**Registered Charity No. 1070500**

Dr Darren Henley OBE

Chief Executive

Arts Council England

14 Great Peter Street

London

SW1P 3NQ

29th September 2022

Dear Dr Henley,

We previously wrote to you in October last year to express our grave concern about Arts Council funding for Fatt Projects, which ran ‘Palaver party’ drag performances for children 3-8 and we have also previously raised our concerns about your funding for the Family Sex Show, which we are pleased has now been stopped due to the intervention of Baroness Nicholson (copied into this letter.)

Despite our concerns that the highly sexualised Palaver performances were unsuitable for young children, the response we got from your team stated that you were satisfied that all safeguarding was in place and that the Arts Council recognised that while “*some of this work may not be to everybody’s taste or interest…it would be inappropriate for us to intervene in an activity on this basis*”.

The response on your behalf also stated that we should feel assured that the Arts Council “*take concerns about safeguarding extremely seriously. All organisations we fund are expected to comply with any relevant laws or government requirements and best practice in governance, reporting and operation. This includes having effective policies and procedures in place for safeguarding vulnerable people and children.”*

Therefore, you can imagine the shock and huge concern that we now feel having been sent (by a very worried librarian), the attached images from a graphic novel called *Welcome to St Hell: My Trans Teen Misadventure*, which contains inappropriate imagery and promotes the idea that children can take hormones and medically transition into the opposite sex.

This book is being published by the Reading Agency, which receives funding from the Arts Council, and is being released on 6th October as part of a collection of books for teenagers aged 13-18 years covering mental health, body image, sexuality and gender identity. Bearing in mind that a librarian has already received the embargoed collection and raised concerns with us, we must assume that the Reading Agency intends for the collection to be stocked in every public library and indeed even in school libraries.

The *Trans Teen Misadventure* book contains obscene adult imagery (we have enclosed with this letter some of the more disturbing sections from the book) and gives vulnerable children the message that taking puberty blockers and cross sex hormones is a normal part of growing up, rather than causing irreversible harm and possible infertility and the inability to have a normal sex life as an adult. Anyone who has read the interim report by Dr Hilary Cass will be aware that the NHS gender identity clinic, GIDS, is being shut down due to safeguarding concerns about their “affirmation only approach”. As Dr Cass says in her report, “the care of this group of children and young people is everyone’s business”, therefore it is hugely irresponsible to publish a book which promotes the medical transition of children.

We are also extremely concerned about the age group at which the book is aimed. To be clear, under 18s are legally still children, and 13–15-year-olds are under the age of legal consent. It is a massive safeguarding red flag that any organisation would seek to include vulnerable children in the same age bracket as 18-year-old adults when promoting books about sexual and gender identities.

This book effectively promotes self-harm to children, something which no organisation should be doing – especially not one funded by the Arts Council. There is a worrying trend of grouping young teenagers just going through puberty with 18-year-old adults, which blurs the boundaries between adults and children and normalises the idea that it is acceptable for children under 16 to be sexually active.

As you have already stated in your previous response to our concerns about adults targeting children with harmful ideas that could lead to child abuse, we know that the Arts Council takes safeguarding “extremely seriously”, therefore we look forward to hearing your response.

We urge you to reconsider your association with the Reading Agency and take steps to prevent this book from being distributed to public libraries since it poses such a safeguarding risk to children and families.

We would ask the Council to take seriously our concerns and cease to fund such enterprises in the future.

Yours sincerely



Lucy Marsh

Communications and Public Relations Officer

Cc Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne

**Please see below some of the more disturbing sections from *Welcome to St Hell: My Trans Teen Misadventure***





















