

# Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Bill

## Page 2: About you

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

on behalf of an organisation

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".)

*No Response*

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

Third sector (charitable, campaigning, social enterprise, voluntary, non-profit)

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 If you choose the second or third option, a name is still required, but it will not be published.

Upstart Scotland

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**

Children, like all Scottish citizens, deserve to be protected from assault by law.

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**

A change in the law (including the recognition that 'smacking' is actually physical assault) is an important step in establishing children's human rights.

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?

Physical violence is now well-established as an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) which contributes to long-term social and emotional damage. There are therefore long-term advantages to society in protecting children from assault.

A change in the law -- along with the attendant publicity -- is a clear indication that society does not accept the common assumption that it's 'OK to smack children'. Since this assumption is deeply ingrained in our culture, it requires serious measures to affect the necessary culture change.

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?

For parents who do not understand early child development, there will be problems in dealing with their children's behaviour. They will require information and support to change their own attitudes and behaviour.

## Page 11: Financial implications

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

Some reduction in cost

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

The reduction in cost will be long-term, and is dependent on support for parents. But if society provides this support it will eventually lead to fewer costs in terms of special educational needs, mental health services and criminal justice. Indeed, in the light of current knowledge about child development, if Scotland were to introduce a well-funded, coherent policy for the Early Years (pre-birth to 8 years), including a developmentally-appropriate approach to care and education for the under-sevens, there would be significant reduction in costs in the areas listed above.

## 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?

Slightly positive

**Please explain the reasons for your response**

As a society, the better we treat our children in the Early Years (pre-birth to 8 years), the more tolerant and responsible they will be as future citizens. Protection from assault is an important element in treating children well, although there are many other steps we need to take.

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

Information for parents about child development and support with parenting skills should be available from as early as possible. This could be targeted to specific groups as necessary. The introduction of the Baby Box would be one way to disseminate information. In Finland, the entitlement to the Baby Box is accompanied by 'parents meetings' to talk about the best way to care for babies, toddlers and young children.

## 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 is already support for the principle of non-violence to children from the majority of Scottish parents and the general public. There is also informed support from major stakeholders, such as personnel in health and social services, childcare, education and the police. This adjustment to the law will ratify and support an important cultural change that is already under way.

## Page 15: General

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

It is an extremely important element in the stated aim of the Scottish government to make Scotland 'the best place in the world to grow up'. In fact, if this Bill is not passed, that aspiration would be seen internationally as laughable.