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)

As a parent I believe that the final responsibility for the discipline of my children, which may in certain situations include smacking, lies with the Parents.

This proposed bill confuses child abuse, with reasonable chastisement. This is a glaring and alarming confusion.

I write as a father with two grown up children who now have children of their own. When our children were younger we sought to create a loving environment which included lots of hugs, kisses and positive affirmation of our children. We also told them that certain behaviors were not acceptable i.e. not sharing toys, hitting siblings etc. We explained that punishment at various levels would follow disobedience. When as young children their behavior crossed that line they knew that discipline would be exercised. The process, of which they were aware, was first; warnings to behave or desist from wrong behavior, second; the withdrawal of privileges, third and as a last resort came a short smack. Following the exercise of any of those disciplines there would be hugs and kisses. We always assured them of our love for them but not the behavior they had manifested. Today I am proud of my two grown up children and their own young families. They are well grounded individuals holding responsible jobs that benefit and support the wider community.
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 because we already have legislation to prevent child abuse i.e. section 58 of the Children Act 2014. Under this legislation a step dad was successfully prosecuted for smacking his 4yr old daughter too hard. He admitted his wrong and received the appropriate punishment. Therefore I believe that the necessary safeguards are already in place.

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)

No comment.

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)

Yes, I fear for the unintended consequences i.e. this proposed bill will:

1 criminalise those with good parenting skills.

2. Ignores public opinion i.e. one survey reveals that 76% of those questioned have said 'No' to making parental smacking a criminal offence.

3. Raise the real possibility of overwhelming the police and social services with what will be trivial cases.

4 Damages young people in the longer term as evidenced by the experience of the Swedish legislature of 1979. Current data monitoring the effects reveals that their smacking ban has resulted in child on child violence, (a 1,791% increase). Psychiatrist David Eberhard argues that it has left parents unable to correct their children in any way. This in turn has led to the breakdown of discipline in schools, falling grades, a rise in anxiety disorders among teens with a link to suicide attempts.
New Zealand found that a ban as proposed here has led to parents being criminalised. It beggars belief that with such evidence this bill should still be going before the Welsh assembly.

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)

Implementing this proposed Bill will divert finances from more pressing & obvious needs.

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)

Only to underline my earlier comments as stated in Q1:1 describing the parental discipline exercised by my wife and I.