

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**  
**Wednesday 14 August 2024**

**1. QUESTION FROM JENNY DINGSDALE (IN ATTENDANCE)**  
**Re: Safeguarding Response to Gender Identity**

I recently asked what actions this council was taking to ensure that effective safeguarding of children was not being prevented by extremist beliefs in gender ideology. The response, that despite Devon's huge GIDS referral rates, you "have no evidence" and that you respond appropriately, is extremely concerning as it implies no action has been taken.

Serious harm is defined as the serious and/or long-term impairment of a child's mental health, or intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development. Safeguarding is supposed to prevent this.

The recent update to KCSIE reflects "the Cass review identified that caution is necessary for children questioning their gender as there remain many unknowns about the impact of social transition and children may well have wider vulnerabilities, including having complex mental health and psychosocial needs, and in some cases additional diagnoses of autism spectrum disorder and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder."

We know that there are other relevant vulnerabilities present in this cohort of children, including cared for children, victims of abuse and sexual assault, children who have lost a parent or sibling, and young people who are simply gay and living in this homophobic era of "gender". These children often also exhibit many of the risk factors described by the PREVENT duty.

This is a safeguarding issue, and must be treated as such. To ignore this is to wilfully cause serious harm to countless more children. You can no longer pretend to be unaware of the devastation this is causing or prioritise virtue signalling woke ideology over safeguarding. Will you please arrange full inquiry to examine the appropriate safeguarding response to gender ideology?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR LEADBETTER**

We will not be conducting an Inquiry independently of work being carried out by the NHS in their implementation of the Cass Review recommendations or the results of the recent Department for Education review and consultation under the previous government which have not been published yet. We will be working with the NHS to ensure that we align any appropriate actions as a result of the recommendation from the Cass Review.

The Council ensures that our partners are aware of any changes to the government's publications, such as Keeping Children Safe in Education. We take our duty for Safeguarding very seriously and as previously mentioned, we have clear safeguarding policies and procedures in place. As a Council, we publish and follow the governments guidance.

If you have specific evidence of a risk to the safety of a child or young person, these must be raised through the appropriate tried and tested channels which are available to everyone in the community. We and our partners are committed to thoroughly investigating any safeguarding risk to an individual that is reported to us, which is the appropriate and proportionate action under current guidelines.