

Ending the physical punishment of children will protect their rights

Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies will today publish a summary of the consultation responses received to the Welsh Government consultation about its plans to introduce legislation to remove the defence of reasonable punishment.

The consultation, which was launched in January and closed in April 2018, was designed to gather feedback from the public and key stakeholders to further develop a Bill and to help the Welsh Government to address any concerns as the legislation develops.

More than 1,890 responses were received to the consultation, from a range of individuals, organisations and groups. More than 270 people also attended one of the engagement events held across Wales.

The consultation found just over half of respondents (50.3%) agreed and 48.1% disagreed with the statement that the legislative proposal will achieve the aim of protecting children's rights; 1.5% said "don't know".

The First Minister has announced the Welsh Government will introduce a Bill to remove the defence of reasonable punishment in year three of the legislative programme (between September 2018 and July 2019).

Huw Irranca-Davies said:

"As a government, we are committed to introducing legislation to remove the defence of reasonable punishment, which will prohibit the physical punishment of children by parents and those acting in loco parentis. This reinforces our long-standing commitment to children's rights.

"The consultation we launched earlier this year was intended to help inform our legislative proposals, ensuring we develop the very best legislation to help us achieve our aim. I'd like to thank everyone who took the time to respond. The responses received will be considered during the development of the Bill.

"While the primary responsibility for raising children lies with parents, the Welsh Government has a very specific role in creating a society in which children can grow up in a safe and nurturing environment. Our commitment to introduce legislation, alongside support for parents, is key to us achieving success in this endeavour."

The Welsh Government is developing the Bill as part of a much wider package of support for children and their parents. This includes:

- the Parenting: Give It Time campaign, which aims to help parents to do the best job they can, by providing positive parenting tips and information
 - access to a range of services to promote positive parenting delivered by local government, health, education, social services, social justice and the third sector
 - more targeted interventions, such as Flying Start and Families First, which offer support and advice to parents.
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Funding to develop and progress rail projects in Wrexham

The funding will allow the completion of development work to upgrade the Wrexham North Junction as a priority project.

This will enable improved journey times from Wrexham General station going north, allowing trains to pass through the single line section up to Rossett more quickly, which will also contribute towards enabling increased frequency of services.

The investment is also being used to consider a range of other interventions that can further support increased services. These include improvements to signalling and associated infrastructure as well as level crossings in the area.

Ken Skates said:

“I am delighted Welsh Government investment will support Transport for Wales to develop and progress these vital projects with the aim of increasing the frequency and improving journey times of trains operating through the Wrexham area.

“It is our clear ambition to see improvements for the benefit of rail users and this funding will ascertain what can be delivered for that exact purpose.

“This is yet another great example of the steps we are taking a responsible government and again highlights the historic underfunding by the UK Government in our rail network who have spent just 1.5 per cent of their rail infrastructure budget in Wales, despite it accounting for 11 per cent of the track in England and Wales, since 2011.

“Welsh Government investment is improving transport infrastructure in North Wales and comes on the back of my recent announcement of

the development of a new Transport and Business Hub to totally regenerate the area around Wrexham General Station.

“We are delivering a boost to the local economy, stimulating new growth opportunities and building a stronger transport network in the region.”

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Counsel General calls for fair and effective Welsh justice system

He will argue that current arrangements are not fit for purpose and that policing and justice need to be devolved in order to address a “conundrum at the heart of the devolution settlement”.

The Counsel General’s vision is for a justice system which reflects the values and particular characteristics of Welsh society and embraces social and economic justice. He will also talk about what the justice system in Wales can do to increase fairness, equality and prosperity for all.

Speaking at the event organised by the Bevan Foundation, the Counsel General will refer to the justice system itself and the impact that non-devolved areas of policing and justice have on the delivery of public services in Wales.

Ahead of today’s event, Jeremy Miles said:

“The Welsh Government is fully committed to an equal and fair Wales, but achieving our vision of a just Wales requires fundamental change. The Commission on Justice in Wales chaired by former Lord Chief Justice, Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd, has a vital role to play in shaping our future.

“I am concerned that the justice system of England and Wales is not fit for purpose and there is an arbitrary line between what is devolved and what is not. This means public services cannot be properly joined up and integrated to the detriment of the people of Wales, who deserve better.”

Green light for £3.5 million EU-backed

Low carbon energy storage initiative

The Smart Energy Storage Solutions Hub (SESS) scheme, led by the University of South Wales (USW), will work with businesses to drive innovation and develop new products, technologies and processes for the commercial market.

The hub, based at the university's state-of-the-art Centre for Automotive and Power Systems Engineering (CAPSE), will benefit from £2.3 million of EU funding to collaborate with businesses in sectors such as low carbon, energy and environment, advanced manufacturing and ICT.

The remainder of the funding will come from the university and industrial partners involved in the project.

Professor Drakeford said:

"We are committed to driving forward cutting-edge research in the low-carbon economy and collaboration between business and universities will help us achieve this.

"Reducing our carbon footprint is a key priority of the Welsh Government, helping Wales to realise its energy-efficiency potential and to become a major exporter of energy efficiency technology and know-how."

Businesses will have access to the university's specialist research facilities and academic expertise to help develop new products and processes, including in the automotive and energy fields.

Professor Julie Lydon, USW vice-chancellor, said:

"USW has extensive experience of working in collaboration with a wide range of external bodies in all sectors of the economy.

"CAPSE has an excellent reputation for expertise in the field of battery/energy storage research, on which the SESS operation will be based.

"The extensive range of knowledge available at USW will help SMEs involved in SESS to capitalise on our existing academic and research strengths and the resulting innovation will maximise the contribution of Welsh businesses to future economic growth."