



Our ref: MA-L/JM/194/19

Lynne Neagle AM
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee
National Assembly for Wales

SeneddCYPE@assembly.wales

5 April 2019

Dear Lynne

Following the introduction of the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Bill to the National Assembly on 25 March 2019, I am writing to provide further information in relation to social services data, which is highlighted in the Regulatory Impact Assessment accompanying the Bill.

This information is provided to support the committee's scrutiny of the Bill.

The Welsh Government has not been able to establish a baseline of the number of referrals relating to reasonable punishment received by social services departments using existing social services data. As the defence of reasonable punishment currently exists, social services departments in Wales do not specifically collect information about physical punishment. There is therefore, no published or readily-available data to use as a baseline.

We have carried out a lot of work to try to establish a baseline for social services referrals. As part of this work with local authorities, we have been able to establish that local authorities do not necessarily record the specific details of a referral or report of an incident in the first instance in a searchable form. The details of each individual case, record or report are normally established later in the process. This has presented challenges in separating out data relating to the physical punishment of children where the defence of reasonable punishment would apply.

The recording of incidents differs among the 22 local authorities. For example, some record this under child protection, some under child welfare issues or other categorisations.

We have considered a number of options to enable us to obtain the relevant data, which could then be used as an approximation for a baseline but, to date, we have not yet been able to identify an existing baseline dataset, which is sufficiently robust.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

We are continuing this work and are currently working with a small number of local authorities to try to establish a sufficiently accurate baseline, based on the method the four Welsh police forces were able to use when analysing their data.

I will provide further updates about the process to establish a social services data baseline as they become available and I look forward to providing evidence to the committee in due course.

I am copying this letter to the chairs of the Finance and the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs committees, which are also scrutinising this Bill.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Morgan'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Julie Morgan AC/AM

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services