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Transgender children deserve to have our attention

By [Kate Marshall](#)

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Image: Tim Evanson

Anne Fine's *Bill's New Frock* is a story about a young boy who, one day, wakes up to find everybody believes he is a girl. He is forced to wear a dress to school, is treated differently by his peers, and at one point faces the dilemma of which bathroom to use. Bill knows what gender he is, and that everybody else is wrong. It is, effectively, the story of a boy who is trans for a day.

But when Bill wakes up the next morning, everything is right again. There is no such easy resolution for trans children, who face constant dismissal: it's a phase, a rebellion, they're making it up, and they'll grow out of it. It is easy, therefore, to ignore or silence a child's wish to transition.

Transitioning is an aspect of being trans that not everybody feels the need to go through, and those that

do can pick and choose what aspects of their gender they want to present.

While surgical intervention makes up the majority of mainstream trans narratives, and is what most people think of when transitioning is mentioned, other medical interventions like hormone treatment and puberty blockers also exist.

The other, and arguably greater side to transitioning is social transitioning, an umbrella term which encompasses changing pronouns, names and appearance, and small everyday things such as the gender on your driver's license. Even simple acknowledgement can make a huge difference, and it is often denied.

A person must be 18 in the UK to access any surgical option, and must have lived as their gender for at least a year – social transitioning is currently, therefore, a requirement. However, treatment to prevent the changes of puberty is extremely beneficial to young trans people, as puberty is the most common point at which gender dysphoria begins – anxiety, depression or disassociation with your body.

Preventing the changes of puberty not only makes other aspects of the transition easier, but also helps passing – being read as the correct gender. If a trans person wants to pass, the better they can do so, the safer they are.

The fear is, of course, that trans people will regret their transition. From the reports and testimonials I have read, it seems that very few trans people actually change their mind and want to return to living as their designated gender (that which was given to them on birth, based on their genitalia).

Instead, the main reasons seem to be lack of support, medical complications, or simply to escape transphobia. The NHS cites a study that, across 20 years, found that 96 per cent of people who had received surgery were satisfied.

The Trans Mental Health study, which had 900 respondents, finds that 86 per cent of those who went through physical transitions had no regrets, and 10 per cent had only minor regrets, which included when surgery was difficult or resulted in complications. It is therefore apparent that the majority of cases are worth going through with.

The concern that a child is making a life-changing decision is valid, but in this case, unfounded. Evidence suggests that if we insist on doubting young trans people, we should give them the benefit of that doubt, and allow them to make their own decisions.

The best thing that non-trans people can do is to be accepting, accommodating, and to simply listen to a child who declares their gender to you.

This, it has been shown, will resolve the majority of regrets. Bill need not have worn his frock at all.



One comment

Kate Marshall

23 Apr '15 at 10:01 pm

Links seem to have gone missing, so:

The NHS statistics can be found here <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Gender-dysphoria/Pages/Treatment.aspx>

The Trans Mental Health study is here http://www.scottishtrans.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/trans_mh_study.pdf

 Report

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