



23 September 2019

Dear Scottish Party Leaders,

We welcome and fully support the Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Bill which will offer children in Scotland the same lawful protection from violence that adults are currently afforded. Just as it is unlawful to hit a spouse, an elderly relative or an adult with or without a disability, it should no longer be lawful for parents or carers to hit a child.

The evidence demonstrates that hitting children can damage their health and well-being. Violence does not work as a strategy for improving children's behaviour. As well as injuries sustained from being hit harder than intended, physical punishment leads to an increased risk of the child developing aggressive, antisocial behaviours themselves or suffering low self-esteem, depression or anxiety which can continue into adulthood. This is not the future we want for the children and families of Scotland.

The experiences of other countries which have acted on the evidence and delivered laws protecting children from violence demonstrates that doing so leads to a better future for families. In Ireland, we now see clarity in the advice that parents and carers receive, and an end to doubt around whether hitting a child can be justifiable.

We want a Scotland where all children can thrive. We want to support and empower families to give their children the best start in life. We want to deliver this bill to stop the long-lasting consequences of violence against children in Scotland.

Therefore, we urge all Party Leaders to show their commitment to the health and wellbeing of Scotland's children and to our country's future by supporting the Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Bill at the Stage 3 proceedings, taking place on Thursday 3 October 2019.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Maggie Rae, President, Faculty of Public Health
Dr. Andrew Fraser, Chair, Scottish Directors of Public Health
Dr. Peter English, Chair, BMA Public Health Medicine Committee
Dr. Carey Lunan, Chair, Royal College of General Practitioners Scotland
Professor Jackie Taylor, President, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow
Professor Derek Bell OBE, President, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh
Professor Ravi Mahajan, President, Royal College of Anaesthetists
Professor John Crichton, Chair, Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland
Professor Steve Turner, Scottish Officer, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Dr. Ingrid Wolfe, Co-chair, British Association for Child and Adolescent Public Health
Matt Forde, National Head of Service, NSPCC Scotland
Martin Crewe, Director, Barnardo's Scotland
Ben Farrugia, Director, Social Work Scotland
Neil Hunter, CEO & Principal Reporter, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
Mary Glasgow, Chief Executive, Children 1st
Juliet Harris, Director, Together