

Written from Safe Schools Alliance UK (FOE0213)

Safe Schools Alliance U.K. is a grassroots group of parents, grandparents, teachers, governors, psychologists and other health and educational specialists with an interest in the safety and well-being of children. We are from all over the UK, are from a wide range of backgrounds and have no religious or political affiliation. We work with individual parents and a wide range of other groups to ensure the effective safeguarding of all children. We formed in 2019 to uphold safeguarding and the correct interpretation of the Equality Act in Schools.

SSAUK recognise Freedom of Expression as both a right and a responsibility. We are particularly concerned about constraints on freedom of expression which may prevent people being able to safeguard themselves or others.

Summary

We will discuss:

- The impact on children's freedom of expression of guidance produced by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in conjunction with Stonewall. This was completely withdrawn in January 2021, with no intention of being revised and republished, following legal action by a 14 year old girl supported by SSA.
- That it has only been with the threat of legal action that we have been able to prevent a serious impingement upon children's freedom of expression and safeguarding.
- How certain school policies and educational material, often introduced into schools via lobby groups who are neither experts on safeguarding or human/ children's rights, have an impact on children's freedom of expression and safeguarding.
- The prohibitive climate that many of our teacher members have felt when attempting to discuss safeguarding concerns related to transgender or gender ideology, policies and practice.

CPS Hate Crime Guidance

In January 2020 the CPS released updated guidance aimed at secondary school children which sought to educate children about bullying, hate crime and non-crime hate incidences relating to the protected characteristics of sexual orientation and gender reassignment. The CPS did not intend to share the guidance with parents, but did so after parental pressure.

The guidance suggested that a child can be guilty of criminal behaviour because of their thoughts, reactions or whom they are friends with. One example described a man who identified as a woman wanting to use the female toilets; the picture showed a clearly adult male individual and then told children that this person should be in the girls' toilets, thus erasing boundaries. This would have a chilling effect on children's confidence to discuss biological reality or assert sex-based rights; and would create fear by teaching children (especially girls) that stating a preference for single-sex spaces would mean that they are committing a hate incident and possibly a hate crime.

The guidance also encouraged children to report 'hate incidents' by other children, which it defined as 'any incident which is perceived to be homophobic by the victim or any other person.' It contained great detail about the criminal offences that a person could be charged

with. Schools should implement robust bullying and safeguarding policies so they can deal with all bullying swiftly and effectively. However, simply accepting one child's perception of an incident over and above another child's, based purely on whether someone perceives it to be a hate incident is not going to improve relations between school children or protect their welfare.

The teenage girl claimant in the CPS case said: "I feel that if I don't like someone, and don't want to hang out with them, I shouldn't feel I was forced to in any way. Being made to hang out with someone you don't like won't make you like them. I feel my own mental health would suffer.", "Girls should not have to stay silent when they are uncomfortable with males in their toilets. This is supposed to be anti-bullying guidance but I feel intimidated that I would have to stay silent. That's not anti-bullying; not for girls." and "It's not bullying to stand up for your rights. I have a right to a female only space where I feel comfortable changing my period things without being worried about judgement. I actually feel bullied by being told I am breaking the law by saying no."

Further details about this case: <https://safeschoolsallianceuk.net/legal-action-against.../>

Other Legal Action

Existing Hate Crime legislation, despite its good intentions, appears to have emboldened lobby groups such as Mermaids, Stonewall and others purporting to work for LGBTQI+ inclusion to push policies on schools that have a chilling effect on people wishing to raise safeguarding concerns. This is extremely detrimental to the wellbeing of children. These are having to be challenged by expensive and time consuming legal actions involving many women in hours of unpaid work. People without the resources to challenge have been silenced; this is an assault on their freedom of expression.

Other legal cases: <https://safeschoolsallianceuk.net/legal-action-against.../>

Impact on Safeguarding

An inability or unwillingness to raise safeguarding concerns has been implicated in a number of Serious Case Reviews. It is imperative that all adults, and particularly professionals, feel able to report safeguarding concerns.

We have been contacted by teachers required to teach lessons that they believe undermine safeguarding, particularly the rights of girls. They are afraid to report these concerns due to fears for their livelihoods, and are too frightened to contact their own union for support, such is the perceived stranglehold that LGBT+ groups have on the unions.

Quotes from members of our group who are scared to speak publicly:

- "I work in a school where a trans child learns. I would be scared of being doxed and losing my job.'
- 'I've been working for a health charity but didn't feel I could tell them about what I was doing as they might worry about risking funding. My main career was local government though and I've written off going back there as it would be impossible to speak out whilst working there.'

- ‘I’m an ex teacher, so terribly concerned that the powers that be seem to have forgotten about safeguarding and forgotten all about child development theories.’
- ‘I am a charity worker. I have already been targeted and forced out of my previous job due to trans activists contacting my employer about my refusal to deny biological reality.’

It is shocking that people concerned about safeguarding children would ever be afraid to speak out about the welfare of children, but they are. Hate crime legislation and constant accusations of ‘transphobia’ contribute to this climate of fear.

Our answers to specific questions posed by the committee are as follows:

1. The law should not require specific listing of all vulnerable people to take account of their vulnerabilities in law. There are many groups of people that are vulnerable for particular reasons and the existing sentencing guidelines should take this into account. If a crime is committed, any hate elements should be taken account within existing sentencing guidelines.

2. We are deeply concerned about instances where police have charged people with hate crimes or recorded non-crime hate incidents if the police believe that an individual disagrees with transgender ideology. This will have a worrying impact on the ability of school children to express themselves freely and debate ideas. The ability to express themselves is important from a safeguarding point of view, particularly so when children are expressing concerns that their rights are being impacted.

3. We have no comment on this.

4. Our focus is on teachers. All schools should have social media policies which teachers must abide by. This should focus on safeguarding, confidentiality and not bringing the school into disrepute. Teachers are entitled to a private life, however teachers are in a position of trust and must show they are a ‘suitable person’. Examples such as publicly posting about drug use, statements that show lack of safeguarding e.g. posting support for teacher Jeremy Forrest and blaming the child victim, or derogatory comments about colleagues or students, must not be excused as ‘freedom of expression’ issues.

5. Yes. Police should not be able to choose their own criteria. We are particularly concerned that the College of Policing guidance applies to children in schools such that children saying that male children should not share private facilities with female children could constitute a hate crime. There must be greater clarity here; children need to be able to express concerns without fearing being accused of a hate crime.

6. Teachers being trained at universities which allow the silencing and no platforming of individuals who speak about transgender ideology are unlikely to hear discussions around the conflict between gender ideology and safeguarding, leaving a hole in their safeguarding training. Kevin Price was a Labour councillor who resigned over a controversial motion about single sex spaces. He was also a porter at Cambridge University, and students called for his resignation. Seeing the reaction from Cambridge students it is easy to see why others would not speak out about safeguarding concerns.

7. No. It seems that people who disagree with transgender ideology are being targeted by the police, while men who repeatedly make violent threats of murder and rape to women are not

charged. Anecdotally we hear that people are able to describe themselves as MAPs - Minor Attracted People (i.e. paedophiles) on Twitter but those expressing safeguarding concerns about this are banned.

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