

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".)

Member of the public

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 would like this response to be anonymous (the response may be published, but no name)

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

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

There is no excuse for hitting children and some children and infants are killed through intentional or unintentional physical abuse each year, who might be saved if attitudes are changed. This would also serve to reduce violence in general in society as behaviour is learned from childhood. However, any increase in protection should ensure that families are not necessarily broken up or criminalised as this could be a generational process and the focus should be on help and support and education in the first instance, rather than criminal penalties.

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 requires a change in the law.

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?

1. Reducing the number of children who are killed or severely injured each year by abusive parents or carers.
2. Improving the life chances of children by removing fear of violence and exposure to violence.
3. Reducing the incidence of violence in general in society, particularly the impact on those more vulnerable to violence, by eliminating the tolerance of physical punishment under certain circumstances.

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?

This may disrupt or criminalise families where the incidence of physical punishment is minimal or a one-off lapse, particularly if stress or mental health is an issue, so the initial focus should be on support and education rather than criminalisation.

Page 11: Financial implications

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

Broadly cost-neutral

Please explain the reasons for your response

Over time, the unlearning of violent behaviour from childhood will reduce the incidence of violence in society and the direct and indirect costs on the health and criminal justice systems, also improving the life chances and potential contribution to society and the economy of children when they grow to be adults.

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

As well as protecting young people and children, this may reduce the incidence of domestic violence/violence against women and the tolerance of violence and abuse in general, which is seen as justifiable under certain circumstances.

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

The only negative impact may be cultural in some circumstances if any particular cultures or faiths have a traditional outlook on child discipline, but this is outweighed by the benefit to children and young people, and can be mitigated by education and support.

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

Please explain the reasons for your response:

It is a minor change to the law that will mostly be met with understanding and compliance. It may encourage earlier interventions rather than later and more costly interventions.

Page 15: General

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

This is long overdue. I have two children and, despite the inevitable family squabbles, never see any justification or requirement for physical punishment. Positive discipline can be achieved by many other means.