

My Ref: SL/CC

Date: 5 September 2014

Ms Christine Chapman AM,
National Assembly for Wales,
Cardiff Bay,
Cardiff.
CF99 1NA

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee
Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill: Stage 1
Response from: Cardiff Council's Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children and Families

GBV 86



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Neuadd y Sir
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Dear Christine Chapman,

Response to the The Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill

I am writing to you in my capacity as Cardiff Council's Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children and Families.

I welcome the introduction of this Bill, particularly its proactive and preventative approach. The emphasis on planning across agencies and on a national and local level is also very welcome.

I would, however, urge your committee to consider the case for including an amendment to the Bill. I would suggest that the Bill should be amended to include a removal of the defence for the physical punishment of children. Cardiff Council signed up to "Children are Unbeatable" last year after a motion which was approved at a Full Council meeting.

We feel that the "reasonable punishment" defence which is currently lawful is unjust and confusing. At a time when we are actively promoting positive parenting through Flying Start initiatives and our statutory services, retaining this defence sends out mixed messages and potentially hinders our Social Workers in their child protection role. Having practiced as a Child Care Social Worker myself for many years I firmly believe in the importance of being clear with families. Many of our most vulnerable children have been exposed to domestic violence and it is important that children learn that physical violence is never the way to conduct relationships or solve problems.

There is growing evidence of the harmful effects on children of living in constant fear of physical punishment, particularly in relation to stress levels. Many adults remember the humiliation of being physically punished and feel that this damaged their relationship with their parents both as children and adults.



We believe that there is an urgent case for the Welsh Government to ensure that children and adults have equal protection against assault. This will enable our public services including schools, social services, health professionals and the police to give clear and unambiguous messages about healthy relationships and problem solving.

We were encouraged by the Deputy Minister for Social Services statement in February this year that made a commitment to look further at the issue of banning physical punishment during this Assembly term, ideally on a cross-party basis. We understand that such a move has cross-party support and it would be consistent with the Welsh Government's long standing commitment to children's rights.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Lent". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Sue Lent
Deputy Leader