anxiety and depression since the pandemic. In fact, today's parents are **+43% more worried about their kid's mental health** than they are about drugs and alcohol, and +65% more concerned about mental health compared to the risk of pregnancy.

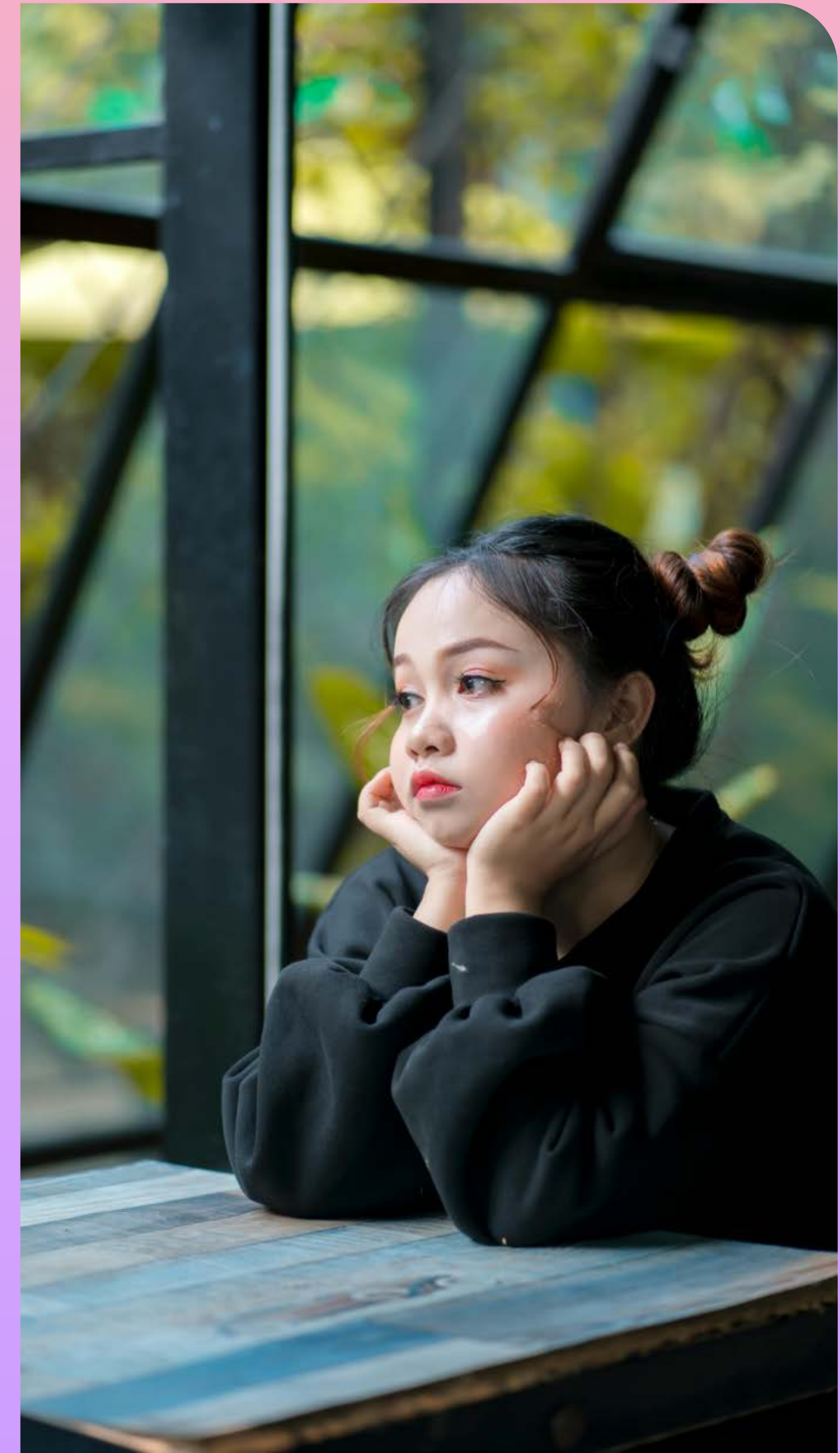
Not for no reason – Gen Alpha are **more likely to be worse off than their parents were at their age** when it comes to mental health. In fact, **a record 1.4m children and young people** sought NHS help for mental health problems in 2022; the number of kids referred to emergency mental healthcare in England has **soared by more than 50%** in three years; and **20% of teens** have seriously considered suicide, including a third of teen girls. Compound all of that with the fact that young people aren't getting the support they need. Some NHS trusts are failing to offer treatment to as much as **60% of children referred by GPs**. Those that do get an appointment face wait lists of **five months on average**.

Faced with these structural barriers, we're seeing a rise in **young people turning to AI chatbots for mental health help** or companionship instead. These chatbots aren't equipped to deal with serious mental health issues.

**“20% of teens have seriously considered suicide”**

We need better, dedicated infrastructure that has equitable accessibility and is well sign-posted towards Gen Alpha and their parents, with a focus on de-stigmatisation. For example, schools could adopt **'whole school' approaches** to normalise discussions around mental well-being, in the hopes that impacted groups feel less isolated and more seen.

Gen Alpha themselves are very conscious of their own mental health. **59% of them agree** that mental health is a big issue, and **62% say** their school should focus more on mental health education than physical education. They're a generation that care about combatting anxiety and improving their emotional wellness. Engage Gen Alpha around their mental health and well-being, offer them solutions and care.



# // THE END OF CHILDHOOD

Are today's kids growing up too fast? This debate is as old as time, with every generation wondering if their kids are growing up too fast. But it does feel like things are changing more rapidly now. Kids toys and media are now more often **less whimsical**, and instead grounded in reality (picture **sad beige babies**, instead of joyful, colourful childhoods). Nine year olds are **spending all of their pocket money at Sephora** to buy skincare routines to 'prevent wrinkles'; teen boys are buying **expensive colognes**; kids are popularising fancy **mocktails** to look more sophisticated. Kids have always tried to emulate their older role models to try to fit in or seem cooler, but social media has given them **unprecedented access to influencer lifestyles**. It's not just emulating kids a year or two ahead of them at school, it's twenty-five year old influencers across the world. Instead of being kids and teenagers, we're seeing Gen Alpha go straight into a type of Mini Adulthood.

**"Young brains may actually be ageing faster because of pandemic stress"**

Meanwhile, they (literally) have the weight of the world on their shoulders. They're exposed to harrowing headlines and content on a daily basis - for example, the average age when children are **first exposed to porn now is 11** - as well as the implicit expectation that they'll be the activist generation to save the world for the rest of us. The stress we're imparting on this generation is making childhood more complicated than ever before.

As such, it's not just behavioural change that we're seeing either. Researchers have found that young brains may actually be **ageing faster because of pandemic stress**. Fear and anxiety ages us - and not in a good way. The brain age we're seeing in today's Covid kids is typically found in children who have experienced violence, neglect, and family dysfunction. The same issue is playing out physically as well. Puberty **even starts up to two years earlier than it used to**, according to some researchers.

The concept of childhood is in crisis, because kids can no longer be 'just kids'. They face too many challenges that are normally reserved for adulthood. We need to inject simplicity and fun back into Gen Alpha's life. Not an easy task when they're actively trying to disengage from childhood.



# CASE STUDIES



## Monster Meditations

This collaboration between Sesame Street and Headspace, 'Monster Meditation', is aimed at teaching children mindfulness and emotional regulation, through short videos featuring iconic Sesame Street characters. Ever wanted to learn breathing from Elmo? This is the place for you. The content is designed to be fun and accessible, helping young children develop essential skills for emotional well-being.

**So What:** The initiative demonstrates how creative partnerships, featuring beloved comfort characters, are a great vehicle for promoting mental health and well-being among children. Examine your existing IP or brand relationships for similar opportunities.



## Clayful

Mental health support platform Clayful offers students immediate access to mental health coaches via text message. It guarantees a response within a minute, and is designed to be a quick and easy way to get professional advice and support, at a time when barriers to mental health care are high.

**So What:** Despite the importance of immediate and accessible mental health care, the reality is that many children struggle to get the help they need. We need to leverage technology to provide instant support and alternative pathways for intervention.



## Ollee

The BBC's Children in Need has launched a digital friend, called Ollee. The online tool is designed to support children's mental health and emotional wellbeing for kids aged 8-11. Ollee helps children articulate their feelings more clearly, and offers advice on common problems like school, family, and friends. On top of that, it also has a resource hub for parents to help encourage their children's open communication and agency.

**So What:** Given the social impact of Covid, we need to invest in interventions that allow kids to learn how to navigate their emotions, communicate them, and act on them. Ollee's success comes from its support of both parents and children simultaneously.



# // GEN ALPHA: 2034 PREDICTIONS

## // Positive Outlook

### HOLISTIC INTERVENTION

The child and teen mental health crises have led to a re-evaluation of mental health services. A new, proactive approach to combating the roots of existing mental health issues ensures that mental health is de-stigmatised and openly discussed among this generation. Additional interventions are designed with changing norms of childhood in mind, and are signposted to Gen Alpha in the spaces they frequent (ie. their schools, social media communities, games, etc.).

## // Murkier Outlook

### SLOW DECLINE

We ignore Gen Alpha's current mental health crisis until they're at a breaking point. Millions struggle quietly while waiting for NHS waiting lists to shrink, which only compounds the problem. Alternative interventions do not account for the differences between this generation of kids and the last, and don't understand their unique set of problems (lockdowns, rising environmental pressures, growing up online). The result will be a generation with alarmingly high rates of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues, some of which may become chronic and irreversible.



# LIFESTYLE



It would be impossible to generalise about an entire generation's hobbies, but there are some common themes that are popular among Gen Alpha. Gaming, without a doubt, takes the cake for favourite pastime, as it morphs into a mini-metaverse for this cohort.

Meanwhile, Gen Alpha is spending (and making money) from circular fashion; founding tech-powered side hustles; enjoying the great outdoors; and diving into nihilistic horror entertainment to cope with the realities of day-to-day life.

Welcome to Gen Alpha's favourite pastime. With Gen Alpha kids being as plugged in as they are, it doesn't come as a surprise that a whopping **94% of them** identify as gaming enthusiasts. We're looking at titles like **Fortnite, Super Mario Bros, Minecraft and Roblox**. Essentially Battle Royale-style and sandbox games that allow kids to play with their friends and encourage creativity. This generation cares about the social aspect of games, with approximately **43% of them** engaging with the community at large. But their biggest priority is the creation of new worlds. Games like Roblox and Minecraft, that encourage the co-creation of the worlds they inhabit.

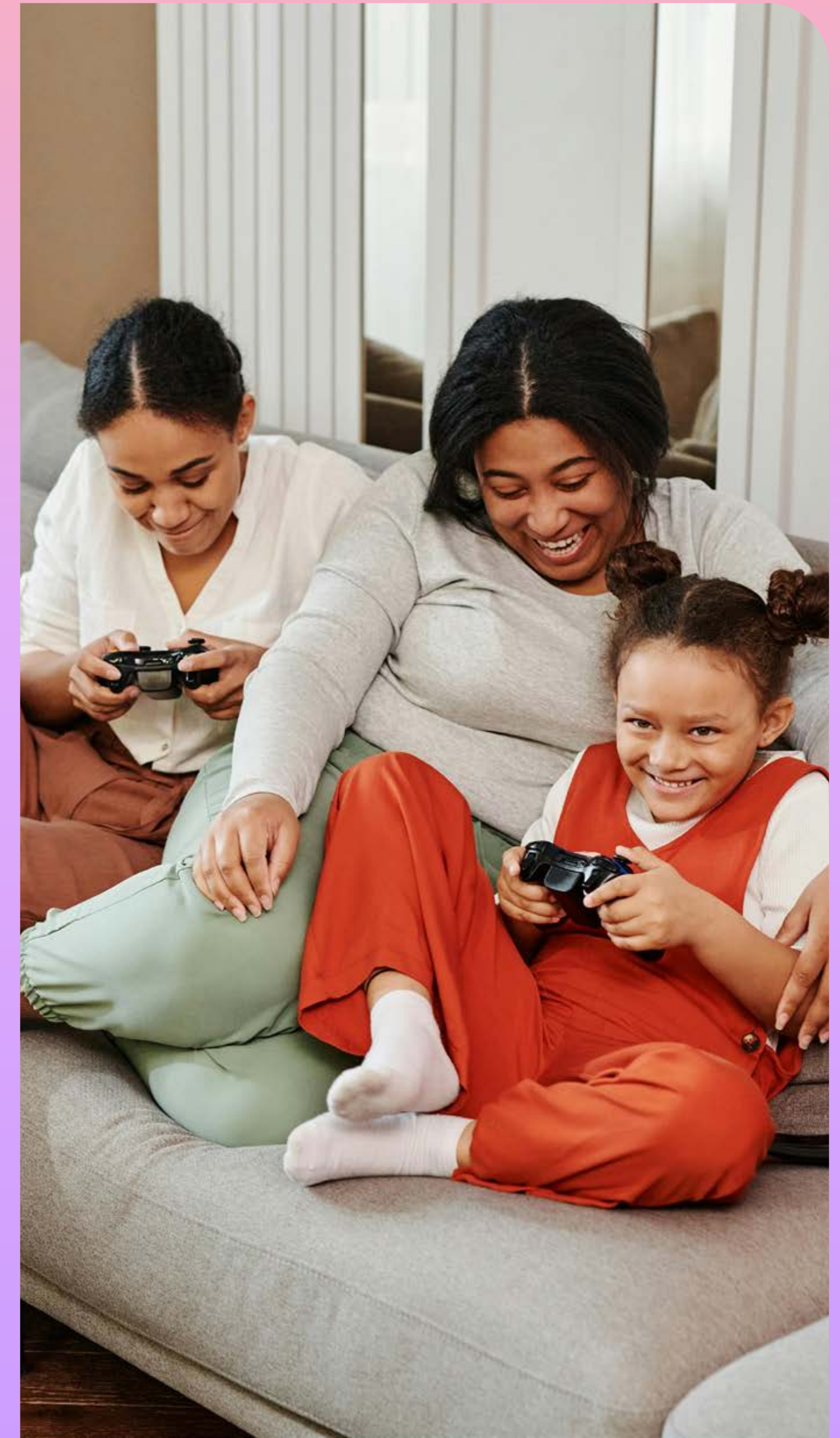
**"94% of Gen Alpha identify as gaming enthusiasts"**

On top of that, young Gen Alpha use gaming as a bonding mechanism with their parents. Approximately **64% of Millennial parents** say that they game with their kids, sometimes up to **five extra hours a week**. It's not just for bonding – parents increasingly believe that gaming teaches their kids new skills, like **teamwork and collaboration (33%); important life lessons (26%); and leadership skills (25%)**.

**"This generation cares about the social aspect of games, with approximately 43% of them engaging with the community at large"**

Although parents are increasingly open to letting their kids game, that acceptance doesn't extend to advertising. **70% of them** believe that there shouldn't be any advertising within kid's games – but the reality is miles away. Games like Roblox and Fortnite are particularly inundated with brand activations, and are still Gen Alpha favourites. What makes the difference? Brands offering something of value, like hangout spots or educational experiences, are **more likely to be accepted by the parents involved**.

**"Approximately 64% of Millennial parents say that they game with their kids"**



# // PHYGITAL WORLDS

The metaverse may not have fulfilled its early promises, but if there's one generation that's still eagerly anticipating it, it's Gen Alpha. In fact, Roblox, one of their favourite games, social networks, and place to hang out with their friends, is probably the closest thing we have to a metaverse right now. With **43% of Gen Alpha** playing Roblox regularly, at times even with their parents, brands and organisations that want to engage this audience are investing in building events and experiences on the platform to create long-term brand recognition and loyalty. This generation wants to live in worlds where the **digital blends into the physical**. For these digital natives, the blending of virtual and IRL isn't just a want, but a need. This is a world in which car brands use games as a space to test out reactions to forthcoming real-world features, and where Coca-Cola launches their new limited-edition flavours on Fortnite before Sainsbury's.

To connect with this demographic, use more transmedia approaches. Bring IRL products and experiences into the virtual world, and bring digital collectables into the real world.



Gen Alpha has an unprecedented financial impact, **despite their young ages**. Monthly allowances are **increasing year on year**, and nearly **half of kids** between ages six and sixteen already have access to an Amazon Prime account. They've got the digital literacy needed to navigate the internet and shop online – spending for them can be done at the touch of a finger. In fact, the typical Gen Alpha kid spends **\$45 of their own money every week**, and they have an additional £237.3b in spending power through **parental influence** to back up their spending habits.

What do they spend their money on? They want to shop from the **same shops as their Millennial parents**, and participate in the same trends that they see adults taking part in on TikTok (think Stanley Cups and Sephora). It's become very clear that to reach Gen Alpha consumers, your brand needs to embody Millennial tastes and values.

**“68% of Gen Alpha express wanting to shop from brands that prioritise DEI, while 63% want to shop sustainably”**

Other brands attract Gen Alpha by emphasising the values that are important to this generation (and their parents). It's not just about having the coolest shoes, **68% of Gen Alpha** express wanting to shop from brands that prioritise DEI, while 63% want to shop sustainably:

**SUSTAINABILITY:** Brands, especially clothes and toy brands, are leaning heavily into **sustainability and transparency**, to appeal to a generation plagued by climate anxiety. For example: **Mattel's Playback programme** where parents can send waste back to Mattel to recycle.

**GENDER NEUTRAL:** Brands are foregoing traditional gender categories in favour of **gender-neutral products**, for a generation that is expected to be the most diverse of all time. For example: **Claude & Co's** gender-neutral clothes for kids, as well as their matching adult pieces.

**INCLUSIVITY:** Brands are becoming aware of Gen Alpha's want for everyone to be treated equally. Expect these brands to **design for people of every gender, skin colour, and ability**. For example: **Playstation's accessible gaming console controller**.



In terms of how they find their favourite products, the answer is almost uniformly online. In fact, **58% of Alphas** have asked for something they saw on YouTube, while 75% of their parents say they've bought their kid something they asked for after seeing it online. Most likely, they're looking at whatever is featured on Ryan's World, a hugely popular toy review channel on YouTube, helmed a a tween itself.

**"58% of Alphas have asked for something they saw on YouTube"**

What does this mean for charity retail? They're embracing **circular fashion**, with a love of secondhand clothing. In fact, a whopping **80% of them** are buying secondhand clothing, and 45% of them are then reselling items they've bought secondhand at least once a year.

To attract Gen Alpha shoppers, make sure you're rising to their values (and communicating that clearly), and making sure that you have a functioning online shopping platform, or at least a digital marketing strategy.

## **Gen Alpha's Favourite Brands**



YouTube



Netflix



McDonald's



Amazon



Disney



Apple



Minecraft



Nike



Nintendo



Roblox



Spending money isn't the only thing Gen Alpha gets from their Millennial parents – they've also picked up their entrepreneurial spirit. Gen Alphas supplement their pocket money through any number of ventures. We've already mentioned their fashion resale hobby, with as many as **1 in 3 of them** earning money through online selling or reselling. Kids as young as eight are already **earning £60 a year on average** from peer-to-peer marketplaces including eBay, Depop, and Vinted. On top of that, **almost half of them do odd jobs** outside the home (such as babysitting) to get paid. It's not just cleaning their neighbour's lawn for a tenner though – these kids are starting their own businesses, and **using technology to amplify their skills**.

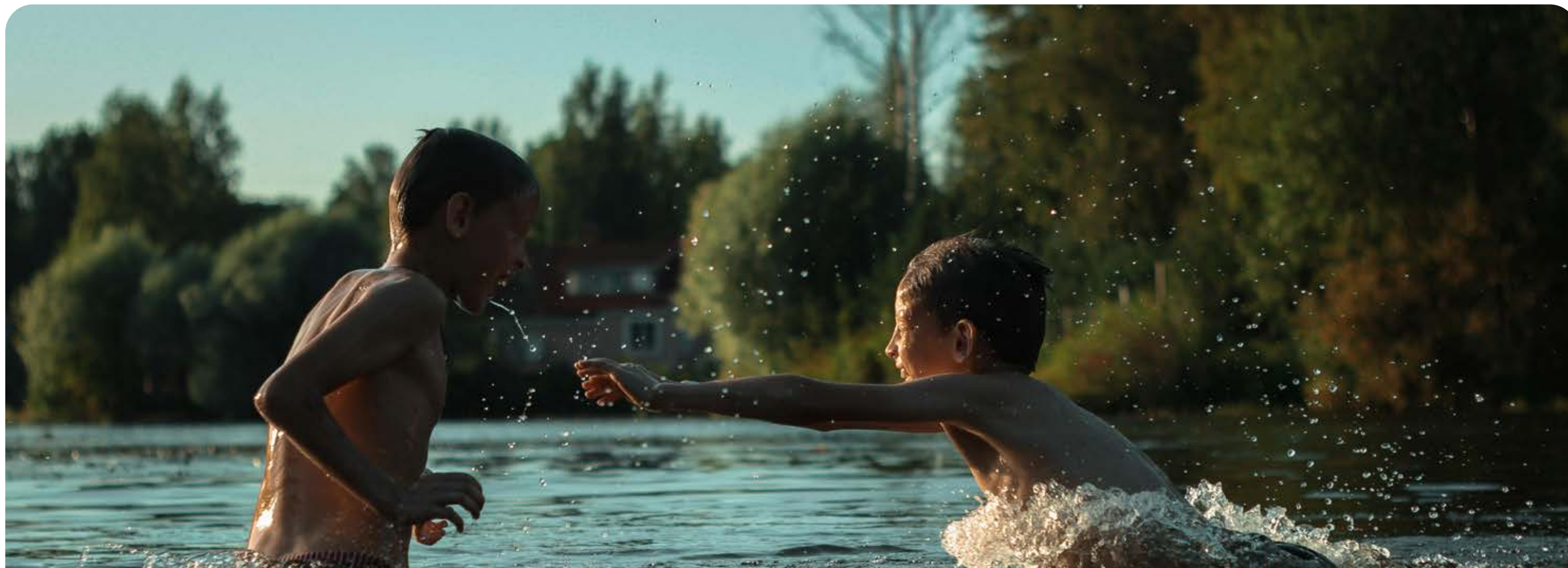
Their childhood side hustles aren't a short-term thing either – these young entrepreneurs are preparing for the future. **Over three quarters of them** aspire to be their own boss someday, compared to only 13% who want to work for someone else. Once again, this comes down to the level of agency that these kids are being raised with. Don't underestimate this audience's maturity, influence, or drive.



# // GREAT OUTDOORS

Perhaps unsurprisingly, research shows that today's younger generations spend **less time exercising, and less time outside.** In fact, **57% of the Silent Generation** were active daily in their childhood, compared to just 19% of Gen Z. It's predicted that this could be even worse for Gen Alpha, given their digital habits. Increased **parental safety concerns,** heightened by polycrisis and increasingly complex risks, are further exacerbating the problem. We need to nudge Gen Alpha to swap their digital (and phygital) playgrounds for IRL exercise, ideally outside. A breath of fresh air is likely to help them feel more **energised (30%), confident (21%), and relaxed (23%).**

Luckily, since 2021, the needle has been moving on this. After being stuck inside for a crucial chunk of their childhoods, Gen Alpha **wants to go outside,** and wants to spend time with their friends there. We've seen a drop in parents saying that their child spends a lot of time on their **devices (-10%), and online (-7%).** Meanwhile, the number of Gen Alphas who say they like to see their friends in-person and play sports is increasing (although time spent plugged in still rules the day!). After a prolonged period of being stuck online and indoors during their formative years, it's no surprise that kids are gravitating towards the great outdoors post-pandemic. Help Gen Alpha spend mindful time in the great outdoors, and connect them with both nature and their friends.



# // HORROR HEALING

So how does Gen Alpha cope with the anxieties of day to day life? They dive straight into the world of horror, nihilism, doomism, and the absurd. Just look at their first ever meme: Skibidi toilet, in which terrifying humanoid toilets take over the world. They're **flocking to horror movies in cinemas** (like last year's *Five Nights at Freddy's*), despite their PG-13 and above age ratings. Surprising? Not really - most of the news they consume on a daily basis can invoke the same level of terror. They're growing up doom-scrolling past wildfires, floods, war and famine every day, oddly sandwiched between photos of cute animals and funny memes. We can see their love for horror and darkness as a **safe space for them to examine these fears**, through the psychological safety net of a screen and fictional story. Don't shy away from darker themes when engaging with this demographic.

**“We can see their love for horror and darkness as a safe space for them to examine these fears”**



# CASE STUDIES



## Roblox

We can't talk about Gen Alpha gaming without talking Roblox. The platform lets users play and develop games in the same place. It now boasts a whopping **350m monthly active users, 42% of which are under the age of 13**. To keep this demographic safe online, they've launched a 'For Parents' section, which explains their safeguarding tools, like their algorithm to block swear words.

**So What:** For Gen Alpha, gaming is all about co-creation and social connection. If you're engaging this demographic with gaming, meet this cohort in the spaces they frequent. Roblox (and Fortnite, Minecraft, etc) already have the infrastructure that Gen Alpha prefers, you just need to tap into it.



## LEGO

LEGO's Hidden Side sets are a great example of creating phygital toys. Their brick-built sets all pair with the 'Hidden Side' app, where kids can find and catch ghosts to save the fictional town of Newbury. The sets are meant to stimulate a combination of physical and digital play, and foster imagination among Gen Alpha.

**So What:** LEGO is tapping into Gen Alpha's affinity for interactive phygital experiences. This is the future of play – where physical toys and digital content combine to create enriched experiences and learning environments.



## Natuurhuisje

This rental platform is mapping out nature trails that encourage walk-and-talks with loved ones. The 'talking trails' feature markers along the way with conversation prompts like "If you could step into a time machine, where would you go?" and "Which qualities do you admire in one another?" Three separate trails are available, including one specifically made for families.

**So What:** This campaign aims to encourage people to spend time together offline – unplugged but connected. It successfully encourages families to spend more time together in nature specifically, and to use that time to facilitate deeper dialogue. Ideally, these talking trails will be an opportunity for Gen Alpha to fall in love with the outdoors.



# // GEN ALPHA: 2034 PREDICTIONS

## // Positive Outlook

### PHYGITAL FUTURES

By 2034, the world will be 100% phygital. Gen Alpha will thrive in a seamless blend of physical and digital spaces, which act as dynamic environments for Gen Alpha to play, connect, and create in. Phygital realms will be populated with interactive and immersive experiences – the new normal for engaging this generation.

### FUTURISTIC SHOPPERS

Growing into their enormous spending power, this generation will continue to shape retail trends for the coming decade. Drawing on their love of all things phygital; their expectation of personalisation; and their strong values, expect retail to become a highly interactive, personalised and co-creative, and sustainable ecosystem.

## // Murkier Outlook

### CHRONICALLY ONLINE

A lack of exciting opportunities IRL (or the failure to adopt phygital worlds) mean that Gen Alpha increasingly disappears into online platforms. The lack of face-to-face interaction leads to social isolation, increased anxiety and depression, sedentary lifestyles, and a disconnect from nature.



# MARKETING TO ALPHAS



You might think that it's not worth marketing to Gen Alpha yet, but they have an unprecedented influence on their Millennial parents. Not only do they get a say in what their parents buy for them, they also influence the products their parents choose.

Get ahead of the curve by engaging both of these generations in tandem. Gen Alpha is looking for interactivity, strong values, and opportunities for personalisation and co-creation.

# // FAMILY-STYLE MARKETING

Gen Alpha may not have the most disposable income right now, but that doesn't mean they're not worth marketing to. We've already discussed their **higher-than-expected spending power**, but their true power lies in their trend-setting ability. Gen Alpha has significant influence on family purchases. A whopping **94% of Millennial parents** intentionally solicit their children's opinion when making purchases, and when asked who decides which apps they download, food they eat, toys they buy, video games they get, and clothes they purchase, Gen Alpha is **more likely than previous generations** to say that they pick them or choose with their parents. Consider this generation a vital part of marketing to Millennials – their opinions carry significant weight in decision-making processes. Leverage your relationship with Gen Alpha to appeal to their Millennial parents, and vice versa. It doesn't hurt that children **as young as three** can start recognising, or even preferring, brands. The relationship you build with Gen Alpha now can last a lifetime.

**“The relationship you build with Gen Alpha now can last a lifetime”**



# // MARKETING 101

So what does Gen Alpha want to see in your marketing content? It comes down to the following pillars:

**VISUAL/INTERACTIVE:** These digital natives have short attention spans. Catch their eye on social media channels (preferably TikTok or YouTube) and keep it snappy.

**VALUE-ALIGNMENT:** This generation cares about sustainability and equality. Make sure your comms strategy highlights your values and features transparent information about your sustainability and DEI creds.



**INFLUENCERS:** Gen Alpha trusts their favourite influencers a lot. Choose niche influencers who are active in the communities that Gen Alpha frequents. Build long-lasting and meaningful relationships with them.

**PERSONALISATION:** Algorithms and hyper-personal technology mean that this generation expects personalisation. Make sure your communications are personalised.

**CO-CREATION:** Gen Alpha's craving for co-creation and creativity goes beyond their gaming habits. This cohort wants brands to give them creative control over the products they buy - their spending habits are a form of self-expression, and they want this to be ultra-personalised.

**COLOURFUL:** If Millennials' design style can best be characterised as 'Sad Beige', and Gen Zs are bright neons, then Gen Alpha's design style is a perfect mix of the two. Bright pastels and glitter dominate their preferences.



# CASE STUDIES



## ASICS

Meet the world's youngest influencer team. ASICS' new campaign enlists Gen Alpha to remind the adults in their lives of the importance of physical exercise for mental well-being. The campaign shows young kids engaging in various 'fun' forms of exercises, and promotes those through social media.

**So What:** ASICS recognises both the power of Gen Alpha as social media savvy young influencers, and as changemakers in their own homes. Enlist this generation to engage their parents on your behalf.



## IKEA

IKEA has launched a design competition aimed at encouraging children to create sustainable products. Children from around the world submit drawings of their best, innovative product ideas focused on sustainability, with winning designs turned into real products. This initiative engages kids in sustainability, while promoting environmental education through hands-on creativity.

**So What:** This generation is creative and imaginative. Use hands-on activities and imaginative play to engage this generation around their futures and big issues like climate change, while fostering creativity and problem-solving skills.



## Ryan's World

This YouTube channel and brand has skyrocketed to Gen Alpha popularity. Ryan Kaji, a 12 year old influencer, leads the account with his family, creating kid-friendly content like toy unboxing, gaming, and science experiments. At time of writing, the account has **37.1m subscribers**. Its popularity means that the channel has extended into merchandise, partnerships, and even the creation of a Ryan's World movie this year.

**So What:** The key to Ryan's World's success is its relatable and entertaining content. Gen Alpha kids love to see themselves represented on screen. This authenticity makes Ryan's World the perfect vehicle for brand partnerships and recommendations.



# GEN ALPHA & CHARITY



While Generation Alpha is too young to be your most prolific donors, they're more engaged than you might think. This is a demographic that not only donates a fair amount of their own money, they also influence their parents to give to charity.

Tap into this generation's philanthropic inclinations by engaging them (and their parents) in family-centric volunteering opportunities, or giving them a voice in the creation of next gen fundraising products for kids, like school-based fundraising or telethons.

While it might be too early to assess Gen A's own philanthropic preferences, donation behaviour, and preferred causes, we can still make some predictions. Firstly, they already seem to be taking a proactive approach towards charity, **donating more money** than ever before. In fact, UK kids were responsible for a **total of £435,000 donated in 2022**.

**“UK kids were responsible for a total of £435,000 donated in 2022”**

We know they value **equality and sustainability** above all, like their parents, and will likely prioritise causes that champion these. Given the importance of the climate for their futures, sustainability will likely **continue to be at the forefront of their minds**. Expect Gen Alpha to advocate for organisations that have a clear sustainability strategy, as well as transparent information about their own eco-impact, regardless of their mission.

Furthermore, their online behaviours give an insight to how they will prefer to give in future. Their retail behaviours show a cohort that enjoys **convenient online shopping**, spending their money at the touch of a button, so ensure your online donation pathways are frictionless, and seamlessly integrate between platforms. They're also likely to use this digital savvy to advocate for causes they care about, using their native platforms like YouTube, TikTok and Instagram, to spread awareness and influence others. Even when they're not actively able to donate to your organisation, consider using their digital influence and advocacy to amplify your message.

**“66% of parents say that their Gen Alpha kids implore them to give to charity”**

On top of that, their parents value their opinions in their donation decisions. In fact, **66% of parents** say that their Gen Alpha kids implore them to give to charity. According to the research, if the kids care about it, the parents will follow. These kids may not seem like your current audience, but understanding their preferences and motivations will be a crucial pathway towards engaging their parents.



“Approximately 25% of teenagers and young people volunteer at least once a month”

Similarly, most of the volunteering that Gen Alpha does is likely to currently be with their parents – but this will soon change as they hit their teenage years. Currently, approximately **25% of teenagers and young people** volunteer at least once a month, while 38% volunteer at least once a year. Meanwhile, the **volunteering rate for Millennials** has dropped below 20%, as the cost of living crisis continues to diminish their **ability and willingness to volunteer**. As Gen Alphas hit adolescence, there’s an opportunity to engage both them and their parents around family-oriented activities. Interestingly, **more than half of parents with children under the age of 18** say that they’re too stressed with daily life to think about experiences that are geared towards fun. Tap into this need for fun family experiences by offering Gen Alphas and Millennials a thoughtful volunteering experience that allows them to bond over their shared impact.



# // FUNDRAISING PRODUCTS

So what types of fundraising products do they come across in their day-to-day lives? School fundraising is likely the most common type of fundraising they come across, with **almost all British school kids** participating in common events like non-uniform days or bake sales. These are usually school organised with assets from a charity, and raise money while fostering a sense of community and social responsibility. The culture of these school fundraisers is deeply embedded in the UK education system, but the question is if Gen Alpha kids are still going to be interested in the same activities? We've been doing the same things for decades now, do we need to come up with new ideas to engage this young generation?

The other main charity product that Gen Alpha will have been exposed to is the charity telethon. For example, events like Red Nose Day typically see **millions of viewers tune in**. These events continue to bring in cash for the sector, and often have strong engagement from schools which organise **related activities**.

However, the traditional TV telethon has seen a **decline in overall viewership**, alongside the general decline of mainstream TV in a post-Covid, post-streaming world.

Gen Alpha in particular are **unlikely to flock back to TV** any time soon, preferring streaming platforms like YouTube and Disney+. The traditional telethon formula may not be as effective in engaging this digital-first audience. In short, children's needs and preferences are evolving, along with their environments. We need to innovate around both new and existing charity products to keep Gen Alpha excited.



So what do they want to see in an activation?

**VALUE-ALIGNED:** Whatever the plan, Gen Alpha wants to make sure it aligns with their values. Make sure your EDI and sustainability credentials are clear and signposted. Bonus points if you can incorporate them into the activation.

**CO-CREATION:** Gen Alpha are creative, driven, and excited to get stuck in. Encourage their initiative by handing over your creative assets for them to build with. Entrepreneurial Gen A knows how to co-create with your brand for best results.

**HUMOUR:** This generation is suffering from content fatigue, having grown up during polycrisis. Help them handle complex topics by injecting a **dose of humour and fun** into it.

**PHYGITAL:** This hybrid generation switches seamlessly between the physical and digital worlds. Future-proof your fundraising products by adding a phygital or transmedia approach.

**HOBBIES:** To engage this generation, tap into their favourite pastimes. For example, transform the traditional telethon into a gaming stream, or bring your initiatives into the great outdoors.



# CASE STUDIES



## UNICEF

UNICEF's 'Kid Power' aims to get kids moving, while simultaneously making a positive impact. Kids wear Kid Power Bands that track their physical activity, similar to a FitBit. Sponsors then donate funding depending on the amount of exercise achieved, which is used to deliver food packers to kids in need around the world.

**So What:** UNICEF is leveraging gamification to 1) get kids active in a fun way, and 2) engage with global causes from a young age. They're promoting health and well-being, while turning that into an educational opportunity for humanitarian issues. Gen Alpha are (literally) becoming active participants in global change.



## Family Volunteering Club

This initiative is designed to encourage family-friendly volunteering opportunities across the UK. The club provides families with a wide variety of volunteering activities that they can do together as a unit, promoting both community involvement and family bonding. Activities include environmental clean-ups, community gardening, and helping at food banks.

**So What:** The club aims to make volunteering accessible and fun for all ages, playing into Millennial/Apha family units' closeness. The approach helps families bond, fosters a sense of civic engagement with young kids, while giving back to local communities.



## Red Nose Day

The total raised by Red Nose Day was up this year, for the first time in six years. The increase was partially spurred on by some exciting changes that they'd brought in. Notably, the Red Noses this year were more sustainable than ever before, and the schools fundraising appeal was redubbed 'School Rebellion'. Inspired by young activists, this initiative encouraged teachers to choose a lesson to disrupt, and allow kids to break the 'rules'.

**So What:** Recognising that audience needs and preferences have shifted, especially post-Covid, Comic Relief have modernised their appeal to resonate deeper with younger audiences and their values, particularly around sustainability and activism.



# // GEN ALPHA: 2034 PREDICTIONS

## // Positive Outlook

### LIFELONG DONORS

Strategic, long-term efforts to engage Gen Alpha in charity, through family bonding, volunteering, and kid-friendly campaigns, cultivates a generation deeply committed to the sector, with a number of strong brand relationships that have been fostered throughout their childhoods.

### YOUTHFUL INNOVATION

To engage Gen Alpha, as well as future generations, charities are innovating and designing with young audiences in mind. Traditional fundraising models have evolved, and charities have adapted their strategies to include audiences they may have traditionally seen as too young.

## // Murkier Outlook

### ALTERNATIVE IMPACT

Despite their early enthusiasm for charities, Gen Alpha doesn't find themselves engaged by organisations throughout their youth. As they grow older, and struggle to see themselves reflected authentically in the sector, they begin to view charities as outdated, or as a less effective way of doing good. They may prioritise other forms of social impact, such as direct action or green ventures.



# 10 FOR 10

## 1 Agency & Maturity

Be honest and upfront with Generation Alpha. Their early exposure to raw and disturbing issues has made them grow up (too) fast. They're not too naive to process big issues – they've been seeing them in the news and all over social media since they were born. On top of that, they've been raised with their parents' strong values and the agency to stand up for themselves and what they believe in. Ignore these independent, outspoken kids at your own peril.

## 2 Reimagined Education

The rise of AI and the ongoing developmental impacts of lockdowns are an opportunity for us to radically rethink our education systems. We have the chance to reshape how, what, and where we teach. Make learning fun for everyone and inspire a generation of life-long learners.

## 3 Trickle-Down Parenting

Millennials are reshaping the parenting game. They spend more time with their kids, give them more responsibility, and pass down everything from their political beliefs to their fashion tips. These two generations are inextricably intertwined – to get one on board, target the other. This influence isn't a one-way-system either, Gen Alpha's voice & influence at home are significant.

## 4 Safe Socials

Today's children are going to be introduced to social media from increasingly young ages, and spend increasing amounts of time on it. Call for regulation; educate users; demand accountability from social media companies; and encourage intentional use. These digital natives deserve to feel safe in their home spaces.

## 5 Mental Health

We're lacking a comprehensive approach for children's mental health. Current systems are buckling under demand; not designed with today's children in mind; and have unequal access; and aren't mindful of Covid's developmental impact. Collaborate with others to create a network of interconnected solutions that meet kids where they live.

## 6 Co-Creation

Gen Alpha is a cohort of entrepreneurs. They're excited about the next big thing, and they want to work on it with you. Give Gen Alpha a seat at the table (or, even better, the keys to your brand) and let them co-create your next idea. Give them the platform and assets they need to be an advocate for your organisation.

# 10 FOR 10

## 7 Misinformation

Misinformation is taking over the internet. This generation is growing up knee-deep in AI-generated sludge, deepfake technology, at a time when traditional fact-checking infrastructure is breaking down. Be a trusted voice amidst the chaos, and use your expertise to help Gen Alpha tell the real from the fake.

## 8 Sustainability

Sustainability initiatives are a must-have for this value-aligned generation, who sometimes feel like saving the world for climate change is entirely down to them. Go the extra mile with your eco-credits to support Alphas through this challenge. Help them stay engaged by sharing responsibility and accountability, and focussing on solutions and opportunities to engage.

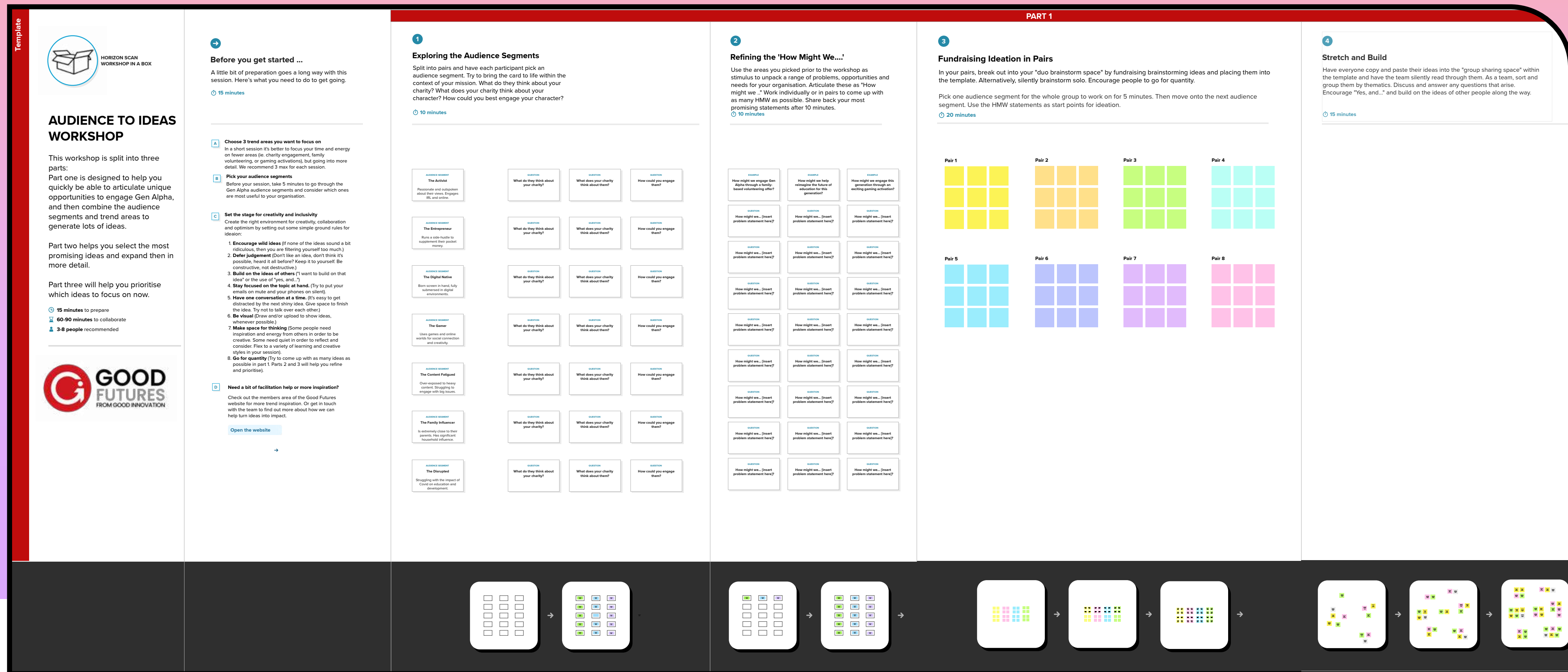
## 9 Gaming & Phygital Worlds

The games that Gen Alpha are playing are no longer just straightforward games – they’re social networks, hangout spots, places to create, and something to bond over with families and friends alike. To tap into this demographic in the gaming space, enrich their existing experiences and communities.

## 10 Retail

Don’t underestimate this generation’s spending power – they’ve got more money than you think they do, and they’re spending it sustainably. To tap into the Alpha market, make sure you’re communicating your values clearly, and build a strong digital presence. Even if you can’t move your entire offering online, tap into Alpha’s social media habits to establish a brand presence.

# WORKSHOP IN A BOX



To help you go from inspiration to action, we've created a handy 'Workshop in a box'.

This toolkit will guide you through a 90 minute creative session, designed for 3-8 people.

This workshop is split into three parts:

1. Designed to help you quickly be able to articulate unique opportunities to engage Millennial Parents.

2. Helps you select the most promising ideas and expand then in more detail.

3. Will help you prioritise which ideas to focus on, which ones might need a bit more thought, and which ones are (quite frankly) a bit crap.

**Download the kit or visit the Mural.**

# CONTACT US

Want to discuss how you can use the horizon scan as an opportunity to innovate?

**We're here to help.**

Get in touch.

**[GoodFutures@goodinnovation.co.uk](mailto:GoodFutures@goodinnovation.co.uk)**

Click **[here](#)**// to find out more about Good Futures.

