

Idris Elba urges urgent action on youth knife violence

Idris Elba has called for urgent action on youth knife violence, including the immediate banning of machetes and "zombie" knives, and increased funding for youth services. Elba claimed that society was capable of coming together to solve the problem, and he added that experts in youth services and bereaved families needed to be able to sit in the same room as politicians and the police, among others, to achieve that. He added that he wanted to set up an advisory group comprised of bereaved relatives, youth workers and community leaders, as well as "aspirational" young thinkers he said could give an idea of how their contemporaries were thinking. Elba also told the *Guardian* that an outright ban on zombie knives and similar weapons would be an important symbolic act. He added: "The Government know zombie knives, machetes and swords have no place in our society - There is a real strong symbol in asking for that ban to be immediate, to tell us - we are running out of tolerance for what's happening to the young people."

The Guardian

Labour plans to tackle absenteeism and improve safeguarding

Labour has unveiled plans to tackle absenteeism and improve safeguarding which includes plans to introduce a national register of children not attending school. Under the party's proposals, parents who wish to home-school their children would have to register with the local council and could be subject to spot-checks to ensure an adequate education is being provided. Labour also plans to use artificial intelligence to connect information on pupils held by schools, councils and GPs, which aims to improve co-ordination between services and identify areas of concern. Labour will provide Ofsted with the authority to review school absence rates as part of annual safeguarding spot-checks. Additional mental health counsellors in every secondary school, mental health hubs in every community and universal free breakfast clubs for every primary school pupil in England are also among Labour's proposals to deliver "high and rising standards" in education. Shadow Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson said a Labour government would make "education its priority", with schools delivering "rising standards for all our children". Geoff Barton, of the ASCL, said: "Current absence rates are alarming. If children are not in school, they cannot learn - simple as that." He added: "We would also like to see greater investment in the wider infrastructure of family and children's support services that have been eroded over the past 14 years. Schools cannot fight this battle on their own."

The Times Daily Mirror London Evening Standard The Daily Telegraph

SAFEGUARDING

Teenagers falling victim to deepfake porn at school, says childline

The NSPCC-run service Childline says that pupils were increasingly calling the helpline to report that they are falling victim to deepfake porn at school. Childline said one 15-year-old girl had said: "A stranger online made fake nudes of me. It looks so real, it's my face and my room in the background. They must have taken the pictures from my Instagram and edited them. I'm scared they will send them to my parents." Sir Peter Wanless, chief executive of the NSPCC, said: "The risk children face from unregulated AI is already far too high, and their safety and experiences must be at the centre of conversations about its development."

The Times

Conservative MP calls for smartphone ban for under-16s

Conservative MP Miriam Cates has called for under-16s to be banned from using smartphones for the sake of their mental health. Cates, a former teacher, said there had been a "marked increase" in poor teenage mental health since 2010, and that it was "time to consider banning and perhaps even smartphones for under 16s?" Speaking in the Commons, Ms Cates said: "The United Kingdom has a strong tradition of legislating to protect children from serious threats to their safety and welfare. So does my right honourable friend agree with me that it's time to consider banning social media and perhaps even smartphones for under 16s?" Ms Cates referred to the case of Mia Janin, who is believed to have taken her life aged 14 in 2021 after claims she was subjected to bullying at the UK's most prominent Jewish school.

Sky News *The Daily Telegraph*

British children spend over 2 hours a day on TikTok, report finds

A new report has found children in the UK are using TikTok for more than two hours a day, making British youngsters some of the heaviest users of the social media app worldwide. Research by Qustodio, the parental controls company, said British children who use the app spent an average of 127 minutes per day on it last year, a rise of 11% on the previous year. Eduardo Cruz, chief executive of Qustodio, said parents, teachers and children needed to talk about how to "strike a healthy digital balance", while "keeping the youngest in society safe from online harm". Overall, the data found children on average spent about four hours per day on phones, tablets, games or computers outside of school hours, unchanged from the previous year.

The Daily Telegraph