

Children in Scotland

every child - every childhood

Justice Committee

Room T3.60

The Scottish Parliament

Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Crime and Security Bill (UK)

Children in Scotland welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence on the Legislative Consent Memorandum in respect of the Crime and Security Bill currently before the House of Commons. Most sections of the Bill are not intended to apply in Scotland. Of those elements that are, only Section 42 (Air Weapons) has significant implications in respect of children and young people. We therefore will restrict our evidence to the particular section. Though Children in Scotland represents over four hundred member organisations across the children's sector, we have not had opportunity to undertake an in-depth consultation with our members on this issue. The views expressed, therefore, are the informed perspectives of the Children in Scotland Policy Team.

The changes proposed will effectively prohibit air weapon use by people under 18. This is a significant change from the current position where people aged 14 to 17 can not only use air rifles but can do so on private land without supervision. At present people under fourteen can also legitimately use air rifles in the same circumstances, though they must be supervised by someone over 21. While Children in Scotland supports the introduction of any measure which safeguards and protects the public in general, and young children (for whom the consequences of an airgun injury are more likely to be serious or indeed fatal) in particular, we believe that there are circumstances in which some exceptions to the proposed legislation would be acceptable.

There is no evidence that misuse of air weapons is more frequent or serious among young people who are current legitimate users, than among adults. As a national organisation, Children in Scotland represents and works with many member organisations in rural Scotland. In rural communities, the use of

weapons both for sporting activities and pest control is a well-established element of traditional culture. Young people have historically participated in this, and, in the overwhelming majority of cases, have behaved safely and responsibly in so doing. For this reason we would encourage the Justice Committee to consider the inclusion of a mechanism for allowing some exceptions to the general provisions of the Bill. A permit system, for example, could be a possible approach.

For further information please contact Marion Macleod, Senior Policy and Parliamentary Officer.

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Children in Scotland is Scotland's national agency for organisations and professionals working with and for children, young people and their families. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that policies and services and other provisions are of the highest possible quality and are able to meet the needs of a diverse society. Children in Scotland represents more than 400 members, including 90% of Scottish Local Authorities, all major voluntary, statutory and private children's agencies, professional organisations, as well as many other smaller community groups and children's services. It is linked with similar agencies in other parts of the UK and Europe.

The work of Children in Scotland encompasses extensive information, policy, research and practice development programmes. The agency works closely with MSPs, the Scottish Government, local authorities and practitioners. It also services groups such as the Cross Party Parliamentary Group on Children and Young People (with YouthLink Scotland). In addition, Children in Scotland hosts Enquire - the national advice service for additional support for learning, and Resolve: ASL, Scotland's largest independent education mediation service.