

Suicide attempts ‘part of everyday life in a school’

Suicide attempts and self-harm are now “just part and parcel of everyday life in a school”, teachers have told the former Children’s Commissioner for England. Anne Longfield told peers that there is a large legacy of children with increased mental health needs in the wake of the pandemic. She told the Children and Families Act 2014 Committee: “The numbers ... they’re just enormous. I’ve been struck over recent weeks about the number of teachers that have told me that suicide attempts, self-harm are just part and parcel of everyday life in a school now, in a really quite shocking way.”

Evening Standard

Call to include risks of suicide in the school curriculum

Writing in *City AM*, Jan Gerber, a researcher for John C. Hulsman Enterprises, calls for discussions about suicide prevention to be included in the UK’s school syllabus. He cites recent research showing that 7% of children in the UK had attempted suicide by the age of 17, and 24% have self-harmed. He notes that in 2015, AQA – the largest exam board for sociology A-levels – dropped the topic from its syllabus to avoid “undue distress”. Gerber writes the should be a focus on the risks of suicide in the school curriculum and that schools must start teaching children how to recognise and respond to suicidal ideation by familiarising them with the signs and symptoms. He says suicide prevention classes would provide students with a “script” they can use if worried about a friend or loved one. He said classes would also help young people realise that it is normal to struggle with difficult emotions. If a child is self-harming, they need to know about practical coping strategies.

City AM

Online Safety Bill amendment brought forward after Molly Russell inquest

An Online Safety Bill amendment will be brought forward to help bereaved parents access information about social media companies, a peer said after the landmark ruling over 14-year-old Molly Russell’s death. Baroness Beeban Kidron said she will table a change to the proposed legislation in the House of Lords after a coroner concluded content viewed on the internet contributed to the schoolgirl’s death. Molly died after engaging with 2,100 self-harm or suicide-related posts over a period of six months, an inquest at North London Coroner’s Court heard. Senior coroner Andrew Walker said material viewed by Molly on sites such as Instagram and Pinterest “was not safe” and “shouldn’t have been available for a child to see”. The ruling has been described as a global first of its kind after concluding that content Molly was allowed to view by tech companies contributed to her death.

Sky News The Times_ London Evening Standard The Independent The Independent UK

Urgent overhaul planned for Prevent

Suella Braverman is reportedly planning an urgent overhaul of the Government’s counter-extremism programme after an official inquiry concluded Prevent was treating potential terrorists as “victims”. Government sources said the new Home Secretary had identified reform of Prevent as “a key priority”. The disclosure comes as *the Telegraph* reveals the findings of the assessment, written by William Shawcross, the former chairman of the Charity Commission, have concluded that the programme appeared to have been focusing on “protecting those referred into Prevent from harm” rather than “protecting the public” from potential terrorists. The document warns that Prevent “has increasingly come to be seen as synonymous with safeguarding... confusing practitioners and officials as to Prevent’s fundamental purpose.”

The Daily Telegraph

NSPCC calls for better sex education in schools

The NSPCC has called for better sex education in schools to help reduce the number of sexual offences between teenagers. Spokeswoman Hayley Clark said: “We’ve had increasing calls over the past year around harmful sexual behaviour where there are young people abusing other people. Numbers of reports are going up. If there’s better sex education available it could potentially reduce offences.” More than 54,000 anonymous testimonies about sexual violence and harassment in schools and universities have been shared via the website Everyone’s Invited since March 2021. Site founder Soma Sara says teacher training is vital for dealing with “peer on peer” offences. She added: “The problem will continue if teachers aren’t able to deliver sex education. They need to be comfortable with the content themselves. They need to be really confident and teaching in an accessible and engaging way to have an impact on young people’s behaviours.”

Sunday Mirror

Children buying 'DIY' transitions online

A *Sunday Times* investigation has found that dangerous prescription-only drugs designed to disrupt the body’s hormones are routinely being sold online to young people attempting “DIY” transitions. *The Sunday Times* was able to buy drugs within minutes without any need to show proof of age or a prescription. In response, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society warned young people were risking “serious harm” to their health, and politicians have called for a crackdown. Baroness Morgan of Cotes, a former education secretary, said regulation was “long overdue”. The Conservative peer added: “[This] just shows there is potentially harmful content which is sold without any checks or questions at all, and in this case it is interesting that people are finding out about it through an online platform like Reddit.”

The Sunday Times