**Trojan Horses**

**Text of talk given by Maggie Mellon**

**Sole Sisters Meeting**

**Motherwell, Scotland**

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1. Thank you very much for asking me to speak tonight.
2. I am a social worker who has worked with families and with women and children and young people for many years. Before this issue of gender identity and calls for us all to choose our own sex, the last time I was a speaking at public meetings like this was about the Named Person law. This was in the end struck down by the Supreme Court as a breach of the Human Rights Act. Before I get into the gender identity issues for social work, I am going to say a few words about the Named Person law and the response to criticisms. Because it is relevant and there are several lessons from it.
3. Just as with gender identity, many people in social work said it was completely misguided to oppose the Named Person. Their argument seemed to be that the intentions of government were benevolent. There was cross party support, and the education and social work establishment were all for it. the problem was that the Named Person law called for unprecedented levels of intrusion into families’ lives and unprecedented breaches of confidentiality, authorising information-sharing about families’ lives across agencies in great and unnecessary and detail without that family’s knowledge or consent. The Named Person (usually not named at all) role was to advise parents and to call meetings of about any concerns they had. That was called early prevention.
4. There maybe people here tonight who supported and maybe still support the Named Person. I understand that the case made for it was all about “doing the right thing” for children. The case was made that it was all about children, all about working together and being kind and caring. But there was no evidence of good outcomes, and there was a refusal to engage with the law. Despite the Law Society and the society of advocates and many others spelling out how the Named Person law was in breach of human rights, and the many examples of breaches of rights the bandwagon rolled on.
5. Nothing that deviated from or challenged the govt position was entertained. Anyone who was against it was a right wing Christian nutjob.
6. The Scottish courts lined up behind government, ignoring very simple principles of the human rights act. The Supreme Court ruled what most legal observers had said from the start. That the Scottish parliament had passed a law that breached human rights and that it could not stand. Swinney still won’t apologise. It is all the Supreme Courts big mistake.
7. Another parallel - many of those in favour of the Named Person were charities and organisations which claim to be right on side with children and their rights. With protecting children from harm. Children in Scotland, Barnardo’s, Aberlour, Children 1st, NSPCC etc. All funded by government and all vocally in support of government.
8. In 2018 I published articles critical of the impact on children of these new claims about gender identity in the Herald, and elsewhere. Was on holiday and half expected to come home to my windows panned in. nothing. Instead, I got lots of support from individuals, and contacted a lot of fine women, who were already working on it. Went down the rabbit hole to have a look and came back astonished and horrified at what was going on.
9. In 2019 I spoke at a FWS meeting -Red Flags and Crossed Bridges. I also wrote to the CEOs of the big charities, some of them women I had known for years, pointing to the obvious problems with telling children that adults or children could belong to the opposite of their actual biological sex. These are on my website if anyone is interested. I suggested a meeting of the charities to discuss the evidence and the risks. I genuinely thought that the need for this was so obvious that they would be keen to get together to work out how to get back on track. Wrong(not for the first time!) . I was told that “the feelings of children” had to be considered so a meeting would be impossible. Puzzling because it was children’s feelings and not adults’ feelings that I was worried about. They meant I think the tiny number of children and young people who have been used by Stonewall and Lgbty Scotland etc to sell adults’ (mostly male adults) demands for self ID of their claimed gender identity. Children as a Trojan Horse.
10. At that point I realised that things had gone so far that these charities and even the Children’s commissioner were not just entertaining gender identity but had adopted it wholesale. Although I was told by more than one person that privately some people key positions in social work or social care agreed with me and were glad that I was doing unpaid what they were paid to do but were too afraid to. Again, just like the Named Person.
11. It emerged about this time that government funding for any charity including Women’s Aid and Rape Crisis but also Barnardo’s and others had been made dependent on that organisation explicitly accepting gender identity. Money talks. Government money obviously talks louder than “getting it right for every child” or women’s rights. .
12. Just two weeks ago, the Cass Review of treatment of children with gender dysphoria in England and Wale published its first interim report. This has established as a first base that there is **no evidence** to support treatments demanded by Mermaids and other organisations which are currently being provided by the health service. In other countries, such as Sweden and Denmark there have been recent pull backs from puberty blockers and cross sex hormones.
13. The Cass review has also acknowledged concerns about the high numbers of girls being referred. There has been a 4000% increase in girls. Gender dysphoria used to be more a problem among boys. Because girls could be tomboys, and mothers and fathers were often proud of their adventurous girls, but boys could never be effeminate. Now boys and girls who are gender non-conforming are told that they may be in the wrong body.
14. The Cass review also acknowledged the evidence that children who suffer from gender dysphoria suffer from other mental health problems . A high proportion of girls who are coming forward as transgender or non-binary are autistic. Some have trauma and disruption in their development. The connection between feeling different and not fitting in, having social difficulties, tending to rigid thinking, having quite fixed ideas, and being attracted to transgender beliefs is obvious. There are now hundreds if not thousands of detransitioners who have reached maturity and are angry about the harm done to them. Their stories, like women’s concerns, are of course not valid in Scotland.
15. Scottish Government response to the Cass Review has not been to welcome it and say they would consider what it could offer. It was immediately that it was nothing to do with Scotland and Scottish NHS would continue to be trusted to make decisions that they agreed with. There is another similarity here with the NP – the refusal of government to accept responsibility – to grandstand with the big statement, the big vision and then to point the finger at councils, at health, at education if things go wrong.
16. .So today we are facing almost total capture of social work and other professions. I feel that JK Rowling foresaw the future in the plot of Harry Potter. Here we are out in the wilderness with JKR and Joanna Cherry, a small band of dedicated seekers of truth while Hogwarts and the Ministry of Education has been captured.
17. But just as in Harry Potter books, I don’t believe that everyone agrees, and I don’t believe we are doomed. People don’t agree. They have agreed to stay silent. Not to challenge. The have agreed to use pronouns. They are in fear of their jobs. The unions have been captured; the professional associations have been captured. UNISON, BASW (the social workers association), GMC, Nursing, Midwifery.
18. Just recently I wrote an article “Gender Identity - A disaster for Children” for the Sunday Times. I don’t think that Disaster is putting it too strongly. What is taking place is an unprecedented interference in children and childhood. And unbelievably all of the organisations and people charged with protecting and supporting children and families are supporting this. I could not say all that I wanted to say in a short article in the Times about the harms being done. So, I am pleased to have been asked to expand a bit on the main message tonight. Been a good opportunity to take stock.
19. Harm is being done on a number of levels. One obvious level that Shereen has fully addressed is the harm done in education . On top of teaching sexism, Children are being taught that they can’t trust the evidence of their own eyes, that words mean whatever the speaker intends them to mean, that their parents be quite wrong about something as basic as whether you are a boy or a girl, that doctors get it wrong all the time when children are born. And only children can know the secret of your own identity. And, children and parents are being told that there is a high risk of suicide if children don’t get the pills or whatever has been held out to them as the solution. That is the stuff of nightmares for children.
20. We know that an increasing number of children particularly girls are identifying or being identified as transgender. But we also know that children who question this are being shamed and punished and risk being shunned and losing their friends. The guidance for schools advises that such children should be told that it is they who are wrong, or unkind, that they should politely accept what they are told and not upset other children with questions. Today the Emperor’s New Clothes story would end in that child being turned on by the mob and told to shut up. So, we are allowing children to be shut up and told not to question.
21. A more personal level of harm being done is to vulnerable children and young people – who along with their parents are being pushed down the "NO DEBATE" rabbit hole of denial of sex, with very unfortunate personal consequences for them.

1. As we know from the studies that do exist, the consequences of puberty blockers and cross sex hormones are possibly life long, possibly life threatening. But so also is social transition – that is being encouraged to deny the physical reality of your body, being encouraged to change your name, to be celebrated as brave and amazing. And in the end, only to find out that it did not work. The grown-ups who cheered you on are not there when this happens. The parents who protested or complied under protest are left to pick up the pieces with you if there is any relationship left. Claims about the necessity of affirmation, of the threat of suicide and the need for life altering medical treatment are as toxic as online material on anorexia and self-harm. It would be harmful enough if it only existed on the internet, but it is being promoted and acted upon in health and social services. Without a shred of evidence to support it as the Cass Review has reported
2. The demand that no one including children should question or dissent should have been seen as a huge red flag. Instead, it is being used as a trojan horse
3. I don't put the responsibility for this on the transgender activists. They can believe what they like. They can demand what they like. My criticisms are not about the lobbyists. what makes me angry on behalf of children, and of parents, is the wholesale support given by the powers that be in Scotland up to the highest level. In Holyrood, in St Andrews House, in Education, Health, in social work, by the leaders of children’s charities. Shereen has told us about what is happening in education, and I am going to tell you a bit about what is happening in social work.
4. Firstly, staff are faced with threats of investigation by their regulatory bodies and by disciplinary action and even termination of contract for questioning and speaking out against gender identity ideology. In England a social worker is taking her employer and Social Work England to an employment tribunal for investigating and disciplining her for liking and retweeting posts by WPUK, by Transgender Trend. One or more complaints were made to the regulator that this meant she was unfit to practice. she was found guilty despite their being no evidence that she had eery discriminated against anyone. Her employer then began disciplinary proceedings to dismiss her.
5. Those of us who have quite politely but firmly asked for the evidence have found that that is a breach of the first commandment - that there must be "no debate". We find ourselves subject to complaints of transphobia for voicing perfectly reasonable concerns about drugs and surgery and chest binding. These complaints are investigated – at great length and depth. What should be encouraged as responsible professional behaviour is instead considered offensive. The prolonged process of investigation is a punishment in itself even if exonerated. It is also a lesson to the rest of the workforce.
6. First do no harm is basic professional ethic, but social workers are being told that it is transphobic to ask for evidence of benefit or point to a risk of harm. I am a member of an alliance of concerned social workers = evidence based social work alliance. Only those who like me are independent and have pensions and other financial security can be public. Others have children, mortgages. They can’t afford to be public. On the other hand, they have a professional duty to protect children from harm.
7. Investigating alleged child protection concerns has for a long time been the main occupation of social workers in local authority children and family teams. The process of child protection investigation is usually experienced by families as one of the most stressful things that can happen to them . Most investigations result in no further action but leave a trail of hurt and harm in their wake. The investigation itself is experienced as a punishment and is often disproportionate to any concern. Those of us who are investigated for transphobia get to experience that first-hand.
8. The guidance says that parents of children with gender dysphoria should be asked to accept and affirm the child’s “identity”. in response to the first consultation on the guidance for schools several councils including Edinburgh urged that parents should be considered a risk to their children and that child protection measures should be taken. Professional Social Work magazine carried a two page spread by a Mermaids affiliated social worker calling for parents who opposed affirmation including chest binding and puberty blockers to be treated as a child protection risk to their own children. All based on absolutely no evidence that affirmation is necessary or helpful.
9. CAFCASS the child and family court advisory and support service is the biggest social work employer in England and Wales has been completely captured. Without any process of consultation or evidence gathering it has completely adopted nonsense about children It advises staff to festoon themselves and their offices with rainbow and lgbtyqi++ insignia. They also advise staff to always discuss sex, sexual orientation, gender identity with children – and to tell parents who object that the courts can be asked for an order to compel the parents to allow this. Complete strangers often of the opposite sex inviting adolescent children to talk about their sexual experiences and preferences is usually considered to be big red flag. But here it is as a trojan horse again.
10. In England and in Scotland fostering and adoption services are dealing with increasing numbers of children. Scotland has in fact the highest rates of children in care . It is catching up with England in the % of privatised services. Successive reviews and inquiries have found that care is not very safe or kind to children. Children are at high risk of abuse in care. As every refugee agency knows, separated children are at high risk. .
11. One thing that successive enquiries have told us is that there must be no “no go” areas. Social workers, residential workers, foster carers, adopters, must **never** be considered above suspicion just because of who or what they are. Religion, education, class, position, or sexuality – none of these are evidence of innocence. Happily married fathers of 4, celibate priests, highly educated doctors… These were all trojan horses in their day. Nobody should be above suspicion, no organisation or set of beliefs should have a free pass. The trojan horse of self ID of gender should be no exception.
12. There is evidence that increasing numbers of social workers do believe that there are trans children who were born in the wrong body or who for some other reason must be treated as belonging to the opposite sex. Some of these social workers claim to be the parents or foster carers or adopters of “trans” children. These social workers use the terminology of the trans movement uncritically. The confidently talk of “trans” kids, of affirmation, of blockers, packers, chest binders, chest surgery, of medical pathways. They say “they” instead of he or she. They may even declare that they themselves are “nonbinary”. They rest their practice on the claim that this is all about children’s rights and children’s safety. But to me no matter how sincere their beliefs, it is the consequences for their practice that are important. Do they in practice denial of the reality of children’s actual sexed bodies? Do they expect children and other adults to agree with them? or do they accept that, like religion, there are other beliefs and that they have no right to impose their beliefs on others, including children? I believe that believers should expect to answer to respectful but demanding challenge for the evidence for their practice of affirmation of children’s supposed or claimed gender identity. That is going to be difficult for them given that the Cass review has just reported the evidence does not exist.
13. But additionally, to these genuine believers who are in themselves of concern, there are also bad actors in social work and childcare as in any other profession - and possibly more so as fewer occupations give such open access to very vulnerable children separated and even estranged from their families. We know – although Shona Robinson denies it – that there are always those who will seek access to vulnerable adults and to children for all the wrong reasons.
14. There are too many red flags in the tactics used to capture social work and education to not suspect that there are some bad actors involved. It is not just the belief in self id of gender, but the unquestioning assumption that men who claim to be women are somehow above all suspicion. Like a miraculous act of transubstantiation, all that was male floats into air and what is left is all innocent and safe womanhood. Even applies to men who have committed rape and murder. The SPS gives them make up and tells women to call them “she” and “her”.
15. Even the dogs in the street know, apart from Shona Robinson, that those intent on abusing children do disguise their true natures and proclivities, and work hard to find their way to positions that allow them access to children and relative safety from discovery. We also know that we, their colleagues, can unwittingly facilitate their abuse– by accepting their claims about themselves, their devotion to children, their superior knowledge, their apparent ability to get children to adulate them, despite all the little warning signs. Those who like me have been duped by such predatory men in social work beat ourselves up for ignoring those little warning signs which are in hindsight enormous flashing red lights. I am left astonished at how the enormous trojan horse of self ID has been ridden into town - with an escort of police cars covered in rainbow stickers warning the citizens they will get arrested if the say anything hurtful about big wooden horses.
16. So, what happens when gender identity ideology captures care services? In England the regulator only wants to know the gender identity of a registrant. In Scotland, the SSSC registers care workers and foster carers as well as social workers. Here the position is less clear. The SSSC equalities monitoring form used to ask for “gender” but when I pointed out that sex was the correct protected characteristic and the Chief Executive commendably got back very quickly to say thanks for spotting that and that it had been rectified. She has offered to meet us to discuss the range of concerns that we have if the GRA is passed.
17. What are these concerns? yes, it could of course be happening already as we are smugly told by the apologists for the reform. But the proposed GRA reform could make it legal for any person to register to work in social work or social care as the opposite sex That would mean that same sex service provision across social work and in social care would be impossible. There would be no way of ensuring the actual sex of staff or foster carers or of adopters.
18. However, we have been assured by the Scottish government and Labour, the Liberal Democrats and Greens that single sex service provision for children and women will be completely respected. But of course, if someone has a birth certificate that states they were born female, and it is an offence to drag up the truth, how will single sex services possibly be protected?
19. I imagine that when challenged about the practical consequences for childcare and protection and adult safeguarding, we will probably be told that it will be the responsibility of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) , and of councils and other employers to make sure that staff and foster carers are safe. We will be advising the SSSC that they should seek clarity in the face of the Bill about protections of their duties to ensure the safe regulation of care of children, women and vulnerable adults.
20. Vetting and assessing staff and of foster carers and adopters is set at a high level – it is not enough to have a clear enhanced disclosure and a reference from your best friend. In order to assess staff and carers, employers need to carry out a full risk assessment based on disclosure and discussion of all relevant facts. Criminal convictions are a relevant fact. Past employment and education are relevant facts. Past and current medical history is a relevant fact. Age and ability are relevant facts. Race and religion are relevant facts. A GRC is a relevant fact. Natal sex is a relevant fact. None of these in themselves are grounds for discrimination against a person. . But there needs to be honesty and a willingness to discuss motivations, the consequences of one’s beliefs on others, an acceptance that safe care and the rights of others might mean that you are precluded from certain jobs, or tasks. Safe care means being willing to challenge and be challenged. If an applicant wishes to protect themselves from disclosure of relevant facts or from discussion about this, then the conclusion is that they don’t pass the threshold test of honesty and accountability.
21. This is a country where social workers routinely carry out pre-birth assessments on pregnant women to judge whether they should recommend the permanent removal of that woman’s child at birth based on possible risk of future harm to the child. I profoundly disagree with what is happening in social work on that count. But it is surely not too much to ask that those who want to enter the social care workforce or to foster or adopt children are held to just a fraction of that level of scrutiny, pain and accountability before giving them access to children and vulnerable adults .
22. If the claims that single sex services will be safe are true, I believe that anybody charged with regulating the workforce or in safeguarding or in providing personal social care must have the duty and the right to be made aware of the actual natal sex of any applicant, just as they have the right to know their criminal record and any relevant information short of criminal that points to risk in employing that person.
23. I think that means that natal sex should be made available in any process of enhanced disclosure of information held by DBS. Failure to disclose or falsifying actual biological sex when registering to be a social worker or when applying for a regulated post in social work or social care should be made a breach liable to immediate permanent deregistration and termination of employment and to criminal penalties.
24. In conclusion, despite offering what I feel is a minimum solution to guarantee children safety in care, I feel that the big question remains unanswered. That is - why have these ideas been accepted and even welcomed by people in power and in leadership positions in children’s services in Scotland? The Children’s Commissioner! The Chief Execs of charities, British Association of Social workers? Social Work Scotland? Only they can answer that. I have a feeling that many of them will be quietly wondering how they can cross back over the bridges they have so carelessly crossed. But some, like Macbeth, will believe that they have stepped so far in blood that it is safer for them to plough on with their reckless course than to try to cross back.
25. One day, those who are adults today are going to have to answer the question – “how could you let that happen?” There will be enquiries and calls for enquiries. There will be angry and hurt people asking why this was allowed to happen. There already are.
26. Our voice will be strong enough if we meet and organise together like this.
27. I am looking forward to having a good discussion tonight about the future. what should our aims be? how should we share and learn from one another?
28. Thank you for listening.
29. Maggie Mellon

Motherwell

30 March 2022