

Deputation to 16 September Health & Wellbeing Board

We are a group of concerned Brighton and Hove residents, including parents directly affected by the issues raised in this deputation.

On 15 August 2025, the New Statesman published an extensive investigation into the prescribing practices of the Hove WellBN clinic and the failures of NHS Sussex and NHS England to act upon repeated warnings over a five-year period¹. These revelations are deeply troubling and demand urgent scrutiny.

The New Statesman reported that in April this year, NHS England formally instructed WellBN to cease prescribing cross-sex hormones to under-18s, citing “indications that patient harm may have occurred.”² A joint investigation with NHS Sussex was announced in June³. It is also reported that regulators including the General Medical Council and NHS England had been aware of concerns since at least 2020⁴, while official records show that as of May 2025 up to 139 children—some under 13—were in receipt of either hormones or puberty blockers through WellBN⁵.

It is reported that the model of care followed by WellBN, based on “informed consent,” dispenses with psychiatric assessment and treats the child as the sole authority on their condition⁶. The New Statesman reports that despite multiple complaints to the GMC, including one where a 16-year-old forged parental consent to obtain a prescription, no action was taken⁷.

The New Statesman reported that expert clinicians have issued stark warnings. Professor Riittakerttu Kaltiala of Finland stated that the use of exogenous hormones “is not safe to any minors” and that “having reached age 16 makes no difference”⁸. Professor Jovanna Dahlgren of Sweden explained that early hormone use carries significant risks of cardiovascular disease, infertility, liver damage, and cancer, concluding that the body and brain are “permanently marked” by such treatment⁹. Sweden no longer recommends hormones for under-18s.

Despite this, children—including some as young as 13—remain on prescriptions, because it is alleged that NHS Sussex diluted NHS England’s directive, restricting only new patients from initiating treatment¹⁰.

In relation to schools, Brighton and Hove News reported in October 2023 that parents were seeking an apology from the Leader of the Council as they felt part of her response to a public question dismissed their safeguarding concerns. In April 2024 Brighton and Hove News reported that a family was seeking to sue the council in relation to the Trans Inclusion Schools Toolkit unless it was withdrawn.

Chair, Members—public bodies are bound by the Nolan principles of integrity, accountability, and transparency. When it comes to children, the standard must be higher still: safeguarding must always take priority.

I speak as one of the parents affected. This is not safeguarding. It is ideology overriding evidence, clinical caution, and parental responsibility. Children are at risk.

We ask the Board to acknowledge this reality and ensure that statutory safeguarding is recognised in active policy in this city by publicly calling for the desktop review, due to take four to five week as noted in the Terms of Reference "Children and Young People Offered Gender Care at the WellBN General Practice, Brighton" (section 5.1) published by Sussex ICB on the 22nd July 2025, to begin without further delay.

Footnotes

¹ Hannah Barnes, "Health bosses failed to act on NHS clinic prescribing gender drugs to kids for five years," New Statesman, 15 Aug 2025.

² NHS England instruction to WellBN to cease prescribing, April 2025 (New Statesman, 15 Aug 2025).

³ "NHS bosses start inquiry into how children were given gender drugs," Brighton & Hove News, 6 June 2025.

⁴ "Brighton GP is using loophole to prescribe hormones to underage kids, book claims," Brighton & Hove News, 27 Mar 2024.

⁵ Barnes, New Statesman, 15 Aug 2025.

⁶ Barnes, New Statesman, 15 Aug 2025.

⁷ Barnes, New Statesman, 15 Aug 2025.

⁸ Barnes, New Statesman, 15 Aug 2025.

⁹ Barnes, New Statesman, 15 Aug 2025.

¹⁰ Barnes, New Statesman, 15 Aug 2025.

¹¹ "Parents seek apology from council leader for calling their concerns 'baseless smears'," Brighton & Hove News, 28 Oct 2023.

¹² "Brighton family threatens to sue council over 'classroom to clinic' school trans advice," Brighton & Hove News, 15 Apr 2024.