

### 'Covid generation' facing mental health crisis

New research reveals how the pandemic has had a lasting legacy on the mental health of the "Covid generation" of students, exacerbating rates of anxiety, depression and self-harm and resulting in a "significant rise" in young people struggling at university. A survey found more UK universities have reported that more students are experiencing mental health problems in the aftermath of the pandemic, and that this is expected to continue with the cohort arriving in September, whose school experience was heavily disrupted by the pandemic. The president of the National Union of Students, Larissa Kennedy, said students' struggles were caused by exam pressure combined with the cost of living crisis, and called for more funding to introduce "early support hubs" that would "prevent thousands reaching crisis point".

*The Guardian*

### Record levels of children prescribed addictive anti-anxiety drugs

The *Sunday Express* reports that statistics show that there has been a 57% increase in the number of children being prescribed anti-anxiety drugs such as Valium - which can be highly addictive - over the past four years. The increase was also driven by a sharp rise since the beginning of the pandemic. Marcantonio Spada, a Professor of Addictive Behaviours and Mental Health, raised concerns that the prescriptions are "being used as a patch-up" for an unsustainable mental healthcare system, adding: "These drugs are very dangerous and children can become dependent on them for life." Another top psychiatrist, Professor Sami Timimi, added: "These statistics are shocking. I don't think there has been a generation as pathologised as this one, which is really worrying." In light of these figures, *Sunday Express* has partnered with mental health charity YoungMinds in demanding a number of actions from the Government, including the roll-out of Mental Health Support Teams across all schools by the end of the decade and that those teams are embedded in schools as part of a whole school approach to mental health.

*Sunday Express*

### Students urged to be aware of drink-spiking

The Government is set to roll-out advertisements targeted towards first-year students, warning them about the risk of being spiked with needles in nightclubs. The Home Office has said it is working on a campaign to launch at the start of the new academic year, following a rise in reports of needle-spiking last autumn as students began returning to university campuses for the first time since the pandemic.

*The Times*

### Police investigating claims drones used to spy on schools

New figures reveal that a total of 333 drone flights have been recorded over or close to school premises since October 2020, prompting police to investigate whether paedophiles are using drones to watch and record children at school. James Bingham, lead intelligence analyst at the counter-drone unit of the National Police Chiefs Council, said the deployment of the devices over school premises was a "concern", after intelligence linked some flights to registered sex offenders. Mr Bingham said: "We are seeing a lot of reported incidents at schools. .. We are seeing an increasing number of incidents that have some other intelligence to indicate that activity is more likely linked to registered sex offenders' activity or other voyeuristic activity. So that is a concern of ours - we are working very hard to understand the scale and volume of the problem and also put measures in place to deal with that."

### Serious self-harm in young people rose during lockdowns

New research reveals that serious self-harm among young people jumped during strict COVID-19 lockdowns. A study by King's College London found that boys needing urgent support from emergency services doubled, and then tripled for children in care. Researchers found that while school pressure and rows with friends became a less common trigger, COVID-19 restrictions may have led to greater urges to self-harm, related to increased overthinking and negative coping strategies at home. They also said children from more deprived areas became less likely to visit emergency departments and were less likely to have access to community support networks. Dr Elaine Lockhart, chair of the Child and Adolescent Faculty at the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said: "The earlier we offer support, the less likely people are to develop long-term mental health problems. It's important to consider the impact of measures put in place during the pandemic on self-harm so that we can plan mental health services for the future. That's the only way to ensure all children and young people receive the mental health support they need, when they need it."

*Sky News*

### COVID and social media pressures driving surge in mental health problems

A combination of the pandemic and social media pressures is driving a surge in mental health problems, including eating disorders, among young people. NHS Digital data shows that the proportion of children and young people in England with possible eating problems has increased significantly since 2017 - from 6.7% to 13% in 11 to 16-year-olds, and from 44.6% to 58.2% in 17 to 19-year-olds. In 2020/21, the NHS saw an 83% increase in demand for urgent eating disorder services and a 41% increase for routine services. Data also shows that between April and October 2021, there were 4,238 hospital admissions for eating disorders for children aged 17 and under, up 41% compared to the same period the year before. West London NHS Trust said referrals to its children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) had increased by 140%.

*Sky News*

### The far-right web radicalising UK children

Concerns have been raised that a "far-right ecosystem" is targeting children online in an attempt to radicalise them. Teachers, police officers, academics and community leaders say there is evidence that long periods of unsupervised online access, compounded during Covid lockdowns, were resulting in young people across the UK encountering far-right groups in greater numbers than before. Among the platforms

being used to ensnare young teenagers are gaming forums, private chatrooms or slickly produced online leaflets or "study guides". Experts are alarmed that while the total number is very small, the age profile of those referred and arrested in connection with far-right extremism is getting progressively younger. Prevent teams working with schools in England say they have seen a significant increase in the number of children and young people referred to them, often by their teachers, over concerns they are being drawn into far-right extremism.

*Daily Express (London) The Guardian*

### **Increase in self-recorded child sexual abuse**

The Internet Watch Foundation has reported a dramatic increase in children aged as young as seven being tricked by abusers into sharing sexual images of themselves online. The charity discovered nearly 20,000 web pages of child sexual abuse imagery in the first half of 2022 - 8,000 more than in the same period last year. In comparison with the first half of 2020, when the UK entered its first COVID-19 lockdown, the IWF found a 360% rise in "self-generated" content by those aged seven to ten. Susie Hargreaves, the IWF chief executive, said: "Children are not to blame. They are often being coerced, tricked or pressured by sexual abusers on the internet." The IWF has called on the Government, the tech industry, the police and the education and third sectors to help solve the problem. Hargreaves called the proposed Online Safety Bill "essential", adding: "We need to attack this criminality from several directions, including providing parents and carers with support to have positive discussions around technology use and sexual abuse within the home. Only when the education of parents, carers and children comes together with efforts by tech companies, the government, police and third sector can we hope to stem the tide of this criminal imagery."

*The Times The Daily Telegraph The Guardian*

### **Andrew Tate**

Andrew Tate – or, to give him his full title, the king of toxic masculinity – is a total enigma to the digital latecomer. Originally a kickboxer from Luton, he arrived in the public eye by being expelled from Big Brother in 2016, after video footage emerged of him beating a woman with a belt. It was just a kink thing, they both said, totally consensual, but Tate then went very public with his view that women are scum. [His online profile soared](#): he now has 12.7bn social media views, and more Google searches than Donald Trump and Kim Kardashian. He was [banned from the core platforms](#) – YouTube, TikTok, Instagram and Facebook – last week, and yet apparently this makes no odds, since his "soldiers" can still find his content if they just look hard enough, which they do. He is the poster boy of the manosphere, and, as much as you might wish to take the wasp approach – ignore him and eventually he'll go away - this peacocking of unpleasantness is not without consequence. He is a key influencer of young teenage boys, and – apparently, according to worried teachers – they're taking him quite literally.

*The Guardian*