

# Backlash over trans rights

Opinion poll suggests that politicians' views on gender change are not in line with public opinion

Jason Allardyce and Shingi Mararike

Scottish ministers are under pressure to drop plans to extend transgender rights after a voter backlash was revealed in a Panelbase poll for The Sunday Times. The SNP government has supported controversial guidance that suggests teachers need not tell parents if a child wants to identify as a different gender. The advice, from LGBT Youth Scotland, also says there is no reason for parents to be told if their children are sharing rooms with trans pupils on school trips. The government is also considering letting children as young as 12 alter the gender on their birth certificate.

The changes are at the heart of Nicola Sturgeon's equality drive, but the poll of 1,024 adults in Scotland suggests she is out of step with public opinion.

Nearly seven out of 10 adults in Scotland (69%) say parents should be told if their children change gender at school, while 13% disagree and 18% don't know. Meanwhile, 57% say parents have a right to be informed about transgender children sharing a room on overnight school trips, 25% disagree and 18% don't know.

Most adults believe either that the law should stay as it is – only allowing people to change the gender on their birth certificate at age 18 or over (38%) or not at any age (40%). Just 6% believe children should be allowed to change the gender on their certificate at age 12 or over. The preference of 16% of voters is for this to apply to those aged 16 or over.

Maggie Mellon, one of Scotland's foremost authorities on child welfare and

ALAMY



Children take part in a pride parade in Glasgow. Guidance by LGBT Youth Scotland is proving controversial

a former vice-chairwoman of the British Association of Social Workers, said it was "heartening but not really surprising to know that most adults disagree with the policies that government and local authorities and others have been foolish enough to adopt in the face of persistent lobbying by trans activists."

"It has been framed as a children's rights issue. But it is a protection issue, just as the age of consent to sexual activity being set at 16 years is a protection and not a rights issue."

"It is dangerous to give way to any lobby group that insists it is fighting for

'children's rights' when it is actually fighting against protection of children."

"They don't care about children's rights because if they did, they would care about girls, and boys, too, who are being asked to accept the unacceptable and the unbelievable. It is time those in authority who have been basking in the approval of transactivists, woke up to the harm they are causing."

James Morton, the Scottish Trans Alliance manager, said the schools guidance recommended that teachers supported young trans people to feel comfortable and ready to come out to

their parents. "We've never heard of any trans child in Scotland transitioning without the knowledge and support of at least one of their parents," he said.

"The law that protects a minority needs to be decided by the parliament on the basis of careful consideration of the evidence, not on the results of opinion polls."

A Scottish government spokesman said: "We received over 15,500 responses to our consultation on plans to reform the Gender Recognition Act 2004. These responses are being independently analysed and we will outline the way ahead in due course."

## TRANS PLANS PANNED

Should people be able to change the gender on their birth certificate?



Should teachers have to tell parents if their child changes gender in school?



Should parents be told if their children are sharing rooms with transgender pupils on overnight school trips?



Source: Panelbase interviewed 1,024 adults in Scotland, Sep 28-Oct 4

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Storm Callum batters rail travel

Storm Callum continued to cause disruption yesterday with rail services across Scotland, Wales and southwest England hit by delays. High winds forced energy company Cuadrilla to delay fracking in Lancashire and Ross Edgley, 32, was stuck in Grimsby on a 2,000-mile swim around Britain.

### Woman, 28, killed in hit-and-run

A 28-year-old woman died after being hit by a car that failed to stop as she crossed St Mary's Road in Sheffield early yesterday morning. The car was found burnt out in the Heeley area of the city. A 51-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of causing death by dangerous driving.

### Far-right protesters clash with police

A planned silent march in London by the far-right Democratic Football Lads' Alliance descended into violence yesterday when they fought police. At least one protester was seen giving a Nazi salute. About 2,000 people took part in a counter-march.

# Sweet e-liquids: the vaping equivalent of alcopops

## INVESTIGATION

Jon Ungoe-Thomas and Will Neal

The "tangy tippie" with "lime zest" and "juicy pineapple chunks" being advertised on a website last week sounds like a fizzy drink that children will love, but this "soda" carries a health warning. It contains

nicotine. The E-Fizz product is among a range of nicotine liquids for vaporising in electronic cigarettes that are likely to appeal to children. On the same website, Dinner Lady Strawberry Custard is offered for sale.

The e-liquid products sold on [vipelectroniccigarette.co.uk](http://vipelectroniccigarette.co.uk) were branded this weekend as the "vaping equivalent of alcopops" by Sandra Gidley, chair-

woman of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society English Pharmacy Board. The owner of the operating company behind the website is British American Tobacco (BAT).

A Sunday Times investigation found children's cartoons and images of sweets, biscuits and chocolate being used to promote e-cigarettes. The e-liquid products include a Lemon Sherbet nicotine liquid

costing £1, advertised with pictures of sherbet lemons.

One UK website, Ubervape, advertises its products under a colourful array of sweets. It sums up its range as: "scrumdiddlyumptious".

E-cigarettes are the most commonly consumed nicotine products among children in countries including the UK, which have strict regulations on the sale of cigarettes but

more lax controls for the electronic alternative.

One study led by Leeds University suggested that teenagers who tried e-cigarettes were almost four times more likely to start smoking conventional cigarettes than their non-vaping peers.

Liquids for e-cigarettes containing nicotine must carry a warning of the nicotine content. Others are designed to

be mixed with nicotine shots.

Vaping products must be registered with the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency (MHRA). The e-cigarette liquid brands that were on the official MHRA list last week included Jelly Babies, Snowy Candy Bears, Cookie Dough and Jam Doughnuts. The products are regularly promoted on websites operated by UK companies with a

picture of food popular with children: I Love Popcorn nicotine liquid is marketed with pictures of boxes of popcorn, for instance. Cartoon characters also boost sales.

The UK vaping industry says it complies with regulations and that retailers are implementing age-verification. Makers and retailers, including Ubervape, say the products are not targeted at

children, but are "nostalgia" products enjoyed by adults.

BAT said it had recently acquired the company behind the website that sells Dinner Lady products and was reviewing it to ensure it complied with its high standards. The Dinner Lady brand said it "complied with all relevant regulations". [@JonUngoeThomas](mailto:JonUngoeThomas)

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# AIRFRANCE

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## Pupils to get lessons in digital switch-off in bid to cut suicides

Julia Horton

Karaoke sessions, yoga and lessons in sleep are being offered under a new scheme to stop the deadly toll of suicides among Scottish pupils by helping distressed teenagers switch off from digital life.

The initiative, launched at one of Scotland's biggest secondary schools, offers youngsters a range of lunchtime activities which will be extended longer term based on what they say helps improve their mental health most.

A total of seven pupils at Ayrshire secondaries, including Belmont Academy, took their own lives in the past year – prompting the school to ramp up efforts to help.

The campaign – Be Kind, Be Positive, Be Yourself – is supported by Kilmarnock professional footballer Kris Boyd who recently founded a mental health charity after his brother took his own life

two years ago. The Kris Boyd Charity is providing free training to help staff spot warning signs, while pupils have just raised hundreds of pounds for the charity through sponsored tech-free school time during the campaign's launch week.

A "Belmont bee" logo will be used "everywhere" around the school and at neighbouring Barns medical practice to foster a community-wide conversation so pupils can speak out and seek help before it is too late.

Tracy Stewart, head teacher at the academy in Ayr, said: "Seven pupils in Ayrshire have taken their own lives since last September. This is massive for us. We need to talk about it."

"I think we do children a disservice by calling them the snowflake generation. They get no opportunity to switch off from social media."

She said the Kris Boyd Charity was the first mental health charity the school

chose to support under the scheme after Boyd got in touch to offer help.

"He contacted us when he heard about the suicide of one of our pupils and offered his resources and time for free," Stewart said.

Academy staff who have already received "mental first aid" training will learn more about spotting warning signs and managing anxiety. More pupils will become mental health mentors and parents will be offered workshops on issues including sleep deprivation and self-harm.

GP Gordon Haveron, who said self-harm dramatically increased the risk of suicide, added: "The pressures on our young people are so much more marked than in previous years, particularly in terms of bullying and harmful influences being able to reach them 24 hours a day via the double-edged sword of technology, smartphones, and social media."

Although suicides among 15 to 24-year-olds have

dropped significantly in recent years, from 143 to 64 last year, it remains a leading cause of death in the younger generation, killing more Scots under 29 than all cancers combined.

The Samaritans in Scotland welcomed the latest initiative and warned that boys and young men remained at far greater risk, accounting for about 80% of suicides in their age group.

A spokesman said: "Young men and boys are taking their own lives at vastly higher rates than young women and girls, so it's particularly important that figures like Kris are reaching out and encouraging them to think it's OK to talk when things are hard."

Last week the UK government announced a new minister for suicide prevention amid criticism north and south of the border that some of the most vulnerable youngsters are still waiting years for help for serious mental health issues.

## Brown hares face extinction as myxomatosis 'leaps species'

Jonathan Leake  
Environment Editor

The brown hare, one of Britain's most iconic wildlife species, is in danger of being wiped out by a mutated version of the myxomatosis virus that has killed 99% of wild rabbits, scientists have warned.

Hundreds of dying and dead hares have been found across the UK. Diana Bell, a zoologist at the University of East Anglia, said: "We have had reports of multiple deaths in numerous locations, from Scotland all the way down through England."

Myxomatosis is a viral disease from South America

that was introduced into Britain and Australia in the 1950s to control rabbits. It can be spread between animals by direct contact or insects, causing a lingering, painful death that would make a similar introduction unacceptable today.

Hares were thought to be immune to the disease but last year government vets confirmed a case of myxomatosis in a hare found on a reserve owned by the Somerset Wildlife Trust. Bell and the Suffolk Wildlife Trust are now appealing to the public to report any other dead or dying hares, by emailing [d.bell@uea.ac.uk](mailto:d.bell@uea.ac.uk).

She said: "The death of any animal is obviously



Hare numbers are tumbling

distressing but we're asking people to photograph these hares to help us understand what is happening. Getting good images of the bodies of these hares, along with their exact location, is crucial for us to rule out or identify possible diseases."

East Anglia is a stronghold of the brown or European hare, which has already suffered an 80% national decline because of shooting and habitat destruction. A few decades ago there were an estimated 4m of the animals in the UK; now there are fewer than 750,000, with the greatest concentration in Suffolk and Norfolk. The species has largely vanished from southwest England.

If myxomatosis has jumped species and is affecting hares, it would be a conservation disaster, but Bell said the first step was to confirm the nature of the infection, as other diseases have some similar symptoms. [@jonathan\\_leake](mailto:jonathan_leake)