

5 Key Policy Asks on Preventing Online Misogyny & Promoting Men's Mental Health: **Revised following High-level Roundtable, held in UK parliament, 25 Feb 2026**

This short paper sets out **five positive policy priorities for the UK government to prevent growing online misogyny and improve men's mental health**. It was discussed and refined at a roundtable on 25 February 2026 in parliament with 32 experts representing a range of sectors, including MPs, government officials, men and boys' issues, women's rights, VAWG, mental health, online safety, sports, children's rights, academia, education, trade unions, thinktanks, policy forums and donors. This event was co-convened by the [Misogyny Policy Project](#), [Male Allies UK](#), [Fabian Women](#), Jess Asato MP and Alistair Strathern MP.

Overall framing for UK policy in this area

A focus on addressing the normalisation of online misogyny, and the often-linked real-world harms for both girls and boys, including harassment, abuse, and violence against women and girls (VAWG), is not in opposition to the need to address the deteriorating mental health of men and boys. **This agenda cannot be seen as zero-sum in policy or divisive**. These challenges share common root causes, including social isolation, online platform dynamics, economic insecurity, gender roles and norms, and gaps in policies, systems, support and prevention, among others. Effective policy must hold these realities together simultaneously, and create space for meaningful and respectful discussion. Moving beyond a focus on understanding the challenges in this area to **identifying and scaling solutions** is an essential next step. Supporting **cross-sector collaboration and co-creation** is essential to effective policymaking across these topics.

The five asks **build on the government's existing strategies**, including on men's health, VAWG and youth, supporting a clear gendered lens throughout these commitments. Policy responses and implementation should be **strengths-based, aspirational and accountable**. Boys and young men engage most effectively when approached through agency, contribution and care — not shame, toxic or deficit framing. Misogyny, and its impacts, should be addressed honestly and directly, while avoiding language that pathologises boys as inherently dangerous. An overall **public health approach** in policy is key to focusing on early intervention and can help to avoid culture-war framings. UK policymakers need to treat **connection and belonging as infrastructure**, just like healthcare. That means funding spaces, not just services, and valuing *relational outcomes and social cohesion* in measurement and action. When boys and young men, together with young women and girls, feel seen and connected, mental health can improve and misogyny can decrease. Policy must recognise that men and boys are **not a homogenous group**. Experiences are shaped by race, class, disability, sexuality, faith, geography, age and neurodiversity, among others.

1. Schools and beyond: Education that builds digital and emotional literacy and supports connection and self-worth (not only competence or 'anti-misogyny lectures')

This should include:

- Mandatory, age-appropriate PSHE education for both boys and girls – starting in primary school and continuing through adolescence – which focuses on *skills, connection and aspiration*, not judgemental instruction, and teaches:
 - Digital and media literacy, including online conflict, AI strengths & limitations, rejection and shame, dehumanisation, and how algorithms amplify misogyny.
 - Critical thinking, self-esteem, sexual health and gender equality for all.
 - Loneliness and mental health support.
 - What consent means for everyone, safety, and appropriate digital behaviour.
 - Bystander intervention approaches and self- and peer accountability skills.
 - Positive, flexible and healthy expressions of diverse masculinities, challenging narrow male scripts, and celebrating the joy of boyhood and what's going well
- Mandatory training for school leaders and staff on misogyny, online and AI harms, consent, harmful behaviours and positive masculinities; a whole school approach.
- Create safe spaces – single-sex and mixed – for friendship and connection and for dialogue on these issues, and to understand how online content impacts on others.

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- Equip parents, carers and adults to have informed conversations with young people in their lives about relationships, bystanders, online harms, porn, and masculinities.
- Deliver relationship, digital literacy and emotional learning not only in schools, but also in colleges, sports clubs, youth organisations, faith groups and workplaces.
- A specialist teacher in every school, ideally supported by credible and trusted messengers — including trained specialists, mentors, coaches and peer educators.
- Invest in scalable “train-the-trainer” models that equip teachers and youth workers with confidence, capacity and tools to lead and deliver these sessions regularly, and with the appropriate framing. Building internal capacity supports sustainability, particularly in schools, rather than relying solely on external experts to deliver.
- Scale existing educational initiatives that have already shown impact and success.
- Develop educational interventions for the digital spaces young people already inhabit and where they find community, not only classroom environments.
- Collate existing but siloed school resources in this area to support access to them.

Why it works:

- Some misogynistic online spaces can exploit loneliness, social isolation and anxiety.
- Supporting boys to name emotions and navigate online and AI engagement increases critical thinking and supports mental health. Men and boys do want to talk.

2. Tech regulation: Platform accountability for amplification, not just harmful content moderation, and nudging platforms towards connection-building

This should include:

- Acknowledge the online/offline continuum: online harms can often translate into real-world harms, including abuse, coercion, grooming and VAWG.
- Enact stronger regulation for the following, building on existing policy:
 - Transparency on how algorithms can intensify harmful & misogynistic content.
 - Recommender systems and amplification mechanisms.
 - Reducing the spread of pornography showing extreme sexual practices.
 - Banning generative AI systems and apps used for nudification, sexualised deepfakes, harassment and non-consensual intimate imagery.
 - AI as a medium and vessel for scaling dehumanising language.
 - Require safeguards around AI companions/chatbots interacting with children and adolescents, including boys aged 12-16.
- Disrupt financial incentives that reward misogyny, particularly ending the monetisation of misogynistic content among certain influencers (the “grifter model”).
- Ofcom guidance on VAWG should be mandatory, and new Ofcom guidance should be created to protect men and boys from specific internet harms.
- Move from ‘safety by design’ to ‘safety, care and connection’ by design. Encourage platforms to privilege reciprocal interaction and route users toward positive connections/belonging and ‘off-ramps’ to real-world groups (sports, meetups, etc).
- Expand audits of systems that funnel users toward misogynistic content, supporting researchers, regulators and digital harms organisations to hold platforms accountable
- Require impact assessments on whether algorithms increase social isolation.
- Pair regulation with public education to build public understanding and legitimacy.
- Fund ongoing research into the spectrum of gendered online harms, algorithmic exposure pathways, impacts of porn on behaviours and effective interventions.
- Explore age-appropriate guardrails, restrictions and safer platform design for children and adolescents, recognising the impacts of social media, including a social media ban for under 16s and/or bans on phones in schools.
- Support parents to navigate online risks and opportunities with their children.

Why it works:

- Most young men don't seek misogyny; some are *fed it* by algorithms.
- Less exposure to harmful content on women, dating, sex, and being a man.

3. Mental health services: Male-friendly prevention & services as social infrastructure

This should include:

- Take a public health approach that prioritises preventing mental ill-health.
- Expand group-based peer-led models: men's circles; activity-based therapy (walking, building, and training); peer support facilitated by trained mentors.
- Expand structured peer mentoring, and trusted-adult networks to support mental health service navigation, reduce isolation and build resilience.
- Train coaches, youth workers and community leaders as mental health connectors.
- Expand and improve access to mental health services for young people, including through drop-in services for immediate clinical and non-clinical support.
- Co-locate services in accessible places: gyms; community centres; workplaces.
- Develop online mental health services and peer-support alongside offline services.
- Design mental health services that support help-seeking without humiliation or blame, reduce shame and stigma and are designed for and by young men.
- Train health professionals specifically in male socialisation and shame dynamics.
- Improve support pathways for problematic pornography use and related harms, including for disclosure of domestic abuse. Consider NICE pornography guidelines.

Why it works:

- Young men can turn to misogynistic spaces because they are often the *only places acknowledging their challenges*. Other spaces need to create belonging and support.
- Trusted and non-judgemental services and peer-mentors help men to open up.

4. Creating offline and online spaces: Pro-social male communities and mentorship

This should include:

- Recognise the critical importance of friendship-building spaces and opportunities for connection among young people, and to discuss gendered norms among peers.
- Provide youth centres and clubs in every community with trained youth workers.
- Support arts, community theatre and storytelling initiatives that deliver youth provision and model healthy masculinities and relationships.
- Support sports clubs (particularly football) as key pro-social young male spaces.
- Embed young people as co-designers, facilitators and leaders of interventions.
- Provide investment for:
 - Young men's and boys' peer groups focused on purpose, skills, and contribution and where boys can talk about emotions *together*, not alone.
 - Mentoring younger boys (providing supportive role models, particularly dads).
 - Safe mixed-sex and gender spaces for dialogue, belonging and shared activities, supporting boys, girls, non-binary and trans youth to connect.
- Incentivise and fund moderated pro-social online communities, current and new, that build belonging, empathy and healthy peer culture and provide positive role models.
- Train and support online moderators, creators and digital community leaders who foster healthy online cultures.
- Support positive fatherhood and caregiving as empowering for young men and as protective factors for wellbeing, assisted by expanded paternity leave for parents.
- Structure male groups with clear norms (respect, accountability), age-specific membership, and regular meetings. Offer shared challenges for young men, such as community projects, conservation, and outdoor tasks, recognising the benefits of active, hands-on tasks and connection before traditional, conversational settings.
- Ensure offline and online spaces for boys and young men are adaptable to different local, cultural and community contexts.

Why it works:

- Misogynistic movements offer identity and belonging. Alternative spaces can offer status through contribution and leadership, not by reinforcing sexism or patriarchy.
- Men with purpose and support are more likely to support gender equality.

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5. Employment & skills: Economic pathways that restore dignity and reframe roles

This should include:

- Targeted support for young men facing educational and economic disadvantage:
 - Vocational training, apprenticeships and paid retraining.
 - Transitions into care, teaching, mentoring, health, community leadership, green jobs and skilled trades.
- Explicit messaging that policies which support men's employment and skills are deliberately aimed at men and that men are *needed* in these caregiving roles.
- Educational curricula and programmes that support diverse educational pathways and practical life skills for young men.
- Support pathways that build contribution, purpose, belonging and social value — not only employability.
- Engage employers, corporations, trade unions and workplaces as partners in gender equality and wellbeing.

Why it works:

- Economic marginalisation and status loss are drivers of current struggles and zero-sum thinking. You can't moderate away despair caused by structural exclusion.
- This approach restores dignity and a sense of personal worth and reduces isolation.

What makes policies effective on preventing misogyny and promoting mental health:

Policies fail when they:	Policies work when they:
Shame and blame young men and boys or pathologise them as inherently toxic.	Reduce alienation, humiliation and increase belonging and connection.
Treat misogyny as a personality flaw rather than a coping strategy.	Emphasise aspiration, competence, agency, resilience and self-respect.
Focus only on punishment or speech control.	Offer constructive narratives on manhood.
Frame all boys as abusers.	Limit exploitative algorithmic dynamics.
Treat young men and women as monolithic and don't understand their lives.	Co-design with boys and young people as part of the solution
Ignore the role of belonging and loneliness.	Build trust before behaviour change.
Treat online harms as purely individual rather than systemic.	Use credible messengers and peer leadership.
Focus only on schools while ignoring digital ecosystems and community contexts.	Invest in prevention and long-term relational infrastructure.
Assume one-size-fits-all solutions.	Combine regulation with culture change.

Summary of key policy and narrative shifts required:

1. Move from shame and stigma → aspiration and positive strengths-based approach.
2. Move from punishment-only → regulation, accountability and connection.
3. Move from individual blame → systems, culture, policy and platforms.
4. Move from schools-only → a whole ecosystem approach
5. Move from offline-only → online/offline continuum
6. Move from protecting boys from misogyny → protection, prevention, skills-building, building healthy relationships and belonging for everyone.
7. Move from focusing on the problem → practical scalable interventions.
8. Maintain an evidence-based focus and use a public health approach.
9. Keep women and girls' and their lived realities explicitly present throughout.
10. Make young people co-creators, not passive subjects.

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