

22.01.2020

Submission

To whom it may concern,

I would like to submit a response to the Government's proposal to screen all 0-3 years olds for "social and emotional well-being".

As a Certified Ballet Teacher of over 40 years experience, I have had extensive training in Childhood Development, both physically, mentally and emotionally. I have also taught this age group for many years, having also developed teaching techniques specifically for this age group and above.

In my experience many of the concerns in the report, as to certain "manifestations" that possibly indicate mental illness, have to my knowledge and expertise, not been founded on empirical evidence.

For example, we found the high levels of sugar in a child's diet contributed greatly to hyperactivity and lack of focus, in a young child. Once educating parents on reducing sugar intake and feeding the children protein and healthy snacks prior to Dance class, we found a dramatic change in the children's behaviour for the better. The children were calmer, more focused and less likely to have a temper tantrum. This would also be noted by the parents with their general well-being in day to day activities improving.

Another example I have witnessed, is that we found children who were quite naughty in class or disruptive, were actually highly intelligent!

Often it was because they required more challenges and leadership roles in the class. Again I was amazed that by simple techniques (not requiring any drugs), where the life of the parents of that child were transformed with simple things that could be done to address the child's curiosity and desire to learn.

Many of the "possible" indications of mental illness inferred to in the report, are, in my observation and long experience, natural emotional inclinations of any child and are NOT that of mental health disorders.

I also have witnessed young children on certain psychiatric drugs that changed their personality terribly. The drugs were making them more "wooden", more depressed, lethargic and withdrawn, instead of the opposite.

My professional opinion is that this proposal is NOT the solution to the problem and will only exacerbate the issues.

I thank you for reading my proposal and if anyone would like to discuss this further with me I am happy to do so.

Kind regards,

Elana Saks