

GBV 10

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

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

Response from : Sarah Hayes

Dear Senedd

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

As a grandmother, mother, and member of a Welsh WI, I urge you to include the following in the above bill:

Removal of the 'reasonable punishment' defence for the physical punishment of children

With the full support of the Powys Montgomery Federation of WIs (around 40 institutes), Adfa & Cefn Coch Women's Institute has put forward the following resolution for debate by the National Federation of WIs in October (wording shown in blue):

Title of Resolution

'Stop the physical punishment of children'

Wording of Resolution

'Adults in Britain are legally protected from assault. However, the law still allows parents to smack their children. All major children's charities support a ban on smacking. Yet every week a child in this country dies at the hands of a family member. The NFWI call on Her Majesty's Government to ban all physical punishment of children, giving children the same legal protection as adults from assault.'

The Problem

Every week a child in Britain dies at the hands of a family member. Some parents use the word 'smack', yet smacking is another word for hitting. Whichever word is used, the intention is to cause pain. Smacking a child endorses violence and runs the risk of escalating into physical and mental abuse. Currently the law condones violence against children by allowing parents the defence of 'reasonable punishment'. Hitting children is wrong and the law should say so.

Objectives

- To reduce violence against children in the home and elsewhere.
- To change the law to give children the same protection from violence that adults already have.
- To use the power of the WI to work with HM Government to ban the physical punishment of children.
- To promote a positive approach to bringing up children.
- To reassure parents and family members that (as with the law on assault of adults) trivial assault of children will never be prosecuted.
- To join the 25 countries in Europe (37 worldwide) who have already banned all physical punishment of children.

Please note that the WI's first objective is the reduction of violence against children in the home and elsewhere. This must surely chime with the overall objectives of the Domestic Abuse Bill. Please ensure that children have the same protection under Welsh law as their parents and other family members by including this vital amendment in the Bill.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hayes