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

About you
Organisation: Save the Children Sweden

1  The Bill’s general principles

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

— Yes

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)

Children have the right to be protected from violence and corporal punishment is an act of violence. Hitting, smacking, pulling ears, verbally abusing children are methods disguised as discipline, but in reality they are acts of violence. Discipline comes from the Latin word to teach. So by using violence methods of discipline we teach our children that it is okay to hit, and that hitting someone is an act of love. This not only perpetuates the cycle of violence, but also teaches girls that it is okay if one day you are hit by your husband, because he loves you. There are numerous scientific studies that prove that hitting a child undermines his/her self-esteem, makes the child more violent, and a child does not change his behavior because he or she is hit. Disciplining a child means to teach and explain over and over to the child why something is wrong or hurtful. We call it positive discipline and the end result is that a child grows up with the skills needed to solve issues and conflict, rather than use force and yelling. The society also changes because one eliminates violence and the surrounding are more peaceful as well.

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)
A legislation is needed because a child must be protected by the law. The Convention of the Rights of the Child, which the UK has ratified, says that all children must be protected from violence. In addition General Comment 8 explicitly asks Member States to the Convention to eliminate all forms of corporal punishment. It is astonishing that in many countries none can hit an animal, an individual who hits a woman is prosecuted, but we allow adults to hit children because of discipline. This must change.

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)

The barriers to implementing the Bill will be mostly the misinterpretation of it. Once the Bill is adopted, the government, supported by civil society organisations, should prepare a campaign to help the public understanding the Bill. It is crucial to clarify that the Bill is not meant to put parents in jail or make them criminals. Parents and caregivers must be helped and supported, parenthood is the most difficult job a person can have. Parents must receive support, before the birth of the child and after, including hot lines that they can call when they need support and advice.

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)

Yes, I think the Bill does that take into account. It is crucial that when the Bill is adopted, a wide campaign starts to explain that the Bill is a way to protect children and as a deterrent. Parents will not be put to jail, but on the contrary parents and caregivers will receive support.

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)

If the Bill is implemented correctly, there should not be any unintended consequences. As stated above, it is important to accompany the Bill with a campaign to explain it to the public, and the most important part is to support parents, to teach them positive discipline methods. The society will slowly change, in the same way that it has changed in countries that have had a ban for 10 years or even more. I think it is important to continue to state that the aim of the Bill is not to punish parents, but to protect children. A parent who smack a child should not be sent to jail. That parent needs help to change. Change is possible, we have seen that across the world, so the Bill must stress that, rather than focusing on all the referrals.
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 would helpful to include an estimate on the amount of money that will be saved with prevention. Money should be allocated for awareness raising and training of parents and caregivers. That is what it is needed. Training parents in positive discipline methods will, in the long run, prevent violence, and therefore, money will be saved. This has been the case in many countries that have had a ban for decades.

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)

Once again I would like to stress that the Bill must protect children and that it is crucial to stress that the Bill is seen as a tool to change the society as a whole. We want parents to change, to ensure that the next generation of parents will not use hitting and smacking as discipline tools. The Bill must stress that it will invest in helping parents to change, it will not be used to send parents to jail or to take children into custody of social workers. That must not happen, unless there is a serious case of abuse. Parents should receive help and support.