

I am very disappointed to hear that the "Dare to Debate" event has been cancelled. I did see the reaction on Twitter and feel frustrated that transgender activists have managed to shut down a debate which I believe is urgently needed. Many of the children and adolescents contacting Childline will not be 'trans' at all, and to present them with only one possible way of interpreting their feelings is very worrying when the treatment pathway will leave them sterilised and medicalised for life. All children deserve understanding and acknowledgment of their feelings, but we know that individual children come to a cross-sex identification or gender confusion for many different reasons, including (most worryingly) trauma and past sexual abuse, which will remain covered up if they are not able to access impartial counselling.

There is never just one way of interpreting a child's feelings and problems; by withholding all other pathways of investigation we are not providing the normal standard of duty of care towards our children and young people. Many professionals themselves are alarmed at this sudden new diagnosis and treatment of minors, but are afraid to speak out through the very real fear of being seen as 'transphobic' and losing their jobs and positions. I work closely with a group of professionals who remain anonymous for this very reason, I urge you to read the posts on their website here: [www.youthtranscriticalprofessionals.org](http://www.youthtranscriticalprofessionals.org)

I know Sarah Ditung to be a thoughtful and considered journalist who is supported by young friends who are transgender themselves; the accusations of 'transphobia' levelled at her are wholly unsubstantiated and unfair. I know that had I taken part in this debate I would have suffered the same accusations, as would anyone who questions any aspect of the transgender narrative - I see that Gay Star News headlined with "NSPCC accused of anti-trans child abuse" so you have also experienced this.

I do think the choice of Kellie Maloney as speaker was ill-judged, but there are alternative spokespeople who would be satisfactory for the transgender community, such as Susie Green from Mermaids or Jay Stewart of Gendered Intelligence. Bernadette Wren and Polly Carmichael of the Tavistock gender clinic would probably not be accepted, as they are seen as gatekeepers by some in the transgender community. The problem is that there will always be an outcry of "transphobia!" towards anyone who debates the other side, which means that the debate itself is impossible unless organisations have the courage to stand up to this silencing tactic.

I hope that the NSPCC will be that organisation. As the UK's foremost institution for the protection of children, I urge you to re-schedule this overdue debate on the diagnosis and treatment of our most vulnerable children and adolescents.