**Submission to the UN on the Rights of the Child**

We are concerned that the rights of children in the UK are being undermined in two significant ways:

1. By the imposition of adult concepts of sexual orientation and gender identity.
2. By the undermining of normal safeguarding practices by transgender inclusion policies.

**Teaching gender identity runs counter to gender equality**

The progress that has been made in the pursuit of sex equality is being undone by teaching that gender non-conforming behaviour or interests may be a sign that a child is really the other sex and should transition. After many years in which it was standard practice in schools to teach that sex stereotypes can be ignored, that boys and girls can have any personality and preferences and can pursue any interests and any career options, children are now being taught that such behaviour may mean their bodies are wrong, and that medical intervention may be appropriate. This is what it means to teach gender identity ideology to children. Children should be taught to be tolerant and accepting of non-conformity. Instead they are being told that people can actually change sex, and that they should accept whatever someone tells them. This is a risk to their own privacy and safety. It is particularly a problem for girls, who are simultaneously being taught to have boundaries and to trust their instincts, and to ignore those instincts and forget boundaries if a male person says he is a woman or a girl.

**Children are being sexualised and exposed to inappropriate sexual content**

Sex education in schools must be age-appropriate. But the conflation of sex, sexual orientation and gender identity has led to a free-for-all in which adults are telling children there are many genders, and under-age children are being told about adult sexual practices which are in some cases not even legal (e.g. bestiality). This is not appropriate or helpful at all. In some cases children are shocked and frightened what they hear.

**Girls are losing their privacy and dignity in school and in society, and their opportunities for fair, safe sport**

The push in schools and clubs to prioritise the needs of transgender people is detrimental to girls. Many schools and sports clubs now allow trans-identifying boys to participate in girls’ sport, to use girls’ toilets and changing rooms. This comes at the expense of girls, who lose privacy in the changing rooms and fairness on the sports field. In some sports safety is affected too. Sport and physical activity are important for healthy physical and emotional development. Girls’ opportunities are being compromised for the benefit of trans-identifying boys. There should be no hierarchy of rights, but this is where centring gender identity leads.

The demand to accept without question the gender identity of other children and adults around them also puts girls at risk. If they cannot use the right language to describe who is doing what, they cannot report reality. Children are told they must respect others’ identities. This is tantamount to telling them to lie or to keep a secret. This is totally counter to good child safeguarding policy. Even if there is no actual harm, they are being taught to centre others’ wishes over their own needs. This is a backward step on the path to sex equality, and it is girls who lose out.

**This harms both boys and girls**

While most of the obvious risks and harms are to girl children, boys also lose privacy if trans-identifying girls are granted access to boys’ facilities. Nor do these policies serve trans-identifying children well. Leading them to believe they can change sex, and to expect full acceptance that they truly have done so, is a false promise. They cannot control how others perceive them. It would be more honest and more helpful to teach them that they should be free to behave, present and express how they like, and to help them become resilient. At the same time, all children should be taught acceptance of non-conformity. This does not involve any pretence or infringement of boundaries.

**It is counter to the rights of children to promote “gender-affirming care”**

Children should not be encouraged to make adult choices. In other areas of life, it is considered entirely appropriate to protect children from life-changing decisions which they lack the understanding and emotional maturity to make. Taking hormones to suppress puberty in a healthy body is one such decision, since the evidence is that it almost always leads to cross-sex hormones and the loss of sexual function and fertility. While adults must be free to make their own choices, this is not a choice that comes without significant cost, and is therefore totally inappropriate to be promoted as a positive or even a neutral option for gender-confused young people. No one would encourage a child, or even a young adult, to consider sterilisation. It is widely accepted that some young adults who say they do not want children may change their minds as they mature, and for that reason sterilisation is strongly discouraged among young people. Yet “gender-affirming care” among children leads to the same outcome. They are not capable of giving truly informed consent to such treatment.

**Conclusion**

We request that all those involved to rethink their approach to ensure that it is genuinely child-centred, taking account of children’s still-developing intellectual, emotional and physical abilities. It is a serious infringement on the rights of a child is to treat them like an adult in situations where this is to their detriment. Increasingly this is happening as a result of excessively sexualised sex education, policies based on gender-identity in schools, and promoting gender-affirming medical treatments to children and young people. Adult expectations of self-expression, sexual freedoms and access to the healthcare of their choice are being imposed on children, who are not equipped to understand or to make informed choices. It is incumbent on adults to safeguard children, and these practices are systematically undermining that obligation.

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