Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Leading the way in Children's Health

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Sent via email to: L.J.Clements@leeds.ac.uk

1 August 2024

Dear Professor Clements and colleagues

Thank you for your correspondence of 16 July 2024 asking that the RCPCH withdraws its Perplexing Presentations (PP) / Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII) in Children guidance [the Guidance] with immediate effect.

We have consulted on this request with the current RCPCH Officer for Child Protection and Chair of the associated Child Protection Standing Committee, Professor Andrew Rowland and previous post holder Dr Alison Steele who held this remit when the Guidance was in later stages of development and published in February 2021. The RCPCH has decided to not withdraw the Guidance and will now go on to explain how this decision was reached.

The RCPCH convened an expert working group to develop the Guidance, led by the RCPCH Officer for Child Protection and involving representative Consultants who were currently practising within the NHS from paediatrics, child and adolescent mental health, neurology, allergy, rheumatology and safeguarding. The working group considered the limited published evidence available at that time on prevalence and management of FII. In the absence of published evidence, the working group relied on extensive consultation and expert consensus from those with extensive clinical experience of managing such conditions.

The Guidance was subject to a thorough consultation period and views were incorporated from a range of organisations and a number of commissioning groups and provider Trusts across the UK. The following agreed to be listed as having been consulted: RCPCH Child Protection Standing Committee; The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel at DfE; NHS England and Improvement; British Medical Association; General Medical Council; Medical Defence Union; Royal College of General Practitioners; Royal

College of Nursing; Royal College of Psychiatrists; British Society of Paediatric Endocrinology and; the Young People's Health Special Interest Group. The working group also considered the experiences of children, young people and families and sought the views of senior social work practitioners in developing the Guidance.

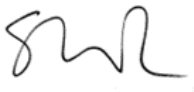
The British Association of Social Workers Fabricated and Induced Illness Practice Guide (May 2022), whose authors are included among your letter's signatories, took a different methodology to that used in the Guidance, and differences between the two documents are at least partly explained by the different approaches taken to what is a hugely complex clinical situation. We emphasise that the Guidance is read as a whole, not in isolation, and as part of a multifactorial process of professional decision making because it follows a pathway approach to the management of Perplexing Presentations and FII in order to ensure the best outcome for children.

As is standard practice for a Royal Medical College document there is an agreed timeframe to review the relevant peer-reviewed literature on FII. This is tabled to commence in Winter 2024.

Your correspondence of 18 June 2024 states that evidence now suggests that the Guidance is indirectly discriminatory but that such evidence is prima facie at this time. During the process of development, the working group paid due diligence to this possibility and drafted the Guidance in a manner so as to avoid discrimination.

The original correspondence from Mark Isherwood, MS, alluded to constituents having been affected by the Guidance and their call for legislative intervention within Wales. We fully recognise and respect the right of the MS and the Welsh Government to seek changes to multiagency work in Wales.

Yours sincerely



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