

Safeguarding News

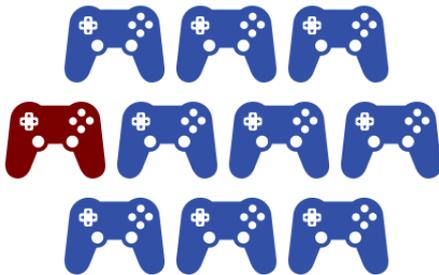
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Addictive video games may change children's brains in the same way as drugs and alcohol, study reveals

1 in 10

young people who plays video games has an addiction.



Fortnite and other addictive video games can have a similar effect on children's brains as drug abuse or alcoholism, MRI scans reveal.

They show the "reward" system in the brains of young heavy users of social media and video games display the same changes in function and structure as those of alcoholics or drug addicts.

A series of studies by California State University found the impulsive part of the brain, known as the amygdala-striatal system, was not only more sensitive, but also smaller in excessive users so that it processed the stimuli of social media or games faster.

The findings come as Britain's children are gripped by the Fortnite video game, with one nine-year-old reportedly admitted to rehab after becoming so addicted she wet herself rather than leave the screen and primary schools urging parents to ban their children from playing them. Initial research suggests there is an association between heavy video game users aged 13 to 15 and an increased likelihood of misusing at least one of 15 substances from cocaine to amphetamines.

A third study found the internet addiction also disrupted the connections between the left and right sides of young people's brains. "When the tracks that connect these parts of the brain are not efficient, people are more prone to develop addictions,"

The development of the reward or impulse system is much faster compared to the development of the self-control system. It means that if you take someone who is 13 years old, they will have a mature reward system but their self-control system will not be as well developed, so they will be much more pre-disposed for impulsive and risky behaviours.

Protect yourself and your family. Find out more about our [Duty of Care campaign to regulate social media](#).