

Justice Committee

Supplementary Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill

Written submission from Children 1st

At CHILDREN 1ST, we listen, we support and we take action to secure a brighter future for Scotland's vulnerable children. Our work is built on over 125 years experience as the RSSPCC. By working together with, and listening to children, young people, their families and communities, and by influencing public policy and opinion; we help to change the lives of vulnerable children and young people for the better. We work to safeguard children and young people, to support them within their families and to help them to recover from abuse, neglect and violence.

CHILDREN 1ST has 52 local services and four national services across Scotland, and we work closely with many local authorities as well as working in partnership with other organisations. All our services are child centred. The children, young people and families we support are key partners in all aspects of our work.

Whilst we understand that forced marriage is a very important issue that affects children as well as adults, we also know it is a complex problem that cannot be solved by legislation alone. Current law already covers forced marriage; it may be of more benefit to focus on training and practice around this issue.

We support the submission from Scottish Women's Aid, and believe:

- the current legislative response in Scotland meets the Istanbul Convention's requirements.
- there is no need for a specific criminal offence and a better approach would be to introduce forced marriage as an aggravating feature during the sentencing stage of criminal proceedings in Scotland.
- the focus should be on existing civil and criminal laws and guidelines on forced marriage to ensure that they are robustly implemented.

For the above reasons we do not support the proposal to make forced marriage a criminal offence.

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Policy Officer
29 November 2013