

Politics

MPs urge Rishi Sunak to ditch 'unlawful' plan to make schools out trans children

Jul 19 • Written by Patrick Kelleher

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Rishi Sunak and Kemi Badenoch reportedly wanted a blanket ban on children and young people socially transitioning at school. (Wiktor Szymanowicz/Rasid Necati Aslim/Getty)

The government has been accused of “diminishing the lives of trans people” in controversial guidance that’s being

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prepared for schools.

Rishi Sunak has reportedly been forced to again delay guidance on how schools should respond when a student comes out as trans after the attorney general warned it would be “unlawful”.

Sunak and women and equalities minister Kemi Badenoch wanted to introduce a “blanket ban” on social transitioning in schools imminently, it’s understood.

But **The Times** reported on Tuesday (18 July) that lawyers have warned doing so would be **illegal** because the Equality Act offers specific protections to trans people. The attorney general reportedly told ministers that they would have to amend the law if they wanted to introduce more hardline guidance for schools.

Even so, the mere suggestion that children and young people could in the future be prevented from socially transitioning at school has ruffled feathers among opposition MPs and trans advocacy groups.

Collectively, they have warned the government that such a policy would be detrimental to the wellbeing of trans youth – and that it could have “unintended consequences” for cis children too.

Kate Osborne, Labour MP for Jarrow, accused the government of trying to “flout the law” by issuing guidance instead of amending pre-existing legislation.



Kate Osborne, MP for Jarrow and a member of the Labour Party, is seen pictured at a pro-refugee rally in Parliament Square. (Hesther Ng/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty)

“Sunak should accept the legal advice, that he commissioned, that any attempts to effectively end the protected characteristic of being trans would breach the Equality Act,” Osborne told PinkNews.



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“This government must stop trying to tie teachers’ hands behind their backs when students approach them for support.

“A blanket ban on social transitioning would be unlawful and as well as having a significant impact on trans students could have unintended consequences even just for girls who want to wear trousers or for students that for whatever reason want to change their names.

“Just like the proposed **guidance for civil servants** from last week, this is just another deliberate attempt to incite hatred as part of the Government’s war on woke.

“Their clear goal is to make the next general election a distraction culture war to cover up their disastrous 13 years of chaotic rule that has led to this cost of living crisis and rampant inflation.”

Nadia Whittome, Labour MP for Nottingham East, urged the government to scrap the guidance completely.

“For many young trans people, their ability to socially transition is essential to their mental health and wellbeing,” Whittome said.

“Any attempt by government to prevent them from cutting their hair or using a different name and pronouns is authoritarian and discriminatory in the extreme.

“The government should abandon this guidance now, along with its wider attacks on the trans community, and focus on improving trans people’s wellbeing and inclusion in society.”



Labour MP for Nottingham East Nadia Whittome criticised the government’s efforts to ban social transition in schools. (Ollie Millington/Getty)

Banning social transition at school would be ‘unenforceable’

Cleo Madeleine, spokesperson for trans advocacy charity Gendered Intelligence, hit out at fearmongering and misinformation about what socially transitioning actually means.

“Really what we’re talking about with social transition is young people changing things like hairstyle, make-up, clothing, to explore a different sort of gender presentation,” she explained.

“I think what’s really important is to note that none of this is new. Youth and adolescence in particular has always been a time when young people figure out who they are, explore different ways of presenting themselves to the world.

“Young people often play around with new names, with new ways of presenting themselves to the world – and that’s really all we’re talking about here.

“I think that’s what’s quite worrying with some of these conversations about the guidance is the idea that we’d be looking at regulating or even outright banning that natural process of exploration.”

Madeleine said that any ban on social transition in schools would be unworkable.



A person holding a sign saying “Gender Affirming Care Saves Lives” at a rally. (Getty)

“There’s no way that a ban on students transitioning in schools could be implemented because it would amount to a ban on students being trans and that’s simply not enforceable.”

Tammy Hymas, policy and campaigns manager for Mermaids, warned that preventing trans and non-binary children from socially transitioning would “embolden bullies” and “weaken” teachers’ ability to protect students.

“This harms all children in schools because what it says is that you’re confined to a very narrow set of gender roles, a very narrow set of gender behaviours,” Hymas said.

She added: “There’s a lot of evidence that shows that social transition can be a very positive experience for young people. It gives them

agency and it gives them choices about themselves and everyone would agree that that is an important and positive thing for young people.

Rishi Sunak is facing criticism over his government's policy on trans inclusion. (Getty)

“There’s actually some evidence which shows that even amongst children who don’t go on to transition in a permanent way that social transition and the affirmation and validation of that can be a positive experience.

“On the flip side when children don’t have their social transition validated, they don’t have it affirmed, we see that there’s much higher levels of mental health problems. We see that they experience more absenteeism and more pressure in their lives because of that.

“This is a question of listening to children and listening to the needs of young people, and I think at the moment it’s been blown out of all proportion by a government which seems to have a very clear ideological approach which is to discriminate and diminish the lives of trans people.”

PinkNews has contacted No 10 and the Department for Education for comment.

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