

## Child sexual exploitation: How much more evidence do we need before the government will act?

*Yet another serious case review shows how ‘difficulty interpreting and reconciling national guidance and the law relating to sexual activity’ is leaving children at continued risk of child sexual exploitation*

Earlier this year, the Family Education Trust report, *Unprotected*, brought together evidence from seven serious case reviews and one independent inquiry to demonstrate how public policy and professional protocols are exposing young people to the risk of sexual exploitation. From Torbay, Liverpool, Rochdale, Rotherham, Thurrock, Oxfordshire, Hampshire and Bristol, a clear picture emerged of a culture in which underage sexual activity is viewed as relatively harmless so long as it is perceived to be consensual.

To that hall of shame, we must now add Somerset, following the publication of a serious case review which focuses on the significant harm suffered by two teenage girls as a result of persistent sexual, physical and emotional abuse from 2010-2014. The girls, named in the report as Child C and Child Q, suffered serious mental health problems, which led to

suicide attempts. Both children had several pregnancies, ending in miscarriage and abortion, and both subsequently had a child by one of the perpetrators.

While the report is chiefly concerned with the abuse of C and Q, it also takes account of the experience of seven other child victims of two men, described as Perpetrators A and B. At the time of their eventual conviction in 2016, Perpetrator A was 34 and Perpetrator B was 29.

### Guidance and the law

The first of the report’s eight findings states:

*Due to difficulty interpreting and reconciling national guidance and the law relating to sexual activity, professionals sometimes find it difficult to distinguish between informed consent for adolescent sexual activity and coercion/‘inappropriate relationships’; this can leave children being at continued risk of child sexual exploitation, especially if they are judged to be ‘competent’ and/or ‘capable’ to make such decisions themselves.*

In an interview with the lead reviewer of this serious case review, the adolescent

support worker recalled being concerned about both C and Q and their relationships with the perpetrators and she informed Children’s Social Care (CSC) of her concerns.

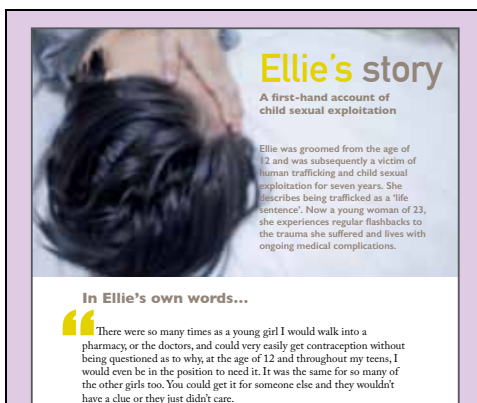
However, her recollection was that both CSC and her own managers took the view that ‘the girls were 15 years old and involved in a consensual relationship’ (4.1.8). The report goes on to note that:

*This view of a consensual relationship was compounded at times by the girls mentioning boyfriends in their late teens or early twenties... This was further complicated by the probable view that both C and Q were capable and competent to make decisions about their sexual relationships, decisions about a termination of pregnancy and about the choice of visitors when in a mental health inpatient unit. (4.1.9)*

Professionals were all too ready to assume that the teenage girls were ‘competent to consent’ to underage sex and to an abortion, without considering the possibility of safeguarding issues. In the cases of C and Q, the report notes:

- Little or no recorded information on sexual partners of teenagers in terms of their age and the nature of the relationship
- Lack of exploration of identity of person accompanying pregnant child at appointments, and their relationship with the child
- Accepting that 15-year-old pregnant child was Gillick competent and did not want her parents informed of her pregnancy, but then when it came to a termination of that pregnancy accepting written agreement for this procedure from an adult female friend who accompanied her...

**continued overleaf...**



**In the August issue of the Bulletin, we published *Ellie's Story* – a powerful firsthand account of child sexual exploitation.**

Since Ellie’s experience brings some of the key messages from the serious case reviews into sharp focus, we have reproduced it as a leaflet in order to give it a wider circulation.

- Quantities of *Ellie's Story* are available at the following prices (inc p&p):  
10 copies - £2.50; 25 copies - £4.00;  
50 copies - £7.00; 100 copies - £13.00.

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## Child sexual exploitation: How much more evidence? *continued from front page...*

• *Acceptance of a 16 year old being competent/capable to decide on visitors in an inpatient health unit, without checking with parents or considering safeguarding issues e.g. having older 'friend' (perpetrator A) visiting her.* (4.1.11)

In short, the inconsistency between law and guidance, and the complacent attitude towards underage sex is placing children at risk. The Somerset report observes:

*The confusing and contradictory messages being given by the law, CICA [Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority], statutory and professional guidance reinforces the mixed messages to children and professionals alike.* (4.1.35)

## Listening to parents

The report's second major finding states:

*There is a tendency for practitioners to focus on short term intervention for perceived parenting deficits, without taking sufficient time to listen and hear the parents' own worries of risks outside the family. This can lead to the provision of insufficient support to the child and family.* (4.2)

The report notes 'the extent of concern' of the parents of the one of the girls, and 'the limited response' to their concerns, despite a miscarriage (possibly her second).



Child Q's father reported that his daughter was being sexually, physically and emotionally abused by an older man, but this was not investigated at all in 2010 and 2011. The serious case review comments that: 'Social workers do not appear to have taken the father's concerns about a much older boyfriend seriously, as reflected by the comment that the father's concerns "cannot be assumed to be correct".' (4.2.2)

The report notes that this tendency to disregard parents is 'compounded by a historical model of intervention and support based on short term intervention primarily around parenting deficits, which tends to minimise parental concerns about risk outside of the home'. (6.1.3)

## New review, same message

There is a remarkable consistency in the messages emerging from serious case reviews in relation to child sexual exploitation from different parts of the country. Put very simply, complacency about underage sex – evidenced by a failure to enforce the age of consent and policies encouraging the confidential provision of contraception to minors – combined with indifference to parental concerns, is putting children at risk.

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On two occasions, the Somerset report cites Finding 2 of the Brooke serious case review in Bristol in order to apply it to Somerset and to the nation as a whole:

*A confused and confusing stance in national policy about adolescent sexual activity, leaves professionals and managers struggling to recognise and distinguish between sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and/or underage sexual activity; this risks leaving some children at continued risk of exploitation in the mistaken belief they are involved in consensual activity.* (4.1.15)

The question is not whether we have enough evidence. It is rather a question of whether we have the political and professional will – and courage – to act on the mountain of evidence that is staring us in the face.

• **Edi Carmi, *The Fenestra Serious Case Review into Child Sexual Exploitation, Somerset Safeguarding Children Board, November 2017***  
<http://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/download/3307/>

## Missed opportunities in Somerset

The Somerset serious case review identifies no less than 14 missed opportunities to discover what was happening to Q and C. For example, in September 2010, 15-year-old Child Q disclosed at school that she had woken up that morning in a flat with two unknown males and another female. She thought her drink had been spiked the previous evening and had no idea who the people in the flat were. A referral was made to Children's Social Care (CSC), but the case was swiftly closed, against the wishes of the girl's father.

Over a three month period, Q's father made three separate referrals, expressing concern that his daughter was in a sexual relationship with a man in his mid to late-20s and that she had suffered a miscarriage several weeks earlier. He also claimed that the man had sexual relationships with other girls, carried a knife with him in his car, physically assaulted Q, humiliated her and forced her to beg. Yet when Child Q denied a sexual relationship, no further action was taken.

### Failure to investigate

The report relates that:

*There was awareness amongst professional staff from 2010 that Child Q had an older boyfriend. He was initially believed to be aged 19, when she was 14 years old in 2010. Later that year, when she was 15, there was information that she was in a sexual relationship with a named man (perpetrator A) believed to be 26 or 28 years old. This was reported both by her father and by the adolescent support worker... Also reported was that Q had one or more miscarriages at age 15 and that perpetrator A physically abused Q and humiliated her in front of others. The next year, when Q was aged 16 in 2011, concerns continued, with Q's deteriorating mental health and for the first time speaking of being sexually, physically and emotionally abused by a 29-year-old married man, leading to pregnancy and miscarriage. These concerns were known at the time (2010 and 2011) but were not investigated by professionals.* (4.1.5)

### Rape recorded as 'consensual sex'

Several months later, Child Q disclosed in a video interview that the sexual relationship between her and Perpetrator A commenced when she was 14 or 15 and he was 28. Yet this was recorded as 'consensual sex', even though in terms of the law a rape had been disclosed, given Q's age when the abuse first occurred. Similarly, when Child C's school notified the police that she was pregnant, reportedly by her boyfriend who was thought to be aged 19-21, the police incorrectly recorded it as 'intelligence' rather than as a crime.

It was not until August 2014, when Q's mother sent an email to the Police & Crime Commissioners (PCC) with her ongoing concerns about young girls continuing to be sexually exploited in the locality by perpetrators A and B that the police finally took action which resulted in their subsequent arrest and conviction.

# Proposed smacking ban: bad news all round – especially for children

*Family Education Trust director, Norman Wells, responds to the Scottish Government's announcement that it will 'ensure' that John Finnie's Member's Bill to criminalise smacking in Scotland becomes law.*

**Advocates of a ban on smacking invariably fail to think through the implications of what they are proposing. But if the Scottish government succeeds in getting John Finnie's bill onto the statute books, it will be a criminal offence for a parent to smack a naughty child.**

Such an outcome would have damaging consequences for families, for Scottish society and for children at risk of significant harm.

Let's be clear, all forms of child abuse and unreasonable punishment are already against the law. An outright ban on all forms of physical correction, no matter how mild, would therefore not give children any more protection against abusive treatment than they already have. What it would do, though, is to subject the mildest of smacks to criminal sanction.

As with any issue that arouses strong emotions, it is important to keep a clear head and keep things in proportion. This is not a subject for soundbites and knee-jerk reactions. Rather, it calls for sober reflection. We need to carefully weigh the consequences of the proposed legislation.

## Court action

If the Scottish Parliament were to impose a blanket ban on all smacking, then children from loving homes who are not at the slightest risk of abuse could be hauled before the courts and forced to testify against their parents if they continued to use an occasional mild smack.

Children would risk suffering the humiliation and degradation of physical examinations and the possibility of seeing their parents dragged through the criminal justice system. The emotional damage of such an intrusion into a well-functioning home would by far outweigh the momentary discomfort of a tap on the back of the legs.

That prospect doesn't only send a shudder down the spines of caring parents who have occasionally used a disciplinary smack to good effect. It is also deeply disturbing to many other parents who do not personally favour smacking as a disciplinary tool at all.

It is hard to think of anything more undermining of parents and more damaging to loving families. For the law to drive a wedge between children and their parents in this way presents a serious threat to stable family life.

## Social work caseload

But a smacking ban wouldn't only run the risk of harm to children from stable

and loving homes where their parents continued to use physical discipline in a loving and responsible way. It would also vastly increase the caseload of social workers and deprive children suffering real abuse of the support they need.

To equate a moderate smack with the kind of horrific abuse experienced by such children would only serve to obscure and trivialise their suffering.

## Positive effects of smacking

Contrary to the claims of the abolitionists, research demonstrates that a mild smack to correct a child's bad behaviour has a positive effect in the context of a parent-child relationship where the child is loved and cherished.

Studies that have compared its effectiveness with other common methods of discipline, such as grounding, depriving children of privileges or sending them to their room, have found that smacking compares very favourably. A ban on smacking would therefore deprive parents of an effective sanction and result in some parents resorting to methods that are cruel and emotionally harmful.

The Scottish government claims that 'physical punishment can have negative effects on children, which can last long after the physical pain has died away'. But hundreds of thousands of Scottish adults will testify that the moderate physical correction they received from a loving parent has done them nothing but good in the long-term, even though they did not appreciate it at the time. Others will tell you that their most painful memories from childhood have nothing to do with smacking, but with hurtful, aggressive, offensive and insulting words spoken by a parent who has lost control.

## Sweden's smacking ban

If parents were denied the freedom to use a moderate and controlled physical sanction to nip a child's misbehaviour in the bud, in some cases the child's bad behaviour would deteriorate to the point at which the parents would lash out in exasperation and cause harm to the child.



It is a little-publicised fact that the years following Sweden's ban on smacking in 1979 saw a fivefold increase in physical child abuse cases classified as criminal assaults and a similar increase in child-on-child criminal assaults.

Evidence from other countries that have imposed smacking bans is sparse, but national reports submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child offer little to suggest that making smacking a criminal offence produces happier, better-adjusted children or contributes to harmonious family life.

## Consequences

In practice, a ban on smacking would be impossible to police. But it would create a climate of fear which would, in itself, be detrimental to family life. Some parents would doubtless try to observe the letter of the law, but in doing so, may resort to emotional and manipulative tactics that would be damaging to their children.

Other parents may conclude that they love their children too much to comply with such an ill-advised law and continue to use an occasional smack to correct their children's behaviour. But such parents would run the risk of potentially damaging state intrusion, including court proceedings, if they are discovered. Either way, it is the children who would lose out.

Governments don't bring up children; parents do. As one social commentator has warned:

*[We should be] very cautious of recommendations decreasing the role of parents and increasing the role of the state in family life... Children's rights theory claims to promote the welfare of children. But in reality it throws children into the arms of state professionals—who may be filled with big ideas but empty of the bonds of family love.*

• A slightly edited version of this article was published in the *Scottish Daily Mail* on Friday 20 October 2017.

# What future for Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education?

*The appointment of Ian Bauckham to oversee the engagement process and advise the Department for Education on the way forward signals the beginning of discussions with stakeholders.*

**Over the coming weeks, Ian Bauckham, chief executive officer of the Tenax Schools Trust and an executive headteacher, will be seeking evidence from a wide range of stakeholders before advising the Department for Education (DfE) on the content of the regulations and statutory guidance which will determine how Relationships Education (RelEd) and Relationships and Sex education (RSE) are taught.<sup>1</sup>**

In response to a parliamentary question earlier in the year, Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, announced that:

*The engagement process will seek evidence from schools and teachers, parents and pupils, experts in safeguarding and child wellbeing, subject experts, voluntary organisations and other interested parties, and other Government Departments and public sector bodies.<sup>2</sup>*

The purpose of the exercise is to assist the DfE in deciding on the content of the regulations and statutory guidance that will determine the character of statutory RelEd in primary schools and statutory RSE in secondary schools.

The government is committed to ensuring that the provisions are in place for the subjects to be taught from September 2019. It has confirmed that parents will be denied the right to withdraw primary-aged children from RelEd and it has also indicated that it will limit their right to withdraw secondary-aged children from RSE as well.

## LGBT-inclusive

During the summer, Mr Gibb stressed that the government would make every effort to ensure that the regulations and guidance were LGBT-inclusive. He stated:

*We expect schools to ensure that all pupils, whatever their developing sexuality or gender identity, feel that relationships and sex education is relevant to them and sensitive to their needs. As part of our engagement programme, we will consider ways to ensure that our guidance and regulations are inclusive of LGBT issues. We plan to work closely with organisations such as Stonewall and the Terrence Higgins Trust, amongst others, to ensure that all views are represented.<sup>3</sup>*

Mr Gibb subsequently told PinkNews that he would do all he could to get LGBT issues on the curriculum: 'My intention is to ensure that it will be LGBT inclusive.'<sup>4</sup>

During October, Theresa May became the first serving Prime Minister to make a personal appearance at the *PinkNews* awards. Having expressed her pride at the part she had played in legislating for same-sex marriage, Mrs May declared:

*[W]e need to keep up our action, so we are pressing ahead with inclusive relationship and sex education in English schools, making sure that LGBT issues are taught well.*

She concluded: 'LGBT history is all our history. LGBT success is everyone's success, and LGBT rights are human rights.'<sup>5</sup>

## Notes

1. DfE press release, 6 November 2017.
2. Answer to HC written question 4399, 17 July 2017.
3. Answer to HC written question 1130, 3 July 2017.
4. PinkNews, 4 August 2017.
5. PinkNews, 18 October 2017.

## Quotable quotes from *Too Hot to Handle*

(see review on opposite page)

● "It is an ironical fact that the school after audaciously taking over so many functions of the family now is beginning to provide instruction on how to conduct family life itself."

*Comment from an unnamed source in the 1950s, p.59.*

● "If children are 'taught' that it is OK for them to change partners and fall into bed when the emotions move them (provided they use a condom!), what hope is there for that young person...ever to form a lasting relationship based on mutual trust? We have to promote lasting, permanent marriage since this is the only sound basis for the family, which in turn is the building block upon which the whole structure of the nation is based."

*An unnamed minister of health in Zimbabwe, p.121.*

● "A century after modern sex education started, its dilemmas remained largely the same: whose values were right for children and adolescents, who would decide, and why."

*Jonathan Zimmerman, p.143.*

## Government policy must put parental responsibility before the power of the state

*The following letter, signed by Family Education Trust director, Norman Wells, and Family Education Trust trustee, Dr Trevor Stammers, together with several MPs, academics and representatives of various organisations, was published in the Daily Telegraph on Tuesday 10 October 2017:*

**Parents and guardians must retain the fundamental freedom to bring up their children in accordance with their beliefs and values. The role of the state in the nurture of children is strictly ancillary to that of the parents or guardians.** The Government's decision to impose Relationships Education on every child in England from the age of five undermines that freedom.

Not only will parents be denied the right to withdraw children from Relationships Education, but the Education Secretary has already spoken in favour of introducing very young children to concepts, such as homosexuality and transgenderism, at an age where these cannot be critically assessed. We note that the Secretary of State has made no mention of ensuring that children are taught about the well-established benefits associated with being brought up by married natural parents.

Relationships education was voted through parliament on the grounds that it would help protect children from exploitative relationships and internet predators. Instead, will it be used to stigmatise traditional marriage and promote alternative lifestyles to children against the wishes of parents?

This would be a coercive and unnecessary measure damaging the position of all parents in England. We demand that the forthcoming consultation on Relationships Education puts the rights of parents ahead of the power of the state.

# Too Hot to Handle: A Global History of Sex Education

Jonathan Zimmerman, Princeton University Press, 2015, pbk, x + 202pp, £17.95, ISBN 978-0-691-17366-5

**The Children and Social Work Act 2017 makes provision for statutory Relationships Education in all primary schools and statutory Relationships and Sex Education in all secondary schools. But the government has left itself the tricky matter of defining its terms and determining the character of the curriculum.** As the process of engagement and subsequent consultation unfolds, the extent of the differences concerning what children should and should not be taught, and for what purpose, will become painfully apparent.



Jonathan Zimmerman's global history of sex education demonstrates that it has been ever thus. Three recurring themes throughout the book will inevitably dominate the government's forthcoming deliberations: Who do children belong to? What is sex education and what is it seeking to achieve? And whose morality should be taught?

Zimmerman is a professor of education and history at the University of Pennsylvania. He dedicates this volume to his mother, who spent her career in family planning and sex education. She imbued him with the standard liberal assumption that the United States was 'behind' more progressive countries, especially in Western Europe, on sex education. While the US pioneered the subject, the Europeans created a different type of sex education, one focused more on individual rights and pleasures rather than on public consequences and dangers. However, Zimmerman argues that no one was 'ahead' or 'behind'. Rather, different countries came to the subject with contrasting goals, expectations and ideas.

While most works on the history of sex education have tended to focus on one nation or another, Zimmerman has taken a broader view and taken account of transnational forces, connections and tensions. He demonstrates that sex education has remained a strongly international movement. In four chapters he considers the origins of sex education (1898-1939), sex education in a Cold War world (1940-1964), sex education and the 'sexual revolution' (1965-1983), and sex education in the age of AIDS (1984-2010).

## Controversy

Extravagant claims for sex education are nothing new. During the 1950s, it was argued that world peace demanded a strong America, a strong America required stable families, stable families needed sex education, so sex education was the key to world peace! And yet, writing two decades on, Zimmerman notes that it still lacks scientific basis or consensus.

From the very outset sex education was highly controversial. In the early years of

the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were concerns that youth sexual behaviour was spiralling out of control, but there was strong disagreement about how it should be brought back under control and by whom. Some sex education advocates argued that if young people were armed with information about sex, they would resist temptation, while others feared it would foster promiscuity. But the disagreements went beyond that.

There were also fundamentally different visions for what sex education could achieve for pupils. Zimmerman writes: 'Some of these visions focused on changing their *behaviour*, to minimise "unwanted pregnancies" and especially sexually transmitted diseases; others emphasised changing their *minds*, so they could be liberated from "guilt" and other unhealthy ideas.' (p.145, emphasis added)

In an attempt to minimise controversy, sex education was often disguised with different names, or no name at all. It was, for example, delivered under the innocuous-sounding Mothercraft, Baby Nursing, Moral Education, Marriage and Motherhood, Human Development, Social Hygiene, Family Life Education, or Life Skills Education. In many parts of Asia, Africa and South America it went under the name of Population Education. There were also efforts to integrate sex within other school subjects, such as Biology, Civics, Social Studies or Religious Instruction.

## The heart of the battle

Parental concerns about sex education surface again and again. Zimmerman notes that at the heart of the battle lies the question: To whom does the child belong – to parents or the state? Sex educators imagined a world in which knowledge, as transmitted through the state, would govern human affairs and penetrate into the most intimate realms of thought and behaviour. But the experts confronted a world of faith and family which frequently rejected state authority and jealously guarded its own. The question of how to teach sex education in a manner that respects different ethnicities, cultures and religions in an increasingly diverse

society has remained a dilemma for sex educators and governments.

Zimmerman points out that opposition was by no means limited to those with a religious faith. He cites Hugo Munsterberg, a Harvard psychologist and self-proclaimed rationalist, who argued that it was fraudulent for sex educators to claim that sexual knowledge would deter immoral practices, and that it was, in fact, more likely to promote them. In 1914, he wrote that sex education 'is one of the most dangerous causes of that evil which it hopes to destroy. We may instruct with the best intention to suppress, and yet our instruction itself must become a source of stimulation which necessarily creates the desire for improper conduct.' (p.37)

## The gospel of sexual freedom

Zimmerman documents how after the Second World War, Sweden took the lead in promoting new curricula aimed at liberating individuals to 'discover and develop their own sexual selves'. Then, following the advent of the birth control pill, liberal intellectuals across the West declared a new gospel of sexual freedom and called on schools to preach it. But for others permissive trends highlighted the need for sex education as a preventative measure against greater sexual liberty and experimentation.

The chapter on the sexual revolution includes a discussion of trends in the UK with references to Mary Whitehouse, the Festival of Light and the Responsible Society (later to become the Family Education Trust). The chapter also highlights the courageous stand taken by Family Education Trust supporter, the late Jack Proom.

All in all, this is an enlightening account of the history of sex education, which is at different points both heartening and disturbing. For himself, Zimmerman concludes that sex education has been neither a 'modernist monstrosity' nor a 'scientific triumph'. It is, rather, 'a mirror, reflecting all the flux and diversity – and the confusion and instability – of sex and youth in our globalised world.' (p.152)

# Promoting transgender ideology is ‘institutionalised child abuse’, says senior paediatrician

**‘Professionals are using the myth that people are born transgender to justify engaging in massive, uncontrolled, and unconsented experimentation on children who have a psychological condition that would otherwise resolve after puberty in the vast majority of cases.’** So writes Michelle Cretella, president of the American College of Pediatricians, a national organisation of pediatricians and other healthcare professionals dedicated to the health and well-being of children.

According to Dr Cretella, the arguments of the transgender movement are deeply flawed. In an article published on *The Daily Signal* website, she sets out some of the facts based on scientific evidence:

## 1. Twin studies prove no one is born ‘trapped in the body of the wrong sex’

‘The belief in “innate gender identity”—the idea that “feminised” or “masculinised” brains can be trapped in the wrong body from before birth—is a myth that has no basis in science.’

## 2. Gender identity is malleable, especially in young children

‘Even the American Psychological Association’s Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology admits that prior to the widespread promotion of transition affirmation, 75 to 95 percent of pre-pubertal children who were distressed by their biological sex eventually outgrew that distress. The vast majority came to accept their biological sex by late adolescence after passing naturally through puberty.’

## 3. Puberty blockers for gender dysphoria have not been proven safe

‘There is some evidence for decreased bone mineralisation, meaning an increased risk of bone fractures as young adults, potential increased risk of obesity and testicular cancer in boys, and an unknown impact upon psychological and cognitive development.’

## 4. There are no cases in the scientific literature of gender-dysphoric children discontinuing blockers

‘This suggests that the medical protocol itself may lead children to identify as transgender. There is an obvious self-fulfilling effect in helping children impersonate the opposite sex both biologically and socially.’

## 5. Cross-sex hormones are associated with dangerous health risks

‘From studies of adults we know that the

risks of cross-sex hormones include, but are not limited to, cardiac disease, high blood pressure, blood clots, strokes, diabetes, and cancers.’

## 6. Neuroscience shows that adolescents lack the capacity needed for risk assessment

‘Scientific data show that people under the age of 21 have less capacity to assess risks. There is a serious ethical problem in allowing irreversible, life-changing procedures to be performed on minors who are too young themselves to give valid consent.’

## 7. There is no proof that affirmation prevents suicide in children

‘Contrary to the claim of activists, there is no evidence that harassment and discrimination, let alone lack of affirmation, are the primary cause of suicide among any minority group... Over 90 percent of people who commit suicide have a diagnosed mental disorder, and there is no

evidence that gender-dysphoric children who commit suicide are any different.’

## 8. Transition-affirming protocol has not solved the problem of transgender suicide

‘Adults who undergo sex reassignment—even in Sweden, which is among the most LGBT-affirming countries—have a suicide rate nearly 20 times greater than that of the general population. Clearly, sex reassignment is not the solution to gender dysphoria.’

### The bottom line...

‘Today’s institutions that promote transition affirmation are pushing children to impersonate the opposite sex, sending many of them down the path of puberty blockers, sterilisation, the removal of healthy body parts, and untold psychological damage. These harms constitute nothing less than institutionalised child abuse. Sound ethics demand an immediate end to the use of pubertal suppression, cross-sex hormones, and sex reassignment surgeries in children and adolescents, as well as an end to promoting gender ideology via school curricula and legislative policies. It is time for our nation’s leaders and the silent majority of health professionals to learn exactly what is happening to our children, and unite to take action.’

● **Michelle Cretella, ‘I’m a Pediatrician. How Transgender Ideology Has Infiltrated My Field and Produced Large-Scale Child Abuse’, *The Daily Signal*, 3 July 2017.**

## Teenage sexual experimentation: ‘We have opened the door...and we need to find a way to close it’

**In a deeply disturbing feature published in the *TES*, the magazine’s commissioning editor, Jon Severs, relates his findings after spending three days shadowing two Metropolitan Police units charged with tackling online sex crimes against children.**

He reports that: ‘The idea that young people send each other explicit images of themselves is now almost accepted as part of growing up...the desensitisation to sexual imagery or acts leads to the problems we see at the more extreme end of exploitation.’

A specialist officer working within the Metropolitan Police Predatory Offenders Unit (POU) cited an example in which parents raised concerns at a school about their daughter sending explicit images to another student, who in turn distributed them to others in the year group. ‘The response was: this is normal behaviour, don’t worry, it’s teenage experimentation, it will blow over, we have some great PSHE resources we can share...’ The officer commented: ‘Just think about the message that all of this conveys. Think about how this acceptance, this normalisation, influences the behaviour of teenagers.’

Severs writes: ‘We have to recognise that we have opened the door to an environment in which children think all of this is OK, and we need to find a way to close it.’

But according to the unnamed specialist police officer, sex education is not the quick-fix that it is often claimed to be: ‘It is not about sex education, about internet-safety advice, about firewalls on the school wi-fi. It’s not about a new SRE curriculum.’

According to a detective inspector, ‘Teachers have got great PSHE resources, great safety advice in the computing curriculum. They’ve done their absolute best. It has no effect.’ In the final analysis, he says, ‘This is not their job, this is the job of parents.’

● **Jon Severs, ‘Until you see someone go through this, you can’t connect with it’, *TES*, 13 October 2017.**

# Officious: Rise of the Busybody State

Josie Appleton, Zero Books, 2016,  
pbk, vi + 121pp, £9.99, ISBN 978-1-78535-420-5

**The state is increasingly encroaching upon areas of life that we previously regarded as private and subjecting them to regulation. It is what Josie Appleton calls ‘the state hyper-regulation of everyday life’ (p.vi) that lies behind initiatives such as the Named Person scheme in Scotland and government proposals to regulate out-of-school education provision.** She writes: ‘Once it was assumed that everything was allowed unless explicitly prohibited; now it is more often assumed that everything is prohibited unless specifically allowed.’ (p.1)

Josie Appleton is director of the Manifesto Club, which campaigns for freedom in everyday life. In this insightful book, she expresses concern that the subjection of spontaneous areas of social life to procedures and rules is stifling and destructive. She draws a distinction between the work of public service officials who seek to meet public needs and the activities of the ‘officious’ which are devoted to obstructing people’s activities and imposing rules that make life more difficult.

Alongside a universal and blanket suspicion of social life, there is a corresponding universal and blanket faith in bureaucratic procedures. Appleton writes:

*...the target of the officious rule is unregulated life, anything that people have done or chosen for themselves using their own judgment or initiative, or any relationship based on spontaneity and mutual trust.*

*For example, child protection regulation targets the ‘relationship of trust’, which is seen as the site of potential abuse and therefore as requiring central state vetting and regulation... It is the unregulated human relationship, and not actual or potential abusive behaviour, which is the target for regulation... The very site of freedom becomes a particular target of officiousness.* (p.22)

With reference to child protection policies, acceptable behaviour contracts, risk assessments and public liability insurance, Josie Appleton paints a picture of an officious mindset that has grown out of control and lost all sense of proportion.

## How did we get here?

Appleton argues that the officious state has emerged to fill the vacuum created by a lack of consensus as to what is right and wrong – what she describes as ‘the collapse of different forms of social regulation’ and ‘the waning of positive ideologies and social forms’. (p.34) Whereas in the past social interactions were based on informal understanding and self-regulation, they are now becoming codified, and rules and regulations are multiplying apace. Appleton refers to a ‘crisis of civic life [which] calls forth

procedures and surveillance mechanisms to mediate people’s relationships with each other. People begin to view each other with suspicion and mistrust...’ (p.42)

We now find ourselves in a vicious circle in which officious officers and organisations have a vested interest in the maintenance and spread of officiousness, co-ordinators of training courses have an interest in the expansion of training requirements, and compliance officers have an interest in the production of yet more guidance and procedures. (p.45)

In the world of the ‘officious’, ‘Nothing counts that is not written down; only the paper world matters. If one has no policy on children’s welfare then apparently one does not care about children.’ (p.55) There is the danger that we cease to relate to one another as fellow human beings and respond spontaneously and instinctively to needs as they arise. Instead we are paralysed by the need to constantly refer to the written code in order to ‘cover ourselves’ in the event of a subsequent query. The fact that officious policies are constantly changing, with a new round of ‘updated guidance’ and ‘latest best practice’ means that we are for ever kept on our toes. The focus is now on a paper trail rather than on the exercise of personal judgment.

Sadly, ‘helping children is not seen as an ordinary part of adult life, but a special activity carried out by qualified, designated people’. (p.67) Appleton fears that child protection training amounts to ‘a desensitisation to ordinary ways of thinking and talking...and a certain dehumanisation, whereby instinctive responses are suppressed and you evaluate the world from official points of view’. (p.68)

## Where do we go from here?

In the final two chapters, Josie Appleton turns her attention to outlining a response to officiousness and all its damaging consequences. She writes of the need to re-establish the autonomy of the social sphere and recover civil society’s capacity for self-mediation. Yet she recognises that because officiousness is based on social fragmentation, mutual suspicion and reduction of independence,

there is relatively little resistance to its incursions and little consciousness of the violation that is taking place. (p.105)

However, there are points at which officiousness overreaches itself and when people arise from their slumber to protest: ‘Every form of officious regulation – the ban, surveillance, licence forms, vetting, fines, risk assessments – has at some point come into conflict with a group or individual which experiences it as an unjustified incursion.’ (p.106) When people protest against officiousness, they are asserting ‘the essential innocence and competence of social life, the right to autonomous action and self-regulation’. (p.107)

Appleton concludes:

*The conflict between officious authority and civil society will mean new contests around new issues and the formation of unfamiliar alliances. The main challenge will be the question of solidarity between different groups within civil society, which, ultimately, is the only force capable of sending the busybodies back behind their curtains.* (p.111)

## Named Person: legal minefield

**The Scottish government’s plans for a modified version of its controversial named person scheme will create a legal minefield, according to lawyers.** Evidence submitted to the Education and Skills Committee suggests that the government’s revised legislation and accompanying code of practice may not satisfy the concerns expressed in the ruling of the UK Supreme Court last July (see *Bulletin 164*).

The Faculty of Advocates warned that ‘an exceptionally difficult task’ was being imposed on the state-appointed guardians, which risked ‘making their job considerably more difficult and undermining the trust of families’. The Faculty stated that: ‘Some of the criticisms of the Supreme Court will continue to apply if the Bill as drafted is passed and the accompanying Code of Practice is approved’. A representative of the Law Society told the committee that he could envisage ‘an awful lot of people who are given named person responsibilities [needing to have] their legal departments on speed dial’.



# How hectic lifestyles are depriving our children

Hectic lifestyles and the decline of the extended family are ‘causing children to feel so bleak and disconnected that they reach out to Childline’, according to the helpline’s founder, Esther Rantzen. Commenting on a steady and alarming increase in the number of calls received from suicidal children, Dame Esther remarked:

*Time is the greatest gift we can give our own children, yet in Britain today it is the scarcest resource we have, especially for working parents. We need to take a hard look at how we live our lives. We’re all so addicted to being busy, but could these hectic lifestyles be depriving young people of something they need as much as oxygen: attention and time?*

Both Labour and Conservative governments have prioritised encouraging mothers with young children to work and have invested ever-increasing sums of taxpayers’ money in childcare, without giving adequate consideration to the consequences of this social experiment for children.

ONS figures reveal that the number of mothers in England with dependent children who are in employment has risen by 11.8 per cent from 3.7m in 1996 to 4.9m in 2017. Almost three-quarters of mothers with dependent children are now in full- or part-time work.\*

## Extended family

In her *Daily Telegraph* article, Dame Esther also lamented the decline of the extended family:

*[W]ithout extended families, where can [children] go for help? Perhaps that is why they turn to online friends or strangers, to have someone to talk to. But the online world brings new risks and pressures: cyber bullying, online groomers, the culture of ‘sexting’ explicit images of themselves, and the easy availability of porn...*

*[I]n these pressured times, with less attention from parents and often no extended family to turn to, children seem more desperately unhappy than ever.*

\* ONS, *Families and the Labour Market, England: 2017*, 26 September 2017.

• Esther Rantzen, ‘Britain’s desperately unhappy children need more time with mummy – and less online’, *Daily Telegraph*, 17 October 2017.

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## British Values curriculum

The Department for Education has set up an expert advisory group of teachers and education professionals to assist it in developing a ‘fundamental British values curriculum’.

In a letter to education professionals, the academies minister, Lord Agnew, outlined plans to develop new guidelines and resources for teachers to help build pupils’ resilience to extremist ideologies. It is envisaged that these materials will be delivered via existing subjects and published on the Educate Against Hate website, a joint initiative of the Department for Education and Home Office.<sup>1</sup>

In September, the chief inspector of schools, Amanda Spielman, called on schools to put British values at the ‘very heart of the curriculum’. The Ofsted head said that the education system has a vital role to play in upholding the principles that ‘make us a beacon of liberalism, tolerance and fairness to the rest of the world’.<sup>2</sup>

### Notes

1. ‘Government “developing fundamental British values curriculum”’, *Schools Week*, 27 October 2017.
2. ‘Schools should not be afraid to promote British values, says Ofsted head’, *Guardian*, 22 September 2017.

## AGM & conference 2018

The 2018 Annual General Meeting and conference will take place at the Royal Air Force Club in central London on **Saturday 9 June 2018**. Please note the date in your diary and plan to join us if you are able. The speakers are due to be **Dr Patrick Fagan**, director of the Marriage and Religion Research Institute (MARRI) in Washington DC., and **Dr Olwyn Mark** from Love for Life in Northern Ireland. Her PhD thesis on sex education is due to be published by Peter Lang shortly.

**Video recordings from the 2017 conference are now available** online on our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/familyeducationtrust>

- Professor Julian Rivers - Does English law need ‘marriage’?
- Dr Peter Saunders - The Transgender Agenda: Critiquing its origins, ideology, methods and goals

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