

## **Children increasingly drawn to cybercrime**

Children as young as seven are being referred to the UK's national cybercrime intervention programme, Cyber Choices, with the average age of referrals being just 15 this financial year. The National Crime Agency (NCA) reports an increase in referrals, primarily involving gamers aged 10 to 16, amidst a 230% rise in insurance payouts due to cyber-attacks on UK businesses. The NCA emphasises that the actual scale of the threat may be greater than reported, with pupils identified as causing 57% of insider data breaches in schools. The allure of online communities and the thrill of hacking often attract bored, curious, or tech-savvy youth, but many are unaware of the severe consequences of their actions.

*Sky News*

## **Families must intervene early to prevent youth radicalisation**

Britain's top counterterrorism officer, Assistant Commissioner Laurence Taylor, has outlined the need for parents to proactively prevent their children from becoming radicalised. With the UK on track for a record 10,000 referrals to the Prevent programme, many children do not qualify for intervention, potentially leading to future violence and terrorism. Taylor expressed concern over the increasing number of child terrorism arrests and highlighted the responsibility of parents, schools, and healthcare providers to protect children from extremist online material through early intervention and teaching digital safety and critical thinking. He criticised the Online Safety Act for not adequately addressing dangerous content on social media and called for stronger regulatory measures. Taylor pointed to the influence of social media algorithms in exposing vulnerable youths to extremist ideologies and stressed the importance of addressing these issues before they escalate.

*The Times*

## **Schools to play key role in tackling violence against women and girls**

The *BBC* reports that the Government's new strategy to tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG) will be published next Thursday as Parliament breaks for Christmas, and will focus on three core themes - preventing young men from becoming radicalised, stopping abusers, and supporting victims. The strategy will step up work in schools to address misogyny and to promote healthy relationships, with more support for parents to help them intervene earlier. The report comes after MPs on the Commons justice committee criticised delays in the strategy's publication earlier this week. A Government source told the *BBC* that there will be "a raft of new measures, so rapists and sex offenders have nowhere to hide. We will track down abusers, empower police forces with the tools they need to do so and put abusers on a course to stop their offending."

*BBC News* *The I* *The Times*

## **New initiative to combat misogyny in schools**

The Government has announced plans to introduce anti-misogyny courses for boys as young as 11 as part of a strategy to halve violence against women and girls. Pupils causing concern will attend behaviour-change programmes in schools aimed at challenging misogynistic attitudes, covering issues such as consent, online harassment, coercive behaviour and image-based abuse. The sessions will be piloted in secondary schools, with possible extension to primaries, and supported by specialist teacher training and a new helpline for teenagers. Ministers say early intervention is needed as research shows high levels of abuse in teenage relationships and widespread exposure to misogynistic influencers. The

measures form part of a wider package including policing, health and housing support for victims.

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### **Urology departments face ketamine crisis**

Urology departments in the UK are nearing breaking point due to a surge in ketamine-related hospital admissions. The Office for National Statistics reports a 252% increase in ketamine use since 2015, with many affected being young adults and teenagers. Consultant urologist Alison Downey stated: "We are already stretched really thin... it's an awful problem at the moment." Experts warn that chronic use can cause irreversible damage to the bladder and urinary tract. They call for targeted educational initiatives in secondary schools to raise awareness of the drug's dangers.

*The Guardian*

### **Ofsted warns of home schooling surge**

Ofsted's chief inspector, Sir Martyn Oliver, has warned that rising numbers of children in England are being home schooled out of "desperation", rather than genuine choice, because parents feel mainstream or specialist provision cannot meet their needs. Home schooling in England is lightly regulated, with no requirement to follow the national curriculum or register with local authorities. Officially recorded numbers rose 38% to 111,700 in 2024-25, though the true figure is likely higher. Parents cite mental health, dissatisfaction with schools and special educational needs as key reasons. New legislation will introduce a national register and tighter safeguards, particularly where child protection concerns exist. Ofsted says schools' ability to include and support pupils will be scrutinised more closely, amid wider concerns about absence, children missing education and social isolation.

*The Sunday Times*

### **Teen jailed for plotting concert attack**

McKenzie Morgan, 18, from Cwmbran, has been sentenced to 14 months in youth detention for planning a terrorist attack on an Oasis reunion concert in Cardiff. He expressed admiration for Axel Rudakubana, who murdered three girls in a separate incident. Morgan admitted to possessing a document useful for terrorism and had researched methods to harm others. Prosecutor Corinne Bramwell stated that he had attempted to create ricin and had made plans to attack a dance school. Morgan claimed he only intended to shock and had been bullied at school. Judge Sarah Whitehouse KC highlighted the risk he posed to others.

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### **Primary teacher backs action on deepfakes**

A London primary school teacher writes in the *i* about the impact of deepfake pornography - revealing that an eight-year-old pupil used photographs taken from the school's website to create a graphic fake video including herself and two other teachers. School leaders, she said, were dismissive of the 2021 incident, and she argues that while many parents "are unaware of what their children are consuming", it is "time to be alert: children hide things, and most access this material at night, when they pretend to be asleep". The teacher backs calls for a ban on children accessing social media and smartphones that are "not designed

for them".

*The I Mirror.co.uk*

### **Police investigate AI image sharing incident**

A police investigation has commenced following reports of AI-generated explicit images shared among pupils at the **Royal School Armagh**. The school, which serves around 800 students, alerted authorities upon discovering the issue. Principal Graham Montgomery stated that the "safety and well-being of all our pupils" is the school's top priority. The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) confirmed the investigation and is working with school authorities and affected parents.

*BBC News*

### **Government announces consultation on social media ban**

Technology Secretary Liz Kendall has announced a consultation on social media reforms, including the possibility of an Australia-style ban on under-16s accessing the platforms. The consultation is expected to seek input on a range of proposals, including an increase in the digital age of consent to prevent algorithmic targeting of younger children, limits on app time, and curfews. The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology will also direct Ofsted to consider schools' policies around mobile phones, and their effectiveness, as part of inspections. The consultation comes as Esther Ghey, mother of murdered teenager Brianna Ghey, joined other bereaved parents to back a ban on under-16s accessing social media to restore children's "lost childhood", arguing that "social media is not appropriate for children under the age of 16". The Prime Minister is understood, however, to be concerned that a ban could push children onto higher-risk and less regulated platforms.

*Sky News The Times BBC News Daily Mirror The Daily Telegraph The Guardian*