

Ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Cathy Mudge and I have been a nurse and midwife for over 40 years.

I stand before you today to address a matter of paramount importance: the issue of single-sex care in mental health and the concerning role of Annex B. Annex B, an addition to the NHS Guidance on Delivering Single Sex accommodation, has sparked significant debate and raised crucial questions regarding sex-based rights.

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Let us delve into the crux of the matter. Annex B stipulates that self-identified gender, not biological sex, determines where transgender and non-binary adults and children should be accommodated. This, we argue, compromises the safety and rights of women and children.

Consider the alarming statistics: independent reports reveal a staggering 44,000 breaches of single-sex accommodation rules, with 5,000 breaches occurring in February alone. These breaches often entail a male being placed in a female ward, yet a man who identifies as a woman is not recorded as a breach. This lack of accountability underscores the urgency of our call for action. The Government have said there will be clearer guidance on the provision of same sex care.

Moreover, in the realm of mental health care, patients lack the capacity to consent to treatment, rendering them particularly vulnerable. Shockingly, investigations by the Care Quality Commission have unearthed widespread incidences of sexual safety violations on mental health wards, where staff have become desensitized to such atrocities.

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At CAN-sg we received the following request for help from a clinician working in Mental Health.

A woman who identifies as a man, is admitted with Psychosis, thus she is unable to consent to her treatment, she requests she is placed on a male ward. One patient there has a history of sexual violence.

Annex B

Trans men whose facial appearance is clearly male, may still have female genital appearance, so extra care is needed to ensure their dignity and privacy as men.

He tried to raise safeguarding concerns, spoke to Speak up guardians, talked about danger of Pregnancy, Teratogenic Drugs. None of this prevented her being admitted and staying on that ward.

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In light of these harrowing realities, it is evident that Annex B's endorsement of mixing sexes in care settings is not only inappropriate but perilous. The notion that mixing sexes can be appropriate or desirable flies in the face of common sense and jeopardizes the safety and dignity of vulnerable patients.

Consider, the following real-life example, sent a few days ago about a woman's experience in Plymouth hospital.

Its own guidelines allow men identifying as women into women's spaces, unless the woman can tell them that she has experienced sexual violence.

Such experiences are not isolated incidents but symptomatic of a systemic failure to prioritize the well-being of patients.

In her own words.

Within minutes nurses move the three of us around to a smaller space.

Three of us women were along one wall, the nurse came in shouting "you're alright if we bring in some men don't worry, they're nice men."

They then lined 3 beds opposite us with men in. The room was cramped and the end of the men's beds opposite, was so close to the end of my bed they could only get trolleys and beds past us if we kept our curtains open.

We couldn't even have the privacy of having our curtains pulled across the bottom of our beds. Whenever we did a nurse would go by with a trolley and whip the curtains open without warning.

The 70-year-old woman next to me was having a terrible time, she had to use a commode by her bed. She was so mortified at having to do this with men opposite she tried to walk to the toilet had breathing problems and nearly fell.

The nurses crossly said she must only use the commode. So, the next time she soiled herself rather than ask for help. She quietly whispered what had happened to the nurse, they loudly told her off like she was five years old then shouted up the ward "bring clean bedding she's wet the bed."

It was horrendous just so upsetting. We were in those conditions for two nights with none of us getting any sleep we were so uncomfortable.

On the 3rd morning a sister came in, looked totally horrified, and shouted we need to make this ward single sex immediately, within 5 minutes it was.

Nothing was explained to us we didn't know we could complain we didn't feel we had any choice but to put up with it. The other woman in her 40s was initially fine, but within a few hours she kept saying how horrendous it was and shouldn't be allowed.

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Furthermore, the absence of clear guidelines exacerbates the situation, leaving healthcare professionals grappling with ethical dilemmas and patients vulnerable to exploitation.

This is further compounded by the alarming rise in sexual assaults and rapes occurring within NHS premises, particularly in mental health units, where 93% of patient-upon-patient attacks take place. Only 10 units have a policy in place to deal with this. A doctor can continue to work with a chaperone. Staff under investigation can leave and it will not be recorded as a crime, their next DBS check, clear.

56 gang rapes have been recorded on NHS sites, usually mixed day room. In Leicester there were 17 gang rapes, no prosecutions as women involved had Mental Health issues and were unable to help the police enquiry.

1 woman was raped on a Mental Health ward, tried to report what had happened but hospital staff told her and police that no man had been on the ward. No record of a breach. But it had happened, a man identifying as a woman had been on that ward and had raped her. Eventually the truth was revealed.

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Annex B's provisions regarding children and young people are equally troubling, disregarding established legal frameworks and exposing minors to potential harm. The recent case of Cass underscores the urgency of repealing Annex B and reaffirming the rights of vulnerable individuals.

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180 children have been raped in Hosp. 186 have been sexually assaulted. 127 other charges like grooming, photos etc.

4 under 16 yrs old have been gang raped.

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In conclusion, I urge you to join us in calling for the immediate repeal of Annex B. We cannot afford to ignore the plight of those entrusted to our care. Let us stand united in our commitment to upholding the principles of safety, dignity, and equality in mental health care. Thank you.

Ref: H.Khalifeh et al. Domestic and Sexual violence against patients with severe mental illness. Psychological Medicine

BMJ Investigations 2023 Torjesen et al. BMJ 2023;381:p1105

Independent Article; <https://apple.news/AH5qmQ46YQE-ReshcWfhovg>

Telegraph Article <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/04/26/nhs-hospital-staff-single-sex-wards-trans-gender/>