

REMEDIES FOR THE MANOSPHERE

A workshop and short research paper

Introduction

The so called “Manosphere” has become an increasingly visible and influential part of online culture in recent years. From high profile influencers such as Andrew Tate, to the hit drama Adolescence and that recent Louis Theroux documentary, mainstream media and public debate have become more focused on the growth of online spaces centred around masculinity, anti feminism, self improvement, status and grievance. Concerns around misogyny, loneliness, online radicalisation and the role of social media algorithms have pushed the topic further into public discussion.

In this short research paper, Marcus Smith facilitated a workshop on Tuesday 19 May 2026 in Bristol with Men Acknowledging Patriarchy CIC to explore what remedies and alternatives might look like. Bringing together a group of eight men for open discussion and reflection, the workshop explored questions around what the Manosphere is, why it appeals to some men and boys, what healthier spaces could look like, and what social or technological changes may better support men and boys in the future.

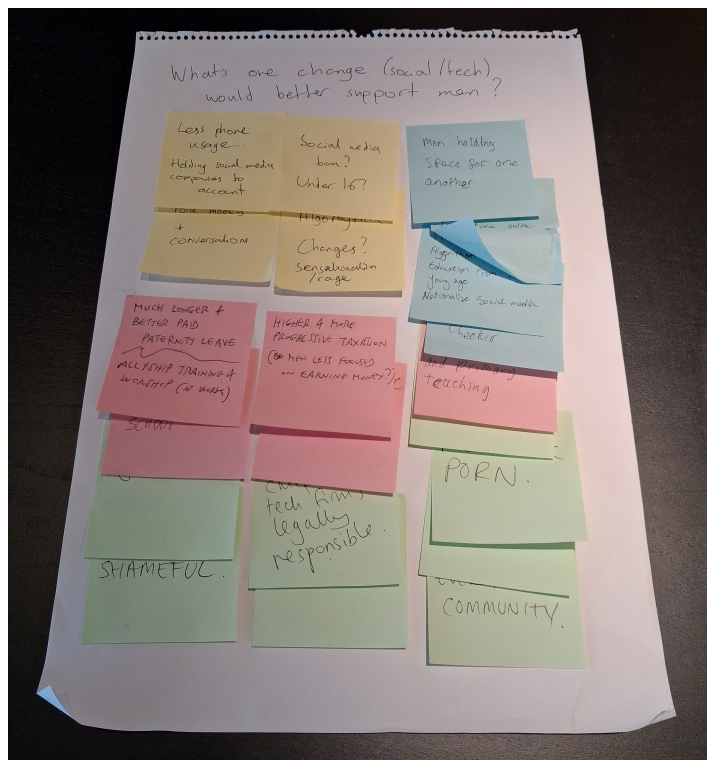
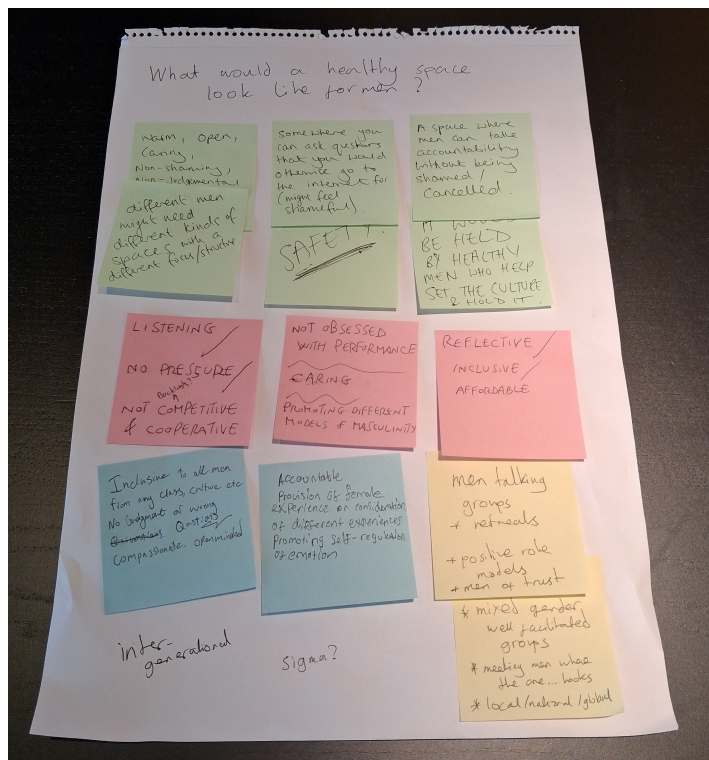
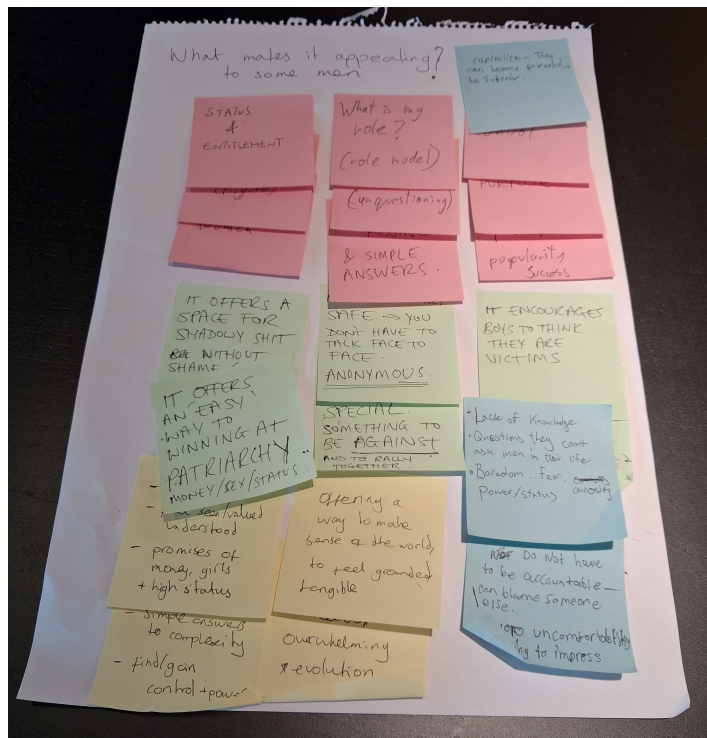
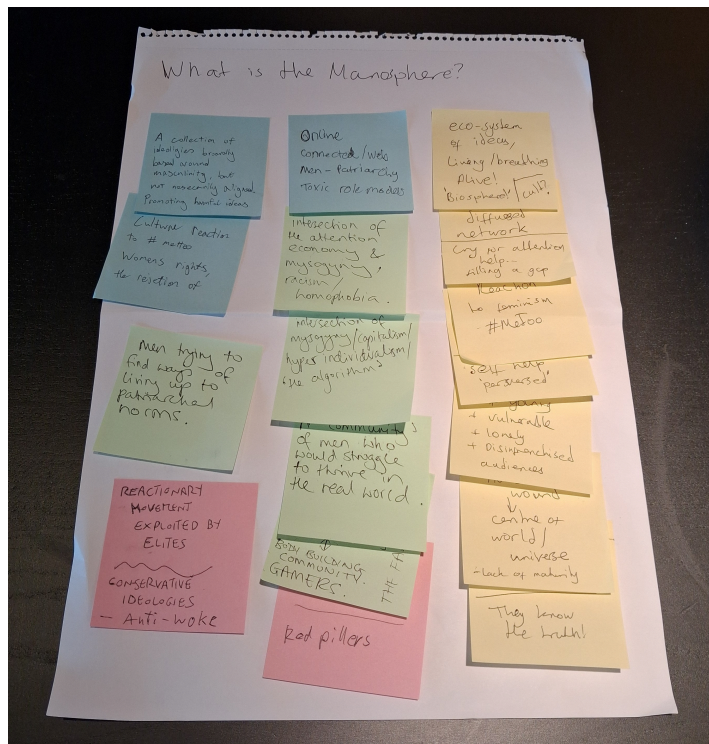
Rather than positioning men simply as perpetrators or victims, the discussions attempted to hold complexity and nuance, recognising the emotional, social and economic conditions that can draw people towards these spaces, while also acknowledging the harm many of these ideologies can cause. The workshop created space for honesty, disagreement, vulnerability and accountability, with participants reflecting on masculinity, power, community and belonging in an increasingly online and unequal world.

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The logo for Fondation de France is a solid blue square. Inside the square, the words "Fondation", "de", and "France" are stacked vertically in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

Workshop Post-it Notes



1. What is the Manosphere?

Participants described the Manosphere as a loose but connected online world made up of influencers, communities and ideas centred around masculinity, gender, power and identity. While not everyone within these spaces shares the same politics or beliefs, many participants felt the Manosphere is deeply connected to patriarchal ideas and often overlaps with misogyny, racism, homophobia and reactionary politics.

Participants repeatedly returned to the role of social media platforms, algorithms and the attention economy in helping harmful content spread quickly and widely. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok and podcasts were mentioned alongside more closed and private online spaces including Telegram groups, forums and invite only communities. Participants felt that algorithms often reward outrage, controversy and emotionally charged content, drawing users deeper into networks of influencers and communities over time.

Several participants described the Manosphere as a modern expression of patriarchy shaped by capitalism, consumer culture and hyper individualism. It was seen as promoting narrow and unrealistic ideas of masculinity, where men are encouraged to measure their worth through money, dominance, status, appearance and power. Participants referenced connected subcultures including incels, Men Going Their Own Way, pick up artists, lookmaxxing, bodybuilding spaces, gaming cultures and parts of the far right.

Alongside politics and ideology, participants also spoke about the emotional and social dimensions of the Manosphere. Many viewed it as attracting boys and young men who feel lonely, isolated, insecure or unable to thrive in the real world. The Manosphere was seen as filling an emotional and social gap by offering belonging, identity and simple explanations for personal struggles. Some participants described it as a “cry for help and attention”, while others saw it as a distorted and commercialised form of exploitative self-help.

There was also discussion around the Manosphere as a reaction against feminism and wider social change, particularly movements such as #MeToo. Participants spoke about the influence of charismatic online figures and “red pill” narratives that encourage followers to believe they have discovered a hidden truth ignored by mainstream society. Some compared this to cult like dynamics, where followers are encouraged to see themselves as enlightened while outsiders are viewed as manipulated, asleep or “in the Matrix”.

Overall, participants described the Manosphere as chaotic, fast moving and constantly evolving. They saw it as a mix of personal insecurity, digital culture, political reaction and online influence, shaped as much by loneliness and social conditions as by ideology itself.

Key Characteristics: Online communities, Algorithm-driven content, Patriarchal ideologies, Emotional and social dimensions, Reaction to feminism

Understanding the Manosphere: Six Key Dimensions

DIGITAL AND CULTURAL Shaped by algorithms, platforms and the attention economy amplifying harmful content	COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY Offers belonging, shared identity and simple explanations for personal struggles	STATUS AND DOMINANCE Promotes narrow ideals of masculinity around wealth, status and appearance
POLITICAL REACTION Rooted in reaction against feminism and social change, especially post #MeToo	CULT-LIKE DYNAMICS “Red pill” narratives frame followers as enlightened while others are “in the Matrix”	EMOTIONAL GAP Described as a cry for help, filling loneliness and disenfranchisement

2. What makes the Manosphere so appealing?

Participants identified a range of emotional, social and cultural reasons why the Manosphere can appeal to some men and boys. One of the strongest themes throughout the discussion was the way these spaces offer simple answers to difficult and complicated problems. In a world that can often feel uncertain, confusing and overwhelming, the Manosphere can provide clear explanations and easy targets for blame.

Many participants spoke about the search for identity, status and control. They suggested that some boys and young men are drawn towards the Manosphere because it promises confidence, power, money, sexual success and recognition. The idea of “winning” within patriarchal systems through wealth, dominance or status was seen as especially appealing to those struggling with insecurity, self worth or questions around their place in society. Some participants described this as an “easy” route towards success, purpose and validation.

Loneliness, isolation and the lack of positive male role models were also discussed in depth. Participants noted that many boys and men may not feel able to ask difficult questions or speak openly about emotions in their everyday lives. Online spaces connected to the Manosphere can therefore provide a sense of belonging, community and shared identity. These spaces may feel emotionally safer because they are often anonymous and avoid the vulnerability that face to face conversations can require.

Several participants argued that the Manosphere encourages men and boys to see themselves as victims, particularly in relation to feminism and changing gender expectations. This narrative was seen as emotionally powerful because it can remove personal accountability and redirect frustration towards women, social change or wider society. Participants suggested this can make people feel validated, important or “seen” while avoiding more uncomfortable forms of self reflection.

The accessibility of this content was also considered significant. Participants noted that Manosphere material is often free, highly visible online and heavily amplified by algorithms that reward controversy, outrage and emotionally charged material. In a period shaped by economic insecurity, boredom, uncertainty and declining social connection, many participants felt young people are increasingly searching for meaning, purpose and recognition online.

Changing gender and economic realities were also discussed as part of the appeal. Participants noted that women are now often earning the same as, or more than, men and are less financially dependent on male partners than in previous generations. Some felt certain men and boys have struggled to adapt to these changing expectations around masculinity, work and relationships. Rather than helping men build the emotional confidence and skills needed to navigate these changes, participants felt the Manosphere often offers a defensive reaction to them.

Participants also reflected on how the Manosphere taps into deeper human desires for belonging, certainty, identity and purpose. Its messages can sometimes feel familiar or even like “common sense” because they draw upon long standing patriarchal ideas around masculinity and gender that many people have grown up around from an early age.

Overall, the discussion framed the appeal of the manosphere as rooted not only in ideology, but also in unmet emotional, social and economic needs.

Core Appeals: Simple answers, Identity and status, Belonging and community, Victim narrative, Free and accessible content

Emotional, social and cultural factors: The manosphere offers simple answers to complex personal and social problems in an uncertain world.

1. IDENTITY, STATUS AND CONTROL

Promises confidence, power and prestige. An easy route to winning within patriarchal systems for those questioning their worth.

2. LONELINESS AND LACK OF ROLE MODELS

Online spaces offer community and belonging when men feel unable to have open emotional conversations in their offline lives.

3. VICTIM NARRATIVES

Men and boys are encouraged to see themselves as victims of feminism, removing personal accountability and redirecting frustration outward.

4. ALGORITHM-DRIVEN ACCESSIBILITY

Platforms are free, highly visible and reward emotionally charged content, especially appealing during periods of insecurity and boredom.

5. SHIFTING GENDER AND ECONOMIC REALITIES

As women gain financial independence, some men struggle to adapt. The manosphere offers a defensive reaction rather than emotional growth.

6. DEEP HUMAN DESIRES

Messages feel like common sense because they echo long-standing patriarchal ideas many have been socialised with from an early age.

3. What would a healthy space look like for men and boys?

Participants described healthy spaces for men and boys as places built around care, openness, safety and accountability. These spaces were imagined as non judgemental and non shaming environments where men could ask difficult, uncomfortable or even embarrassing questions without fear of ridicule, rejection or cancellation. Many participants stressed the importance of creating spaces where vulnerability is accepted, while also ensuring people remain accountable for harm caused to others.

A strong theme throughout the discussions was the importance of positive and emotionally healthy male leadership. Participants suggested that these spaces should be guided or “held” by trusted men who model empathy, self awareness, honesty and respectful behaviour. Listening, cooperation and emotional openness were viewed as more valuable than competition, performance or status. At the same time, some participants acknowledged that competition itself is not always negative, as the desire to achieve, improve and gain respect can be deeply ingrained for many men and boys. Instead, participants suggested that competition could be redirected into healthier forms centred around collective growth, creativity, learning, sport, care for others and personal development rather than dominance, status or control.

The conversations also highlighted the importance of diversity and inclusion. Participants stressed that healthy spaces should recognise the different experiences of men across race, class, age and culture. This included the value of both age specific and intergenerational spaces where younger and older men could learn from one another. Some participants also discussed the importance of including women’s experiences and perspectives in certain conversations, while recognising that mixed gender spaces require careful facilitation, trust and emotional safety.

It was also noted that patriarchal ideas and restrictive gender norms are not only reinforced by men. Some participants reflected on how these beliefs can also be internalised and reproduced by women, showing how deeply social conditioning and cultural socialisation shape ideas around masculinity and gender.

Participants repeatedly emphasised that there is no single model for what a healthy space should look like. Different men will need different forms of support, structure and community depending on their lives and experiences. Suggestions included men’s talking groups, retreats, mentoring programmes and activities built around shared interests such as music, creativity or sport. Meeting men “where they are” was seen as important in making spaces feel welcoming and accessible.

Accessibility and practicality were also viewed as essential. Participants suggested that healthy spaces should be affordable, easy to access and available both online and offline. They should provide emotional support, reliable information and opportunities for meaningful connection at local, national and even global levels.

Overall, participants described healthy spaces for men and boys as places that encourage empathy, emotional self regulation, reflection and accountability, while supporting a broader and more inclusive understanding of masculinity.

<p>SAFE AND NON-JUDGEMENTAL</p> <p>No fear of ridicule, rejection or cancellation when asking hard questions</p>	<p>EMPATHETIC LEADERSHIP</p> <p>Guided by trusted men who model empathy, self-awareness and respect</p>	<p>DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE</p> <p>Recognises different experiences across class, race, culture and age</p>
<p>ACCOUNTABILITY</p> <p>Reflection on behaviour while still being held responsible for harm caused</p>	<p>ACCESSIBLE OFFLINE AND ONLINE</p> <p>Affordable, welcoming and available locally, nationally and globally</p>	<p>INTERGENERATIONAL</p> <p>Younger and older men learning from one another across age groups</p>

<p>AWAY FROM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition and dominance • Performance and status • Shame and self-suppression • Narrow gender norms 	<p>TOWARDS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening and cooperation • Empathy and openness • Collective growth • Broader masculinity
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Suggested Formats

Talking groups	Retreats	Mentoring
Sport and shared interests	Music and arts	Online communities

4. What changes, social or technological, would help most?

Participants proposed a wide range of social, educational and technological changes that could better support men and boys. Much of the discussion focused on the impact of digital culture and the need to create healthier forms of connection, masculinity and community both online and offline.

One of the strongest themes was the role of technology and social media. Participants expressed concern about algorithms that amplify rage, sensationalism, misogyny and misinformation in order to maximise engagement and profit. Many argued for greater accountability and regulation of technology companies and their executives, including more transparency around how social media platforms operate and shape behaviour. Suggestions included restricting social media access for under 16s, encouraging reduced phone use, improving systems to identify harmful or misleading content, and more radical proposals around greater public ownership or democratic control of online platforms.

Education was also seen as central to long term change. Participants called for better sex, relationship and social education in schools, alongside stronger teaching around emotional literacy, critical thinking and social skills. Many stressed the importance of helping boys understand that emotions and vulnerability are not weaknesses or sources of shame. There were also suggestions for greater inclusion of women's studies, allyship training and discussions around gender equality within schools, universities and workplaces.

The importance of positive male relationships and community support came up repeatedly throughout the discussions. Participants argued for more healthy men's groups within local communities, alongside stronger cultures of men emotionally supporting one another. Several participants felt boys and men need better role models and healthier public conversations around masculinity, wellbeing and relationships. Encouraging more men into caring professions and primary school teaching was also viewed as an important way to challenge narrow gender norms and offer more diverse examples of masculinity.

Mental health and wider social conditions were another major focus. Participants called for accessible and properly funded mental health support, including free therapy through the National Health Service. Some participants connected the pressures experienced by men to wider economic systems, arguing that insecurity, inequality and expectations around financial success contribute to stress, loneliness and feelings of inadequacy. Suggestions such as longer and better paid paternity leave and more progressive taxation reflected a desire to reduce pressure on men to define themselves primarily through work, money and status.

Overall, participants argued that supporting men and boys requires both technological reform and stronger real world social connection. Many felt that reducing harmful online influences must go hand in hand with creating more opportunities for meaningful community, emotional openness and healthier human relationships offline.

1. TECHNOLOGY AND PLATFORM REGULATION

- Regulate algorithms amplifying rage and misogyny
- Transparency from tech executives
- Under 16 social media restrictions
- Reduce phone use
- Better public control and ownership over platforms

2. EDUCATION

- Better sex and relationship education
- Critical thinking skills
- Emotional literacy
- Gender equality and women's studies
- Allyship training

3. MALE COMMUNITY AND ROLE MODELS

- Healthy men's groups
- Cultures of emotional support between men
- Better role models and conversations
- Men in caring professions and primary teaching

4. MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Free publicly funded therapy
- Longer and better paid paternity leave
- Progressive taxation
- Reduce pressure to define worth through money

5. OVERALL DIRECTION

- Reduce harmful online influence
- Create meaningful offline community
- Encourage emotional openness
- Build healthier human relationships

Workshop Notes

The following insights were gathered from workshop participants through collaborative discussion:

1. What is the Manosphere?

- A collection of masculinity-centred ideologies and communities, not necessarily aligned, often promoting harmful ideas.
- An online, connected ecosystem shaped by the attention economy and algorithms, with public and closed spaces.
- Overlaps with patriarchy, misogyny, racism/homophobia, capitalism, hyper-individualism, and reactionary politics.
- Includes subcultures such as incels, MGTOW, pick-up artists, lookmaxxing, bodybuilding, gaming cultures, and parts of the far right.
- Often framed as “red pill” truth-seeking with cult-like dynamics; can function as a commercialised self-help industry exploiting vulnerability.

2. What makes the Manosphere appealing to some men and boys?

- Status, entitlement, and promises of money, sex, prestige, and “winning” within patriarchal norms.
- Lack of male role models; questions about identity and role in life.
- Simple answers and clear targets for blame; a way to make sense of an overwhelming world.
- Belonging and purpose; emotionally “safe” anonymity that avoids face-to-face vulnerability.
- Victim narratives that reduce accountability and allow blame to be redirected.
- Free, accessible content amplified by platforms and algorithms.

3. What would a healthy space look like for men and boys?

- Warm, open, caring, non-shaming, non-judgemental spaces where “no wrong questions” are allowed.
- Safety with accountability: men can take responsibility without ridicule or cancellation.
- Held by emotionally healthy, trusted male role models; listening, cooperation, and reflection over performance.
- Inclusive across class, race, culture; age-specific and intergenerational options; sometimes mixed-gender sessions with careful facilitation.
- Accessible and affordable; online and offline; meeting men where they are (e.g., sport, music, creativity).

4. What changes (social or tech) would better support men and boys?

- Reduce harmful platform dynamics: algorithm changes, transparency, and accountability for tech firms.
- Restrictions for under 16s; less phone usage; stronger content standards (including misogynistic pornography concerns).
- Better sex, social, and relationship education; emotional literacy and critical thinking taught in schools.
- Proper mental health support, including free therapy; healthy men’s groups in every community.
- Support men into caring professions and primary school teaching; policies that reduce pressure to define worth through earnings.