Consultation on the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Bill

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<th>Evidence submitted to the Children, Young People and Education Committee for Stage 1 scrutiny of the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Bill</th>
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About you

Individual

1 The Bill’s general principles

1.1 Do you support the principles of the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Bill?

— No

1.2 Please outline your reasons for your answer to question 1.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1000 words)

A loving parent will know far better than anyone else what their own child needs. A smack can be the very thing a child needs to demonstrate to them the seriousness of the action which caused the smack to be given. It is an act of love, not of hate.

The Government admitted in its consultation document last year that an occasional light smack from a loving parent is not harmful, but this bill criminalises those same parents.

The amount of resources needed to police this bill if enacted far exceeds any benefits and is likely to divert scarce resources from cases of real child abuse.

1.3 Do you think there is a need for legislation to deliver what this Bill is trying to achieve?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1000 words)

No. Existing laws already protect children from abuse. Tragic cases have occurred where there has been no intervention, despite the case being known to the Local Authority, simply because of a lack of available resources. A new law would make this situation worse.
2 The Bill’s implementation

2.1 Do you have any comments about any potential barriers to implementing the Bill? If no, go to question 3.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1000 words)

No

2.2 Do you think the Bill takes account of these potential barriers?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1000 words)

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3 Unintended consequences

3.1 Do you think there are any unintended consequences arising from the Bill? If no, go to question 4.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1000 words)

Loving parents who are found to have smacked their child will thereafter be treated as criminals, with possible adverse effects on their families and employment.

The NHS have already stated that, if this bill becomes law, they would treat smacking in the same way as they treat child abuse. The two issues are totally different. Treating them the same could devalue the problem of child abuse, leading to further instances.

4 Financial implications

4.1 Do you have any comments on the financial implications of the Bill (as set out in Part 2 of the Explanatory Memorandum)? If no, go to question 5.1

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1000 words)

With the scarce resources currently available to local authorities, having to devote money to policing this bill, if enacted, would have a detrimental effect on far more important services.

5 Other considerations

5.1 Do you have any other points you wish to raise about this Bill?

(we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 1000 words)

75% of the adult population of Wales have indicated their opposition to the Bill. Because the Welsh Government have entitled their consultations as “Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment)”, many others would not have had a clue as to what the bill was
really about. I suggest that this has been deliberate obfuscation in order to minimise opposition, knowing that the bill is deeply unpopular.