CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER FOR ENGLAND,

"SEX IS KIND OF BROKEN NOW": CHILDREN AND PORNOGRAPHY

Key Findings:

Early Exposure: 1 in 10 children have viewed pornography by the age of nine.

Widespread Consumption: Most young adults (79%) aged 18–21 had seen pornography involving sexual violence by the age of 18.

Normalization of Aggression:

- 47% of young people aged 16–21 believe girls expect physical aggression in sex.
- Many young people assume that girls enjoy acts like airway restriction and slapping.

Personal Experience:

- Nearly half (47%) of 18–21-year-olds reported experiencing a violent sex act.
- Over a third had actively sought out violent pornography.

Platforms of Exposure:

- Twitter was the most common platform (41%) where children saw pornography, followed by dedicated porn sites (37%) and Instagram (33%).

Impact on Children:

The report highlights how depictions of sexual coercion and aggression are becoming normalized.
A disturbing anecdote shared by Dame Rachel involved a 12-year-old boy who strangled his girlfriend during their first kiss, believing it was normal because he had seen it in pornography.

Distorted Understanding of Consent and Intimacy.

Increased risk of harmful sexual behaviour (HSB).

Emotional and psychological harm, including anxiety, shame, and confusion.

Safeguarding Implications for Schools

Education:
Urgent need for age-appropriate RSE that addresses pornography, consent, and healthy relationships.
Equip children with critical thinking skills to challenge harmful narratives.

Policy & Practice:
Strengthen online safety policies and filtering systems in schools.
Ensure staff are trained to recognise signs of HSB and respond appropriately.

Multi-Agency Response:
Collaboration between schools, social care, police, and health to address concerns holistically.
Use of early help assessments where exposure to harmful content is suspected.

- Recommendations from the Commissioner

- Online Safety Bill: Calls for urgent implementation, including:
  - Mandatory age verification for pornographic sites.
  - Regulation of social media platforms to prevent exposure.

- Role of Ofcom: To set minimum standards for age assurance and hold platforms accountable.