

GBV 07

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill : Stage 1

Response from: John Sayce

I write as a professional with extensive experience of Children and parents as outlined below. I wish to make this submission to your committee

- Child care social worker for over 30 years including working in New Zealand in the last 18 months.
- Qualified sports coach, Youth Club leader and Cub Scout Leader.
- Manager of Parenting project in Neath.
- Member of the National Attendance and Behaviour Review ( 2005-2008)
- Chair of Fforwm Magu Plant for 10 years ( National parenting forum)

I am concerned that about the current legal position that legitimises physical and emotional punishment of our children. It seems inconceivable that in 2013 our children still have less legal protection than adults in Wales. Given the Welsh Assembly's continued support for the rights of children and various UN reports commenting adversely on the current situation, it is imperative that the defence of 'Reasonable Punishment' should be withdrawn as soon as possible. Some of the supporting evidence is summarised below.

Almost all parents do not want to smack or hit their children. However many parents have told me that they didn't know any other alternative that they could use as they themselves had been hit as a child. It is this factor that explains the opinion poll support for 'smacking' children'. Many parents attending parenting courses were relieved that there were other methods that were effective in curbing difficult behaviours in their children. Whilst working for in statutory child care services in New Zealand, (where physical punishment is banned) parents who were interviewed by the Police officers and social workers were invariably referred to open access parenting programmes which were widely available throughout the country. Interestingly parents from all social classes attended and there seemed to be little or no stigma attached. Police prosecutions were limited to the most serious cases, which would also have been prosecuted in Wales. All the parents I spoke to were aware of the change in the N.Z law and accepted the need of all children to feel protected from violence from adults.

Violence against person should be seen as unacceptable in any situation in a modern Wales and I am glad that this Domestic Violence Bill seeks to reduce and end interpersonal violence . Domestic abuse or family violence has been an issue that has been far too prominent in Welsh life, whether in the home, on the streets or in the legal system. It is important that adults model good behaviour towards their children, so that another generation does not grow up to see violence as acceptable between partners or as a child rearing practice.

Children and young people in Wales have received a strong message from the Assembly that they have a right to feel safe and secure in their home and school. Children themselves have

spoken out strongly in many consultations about both the physical and emotional hurt and pain that comes from being smacked or hit. Furthermore the overwhelming research evidence is that hitting or smacking children is ineffective in promoting good behaviour in the long term.

To conclude, I would be happy to provide more information either verbally or in writing if it would assist the committee.

John Sayce