

GBV 11

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

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

Response from: Dr Anne Crowley

Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill – stage 1 consultation, deadline September 5 2014

I am writing to you in connection with the Committee's inquiry into the Principles of the above Bill. I wish to propose that the Bill should include provision to remove the 'reasonable punishment' defence for physical punishment of children in Wales.

This Bill is a perfect opportunity to bring forward legislation that can deliver long-promised, equal protection to the Children of Wales. The Bill's overall intention is to create a stronger and consistent focus on the prevention of violence between family members (including parents and children), the protection of victims and support for all affected. Research evidence shows clear associations between physical punishment in childhood and the perpetration of violence against partners in later life. Measures to change the social acceptability of interpersonal violence – for example by providing healthy relationships education in schools – will be seriously undermined unless it is absolutely clear that using violence of any kind to control or punish others, whatever their age, is never acceptable. While hitting children remains legal there can be no consistency of approach in either prevention or protection from violence and abuse.

Successive Welsh Assembly Governments and the National Assembly for Wales have supported giving children equal protection (in the law on assault) for over a decade and have in the past acknowledged that it is a human rights imperative under UN Conventions. There can be no excuse for further delaying reform now the Assembly has devolved power to enact this measure.

Yours sincerely

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