

RECONNECTING BOYS AND YOUNG MEN

A policy roadmap to prevent
online misogyny and promote
men's mental health

September 2026

Dr Tim Shand and Imogen Grant



**MEN AND
POLICY**

Produced by:

**MISOGYNY
POLICY** PROJECT



Men and Policy is an independent policy and research organisation working to strengthen public policy for men and boys, for the benefit of everyone. We develop evidence-informed, cross-sector

solutions that improve the health and wellbeing of men and boys while advancing gender equality and stronger communities.

Through research, policy development, advocacy and collaboration, we work with policymakers, academics, civil society and advocates to identify policy gaps, develop practical solutions and build support for change. Our work is grounded in a positive and aspirational vision of men and masculinities – supporting men and boys to thrive, contribute and care for others.

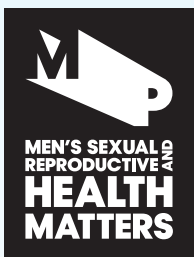
menandpolicy.org

OUR PRIORITY INITIATIVES



Misogyny Policy Project develops policy solutions to prevent online misogyny and strengthen the mental health and social connection of boys and young men.

Find out more: misogynypolicyproject.org



Men's Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters advances policy and systems change to address neglected sexual and reproductive health needs affecting men and boys, particularly male factor infertility.

Find out more: msrhm.org

ABOUT THE CROSS-SECTOR TASKFORCE

The Cross-Sector Taskforce on Online Misogyny and Men's Mental Health brings together organisations, researchers, MPs, officials, and practitioners from across the men and boys, women's rights and violence against women and girls (VAWG), child rights, mental health, online safety, sports, academia, education, trade unions, think-tank, and philanthropy sectors to co-develop evidence-informed policy solutions to prevent online misogyny and promote men's mental health.

The Taskforce recognises that these are distinct, but interconnected challenges, with common root causes, requiring coordinated action across policy, systems and services. It is chaired and co-founded by Dr. Tim Shand and was launched in the UK Parliament in February 2026 in partnership with Male Allies UK, Fabian Women's Network, Jess Asato MP and Alistair Strathern MP.

CROSS-SECTOR TASKFORCE ON
**ONLINE MISOGYNY &
MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH**



Authors

Dr Tim Shand

Director, Men and Policy

Chair, Cross-Sector Taskforce on Online Misogyny and Men's Mental Health

Policy Consultant,
Global Action on Men's Health

Honorary Researcher,
Queen Margaret University

Founding Board member, UK Centre for Policy Research on Men and Boys

Imogen Grant

Senior Policy Associate, Men and Policy

Public mental health consultant
and independent writer

Contents

Executive Summary	4
About this report	10
Background and rationale	11
Systems approach to prevention	13
Note on terminology	15
1. Schools and Education Settings	16
The case for change	
How can this change? Build digital and emotional literacy sustainably and support connection and belonging	
2. Tech Regulation	21
The case for change	
How can this change? Strengthen platform accountability for harmful content and its amplification, while supporting healthier online environments and connection-building	
3. Mental Health Services	27
The case for change	
How can this change? Expand male-friendly prevention, early support and services	
4. Prosocial offline and online spaces	32
The case for change	
How can this change? Invest in prosocial communities, trusted relationships and mentorship for boys and young men	
5. Employment and Skills	37
The case for change	
How can this change? Strengthen economic pathways, opportunities and a sense of purpose	
Cross-government leadership and delivery	42
Recommendations for policy action	43
Policy Recommendations on Schools and Education Settings	
Policy Recommendations on Tech regulation	
Policy Recommendations on Mental Health Services	
Policy Recommendations on Prosocial Online and Offline Spaces	
Policy Recommendations on Employment and Skills	
Policy Recommendations for Cross-Government Leadership and Delivery	
Further engagement & research	49
Co-creation with young people	
Wider research priorities	
Conclusion	51
Resource List	52
References	54
Acknowledgements	57
About the Authors	58

Executive Summary

Online misogyny is not confined to fringe online spaces. Misogynistic and regressive narratives about gender, relationships and masculinity can reach boys and young men through mainstream digital platforms, including content linked to everyday interests, and may be amplified by influencers, recommender systems and engagement-driven business models. Such narratives can reinforce restrictive expectations of masculinity and shape attitudes towards relationships, women and gender equality, while also affecting some boys' and young men's wellbeing and sense of self. Boys and young men can also be exposed to direct and predatory harms, including sextortion and influencer-driven scams that prey on and profit from insecurities, with potentially serious consequences. For women and girls, online misogyny forms part of a wider continuum of sexism, abuse and violence, with digital technologies – including generative AI, sexualised deepfakes, nudification tools – creating additional routes through which harassment, coercion, sexualised abuse and other gendered harms can be intensified, reproduced or scaled.

Online misogyny cannot therefore be understood or addressed as a content problem alone. Its reach and influence sit within a wider social and digital context, including platform design, gender norms, declining service provision and support, education and economic insecurity, and a lack of trusted relationships, as well as the different circumstances in which young people seek identity, connection, advice and belonging. These factors should not be treated as simple causes of misogyny or explanations or excuses for harmful behaviour, rather, they form part of the broader environment in which young people encounter and make sense of online narratives. Effective prevention therefore requires both direct action on misogyny, abuse and harmful platform systems, and a wider systems approach across education, mental health, community and social spaces, and employment and skills to strengthen critical thinking, healthier relationships, wellbeing, connection and opportunity.

THIS REPORT

This report provides policy solutions across five connected policy domains: education, technology regulation, mental health support, online and offline communities, and employment and skills.

To address these interconnected challenges, this report provides a practical roadmap for coordinated action across five connected policy domains: **education, technology regulation, mental health support, online and offline communities, and employment and skills.** Drawing on research and consultation with 17 multi-sector organisations, two parliamentary roundtables and the Cross-Sector Taskforce on Online Misogyny and Men's Mental Health, the report outlines the case for change in each area, how policies can change and examples of change in action. It provides a detailed list of opportunities for policy action and for further research and development of this agenda.



Education

Schools are one of the first places where the influence of online misogyny can become visible offline, but they are also a critical setting for prevention. Education can help children and young people understand consent, healthy relationships and gender equality, recognise how online content and influencers shape attitudes, and build the critical, digital and emotional skills needed to navigate online and offline life. How this is done matters: boys and young men should be engaged through participation and critical reflection which brings them into the conversation as part of potential solutions, rather than shame-based approaches that frame them as inherently problematic.



Tech regulation

Online misogyny is shaped not only by harmful content, but by the systems that recommend, amplify and monetise it. Recommender systems, platform design and engagement-driven business models can increase exposure to misogynistic and other harmful material. Emerging technologies are expanding the scale and forms of technology-facilitated abuse, including gendered and sexualised harms that disproportionately affect women and girls, alongside distinct forms of online harm experienced by men and boys. Effective prevention therefore requires greater accountability for how platforms design and operate these systems, alongside action on harmful and illegal content.



Mental health support

Mental health support is an important part of supporting boys' and young men's wellbeing. Restrictive expectations of masculinity, including those reinforced in some online spaces, can make it harder for some to recognise distress, express vulnerability or seek help, while strong social connections, trusted relationships and a sense of belonging can support wellbeing and resilience. This strengthens the case for accessible, trusted and non-judgemental support that reaches boys and young men earlier and in ways they are more likely to engage with, alongside adequately funded and staffed specialist services for those with more severe or urgent mental health needs.



Online and offline spaces

Young people need places where they can build friendships, develop trusted relationships and feel a sense of belonging, purpose and contribution. Where these opportunities are limited, online

spaces can play an increasingly important role, often positively, but sometimes exposing young people to communities that reinforce misogynistic or harmful attitudes. Stronger prosocial spaces, online and offline, can provide credible alternatives built around shared activity, positive relationships and opportunities to contribute and be valued without diminishing others.



Employment and skills

Secure and meaningful work can provide financial stability, structure, social connection and a sense of purpose and contribution, while exclusion from education, training or employment can narrow young people's opportunities and shape expectations for the future. There is no simple or inevitable relationship between economic insecurity and misogynistic attitudes, but grievance-based narratives can exploit wider anxieties about work, housing, status and opportunity, sometimes redirecting them towards women and gender equality. Employment and skills policy therefore matters as part of the wider preventative context, by strengthening credible routes into opportunity, providing dignity, competence and participation at a time of significant labour-market change.



This report's central argument is that digital regulation, content moderation, enforcement and accountability for abusive or criminal behaviour remain essential but cannot prevent these harms on their own. Responding only after harmful attitudes have taken hold, content has been amplified or harm has occurred is inadequate and unsustainable. **A coordinated, preventative systems approach which draws on public health principles is needed** to intervene upstream of the plethora of harms experienced by both boys and girls, and address the interconnected conditions in which online misogyny can take root, spread and become normalised, influencing young people's attitudes and behaviour.

The rise of misogyny and more rigid, regressive attitudes towards gender is harming people of all genders, although the nature and severity of those harms differ. For boys and young men, as well as the potential psychological, financial and physical consequences, these online harms can erode their self-esteem, damage their ability to form and nurture healthy relationships, and stifle emotional openness and help-seeking, contributing to social isolation and poor mental health outcomes. They can also normalise and entrench misogynistic attitudes, sometimes expressed through sexist and misogynistic behaviour, including the harassment, abuse

and violence disproportionately experienced by women and girls. As explored in greater depth later in this report, these harms are interconnected and shaped by wider inequalities, restrictive gender norms and unmet needs. Policy responses should therefore avoid treating the wellbeing of boys and young men and the safety and equality of women and girls as competing priorities.

Gender equality is not zero-sum: healthier attitudes towards gender and more flexible models of masculinity can improve boys' and men's wellbeing, support safer and more fulfilling relationships, reduce harm, and advance equality for all.

Evidence and practice drawn on in this report point towards engaging boys and young men through participatory, non-judgemental approaches that encourage critical reflection and give them agency in creating change, rather than employing shame or deficit framing that risks alienating those we need to reach. This roadmap therefore emphasises agency, aspiration, accountability and care in approaches to engaging boys and young men. Responses must also recognise that they are not a homogeneous group and that their experiences, vulnerabilities and access to support are shaped by wider inequalities and circumstances.



Priority policy actions

1

SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION SETTINGS

Build digital and emotional literacy sustainably and support connection and belonging.

Strengthen age-appropriate Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) through consistent, quality-assured training and resources covering healthy relationships, consent, gender equality, emotional literacy, positive and flexible masculinities, media literacy, digital ethical and values frameworks, pornography, AI, algorithms and influencer tactics. Content should be co-developed with young people, and delivery should be participatory, pupil-centred and non-judgemental. Educational interventions should also be developed for the digital spaces young people already inhabit.

Equip parents and carers with practical support and guidance to help young people navigate relationships, online harms and emotional wellbeing, and invest in scalable, locally adaptable train-the-trainer models for teachers, youth workers, coaches and other trusted adults to provide the capacity and tools they need. Provide dedicated, sustained funding for schools and specialist organisations to deliver and embed prevention work and to develop and adapt interventions to meet local needs.

2

TECH REGULATION

Strengthen platform accountability for harmful content and its amplification, while supporting healthier online environments and connection-building.

Make Ofcom's guidance on violence against women and girls (VAWG) mandatory and develop complementary guidance on harms affecting boys and men, backed by public reporting, independent audits and scrutiny of recommender systems.

Require platforms to prevent the amplification and monetisation of misogynistic, VAWG-related and "lawful-but-harmful" content, address the commercial incentives that reward it, provide meaningful user control over personalised recommendations, and implement effective age-assurance and safety-by-design measures. Strengthen protections against sexualised deepfakes, nudification tools, non-consensual intimate imagery, sextortion and other forms of technology-facilitated abuse, including the distinct harms experienced by women and girls, and by boys and young men.

3

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Expand male-friendly prevention, early support and services.

Expand accessible, preventative and gender-responsive mental health support and services tailored specifically for young men through schools, sports, primary care, community provision and Young Futures Hubs. This should include “no wrong front door” drop-in support, so that young people are not turned away or passed between different agencies.

Support peer-led and activity-based early-support models, co-designed with boys and young men. Train and upskill trusted professionals across health, education, youth, sports and employment as mental health connectors. Provide clear and timely pathways into sufficiently funded specialist care for those with severe or complex needs.

4

PROSOCIAL OFFLINE AND ONLINE SPACES

Invest in prosocial communities, trusted relationships and mentorship for boys and young men.

Treat belonging to prosocial communities and trusted relationships as essential prevention infrastructure, ensuring young people – particularly teenage boys and vulnerable youth – can access safe spaces, a trusted adult and meaningful opportunities to contribute. Invest in youth work, mentoring, peer support groups (such as men’s circles and talking groups), sport, arts and prosocial moderated online communities and offline spaces that provide connection, purpose, belonging and credible alternatives to harmful communities, with provision adaptable to local contexts and accessible to disabled and neurodivergent young people. Young people should be embedded as co-designers, facilitators and leaders.

5

EMPLOYMENT
AND SKILLS

Strengthen economic pathways, opportunities and a sense of purpose for boys and young men.

Connect employment and skills policy to prevention by expanding paid routes into secure and socially valued work, including apprenticeships, vocational training and retraining. Expand routes into growth sectors and shortage occupations where men's contributions are needed and valuable, including care, teaching, health, green industries, and skilled trades. Targeted support should prioritise economically marginalised young men and those facing structural barriers to secure employment, including those facing disadvantage or discrimination linked to socioeconomic background, disability or ill health, ethnicity, or insecure employment, as well as those living in areas with weak local labour markets, with success measured through retention, progression, contribution and financial stability – not job entry alone.

CROSS-GOVERNMENT
LEADERSHIP AND DELIVERY

Accountability and partnership.

Provide clear cross-government leadership and coordination for this agenda through a ministerial lead, shared prevention outcomes and defined responsibility for implementation across education, health, online safety, youth services, employment, justice and violence against women and girls. Support the Cross-Sector Taskforce on Online Misogyny and Men's Mental Health as a valuable advisory body, maintaining cross-sector and frontline participation, to inform and strengthen policy development. Embed co-production, evidence and evaluation throughout, involving boys and young men, women and girls, frontline practitioners and relevant sectors, with transparent reporting on delivery and outcomes.

Government should also build sustained, mutually beneficial partnerships with grassroots, community and specialist organisations, drawing on their evidence, delivery expertise and trusted relationships to design, test, fund and scale interventions rather than duplicating or displacing effective practice.

Taken together, these measures would move policy beyond fragmented, reactive and predominantly punitive responses towards a coherent national approach to preventing online misogyny and its wider harms, and promoting mental health. By acting across individual needs, communities, education, platform systems and public policy, government can reduce vulnerability to harmful narratives, make digital environments safer and strengthen the relationships, support and opportunities that enable boys and young men to thrive. The evidence and practice drawn on in this report point to the value of combining action across these areas in order to reduce harmful exposure while strengthening protective factors such as trusted relationships, social connection, early support, skills and meaningful opportunities to contribute. In doing so, it can help reverse regressive attitudes, reduce violence and abuse against women and girls, and support a healthier, safer and more equal society for everyone.

About this report

This roadmap sets out a **coordinated, preventative systems approach**, drawing on public health principles, to tackling online misogyny and promoting men's mental health. It recognises these as distinct but interconnected challenges, shaped by shared underlying drivers, and identifies practical action across five interconnected policy areas:

- 1 Schools and education settings:** Build digital and emotional literacy sustainably and support connection and belonging.
- 2 Tech regulation:** Strengthen platform accountability for harmful content and its amplification, while supporting healthier online environments and connection-building.
- 3 Mental health services:** Expand male-friendly prevention, early support and services.
- 4 Prosocial offline and online spaces:** Invest in prosocial communities, trusted relationships and mentorship for boys and young men.
- 5 Employment and skills:** Strengthen economic pathways, opportunities and a sense of purpose for boys and young men.

A separate summary report is also available at menandpolicy.org

The report is primarily intended for policymakers and decision-makers, alongside practitioners, researchers and advocates. It focuses on policy within the remit of the UK government and Parliament. Where policy areas are devolved, the report focuses on England unless otherwise stated.

HOW THIS REPORT WAS DEVELOPED

The policy priorities set out in this report, and the related challenges, opportunities and recommended actions, were developed through desk research, consultation with 17 organisations across multiple sectors between November 2024 – May 2025, discussions at two multisectoral parliamentary roundtables in May 2025 and February 2026 involving more than 50 experts, ministerial briefings, meetings with officials, and ongoing co-creation with members of the Cross-Sector Taskforce on Online Misogyny and Men's Mental Health. The work was led by the Misogyny Policy Project, in collaboration with Male Allies UK, the Fabian Women's Network, Jess Asato MP and Alistair Strathern MP, to collaboratively explore policy solutions that address the root causes of growing misogyny and promote positive masculinity.

A full draft of this report was shared with all members of the Taskforce for comments and inputs, and to share case studies on their work (see Change in Action sections below).

ORGANISATIONS SUPPORTING THIS POLICY ROADMAP

At the time of publication, the following organisations have endorsed the overall direction and recommendations of Reconnecting Boys and Young Men. Their support does not necessarily indicate agreement with every individual recommendation or statement in the report.

- Progressive Masculinity
- Centre for Policy Research on Men and Boys
- Beyond Equality
- Mental Health Foundation
- Male Allies UK
- Fabian Women's Network
- Voicebox CIC

Background and rationale

Online misogyny and narrow, restrictive messages about masculinity are causing real harm to boys and young men. There are the most apparent, predatory harms like influencer-driven scams, sextortion, and viral “looksmaxxing” trends like ‘jaw-breaking’,[†] which profit from the insecurity and vulnerability of young men and boys and can inflict psychological, financial and physical harm. There are also more insidious harms from content which equates manhood with dominance, wealth, status, emotional control and distrust of women. This can damage boys’ self-esteem, their ability to form and nurture healthy relationships, and discourage emotional openness and help-seeking, contributing to social isolation and worsening mental health outcomes. Most young men do not actively seek out extreme misogynistic content, they are fed it by algorithms which introduce and progressively amplify it through everyday interests such as fitness, gaming, relationships and self-improvement.¹

These harms do not stop with men and boys. Misogynistic attitudes and behaviours can move from online spaces into schools, relationships, workplaces and wider society, contributing to the harassment, abuse and violence against women and girls (VAWG) which is disturbingly endemic in the UK. At the root of VAWG are harmful gender norms arising from gender inequality and intersecting structural inequalities. Narratives which present women’s progress and gender equality as a loss for men can fuel division between boys and girls and intentionally redirect legitimate anxieties about employment, housing, relationships and the future towards women and feminism, rather than the broader structural forces that shape these circumstances – including economic insecurity, insecure work, housing and cost-of-living pressures, declining youth provision and gaps in mental health support.

For women and girls, online misogyny is not confined to offensive content. It includes sexual harassment and threats, coordinated abuse, stalking and coercive control, and image-based sexual abuse. These harms can cause lasting fear and trauma, restrict women’s and girls’ freedom to participate online, and reinforce the inequalities and patterns of power and control that underpin VAWG offline. Preventing online misogyny is therefore essential both to individual safety and to gender equality, including women’s and girls’ freedom to participate in relationships, education, work and public life.

Online environments have brought these issues into sharper focus and accelerated their reach. Almost three-quarters of Gen Z social media users have witnessed misogynistic content online, with half encountering it weekly.² Research with young men aged 16–25 found that nearly two-thirds regularly engage with men and masculinity influencers.³ The answer is not however to simply remove boys from online spaces. Online communities can provide friendship, information and meaningful support, particularly for young people who feel excluded from physical spaces. Boys and young men are not simply passive recipients of harmful influences; they are also trying to navigate a rapidly changing world while searching for certainty, belonging, purpose and recognition. Part of the appeal of influencer content is that it can appear to meet these needs, offering direction and feelings of motivation and purpose even where these are packaged alongside restrictive ideas about masculinity or harmful attitudes towards women. The solution is therefore not to simply dictate to boys what they should think. Instead, the task is to help boys understand and critically engage with these topics and increase their sources of meaningful offline support, whilst making digital environments safer through upstream regulation to ensure harmful content and ideologies are not accessible, nor actively promoted to them.

Accountability for harmful and criminal behaviour is essential, but responding only after harm has occurred is inadequate. Prevention efforts must address the systems, incentives and unmet needs that allow online misogyny to take root and spread, including algorithmic amplification and monetisation, poor mental health, social and economic insecurity, loneliness, reduced youth provision, and a lack of trusted relationships, purpose and belonging. Rebuilding the social infrastructure that gives boys and young men credible alternatives to the apparent recognition, purpose and belonging offered by manosphere ideologies and communities is a crucial element of this prevention work. This includes accessible mental health support, trusted adults, positive role models, prosocial communities and spaces, and realistic pathways into secure and meaningful work.

The significance of this extends beyond prevention of misogyny and VAWG, to the fabric of our democracy. The mis- and disinformation about gender equality being intentionally spread through highly effective influencer communications tactics and amplified by platform recommender systems can fuel division and resentment on a large scale. Some gain traction because they meet a very real need for belonging, recognition and direction among boys and young men. The prevalence of loneliness, social isolation, anxiety and uncertainty about identity amongst boys and young men can boost the appeal of online spaces that reframe vulnerability into shared grievance, rigid masculinity, and hostility towards women and girls.⁴ While these experiences have multiple causes, restrictive masculine norms can compound them by discouraging emotional openness and help-seeking, making it harder to rely on others and form and sustain healthy relationships. Preventing the spread and amplification of this content, while supporting young people's mental health and social and economic security, can strengthen social connection amongst this demographic

and reduce their vulnerability to online communities that promote misogyny, extremism and wider anti-gender narratives. Preventing online misogyny and promoting men's mental health should therefore be understood not only as equality and public health priorities, but as part of building a more cohesive, resilient and democratic society.

Supporting boys and young men and tackling online misogyny and VAWG should not be treated as siloed or competing policy agendas. While distinct challenges, these are not separate problems. Addressing the enduring issues at their root – including gender inequality, harmful and restrictive gender norms, social and economic insecurity, and isolation – whilst strengthening connection, purpose and positive, flexible models of masculinity, can improve men's wellbeing, support healthier relationships and advance gender equality for all.

The implications of this are two-fold. Firstly, a joined-up, cross-government approach is required which spans technological, educational, health, economic, justice, social and cultural responses. Secondly and hearteningly, as these are not all new problems, but longstanding ones in new form, there are already effective interventions, protective factors and examples of good practice that can be built on to combat these growing issues. This policy roadmap seeks to provide a brief overview of these and where UK government and parliamentary attention and action would be best focused.

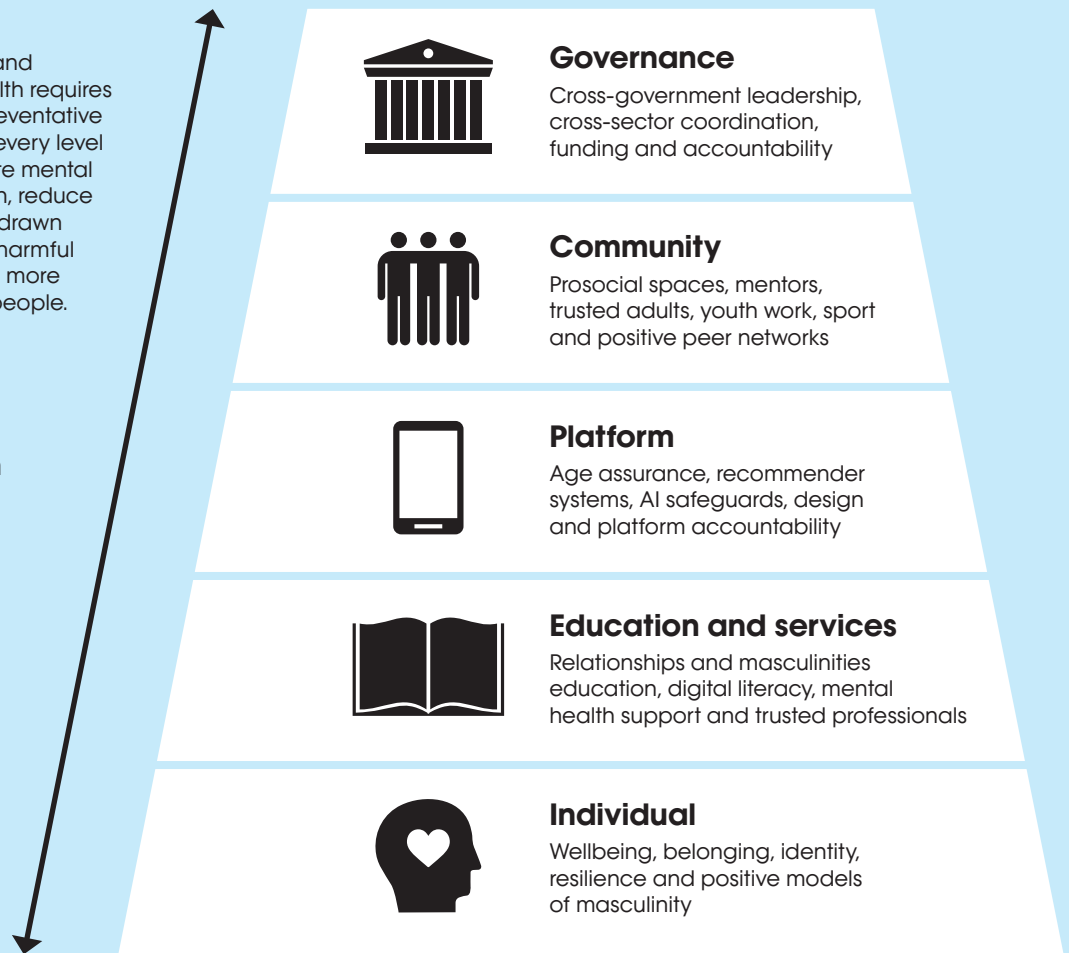
The UK government already has many of the necessary building blocks in, amongst others, its Youth Matters Strategy, Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, Online Safety Act, 10 Year Health Plan, Men's Health Strategy for England, reforms to Relationships, Sex and Health Education, and its recently announced, developing cross-government Mental Health Strategy.

A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO PREVENTION

Policy action across interconnected levels

Preventing online misogyny and promoting men's mental health requires a coordinated multi-level, preventative approach. Policy actions at every level strengthen resilience, promote mental health and social connection, reduce the risk of young men being drawn into online misogynistic and harmful environments, and support a more positive future for all young people.

Stronger impact when actions are aligned across all levels



The roadmap's five policy areas cut across these interconnected levels

Accountability for harmful and criminal behaviour, effective content moderation and stronger tech regulation remain essential. However, these measures cannot prevent harm on their own, particularly when they intervene only after harmful attitudes have developed, content has been amplified or harm has already occurred.

Effectively preventing online misogyny and its wider harms, and promoting men's mental health, requires a coordinated, preventative systems approach (see figure) across multiple, interconnected levels, including individual support, education and services, platforms, communities and governance. Drawing on public health principles, this approach acts upstream, addressing the social, economic, cultural,

technological and commercial environments shaping boys' and young men's lives and in which online misogyny can take root, spread and become normalised, while strengthening the support, relationships and opportunities that help boys and young men to thrive. It seeks to reduce risks, strengthen protective factors and intervene early, rather than relying primarily on individual behaviour change or punitive responses. Supporting the five policy areas in this report, a systems approach necessitates that we take action to:

- reduce exposure to harmful content and disrupt the platform design, recommender systems and commercial incentives that amplify and monetise it;

- address the underlying conditions that can be exploited by misogynistic influencers and communities and make their narratives more appealing, including poor mental health, loneliness, social and economic insecurity, restrictive gender norms and a lack of wellbeing, purpose and belonging;
- strengthen protective factors by building emotional and digital literacy, expanding access to trusted relationships, investing in local communities, providing early support for mental health and wider needs, supporting positive and flexible models of masculinity, and offering meaningful alternative opportunities to participate, contribute and feel valued; and
- align policy, funding, delivery and accountability across government departments, regulators, public services, technology companies and wider society, so that action is sustained rather than fragmented or short term.

Online environments have intensified and accelerated attitudes rooted in the patriarchal structures and gender inequalities that already exist across society; they have not invented them. Prevention cannot therefore tinker with one element at the edges, or place responsibility solely on individual boys and young men to resist harmful online content. It must address both the unmet needs and significant challenges that can make misogynistic communities appealing, and the systems that produce, recommend, profit from and normalise their messages. Acting across these interconnected levels can improve the wellbeing, agency and opportunities of boys and young men, and prevent downstream harms to women and girls. At a societal level, effective prevention can also reduce future demand on health, education, welfare, policing and justice services, improve participation and productivity, and avoid the considerable human and economic costs of allowing harm, isolation and poor mental health to escalate.

A note on terminology

Online misogyny refers to content, conduct and narratives that express or reinforce hostility towards women and girls, opposition to gender equality, and restrictive ideas about gender and masculinity through digital platforms. These are not new beliefs, but longstanding patriarchal and anti-feminist attitudes, repackaged, monetised and given unprecedented reach online.⁵ The “online” therefore describes where these ideas are increasingly housed, circulated and amplified, not a boundary around their influence or harms, which move continuously between digital spaces and wider society.⁶

Throughout this document we will be using the terms “manosphere” and “men and masculinity influencers” to refer to the network of online communities, influencers, websites and forums focused on men’s issues, masculinities and gender relations and gender norms whose content ranges from fitness, dating and self-improvement advice to anti-feminist, male-supremacist and explicitly misogynistic ideologies. Not all masculinity-related content is harmful, but misogynistic ideas can be embedded within and amplified across this wider ecosystem (see tech regulation section for further detail).

As these terms have entered the everyday lexicon, they have become increasingly two-dimensional and catch-all. The “manosphere” is often used as a catch-all term for online content focused on men and boys, and the inherent limitations and lack of nuance in the phrase should be noted.

The UN defines the manosphere as a loose network of communities that claim to address men’s struggles – dating, fitness or fatherhood, for example – but often promote harmful advice and attitudes. They are united by an opposition to feminism and can portray men as “victims” of social and political change,⁷ often exploiting genuine challenges to promote grievance-based and zero-sum narratives. It should be noted that, understood in this way, the term helps to frame these attitudes as a cultural movement, implying shared ideology, and in doing so shifts focus away from the commercial infrastructure which underpins it, and the range of individuals and businesses which profit from it. It helps to shift attention away from those profiting and towards what people believe – “from supply-side accountability to demand-side pathology”.⁸ But to address it and reduce its impacts, we need to look at both demand and supply: why some boys and young men are drawn to this content, and how influencers, platforms, algorithms and commercial incentives produce, amplify and profit from it.

This report therefore uses these terms with care, avoiding framing boys and young men as the problem or obscuring the responsibility of those who design, distribute and monetise harmful content.



1

SCHOOLS AND
EDUCATION SETTINGS

The case for change

Schools are one of the first places where the influence of online misogyny becomes visible in the real world. The ideas promoted by certain influencers are drawing some boys towards restrictive ideas of masculinity that can damage their relationships, emotional wellbeing and engagement with education. Teachers are seeing the impacts of this content in schools reflected in behaviour. **There is widespread concern about sexist, violent and misogynistic content being mimicked in classrooms** with discriminatory and abusive behaviour towards female peers and staff in both primary and secondary schools.⁹

76%

secondary school teachers and 60% of primary school teachers are extremely concerned about the influence of online misogyny in their schools.¹⁰

The **preventative, systems-level approach proposed by this report (see above) must be employed** to address the root causes and prevent the impacts of online misogyny from continuing to bleed into classrooms and wider society. Holding boys and young men to account for unacceptable or criminal behaviour in schools remains essential, but **responding to individual instances after harm has been inflicted is an inadequate and unsustainable approach**.

Educational settings are a critical site for prevention and skills-building. Children need **age-appropriate education** that helps them understand consent, relationships and appropriate

digital behaviour, recognise how algorithms and influencers can shape what they see, and develop the emotional and critical-thinking skills needed to navigate online and offline life. Schools need **effective approaches to educating and engaging young people on these topics**.

How this learning is delivered matters. Shame-based approaches, or those that frame boys as inherently toxic, risk alienating boys who say they are “made to feel like a problem” whilst “girls are always getting celebrated”.¹¹ Instead of resulting in changes in behaviours or beliefs, this can increase a sense of polarity between boys and girls, and make boys shut down and disengage with the learning.

54%

of boys think boys have it harder than girls today.

Male Allies UK, the Voice of the Boys¹²

Providing **inclusive, participatory and relational learning, which models and celebrates positive masculinities** can provide alternative role models and help boys feel listened to, supported, and less alone. We must provide education which can communicate and hold the duality of the existence of restrictive masculine norms, systemic misogyny and VAWG, as well as male allyship, positive masculinities and the needs of young men and boys, without making boys feel they are personally to blame for patriarchal systems and structures, or that they are somehow inherently “wrong”.¹³ It should provide the opportunity for boys and young men to meaningfully engage with and



reflect on these topics, to be part of both the conversation and the solutions. Not least because these solutions will benefit boys as well as girls – it is not a zero-sum situation.

This approach is supported by evidence from international programmes working with men and boys on related issues, including gender equality, sexual and reproductive health, and gender-based violence (GBV). Effective interventions tend to be person-centred and gender-transformative, using participatory discussion and critical reflection on gender roles, supported by trained facilitators. These approaches have improved outcomes for both men and women, including reductions in some forms of GBV.¹⁴ Wider evidence also shows the importance of going beyond individual attitudes and behaviour to address the broader systems and structures that sustain gender inequality.¹⁵

Challenging the regressive gender expectations championed by manosphere influencers can help boys to thrive. Take academic outcomes for instance – boys fall behind girls at every stage of education, from early years development, to GCSE and beyond. The data shows us that boys who care and are given domestic responsibilities – who cook, clean, and show up, engaging in what traditional gender norms and “manosphere” influencers say boys should not do – perform better academically, emotionally, and relationally. But attitudes are trending away from this, with 40% of fathers saying boys shouldn’t be taught to cook or clean, up from 25% in 2023.¹⁶ The trend towards more rigid, regressive gender expectations championed by manosphere influencers risks harming boys’ social and educational outcomes, not delivering the “solutions” they purport to provide. **Schools provide a particularly fitting setting to educate boys to this fact**, to challenge regressive gender expectations early, and to provide boys with healthier, more flexible models of masculinity and relationships to help them thrive in life.

How can this change?

Build digital and emotional literacy sustainably and support connection and belonging

In keeping with the government’s increased focus on prevention across healthcare, mental health, suicide prevention and VAWG – reflected in the Youth Matters National Youth Strategy, the 10 Year Health Plan for England, the VAWG Strategy, the Men’s Health Strategy for England and the development of a new Mental Health Strategy – **ensuring every child is educated and engaged on these topics and develops the critical and emotional tools to navigate this online landscape**, provides the greatest opportunity to reduce downstream harm and service demand for all genders.¹⁷

17%

Relationship violence prevention lessons and activities could reduce violence between young people in intimate relationships by 17% on average.

VAWG Strategy¹⁸

Schools and other educational settings can provide a safe space for boys to learn about and explore digital and emotional literacy, ethical values and frameworks, gender, relationships and consent, to counteract negative online influences. Evidence-based programmes, professional teacher training, and inclusive curricula are needed to ensure boys engage constructively, reducing the alienation or defensiveness that current models can trigger. Supporting boys to name emotions, handle online challenges and AI engagement will help bolster boys’ critical thinking and provide crucial tools for mental wellbeing and navigating the digital world across their lifetime.



As “digital natives”, young people are often more digitally literate and aware of online risks and pitfalls than older generations. But recommender systems can intensify exposure to increasingly extreme content, while highly effective influencer communications tactics spread mis- and disinformation about gender equality, sowing division on a mass scale. In the face of this, **information, education and critical media literacy are among young people’s strongest lines of defence**. Further upstream, regulation of the systems that recommend, monetise and facilitate harmful content is critical as the burden of keeping young people safe online should not sit on their shoulders (see tech regulation section).¹⁹

We know that **Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)** standards and consistency have improved since the statutory RSHE requirement was introduced in 2020.²⁰ But both the **quality and means of delivery are critical to effectiveness**. Digital competence or “anti-misogyny lectures” alone will not be enough as simply telling boys what to think and feel is likely to have little impact and can push them away.²¹ We know from young men that:

- Current online safety education provision is not consistently achieving desired learning outcomes: among those who received it, 58% of young people (16–21) found it was not helpful enough or not helpful at all.²²
- **Boys say they learn better when listened to and not talked at:** 85% said they learn better when their voice and views are valued.²³
- **Trusted relationships with educators matter:** 79% of boys agreed or strongly agreed that the relationship with an educator affects their likelihood of learning.²⁴

Effective teacher and youth worker training, and inclusive, participatory approaches can help boys engage constructively. We know that men and boys do want to talk and much can be learnt from third sector organisations that are modelling how to meaningfully engage boys and young men on these topics in schools through inclusive, pupil-centred approaches which foster a sense of belonging and active participation (see Education Change in Action section below).

The government’s new statutory guidance for Relationships, Sex and Health Education, which came into effect on 1 September 2026, is a positive step in the right direction, with requirements on age- and stage-appropriate teaching, and strengthening content on loneliness, healthy relationships, misogyny, pornography, online safety, AI and deepfakes, while emphasising positive, participative delivery that avoids stigmatising boys.²⁵ Effective implementation is now key to ensuring the guidance has the desired impact. Training models, consolidating disparate teaching resources, and delivery of this learning beyond schools, in other youth and community spaces, should also be addressed.²⁶





PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION SETTINGS

Building on the new statutory **RSE and Health Education guidance**, the **VAWG Strategy's** healthy-relationships commitment and associated teacher-training and external-provider investment, the **Media Literacy Action Plan 2026–29**, **Ofcom's media-literacy duties** and the July 2026 *Growing Up in the Online World* commitments, government should:

1**Strengthen age-appropriate Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)**

supported by consistent, quality-assured training and resources for educators on content and delivery using participatory, pupil-centred and non-judgemental approaches.

2

Improve practical support and guidance to parents and carers to develop the knowledge and skills to reinforce learning at home and hold informed conversations with young people about relationships, bystanders, online harms and digital life, pornography, masculinities and emotional wellbeing.

3**Develop educational interventions for the digital spaces**

young people already inhabit.

4

Invest in scalable, locally adaptable train-the-trainer models that equip teachers and youth workers, coaches and other trusted adults with confidence, capacity and tools to lead and deliver sessions regularly and with the appropriate framing.

5

Provide **sustained, dedicated funding for schools and specialist organisations** to deliver and embed high-quality prevention work, enabling schools to work with organisations with expertise in masculinities, relationships and online harms and adapt provision to local needs.



Change in Action: Schools and Education Settings

A range of organisations are already offering practical models, evidence and learning that can be built on to help deliver the change called for in this report. These include the following two examples:

Case study

Beyond Equality works with men and boys to rethink masculinities, build healthier and more equitable relationships, prevent gender-based violence and create safer, more inclusive communities. Its approach is positive, compassionate and participatory: rather than treating boys as a problem or telling them how to behave, it creates space for them to explore their experiences, question gendered expectations and decide who they want to be.

Through its work with secondary schools across England, Beyond Equality delivers inclusive, pupil-centred workshops exploring gender stereotypes and restrictive masculine norms, healthy relationships, consent, allyship and gender-based violence. Facilitators guide boys through the processes of socialisation and the impact of gender roles, while creating an open and welcoming environment in which pupils can listen to one another, ask questions and participate actively in their learning.

Of pupils they have worked with:

- **80%** said the workshop helped them learn more about gender stereotypes;
- **86%** said they learned more about healthy relationships; and
- **75%** said they better understood gender-based violence and how it affects other people.²⁷

For more information and resources for parents, carers and educators go to www.beyondequality.org

Case study

Progressive Masculinity – supporting pupil-led cultural change

Progressive Masculinity's Exploring Masculinities Programme and School Staff Training take an upstream, pupil-led approach, creating the conditions for cultural change to be driven from within the school community rather than imposed by teachers or external experts. Rather than beginning with misogyny or framing boys as a problem, the programme first explores the pressures and expectations associated with masculinity, before moving into topics including misogyny, violence against women and girls and gender allyship. Its aspirational rather than deficit-based framing encourages boys to participate openly, reflect on the kind of men they want to become and take ownership of creating a healthier and more respectful school culture. Pupils are supported to shape the work themselves, while staff are equipped to embed and sustain it.

Work with school staff and pupils enables schools to incorporate the approach into their curricula or develop their own programmes. At Oasis Academy Oldham, for example, work with Progressive Masculinities enabled the school to develop its own internal programme. Early evaluation has shown positive pupil engagement, greater willingness among boys to discuss sensitive and high-stakes topics, improvements in behaviour, and more respectful attitudes reported by female pupils and staff. Pupils have been enthusiastic about shaping the programme and more willing to challenge sexist behaviour among their peers.²⁸

For more information go to progressivemasculinity.co.uk



2

TECH REGULATION

The case for change

Young people can encounter a range of risks and harms on social media, including cyberbullying, image-based abuse, sextortion, scams, stalking and harassment, as well as “looksmaxxing” practices and content relating to body image and appearance. Many men and boys specifically are being fed misogynistic content and harmful material relating to masculinity, relationships, body image and status, as well as experiencing particularly high rates of cyber-enabled blackmail related to intimate or sexual images (sextortion). The impacts of these on boys’ self-esteem, mental health and relationships can be hugely damaging. Online environments can also replicate and reinforce real-world harms, including abuse, coercion, grooming and violence against women and girls.^{29 30} Recent research from London’s Violence Reduction Unit found an association between increases in misogynistic posts online and police-recorded violence against women and girls that same day. While this does not establish causality, it highlights the online-offline continuum in how online environments can mirror and amplify existing offline harms and risks into something more public, persistent and difficult to contain.³¹

The issue is **not only harmful content, but algorithmic amplification, recommender systems, monetisation and design features that intensify it**. Manosphere content is heavily promoted to boys and men. **Most young men do not seek this content out, they are served it by algorithms**, embedded within topics and trends they already engage with. Setting up a TikTok account as a teenage boy, it takes less than 30 minutes on average before the first piece of extreme misogynistic content is promoted to the timeline,³² and research found a fourfold increase in the level of misogynistic content recommended to accounts modelled on teenage boys within just five days.³³

Influencers use engagement bait, irony, banter, aspirational identities and lifestyle content to attract attention, build trust and progressively introduce more extreme ideas. Interacting with or dwelling on content, regardless of whether the viewer is interested, shocked or outraged, triggers more of the same. Platform design and engagement-driven incentives amplify this process, rewarding provocative content with greater reach and, for many creators, revenue.³⁴ As these ideas are repeatedly surfaced and normalised online, misogynistic language and attitudes can become embedded within wider youth culture, evidenced by young people and school staff reporting that hateful ideologies and misogynistic tropes have moved off screens and into schools.

Much of this material is often described as **“lawful-but-harmful”** as it may not meet the threshold for illegal content, but can still promote, normalise or glorify misogyny and violence against women and girls. The **harm is intensified when recommender and monetisation systems repeatedly amplify this content**, turning individual posts into sustained patterns of exposure and rewarding those who produce it.

Research has also shown how quickly TikTok and YouTube algorithms can move young men from innocuous interests and trends, such as gaming, fitness and sports, towards more extreme content. Research by Movember has illustrated how harmful topics which used to be confined to extreme, fringe communities – ranging from stereotypical ideals about masculinity to hate speech, explicit misogyny, unverified health advice and damaging ideas about physical appearance and performance, including “looksmaxxing” – are now showing up in young men’s feeds alongside everyday masculinity content. Movember describes the range of content that makes up online masculinity content as an “inverted iceberg”, where popular culture, lifestyle



and self-improvement content, which makes up the majority of the content young men are engaging with, sits at the surface, with more harmful messaging of dominance, emotional suppression and exclusionary attitudes layered below, embedded within the same topics and amplified by algorithmic recommendations. This can have an insidious impact on young men's mental health – with young men who regularly engage with masculinity influencers reporting higher levels of psychological distress – and affect their attitudes and relationships to themselves and those around them.³⁵

That **social media holds many harms for young people is evident, but it also provides connection, support, information and friendship** for many, and can be particularly important for young people with additional needs. Yet the risks are also higher for this demographic, with four in five children with additional needs having experienced online harms, compared with 63% of their peers, and are nearly four times as likely to report doing something dangerous because of something that they have seen online.³⁶ **Platform risk assessments and safeguards must consider the specific and heightened harms that children with additional needs experience**, including disabled and neurodivergent young people, and consider the harms and implications faced by people across all protected characteristics.

Some **misogynistic online spaces seek to exploit loneliness, social isolation, anxiety and economic pressures, diverting legitimate grievances about socio-economic challenges towards feminism, women's rights and gender equality**. Progress for women is presented as a loss for men, creating a zero-sum "us versus them" dynamic, which algorithms that reward provocative and polarising content can intensify.

On a personal and relational level, extreme distrust and vilification of women harms and inhibits real-world connection, fuelling further isolation. Beyond harming boys and young men, the inflammatory division bred by some algorithms has wider political and social consequences, and the downstream impacts on women and girls are vast. Women and girls experience online misogyny not only as hostile speech, but as sexualised abuse and control, including harassment, misogynistic pile-ons and coordinated harassment, stalking, coercive control, and intimate images or sexualised deepfakes created and shared without consent. Ofcom finds that pornography depicting sexual violence can shape sexual scripts, normalise coercive behaviour and blur understandings of consent.³⁷ Research by the Children's Commissioner found that, among surveyed 18–21-year-olds who had seen online pornography, 79% had seen pornography involving at least one sexually violent act before turning 18.³⁸ A government review found substantial evidence of an association between pornography use and harmful sexual attitudes and behaviours towards women, with stronger associations for violent pornography.³⁹ Generative AI is also intensifying these harms: more than 290 nudification tools were identified in 2025, enabling photographs to be turned into synthetic sexual images without consent, including child sexual abuse material.⁴⁰ **Technology therefore does not simply reproduce misogyny, it enables sexual exploitation, humiliation and control at unprecedented scale, with serious consequences for women's and girls' safety, dignity and freedom to participate in online and wider public life.**





How can this change?

Strengthen platform accountability for harmful content and its amplification, while supporting healthier online environments and connection-building

The government's plan to ban social media access for under-16s from Spring 2027, using the same model as Australia plus further restrictions on high-risk features such as livestreaming and stranger communications, is welcome given the breadth of harms young people too often experience online, the deterrent effect it may have, and the legitimacy it provides parents trying to enforce restrictions.⁴¹

However, this **does not negate the need to regulate platform design and content**, as, at least in the medium term, many young people will continue to access social media – recent polling of young people in Australia (where the ban is in effect) shows that 61% of Australian 12–15 year-olds who had accounts before the ban came into force still have access to one or more accounts on now restricted platforms.⁴² Another Australian study found little evidence of immediate substantive reductions in social media use by under-16s in the months following the ban, with over 85% of participants continuing to use social media.⁴³ The Australian Government has flagged poor practices by some platforms and is actively investigating potential non-compliance by Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and YouTube, having found many under-16s have retained their accounts or created new ones.⁴⁴ These realities need to be considered in how to effectively educate and support many young people who will still experience online harms, and parents and carers who continue to need guidance in how to protect and support them.

It is crucial that **education, such as digital literacy, tech regulation, and support for parents and carers in navigating online risks continue** despite the under-16s social media ban. Parents and carers want and need advice and guidance on how to support their boys in these rapidly changing and as yet uncharted waters for parents. An excellent

example of work to support parents, mentors and coaches with tools and guidance is the mentor-badge launched as part of EE's Yes Boys campaign (see Tech Regulation Change in Action section below).

77%

Over three quarters (77%) of parents admit they are **concerned about the influence of online content on their son's attitude or behaviour**, while over half (54%) say they have not actively sought guidance because they **feel out of their depth**.

80%

Meanwhile, **8 in 10 (80%) parents say they would welcome more practical support and advice** on how to have conversations about harmful online content.⁴⁵

How to effectively enforce the social media ban and avoid unwanted effects – such as reduced help-seeking for online harms in young people due to fear of getting into trouble for accessing platforms, or lulling parents into a false sense of security – needs to be considered in the UK planning, using the data and insights available from Australia.

The insidious and real-world harms of online misogyny are not confined to boys under 16. Older boys and men are also exposed to, targeted by, and influenced by misogynistic online content, with significant consequences for attitudes, relationships, mental health, and behaviour. **Content moderation, regulation, and wider efforts to prevent and address online misogyny must therefore remain a priority across age groups, including in recognition of its contribution to VAWG and broader social harms for all genders.**



Crucially, **tech companies must be held to account over harmful content, algorithms, recommender systems, and the monetisation of misogynistic content, and soon (under upcoming regulations), detecting or seeking to remove the accounts of under-16s.** How the Online Safety Act is implemented and enforced is crucial given the aforementioned concerns about compliance by tech companies.

The example of the most high-profile “manosphere” influencer, Andrew Tate, illustrates the regulatory challenges, and the gap between platform policies and what is allowed to spread in practice. TikTok states that it does not allow misogynistic content, yet content featuring Tate has received more than 11.4 billion views.⁴⁶ When content of this kind can achieve that reach despite a platform’s own rules, regulation must require proof of compliance rather than relying on platforms to police themselves. Ofcom guidance on VAWG should become mandatory through enforceable codes of practice or statutory duties, and new, complementary Ofcom guidance should be created on the specific online harms affecting men and boys.

Regulation cannot primarily rely on retroactive content removal, after harms have occurred. A more **proactive, preventative approach is required to combat foreseeable harms** through action on algorithms and recommender systems which dictate what users view.⁴⁷ These systems are within the scope of the Online Safety Act, but require the regulator to be prepared and properly resourced to act.

We know that disconnection and isolation are harmful, and that social media holds a myriad of benefits like connection, support and friendship, as well as harms. Removing social media access for under-16s, when alternate spaces for young people such as youth clubs, community organisations and extracurricular school provision, have also been removed, means the problems associated with social disconnection and disillusionment will endure. The **measures to restrict social**

media use and other high-risk features must be accompanied by further action to help children safely connect, critically engage with technology across their lifetime, and provide alternate models and narratives on masculinities and gender equality. Requiring platforms to implement ‘safety, care and connection by design’, privilege reciprocal interaction, and route users towards positive connections and “off-ramps” to safe real-world groups (sporting activities, meetups etc) should sit alongside funding spaces for real-world connection.

London’s Violence Reduction Unit provides an emerging example of this broader preventative approach, with a £4.9 million investment in a city-wide public health response to algorithm-fuelled online harms and violence. This includes digital youth work, peer-led bystander intervention and digital de-escalation programmes, trusted-adult training, targeted support for girls and young women experiencing or at heightened risk of online harms, and home-, school- and community-based positive masculinity interventions for boys and young men – combining action on online harms with the relationships, skills and support needed to prevent harms escalating offline.⁴⁸

Regulation should also be paired with investment in credible alternative narratives. Young men need to see forms of masculinity in which connection, care, creativity and contribution carry status, rather than leaving the most visible models of success to influencers who equate manhood with wealth, dominance and physical power. The Young Men and Media Collective (YMMC, see Case Study below) provides an example of how to promote these alternative narratives, led by young men themselves who instinctively understand the medium and the challenges their peers and target audience face.



PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TECH REGULATION

Building on the **Online Safety Act**, **Ofcom's Protection of Children Codes of Practice** and **VAWG guidance**, and the July 2026 *Growing Up in the Online World* commitments, government and Ofcom should:

1

Make Ofcom's VAWG guidance mandatory and create new guidance on protecting boys and men from specific online harms. Require proof of compliance through public reporting and independent audits.

2

Strengthen regulatory oversight on platforms and services to prevent algorithmic amplification and monetisation of misogynistic and VAWG-related content, including "lawful-but-harmful" content.

3

Compel platforms to **give users meaningful control over recommender systems**, including the ability to reset, curate or opt-out entirely of suggested content, and implement effective age-assurance and safety-by-design measures.

4

Strengthen protections against sexualised deepfakes, nudification tools, non-consensual intimate imagery, sextortion and other forms of technology-facilitated abuse, including the distinct harms experienced by women and girls, and by boys and young men.



Change in Action: Tech Regulation

A range of organisations are already offering practical models, evidence and learning that can be built on to help deliver the change called for in this report. These include the following two examples:

Case Study

The **Young Men and Media Collective (YMMC)**, co-convened by Movember and Equimundo, brings together creators, platforms and organisations to test how online content can support young men's health and wellbeing and broaden ideas about what it means to be a man. It acts as a hub for experimentation, learning and dialogue, funding creative projects that challenge harmful narratives around masculinity, status, wealth and body image within the cultures and platforms young men already use.

One of these projects, **Hey Brother House**, uses short, retreat-style creator residencies to develop a sustained pipeline of content showing men building connection, meaning and identity together beyond wealth, status or physical dominance. By producing and releasing a high volume of creator-led content, it aims to "flood the zone" with healthier and more compelling narratives of masculinity and brotherhood, increasing the volume and visibility of healthier content within young men's online media environments.⁴⁹

For more information go to <https://uk.movember.com/story/introducing-our-young-men-and-media-collective-test-and-learn-cohort-2026>

Case Study

The **EE Yes Boys** campaign was launched ahead of the Summer 2026 World Cup to help young boys navigate negative online influences and the pressures they face. Fronted by former England player Theo Walcott, it uses football communities to promote grounded, positive masculinity, emotional openness, and digital safety. It provides an excellent example of meeting boys where their pre-existing passions and interests lie and in a traditionally masculine sphere, football. The campaign effectively "flips the script" by rejecting harmful "boys don't cry"/emotional suppression messaging and reframing emotional openness, leadership, and mutual support as core strengths.

As well as videos and advertising materials, there are online digital resources to help coaches and parents with practical tools, videos, and real-world guidance to support boys in navigating online influences, developing healthy identities, and building positive models of masculinity.

The mentor-badge, developed in partnership with Internet Matters, is a free online guide built around 3 key pillars (language, leadership and body image) to help coaches develop practical tools to support boys growing up online, helping them to engage with positive, grounded models of masculinity, and directly tackle the negative, damaging impact of the manosphere.

For more information go to ee.co.uk/ee-sponsorships/home-nations



3

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The case for change

England is facing **high levels of mental health problems and unprecedented service demand, particularly amongst young people**. Evidence suggests a myriad of contributing factors, including socio-economic difficulties, not least the impacts of the cost of living crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns upon individuals and families, social media use, and increased social isolation and disconnection.

Suicide rates amongst young men and boys are a particular concern in the UK. Suicide is the leading cause of death in under-35s in the UK, with around three quarters of those deaths among boys or young men.⁵⁰ Mental health needs have also risen sharply. Prevalence rates of mental health problems have increased, with **1 in 5 young people (aged 8–16) in England having a probable mental health disorder**. This is **up from 1 in 8 in 2017**.⁵¹

Research suggests that **engaging with men and masculinity influencers is associated with worse mental health outcomes** for boys and may be shaping boys' and young men's sense of masculinity into rigid gender norms which **discourage help-seeking or recognition and expression of emotions**. Young men regularly engaging with men and masculinity influencers, relative to those who don't, are more likely to report:

- **Worse mental health outcomes;**
- **A reduced willingness to prioritise their mental health;** and
- Associating an **inability to control one's emotions with personal weakness and failure** in men.

Young men are also **less likely to see spending time with friends and family as important for success, suggesting the messaging that they receive makes them less likely to prioritise common protective factors for mental health and wellbeing**, such as social connection.⁵²

We also know **social media may increase social isolation and loneliness, and that social isolation and loneliness are linked to poorer mental health**. Globally, rates of male loneliness are highest in young adults and adolescents (**around 1 in 5 people**),⁵³ and social connection outcomes in men and young people have deteriorated recently.⁵⁴ WHO reports that people experiencing loneliness are twice as likely to experience depression, and that loneliness can lead to anxiety and thoughts of self-harm or suicide.⁵⁵

With the dearth of mental health support services and increasing rates of male loneliness, particularly amongst young men and boys (who historically had better social connection outcomes), some boys and men are turning to AI for therapy, friendship, and romantic relationships – in part because of the gaps in available support systems and services.^{56 57}

Monthly referrals to NHS mental health services for young people have tripled since 2016 and crisis referrals have also tripled since 2019.

[NHS Digital, Mental Health Services Monthly Statistics](#)

High referral thresholds and long waiting times to access mental health services due to chronically under-resourced services mean **many young men cannot access support** and any scantily available care often comes too late. Soaring demand and severe capacity constraints drive up referral thresholds, meaning many young people are told they're 'not unwell enough' to receive care and limiting access to only the most critical cases.⁵⁸



Despite this, record numbers of young people are being referred and some are waiting over two years to be seen.⁵⁹ Long waits or being denied access to the right support leaves many young people unsupported whilst their mental health deteriorates and many end up reaching crisis point before receiving any form of care.⁶⁰

As well as the human cost, **there are significant costs to the wider economy and public funds in failing to adequately address rising mental health prevalence** rates, including costs to public services, across health, education, welfare, policing and justice, and productivity losses. The cost of deteriorating mental health between young people's referral and receiving support is now £295m a year, and the impact of childhood mental health problems is estimated to lead to £1 trillion in lost earnings across the current generation.⁶¹

How can this change?

Expand male-friendly prevention, early support and services

For some young men, misogynistic spaces can partly appeal because they appear to be one of the few places readily acknowledging their challenges. Providing **accessible spaces which provide a sense of belonging and support and allow men and boys to open up in trusted, non-judgemental settings would provide an alternative outlet and support system**. Such spaces also support social connection – a known protective factor for mental ill health.

Messaging from manosphere and masculinity influencers – discouraging recognition or expression of emotions, and framing an inability to control them as weakness – risks exacerbating these challenges, reinforcing attitudes that discourage young men from engaging with the services or support systems which are available to

them, and fuelling growing stigma around mental health.^{62 63} We need to **provide more support services and spaces, whilst combating the rigid hegemonic model of masculinity that is driving some young men to bottle up until crisis point**. The suicide statistics speak for themselves in illustrating the importance of tackling barriers to mental health help-seeking. We must combat these narratives, teach and encourage emotional literacy in young men and boys, support mental health help-seeking, provide supportive spaces and services, and combat rising stigma around mental health. The Becoming a Man (BAM) programme is an excellent real-world example of designing and delivering trusted, non-judgemental services to help young men to open up (see Mental Health Services Change in Action section below).⁶⁴

Community-based, preventative and early intervention approaches, cross-government action, and adequately funding mental health services, estates and the workforce are consistently recommended **to create the system-level change required** to meet the scale of need. The Government must heed this and provide early support so young people have somewhere to turn before they reach crisis point and provide sufficient resources, both human and financial, to both early intervention and specialist services. **Failure to do so will have long-term downstream impacts on young people's educational, employment, health and social outcomes, and continue to strain services and health budgets.**⁶⁵

Young people's access to early support has fallen away, with **youth service funding in England having dropped by 73% since 2010**, and specialist mental health services continuing to face growing demand they can't meet.⁶⁶

King's College London



It is **100 times cheaper on average to treat a young person in the community compared to an inpatient setting**, and the **government's commitment to shift from hospital to community care presents a major opportunity to seize these savings** and address the nation's growing mental health needs. We know that 75% of mental health problems are established by age 24, so timely support can stop problems worsening.⁶⁷ This support also needs to continue through the transition into adulthood, with developmentally appropriate provision across the 0–25 age range and clear pathways between children and young people's and adult services, so young people do not fall through gaps at age-based thresholds. The Fund the Hubs campaign group has set out a vision for how Young Futures Hubs can be delivered to effectively support the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 11–25.⁶⁸

Recognition of the need for early intervention support services is demonstrable in various government commitments. These include: the recent announcement of £343 million for 100 new community mental health centres and 59 dedicated mental health emergency departments; the continued roll out of Mental Health Support Teams in schools; embedding mental health support in and continuing to roll out Young Futures Hubs; neighbourhood-based suicide prevention support pathfinders (co-designed with men with lived experience); roll out of suicide-safety training for mental-health practitioners (including tailoring support around the barriers men and boys face in accessing services); and suicide prevention work with the Premier League (building on Together Against Suicide), using football clubs, matchdays and trusted community settings to raise awareness, reduce stigma and connect men.^{69 70}

The developing cross-government Mental Health Strategy provides an opportunity to bring these strands together, while the forthcoming 10 Year Workforce Plan provides an important opportunity to address the workforce capacity needed to deliver these commitments.⁷¹

These are excellent initiatives, but they do not yet amount to a universal, adequately funded early-support offer. Further clarity is needed on how these different initiatives will fit together, and whether and how the new community mental health centres will support children and young people under 18. The 50 Young Futures Hubs by 2029 promised in the Youth Strategy will cover only part of England and specialist services remain under severe pressure. Expansion and implementation of these community-based initiatives require clear milestones for national coverage, sustained funding, workforce capacity and embedded referral pathways into specialist clinical care in order to deliver high-quality support nationwide.





PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Building on **Young Futures Hubs**, the **10 Year Health Plan**, the expansion of **Mental Health Support Teams**, the **Men's Health Strategy for England**, new **community mental-health centres** and **emergency departments**, the developing **Mental Health Strategy** and planned **10 Year Workforce Plan**, government should:

1

Expand and improve access to mental health services for young people, including same-day open-access drop-in services for immediate clinical and non-clinical support.

2

Establish a **“no wrong front door”** early-support pathway through **Young Futures Hubs** and connected local services.

3

Commission and evaluate **male-friendly early-support models** including activity-based groups, peer support, mentoring, sport-based provision and online-to-offline support, co-designed with boys and young men.

4

Train trusted professionals across health, education, youth, sport and employment settings **as mental health connectors**.

5

Invest in and adequately staff specialist children and young people's mental health services to provide timely specialist care for urgent and severe needs.



Change in Action: Mental Health Services

A range of organisations are already offering practical models, evidence and learning that can be built on to help deliver the change called for in this report. These include the following two examples:

Case study

42nd Street's Integrated Community Response Service

Early-support hubs and Youth Information, Advice and Counselling Services provide open-access, self-referral support before young people reach crisis point, combining mental-health care with help on the practical issues that can contribute to distress.

42nd Street's Integrated Community Response pilot placed mental-health practitioners in community settings across Manchester and Salford, providing short-term de-escalation, e-therapy, welfare and social-care support, and rapid referral into specialist NHS services where required. An external evaluation by the Anna Freud Centre estimated system savings of £806,040 through improved mental-health outcomes and reductions in referrals, emergency calls and A&E presentations. The service was subsequently incorporated into NHS contracts, demonstrating how accessible, integrated community support can intervene earlier, provide a clearer route into specialist care and reduce pressure on crisis services.⁷²

For more information go to www.42ndstreet.org.uk/

Case study

The Becoming a Man (BAM) programme provides support to young men (aged 12–16) who face disadvantage and inequality that put them at greater risk of developing mental health problems. It works to improve boys' social-emotional wellbeing, skills and decision-making to help them become resilient to challenges, strengthen their relationships, reduce their risk of exclusion or crime, and improve their emotional regulation and school engagement, in turn increasing their likelihood of pursuing further education or work.

Delivered within schools, and facilitated by expert BAM counsellors – trained in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Trauma-Informed Care – the programme uses a mix of group sessions, structured one-to-ones, and planned activities. It provides a safe space to help young men to discuss issues in their lives, taking into account their lived experience and the often difficult environments they navigate. It supports them to identify the values that will help them contribute to society and make decisions about their lives and values, helping them consider and get to where they want to be in twenty years' time.

BAM was developed in the US by Youth Guidance, licensed to the Mental Health Foundation until March 2026 and has now transitioned to Islington Council, where it forms one pillar of the borough's wider Young Black Men and Mental Health Programme, reflecting both the programme's success and its evolution within a broader local offer.

For more information see:

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/programmes/families-children-and-young-people/becoming-a-man

<https://www.islington.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/health-services-in-islington/mental-health/young-black-men-and--mental-health-programme>



4

PROSOCIAL OFFLINE AND ONLINE SPACES

The case for change

Safe spaces for young people to spend time, build friendships and form trusted relationships are part of the social infrastructure necessary to **support wellbeing and prevent harm**. Yet many **boys feel this is missing**.

81%

of boys don't feel there are enough spaces to be a boy today, and 72% do not have more than one person who knows them "really well."

Male Allies UK

Boys describe various barriers to socialising today, including playing fields being redeveloped, youth clubs remaining closed after the pandemic, volunteer shortages limiting access to activities, safety concerns, and being hassled when spending time together in public.⁷³

The lack of physical and social spaces for young people today can leave online spaces to fill the gap. This is not, in itself, negative. For some young people, particularly those with additional needs, online spaces can provide friendship, connection, and creativity. But it also means online communities may be one of the main places boys turn to find belonging, identity, recognition and advice, and **in unmoderated spaces these needs can be exploited**. Ofcom has noted that **young people searching online for friends, advice or groups can be served increasingly misogynistic content, and that loneliness, isolation and mental health concerns can increase vulnerability to more radical and misogynistic communities**.⁷⁴ In acknowledging the very real socio-economic

challenges they face today, "manosphere" influencers can provide a sense of recognition and belonging to men and boys who are struggling. This provides fertile ground for hateful and divisive ideologies, including misogynistic content, to be served up, promising so-called answers to their problems.

This concern transcends debates about the use of social media (such as the recently announced ban for under-16s), and even individual or parental choices (such as screen time). The World Health Organisation (WHO) identifies **social infrastructure**, including spaces, programmes and services, as a **protective factor against loneliness and social isolation**.⁷⁵ The OECD has identified young people, and particularly younger men, as an at-risk group with worsening loneliness, social support and relationship satisfaction alongside declining face-to-face interactions.⁷⁶ Economic inequality further limits social participation, and has knock-on impacts on health and social outcomes.

17- to 25-year-olds with a probable mental disorder were 3 times more likely to be unable to afford to participate in activities such as sport, days out or socialising with friends, compared with those unlikely to have a mental disorder (26.1% compared with 8.3%).

NHS England⁷⁷

The **online and offline worlds** therefore **need to be understood as a continuum, and failures to provide safe, regulated, trusted spaces in one can play out in the other** in the form of harms for both boys and girls.



How can this change?

Invest in prosocial communities, trusted relationships and mentorship for boys and young men

Strengthening the spaces, places, programmes and services that “shape how people interact” (such as community centres, libraries, parks, and transport systems) can support social connection and reduce loneliness and social isolation.⁷⁸

Without spaces for boys to go, whether physical or online spaces, where they feel safe, seen, heard and known, where they have meaningful opportunities to contribute and participate, the online communities offering simple explanations, status and belonging will continue to be attractive to some, with resultant harms to both boys and girls. Boys’ participation in **“manosphere” communities**

can deepen the isolation they claim to solve

by widening the divide between the sexes. The attitudes and behaviours they promote can fuel distrust and rejection, reinforcing the rigid ideas of masculinity and dominance “required” to rectify a situation that they are in fact fuelling.

Strengthening real-world connection while creating safer, prosocial online communities is therefore central to improving boys’ and young men’s wellbeing, preventing misogyny and harm to women and girls, and reducing polarisation by strengthening trust and connection between boys and girls.

Building credible real-world and online alternatives that meet the same needs for identity, recognition, purpose and belonging without reinforcing sexism or patriarchy is crucial

to blunting the appeal of misogynistic online spaces. These misogynistic movements can offer young men a role, a peer group and a sense of status. Prosocial communities can offer something altogether stronger: status through contribution and leadership, relationships grounded in respect and accountability, and opportunities to feel valued without diminishing women and girls. This requires both single-sex spaces, where boys can connect and reflect together, and mixed-gender

spaces that enable dialogue, shared activity and healthier relationships across genders.

Change will require accessible spaces built around shared activity, trusted relationships and positive role models, both online and

offline. Sport, arts, and shared community projects can provide a practical focus around which relationships and trust develop. Younger boys can benefit from consistent relationships with peers as well as trained and supportive role models, including mentors, coaches, and youth workers. These settings also create opportunities for boys to contribute, develop skills, take responsibility and practise leadership. Discourse on the lack of ‘rites of passage’ into adulthood in western society posits that it leaves a void, and in that space misogynistic attitudes can flourish. These opportunities provide positive alternative pathways, offering challenge, responsibility and recognition as healthier alternatives to seeking status through risk-taking, peer dominance or harmful online cultures.⁷⁹ In time, this can provide the space and trusted relationships required for honest conversations about emotions, relationships, gendered expectations and online experiences.

Effective approaches should be relational, participative and build trust – not treat boys as a passive audience or frame them as inherently problematic. Young people should be involved in co-designing services and spaces and facilitating interventions as peer leaders, acknowledging their expertise-by-experience of the communities and the digital landscape they inhabit. **Provision of such services must also respond to different local, cultural and community contexts rather than adopting a “one size fits all” approach.**

There are existing models that could be built on and can be adapted for differing contexts which incorporate facilitated group work, community training, digital culture and mentorship, for example the Groundswell Project (see Prosocial Spaces Change in Action section).



Boys are watching and learning from the men around them. This provides an opportunity for fathers, carers and trusted adults to model healthier forms of masculinity by demonstrating to boys that **care, presence, emotional openness and responsibility are valued and empowering parts of manhood**, rather than qualities that sit outside it. As trusted adults and mentors, they can create space to discuss emotions, relationships, gendered expectations and online experiences without beginning from shame or blame, providing a credible alternative to influencers who equate masculinity with dominance, status and emotional suppression. Involved fatherhood is associated with better emotional and developmental outcomes for children and can also support fathers' own wellbeing. 91% of fathers say caring for children or loved ones is one of the most enjoyable things in their lives.⁸⁰

However, **too many boys – particularly the most disadvantaged – grow up without a father figure or trusted adult in their life.** An estimated **2.5 million children in the UK grow up without a father figure at home** and nearly **1 in 5 teenagers in England do not have a trusted adult outside their family whom they can turn to** when life gets difficult.^{81 82} Longer, adequately paid statutory paternity leave, affordable childcare, and workplaces that enable fathers to take leave and work flexibly would give men the time and security to form these relationships, share care in practice, and model healthier forms of masculinity to their sons. **Without these, policy and workplace structures will continue to shape men and boys into those who define themselves primarily as earners and providers rather than carers, reinforcing rigid gender roles** that harm fathers' wellbeing, constrain women's choices and leave boys with narrower models of manhood.⁸³

Online spaces must be part of the same solution. Many boys want real-world experiences and relationships, but also value online connection.⁸⁴ Moderated prosocial communities can model healthy male norms, provide positive role models and develop belonging, empathy and healthier peer cultures. **The aim is not to replace online connection with offline provision, but to create a continuum in which online and physical spaces reinforce connection, contribution and healthier relationships rather than isolation and grievance.**

The UK government has already progressed the agenda on community spaces, including the National Youth Strategy's commitment of nearly £70 million over three years to rebuild local youth services and establish up to 50 Young Futures Hubs by March 2029. This sits alongside four-year funding commitments for youth facilities through Better Youth Spaces and grassroots community sport facilities.⁸⁵ Young Futures Hubs, sports-sector programmes, school and community partnerships, enrichment funding and Local Covenant Partnerships provide many of the required components for effective social infrastructure. There is **an opportunity to use this emerging infrastructure to create places in which trusted adults, coaches, youth workers and peers can build belonging, healthy relationships and models of masculinity, and provide routes into support services** if needed. However, 50 hubs and time-limited funding will not provide universal provision, and the youth strategy itself recognises that local capacity and coordination are inconsistent. **A long-term approach including allocated funding, nationwide rollout, a trained workforce, and affordable transport will be needed if these new spaces and programmes are to become reliable places of belonging for young people.**



PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROSOCIAL OFFLINE AND ONLINE SPACES

Building on the **Youth Matters: National Youth Strategy**, **Young Futures Hubs** and **Better Youth Spaces**, alongside *Growing Up in the Online World*, the **Online Safety Act** and wider media-literacy work, government should:

1

Treat belonging and trusted relationships as prevention infrastructure, ensuring young people – particularly teenage boys and vulnerable youth – can access safe places, a trusted adult, and meaningful opportunities to contribute.

2

Invest in and scale high-quality youth work, mentoring, peer support groups and activity-based provision for boys and young men. **Embed young people as co-designers, facilitators and leaders of interventions.**

3

Support prosocial offline and moderated online communities that provide connection, purpose, belonging, and are **adaptable to different local, cultural and community contexts**. Provision should be accessible to disabled and neurodivergent young people.

4

Support positive fatherhood and male caregiving, assisted by expanded and adequately paid statutory paternity leave, affordable childcare, and workplaces that enable all parents to take leave and work flexibly.



Change in Action: Prosocial offline and online spaces

A range of organisations are already offering practical models, evidence and learning that can be built on to help deliver the change called for in this report. These include the following two examples:

Case study

The **Groundswell Project** works with grassroots organisations across the UK to strengthen community cohesion, identify early signs of vulnerability to hate and extremism, and support locally led responses. Its Find–Connect–Amplify model begins by mapping existing community organisations and understanding the specific local risks and opportunities; it then connects those groups with residents, statutory partners and one another, before amplifying effective community-led activity through wider networks, events and digital communications. This allows provision to build on trusted local relationships and respond to different cultural and community contexts, rather than applying a one-size-fits-all model.

Groundswell also provides specialist online and in-person training for educators, youth workers, safeguarding leads, community leaders, parents and young people. Drawing on frontline counter-extremism, mentoring and safeguarding experience, the training covers extremist misogyny and male-supremacist movements, gaming and digital subcultures, algorithmic amplification, online recruitment tactics, and digital literacy and resilience. Sessions provide practical tools for identifying and responding to risk and can be adapted to different geographic, cultural and institutional contexts.

For more information go to www.groundswellproject.org

Case study

Football Beyond Borders (FBB) demonstrates how shared activity and long-term relational support can be combined. Its programme brings together weekly football and classroom sessions with therapeutic interventions, pastoral support and trained practitioners who build consistent, trusted relationships with young people at risk of exclusion. The programme data shows that among more than 1,300 young people participating, access to a trusted adult was associated with stronger school belonging and social and emotional skills. While 34% named a member of school staff as their trusted adult, this rose to 62% when FBB practitioners were included. Among participants, 85% of those eligible for Pupil Premium and 86% of those with special educational needs reported having a trusted adult inside or outside school.

FBB leads the Lost Boys Taskforce, a cross-sector coalition of leaders from football, education, youth work, policy, and business, which is working to make the UK a country where every young person has access to a trusted adult. The Taskforce's Trusted Adult Guarantee calls for government-supported training for 10,000 trusted adults across schools and football by 2029, beginning with boys growing up in poverty, alongside national tracking of whether every teenager has an adult they can turn to. Rather than creating an entirely new workforce, it proposes that the government invest in adults already embedded in young people's lives – such as pastoral staff, coaches, mentors and youth practitioners – and track through national school surveys whether every teenager has someone outside their family whom they trust and can turn to. This offers a concrete model for turning mentorship from a short-term project into social infrastructure.⁸⁶

For more information go to www.footballbeyondborders.org



5

EMPLOYMENT
AND SKILLS

The case for change

Secure and meaningful work can provide structure, social connection, a sense of purpose and contribution, and the financial stability needed to participate in wider social life.

Conversely, educational disadvantage, insecure employment and exclusion from the labour market can affect not only material circumstances, but also a person's sense of identity, status, belonging and value.

Just under **one million 16- to 24-year-olds are not in education, employment or training (NEET)** – 13.0% of all young people in this age group, with young men accounting for the majority of those who are NEET.

Office for National Statistics, 2026

A vast and growing number of boys and men are struggling to find secure pathways through education and into working life. Of the almost 1 million young people (aged 16–24) not in education, employment or training, **rates are highest among young men** and most of the increase over the previous year was amongst young men.⁸⁷

These trends **do not affect all boys and men equally**. Educational disadvantage, disability and ill health, class, ethnicity and place all intersect to shape young people's routes into employment and their access to opportunity. **The disparity is particularly stark for disabled young people: nearly three in ten were not in education, employment or training in 2024/25, compared with fewer than one in ten of their peers without a disability.**⁸⁸ Further evidence is needed to understand these intersecting experiences and

ensure that young men are not treated as a single group, and to develop effective support structures and economic pathways for all.

Employment-related hardships are likely to intensify in an increasingly challenging labour market. Employment opportunities for young people have already dwindled and **rising employment costs, artificial intelligence (AI), and automation will likely reduce the need for many entry-level roles which traditionally provided a first foothold in working life**, such as administrative, data-entry, and customer-service roles.⁸⁹

Current debates about employment and disability benefits also risk reducing a structural problem to one of individual motivation. Around half of young people who are not in education, employment or training are not claiming out-of-work benefits (and therefore not receiving any employment support through this system), while many young people receiving health or disability benefits say they could work with the right job and support, or if their health improves.⁹⁰ **Ill health, inaccessible recruitment, weak local labour markets, and a shortage of suitable jobs all shape whether young people can enter and remain in work**, and narratives around a “workshy” generation are reductive and unhelpful for the many young people looking for work.⁹¹

Economic insecurity and an associated perception of lost status or inadequacy can create conditions in which grievance-based and zero-sum narratives become more appealing.

Where young men feel that recognised routes into stable adulthood are narrowing, messages suggesting that progress for women and girls has come at men's expense can offer both an explanation for their difficulties and someone to blame. This does not mean that economic disadvantage inevitably leads to misogyny, nor does it excuse harmful attitudes or behaviour, but it does mean that online misogyny cannot



be addressed through content moderation or individual behaviour change alone. **We cannot moderate away the distress, anger or loss of purpose caused by structural exclusion and economic hardship.**

Against this backdrop of rising socio-economic hardship and exclusion, online influencers can offer young men motivation and a highly visible image of success based on wealth, physical strength, status and self-reliance. Movember's research found that, among young men who had acted on advice from men and masculinity influencers, 75% said it made them feel more motivated, 58% felt happy and 44% reported a greater sense of purpose.⁹² These findings help explain the attraction of this content – it can respond to genuine needs for direction, inspiration and purpose, even where those messages sit alongside restrictive ideas about masculinity or harmful attitudes towards women.

The challenge is therefore not simply telling young men what they should reject, but to ensure they have credible and achievable alternatives. Economic and educational pathways should offer more than employability alone. They should support dignity, practical competence, contribution, connection and a sense of personal worth. Acknowledging the challenges young men face and providing better routes into secure, socially valuable and meaningful work would benefit young men, their families, women and girls, and society as a whole, and show that progress towards gender equality is not the cause of economic exclusion.

How can this change?

Strengthen economic pathways, opportunities and a sense of purpose for boys and young men

Employment policy cannot prevent online misogyny on its own. However, **by providing young men facing economic marginalisation and exclusion with realistic routes into roles that provide security, belonging, contribution and recognised social value, it can reduce some of the isolation, economic challenges, and loss of purpose that grievance-based influencers exploit.** This would help to support men's mental health and healthier relationships, while challenging narratives which present women's progress and gender equality as a threat to men.

As AI and wider labour-market changes place increasing pressure on entry-level opportunities, **government, employers and the public sector need to explore how to protect and rebuild the first rung of the career ladder.** This should include genuine paid routes through vocational training, apprenticeships, paid retraining, work experience and accessible entry-level jobs, alongside the training, induction and ongoing support needed to help young people remain and progress in work.⁹³ **Young people should not be left to absorb the transition into an AI-orientated world without clear routes into new skills, experience and secure work.**

There should be **targeted support for young men facing educational and economic disadvantage**, including those affected by socio-economic background, disability, ill health, insecure work, and weak labour markets. Schools, colleges, youth services, employment support services, employers and training providers should provide clearer pathways and handovers, rather than expecting young people to navigate disconnected systems alone. The benefits system should also support participation without withdrawing the safety net that young people who are ill, disabled or unable to work need. Employment and disability benefit



reform should combine an adequate safety net with personalised employment, health and skills support. **Reducing financial support without addressing poor health, inaccessible work, weak local labour markets and the shortage of suitable jobs risks increasing hardship and exclusion rather than helping people into sustained employment.**⁹⁴

Young men also need visible and achievable pathways into roles where their contribution is recognised and valued, including care, teaching, mentoring, youth work, health, community leadership, skilled trades, green jobs, digital and AI roles, sport and public services. Men make up just 14% of nursery and primary school teachers and 22% of England's adult social care workforce, yet adult social care had around 111,000 vacant posts in 2024/25, underscoring the need to support more men into caring, educational and community-facing roles where their contribution is both needed and valued.⁹⁵ **Building practical competence, connection, purpose and social value can help restore dignity and provide credible alternatives to narrow online models of male success based on wealth, status, dominance and self-reliance.**

Existing government employment, skills and youth commitments, including the Youth Guarantee, DWP Youth Hubs, Young Futures Hubs, apprenticeships and foundation apprenticeships, TechFirst, careers reform and work-experience commitments, provide a strong foundation for a more joined-up approach. However, as it stands **provision remains fragmented, does not consistently reach young people outside the benefits system or those facing more complex barriers, and can rely on entry into work and short-term interventions rather than sustained participation and progression.**⁹⁷ The government should join up and strengthen this work, and link it to its wider work on men and boys, focusing not only on employment but the secondary **outcomes it can provide including purpose, contribution, wellbeing and belonging.**





PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

Building on the expanded **Youth Guarantee**, including the Youth Jobs Grant and Jobs Guarantee, **DWP Youth Hubs** and links with **Young Futures Hubs**, **Growth and Skills Levy** reforms, apprenticeships and foundation apprenticeships, **TechFirst**, careers reform and work-experience commitments, government should:

1

Expand routes into growth sectors and shortage occupations where men's contributions are needed and valuable, including care, teaching, health, green industries, and skilled trades.

2

Ensure targeted employment and skills support is accessible to young men affected by educational disadvantage or discrimination linked to disability, ill health, ethnicity or gender, as well as those facing poverty, insecure work or weak local labour markets.

3

Protect and expand accessible paid entry routes into secure and socially valued work through apprenticeships, paid retraining and vocational training, with support for retention and progression.



Change in Action: Employment and skills

A range of organisations are already offering practical models, evidence and learning that can be built on to help deliver the change called for in this report. These include the following two examples:

Case study

Street League is working to tackle poverty and youth unemployment by combining sport with tailored support for 16- to 30-year-olds living in some of the UK's most disadvantaged communities. Alongside skills development and job-search support, its programmes use regular physical activity and trusted relationships with staff to help young people address personal and practical barriers to education, training and employment.

The model recognises that young people may need confidence, structure, connection and sustained support as well as qualifications or help applying for jobs. In 2024/25, 3,079 young people joined Street League's employability programmes, 1,765 progressed into employment, education or training, and 989 sustained that destination for at least six months. By bringing together shared activity, personalised support and clear routes into work, Street League provides a practical example of helping young people build purpose, capability and a more secure pathway into adult life.⁹⁸

For more information go to www.streetleague.co.uk

Case study

The King's Trust Team programme is a free 12-week personal-development and employability programme for 16- to 25-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training. It combines a residential experience, a community project, work experience, employability support and a qualification, giving young people practical responsibilities, structured support and opportunities to contribute alongside others.

By building confidence, teamwork, connection and a sense of achievement alongside employment skills, the programme offers more than short-term job-search support. It provides a practical model for helping young people develop purpose, recognised social value and a clearer pathway into education, training or sustained employment. Two thirds of young people who complete the Team programme move into a positive outcome, including employment or an apprenticeship, education or training, or volunteering.⁹⁹

For more information go to www.kingstrust.org.uk/how-we-can-help/grow-skills-and-confidence/team

CROSS-GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP AND DELIVERY

Finally, none of this can be delivered in silos. These issues, and the government strategies and commitments they relate to, cut across education, health, online safety, youth services, mental health services, employment, justice and violence against women and girls. **Many of the necessary building blocks already exist; the challenge is joining them up**, closing the gaps and ensuring that existing commitments translate into sustained delivery.

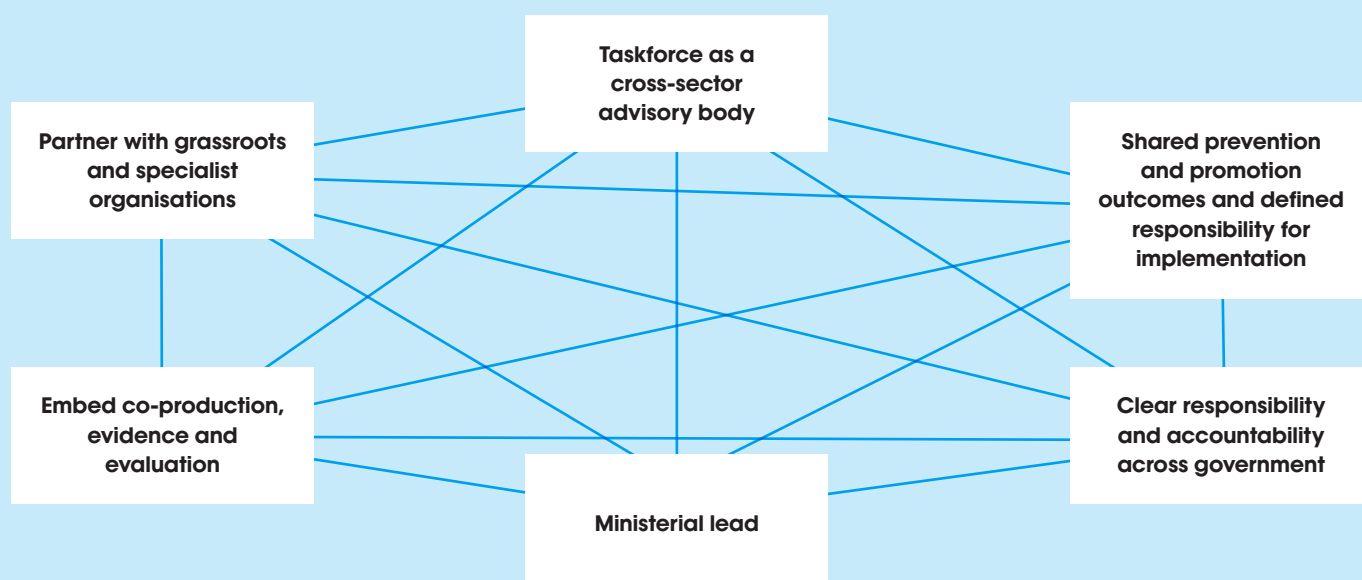
Government should provide clear cross-government leadership and accountability for delivering on our five policy areas. A **cross-government ministerial group should be established, led by the existing minister with responsibility for men and boys**, with a clear mandate to coordinate policy and delivery across relevant departments and policy areas. This should be supported by **clear shared prevention outcomes and defined responsibilities for implementation** across government. Policy, funding and delivery should be coordinated by the government with regulators, public services and wider partners so that action is sustained rather than fragmented or short term.

This should be underpinned by co-production, evidence and evaluation, involving boys and

young men, women and girls, frontline practitioners and relevant sectors in shaping policy and how services, interventions and spaces are designed and delivered, with transparent reporting on progress and outcomes. The **Cross-Sector Taskforce on Online Misogyny and Men's Mental Health** should continue as an advisory body, providing a mechanism for cross-sector organisations and frontline expertise to inform government policy, and to engage and advise relevant ministers and officials.

Government should also build **sustained, mutually beneficial partnerships with grassroots, community and specialist organisations**, drawing on their evidence, delivery expertise and trusted relationships to design, test, fund and scale interventions rather than duplicating or displacing effective practice. The examples throughout this report show that practical models, evidence and learning already exist across sectors and can be built on.

Taken together, these measures would help move policy beyond fragmented and reactive responses towards a more coherent national approach to preventing online misogyny and its wider harms, while promoting boys' and young men's mental health, connection and opportunity.



Detailed recommendations for policy action

Building on the priority actions outlined in each section, the following detailed recommendations set out the action needed across the five policy areas to deliver a coordinated, preventative systems approach to preventing online misogyny and promoting men's mental health.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION SETTINGS

The government should build on and strengthen its existing statutory **RSE and Health Education** guidance, **Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy** external-provider investment and commitment to ensure every secondary school in England has access to a credible offer for educating students about healthy and respectful relationships by 2029, the **Media Literacy Action Plan**, and wider commitments on digital and media literacy set out through **Ofcom's media literacy duties** and the **Growing Up in the Online World** commitments. Specifically, the government should:

- **Strengthen mandatory, age-appropriate Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE)** 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 about:
 - Digital and media literacy, including online conflict, AI strengths and limitations, rejection and shame, dehumanisation, and how algorithms amplify misogyny and provide financial incentives for its promotion, highlighting its inauthenticity.
 - Critical thinking, self-esteem, sexual health and gender equality for all.
 - Loneliness, emotional literacy 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.
- Ensure **training is mandatory for school leaders and staff** on misogyny, online and AI harms, consent, harmful behaviours and positive masculinities, **as part of a whole school approach**.
- **Equip parents, carers and other trusted adults to have informed conversations with young people** in their lives about relationships, being a bystander, online harms, pornography, and masculinities.
- **Invest in high-quality, scalable and locally adaptable "train-the-trainer" models**, developed with specialist organisations and practitioners, that equip teachers and youth workers, coaches and trusted adults with confidence, capacity and tools to lead and deliver these sessions regularly and with the appropriate framing.
- **Develop educational interventions for the digital spaces** young people already inhabit and where they find community, not only in classroom environments.
- Provide **sustained, dedicated funding for schools and specialist organisations** to deliver and embed high-quality prevention work, enabling schools to work with organisations with expertise in masculinities, relationships and online harms and adapt provision to local needs.

- **Collate existing but siloed school and parent resources** in this area to support access to them.
- **Commit to a specialist teacher in every school**, ideally supported by credible and trusted messengers – including trained specialists, mentors, coaches and peer educators.
- **Scale existing educational initiatives** that have already shown impact and success.
- **Enable and invest in safe spaces – single-sex and mixed – for friendship, connection and for dialogue** on these issues, including how online content affects others.
- **Support the delivery of relationship, digital literacy and emotional learning** not only in schools, but also in colleges, sports clubs, youth organisations, faith groups and workplaces.
- **Strengthen regulatory oversight on platforms and services to prevent algorithmic promotion and monetisation** of misogynistic and VAWG-related content, including “lawful-but-harmful” content.¹⁰⁰
- Compel platforms to **give users meaningful control** over recommender systems, including the ability to **easily reset or select content-curation algorithms or opt out entirely from algorithmic suggestions**.¹⁰¹
- **Enact stronger regulation** for the following, building on existing policy:
 - **Transparency on how algorithms can intensify harmful and misogynistic content.**
 - **Recommender systems and amplification mechanisms.**
 - **Reduce the availability, recommendation and amplification of pornography depicting violent, coercive and other non-consensual or degrading acts.**
 - **Banning generative AI systems and apps used for nudification, sexualised deepfakes, harassment and non-consensual intimate imagery, sextortion** and other forms of technology-facilitated abuse.
 - Prevent 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.
- **Monitor whether existing legislation and regulation are adequately protecting all children**, including children with additional needs, and **take further regulatory or enforcement action where platforms fail to meet their duties**, particularly in relation to emerging AI harms.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON TECH REGULATION

The **Online Safety Act**, **Ofcom’s Protection of Children Codes of Practice** and **VAWG guidance**, the July 2026 **Growing Up in the Online World** commitments, and the government’s wider work on children’s online safety provide important foundations. Implementation and enforcement now need to address not only harmful content, but the systems that amplify, monetise and normalise it. Building on existing policy, government and Ofcom should:

- **Make Ofcom guidance on VAWG mandatory**, and **create new Ofcom guidance to protect men and boys from specific internet harms**. Require proof of compliance through transparent public reporting, named senior accountability, and independent safety testing.
- **Monitor whether existing legislation and regulation are adequately protecting all children**, including children with additional needs, and **take further regulatory or enforcement action where platforms fail to meet their duties**, particularly in relation to emerging AI harms.

- **Disrupt financial incentives that reward misogyny**, particularly ending the monetisation of misogynistic content among certain influencers (the “grifter model”).
- **Move from ‘safety by design’ to ‘safety, care and connection’ by design**. This should include **safer default settings and removal of features that foreseeably increase exposure to harm**, particularly for children.
- **Acknowledge the online/offline continuum**: online harms can often translate into real-world harms, including abuse, coercion, grooming and VAWG.
- **Encourage platforms to privilege reciprocal interaction and route users toward positive connections online and offline**, and promote ‘off-ramps’ to real-world groups (such as sports groups and in-person meetups).
- **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 pornography on behaviours and effective interventions.
- Explore **risk-based, age-appropriate safeguards, restrictions and safer platform design** for children and adolescents, incorporating the **distinct risks experienced by children with additional needs**.
- **Monitor how under-16 restrictions work in practice** and use insights and learnings from Australia’s under-16s social media ban to explore effective enforcement measures, ensure young people still seek help for online harms, and inform and equip parents with how to protect and support children despite the ban.
- **Develop a regularly updated typology of gendered online harms** affecting children and young people, drawing on Ofcom’s Children’s Register of Risks,¹⁰² and evidence from specialist organisations.
- **Provide public education and practical support for parents and carers to navigate online risks and opportunities** with their children. **Improve awareness of the Government’s online-safety parent hub and include tailored guidance** for families of children with additional needs and signpost to proven specialist resources.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The government has already made a number of relevant commitments through **Young Futures Hubs**, the **10 Year Health Plan**, the **expansion of Mental Health Support Teams** and the **Men’s Health Strategy for England**, and the recently announced **expansion of community mental health centres and dedicated mental health emergency departments**. The developing **cross-government Mental Health Strategy** and planned **10 Year Workforce Plan** provide an opportunity to deliver much needed action and investment on improving access to mental health support for boys and young men, across prevention, early intervention and specialist care. Building on these, the government should:

- **Expand and improve access to mental health services** for young people, including through same-day open-access drop-in provision offering immediate clinical and non-clinical support, with community-based and self-referral routes available to young people up to the age of 25.

- **Establish a “no wrong front door” early-support pathway through Young Futures Hubs and connected local services**, bringing together mental health, youth, employment, housing and other relevant support services.
- **Commit to a Young Futures Hub, or equivalent early-support hub, in every local authority**, backed by clear national standards and milestones, sufficient long-term funding, and implementation informed by existing best practice, with a plan to achieve 70% coverage by 2030 and full coverage by 2035.
- **Commission and evaluate male-friendly early-support models** including activity-based groups, peer support, mentoring, sport-based provision and online-to-offline support, to reduce isolation, build resilience and help young men navigate mental health services.
- **Co-design interventions with boys and young men** to help encourage help-seeking without humiliation or blame and actively reduce shame and stigma.
- **Adopt a public health approach** that prioritises the prevention of mental ill-health.
- **Support the training of coaches, youth workers and community leaders to act as mental health connectors**, helping young people recognise when they need support and access appropriate services.
- **Invest in and adequately staff specialist children and young people’s mental health services** to provide timely specialist care for urgent and severe needs.
- **Co-locate mental health support in accessible and familiar settings**, including gyms, community centres and workplaces.
- **Develop online mental health services and peer-support provision** alongside accessible offline services.
- **Develop clear, best-practice guidance and train health professionals**, in partnership with specialist organisations experienced in engaging boys and young men, to understand how **male socialisation and experiences of shame can affect help-seeking, communication and engagement** with services.
- **Improve support pathways for problematic pornography use and related harms**, including appropriate routes for the disclosure of domestic abuse, and consider the development of NICE guidance on pornography-related harms.
- **Fully fund and protect the continued rollout of Mental Health Support Teams** to achieve national coverage across schools and colleges.
- **Ensure that neighbourhood health centres include mental health provision for children and young people and are closely connected to school-based teams, early-support hubs, and voluntary and community-sector services.**
- **Ensure the upcoming 10 Year Workforce Plan addresses the long-term funding, recruitment, retention, training and staffing capacity required** across specialist children and young people’s mental health services to meet increased demand.
- **Ensure NHS mental health provision is developmentally appropriate** through the transition into adulthood, with clear **pathways between children and young people’s and adult services** and no automatic transfer or discharge at age 18 so young people do not fall through gaps at age-based thresholds.
- **Introduce a single named point of contact from referral to treatment to help young people and their families navigate services**, including during transitions from children’s to adult services and following discharge from hospital.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON PROSOCIAL ONLINE AND OFFLINE SPACES

Building on the emerging social infrastructure set out in the government's **Youth Matters National Youth Strategy**, **Young Futures Hubs** and **Better Youth Spaces**, alongside **Growing Up in the Online World**, the **Online Safety Act** and wider media-literacy work, the recommendations below suggest how to build belonging, trusted relationships, contribution and healthier models of masculinity, both online and offline, through targeted action. The government should:

- **Treat belonging and trusted relationships as prevention infrastructure**, ensuring young people – particularly teenage boys and vulnerable youth – can access safe places, a trusted adult and meaningful opportunities to contribute, including spaces for connection and discussion of gendered norms among peers.
- **Invest in high-quality youth work and provide youth centres and clubs in every community with trained youth workers.**
- **Ensure offline and online spaces** for boys and young men are **adaptable to different local, cultural and community contexts**. Provision **should be** accessible to disabled and neurodivergent young people.
- **Support positive fatherhood and caregiving** as empowering for young men and as protective factors for wellbeing.
- **Expand adequately paid paternity leave**, inclusive of adoptive, same-sex and self-employed parents.
- **Improve access to affordable childcare and promote workplace practices that support flexible working** and enable parents to take leave without financial or career penalties.
- **Incentivise and fund moderated prosocial 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 arts, community theatre and storytelling initiatives** that deliver youth provision and **model healthy masculinities and relationships**.
- **Support sports clubs** (particularly football) as key prosocial young male spaces.
- Support actions that **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, trusted adults, and encouraging the positive role of dads.
 - **Safe mixed-gender spaces** for dialogue, belonging and shared activities, supporting boys, girls, non-binary and trans youth to connect.
- Provide **guidance to ensure male peer groups are structured with clear norms** (such as respect and accountability), age-specific membership, and offer regular meetings. These peer groups should also seek to 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 using traditional conversational approaches.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

Building on the government's existing initiatives, including the expanded **Youth Guarantee**, **Youth Jobs Grant**, **DWP Youth Hubs**, **Young Futures Hubs**, **Growth and Skills Levy reforms**, apprenticeships and foundation apprenticeships, **TechFirst**, **careers reform and work-experience commitments**, the recommendations below set out how employment and skills policy can provide not only routes into work, but also dignity, purpose, belonging and social value. The government should:

- **Expand routes into growth sectors and shortage occupations where men's contributions are needed and valuable**, including care, teaching, health, green industries and skilled trades. Employ explicit messaging that men are needed in caregiving, educational, community and prevention roles.
- **Provide targeted employment and skills support for young men affected by educational, economic and structural disadvantage**, including:
 - Vocational training, apprenticeships and paid retraining.
 - Transitions into care, teaching, mentoring, health, community leadership, green jobs and skilled trades.
 - Personalised employment, health and skills support for young men facing disability, ill health or complex barriers, alongside an adequate financial safety net.
- **Protect and rebuild entry points into work** by supporting government, employers and the public sector to create genuine paid routes through apprenticeships, work experience, vocational training, paid retraining and accessible entry-level jobs.

- **Support pathways that build contribution, purpose, belonging and social value** – not only employability – with success measured through sustained participation, progression, confidence, reduced isolation and healthier relationships, as well as entry into work.
- **Support educational curricula and programmes** that support **diverse educational pathways and practical life skills** for young men.
- **Engage employers, corporations, trade unions and workplaces as partners** in gender equality, VAWG prevention, men's health and workplace wellbeing.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CROSS-GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP AND DELIVERY

Across these areas, government should provide **clear cross-government leadership and accountability through a cross-government ministerial group, led by the minister with responsibility for men and boys, with shared prevention outcomes and defined responsibility for implementation**. The **Cross-Sector Taskforce should continue as an advisory body**, providing a mechanism for cross-sector and frontline expertise to inform government policy and to engage and advise relevant ministers and officials.



Further engagement & research

This report is intended as a starting point for action in a complex and rapidly developing area, drawing on existing evidence and cross-sector expertise. Further work should therefore both develop the recommendations in this roadmap into tested, co-produced solutions and address important gaps in the wider evidence base.

Co-creation with young people

While the voices of young people have informed this work, and their views and experiences have been brought into discussions by the members of the Taskforce, additional work is needed to ensure this work is continuously informed by young people themselves. A priority should be further participatory engagement with young people to test the findings and recommendations in this report and help shape practical solutions. We need to know from boys and young men themselves, alongside girls and young women and trans and non-binary young people, about the challenges they experience, their support needs, which messages and messengers are credible, what safeguards and controls they want online, and what would help them move towards healthier online and offline relationships and communities. Parents and carers, teachers, youth workers, and frontline mental health practitioners should also be included.

Wider research priorities

Important gaps remain in understanding the causes, effects and prevention of online misogyny, and in the interconnections with young men's and boys' health and wellbeing. Priorities for future research include:

- **Schools-based prevention:** identifying the most effective schools-based model for preventing online misogyny, including the appropriate combination of whole-school approaches, curriculum content, trusted adults, specialist facilitators and peer-led work.
- **Meaningful technology regulation:** exploring regulatory and design approaches that address recommender systems, platform and influencer monetisation, AI-generated harms, harmful business models and young people's control over their online experiences.
- **Effective 'off-ramps':** understanding what helps young people move from harmful or isolating online spaces towards positive relationships, communities, youth services, sport, creative pursuits, mentoring, volunteering, education and employment.
- **Loneliness and social isolation:** examining how loneliness, poor mental health, insecurity and a lack of belonging may increase the appeal of misogynistic communities, and whether engagement with these spaces can in turn deepen isolation and undermine real-world relationships.
- **Content, exposure and influence:** understanding which forms of content, narratives, communities and influencers are most likely to affect attitudes, behaviour, mental health and relationships, and what the short- and long-term consequences of exposure may be.
- **Causality:** examining whether harmful content changes young men's attitudes, reinforces beliefs they already hold, or attracts those already experiencing grievance, insecurity or limiting views about women and gender equality.

- **Masculine identities and boys' online lives:** build on existing international evidence to examine how contemporary narratives about status, success, appearance, emotional restriction, rejection and gender relations interact to shape boys' and young men's developing masculine identities and lives, particularly online, and their implications for health, wellbeing and relationships.
- **Public health prevention:** investigating whether a public health approach to online misogyny and boys' and men's mental health could also reduce vulnerability to extremist, conspiratorial and anti-gender narratives by strengthening belonging, critical digital literacy, trusted relationships and social and economic security.
- **Differences between groups:** understanding how experiences, risks and effective responses vary according to age, class, ethnicity, disability and neurodiversity, sexuality, faith, education and geography.

The purpose of this further work should not simply be to produce more evidence that online misogyny and its associated harms exist or that young men and boys, together with women and girls, deserve our attention. It should establish what works, for whom and in which circumstances, and translate that evidence into practical action for government, funders, schools, services, regulators and the third sector. Men and Policy and its cross-sector partners are well placed to help convene and develop this next phase.

Conclusion

Online misogyny, violence against women and girls, and the deteriorating mental health and social connection of boys and young men are distinct challenges, but they are not separate problems. They are shaped by overlapping systems, inequalities and unmet needs, and require an equally connected response. Accountability for harm remains essential, but lasting change also depends on prevention: safer digital environments, effective education, accessible early support, trusted relationships, meaningful spaces and credible pathways into secure and socially valued roles.

This requires a coordinated, preventative systems approach that acts upstream, strengthens protective factors and coordinates action across the interconnected social, economic, cultural and technological conditions shaping young people's lives.

The UK government already has many of the necessary building blocks. The task now is to connect them, close the gaps and ensure that commitments across education, health, online safety, VAWG, youth services and employment translate into sustained delivery.

To embed this work, government and organisations should support and strengthen the Cross-Sector Taskforce on Online Misogyny and Men's Mental Health established through this project, with continued participation in its activities. The Taskforce should continue to build its membership and have the opportunity to feed directly into government and meet with relevant ministers. This will benefit government through the inputs, ideas and challenges the Taskforce can provide to help inform current and future policy and commitments, and also strengthen accountability among relevant departments towards the sectoral and frontline organisations within the Taskforce.

This approach can help boys and young men build connection, purpose and healthier, more flexible models of masculinity, while supporting safer relationships, stronger communities and greater equality for women and girls.

Resource List

- 42nd Street (2020), [Annual Report 2019–2020](#).
- Amnesty International UK (2025), [Toxic Tech: How Misogyny Is Shaping Gen Z's Online Experience](#).
- Anna Freud Centre (2020), Evaluation of 42nd Street's Integrated Community Response Service (TC42).
- Bath Institute for Digital Security and Behaviour (2026), [A 10-Point Plan for Addressing Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls Through the Online Safety Act](#), University of Bath.
- Beyond Equality (2025), [Impact Report 2024–25](#).
- Barnes C, Hall A, Mantach S, Oldmeadow C, Attia J, Backholer K et al. (2026), [Assessing early effects of Australia's Social Media Minimum Age Act on adolescents' social media use: observational study](#), BMJ.
- Burrell, S. R. and Westmarland, N. (2025), [New Paths to Prevention: Engaging More Boys and Men in Ending Violence Against Women](#), produced for the Firebird Foundation and End Violence Against Women Coalition.
- Centre for Young Lives (2026), [Don't Blame Your Life, Blame Your Face: How Online Masculinity Content and Looksmaxxing Is Pushing Some Boys and Young Men to Extremes](#).
- Centre for Mental Health, Centre for Young Lives, Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition and YoungMinds (2025), [Future Minds: Why Investing in Children's Mental Health Will Unlock Economic Growth](#).
- Centre for Social Justice (2025), [Lost Boys: The State of the Nation](#).
- Centre for Social Justice (2026), [Lost Boys: Mentors and Role Models](#).
- Children's Commissioner for England (2023), ['A Lot of It Is Actually Just Abuse': Young People and Pornography](#).
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2025), [Youth Matters: Your National Youth Strategy](#).
- Department for Education (2025), [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education: Statutory Guidance for Introduction from 1 September 2026](#).
- Department for Education (2025), [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education: Equality Impact Assessment and Public Sector Equality Duty](#).
- Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (2026), [A Safe, Informed Digital Nation: Government's Media Literacy Action Plan 2026–2029](#).
- Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (2026), [Entry-level Hiring in the UK: A Snapshot](#).
- Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (2026), [Fact Sheet: New Rules to Protect Children Online](#).
- Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (2026), [Growing Up in the Online World: A National Conversation](#).
- Department for Work and Pensions (2024), [Employment Data Lab Analysis: Street League Academy, Street Sports and Schools Programmes](#).
- Department for Work and Pensions (2026), [The Employment of Disabled People 2025](#).
- Department for Work and Pensions (2026), [Young People and Work: Interim Report](#).
- Department of Health and Social Care (2025), [Fit for the Future: 10 Year Health Plan for England](#).
- Department of Health and Social Care (2025), [Men's health: a strategic vision for England](#).
- Department of Health and Social Care (2026), [Government to Transform Mental Health Care with New Strategy](#).
- Department of Health and Social Care (2026), [Major Expansion of Community Mental Health Support Across England](#).
- EE (2026), [EE Highlights Football's Role in Building Boys Up On and Off the Pitch as New Research Reveals Four in Ten Are Exposed to Harmful Online Messages Weekly](#).
- Equimundo and Beyond Equality (2025), [Equimundo's State of UK Men 2025](#).
- Gupta, T., van der Gaag, N., Vlahovicova, K. and Lewis, C. (2026), [State of the World's Fathers 2026: Stretched to the Breaking Point](#), Equimundo: Center for Masculinities and Social Justice.
- eSafety Commissioner (2026), [Social Media Minimum Age: March 2026 Compliance Update](#), Australian Government.
- Football Beyond Borders (2026), [The Trusted Adult Deficit: Why Embedding the Trusted Adult Guarantee into School Strategies Matters](#).
- Football Beyond Borders (2025), [Launching the Lost Boys Taskforce to Back the Trusted Adult Guarantee](#).
- Gottert, A., Pulerwitz, J., Weiner, R. et al., [Systematic review of reviews on interventions to engage men and boys as clients, partners and agents of change for improved sexual and reproductive health and rights](#), BMJ Open, 15(1) (2025).
- Groundswell Project, [What We Do](#).
- Groundswell Project, [Training](#).
- Groundswell Project (2026), [2025/26 Impact Report](#).
- Home Office (2025), [Freedom from Violence and Abuse: A Cross-Government Strategy to Build a Safer Society for Women and Girls](#).
- Home Office (2025), [Freedom from Violence and Abuse, Volume 2: Action Plan](#).
- HOPE not hate (2026), [Digital Trapdoors: Gendered Pathways to Youth Radicalisation](#).
- House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee (2025), [Equality at Work: Paternity and Shared Parental Leave](#).
- House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee (2025), [Oral Evidence: Misogyny, the Manosphere and Online Content](#).
- Hunter, A. L. (2025), [Beyond Two Weeks: How Paternity Leave Can Help Build a Better Vision of Masculinity](#), White Ribbon UK.
- Internet Matters (2026), [Every Child Safe Online: Supporting Children with Additional Needs](#).

- Internet Matters, [Guides and Resources](#).
- Katz, J. (2025), [Every Man: Why Violence Against Women Is a Men's Issue, and How You Can Make a Difference](#), Penguin Life.
- King's College London (2025), [Public Attitudes to Mental Health Are Going Backwards, Warns Mind](#).
- The King's Trust (2026), [Written Evidence Submitted by the King's Trust \(YEETO183\)](#), February 2026.
- The King's Trust, [Team Programme](#).
- The Oldham Times, 'The Oldham school teaching "progressive masculinity" to boys'.
- Male Allies UK (2025), [The Voice of the Boys: How Boys in Secondary School Education Feel About Being a Boy Today](#).
- Mayor of London, London Violence Reduction Unit (2026), [Online Harms: Social Media and Violence](#).
- Mayor of London (2026), [Mayor Announces £5m Investment in City-Wide Approach to Tackling Impact of Algorithm-Fuelled Online Harms and Violence](#).
- McGorry, P. D. and Mei, C. (2018), [Early Intervention in Youth Mental Health: Progress and Future Directions](#), Evidence-Based Mental Health, 21(4), 182–184.
- Mental Health Foundation, [Becoming a Man](#).
- Mental Health Foundation (2025), [Online Communities, Online Safety and Young People: Our Policy Perspective](#).
- Mike Nicholson, 'Our Men of Tomorrow: Creating the Conditions for Boys to Thrive', in *Men For All Seasons* (in press).
- Mind (2025), [Care Before Crisis: Our Report on Young People's Mental Health](#).
- Molly Rose Foundation (2026), [Australia's Social Media Ban – Is It Working? Research Briefing](#).
- Morgan, S., Hamilton, A., Harland, K. and Murphy, B. (2024), [Taking Boys Seriously: 2018–2023 Report – Embedding Gender-Conscious Relational Learning to Tackle Compounded Educational Disadvantage](#), Ulster University.
- Movember Institute of Men's Health (2025), [Young Men's Health in a Digital World](#).
- Movember Institute of Men's Health (2026), [The Manosphere Content Classification Framework](#).
- Movember Institute of Men's Health (2026), [Inside the Manosphere: A World-First Look at What Young Men Actually See on TikTok](#).
- Movember Institute of Men's Health (2026), [Introducing Our Young Men and Media Collective 'Test and Learn' Cohort 2026](#).
- NASUWT (2025), [Behaviour in Schools 2025](#).
- NHS England (2023), [Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2023: Wave 4 Follow-Up to the 2017 Survey](#).
- O'Connor, E. C., Ford, T. E. and Banos, N. C. (2017), [Restoring Threatened Masculinity: The Appeal of Sexist and Anti-Gay Humor](#), Sex Roles, 77, 567–580.
- Ofcom (2025), [A Safer Life Online for Women and Girls: Practical Guidance for Tech Companies](#).
- Ofcom (2025), [Children's Register of Risks](#).
- Office for National Statistics (2026), [Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training \(NEET\), UK: August 2026](#).
- Online Safety Act Network (2026), [Safety by Design: Code of Practice](#).
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2025), [Social Connections and Loneliness in OECD Countries](#).
- Over, H., Bunce, C., Baggaley, J. and Zendle, D. (2025), [Understanding the Influence of Online Misogyny in Schools from the Perspective of Teachers](#), PLOS ONE, 20(2), e0299339.
- Over, H., Bunce, C., Konu, D. and Zendle, D. (2025), [Editorial Perspective: What Do We Need to Know About the Manosphere and Young People's Mental Health?](#), Child and Adolescent Mental Health.
- PAPYRUS, [Statistics](#) (accessed June 2026).
- Progressive Masculinity, [Exploring Masculinities](#).
- PSHE Association (2025), [Statutory RSHE Impact: Keeping More Children Safe Through Education](#).
- Regehr, K., Shaughnessy, C., Zhao, M. and Shaughnessy, N. (2024), [Safer Scrolling: How Algorithms Popularise and Gamify Online Hate and Misogyny for Young People](#), UCL and the University of Kent, in collaboration with the Association of School and College Leaders.
- Royal United Services Institute (2026), [Hostile States and the Far Right: Converging Tactics](#).
- Royal United Services Institute (2026), [Tracking Money and Influence in the UK and Europe](#).
- Shand, T. (2026), [Bitter Pill](#), Fabian Society.
- Sparks, B. (2023), [How Healthcare Can Help Young Men Find Alternatives to Online Misogyny](#), BMJ, 383, p2947.
- Street League (2025), [Annual Report 2024–25](#).
- Ulster University (2021), [Taking Boys Seriously Principles: Boys as Relational Learners](#).
- University of Bristol (n.d.), [IRIS+: Improving the General Practice Response to Domestic Violence and Abuse](#).
- UN Women, [Policy Brief No.23: Working with Men and Boys for Gender Equality: State of Play and Future Directions](#) (2021).
- UN Women, [What is the manosphere and why should we care?](#) (2025).
- Upton, J., Hazell, A., Abbott, R. and Pilling, K. (2020), [The Relationship Between Pornography Use and Harmful Sexual Attitudes and Behaviours: Literature Review, prepared for the Government Equalities Office](#).
- World Health Organization (2025), [From Loneliness to Social Connection: Charting a Path to Healthier Societies](#).
- YoungMinds (2025), [52% Increase in Young People Waiting Over a Year for Mental Health Support](#).
- Youth Access and partners (2025), [A Blueprint for Young Futures Hubs](#).
- Zaza, J. (2025), [Undisciplined? Entitled? Lazy? Gen Z Faces Familiar Flood of Workplace Criticism](#), The Guardian.

References

- 1 Movember Institute of Men's Health, [Young men's health in a digital world](#) (2025).
- 2 Amnesty International UK, [Toxic Tech: New Polling Exposes Widespread Online Misogyny Driving Gen Z Away from Social Media](#) (2025).
- 3 Movember Institute of Men's Health, [Young men's health in a digital world](#) (2025).
- 4 Ofcom, [A Safer Life Online for Women and Girls: Practical Guidance for Tech Companies](#) (2025).
- 5 Barker, K. and Jurasz, O. (2019), 'Online Misogyny: A Challenge for Digital Feminism?', *Journal of International Affairs*, 72(2), pp. 95–114.
- 6 Ofcom (2025), [A Safer Life Online for Women and Girls: Practical Guidance for Tech Companies](#).
- 7 UN Women, [What is the mansphere and why should we care?](#) (2025).
- 8 Kristina Wilfore, *Keynote Speech, Supporting Women in Public Life*, Northern Ireland Assembly Women's Caucus, 5 February 2026.
- 9 NASUWT The Teachers' Union, *Behaviour in Schools 2025*, (2025).
- 10 Over, H., Bunce, C., Baggaley, J. and Zendle, D. (2025), 'Understanding the influence of online misogyny in schools from the perspective of teachers', *PLOS ONE*, 20(2), e0299339.
- 11 End Violence Against Women Coalition, [New Paths to Prevention: Engaging More Boys and Men in Ending Violence Against Women](#) (2025).
- 12 Male Allies UK, [The Voice of the Boys: How boys in secondary school education feel about being a boy today](#) (2025).
- 13 *ibid.*
- 14 Gottert, A., Pulerwitz, J., Weiner, R. et al., [Systematic review of reviews on interventions to engage men and boys as clients, partners and agents of change for improved sexual and reproductive health and rights](#), *BMJ Open*, 15(1) (2025).
- 15 UN Women, [Policy Brief No.23: Working with Men and Boys for Gender Equality: State of Play and Future Directions](#) (2021).
- 16 Equimundo, [State of the World's Fathers 2026: Stretched to the Breaking Point](#) (2026).
- 17 UK Government, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 'Youth Matters: Your National Youth Strategy' (2025); Department of Health and Social Care, 'Fit for the Future: 10 Year Health Plan for England' (2025); Home Office, 'Freedom from Violence and Abuse: A Cross-Government Strategy to Build a Safer Society for Women and Girls' (2025); Department of Health and Social Care, 'Men's health: a strategic vision for England' (2025); Department of Health and Social Care, 'Government to Transform Mental Health Care with New Strategy' (2026).
- 18 UK Government, Home Office, [Freedom from Violence and Abuse: A Cross-Government Strategy to Build a Safer Society for Women and Girls](#) (2025).
- 19 HOPE Not Hate, [Digital Trapdoors: Gendered Pathways to Youth Radicalisation](#) (2026).
- 20 PSHE Association, [Statutory RSHE impact: keeping more children safe through education](#) (2025).
- 21 End Violence Against Women Coalition, [New Paths to Prevention: Engaging More Boys and Men in Ending Violence Against Women](#) (2025).
- 22 Mental Health Foundation, [Online Communities, Online Safety and Young People: Our Policy Perspective](#) (2025).
- 23 Morgan, S., Hamilton, A., Harland, K. and Murphy, B., *Taking Boys Seriously: 2018–2023 Report: Embedding Gender-Conscious Relational Learning to Tackle Compounded Educational Disadvantage* (2024).
- 24 *ibid.*
- 25 UK Government, Department for Education, [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education \(RSE\) and Health Education \(for introduction 1 September 2026\)](#), (2025).
- 26 UK Government, Department for Education, [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education Equality Impact Assessment and Public Sector Equality Duty](#) (2025).
- 27 Beyond Equality, [2024/25 Impact Report](#) (2025).
- 28 The Oldham Times, ['The Oldham school teaching "progressive masculinity" to boys'](#).
- 29 Male Allies UK, [The Voice of the Boys: How boys in secondary school education feel about being a boy today](#) (2025).
- 30 HOPE not hate, [Digital Trapdoors: Gendered Pathways to Youth Radicalisation](#) (2026).

- 31 Mayor of London, Violence Reduction Unit, [Online Harms: Social Media and Violence](#) (2026).
- 32 Laura Bates, House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, [Oral evidence: Misogyny, the manosphere and online content](#) (2025).
- 33 Regehr, K., Shaughnessy, C., Zhao, M. and Shaughnessy, N., *Safer Scrolling: How algorithms popularise and gamify online hate and misogyny for young people*, UCL and the University of Kent, in collaboration with the Association of School and College Leaders, (2024).
- 34 HOPE not hate, [Digital Trapdoors: Gendered Pathways to Youth Radicalisation](#) (2026).
- 35 Movember Institute of Men's Health, [Young men's health in a digital world](#) (2025).
- 36 Internet Matters, [Every Child Safe Online: Supporting Children with Additional Needs](#), Research Briefing, (2026).
- 37 Ofcom, [A Safer Life Online for Women and Girls: Practical Guidance for Tech Companies](#) (2025).
- 38 Children's Commissioner for England, 'A Lot of It Is Actually Just Abuse': Young People and Pornography (2023).
- 39 Upton, J., Hazell, A., Abbott, R. and Pilling, K., *The Relationship Between Pornography Use and Harmful Sexual Attitudes and Behaviours: Literature Review, prepared for the Government Equalities Office* (2020).
- 40 UK Government, Home Office, *Freedom from Violence and Abuse: A Cross-Government Strategy to Build a Safer Society for Women and Girls* (2025).
- 41 UK Government, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, [Fact sheet: New rules to protect children online](#) (2026).
- 42 Molly Rose Foundation, [Australia's social media ban – is it working?](#) Research briefing, April 2026.
- 43 Barnes C, Hall A, Mantach S, Oldmeadow C, Attia J, Backholer K et al., [Assessing early effects of Australia's Social Media Minimum Age Act on adolescents' social media use: observational study](#), BMJ, June 2026.
- 44 Australian Government, eSafety Commissioner, [Social Media Minimum Age: March 2026 Compliance Update](#) (2026).
- 45 EE, [EE highlights football's role in building boys up on and off the pitch as new research reveals 4 in 10 are exposed to harmful online messages weekly](#) [accessed June 2026].
- 46 Laura Bates, House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, [Oral evidence: Misogyny, the manosphere and online content](#) (2025).
- 47 Online Safety Act Network, [Safety by Design Code of Practice](#) (2026).
- 48 Mayor of London, [Mayor announces £5m investment in city-wide approach to tackling impact of algorithm-fuelled online harms and violence](#) (2026).
- 49 Movember, [Introducing our Young Men and Media Collective "test and learn" cohort 2026](#) [accessed June 2026].
- 50 Papyrus, [Statistics](#) [accessed June 2026].
- 51 NHS Digital, NHS England, [Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2023 – wave 4 follow up to the 2017 survey](#) (2023).
- 52 Movember Institute of Men's Health, [Young men's health in a digital world](#) (2025).
- 53 World Health Organization, *From loneliness to social connection: Charting a path to healthier societies* (2025).
- 54 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), [Social Connections and Loneliness in OECD Countries](#) (2025).
- 55 WHO, *From loneliness to social connection*, 2025.
- 56 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), [Social Connections and Loneliness in OECD Countries](#) (2025).
- 57 Male Allies UK, [The Voice of the Boys: How boys in secondary school education feel about being a boy today](#) (2025).
- 58 Mind, [Care Before Crisis](#) (2025).
- 59 YoungMinds, [Press release: 52% increase in young people waiting over a year for mental health support](#) (2025).
- 60 Mind, [Care Before Crisis](#) (2025).
- 61 Future Minds, [Why investing in children's mental health will unlock economic growth](#) (2025).
- 62 Over, H., Bunce, C., Konu, D. and Zendle, D., [Editorial Perspective: What do we need to know about the manosphere and young people's mental health?](#) (2025).
- 63 King's College London, [Public attitudes to mental health are going backwards, warns Mind](#) (2025).
- 64 Mental Health Foundation, [Becoming a Man \(BAM\)](#) [accessed June 2025].
- 65 Mind, [Care Before Crisis](#) (2025).

- 66 King's College London, [Public attitudes to mental health are going backwards, warns Mind](#) (2025).
- 67 Centre for Mental Health, Centre for Young Lives, Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition and YoungMinds, [Future Minds: Why Investing in Children's Mental Health Will Unlock Economic Growth](#) (2025); McGorry, P.D. and Mei, C., [Early intervention in youth mental health: progress and future directions](#) (2018).
- 68 Fund the Hubs, [A Blueprint for Young Futures Hubs](#) (2025).
- 69 UK Government, Department of Health and Social Care, [Fit for the Future: 10 Year Health Plan for England](#) (2025); Department of Health and Social Care, [Major expansion of community mental health support across England](#) (2026).
- 70 Department of Health and Social Care, [Men's health: a strategic vision for England](#) (2025).
- 71 UK Government, [10 Year Workforce Plan: Call for Evidence](#) (2025).
- 72 Anna Freud Centre (2020), [Evaluation of 42nd Street's Integrated Community Response Service](#) (TC42).
- 73 Male Allies UK, [The Voice of the Boys: How boys in secondary school education feel about being a boy today](#) (2025).
- 74 Ofcom, [A Safer Life Online for Women and Girls: Practical Guidance for Tech Companies](#) (2025).
- 75 World Health Organization, [From loneliness to social connection: Charting a path to healthier societies](#) (2025).
- 76 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), [Social Connections and Loneliness in OECD Countries](#) (2025).
- 77 NHS England, [Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2023 – wave 4 follow up to the 2017 survey](#) (2023).
- 78 World Health Organization, [From loneliness to social connection: Charting a path to healthier societies](#) (2025).
- 79 Mike Nicholson, [Our Men of Tomorrow: Creating the Conditions for Boys to Thrive in Men For All Seasons](#) (in press).
- 80 Equimundo, [State of the World's Fathers 2026: Stretched to the Breaking Point](#) (2026).
- 81 Centre for Social Justice, [Lost Boys: Mentors and role models](#) (2026).
- 82 Football Beyond Borders, [Launching the Lost Boys Taskforce to Back Trusted Adult Guarantee](#), accessed June 2026 [available [here](#)].
- 83 Alex Lloyd Hunter, [Beyond Two Weeks: How Paternity Leave Can Help Build a Better Vision of Masculinity](#); White Ribbon [accessed June 2025]; UK Parliament, Women & Equalities Committee, [Equality at work: Paternity and shared parental leave](#) (2025).
- 84 Male Allies UK, [The Voice of the Boys: How boys in secondary school education feel about being a boy today](#) (2025).
- 85 UK Government, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, [Youth Matters: Your National Youth Strategy](#) (2025).
- 86 [Football Beyond Borders](#).
- 87 Office for National Statistics, [Young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\), UK: August 2026](#) (2026).
- 88 Department for Work and Pensions, [The employment of disabled people 2025](#) (2026).
- 89 Department for Work and Pensions, [Young people and work: interim report](#) (2026).
- 90 Department for Work and Pensions, [Young people and work: interim report](#) (2026).
- 91 Zaza, J., [Undisciplined? Entitled? Lazy? Gen Z Faces Familiar Flood of Workplace Criticism](#), The Guardian (2025).
- 92 Movember Institute of Men's Health, [Young men's health in a digital world](#) (2025).
- 93 Department for Work and Pensions, [Young people and work: interim report](#) (2026); Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, [Entry-level hiring in the UK: a snapshot](#) (2026).
- 94 Department for Work and Pensions, [Young people and work: interim report](#) (2026).
- 95 Department for Education, [School workforce in England: Report year 2025](#) (2026).
- 96 Skills for Care, [The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England 2025](#) (2025).
- 97 Department for Work and Pensions, [Young people and work: interim report](#) (2026).
- 98 Street League, [Annual Report 2024/25 & DWP Employment Data Lab analysis](#).
- 99 The King's Trust, [Written evidence submitted by the King's Trust \(YEET0183\)](#) (2026).
- 100 Bath Institute for Digital Security and Behaviour, [A 10-Point Plan for Addressing Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls Through the Online Safety Act](#) (2026).
- 101 Online Safety Act Network, [Safety by Design Code of Practice](#) (2026).
- 102 Ofcom, [Children's Register of Risks](#) (2025).

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the organisations and individuals who contributed their time, expertise and feedback to the development of this report, including Lisa Raftery from Fabian Women's Network, Lee Chambers from Male Allies, Dan Guinness and his colleagues at Beyond Equality, Mike Nicholson at Progressive Masculinity, Oliver Chantler, Emily Fu and colleagues at the Mental Health Foundation, Nick Isles and Mark Brooks at the Centre for Policy Research on Men and Boys, Lib Peck and colleagues at London's Violence Reduction Unit, Joey Hasson at SR Trust, Felicity Mulford at the Centre for Information Resilience (CIR), Anne Craanen at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, Kristina Wilfore at Reset Tech, Internet Matters, Online Safety Act Network, George Gabriel at The Dad Shift, Jess Asato MP and Ella Owen, Alistair Strathern MP and Ben Morley, Aisling Barker, Catherine Briody and colleagues at Islington Council, Baroness Sara Hyde, and Nick Vincent at Vincent Design. Their contributions helped to inform and strengthen the final Policy Roadmap.

Particular thanks to Fran and William Perrin for supporting this project. The funders have neither sought nor had any influence over the contents of this report.

About the Authors

Dr Tim Shand has worked to advance policy, research and practice on men and boys' issues, health and wellbeing, gender equality and gender norms for the last two decades. He founded Men and Policy in 2026, building on his earlier Misogyny Policy Project initiative. He chairs the Cross-Sector Taskforce on Online Misogyny and Men's Mental Health (see below). Tim is also co-Director of ShandClarke Consulting, works as a consultant for Global Action on Men's Health (GAMH), and undertakes advocacy to strengthen the policy ecosystem on male fertility in the UK. He is an Honorary Research Fellow at the Institute for Global Health and Development (IGHD) at Queen Margaret University and a founding board member of the UK Centre for Policy Research on Men and Boys (CPRMB). Tim has previously worked at the World Health Organization, International Planned Parenthood Federation, Sonke Gender Justice in South Africa, Georgetown University, and Promundo (now Equimundo) in the United States. He has spoken and published widely on men and boys' issues, masculinities, VAWG and gender equality.

Imogen Grant has worked across policy, advocacy and communications in mental health, children and young people's rights and gender equality for the last decade. She is a Senior Policy Associate at Men and Policy working on addressing online misogyny and supporting men's mental health and is an independent writer and public mental health consultant. She has previously worked with leading UK and international organisations including Mind, UNICEF UK, the Mental Health Foundation and United for Global Mental Health. Her work focuses on translating evidence and lived-experience insight into practical policy recommendations, compelling communications and effective advocacy, with co-production and expertise-by-experience central to her approach. She has co-authored articles published in international public health journals and holds an MSc in Global Mental Health with Distinction from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and King's College London.

Suggested citation

Shand T, Grant I. Reconnecting Boys and Young Men: A Policy Roadmap to Prevent Online Misogyny and Promote Men's Mental Health. Men and Policy. London, 2026.

Read the Summary Report

Go to our website to access the concise version of this Policy Roadmap.





menandpolicy.org

Published September 2026

© Men and Policy 2026

Men and Policy is a Community Interest Company registered in England and Wales, with company number 17081474

Report design by vincentdesign.co.uk