

Ministerial Briefing Note

Outcome of multi-sectoral consultation and parliamentary roundtable on preventing online misogyny and promoting positive masculinities
October 2025

Summary

A multi-sectoral parliamentary roundtable, organised by the [Misogyny Policy Project](#) (MPP), in collaboration with [Jess Asato MP](#), [Male Allies UK](#) and the [Fabian Women's Network](#), was held on 21st May 2025 to collaboratively explore policy solutions that address the root causes of growing misogyny and promote positive masculinity. This was informed by a set of 17 in-depth consultative discussions held by the MPP between November 2024 and May 2025 with a range of multi-sectoral organisations. Participants included MPs, organisations working on men and boys' issues, preventing violence against women and girls (VAWGs) organisations, mental health organisations, Trade Unions, online safety organisations, teachers, thinktanks, universities, sports organisations, funders and government departments. The full list of organisations can be found in the annex below.

The roundtable shared existing research and initiatives and identified policy recommendations that prevent misogyny and online harms while also addressing young men's mental health, supporting healthier masculinities, and preventing violence against women and girls (VAWGs) and child sexual abuse. Key areas of discussion included the role of schools and education, tackling isolation and broader young men's wellbeing and improving digital literacy and addressing harmful online context. Key recommendations were framed around the forthcoming government policy agenda.

Policy actions and opportunities recommended include:

- Policy related to online misogyny should apply an aspirational rather than a deficit approach to men and boys. This includes focusing on prevention as much as accountability, emphasising the benefits of gender equality to everyone's social, economic and mental wellbeing, and seeking regulation rather than solely criminal justice approaches (such as focus on misogyny as a hate crime) which can be limited in impact and could reinforce demonising narratives on young men. This should be reflected in the government's new VAWG Strategy.
- Policy processes should work collaboratively with young people, male and female, and positively engage with and listen to young men's and young women's perspectives and experiences, which builds trust with them and avoids alienating them.
- Policy should meet young men where they are at and understand how patriarchy, conventional masculinities and the pressure for success also negatively impact them. Policy should not treat men and boys as monolithic and should show an understanding of the complexity of their lives and use an intersectional approach.

Key issues and recommendations:

- Addressing growing online misogyny requires a multi-sectoral and departmental approach that spans justice, educational, health, economic, technological and social and cultural responses.
- Positively engaging men and boys is essential to reduce harms they cause to women and girls, to prevent harms to men and boys themselves, and to support and empower all young people and address their needs.
- Policy responses need to be aspirational, understand young men's lives, and include a strong focus on prevention.
- A government working group is needed to improve cross-sectoral civil society and government collaboration on preventing online misogyny and promoting positive masculinities. This forum could form the basis for this working group.
- Forthcoming relevant government policy should be informed by this brief – such as the Online Harms Bill, VAWG Strategy, Men's Health Strategy and National Youth Strategy.

- Address young men's sense of alienation and social dislocation, including through gender sensitive policies which address their aspirations, educational disparities, high suicide rates, unemployment and desire for connection.
- Strengthen tech and online regulation to prevent exposure by young people to harmful content, including preventing algorithmic manipulation, interrupting the link between financial incentives for influencers and the spread of misogynistic content, raising the digital age of consent and improving age verification measures, improving tech company procedures for addressing harms, strengthening Ofcom's role in oversight of online safety and better regulating porn content online. This should be reflected in any new legislation and guidelines around online harms.
- Address misogyny and the influence of the manosphere in schools and other educational institutions, including through a [Whole School Approach](#) that goes beyond one-off sessions and uses specialist leads and has school leadership buy-in, develop nationally provided for materials, effective teacher training, provide clear approaches for schools on smart phone use and expand the availability of counsellors in schools.
- Engage employers to implement workplace programmes that prevent and respond to misogyny and intersecting sexism and racism and other forms of discrimination in the workplace.
- Scale-up the focus on preventing VAWG, including the prevention of violence among children and young people and preventing the growth of physical and sexual violence against women and girls as a result of online content.
- Address men's ill-health as a critical part of responding to misogyny, and include a focus on this issue within the new Men's Health Strategy.
- Improve young people's mental health and wellbeing.
- Promote positive fatherhood and men's involvement in caregiving, including through parental leave provision.
- Support parents to better navigate the risks, challenges and opportunities of social media and hold uncomfortable discussions with their young children about online use.
- Promote alternative positive male role models and narratives around being a man - that include emotions, care and non-violence - through sport, media, entertainment, among others.
- Strengthen community physical spaces for young men and boys, including youth clubs and youth services, particularly as part of the new National Youth Strategy.
- Support civil society collaboration and dialogue on addressing online misogyny and promoting positive masculinities, including through a cross-sectoral coalition or government working group under the Home Office. The group that met for this roundtable could effectively form the basis for this working group.
- Policy and data should not be gender-neutral but should speak to specific experiences, needs and voices of men, women, and non-binary individuals.
- Adopt clear metrics to track success of policy responses to online misogyny.
- Address research gaps on online misogyny and promoting positive masculinities.

1. Background: Framing the problem

Misogyny among young men in the UK is on the rise. Online misogynistic content has [become mainstream and normalised](#), with influencers like Andrew Tate [gaining traction among young men](#) by speaking to their concerns while promoting harmful gender norms. Incel (involuntary celibate) culture is also growing. High proportions of young men and young women, 16 to 29 years, [report holding negative views about feminism](#), with increasing popularisation of the reassertion of traditional male and female gender roles (where the man is the patriarch and woman are submissive). Research by [UNISON and UK Feminista](#) in 2024 found sexism to be widespread in schools, and in January 2025 the [National Audit Office reported](#) that an "epidemic of violence against women and girls" in the UK is getting worse. The national curriculum reinforces gender inequality, with [End Sexism in Schools finding](#) that only 2% of students in 2022 study a text by a female author for their English

Literature GCSE. At the same time, young men are struggling and feeling lonely and undervalued within their communities, and there are limited support structures in place for their mental health and well-being needs.¹ Suicide is the leading cause of death for men under 50 in the UK.² Public understanding of the challenges faced by men is limited.³

Recent policy responses proposed to addressing misogyny have included [cultivating positive male role models](#) to conduct mentoring for young men and boys in schools and a desire to review the current counter-terror strategy to include [misogyny as hate crime or form of extremism](#). However, there are potential [limitations in the impact of positive male online influencers alone](#). And while stronger legal frameworks are needed, particularly to address VAWGs, this sole approach overlooks the deeper reasons for men's engagement in these online spaces and the ways in which social media can feed misogyny content. The current policy approach can also reinforce narratives that demonise young men and view masculinity solely as "toxic", creating challenges to engage young men to change their behaviours and to facilitate healthy dialogues between and among young men and women.

2. Challenges identified during the roundtable and consultations

The in-depth consultations and roundtable discussion highlighted the following 12 key challenges in the area of growing online misogyny and promoting positive masculinities:

- 2.1 Young men are struggling. They face loneliness, social isolation and uncertainty about their futures in terms of economic and social success. Easy solutions provided by online influencers can appeal to young men who are experiencing a sense of disconnection or feel a lack of purpose, particularly given the current vacuum in alternative narratives. These challenges are particularly acute for young white working class men, and for young black men there are additional challenges around racism.
- 2.2 Men lack positive role models that associate being a man with expressing emotions, care and non-violence, rather than valuing aggression, control and dominance over women. There is a correlation between holding ideas on traditional gender roles and perceiving feminism as being weaponised against men. This is reinforced by the vacuum of alternative narratives around being a man.
- 2.3 There are limited physical spaces where boys and men can open up and feel accepted. This is compounded the fact that non-judgemental local and community physical spaces, such as youth clubs, where young men could feel safe to open up, make mistakes in learning to be a man, and develop offline social networks, have been shuttered.
- 2.4 Many current narratives frame being male as bad or toxic, and boyhood with negativity, and men and boys feel alienated and that they cannot speak with adults about things that they've seen online (for fear that the conversation will be shut down). Research with 800 students, aged 11 to 18, at a school in Bolton found that the vast majority of young men and boys are keen to engage with discussions on gender equality but are afraid or turned off from doing so because of being scared of saying the wrong thing and that they feel they are being told off or blamed for the situation they are in.⁴
- 2.5 For many young men, the online world is more rewarding than what they experience offline. Research by Male Allies UK⁵ involving 1,000 young men in secondary schools revealed that 50% perceive the online world as more engaging and rewarding than real life, despite 63% feeling they spend too much time online. This is because they felt a

¹ Mental health foundation, Men and women: statistics. Link [here](#)

² Office of National Statistics. Men urged to talk about mental health to prevent suicide, 2022. Link [here](#)

³ Ipsos, King's College London. Emerging tensions? How younger generations are dividing on masculinity and gender equality. 2024

⁴ Katharine Roddy, research project with students on gender equality as part of whole school project, DEI lead, Bolton School, 2021

⁵ For further details, see <https://www.maleallies.co.uk/>

sense of connection and more likely to report feeling accepted and understood online. 42% reported trusting at least one manosphere voice.

- 2.6 While young men report engaging in the manosphere brings them benefits, many young men highlight negative impacts on their mental and physical health as a result of their online use, and that the manosphere reinforces dominant aspects of masculinities. Research by Movember involving 3,000 young men aged 16-25 across the UK, US, and Australia to explore their online engagement habits,⁶ found that 61% regularly engage with harmful online content. 43% of men engaging online found it motivating and 50% said it made them feel happy. The research revealed mixed health outcomes, with those engaging showing both more optimism about their futures, while also reporting worse mental health and being more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours. Those regularly online were more likely to display traditional attitudes towards gender roles and relationships. Young men recognise these contradictions and dangers related to their online use, and believe there are too few limitations or controls around online access.
- 2.7 Many young men are starting to use AI for companionship. While AI can bring benefits, there are potential challenges where this technology is being marketed to solve young men's loneliness and feeling of disconnection. A key driver for AI companionship is the economic returns to tech companies and others that design the related apps.
- 2.8 Young men are being 'algorithmically manipulated' by social media platforms, leading them rapidly from straightforward content to information about incel movements, violent content or illegal pornography. The amplification of online hate and misogynistic content by algorithms, alongside the non-existent or inadequate protections to limit this content, has been documented in the academic literature.⁷ Countless stories report young men starting out on innocuous searches or content around how to get fit or how to make money and then being directed to misogynistic material. This is driven by financial incentives for these influencers and the algorithms that reward them to sell misogyny.
- 2.9 Parents and carers are not fulfilling their responsibilities towards young people in protecting them from the dangers within the digital landscape and the need to uphold their right to a healthy age-appropriate information environment. Parents are not provided with enough information on how to play a role in overseeing content their children engage in. Anecdotal evidence suggests many parents are not providing sufficient boundaries around their child's use of social media.
- 2.10 The influence of fathers on the development of young men and boys is well documented, but there remain significant gaps in the policy focus on father's role in parenting and connections to preventing misogyny.⁸
- 2.11 Misogynistic scripts and sexist behaviour learnt online are increasingly being brought into the school classroom and other offline spaces, impacting other boys, girls and teachers. Online harms are reaching younger and younger audiences, particularly extreme online pornography and deepfake pornography, and creating a generation where this becomes normalised. This is leading to increased expectations among girls and boys to mirror these extreme sexual practices, such as choking (strangulation), creating ambivalence around the understanding of consent, and is fuelling violence against women and girls (VAWG) at increasingly younger ages. The roundtable noted concern around the growing levels of child sexual abuse and exploitation.

⁶ Fisher, Rice & Seidler (2025) Young men's health in a digital world. Melbourne, Australia. Movember Institute of Men's Health

⁷ Kaitlyn Regehr, Caitlin Shaughnessy, Minzhu Zhao & Nicola Shaughnessy. Safer Scrolling: How algorithms popularise and gamify online hate and misogyny for young people. University of Kent. 2024.

⁸ Rebecca Goldman, Adrienne Burgess. The kids are alright: Adolescents and their fathers in the UK. Fatherhood Institute. 2024.

2.12 Schools are struggling as the frontline to this challenge with a lack of available time, training and support to discuss these issues and to create policies around them. Schools have often been left to deal with misogyny, but teachers can be ill-equipped or not sufficiently skilled in these discussions, and can instead shut them down. Schools lack high quality materials relating to misogyny and also lack clear policies on this issue, with many adopting contradictory approaches. Addressing this issue will also help address the current challenge with teacher recruitment and retention.

2.13 There are increasing programmes to respond to this challenge but they often operate in siloes. Among civil society and charities, there is huge willingness to work on this issue, but they can lack resources and coordination opportunities. For example, multiple different organisations have developed materials for schools on the manosphere, but there has not been opportunities or support to ensure alignment of these materials. In Whitehall, there is a lack of coordination around online harms (and this area does not have the same type of government focus and champion as does innovation) and the policy responses to-date are not sufficient.

2.14 Criminalising behaviours cannot be the default. This often does not address the actual challenge, and certainly does not address the root-causes. Instead there needs to be a focus on prevention and sufficient regulation around online harms.

3. The opportunities: strategies and interventions needed

The in-depth consultations and roundtable yielded the following recommendations for policy opportunities to address the aforementioned challenges. These must be implemented through cross-departmental and cross-sector collaboration.

3.1 Frame this issue using an aspirational rather than a deficit approach

- Focus on prevention as much as accountability in order to address the underlying causes, including in the context of the government's new VAWG strategy.
- We can't just focus on misogyny as a hate crime, which reinforces demonising narratives on young men. It is important to work collaboratively with young people and positively engage with and listen to young men's perspectives, which builds trust with them and avoids alienating them.
- Gender equality must be reframed to emphasise how breaking down stereotypes and fostering equality improves social, economic, and mental well-being for both men and women.⁹ This should highlight how patriarchy and conventional masculinities also impact and constrain young men and boys. This would help move beyond perceptions of a gender equality as a zero-sum game and highlight the benefits it brings for everyone.

3.2 Strengthen tech and online regulation to prevent exposure to harmful content

- Work with the tech industry to address the current algorithmic manipulation that can drive young people to increasingly harmful content. 70% of UK adults want social media firms to take more action on racism, homophobia and misogyny on their platforms.¹⁰
- Break the link between financial incentives for influencers (the amount of money they can make) and the spread of misogynistic content.
- Increase transparency of the tech industry on its algorithms and the data it is collecting on young people.
- Raise the digital age of consent (currently 13 for social media). There is also a need to improve and better enforce age verification measures, which are currently not working.

⁹ Ipsos, King's Global Institute for Women's Leadership. Emerging tensions? How younger generations are dividing on masculinity and gender equality. King's College London. 2024.

¹⁰ Ipsos. New poll finds 7 in 10 adults want social media firms to do more to tackle harmful content. UK Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. 2022

- Better regulate porn content online, particularly the increase and widespread availability of pornography showing extreme sexual practices.
- Tackle cyberstalking
- Strengthen the Online Safety Act and Ofcom's role in oversight of online safety.
- Develop new Ofcom guidance for tech companies on men and boys online harm (building on current guidance on women and girls' online harm).
- Implement proper risk assessment and risk mitigation before related tech is made available.
- Improve the currently ineffective procedures that tech companies implement to deal with the online harms reported to them.
- Implement more imaginative online solutions to reach young men in positive ways.

3.3 Address misogyny and the influence of the manosphere in schools and other educational settings

- Implement a [Whole School Approach](#) that goes beyond one-off sessions.
- Create nationally provided materials for Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education, particularly better relationships and sex education (RSE) provision, that address healthy masculinities, relationships, critical thinking, digital and media literacy and challenging gender inequalities in a positive and proactive way (allyship and bystander approaches).
- Disseminate and share existing materials on misogyny with schools.
- Provide effective and meaningful teacher training on misogyny, gender issues and online harms. Support teachers to build their skills in holding these conversations with young people with confidence or to know where to find more information.
- Identify specialist leads in schools which is what young people want. A programme called "Becoming a Man" (BAM), run by the Mental Health Foundation, has been successfully piloted and evaluated in London schools, focusing on young people from disadvantaged communities and requires local authorities or government to scale it up.
- Create spaces – both single-sex, and mixed-sex – for ongoing non-judgemental dialogue and to build shared understanding between boys and girls.
- Support clear policies among schools on smart phone use, such as banning smart phones during the school day.
- Make training for governors' mandatory, given their specific safeguarding responsibilities.
- Ensure buy in and commitment to this issue from senior school leadership.
- Appoint a councillor/psychologist in each school.
- Recruit more male teachers.
- Improve how women and other marginalised groups are better represented across the national school curriculum as a whole.
- Ensure University bystander training for staff is meaningful and not tokenistic.

3.4 Engage employers to address misogyny in the workplace

- Implement workplace programmes that prevent and respond to misogyny, sexism, racism, homophobia, and which address men and women's mental health and wellbeing needs.

3.5 Scale-up the focus on preventing VAWG

- Ensure that the new VAWG Strategy goes beyond the responsibility of just one department to include multiple e.g. Home Office, DoJ, and DHSC.
- A strong focus is required on prevention of violence among children and young people.
- Prevent the growth of physical and sexual violence against women and girls as a result of online content, including the normalisation of extreme sexual practices

3.6 Address men's health as a critical part of responding to misogyny

- Ensure these issues are fully reflected in the new England Men's Health Strategy, which can push for gender-sensitive policies and strategies on issues that affect boys and men, such as educational disparities, high suicide rates, unemployment, and their involvement in criminal activities.

3.7 Urgently improve young people's mental health and wellbeing

- Implement a cross-government mental health and wellbeing plan – including DSIT and DFE – to help integrate efforts to protect the mental health of young men and women, including addressing online harms and violence against women and girls.
- Support young men's desire for connection and a sense of purpose and address their feelings of isolation and loneliness in order to improve their mental health.

3.8 Promote active fatherhood and support parents

- Support parents to have conversations with their children about online harms, including issues around misogyny, sex and pornography, and encourage them to have those conversations earlier.
- Make it easier for parents to have greater controls over their children's use of social media and online.
- Improve paternity leave provision in the UK, which lags behind other European countries.
- Promote fatherhood as opportunity for men to be more involved in caregiving and connect with their emotions and be healthy role models in the lives of their children.

3.9 Promote alternative male role models and narratives around being a man

- Support diverse positive role models (including trusted adults) and narratives around being a man across society – sport, media, entertainment, among others - to foster open dialogue and empower young men and boys to explore and define what it means to them. These role models should highlight emotions, care and non-violence as part of being a man, rather than being tough, stoical and patriarchal.

3.10 Strengthen community physical spaces for young men and boys

- Support youth clubs, centres and other spaces to continue operating (and reopen those that closed) so that these services can play a greater role supporting young men.
- Include greater funding for youth services within the government's National Youth Strategy.
- Improve and expand training for youth workers in this area.

3.11 Support civil society collaboration and dialogue on addressing online misogyny and promoting positive masculinities

- Create a cross-sectoral coalition or network of organisations to create a space to support civil society to collaboration and dialogue on this issue.

3.12 Adopt clear metrics to measure success of policy responses to online misogyny

- Improve tracking for approaches implemented to address misogyny (e.g. whole school approach) to show progress.

3.13 Address research gaps on online misogyny and promoting positive masculinities

- Undertake a detailed analysis, building on existing research, to more comprehensively understand the full extent of this challenge.
- Analyse levels of stalking for children and young people.

4. Organisations consulted (*) and that attended the Parliamentary Roundtable, 21st May 2025

- Several Members of the UK Parliament (MPs)
- Movember*
- Male Allies UK*
- Fabian Women's Network*
- National Education Union (NEU)*
- UK Feminista*
- University of Exeter*
- Centre for Countering Digital Hate*
- Hope Not Hate
- Online Safety Network*
- Men at Work*
- University of Essex*
- End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAW)*
- Center for Policy Research on Men and Boys
- Mental Health Foundation*
- Suzy Lamplugh Trust
- Progressive Masculinity
- Football Without Borders
- Beyond Equality
- Malala Fund*
- Oak Foundation
- Refuge
- NASUW*
- University of Melbourne
- Now and Men Podcast
- Home Office
- The Dad Shift

5. Relevant resources

[Young Men's Health in A Digital World](#), Movember Research

[How to positively engage young men in the fight against misogyny](#), Katharine Roddy

[Navigating online communities safely, Recommendations for government, schools parents and users](#), Mental Health Foundation

Mark Brooks and Nick Isles, [Missing Men: Men and Boys' Scorecard](#), Centre for Policy Research on Men and Boys (CRPMB)

[The Black Mental Health Manifesto](#)

Online Safety Act Network, [Analysis of Ofcom's draft guidance on protecting women and girls](#)

Carnegie UK, [Violence against Women and Girls Code of Practice](#)

National Education Union, [Preventing Sexism and Sexual Harassment](#)

6. Further details about the main organiser, MPP and Dr Tim Shand

The goal of the [Misogyny Policy Project](#) (MPP) is to develop collaborative policy approaches and actions that prevent and reduce misogynistic behaviour among young men and boys, while addressing young men's mental health and wellbeing, supporting healthier masculinities and preventing VAWG. MPP seeks policy solutions which support a generation of boys and men who grow up respecting women, that protect men and boys themselves from harm, and that promote a more positive and inclusive approach to the benefits of gender equality for everyone. Dr Tim Shand has worked on men, masculinities and gender equality for the last two decades. He leads the Misogyny Policy Project, is co-Director of [ShandClarke consulting](#), and an Honorary Research Fellow at the Institute for Global Health and Development (IGHD) at Queen Margaret University. Tim has worked extensively in policy development and implementation. He is a founding Board member of the UK Center for Policy Research on Men and Boys (CPRMB). He is a former Labour councillor in London.