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 realise that the purpose of the bill is to protect children, but I believe this bill is too extreme. The premise is that children should be protected from hurt, pain. This is unrealistic. The point is HARM, not hurt. In fact the bill does not even allow for a --non-hurtful-- tap on the arm to get the child’s attention. An overwrought cantankerous child will likely scream even at being picked up or restrained. So the question to consider is what is the best practical approach, rather than following ideologies and absolutes more suited to a perfect world?

A corrective smack, defined as done with an open hand to the legs or buttocks, is not violence, it is not cruelty. Properly delivered it is not done in anger, out of frustration or impatience. I was smacked but it was never done in such contexts. I was never left feeling hated, humiliated or rejected by my parents. I learned that pain is not nice and made me not want to inflict it on others. I was hurt, and I learned from it, but not HARMED.

Such a bill will cause resources to be diverted from the serious issues that the police, teachers and social workers have to deal with in this area. We already have complaints that the police resources are reduced from dealing with actual violence because they are distracted with investigating Twitter and Facebook verbal violence. Parents investigated for alleged cruelty
face terrible stress as they await prolonged court proceedings, and even if exonerated their family life is damaged. Also trumped up or malicious accusations will be easier to make.

Research in this area must be carefully examined. Other countries' experience also. In Sweden child-on-child violence has increased hugely since smacking was banned. That needs to be explained.

If smacking is banned what alternatives will be allowed, recommended and taught? What else will parents do as correction? Threaten, blackmail, bribe, deny affection, scream or shout, withdraw from disciplining at all? This needs also to be considered.

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)

If the bill is trying to achieve pain-free disciplining of childhood it cannot succeed. Emotional pain is as bad if not worse than physical pain. If it is trying to diminish the threat of violence to children the current laws are adequate and well thought through. Members of the public basically know the difference between physical cruelty and reasonable chastisement.

However, there may well be better ways that the current laws can be administered, and that would be a good focus.

I was impressed by the very thorough documentation of the W.A.G.'s proposal, but I think the resources available and proposed for education and guidance of parents should be the focus of funding and legislation.

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)

-
3 Unintended consequences

3.1 Do you think there are there 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)

Parent lessening of authority and confidence, especially in those less skilled in the first place or with less resources or who are more burdened for any reason. Demoralisation and uncertainty as to their role. Children becoming more rebellious.

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)

NO

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)

The importance of research being carefully evaluated. I realise this has been done well in the documentation you have compiled, but there is other research to take into account.

I would like to say a bit more about the ideology behind the bill. It is not logical to try to eliminate pain from the human experience. Harm yes, but not pain. We all realise that seeing a doctor, nurse or dentist may involve a painful experience. Even just the investigation. But the end is a good one. It is not sadistic or illegal to press on a person's abdomen to diagnose an appendicitis even though the patient may experience a lot of pain. No one is going to want to ban doctors et al because they cause pain. Obviously doctors do not inflict pain for the sake of it. Similarly, smacking a child has a good end in mind. The end is not to be cruel but to help the child learn. I am not for one second advocating abuse or excessive physical force. I hate cruelty. But careful physical discipline of a child is not cruelty.