



# Safe Schools Alliance UK

## Safe Schools Alliance UK response to Oxfordshire County Council's Statement on the withdrawal of their Trans Inclusion Toolkit

[http://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/schoolsnews/withdrawal-trans-inclusion-toolkit?fbclid=IwAR0bq7\\_N8CadIKhp9fRRKSsCZuhFwptuseQjde\\_1Wox9zS84P2oj4nzHHJY](http://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/schoolsnews/withdrawal-trans-inclusion-toolkit?fbclid=IwAR0bq7_N8CadIKhp9fRRKSsCZuhFwptuseQjde_1Wox9zS84P2oj4nzHHJY)

OCC: The Trans Inclusion Toolkit, which was published in November 2019, has been an important part of Oxfordshire County Council's work to safeguard children and young people.

*SSAUK Response: This guidance failed to safeguard children, and in fact it exposed them to further risk. This includes the trans-identifying children it purported to support. Parents had been challenging this guidance on safeguarding grounds since February 2019. The safeguarding concerns were never addressed nor acknowledged.*

OCC: Created in partnership with multiple stakeholders with safeguarding responsibilities, the guidance is designed to help schools support young people who are trans or gender questioning.

*SSAUK Response: We are concerned that so many stakeholders with 'safeguarding responsibilities' appear to have scant understanding of safeguarding. There needs to be transparency regarding what, if any, qualifications in and understanding of safeguarding they actually have, and how they were recruited to this project.*

OCC: We understand that the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is planning to issue its own guidance on transgender rights. As we will be adopting this new national guidance, we have taken the decision to withdraw our Toolkit. We will also be withdrawing from the judicial review of the Toolkit that was due to be held in the coming months.

*SSAUK Response: It is common knowledge that safeguarding concerns have been raised about the leaked EHRC guidance. The guidance was due last year but has still not been issued. Given that fact, we must question why OCC now feel that the proposed EHRC guidance will be stronger than their own. Why did OCC go to Queen's Counsel in February 2020 to defend their Toolkit? What has changed since then?*

OCC: Although we have taken the decision to withdraw the Toolkit, we will continue to prioritise support for young people and schools in dealing with the safeguarding concerns

which our guidance originally sought to address.

*SSAUK Response: We remind OCC that the original guidance raised numerous safeguarding concerns which were never addressed. We must ask how this failure at OCC will be remedied.*

OCC: We will continue to support young people and schools through a range of services within education. Additionally, our children's social care teams provide support to individual children and young people, to schools, and in other settings such as to pre-school and childminders.

We are very much aware of the challenges faced by young people who feel they are not the gender they were assigned at birth.

*SSAUK Response: "Gender" is not "assigned" at birth, sex is observed. We note that language that was raised as a safeguarding concern is still being used.*

OCC: We will do our utmost to safeguard these potentially vulnerable young people and help the schools who support them as part of our critical safeguarding work.

*SSAUK Response: We would like to see how OCC plan to address the failures in safeguarding that allowed this document to be published. Questions need to be asked about the tenability of those who remain in post at OCC, including those with seats on the Safeguarding Board and those who recommended the commencement of legal action.*