

GBV 61

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

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

Response from: Nigel Thomas

I am writing in response to the above Assembly Committee consultation. I support the Bill in its general purpose and in the specific measures proposed. However, I consider that it is also important that the Bill should include the removal of the "reasonable punishment" defence for the physical punishment of children.

I understand that earlier this year the Deputy Minister for Social Services made a commitment to look further at the issue of banning physical punishment during this Assembly term. This Bill provides an excellent opportunity to achieve this.

The Bill's overall intention is to create a stronger and more consistent focus on prevention of violence between family members and the protection of victims. While hitting children remains legal, there can be no consistency of approach in either prevention or protection from violence and abuse. Measures to change the social acceptability of interpersonal violence will be seriously undermined until it is absolutely clear that using violence of any kind to control or punish others, whatever their age, is never acceptable. There is substantial and well-founded research evidence that shows clear associations between physical punishment in childhood and the perpetration of violence against partners in later life.

I urge the Government to include such a provision in the new Bill, and show once again that Wales can lead the way in promoting the rights and wellbeing of children.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Thomas