

On the 13th July 2022, **Safeguarding Our Schools – Scotland** attended an online presentation by Dr Hilary Cass OBE, which was facilitated by the Association of Child Protection Professionals (AoCPP)*, where she spoke about the Interim Cass Review of Gender Identity Services for children and young people.

We were able to ask Dr Cass the question: ***‘Do you think teachers should be trained around being able to avoid overshadowing of underlying causation of distress in a child presenting as transgender’.***

The following is a transcript of the question being asked and Dr Cass’s response.

AoCPP facilitator - Someone would like to ask about teacher training. I mean teachers find themselves quite literally at the front end of this issue because often they’re dealing with children presenting with distress, about their gender identity and managing that and managing the staff and how they respond and having clarity about that. Do you think that that is, do you think that teachers should be given more training in how to respond to that very much chalk face situation?

Dr Hilary Cass - 100%. So, gender, gender issues don’t start at the door of the NHS. Its far more important in some ways to understand what’s going, you know, going on in schools and to provide guidance to school’s staff on what they should do. Cause there are, you know, I mean, I think we get everyone in this group will understand and that, that a child who is in a supportive family under any context is going to have a better outcome than a child who isn’t. And, and one of the real problems is when school enacts a social transition without any communication with the family, which instantly then, you know, you’re already looking at a poorer outcome once you’ve not got a family, you know when a family doesn’t know, and a decision is being made without their involvement. So that’s one area on which advice is needed.

The second thing to say is that social transition is a powerful intervention, whether it’s the right intervention or not for any one child, I think is a complex decision to make and I think there are real challenges if that decision is falling on or being taken by teachers. I mean somebody did say to me you wouldn’t give, you know, paracetamol to child without checking with their parents so it’s a very, it’s a huge step for teachers to be taking unsupported.

AoCPP facilitator – and with the non-statutory government guidance, indicates about keeping secrets from parents in regard to transitioning and is something which has caused some debate in Scotland for example where it has been adopted by certain local authorities as a model, because obviously there’s a danger there of not identifying possibilities of abuse or safeguarding issues around that child. So, I think it’s something, that I know from the chat, those in education feel quite strongly about.

Dr Hilary Cass – Yep, yep and, you know Nadhim Zahawi was certainly committed to developing some guidance for schools, but you know I’ve got no idea what will happen now.

*The Association for Child Protection Professionals is a registered charity and membership association - the only one in the UK that provides training, support, and professional development opportunities for those working across multiple disciplines within child protection and adult safeguarding. Through sharing knowledge, research, and examples of best practice, what started as a small inter-professional membership association grew and today, are the only multi-disciplinary professional membership association, with charitable status, of its kind. <https://www.childprotectionprofessionals.org.uk/>

