

Q Lydia Hall (researcher)
A Man with 8-year-old son

Q Okay, so it's recording now. So, thank you very much for agreeing to participate. Just let you know, this is voluntary so you can stop by any time. You don't have to explain the reason why and you will still get the voucher regardless. Okay, I want to ask you a series of questions. So, the first question is how does technology feature in your son's play?

A It's quite a significant factor, especially because it helps him to improve his learning skills, life skills. Basically, how to use a computer, how to use technology. For example, even at the age of eight, he's able to handle PowerPoint. He puts the music on the display, and then to if he wants to play games, he does it on the computer. He knows exactly how to handle all these things, the software in a computer. Sometimes, if I don't understand something, he's able to find out the answer. Problem solving, he's quite good at that. So, the technology has really helped him a lot in this age of smartphones.

Q And are there any particular sorts of devices or apps or toys that you think he likes to play with?

A Yes, [unclear]. He has on his phone different types of games. And then he uses them. For example, Tomcat is one. And there are so many other games. You have to see his phone to see all that. And then of course, he has a LEGO book, the ones you get in the pack, the building blocks. So basically, he sees all the apps and all the materials on the internet. Then he gets the pack. And other than creating what's in the pack, he makes his own creation. Suppose it's supposed to be a car, he makes a helicopter or a helipad. Anything that he can create. He's very inventive and very creative in that way. And also, the fact that we had been to LEGOLand about two or three years ago. So, he's having a recall of all the information and of course with the technology with different apps helping out.

Q So when he's playing with his toys then all night on an app or on the laptop, for example, would he be on his own, or would he be playing with somebody else?

A Because we have only one child. So, he usually plays by himself. And then he uses the computer and uses the different apps to try to learn. And also, these are the same engaged with him. But we normally let himself discover his own building structures and play stuff.

Q Okay, how long does he do that for? How long would he play on there for?

A He's normally very focussed. He goes on it for more than an hour. Then he tries to finish and we have to stop him and say come on, it's time for your tea or dinner time. We tell him to withdraw and then he does listen after some time. He has a follow on the next day.

Q Okay. And how often then does he go on the laptop or play with digital toys?

A The laptop, we give him a certain time. We give him about two hours per day, because he's using that laptop time... Time is separated from television time and

mobile phone and laptop time. So, we try to make it no more than three hours per day.

Q Is that including his toys, as well as the laptop?

A No, toys is separate, because he's really actually working something by himself, rather than sitting with technology. Toys, you can say about one and a half hours.

Q And then how do you think he's feeling when he's on the laptop or when he's playing toys?

A He seems to be very comfortable. He's not threatened and he's happy and cheerful. He says he likes it and he shows us new apps. Then he asks permission, can I get permission to download this particular app? Then I go through it and see it. Then I enter my password and it downloads by Google. So, he asks us permission.

Q Okay. Do you think that there's any difference then when he's on the laptop say, as to when he's playing a toy, in terms of his emotions or how he is?

A He's happy and he's engaging and seeing all the stuff, playing the games, different kinds of connectors. And he's not aggressive. He's quite calm and laughing, happy. So, it's very engaging.

Q Okay. And do you think your son plays while he's watching TV?

A He tends to, sometimes. But not all the time.

Q So when he is playing while he's watching TV, do you know how he is playing?

A Yes. He just plays for some time and then he watches the television. So, he watches a programme like SpongeBob or this other LEGO TV programme that comes. He watches that a bit, and then he flips the channels, and then continues with the laptop.

Q Okay. So, do you feel that when he's watching television that influences how he's playing?

A Yes. Because some of the ads that come, the commercial breaks, when it is live TV... If it's adverts that come, he is affected. He gets introduced to the new kinds of games and new kinds of adventures.

Q So when your son is engaging with apps or online sites, so for example YouTube, Netflix CBeebies, CBBC, do you think it impacts on how he plays?

A Yes. It makes him more in control and makes him powerful. Powerful in that he's having his own space and is able to express himself. Sometimes, it can be a bit negative, but then we calm him now. Normally, it is positive factors, like good behaviours. So, games can have a negative impact sometimes.

Q Okay. Does your son ever play video games on a mobile or tablet?

A Yes, he plays video games. Normally, Minecraft.

Q How often would he play Minecraft?

A Once a week or twice a week. But he keeps changing the activities. He keeps on jumping. It's not very steady to one particular interest. He keeps on jumping. Now it's a different season, so we're getting more into activities. So out of context, one of these play toys, he also plays Brainbox [unclear]. You get three boxes and you have different activities. Electronics and different kinds of play stuff. So, they give you all the instructions and he goes through it. Either my wife or me, we sit with him and we do all the experiments with him. So, we just get it out of the box. Apps is one of it, but it's different so he can gain a lot of motor skills. Thinking skills as well through apps. We give him a mixture of activities.

Q And does your son have any physical toys that relate to his online interests? So, for example, has he got any Minecraft blocks or figures or any LEGO figures?

A He has some of them. He has some of the soft toys, one of them. Then he has a furry blanket that he likes. He's mainly more focused, so he doesn't have too much of an attachment. He used to have before, but now he's growing out of that because it's less now. Before, he used to play with other toys. He used to play with puppy toys and used to always want to take a puppy with him. Now, he has outgrown it and he's no longer playing with toys. He's more coming up to [unclear].

Q Okay, so he doesn't really like playing with the Minecraft blocks or anything at the same time as while he is...?

A No.

Q Okay. Did he used to play with his Minecraft blocks when he was watching or playing Minecraft online?

A Yes.

Q Does your son ever play with toys that are digital? So, for example, we've got a robot toy or laptops.

A Yes, he used to play with a robot dog. That was about two years ago, that we bought from Amazon. So basically, we had to use batteries and it could talk. It said I am your friend, and then you had to press the remote-control button and he would do those little things, like flying saucers when you press the button and the robot would grow. Then he used to take the same toy to school and share it with his classmates in the school. When they had to show a toy, they used to do that. But this year, they haven't done anything yet, and he's in P4 now. He used to do that.

Q Can you remember how he used to play with the robot then, in what way?

A Yes. So, what he used to do is when he came to school, he would put in the batteries. Then he would press the button and it would say hey, I'm your friend. And then he used to press a button and it used to smile and engage with the robot and carry it everywhere. There was a little bit of [unclear] in there. It used to make him happy. Then finally, after more than a year, I think he got tired of it and he stopped playing with it. It's just lying on the shelf now.

Q Okay. And does your son ever play with internet enabled toys? So, for example,

Furbys?

A Not really because we are not pushing him too much into engaging on the internet, apart from for example, study purposes or he's learning something new to increase his vocabulary, his learning skills and then to improve his English language in other words, his pronunciation. And then of course, now at the moment, the school is teaching how to create documents and simple stuff with technology. They're making a project working on making a car. So basically, it's from rubbish, creating something from nothing. So, they've been collecting all the rubbish, the boxes, empty milk carton caps, jars. And they've been creating a 4x4 wheeler. So that's what they were doing yesterday. So, there's a lot of impact on technology.

Q And does he ever play with augmented reality? So, that will be, for example, Pokémon Go.

A Mostly, those that are hands on. If the room is quite [unclear] on a scale of one to 10, because we have restricted it. We want him to be more sociable, rather than just being stuck to a room. So, he's very focused on engaging. So, on a scale of one to 10, I would say he's maybe four out of 10. But when you leave him, he really gets engaged. But we cut down because we want him to be talking to people and engaging, rather than just having all these apps. Sometimes if he's too focused, he gets carried away. In other words, you get addicted to it.

Q Okay, how about virtual reality?

A Yes he does it sometimes. He puts the mobile phone in and he keeps on watching. For example, some kind of games. He just watches. But then sometimes he withdraws because it's too heavy to keep on holding on. And then he takes it to the main big screen to watch it.

Q Okay. How often would he go on the virtual reality?

A Once a week.

Q Right, okay. And does he do that with anybody else? Or is he just on his own while he's doing that?

A No, on his own.

Q And how about with any artificial intelligence assistance? So, for example, we've got Alexa, Siri, Google.

A He's very good at it. He has a Google Mini. So, what he does, he keeps asking what's the weather today? Then he uses Spotify and says, can you play this music? And then it's playing on Spotify, the Google just starts playing. Then if he wants to know, can you spell for example, punctuation, the Google spells punctuation. P U N C... It goes on. So, it really helps him, the Google Mini.

Q You know when your son is playing outside in an outdoor space, do you think that technology features in any way?

A Yes. Now we have bought him a smartwatch, which is going to be a handful or us to monitor because he wants to send messages. So, he can monitor how much

exercise he's doing, running. He's putting a little weight, so we are trying to keep his body weight. We are keeping track of his weight, the food he's eating and all that stuff. Just to check he's not overgrown. So, we have been monitoring that.

We bought it on Amazon, the smartwatch. And it monitors heart rate and has a SIM card and everything. You can send messages and make a phone call. So that is the technology he is using when he's outside. It's not a mobile phone, but a watch on his hand. A mobile phone, we feel it is not safe and it is not permissible in the school. So, we don't send a mobile phone outside the house at all.

Q Okay, can I just ask what brand the smartwatch is?

A It's quite a good price. It is called LDBEU Kids Smartwatch.

Q Then who decides then what sort of digital devices or toys or games that your son can use?

A Mainly in different rooms he can have different games. He has darts in his room, a little bit of physical activity involved. And then he has some books, like Roald Dahl and those kinds of books. Then he has lots of other [unclear] for kids, the card memory games. And then he also reads the Bible, so he has a Bible in his room. He has some novels for his age, like Max Einstein.

Q How about the digital side of things? Who will decide what he can use?

A It's both of us jointly, my wife and myself. And of course, the school introduces him to stuff.

Q What helps you make those decisions?

A It's mainly the factor of... For example, it's the internet. Without the internet, it is impossible to know. Also, the television and then the advertisements from mainly the Nick Toons channel. It's living media.

Q And then in your opinion, are there any sorts of digital toys or digital games that promote play?

A I'm not sure where, but I've seen... Normally he plays with the [unclear], and then it gives freebies and different kinds of games. For example, he has been showing me that, so he does show me that.

Q And then the same question. In your opinion, are there any sorts of digital toys or games that will then be limiting in play?

A No, I think whatever choice he has, we try to limit it. Because then he will just sit with the games all the time. So, at this stage, it's not a lot. Maximum two hours of information technology and television and playing games.

Q Okay. Are there any types of device or digital toys that you think are really good for promoting creativity?

A Yes. It's mainly his mobile phone. So that has loads of apps on it and then he plays it. He has some of them, like Fun Kids and then he uses the FM radio to listen. Then Tomcat and then sometimes, when he goes in the community, he

does play Gaming Terminal. So sometimes he plays outside. He's not having a lot, it's limited. But they do help.

Q I'd like to move on to the next question. So, what kinds of toys or products do you think that LEGO should be developing for children in the digital age?

A I think it should be mainly working on, for example, something which is more realistic, rather than just all the time with blocks, to go to the next space. For example, how Apple is working on new smartphones and trying to improvise on technology, they should make more toys which are easy to build, rather than a bit complicated. Maybe electronic gadgets as well. So that would be good. More branded LEGO electronic gadgets that might increase the taste for children as well, rather than just being stuck to the blocks.

Q Right, okay. So, when your son is playing with his digital toys then, do you think that he's actively engaged in what he's doing?

A Yes. It helps him to be engaged.

Q Okay. And do you think that when he's playing with his laptop or the mobile or another digital toy, do you think that's meaningful to him?

A Yes, it is. We can see it, because he's able to use it properly. He won't tell us when there's some issues with the computer. He's able to tell us that he's found a solution or this is the problem. Then he just works it out. For example, a device that we have at the moment is CCTV which you put outside. So, he's able to find and download the correct app that is linked to the CCTV. Then we have learnt something from him. So, it has been more than expected, rather than just sticking to the games. He's able to learn more at a very fast pace.

Q So when your son is playing with digital games then, do you think that he enjoys trying new things out and then making improvements to things that he's already built?

A Yes. It does help him, rather than just being a little fun game, which is just forgotten. I think it takes him to the next step of thinking. Like vertical thinking, able to think in his mind. So that's why he is able to show that positive productivity.

Q And then the next question is do you have any thoughts on the link between play and technology and children's emotions and well-being?

A Technology, when it is used properly, especially with the IP provider, they have provided good controls to control all the negative influences. It is helping us a lot. Also, the monitoring. The technology is helping us a lot. So, what would we do if we didn't have the technology? That would be the next question. You see that it's very difficult to live without technology.

Q Okay, so you feel that it's important then to children's emotions.

A Not just for him. For everyone.

Q And what sorts of emotions do you think that your son has when he's involved playing with digital toys or on the laptop?

A It's mainly learning and happiness, and then he's able to communicate and have a laugh and he's able to express himself with laughter. It's mostly positive. I've never seen any negative effect. The only [unclear] is his language, that sometimes needs to be controlled. We need to find a way on television to stop that. Otherwise, normally it's good.

Q Why do you think that it is mostly positive?

A Because he's able to find a space for himself, that he's able to do something as part of his routine. For example, when he has his own homework, he can even do his own playtime, rather than just going on annoying his mum or his dad. So, he knows that as part of his homework, he has to read a book or play with his games. So, it's not disturbing other routines. He is able to think for himself slowly, to know what is right and what is wrong, and to know what is bad behaviour and what's encouraging behaviour, what is positive behaviour. So only games which are violent we try to not introduce at all. Especially at school, sometimes some of the children don't have a good background. So, they tend to be aggressive. But otherwise, most of the technology is helpful, as long as it is well monitored.

Q Okay. So, when your son is playing with digital toy or technology, does he get bored quickly while he's playing with them?

A No, I've not noticed that. He does play and he stops over a period of time.

Q Do you think then, when he's outside playing doing something different, does he get bored much more quickly when he's not playing with a digital toy?

A No, he's okay. As long as he has good company, he seems to be playing during that time. Maybe two hours and he comes back home. He uses his cycle for cycling activities and then he comes. Sometimes, when there's bad behaviour, we have to bring him home.

Q So while your son is then playing with technological toys that allow for social interaction, do you think that your son engages well with others?

A What I said earlier, it's just that smartwatch. But we don't have any Facebook or social media, nothing. No accounts. Nothing is permitted. So social media is only through his mum and dad's profile and he just uses the same. And then he does tend to get introduced to videos and different types of games, which Facebook has. So that too, when we see him going too much, we just stop it. So that's the only time. But then it seems like sometimes, when you give too much freedom, he seems to get carried away. But my wife monitors and doesn't allow him to go beyond the watch that is helpful for him that he wears

Q Okay, so what sorts of technologies then do you think support social play?

A Technology which is monitored. For example, suppose he has a problem, he knows he can make a phone call, he can press the button and send a message if he's lost. As long as there's a contact where I can contact my mum and dad. So that is the only factor at the moment when he's eight years old. When he grows to be a teenage, then we'll be more...

- Q Okay. And do you think then that having the use of a mobile phone helps him to develop as a person?
- A The influence of being connected will help him a lot. Especially what I expect, his problem-solving skills have been greatly influenced by this connected age, all the apps offered by the different companies. Even LEGO.
- Q Okay, and then so when your son is playing with technology, do you ever play with him?
- A Yes. If I'm struggling in something, to play doesn't mean we really play. Like real life situations, the computer is not working, go and switch off the thing. So, he knows exactly what to do. Go to the switch and the wire, and then he resets the router. Or if the printer is not working, he does the same thing, except if there is any wiring. He is able to do all this. I'm not supposed to say all this, but as long as I am with him, we turn it off and protect all the switches. But he is able to find out all the problems very well. But the technology has helped him a lot and has helped us also a lot because of his influence from the internet.
- Q Okay, so how often do you play together then?
- A So, say when I come from work.. I'll give you an example. We were supposed to do something, to create a gingerbread house. So that is an activity, rather than just a software. So, I did have to sort it, but I just called them [inaudible] on a Friday when I'm not working. So, I said we'll do it after school and I'm looking tomorrow. So that's the time we do play. Then television time, news time, we all sit together and have our meal. So, we tend to do things all together. It's not one person sitting in one room. We have one television so we all share the programmes. So, we have been captured in one particular box.
- Q How about at weekends? Do you spend any time playing with him with digital toys then?
- A Yes. Mainly the weekends, because it's family time. So, we tend to do lots of focussing on... Sorry to say that, but this is the fact. We just spend more time with the family. For example, we go out or stay in a hotel for two nights or three nights, we just go. But then of course, we carry the technology with us. We take the laptop and we tend to use, for example, Sky Go. [Unclear] he said well, we can use the technology of Sky Go on the laptop [unclear]. And then we just watch all the channels that we see at home, rather than just watching the Freeview programmes at the hotel. So, it was his idea. So that is his powerful solution that comes out because of the influence of technology.
- Q And then do you think that there are any sorts of digital toys or digital games or digital apps that are better than others for playing?
- A Not so much. Mainly we try to do for example, card games or playing blocks or the LEGO toys building blocks. Those kinds of games, we play. But that is more engaging as far as I'm aware. We try to engage [inaudible].
- Q And then if you're ever using your own mobile phone or your own devices, does your son ever to play on them with you?

A Yes, he asks can I have a mobile phone. And then he has Tom Cats. He loves that because there are a lot of free games attached on to it. So, he does play those games.

Q Do you play that together with him?

A No, he plays by himself.

Q And are there any sorts of devices or apps that your son can only use if you are around or another family member is around?

A No, it's all monitored apps, which have already been given permission from us. No other apps can come on the mobile phone because of the Google software.

Q Do you think that there are certain technologies that offer a more positive experience for your son?

A Yes. Mainly what is delivered on the Google Store. That is one of the powerful websites that gives us all the free games. It's mainly for himself that he downloads, but we have limited the amount of games. At this stage, he has to focus more on his education and learning mathematics. And they do that building blocks on the computer. So that is the kind of app they have at school. So sometimes, he comes and does it at home.

Q Can you think of the name of any of the apps?

A Education City.

Q And then do you think that there are certain sorts of digital toy or technology that are more negative in terms of experience for your son?

A No, not negative, but they have to also make it more educational, rather than just entertainment. It should be more of a learning experience. That's what I think, like what Education City has. So, in order to bring a more positive experience with the children, they should, in an opinion, make it more learning activity. So that time, my son doesn't have many digital toys that are just for fun or entertainment.

Q Okay. And do you have any concerns regarding your son's experience with technology?

A No nothing, because we are monitoring it constantly, like he's not having any social media accounts and no other people can come and bother him or anything. And then if he has any concerns, he tells us. So, I have no concerns.

Q So then this is a similar question. Are you concerned about the safety aspects of any internet enabled toys?

A No, as far as I'm aware.

Q Okay. And why do you not have those concerns?

A Because I feel my own network provider, broadband provider has provided enough security. My provider is TalkTalk. They have very high, super blocking

the product or blocking the violence games and all that stuff. It does automatically block. So, I have no concerns.

Q Okay. And do you have any concerns regarding data privacy?

A No. Because he's not getting any smartphone at school. Only the digital watch, and that is just for safety reasons. So, no issues at the moment.

Q Okay, so you mentioned your son has a mobile phone, and he has apps on the mobile phone. Do you have any concerns regarding those apps?

A No, no concerns, because he uses them at home and we can see. Then Google sends me the list, or Microsoft, saying your son is spending too much time looking into this. So, you get a full profile from Microsoft MSN, and also from Google. It's got only warning signs, but so far, I've never had anything. So, the technology is quite fool proof.

Q So do you think your son's use of technology then has a positive influence on family life?

A Yes, indeed.

Q Can you explain how?

A Because we segregate our working. For example, our routine, he goes to school from 9:00 to 3:00. Then he comes from 3:00 to 4:00. By 4:00 he's home because of childcare's one-hour time. Then 4:00 to 5:00, he tries to have his tea and plays games and everything. Then he does his homework between 4:00 to 5:00. Then 5:00 to 6:30, then he plays on all the games or whatever he needs to do. Then he goes for his shower. Then between 7:00 to 8:00, that is his TV time. And then 8:00, we have our dinner together, then watches TV. Sometimes he sits between us and tries to see it. Then we see violence and we switch it off and say, you have to go and do your work. So, we send him to his room for him to go and do something else, a reading activity or he can play with his smartphone for some time. Then once he's finished, we have a bedtime prayer and we go to sleep. So, we segregate everything to make it a more positive experience, just limited to no more than three hours of internet time per day.

Q And then do you have any advice or guidance that you would offer to new parents regarding issues of data privacy and safety?

A I think the internet providers, you have to choose one that offers full security, that helps you to control all violence, pornography, all negative influences. And then the parents also have to take responsibility. For example, they have to monitor and they have to be engaging, like how you said, when you want to create toys that are engaging, where everybody can play together. So those are the activities you have to engage with. Not just you leave your child alone and you go and do something else. You have to be around, even if you're in a big room. You have to be around physically so you don't get tempted to go into negative stuff. And they do go, then you have to monitor and stop it. So, it should be more interactive and more engaging.

Q Okay. And finally, last question. You mentioned that your son has some LEGO. Can you tell me what sort of LEGO that he's got?

A It's called LEGO City for ages six to 12.

Q Okay, what does he like to do with that?

A At the moment, he's thrown it all on the floor. He used it to create a 4x4 wheeler. And then he builds his own things. He makes an aeroplane out of tiny pieces. So, he's not using it as for the purpose. He's using it for his own purpose out of that.

Q So does he ever take inspiration from the ideas that you get in the booklets?

A Yes, he did. He sees through it, and then he creates his own.

Q Okay. Right, that's it then. Thank you.

A Yes. Thank you very much for this opportunity. I hope I've answered all the questions to your satisfaction.

Q You have, yes. Thank you.