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)

I oppose the removal of the defense of reasonable punishment because of the following reasons:

1/ The law, as it currently stands, already provides full legal strength for prosecuting parents who smack children unreasonably (as can be seen in the case of the stepdad in Torbay prosecuted for leaving a handprint after smacking).

2/ It is a major mistake to treat children as if they are adults. Sending a child to their room is appropriate discipline, and not false imprisonment (which it would be if they were an adult). Children are not born knowing everything and therefore need training, which inevitably has to include redirection in the form of discipline. Loving and reasonable chastisement is one tool in the toolkit available to a parent.

3/ If reasonable chastisement is disallowed it will have the effect of leaving children in general, worse trained and prepared for adult life where they must be willing to submit themselves to the authority of boss, police, and laws. Removing this defence will therefore ultimately harm children. This can be seen clearly by looking at the result of the ban on smacking introduced in 1979 in Sweden where between 1984 and 2010 child to child violence increased by 1,791%!
4/ The police and social workers are already overstretched. This will lead to them being further overstretched and therefore missing actual situations where abuse is happening.

5/ The Wales centre for Public Policy has already concluded that there is no definitive evidence that smacking causes harm to children. (Parental Physical Punishment: Child Outcomes and Attitudes, Public Policy Institute for Wales [now known as Wales Centre for Public Policy], July 2018). If this is the case why on earth should we criminalise ordinary parents who choose to use it as a loving form of discipline?

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)

I believe that the current legislation if properly enforced by properly funded social workers and police would sufficiently protect children and, more than that, if social workers and health visitors were able to spend time teaching what is and isn’t appropriate, it would better prepare and equip children for successful adult lives.

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)

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)

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)

It will end up criminalising loving and committed parents who are eager to train and teach their children for life. Instead these parents will become scared of the state’s over-involvement in their family life and will step back from the good job they are currently doing. This will raise unimaginable problems when the children of today enter adult life. Prisons are already full.
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)

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)