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

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)

It does not draw any distinction between child abuse with reasonable and loving discipline. A whole range of disciplinary measures need to be available to a parent. A gentle smack is one of those, which is very rarely needed but sometimes appropriate.

I know, I’ve raised 3 children, and at times after being ignored repeatedly have had to use that measure. All three children are now of university age and we have an excellent relationship – my children all get on with each other which was not always the case, and on occasionas a smack was the only way to stop one goading the other which if not intervened would have led to fights in which injuries would have far exceeded the mild discomfort of intervention from a parent.

It is also a fact of life that children fight. If they are taught at the pre-school age (as this will teach them) that no one will intervene, then we are teaching them that fighting is the only way to resolve a dispute and no one will intervene - by the time they reach teenage years they will extrapolate this to “carry a knife for defense because no one else is going to defend you”; certainly not the adults.

My children always knew that they were loved and when a smack was appropriate, it also showed the other two that life was “sort of fair”, because they did not just get away with it.
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.

There is already enough legislation to stop child abuse. Discipline that is harmful eg use of a cane is already covered by those regulations - a simply smack is not child abuse.

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)

It is almost impossible to define a “smack” in a way that distinguishes it from intervening to break up a fight. Will we make that illegal too?

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)

No

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 is likely that if implemented cases of real and serious child abuse will be missed because there are so many "busy-bodies" who will report minor smacks to social services, often just as a way of making someone's life difficult rather than through a concern for the child that social services and the police, already over-stretched, will have so many cases being reported that they would no longer be able to see the wood for the trees.

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We know this to be the case because carrying knives has reached epidemic proportions. When I grew up schools and other institutions were allowed to use a "ruler". I know that I never got into trouble a 2nd time because we knew we would be punished and it would hurt. We respected authority, we knew people did not get away with fighting. No one carried knives when I was a teenager. These are all linked, and the trend will continue to worsen if parents cease to discipline their children as will happen if this bill is passed.

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)

It will cost millions in wasted court / police and social worker costs. Since these resources are limited resources, it will mean that they get diverted away from serious issues like child abuse / knife crime / other violent crime etc.

It will criminalise parents, which will lead to the withdrawal of their co-operation with the law enforcement forces for other more serious issues.

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)