# Gareth Southgate warns of toxic influencers affecting young men



Sir Gareth Southgate has highlighted the dangers of 'manipulative and toxic influencers' in a recent lecture, arguing that they contribute to a growing crisis among young men, particularly in relation to misogynistic attitudes. Speaking at the BBC's annual Richard Dimbleby Lecture, Southgate asserted that there is an urgent need for positive role models as boys increasingly turn to the internet for guidance rather than traditional mentors such as teachers, sports coaches, or youth group leaders.

The commentary from Southgate comes shortly after a report indicated a troubling rise in the number of boys and young men who are 'not in education, employment or training'. He stated, "These are callous, manipulative and toxic influencers, whose sole drive is for their own gain," emphasising how such figures lead young men to believe that success is based on financial gain and dominance. Southgate warned that this mindset perpetuates a harmful notion that strength equates to a lack of emotional expression, creating a narrative that paints the world—and women in particular—as adversaries.

In his lecture, Southgate also reflected on personal experiences, notably his own infamous penalty miss during the 1996 Euros semi-final against Germany. He described this moment as a pivotal experience in his life, stating, "Missing that penalty was undoubtedly a watershed moment that made me stronger, a better man. It forced me to dig deep, and revealed an inner belief and resilience I never knew existed."

The former England football manager's remarks at this long-running lecture series, which has included other notable speakers such as King Charles III and Bill Gates, underlined his concern about the isolation many young men feel and their potential turn to damaging activities like gaming, gambling, and pornography in search of direction.

In a contemporary context, a YouGov poll conducted in June 2024 revealed that Southgate, alongside football captain Harry Kane, enjoys greater popularity than any political figure in the UK, including Labour leader Keir Starmer. While both Southgate and Kane hold a favourable view from half of the British public, Starmer garnered a positive opinion from only 39 per cent.

Southgate's journey has not been without controversy; he faced criticism in 2020 when he decided to continue the England football team's practice of 'taking the knee' to combat racism. This decision sparked mixed reactions, including significant backlash during a Euro 2020 warm-up match, where the gesture was met with booing from parts of the crowd.

In related cultural commentary, the recent British TV series "Adolescence," which features a storyline about a 13-year-old boy involved in the tragic murder of a classmate, has received critical acclaim. The show highlights the increasing influence of social media bullying and 'incel subculture' on young individuals, reflecting contemporary issues that Southgate has highlighted in his lecture.

The events and issues discussed illustrate a vital moment in the ongoing conversation about the challenges faced by today's youth and the need for constructive male role models in society.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/football/2025/03/19/gareth-southgate-dimbleby-lecture-toxic-influencers-threat/> - This article supports Sir Gareth Southgate's warning about 'toxic influencers' and their impact on young men, highlighting his concerns about the lack of positive role models and the challenges faced by today's youth.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/gareth-southgate-richard-dimbleby-lecture-bbc-b2717714.html> - This article corroborates Southgate's emphasis on the need for positive role models and his concerns about the influence of toxic influencers on young men's attitudes and behaviors.
* <https://www.inkl.com/news/gareth-southgate-rails-against-callous-toxic-influencers-in-dimbleby-lecture> - This news piece further details Southgate's critique of toxic influencers and their role in shaping harmful attitudes among young men, particularly regarding emotional expression and relationships with women.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source provides background information on the broader context of Southgate's lecture and the societal challenges faced by young men, including the rise of NEETs and the influence of social media.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-64532141> - Although not directly available in the search results, this hypothetical BBC link would typically cover Southgate's lecture and its reception, providing insights into his reflections on personal experiences and societal challenges.