# Stephen Graham highlights Adolescence’s role in tackling toxic masculinity and online harm at GQ Heroes



Stephen Graham, the acclaimed actor and co-creator of the Netflix drama *Adolescence*, will take the stage at the GQ Heroes conference from July 2 to 4, held at Soho Farmhouse near Great Tew. This annual summit is dedicated to celebrating transformative figures and groundbreaking ideas, making it an apt venue for Graham to discuss the impact of his critically-lauded series. The show has ignited a nationwide dialogue about serious issues such as online safety, misogyny, and the mental well-being of teenagers, particularly highlighting the often-unseen dangers associated with social media and toxic online cultures.

Following the release of *Adolescence*, Graham remarked on the profound effect the series has had, sharing that countless fans approach him to express how it has resonated with their families. Reflecting on these interactions, he recounted a poignant encounter in New York where an emotional viewer, touched by the show's themes, sought to congratulate him. Graham's portrayal of Eddie Miller, a father confronting the dark realities of teenage life after his son Jamie, portrayed by newcomer Owen Cooper, is arrested, has struck a chord with audiences and critics alike. He stated in an interview with British GQ, “The amount of stuff me and (his wife) Hannah (Walters) are getting sent, and the amount of people I’m seeing on the streets… it’s huge. To me, that’s objective complete.”

*Adolescence* debuted on March 13, 2025, and has rapidly become a global phenomenon, amassing over 96 million viewers. The series explores the fraught relationship between teenage boys and the digital world, exposing how subcultures such as the "manosphere" propagate harmful narratives that normalise misogyny and violence. The unique filming technique, which featured single-take episodes, adds to its raw intensity, allowing audiences to connect deeply with the characters and their dilemmas. As the series topped Netflix charts worldwide, its narrative prompted real-world initiatives like educational guides from police and a push for the show to be used as a teaching tool in UK schools. These efforts are supported by government endorsements, including that of Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, who has recognised the show’s potential to spark critical conversations about gender-based violence and online radicalisation in educational settings.

The series' appeal extends beyond mere entertainment; it serves as a catalyst for wider reflections on masculinity and the impact of social media. In discussions surrounding the show, experts and educators advocate for proactive measures over punitive ones, emphasising the importance of open dialogues about toxic masculinity and online influences. They argue that fostering healthy relationships and emotional intelligence in boys is crucial in combating the harmful effects of digital exposure. Initiatives led by organisations such as Tender are already working alongside Netflix to create educational resources aimed at parents and teachers, highlighting the collective responsibility to guide young individuals through the complexities of their online experiences.

As the discourse around the ramifications of social media and the pervasive influence of digital narratives continues to evolve, Graham and his collaborators remain committed to using their platform to ignite meaningful discussions. The importance of addressing these issues head-on is underscored by the increasing prevalence of child-on-child violence, as highlighted by charities dedicated to safeguarding youth. Although *Adolescence* does not claim to offer concrete solutions, it undeniably plays a crucial role in shining a light on a pressing global issue that requires urgent attention and action.

The success of this series reminds us that art can inspire communities to confront uncomfortable truths and cultivate environments where young people can thrive free from the pervasive shadows of toxicity and misinformation.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25193436.adolescence-star-speak-soho-farmhouse-conference/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/adolescence-tv-drama-exposes-global-issue-teenage-violence-2025-04-07/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25193436.adolescence-star-speak-soho-farmhouse-conference/?ref=rss), [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/33b72293c431496e57c2ca16417a379d), [[4]](https://www.womanandhome.com/life/news-entertainment/adolescence-toxic-masculinity/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/adolescence-tv-drama-exposes-global-issue-teenage-violence-2025-04-07/), [[5]](https://elpais.com/television/2025-03-20/el-primer-ministro-britanico-aboga-por-abordar-la-influencia-de-la-misoginia-online-en-los-jovenes.html), [[6]](https://theweek.com/culture-life/tv-radio/adolescence-and-the-toxic-online-world-whats-the-solution)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/adolescence-tv-drama-exposes-global-issue-teenage-violence-2025-04-07/), [[7]](https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2025/04/adolescence-jonathan-haidt-phones/682459/?utm_source=apple_news)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25193436.adolescence-star-speak-soho-farmhouse-conference/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/adolescence-tv-drama-exposes-global-issue-teenage-violence-2025-04-07/> - The British TV drama 'Adolescence,' released on Netflix on March 13, 2025, has become a global phenomenon, watched by over 96 million viewers. The show starkly addresses teenage violence and online misogyny, beginning with the arrest of a 13-year-old boy for murder and exploring the dangerous influence of the 'manosphere'—a toxic online subculture that fosters resentment toward women among teenage boys. Shot in single-take episodes, the series has ignited widespread conversation about the unseen digital worlds influencing youth. It has topped Netflix charts in numerous countries and prompted real-world responses, including guides from Portuguese police and media resources for parents and educators. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer endorsed making the show available in schools, emphasizing the need for national dialogue. Campaigners, teachers, and police see this as a rare opportunity to address online radicalization and gender-based violence. Charities like Tender are collaborating with Netflix to create educational materials for classroom use. While the show doesn’t offer a solution, it is recognized as a catalyst for acknowledging and addressing a pressing global issue.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/33b72293c431496e57c2ca16417a379d> - The hit Netflix series 'Adolescence' will be streamed for free in UK secondary schools to initiate discussions about the harm of social media content on children. The show, which revolves around a 13-year-old boy accused of fatally stabbing a girl, touches on the negative impacts of social media. With 66.3 million views worldwide, it has become widely discussed in the UK. Supported by Prime Minister Keir Starmer, the initiative aims to help students better comprehend misogyny, online radicalization, and healthy relationships. Concerns include the rise of child-on-child sexual abuse, as highlighted by the charity Everyone’s Invited. The charity calls for education over social media bans to tackle misogynistic attitudes early. The success of 'Adolescence' coincides with increasing worries about the influence of smartphones and exposure to harmful content among children. The initiative emphasizes the collective responsibility to address these issues.
4. <https://www.womanandhome.com/life/news-entertainment/adolescence-toxic-masculinity/> - The article explores the concerns sparked by the Netflix series 'Adolescence,' which delves into toxic masculinity and online influence on teenage boys following a violent incident involving young teens. Writer Jack Thorne expresses his fears about raising a son in a digital age filled with harmful content and influencers. The piece offers practical advice for parents addressing toxic masculinity, encouraging open dialogue, promoting respectful relationships, monitoring online activity, and reinforcing emotional intelligence in sons. Experts suggest alternatives to lectures, the importance of positive reinforcement, and discuss how inflammatory language can alienate rather than educate. Three mothers share personal experiences dealing with the impact of toxic content, like Andrew Tate's messages and unrealistic beauty standards, on their sons. Each highlights the importance of conversation, understanding developmental challenges, and building trust. The article concludes with recommendations for professional help, emphasizing that early intervention and informed parenting can help mitigate harm and guide boys towards healthy masculinity.
5. <https://elpais.com/television/2025-03-20/el-primer-ministro-britanico-aboga-por-abordar-la-influencia-de-la-misoginia-online-en-los-jovenes.html> - El primer ministro del Reino Unido, Sir Keir Starmer, calificó de aborrecible la misoginia y la violencia contra las mujeres, temas centrales de la nueva serie de Netflix 'Adolescencia'. La serie aborda el impacto negativo de las redes sociales y los influencers misóginos en algunos adolescentes, y se ha convertido en el programa más visto de la plataforma a nivel mundial. Starmer subrayó la necesidad de abordar este 'problema emergente y creciente' culturalmente, destacando medidas gubernamentales como la creación de equipos especializados en delitos sexuales. La vicepresidenta laborista, Anneliese Midgley, sugirió que la serie se proyecte en el Parlamento y en escuelas para contrarrestar la misoginia. Jack Thorne, coguionista de la serie, expresó su deseo de que ésta genere debate y provoque cambios sociales.
6. <https://theweek.com/culture-life/tv-radio/adolescence-and-the-toxic-online-world-whats-the-solution> - With teenagers spending nearly five hours a day on social media, parents grow increasingly anxious about the toxic and often misunderstood online world their children inhabit. The Netflix drama 'Adolescence' exemplifies these fears, as it depicts how a well-raised 13-year-old boy, Jamie, ends up committing murder due to influence from the online 'manosphere,' an anti-feminist subculture. This online environment is built around codes, slang, and influencers that promote misogynistic and damaging beliefs to vulnerable young males. The drama and real-life instances raise critical questions about the impact of failing male teenagers, who face social isolation and skewed body image expectations, turning to toxic online figures for validation. Solutions proposed include better male role models, more youth clubs, and potentially banning smartphones for children, but these efforts are acknowledged as challenging against the powerful draw of social media and online validation.
7. <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2025/04/adolescence-jonathan-haidt-phones/682459/?utm_source=apple_news> - The article discusses Jonathan Haidt's reflections on the Netflix miniseries Adolescence, which explores the dark influence of social media and smartphone use on teenagers. The show centers on a 13-year-old boy, Jamie, who murders a classmate after being bullied online, raising concerns about digital exposure. Haidt, a social psychologist and author of The Anxious Generation, has long advocated for delaying smartphone access until high school and social media use until age 16. He emphasizes that unrestricted access to smartphones and screen-based communication can exacerbate mental health issues, bullying, and harmful behavior, particularly among boys and girls in different ways. Haidt argues for phone-free schools, increased parental oversight, and a clear distinction between internet benefits and the manipulative nature of social media algorithms. He believes the show functions as a cultural catalyst, helping parents recognize widespread unease about childhood digital immersion and potentially spurring societal change.