Advocacy - Equal Protection and Period Poverty

To prevent breaches of young people’s rights in Scotland, MSYPs will seek to persuade MSPs and others to support legislative and policy mechanisms, such as...

Equal Protection

Equal protection is about giving children and young people the same protection from assault as adults, by removing the defence of ‘justified assault’ in Scots law.

Physical punishment is a violation of children and young people’s rights, as has been identified repeatedly by the UN human rights committees, the Council of Europe and the EU.

It breaches Scotland’s human rights obligations, and goes against the Getting It Right for Every Child policy.

In our Lead the Way (2016-2021) manifesto, we conducted a mass consultation on young people’s views on various issues, securing 72,744 responses.

One of our resulting manifesto commitments, is:

‘All physical assault against children should be illegal.’ (82% agreement).

It is our view that Scotland cannot be regarded as the best place to grow up when our law gives children and young people less protection from assault than anybody else in society. We think they merit equal, if not greater, protection from assault. It is discriminatory, and only by changing the law can children and young people have the same legal rights and protection from assault as adults.
Equal Protection

Research shows that changing the law will:

- Reduce child abuse, improve mental health, shape public attitudes, and reflect society’s declining support and use of physical punishment.
- Bring Scotland in line with its international human rights obligations.
- Allow Scotland to catch-up internationally as one of only four European Union member states which still permits the physical punishment of children.
- Send out a clear message that our society does not tolerate violence, and that we treat each other with dignity and respect.

SYP fully supported John Finnie MSP’s proposed Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Bill, by:

- MSYPs responding widely to and sharing the public consultation over the summer of 2017. You can read SYP’s response here: http://bit.ly/2w9asuh
- Having Thomas McEachan MSYP for Glasgow Pollok as a keynote speaker at the launch of the consultation and a seminar on Equal Protection organised by leading campaigners on the issue, including (Children 1st, Barnardo’s Scotland, NSPCC Scotland, and Children & Young People’s Commissioner Scotland).
- Having MSYPs raise the issue of equal protection in their local work.

More information and references

The Scottish Government announced in October 2017 that it will support the Bill proposal and ensure it becomes law, so MSYPs need to keep calling to ensure this actually happens!

- Equal Protection: NSPCC Scotland, Children 1st, Barnardo’s Scotland and the CYPCS (November 2015)

http://bit.ly/2tyWSBb
- Together, Equal Protection from Assault for Children Briefing (July 2017)

What can you do, as an MSYP?

To support this, MSYPs should contact their regional and constituency MSPs and ask them to support the Bill in Parliament, ask them to tweet their support for it (or otherwise on social media), and to offer support for the legislation in any other way.
Period Poverty

Period Poverty is a violation of human rights, which can particularly affect young people who menstruate.

On 26th March 2017, SYP approved the following policy statement with 99% agreement, the highest current percentage of agreement for any SYP policy:

‘The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that access to menstrual hygiene products is a basic human right, and that more effort should be made to ensure that those in disadvantaged financial situations have access to these products.’

- Members’ Motion by Suki Wan MSYP for Glasgow Shettleston.

Monica Lennon MSP has launched a public consultation on her proposals for legislation to end period poverty in Scotland, and give everyone who menstruates the ability to access sanitary products when they need them.

The proposal is to place a duty on schools, colleges and universities to provide products, for free, to their students, and to also place a duty on Scottish Ministers to create a universal system of free access to sanitary products.

This legislation would mean Scotland becomes a world-leader in giving all citizens the right to access sanitary products.
SYP’s prior involvement in the Period Poverty campaigning:

- Suki Wan MSYP led an informal evidence gathering session on menstrual hygiene for the Scottish Parliament’s Equalities and Human Rights Committee last year.
- Zee Timmins MSYP for LGBT Youth Scotland participated at the launch of the consultation.

What can you do, as an MSYP?

MSYPs should continue to campaign locally around period poverty, and fill out and sharing the consultation www.periodpoverty.scot until the deadline of 8th December 2017.

Monica Lennon MSP is also holding a consultation workshop, led by Zee Timmins MSYP, at SYP’s 64th National Sitting at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh on the 27th October 2017.

Also to support this, MSYPs can raise Period Poverty with their constituency and regional MSPs, ask them to tweet about it, and write a letter to the editor of local newsletters, calling for local politicians to support it. If you need support with a template, please get in touch with SYP staff.

Case study (local work)

Cailyn McMahon MSYP for Cowdenbeath has been campaigning locally about Period Poverty.

She created ‘a presentation for schools, gained the support of other MSYPs, councillors and teaching staff, and is willing to speak to headteachers, elected members and council officers to further the campaign’.

This was reported in the Central Fife Times: http://bit.ly/2gZ6c9