

Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Bill

Page 2: About you

Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

an individual

Which of the following best describes you? (If you are a professional or academic, but not in a subject relevant to the consultation, please choose "Member of the public".)

Professional with experience in a relevant subject

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

No Response

Please choose one of the following; if you choose the first option, please provide your name or the name of your organisation as you wish it to be published.

I am content for this response to be attributed to me or my organisation

Please insert your name or the name of your organisation. If you choose the first option above, this should be the name as you wish it to be published. If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

Dr Sarah Little

Please provide details of a way in which we can contact you if there are queries regarding your response. Email is preferred but you can also provide a postal address or phone number. We will not publish these details.

Page 7: Your views on the proposal

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposal of giving children equal protection from assault by prohibiting all physical punishment of children?

Fully Supportive

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposal of giving children equal protection from assault by prohibiting all physical punishment of children?

Please explain the reasons for your response

Early years experiences are vital. As well as physical punishment being an illogical interpretation of discipline (in terms of children being the most vulnerable in our society, who look to adults to set an example of how to behave and respond), physical punishment may affect secure attachments to the primary caregivers. Compared to those with a history of poor attachment relationships, children with a secure and stable attachment history are more capable of developing and maintaining successful relationships, emotional regulation, and a positive sense of self as adults (1). There is increasing recognition of the importance of fostering resilience, the roots of which relate to secure attachment in early childhood. Up to 40% of children in the UK lack secure bonds and 15% actively resist their parent. This calls for evidence based interventions(2). Physical punishment also suggests to the child that the parent's love for them is conditional on their behaviour, as opposed to being loved unconditionally. Physical punishment is an unnecessary discipline strategy and may be replaced with a range of parenting tools which are gentle and nurture the child's development long term. (1) Thomson, R.A. (2008). Early attachment and later development: familiar questions and new answers – in J. Cassidy and P.R. Shaver (eds) Handbook of Attachment, 2nd New York: The Guildford Press, pp. 348-65. (2) Moullin et al (2014). Parenting, attachment and a secure base for children. Baby Bonds report by the Sutton Trust.

Q2. Could the aims of the proposal be better delivered in another way (without a Bill in the Scottish Parliament)?

No

Please explain the reasons for your response

This vital issue needs to be brought to the government in the most formal way possible.

Q3. What do you think would be the main advantages, if any, of giving children equal protection from assault by prohibiting all physical punishment of children?

Children deserve legal protection from physical punishment. Society has turned a blind eye to this issue for too long. We need to send a clear message to society that physical punishment is completely unacceptable ethically and morally. This will hopefully filter down through the generations to come, reversing the trend of inter-generational abuse of children behind closed doors. We need to invest heavily in children's early years and children's mental health. The manifesto 1001 critical days highlights the importance of infant and child mental health, the detrimental effects of which can last a life-time.

Q4. What do you think would be the main disadvantages, if any, of giving children equal protection from assault by prohibiting all physical punishment of children?

It may be difficult to police but that is not a reason to stall moving ahead with this vital bill. There are no disadvantages in protecting children from physical punishment.

Page 11: Financial implications

Q5. Taking account of both costs and potential savings, what financial impact would you expect the proposed Bill to have?

Unsure

Q5. Taking account of both costs and potential savings, what financial impact would you expect the proposed Bill to have?

Please explain the reasons for your response

Increased costs may be due to exploring allegations of punishment. Reduced costs are from children growing into more secure adults, able to contribute to society.

Page 12: Equalities

Q6. What overall impact is the proposed Bill likely to have on the following protected groups (under the Equality Act 2010): race, disability, sex, gender re-assignment, age, religion and belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity?

Positive

Please explain the reasons for your response

These protected groups may have an increased risk of physical abuse and punishment so the bill would protect them.

Q7. Could any negative impact of the proposed Bill on any of these protected groups be minimised or avoided?

Unsure

Page 14: Sustainability of the proposal

Q8. Do you consider that the proposed Bill can be delivered sustainably i.e. without having a disproportionate economic, social and/or environmental impact?

Yes

Page 15: General

Q9. Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the proposal?

Please keep up the pressure on this issue.