

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.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

We can't continue to have a situation where children learn that it is acceptable for a person who is bigger and more powerful to use physical violence against a smaller, weaker person. Scotland is a progressive country with strong social values, and that needs to be reflected in how we raise our children. I did smack my first child, something I now deeply regret. I was encouraged to do so by older generations, so I recognise that introducing a ban on smacking children will be met with a lot of resistance, but I think it's important even if it doesn't become law that it publicises the argument, in the hope that public attitudes will change.

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

Unsure

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

Much as I support an end to physical chastisement, I'm not sure if legislation is the best way to achieve it. People who disagree will only push back against a ban, rather than listening to the persuasive arguments against smacking children. A widespread information programme would be a better option, with more funding for Early Years support for parents.

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?

The best-case scenario would be an overall reduction in violence within society, and the development of better respect between generations. Too many adults blame a lack of corporal punishment for a perceived worsening of youth behaviour (although there is no evidence to support this), because of an erroneous belief that children can be beaten into respecting their elders. Fear is not respect, and those children will grow up using violence themselves. There are far better ways to teach children moral and pro-social behaviour, and these methods develop mutual respect between parents and children. How can that not be a better way? My children are teenagers now. We have never had a slammed door, and they have never raised their voices to me. We talk and we play, and they know where the boundaries are. I respect them as individuals, and they respect us as their parents who guide and teach them, and share interests and listen to them and encourage them. And we get very, very silly.

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?

I don't think there are any inherent disadvantages in the concept, but I think it would be extremely difficult to implement. There will be many people who will not accept it. It's also something that would be very difficult to introduce for the current generation of children. If children have grown up being smacked, it would be a challenging and long process to change the parenting style and intergenerational relationship to develop new methods of discipline and boundary-setting. Without wishing to sound judgemental, I do believe that smacking is a short-cut to discipline for parents who lack the time, willingness or understanding to spend more time relating to their children and developing a depth of relationship with mutual respect at the core. I don't think you can smack someone that you know and respect as an autonomous individual, so in order to stop smacking that relationship would need to be developed first. Which is a dichotomy - how can that relationship be developed while still smacking, but how does a parent set boundaries and create an environment in which a new relationship can be formed if a child is used to being smacked?

## 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

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

I really don't know what is involved in introducing and implementing a Bill. There definitely isn't enough investment in Early Years, parenting support and education though.

## 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?

Unsure

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

There are certainly different cultural/religious beliefs surrounding the discipline of children, so this is definitely a tricky area. However, there are other cultural and religious beliefs that are not acceptable in Scotland and the UK, so it is something that could be tackled. I don't see it having an impact on any other protected groups, other than in addition to religious and cultural belief.

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

Any legislation has the risk of being at odds with religious and/or cultural beliefs, so whatever methods are usually used to avoid this could be implemented. Education is probably the best tool, as is working with cultural/religious leaders in local communities to encourage them to support the Bill.

## 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:**

There will be a lot of people who believe that banning smacking will lead to societal breakdown and feral youth running wild, but that just won't be the case. It's also a time-limited change. Once smacking falls out of cultural favour, it should no longer be an issue. Scotland is one of only five countries in Europe where smacking is still permitted, so there are plenty of examples of success in our neighbouring countries that can be used to support best practice in implementing the change.

## Page 15: General

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

It is unfortunate that this Bill is unlikely to be passed, I think Scotland would be a much better place for it. However, I hope it opens up debate on smacking that in itself could impact on societal norms and achieve a state where such a Bill would be unnecessary. So even if unsuccessful, the proposal of the Bill has the power to become a catalyst for change, as long as it is followed up by ongoing information and education.