The consultation in Sweden – as the pioneer country for banning corporal punishment of children in all settings – looked at violence against children more broadly and explored links between different forms of violence and how national governments can address these complexities in an integrated way.
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The Non-Violent Childhoods project and initiative

The Non-Violent Childhoods project aims to support countries in the implementation of the national laws that prohibit corporal punishment of children in all settings. The initiative is coordinated by the Council of the Baltic Sea States and implemented in partnership with the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children and national ministries in Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Sweden and the Ombudsman’s Office in Poland. The initiative is furthermore supported by the Council of Europe, Ombudsoffices in the countries in the Baltic Sea Region as well as leading national and international experts from the region and beyond.

The main components of the project involve national consultations and expert meetings, which will inform the development of guidance material in four main thematic areas:

1) The communication of the legal ban in the home, which raises awareness of the legal ban as a preventive and an educational measure rather than a law aimed at criminal investigations and proceedings;
2) Communication and campaigns related to the legal ban and non-violent childhoods, which will focus on the importance of communication and campaigning to sensitise the population, practitioners and political decision makers to non-violent childhoods;
3) Parenting programmes and non-violent discipline options for parents; and
4) Guidance for service providers in different fields such as health, education and social services.

Based on the experience in the Baltic Sea Region, the guidance will convey key messages and best practices with global relevance. The outcomes of the Non-Violent Childhoods Initiative will therefore be for the countries in the Baltic Sea Region and globally.

Sweden was the first country to organise a national consultation in May 2017 and other consultations will be carried out in Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Poland during 2017. In the Baltic Sea Region, 10 out of 11 countries have prohibited corporal punishment by law. The region combines countries with over 30 years of experience with implementing the legal ban and countries just embarking on this route to ensure childhoods free from violence.

Worldwide, there are 52 states that have achieved a full prohibition of corporal punishment in all settings including in the home. The Baltic Sea Region and Latin America are the first regions to achieve close to full prohibition in all countries. The broader European region is also following towards this objective. While law reform is a milestone achievement, it marks also the starting point of a seminal process to bring the ban from law into practice.

The national consultation in Sweden

The national consultation in Sweden was convened in early May 2017 and was organised with the cooperation and support from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs of Sweden. The consultation gathered important expertise from Sweden, as the pioneer country in enacting a legal ban of corporal punishment that has a long-standing experience in promoting non-violent childhoods. This report presents a summary of the presentations and discussions during the Swedish consultation. A more detailed overview is included in the background report of the Non-Violent Childhood project, which will be available by end 2017.
Considering the long-standing experience in Sweden and the evolution of the implementation measures of the legal ban over almost four decades, the focus of the Swedish consultation was expanded beyond the theme of corporal punishment to also look at violence against children more broadly. The distinctions between corporal punishment and other forms of violence against children are often not easy to make. Although the practice of corporal punishment has declined significantly over the past decades, children in Sweden are still today affected by violence in different contexts and settings. The interest is therefore to explore the linkages between different forms of violence and how national governments can address these complexities in an integrated way.

Non-violent childhoods as a core commitment of the Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

At the meeting in the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, the State Secretary emphasised the importance of the regional cooperation in promoting non-violent childhoods in the Baltic Sea Region, in Europe and globally. Sweden’s experience is of direct relevance for many regional, European and international processes. The transnational cooperation in this area has gained new dynamics and dimensions due to the movement of children into and within Europe, as migrants and asylum seekers, many of them unaccompanied or separated from their families.

The Government of Sweden will continue to promote non-violent childhoods nationally, in Europe and through multi-lateral cooperation. The prevention of violence against children remains high on the agendas for the cooperation within the European Union and the Council of Europe. Sweden is sharing its experience in preventing and responding to violence against children and implementing the legal ban of corporal punishment also as a pathfinder country in the context of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. In addition, ending violence against children is one of the Sustainable Development Goals in the global agenda 2030.1

Sweden has also initiated the series of high-level dialogues on corporal punishment and non-violent childhoods. The first high-level conference took place in Stockholm in 2014, the second in Vienna two years after and the third one will be convened in Malta in 2018.

Currently, Sweden is in the process of incorporating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into national law. Although relevant laws affirming the human rights of the child and protecting children from all forms of violence are already part of the national legislation, this important process will change the status of the Convention and will continue to promote the knowledge and awareness of the Convention and the right of every child to grow up free from violence.

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1 As ending violence against children is part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there are important new developments with regard to measuring global progress. One of the indicators that have been adopted for this purpose is related to the prevalence of corporal punishment. The question from the Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) of UNICEF that gathers data about violence in the home will be adopted for monitoring the progress towards the SDGs. While the MICS programme measures violence in the home against children up to 14 years old, the age range will be expanded to include all children under 18 years of age in the SDGs. This broader approach will enrich the database and opportunities for measuring and monitoring developments in countries all over the world. Information provided by Triona Lenihan, Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment.
Reflections on the history of the legal ban of corporal punishment in Sweden

The legal ban of corporal punishment was enacted into Swedish law in 1979. It was the result of a process of law reform and a national debate in the media, in politics, in academia and the society, which had continued and evolved over decades. There was a strong political consensus across all political parties when the law was adopted in Parliament in 1979.²

Many different factors had a role in this law reform process. In 1858, a law was adopted that prohibited corporal punishment of adult employees and during the 20th century, there was a continuously growing recognition of the rights of children. In 1900, the publication of a book on the psychology of the child marked a notable starting point to consider the child as a competent member of the society (Ellen Key, "The Century of the Child"). The book addressed the issue of physical punishment of children and posed questions about this practice, in consideration of the fact that there was no comparable practice concerning adults. The 1924 Declaration on the Rights of the Child was another important landmark, followed by developments in Sweden to establish the welfare state. In the 1930s and 1940s, there was a growing body of research presenting evidence about the harmful effect of corporal punishment and violence against children on the development of the child. The medical sector and child psychiatry in particular had a prominent role in those times in raising awareness about these matters. There was also a growing sensitisation to the importance of ensuring that national institutions, services and policy programmes needed to be informed and guided by knowledge, professional competence and evidence. The development of the welfare state brought about an increasing sensitivity to the role of parents and families in raising children and the socio-political responsibility of the society and the state. In 1958, corporal punishment of children was outlawed in schools. This law reform had caused a first public debate on the issue, as teachers were afraid of losing their authority if not resorting to corporal punishment and the related discussions raised awareness of different, positive ways of disciplining children in school.³

In the year 1979, the legal ban of corporal punishment was eventually written into the Parental Code, which is a civil law that does not provide for criminal sanctions. While the Swedish Criminal Code contains paragraphs on assault that can be applied in cases of corporal punishment of children, the legal ban was enacted primarily with an educational perspective and the aim to sensitise society and parents that violent behaviour to discipline children is not allowed.⁴

The preparatory works to the 1979 law reform give important background information on the aim of the ban. In addition to its educational purpose, the ban aims to promote an understanding of children as independent individuals who should be treated with full respect for their integrity. It aims to give children a voice and to empower them in protecting themselves

from corporal punishment and enabling them to seek help in those cases. The intention of the ban was not that cases of corporal punishment shall be prosecuted and tried in court but it aimed primarily to change attitudes, to provide clear guidelines for parents and professionals in how to raise and discipline children and how to act in a situation where violent punishment occurs. The ban was also expected to enable earlier identification of children who experienced violence and that in turn should lead to better results in early intervention.\(^5\)

The aim of the ban was to make clear that children should be raised without violence of any kind. It was from the beginning complemented with a massive communication and information campaign that was funded by the government. A brochure was produced in Swedish and English and delivered to each household. This was the most large-scale public campaign developed by the national government that has ever been implemented in Sweden.\(^6\)

The distinction between the provisions in civil and criminal law concerning the prohibition of corporal punishment and the criminal sanctions for violence against children has been a matter of debate. Although the legal ban has been celebrated as a milestone achievement, there remains a certain level of uncertainty with regard to the relation between the legal prohibition in the Parental Code and criminal sanctions for assault provided for in the Criminal Code. Due to the distinction between civil and criminal law provisions, there is uncertainty with regard to what kind of behaviour and conduct is allowed or banned, what remains unregulated by law and what is specifically criminalised by law. The Swedish ban of corporal punishment, as part of the Parental Code, defines what is prohibited but not what is criminalised by law. It is clear that children may not be subjected to corporal punishment or other forms of humiliating and degrading treatment.\(^7\)

The legal ban in the Parental Code does not carry sanctions and penalties. Parental violence against children can however be criminalised under the assault section of the Criminal Code. The Criminal Code provides for sanctions if someone inflicts bodily injury and pain on another person. The preparatory works for the Criminal Code provide that for physical punishment of a child to be criminally punishable, it implies that the pain or injury is neither mild or of short duration. In order to hold someone criminally responsible for corporal punishment of a child, there needs to be evidence beyond reasonable doubt that an act of violence has occurred that caused an impact of injury and pain in line with the law. Compared with the assault provision in the Criminal Code, the ban of corporal punishment in the Parental Code is wider in scope; there is no requirement of injury, pain or proof beyond reasonable doubt. While all forms of corporal punishment are "proactively banned" in the Parental Code, not all forms of actions included in the ban are criminalised in the Penal Code.\(^8\)

At present, there is a proposal pending for reforming some of the sections of the Criminal Code in light of the incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into Swedish national law. The proposal is to introduce into the Criminal Code a section on child

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\(^7\) Sweden: Parental Code, Chapter 6, Section 1: "Children are entitled to care, security and good upbringing. Children are to be treated with respect for their person and individuality and may not be subjected to corporal punishment or any other humiliating treatment." Leviner, Pernilla, The Swedish Ban on Physical Punishment of Children – Legal implications, implementation and challenges, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.

maltreatment (barnmisshandel) where evidence is not required that the violence has caused pain. The proposal is therefore to remove from the Criminal Code the requirement that the act of violence has caused pain in cases where the assault is committed against a child. This law reform would remove also the potentially conflicting differences between the ban of corporal punishment in the Parental Code and the criminal law provisions.9

Many experts who have reviewed the draft law are however critical of the proposal to remove the requirement that pain needs to be proven. While all crimes against children should be punishable under the Criminal Code, it will be important to carefully assess and evaluate the impact of the proposed law reform on children and parents before the draft law is enacted. An issue of debate relates to the potential criminalisation of parents in cases of corporal punishment that is considered “light” such as a light smack. The question concerning the prosecution of parents and the best interests of the child in this regard may need to be debated in the context of this law reform.10

Although the legal ban is discussed today strongly from a child rights perspective, at the time when it was developed, there was a strong public health argument driving the law reform process. In the Swedish society and politics, the social welfare and the best possible health for everyone has always been of central importance. Although today the ban is considered as an innovative law with a pioneer spirit promoting the human rights of children even 10 years before the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted, there lies an additional strong message in promoting non-violent childhoods on the basis of other lines of argumentation.11

Although children have enjoyed a general protection from violence under the law over many decades in Sweden, there was an approach in policy making during the 20th century to take up specific issues and regulate them by specific laws, policies and programmes. The more experience the society and policy has made with understanding and addressing different specific child protection issues, the more is there a recognition of the connections and linkages and the underlying factors that render children vulnerable to violence, including corporal punishment. Today, there is a trend to take these matters into consideration in different policy sectors, political planning processes and implementation measures. Violence against children and the prevention of corporal punishment is therefore increasingly discussed in an integrated way, and in relation to other issues such as gender-based violence, social service sector reform, the health care sector and child psychiatry, victims’ rights and support, the rights of persons with disabilities as well as the reception of asylum seekers and migrants arriving in Sweden from abroad.12

**Reflections and learning with regard to the relevance of the law reform process for subsequent implementation:**

- The legal ban in Sweden was the **culmination of a lengthy process** over decades of socio-political developments and law reforms that resulted in ever more specific laws for the prohibition of corporal punishment in all settings.

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12 Discussion at the consultation hosted by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, 10 May 2017.
- The evolution of the law reform process went hand in hand with an evolving understanding of children as members of society and rights holders.
- The government of Sweden adopted the law with a specific budget for dissemination. The massive public information campaign was essential to disseminate the information about the legal prohibition to all persons living in Sweden and prepared the ground for the subsequent implementation.
- Sweden has enacted the legal prohibition primarily with an educational purpose. The relation between proactive, educational civil laws and penal sanctions in criminal law needs to be clarified in order to prevent any uncertainties about the implementation of the relevant civil and penal laws.
- While the legal prohibition of corporal punishment in all settings is associated with a zero-tolerance approach to violence against children, there remain doubts with regard to the role of law enforcement in cases of corporal punishment and violence against children in the home.

Cultural factors in achieving the prohibition of corporal punishment in law and in practice

The experience in Sweden has provided inspiration and guidance for many other countries in Europe and globally. The enactment of a legal ban and its implementation is a complex process that needs to be understood in relation to the social, political and cultural context of each country and society. Studies have demonstrated that the attitudes regarding child rearing, violence against children and corporal punishment and the understanding of children as rights holders and active members of society differ significantly between countries.13

In Europe, advocates for the legal ban of corporal punishment encounter still today a certain level of scepticism towards the Swedish way of raising children, especially due to the perceived absence of parental authority towards children. There is however no research that would support the view that the absence of authoritarian discipline would lead to negative outcomes or developments among the younger generations. For instance, the rates of alcoholism, criminal behaviour and violence are generally going down in Sweden, although some problems remain in certain areas and with specific groups of the population. Surveys show that the younger generations are increasingly satisfied with the way they were brought up. In the 1950s, a study with 300 families asked young parents, if they wanted to bring up their children in the same way that they had been brought up. In those times, the responses were often negative. Today, there is a very different trend as many of the respondents affirm that they would want to do this as they feel they have been brought up by their parents in a very decent way.14

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Evidence of the impact of the legal ban

The strong political consensus behind the legal ban was an important precondition for the subsequent implementation. Over the past decades, Sweden has witnessed a tremendous development and a strong change in attitudes among children and parents who have reached almost a consensus today in their rejection of corporal punishment. The factors that enabled this change have been subject of many studies. Research suggests that the functioning welfare state has been of fundamental importance in many different ways, including the availability of social protection and social services, a high level of education among the population, the high degree of economic equity and gender equity and the availability of preventive health care for all. Another important factor is that the majority of the children come into the public space at a very young age, in day care and preschools, so that any incident of violence becomes more easily visible.\(^{15}\)

At the early stages after the adoption of the law, the awareness raising campaigns were particularly important. They started even before the law was adopted and continued afterwards. In particular, the printing of key messages on milk boxes revealed itself as a success. At the time, there were only very few trademarks of milk so that the messages on the boxes reached a large proportion of families. The reasoning at the time was that most children in Sweden drink milk and that the messages on the milk boxes would reach families during their joint meals and would thus stimulate discussions. In addition, brochures and leaflets were printed.\(^{16}\)

The main campaign material was disseminated to all households to inform about the legal prohibition. It was entitled “Can you raise and educate your children without hitting or spanking?” (\textit{Kan man klara barnuppostran utan smisk och dask?}). The campaign material provided information about the rights of the child and the new law. It gave case examples and discussed different ways of setting boundaries for children, disciplining children and building positive relations between parents and children in different age groups. The 15 page document offers a comprehensive overview for parents, responds to common questions and directs parents to institutions and organisations that can provide further information and advice.

The law was disseminated also through spokespersons who were known in society, and the relentless contributions of a very active civil society as well as media reporting and the public debate. The Ombudsman for Children has been vital in keeping these issues on the political and social agendas. The initiative of the Government of Sweden to establish the institution of an independent ombudsman for children in 1993 has itself brought about an increased awareness and sensitivity to the human rights of children and children’s role as members of the society.\(^{17}\)

The ongoing process for the implementation of the legal ban is being informed by research, analysis and evidence. Of particular importance are the periodic evaluations of the impact of

\(^{15}\) Janson, Staffan, \textit{The Swedish Experience – Cooperation between the society and the individual}, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.


the ban. The studies and surveys demonstrate the positive developments of the attitudes against corporal punishment. They reveal, that the practice as such has declined constantly and significantly since the enactment of the legal ban. While in the 1950s, approximately 50% of the population were in favour of using corporal punishment in raising children and the majority of children were exposed to corporal punishment in the home. The rate of approval decreased to approximately 10% in the 1990 and approximately 5% today. The surveys are however biased as they are based on self-declaration and self-assessment of citizens. In 2010, the Government of Sweden reported to the Human Rights Committee that there were still children who are exposed to violence in the family. In 2011, a study was conducted with 2,500 parents who had children under 12 years old and 3,207 children aged 15 and 16 years old. The study used the same methodology as previous studies carried out in 1980, 2000 and 2006, so that the findings were comparable. In 2011, the findings revealed that 92% of parents were of the opinion that it was wrong to beat or slap a child. About 3% of the participating parents had hit their child at some point during the past year. This was a significant reduction from 28% in 1980. In 2011, 14% of the participating adolescents stated that they had been hit by their parents at least once in their lifetime. The study found no evidence to suggest that parents who avoided corporal punishment of children were resorting to other humiliating punishments.

The surveys are often conducted with school going children. Boys and girls who are not in school, for different reasons, are therefore excluded from the sample. There is very little knowledge about the extent to which they are affected by corporal punishment and violence in the home or in institutions.

In the academic literature, themes related to non-violent childhoods and positive parenting are very prominent. The high level of awareness about the harmful impact that corporal punishment has on children and the benefits of positive discipline continues to generate knew knowledge and evidence. This is important for the continued implementation of the legal ban and the planning of new measures in a constantly evolving process.

Today, approximately 5-10% of the children in Sweden are living in families where they witness violence against a parent, most often their mother. The children often experience violence themselves. Violence becomes part of their daily lives and does often not stop when the parents separate, as it is common in Sweden to assign joint custody to the parents. Children are considered to experience less violence from a step-parent as the social workers have a better margin under the law to protect a child against violence from a step-parent than from a birth parent due to the strong protection of parental rights by law.

Younger children are known to be witness violence in the home more often than older children. They are spending more time at home and being close to their parents and may not be able

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21 Svedin, Carl Göran, Evaluating Research: What do we know and what are the gaps in research on violence against children, Barnfrifd, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.
to leave the home or go to their rooms and close the doors in moments of inter-parental violence. Young children are strongly determined by their attachment system and are often close to their mother during intimate partner violence as they tend to run to the attachment person when they perceive a threat or a risk.\textsuperscript{23}

The data also indicate that some groups of parents and families tend to resort to corporal punishment of children more than others. Often, the use of corporal punishment is only one of many different problems that these families are struggling with. It is important to develop effective measures and programmes to reach these families. The population groups that need to be targeted today with specific measures for implementing the legal ban include parents with mental health and substance abuse problems as well as different groups of migrants and single parents, where often a number of vulnerability factors can overlap and reinforce each other, such as high levels of stress and reasons related to the circumstances of life rather than cultural believes.\textsuperscript{24}

Research shows that corporal punishment and violence against children in the home, such as hitting children, is perpetrated by mothers just as much as by fathers. The health impact on the child does not depend on whether the act of violence was committed by the mother, the father or both parents. The violence committed by mothers has however a worse impact on the relationship and the emotional relation changes more severely than in cases where the father is the perpetrator. This might be due to the fact that the mother is often the first attachment figure for a child.\textsuperscript{25}

Evidence has shown that exposure to violence, including corporal punishment, is dangerous for the child in the moment it happens and that it is detrimental for the child’s development. Research has evidenced the harmful impact on the child’s health, wellbeing and development, such as the delayed cognitive development, including speech and communication. This is related to the fact that the child’s neurological development is impaired by stress and violence. Violence is also causing mental health issues and different kinds of behavioural problems among the children concerned, which can lead to substance abuse, anti-social behaviour and post-traumatic stress symptoms. Not all children are affected in the same manner, some are more resilient, but the younger children are particularly vulnerable in situations of violence. The factors that make children resilient are still under-researched.\textsuperscript{26}

Research from child and adolescent psychiatry has further evidenced that children who are exposed to violence themselves and who also witness inter-parental violence have stronger symptoms and were more often diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, they have more self-reported symptoms and also regarded the impact of the events as more severe. This group of children is therefore considered to be worse off, symptomatically. Evidence suggests further that this group of children are often more exposed to violence outside the family, including in the school. In general, studies have shown how violence nurtures aggression and

\textsuperscript{23} Almquist, Kjerstin, Swedish Research on Children Exposed to Parental Intimate Partner Violence and Interventions, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.


\textsuperscript{25} Svedin, Carl Göran, Evaluating Research: What do we know and what are the gaps in research on violence against children, Barnfrid, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.

that victims and witnesses of violence who do not receive help to exit the violent environment are developing aggression and potentially violent behaviour themselves.\textsuperscript{27}

Recently, there has been a series of articles demonstrating that there are no benefits from the use of corporal punishment on the child or on the parent-child relation. A recent article by Joan Durrant provides evidence that even mild corporal punishment decreases the quality of the parent-child relationship.\textsuperscript{28}

The periodic surveys conducted in Sweden ask parents about their attitudes towards corporal punishment. At one point, the parents noted that they were only asked if they hit their children and not about any positive things they did, so the surveys started to enquire also what parents do if they do not punish their children. The parents’ responses included the following strategies for solving conflicts with children: distract the child’s attention, make jokes, support good behaviour, calm down and comfort the child, not insulting the child consciously and hugging the child to make him or her able to listen. These responses from parents are not very different from the key messages promoted by positive discipline programmes. According to cognitive-behavioural parenting strategies, alternative disciplining include for instance the following behaviours and approaches: clear rules and expectations appropriate to the child’s age and development; consistent responding; diversion and distraction of younger children; differentiating the child as a person from his or her behaviour; providing the child with behaviour alternatives and encouraging desirable behaviour; parental modelling of self-regulation; separating anger from discipline, and keep the long-term goals in mind.\textsuperscript{29}

The evidence generated by research in Sweden suggests that there is a need for better cooperation between child psychiatry, social services and child protection, the health care sector, the school and researchers in identifying children who are victims of violence and providing them with appropriate support and assistance. It is also important to connect these specific services effectively to the multi-disciplinary and interagency cooperation model of Barnahus. At present, children who are victims of violence are not always followed-up effectively.\textsuperscript{30}

Response and preventive programmes need to target the complexity of these issues and their interrelations. This remains a challenge in Sweden. There are many good interventions and there needs to be a diversity of methods and programmes to choose from, depending on the specific situation and needs of the child and the family. At the same time, these specialised interventions often address single issues that parents and children are facing in isolation and fail to provide a comprehensive set of services to respond to the specific needs of each person involved in a holistic way.\textsuperscript{31}


\textsuperscript{28} Janson, Staffan, \textit{The Swedish Experience – Cooperation between the society and the individual}, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.


The legislation has increased the opportunities for early identification of children at risk, as evidenced by data and research. Due to the measures taken by social services, there has been an increase of the reported cases and this was in fact one of the aims of the legislation. One of the implementation measures after the adoption of the ban, sought to encourage the public to report cases and equip the social workers to respond to these reports in an appropriate way.\footnote{Ingrids, Henrik, The Swedish Work on the Prevention of Violence Against Children, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Presentation, Stockholm, 10 May 2017.}

At the same time, the introduction of the legal ban has not led to an increase of the cases that are prosecuted and taken to court. Only approximately 15\% of the cases of suspected child assault that are reported to the police are prosecuted. There are few studies assessing the rate of convictions in child abuse cases and the existing studies show that there are only convictions in cases where there is clear evidence of the pain inflicted on the child in light of the Criminal Code. There are also no indications of an increase of placements in alternative care of children due to corporal punishment after the ban has been adopted. The rate of children who are placed in alternative care is not higher in Sweden than in other countries, it is rather lower.\footnote{Leviner, Pernilla, The Swedish Ban on Physical Punishment of Children – Legal implications, implementation and challenges, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.}

**Positive experiences and learning from Sweden that could inspire the implementation of the legal prohibition and strategies for changing attitudes and behaviours in other countries:**

- Over a very long time, Sweden has promoted the idea that **children are bearers of human rights**; the experience has shown that it is easier to influence attitudes and behaviour towards children when there is a **high level of awareness in society** of children as bearer of human rights.
- The strong **political consensus on the legal prohibition of corporal punishment** has been important in Sweden as it facilitated the subsequent implementation of the law.\footnote{Jansson, Staffan, The Swedish experience: Cooperation between the society and the individual, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.}
- **Investing in a single massive campaign** that reached all households in the country proved to be successful for disseminating the law, sensitising the people and starting a process for changing attitudes and mindsets with regard to the use of corporal punishment. The budget allocation for the campaign should be part of the law reform process.
- Changing attitudes works by **equalising assaults on children** with assaults on adults.\footnote{Jansson, Staffan, The Swedish experience: Cooperation between the society and the individual, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.}
- **Universal prevention** is an effective approach, as it is not stigmatizing and reaches all parents, for instance through midwifes who are trained to discuss family violence at pregnancy check-ups. Parents tend to listen to the advice from health care professionals.
Family support services are an important part of the welfare state, including parental leave programmes and the provision of early childhood care services, including in day care and pre-schools.\(^3^6\)

A solid understanding of the direct and future risks of child maltreatment can help to sensitise parents, citizens and professionals to the importance of preventing and addressing violence against children in all its forms.\(^3^7\)

A diversity of parenting training programmes are useful to meet the specific needs of each family, including children and parents who are considered to have a particular risk, such as children with disabilities, children and parents with mental health issues or substance abuse problems, and families where intimate-partner violence takes place.

Multidisciplinary and interagency cooperation is essential for the early identification, referral and follow-up to cases of corporal punishment and violence in the home.

The dissemination and implementation of the law needs to rely on the collaborative effort of different state and non-state actors. An active civil society, the academia, Ombudspersons and other independent institutions as well as the media have all an important role in promoting non-violent childhoods.

The role of social services for the implementation of child protection laws

The provision of social services, including child protection and childcare services, falls within the mandate of the municipalities in Sweden, which are responsible to ensure that children grow up safe and secure. When parents are not able to provide for their children, the state must offer protection and support to the child. The social services are responsible for assessing if the child’s needs have been met. They maintain contact with families, plan and design services, deliver services, follow-up and coordinate with other services, including health care and school. The social services play therefore a key role in ensuring the implementation of the legal ban of corporal punishment.\(^3^8\)

In 2017, Sweden has launched a reform of the Social Services Act. An official investigation of the law and its implementation in practice is ongoing and scheduled to last one year. The results will inform the legislative reform. This law reform process is anticipated to address existing challenges for social services to work with children and families where violence, including corporal punishment, occur.\(^3^9\)


The child population in Sweden amounts to approximately 2 million children under 18 years of age. Approximately 32,000 children are in care every year, at some point during the year, and about 55,000 children are needs tested by the social services each year.\footnote{Blomgren, Karin, The Role of Social Services in Family Support and Violence Prevention, Presentation, Ministry of Social Affairs, 10 May 2017.}

Seeking help from the social services is today still considered stigmatising. It would be important to try and change the attitudes in the society towards social services as they play an important role in supporting and protecting children and parents. Universal parental support is crucial in that regard as it helps to lower the threshold for accessing services and enables a non-stigmatising contact, with a strong preventive potential.\footnote{Blomgren, Karin, The Role of Social Services in Family Support and Violence Prevention, Presentation, Ministry of Social Affairs, 10 May 2017.}

Previously, social workers had to inform the parents if a child sought help from social services on his or her own initiative. Today, this has changed and the social workers have the possibility by law to investigate the case over a period of two weeks. In addition to the support from social workers, it is important to activate also the preventive and protective measures that schools can offer, including teachers and school psychiatrists. There should be different possibilities and contact points in place for children to seek help and different groups of professionals identifying incidents and risks of violence and referring children to help.\footnote{Blomgren, Karin, The Role of Social Services in Family Support and Violence Prevention, Presentation, Ministry of Social Affairs, 10 May 2017.}

Experience from the iRiSk Study implemented by the University of Gothenburg\footnote{Development and validation of a risk assessment interview for children exposed to intimate partner violence and child abuse. Project reported 2013-2014, \url{http://psy.gu.se/digitalAssets/1532/1533050_irisk-rapport-2015x.pdf}. Ongoing project: Testing the usefulness and feasibility of structured risk assessments in child protection work. iRiSk – Utveckling av bedömningsinstrument och stödinsatser för våldsutsatta barn [Development of assessment tools and support measures for vulnerable children]. Anders Broberg, Ulf Axberg, Åsa Cater, Maria Eriksson, Ole Hultmann & Clara Iversen. Cited from: Hultman, Ole, Children exposed to intimate partner violence and/or abused – Findings from Swedish research projects in child psychiatry and child protection work, 8 May 2017.} has led the researchers to recommend a rethinking of the methods applied in the case assessments of social workers. In case assessments, social workers commonly pose open-ended questions to children and parents in order not to influence the responses and to allow for a free narrative. The experience with the guided interviews conducted by social workers in the context of the iRiSk study have however shown that it can be valuable to pose also some structured questions that guide social workers and their respondents in gathering the type of information they need for understanding the case, identify specific risks, understand the child’s perspective and planning appropriate support services. The experience and knowledge from child forensic psychology can provide guidance in how to design these structured interview questions without influencing the child’s or the parent’s narrative. Experience of social workers confirms that parents and children tend to appreciate being asked more specific questions. This can help them talk about their concerns and challenges they are facing in parental childcare and child rearing. It can also help overcoming any taboos in talking about aggressions, violence and difficulties in the relationship between parents and children.\footnote{Hultmann, Ole, Children Exposed to Intimate Partner Violence and/or Abused – Findings from Swedish research projects in child psychiatry and child protection work, University of Gothenburg, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.} The experience of the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden reveals that also children who have been exposed to violence would have appreciated to be asked specific questions about their experiences of violence.\footnote{See section on the role of the Ombudsman further below.}
New evidence is suggesting that it could be worthwhile promoting changes also in the approach of psychiatric assessments of children who are referred due to experiences of violence. In the reported cases, there appears sometimes to be a lack of consistency between a lighter form of corporal punishment reported by a child, such as a slap by a parent, and the more severe symptoms that the child is demonstrating. It could therefore generally be important to not limit the case assessment to the most recent incidents in the child’s life but to expand the assessment also to understand and identify if there have been previous and enduring exposures to violence. Studies on poly-victimisation demonstrate that the health of the child deteriorates significantly when a child is exposed to different forms of victimisation, such as one or more form of violence in the home, mobbing or witnessing inter-parental violence. Poly-victimisation is an important factor when it comes to health impact. Currently, social services and child psychiatry are however not yet prepared to identify and address poly-victimisation effectively. In light of these limitations, it would be useful to routinely and systematically inquire about violent experiences both in the family and outside the family. Psychological symptoms should be assessed with standardised questionnaires in the light of previous experiences of violence, especially within child psychiatry and social services. The Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children, for instance, is an assessment tool that should be used when children in child psychiatry or social services have been through traumatic or violent experiences.46

Many practitioners in the social service field and others working with children and families demand or require training that is linked to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention is a starting point for practitioners, researchers and policy makers. There is a need to analyse the application of the Convention and its guiding principles in different areas and to gather the views of children.47

The lessons learned for more effective social work and case assessments suggest the following:

- Prevention could be strengthened if the contact between families and social services becomes natural and non-stigmatising such as the contact to health care services. Children should be enabled to contact social services on their own in order to seek advice.
- Social workers should be trained to have a professional approach in contact with minority groups, including through inter-cultural competence, in order to meet people from different backgrounds at eye-level, listen to their perspectives, inform them, activate their protective capacities and resilience and refrain from moralistic approaches.
- Schools have an important potential to identify cases of violence, including corporal punishment, and school nurses or school psychologists should be in place and trained specifically in this regard. Routine questions about violence exposure is recommended in health examinations, for instance in the context of routine health

46 Hultmann, Ole, Children Exposed to Intimate Partner Violence and/or Abused – Findings from Swedish research projects in child psychiatry and child protection work, University of Gothenburg, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017. Svedin, Carl Göran, Evaluating Research: What do we know and what are the gaps in research on violence against children, Barnafrid, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.
47 Discussions during the National Consultation in Sweden, 8 May 2017.
assessments of school going children made by school nurses in Sweden twice a year (Hälsosamtal).

- **Routine questions about violence** should be implemented in services who are in contact with groups where the risk of family violence is higher compared to the general population, as for instance in social services and child and adolescent psychiatry.

- **Social service assessments** will gather better information about the situations and risks of children and parents if they are guided by a structured interview guide and ask specific questions about violence. Research suggests that parents and children tend to appreciate being asked specifically about violence as this can make it easier for them to disclose.

- Case assessments of children who have experienced violence should seek to explore the child’s story and should not stop short after learning about the most recent exposure to violence. Case assessments and support services need to be sensitive to poly-victimisation, as it increases the mental health impact of children. Children who are exposed to corporal punishment are often also exposed to different other forms of violence in the home, at school and in other settings.

- **A diversity of methods** is needed to support children who have experienced corporal punishment and violence in the home. The methods need to be appropriate for young children, as well as school-age children and adolescents, for children with aggressive behaviour and children who do not want to talk, for children with communication impairments and disabilities, as well as for children who can benefit from group interaction and talking with a therapist.48

### The role of mandatory reporting

In Sweden, any person who works with children and young people is obliged under the Swedish Social Services Act to report cases of violence against children to social services. This reporting obligation applies also to health care and medical staff. The provisions on mandatory reporting make it clear that corporal punishment of children is not a private matter.49

When the social services have become aware of a case where a child needs support or protection, they are obliged to launch an investigation into the child’s situation, circumstances and needs. The BBIC model (“Children’s Needs in Focus”) guides social workers in case assessments and in determining the best interests of a child. It helps them in assessing cases of corporal punishment and making decisions about support measures for the family. In some places, social workers can call the counsellors in the Barnahus (Children’s House) to discuss a case and to decide whether or not to report the case to the police and refer the child to Barnahus. The multidisciplinary and interagency team in Barnahus is well prepared to assess the case, to conduct a forensic interview with the child and to plan for the next steps in pursuing a criminal investigation and/or supporting the child and family with therapy.


49 This section was informed by: Blomgren, Karin, The Role of Social Services in Family Support and Violence Prevention, Presentation, Ministry of Social Affairs, 10 May 2017.
In some cases, it can be in the best interests of a child to be placed in alternative care as a protection measure against violence. The experience in Sweden shows that corporal punishment is rarely the only factor that determines a child’s placement. In many cases, other family conflicts and violence or neglect are supporting the decision on placement. Research has shown that corporal punishment in Sweden is more likely to take place in families that are struggling with many different issues.

Social services are obliged to report cases of violence against children to the police, unless reporting is considered to be not in the best interests of the child. Irrespective of whether the police pursues an investigation in a specific case, the social workers continue working with the child and the family. In cases where a criminal investigation is launched, the case might be referred to a Barnahus, depending on the existing services at the local level.

While mandatory reporting has facilitated the implementation of the legal ban in Sweden significantly, there are also many countries where reporting obligations are not in place or not as clearly regulated as in Sweden. The position in these countries is that the confidentiality allows for a trusted relation between a practitioner, for instance a paediatrician, hospital staff or social worker, and the parents. This can enable professionals and officials to work with the families and support them in developing positive forms of discipline and relationships in childcare and child rearing. In light of this argumentation, attention needs to be given to enable practitioners and other professionals working with families to establish trust, for instance through training or by ensuring they have enough time and resources for establishing a trusted relation in their work with children and parents.

Some practitioners in Sweden observe that it can become difficult to talk with parents about corporal punishment and violence in the home because parents are afraid of being reported to the police. Over the years, this has created obstacles for parents to seek help from social services and has turned the issue of corporal punishment more and more into a social taboo. It is however important that parents feel they can speak openly about aggressions, violence or the risk thereof. That is a starting point for social services to work with the family. The two-stage reporting system in Sweden, where reports are generally made to the social services who decide whether or not to report a case to the police, is appreciated to function well in this regard. It is also considered important that the decision whether or not a case should be reported to the police is in the hands of professionals who are trained and competent to do so.

Studies in Sweden have revealed that the self-reporting and official reporting of cases of violence remains however low. Only 7% of the children who have been beaten by parents have told anyone. Approximately 90% of the cases of violence in the home are not reported to social services or the police. When interpreting national statistics, it is therefore important to consider that growing numbers of reported cases do not necessarily indicate a higher prevalence of violence against children. They could also indicate that a higher number of cases are reported and officially followed up at different levels.

52 Svedin, Carl Göran, Evaluating Research: What do we know and what are the gaps in research on violence against children, Barnfrid, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017. Source of the data: Annerbäck, Eva Maria, Child Physical Abuse, Characteristics, Prevalence, Health and Risk-taking, Linköping University, Medical Dissertations No. 1234.
In Sweden, the mandatory reporting has led to an increased caseload of social workers and law enforcement. There is a risk that this leads to an overload of cases and experience has shown that indeed not all the cases are followed-up effectively due to the overload of public authorities and service providers. The appropriate responses, in policy and administration, to this situation are a matter of debate, including questions concerning the stepping up of staff and resources for working with the reported cases.

**Reflections and lessons learned on mandatory reporting:**

There are different approaches and preferences with regard to professional confidentiality and mandatory reporting in cases of violence against children and corporal punishment. Regardless of the approach chosen in a specific country, mechanisms need to be in place that encourage children to disclose experiences of violence and that ensure they benefit from a functioning referral and protection system that children can rely upon. To this end, children, families, social workers, health care staff and schools need to be informed and equipped with skills and methods on how to react and follow-up to a child’s disclosure and to signs of violence as well as risks.

Professionals working with and for children and parents need to be trained and equipped with sufficient time and resources to be able to build a trusted working relation with children and parents.

Thus far, little attention has been given to the question in which principle ways children should be consulted before an act of violence, including corporal punishment, is reported to the police, and how their views are to be taken into account when determining the best interests of the child with regard to reporting. It may be worthwhile taking this issue up in an academic, political and practical debate.

**The role of Barnahus (Children’s House) in responding to cases of corporal punishment**

In Sweden, there are at present over 30 Barnahus throughout the country that provide multidisciplinary and interagency case assessments and follow-up in cases of children who have experienced violence. The multidisciplinary and interagency team at Barnahus receive cases that are referred by the social services.

In Barnahus Stockholm, the leadership is constituted by one manager each from the police, the social services, the health division and the child psychiatric division. There are in total approximately 70-80 persons involved in Barnahus Stockholm, including 7 coordinators (social

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54 In the Nordic tradition, Barnahus is an integral part of the public child welfare and judicial systems. It is a public institution or body where the relevant services such as child protection, mental health and social welfare services, law enforcement and the judiciary and the medical sector collaborate under one roof. Barnahus is conceived as a model that elicits the child’s testimony and gathers evidence from child victims in a child-friendly environment. Child victims are interviewed by specially trained staff in order to define the needs for social and child protection services, treatment and legal action. If legal action is pursued, the evidence gathered and documented at Barnahus is admissible in court as the procedures involve the relevant sectors and respect fundamental principles of due process and fair trial. Cited in: Council of the Baltic Sea States, Enabling Child-sensitive Justice, The success story of the Barnahus and its expansion in Europe, forthcoming 2017.

55 This section was informed by: Radetzky, Caroline, Stockholm Barnahus – Multidisciplinary work and support for children and their parents in the best interest of the child, Barnahus Stockholm, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.
workers), 50 police officers, 5 child psychologists specialised in trauma, three specialist nurses and three public prosecution offices with approximately 20 prosecutors.

When a case is referred to Barnahus, the multidisciplinary group meets and discusses the history of the child and the family. The main task of the Barnahus team is to coordinate the investigations and the service provision. The social services make the risk and protection assessment. The objective is to understand the perspective of the child, what is best for this child and what needs to be done in follow-up for the child and the parents.

The cases are usually referred to Barnahus by the social services and the social services can consult with the Barnahus team about whether or not to report the case to the police. In some cases, the Barnahus team concludes that it is in the best interests of the child not to do a police report. In most cases, especially when the violence has continued over a long period of time or if the level of violence is very high and severe, it is considered to be in the best interests of the child that the case is reported to the police. After the joint case assessment, the multidisciplinary group can make a recommendation to the social services concerning whether or not the case should be reported to the police, while the responsibility for reporting remains with the social services.

After the multidisciplinary meeting to assess the case, the prosecutor requests the court to appoint a guardian ad litem for the child. The guardian picks up the child at preschool or school and a safety person joins the child, usually the teacher with the closest relation to the child. Bringing the child to Barnahus for a forensic interview without informing the parents beforehand is a sensitive matter. The child is informed about what is happening and why he or she is brought to the Barnahus.

During the forensic interview with the child at Barnahus, the different professionals listen to the interview from the observation room. Listening in helps the social services in making a safety plan for the child in cases where it is in the best interests of the child not to return to the family due to violence. If needed, the child is referred to a forensic medical examination at Barnahus after the interview. The police are responsible for interviewing the parents and any adults involved in the case, which should ideally take place on the same day. After the interview, it is possible for the child and the family to receive crisis support.

In the multidisciplinary cooperation at Barnahus, it is crucial to ensure that the child and his or her interests and needs are always at the centre. The professionals at Barnahus need to organise their cooperation in such a way to ensure that the child’s best interests remain always the primary consideration. The Barnahus staff also talk to the parents about the best interests of the child. They inform the parents that they are at Barnahus because their child needs attention. The services at Barnahus aim to support parents in focusing better on the child, and to ensure the child receives the services he or she needs, either at Barnahus or by referring the child to the right persons or institutions.

After the child has been interviewed at Barnahus Stockholm, there is a possibility to provide parental support for 5 sessions. Subsequently, the parents receive follow-up services by the psychiatric unit (BUP). The experience of Barnahus Stockholm shows that it is good to have a more holistic view of the family situation and to provide services for the child and the parents in a coordinated way. It is important to give the parents space to talk about their own problems, worries and concerns.
Barnahus is working, among others, with the Cognitive Integrated Behavioural Therapy for Child Abuse programme (CPC-CBT, in Swedish KIBB). It is considered a promising model that has been applied for 10 years and is currently being evaluated. KIBB offers a chance for parents who are ready and willing to assume the responsibility for what they have done and to change their ways of acting as a parent. The method is not applied with parents who deny that they have done wrong in using corporal punishment or exposing their child to violence. KIBB is applied with parents who have developed problems with their child and for children who are aggressive and have behaviour problems, and where the parents become helpless or more aggressive or punitive themselves.

A recommendation for the future would be to establish an individual Ombudsman for the children who come to Barnahus. This Ombudsman could have a monitoring function in each case, check how the cases are being handled and observe how the child is being received at Barnahus and followed-up afterwards. The Stockholm University is soon to publish a report that explores the perspectives of children on the services received at Barnahus, how they felt about being at Barnahus and the follow-up support they received.

Reflections and learning with regard to the role of Barnahus in preventing and responding to corporal punishment and violence against children:

- Multidisciplinary and interagency cooperation models such as Barnahus are essential to enable children access to coordinated services, assessments, treatment and justice.
- At Barnahus and otherwise, effective interventions need to address the parent(s) (parenting behaviour) and the children and provide services in a coordinated way.
- Parents who have been exposed to violence and have mental health symptoms benefit as much as the children from services, at Barnahus and otherwise.

The role of the Ombudsman for Children: Listening to children’s recommendations and facilitating their access to social services

The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden works with a method called “Young Speakers”, which can be used for interviews and group discussions with children in different situations. The method is available from the Ombudsman’s website. The core idea of this method is based on the assumption that children are speaking from their own experience, they are the experts and we are there to learn from them. The Ombudsman for Children has conducted many interviews and groups sessions with children, including on the theme of violence. It is important to prepare the engagement of children carefully and to choose the right methods and

56 Barnahus notes that KIBB is a “tool for social workers and health care providers to address the topic of mild to moderate intrafamilial child physical abuse in Sweden. The treatment has shown encouraging results (Kjellgren, Nilsson, Svedin, 2013) and is also linked to ongoing new studies.” Cited in: Linköping University, National Competence Centre in Child Abuse, Ref. No. 3.1-39020/2014, accessed from, http://www.barnahus.se/custom/uploads/2016/03/Linko%CC%88ping-University-Svedin.pdf, p. 5.
59 https://www.barnombudsmannen.se/young-speakers/om-unga-direkt/
approaches for the participating children to express themselves, such as through drama, art, painting, making short films or digital story telling.\textsuperscript{60}

In this way, the Ombudsman has learned from children that they think it takes a good portion of luck to meet a social worker, a judge or other professional who actually listens to them and understands what they are saying. They said that much more could be done in Sweden to protect children better. A lot of children said that they would like to have more access to information, also in school. They would like to access information about their rights, what kind of situations, concerns and problems can be considered "normal", where to get help and whom to call if they need help. As many adolescents are affected by violence, there are many opportunities to reach out to them and empower them to seek help themselves.\textsuperscript{61}

Children expressed also their worries about what could happen once they speak out about violence. They are uncertain of the follow-up and how that will affect the family and their relations to their parents. Children told the Ombudsman that the process that starts when a child reports a crime to the police is very difficult. The uncertainty of the outcome, the few convictions, and the length of the entire process are some of the difficulties that the children pointed out specifically. Another conclusion after listening to children who experienced violence was that children did not believe that the social service were there to help them. Children believed that the social service was for addicts, poor people or adults with social problems. Children’s advice needs to be taken into account more systematically. Children have many important ideas that are relevant for social workers, for instance. Social workers should have courage, to ask children direct questions about experiences of violence. Some children would have appreciated this because they feel it could have helped them to speak out and disclose their experience of violence.\textsuperscript{62}

The children recommended that social workers should inform children and listen to them, ask questions and give support, be sympathetic and put themselves into the children’s shoes. They should also let children be involved in decisions and report directly to the police. A child expressed his/her views as follows: “The social worker should have courage, be thick skinned and not be manipulated. They should take their time and not just want to go home. If needed, pay visits at night without letting anyone know. They should talk to the child alone without anyone else around. They should visit the home and see what it really looks like. Look for signs. Also if you re-locate one child in the family you take everyone, you don’t leave anyone behind.”\textsuperscript{63}

It is therefore important to invest even more in strengthening the knowledge and capacities of social workers, teachers, psychiatrists and other relevant professionals to communicate with children, to listen, and to follow-up in an effective and child-sensitive way. Themes related to violence against children need to be addressed in the standard curricula of the academic and on-the-job training of these professional groups. Despite the good child protection services in Sweden, there is room for improvement and in particular a need to prepare social workers to

\textsuperscript{60} Törneman, Janna, \textit{Listening to Children and Their Recommendations}, Children’s Ombudsman’s Office, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.
\textsuperscript{61} Törneman, Janna, \textit{Listening to Children and Their Recommendations}, Children’s Ombudsman’s Office, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.
\textsuperscript{63} Törneman, Janna, \textit{Listening to Children and Their Recommendations}, Children’s Ombudsman’s Office, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.
be guided by the best interests of the individual child in all their operations involving children and families.\textsuperscript{64}

The Swedish Ombudsman for Children developed the child-friendly website ‘\textit{kollpasoc}\textsuperscript{65}’ in cooperation with children. The website offers information for children on their rights and how to seek help and support in difficult situations. The website is an important channel for communication with children and provides child-friendly information about how to contact social services, the role of social services and the relevant laws, including the legal ban of corporal punishment. The website is targeting also specifically children in institutions as well as children who have just arrived in Sweden from abroad. The website is funded by the National Board of Health and Welfare.\textsuperscript{66}

Surveys with children in Sweden have gathered children’s views about what kind of services they would like to receive when they have been affected by violence. The results reveal that most children like to take part in group programmes. Being part of a group activity feels normal for children as they are used to spend time in different child groups and enjoy activities together with other children. Experience has shown that it is however difficult to establish group programmes for children affected by violence, including corporal punishment, in small cities or rural areas. Thus far, this has worked well in big cities such as Stockholm and Malmö where the population is sufficiently large for running group programmes. It is therefore important to consider the various pros and contras for every programme and to develop responses that are appropriate for the specific context of the children and their parents.\textsuperscript{67}

\textit{Reflections and lessons learned with regard to the active engagement of children in preventing and responding to violence:}

- \textbf{Children want to have access to quality information} on violence prevention. Interactive websites can be useful for children to seek information, to ask questions and seek support.
- Children would like \textit{social workers to provide information and to listen to them, to ask them questions and give support, to be sympathetic} and try to understand the child’s views and situation.
- \textbf{Children would like to be engaged more actively in decision making processes} concerning them.
- \textbf{Group programmes work well for children} who have been exposed to violence in different forms, but tend to be feasible mostly in larger cities.
- \textbf{Professionals need to be trained in communicating with children.} Ombuds Offices for children and researchers can play an important role in consulting with children and communicating their views to professionals and political decision makers.

\textsuperscript{64} Törneman, Janna, \textit{Listening to Children and Their Recommendations}, Children’s Ombudsman’s Office, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.
\textsuperscript{65} \url{https://kollpasoc.se/}
\textsuperscript{66} Blomgren, Karin, \textit{The Role of Social Services in Family Support and Violence Prevention}, Presentation, Ministry of Social Affairs, 10 May 2017.
Support to local social services in implementing national laws

Social services are today under a particular strain, including due to the stark increase of the caseload they have to handle, caused by the high number of unaccompanied children and families who arrived in Sweden as asylum seekers and migrants over the past years. Many of the cases that social services handle are complex and require specialised knowledge and experience, which is not always readily available at the local level, especially in smaller municipalities and rural areas.68

The national government has therefore decided to increase the staff in social services in 2016 and again in 2019. Municipalities can request additional funding from the national state to hire social workers. The objective is to free up time for social workers in social services for children and young persons and enable them to spend more time to engage directly with children and families.

The government also instructed the National Board of Health and Welfare to develop a web-based support platform to support the newly employed social workers. As many social workers appreciate the possibility to seek advice and technical assistance through personal contacts, a national coordinator for social child and youth care has been employed in the Ministry of Health and Welfare for a three-year period. The coordinator is in dialogue with local authorities, provides support for quality development and identifies development needs. The national coordinator is gathering information about good practices and challenges at the local level. The focus is placed strongly on identifying inspiring initiatives that offer solutions to common problems, and to communicate these country-wide. This initiative is also a response to the predominant media attention, which tends to focus on negative examples and difficulties in social services.

Reflections and lessons learned with regard to strengthening social work with children and families:

- **Social workers at the local level appreciate having access to advice**, information and technical assistance from the regional or central level of the state. Access to this type of support can help them doing a better job in promoting non-violent childhoods.
- States need to allocate **sufficient resources to enable social workers to have time to engage directly with children and families**.

Enhancing knowledge and competence in addressing violence against children

In 2016, the Government of Sweden established Barnafriad69, a national knowledge centre addressing violence against children. The centre is established at the University of Linköping, which has traditionally been a leading actor and a hub of competence in this area. The centre is responsible for promoting the cooperation between relevant authorities and service providers, strengthening professional networks for the exchange of experience, including a

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68 This section was informed by: Blomgren, Karin, The Role of Social Services in Family Support and Violence Prevention, Presentation, Ministry of Social Affairs, 10 May 2017.
69 [http://www.barnafrid.se/](http://www.barnafrid.se/)
network of social workers, and to support the government in identifying good practice examples, such as Barnahus, as well as areas for development in improving the prevention of violence against children and appropriate response measures.

Support for children who are victims of violence

The Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority\(^7\) is mandated to act for the needs and rights of crime victims. The authority provides for criminal injury compensation through a state compensation scheme, manages a crime victim fund based on damages claimed from perpetrators in court and administers state compensation for victims of crime, including for children who have experienced crimes or witnessed violence. From the fund, the authority gives grants to NGOs, victims’ organisations and shelters and supports research on crime victims. As a centre of competence, the authority develops and provides information to victims and the general public, organises conferences and seminars and delivers training.\(^7\)

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Act provides that criminal injuries compensation is paid to a child who has witnessed a crime that was apt to impair the child’s sense of security and trust in its relationship with a close related person. Compensation to a child who has witnessed a crime is assessed according to what is reasonable considering the gravity of the crime.\(^7\)

The Authority is governed by the rights of victims as set out in international instruments, including the 2012 EU Victims’ Rights Directive. The Directive includes many important provisions concerning the rights of victims of crime to services, assistance and in proceedings, including for children and other victims who are in a particularly vulnerable position. It affords that protection and support should be based on an individual assessment in each case. The Directive reflects a child-sensitive approach, as expressed in the preamble, which states that child victims should be regarded as full bearers of rights who have the capacity to form their own views. The implementation of the Directive and other international standards relating to the rights of child victims of crime remains demanding and often difficult. The level of national implementation is still poor, in particular for child victims of crime.

The Authority is implementing several projects that are specifically targeting children as victims of violence, including in cooperation with the Ombudsman for Children who supports the Authority in consulting with children. Previous research and programmes have shown that children often do not know their rights and are unaware where to seek help and support when their rights are infringed upon. Many children who have experienced violence cannot disclose to adults. Only when they feel confident with an adult, they can disclose.

The Authority has set up a website with information developed for different age groups of children. The website is entitled Jag Vill Veta (“I want to know”).\(^7\) It informs children, for instance, about how to handle bad secrets, such as something that a friend might have told a child in confidence and that is upsetting or bothering the child. The website informs about violence on the internet and support services for the different counties all over Sweden. There

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\(^7\) https://www.brottsoffermyndigheten.se

\(^7\) This section was informed by: Wergens, Anna, Information and support to children who are victims of violence, Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.

\(^7\) Sweden: Criminal Injuries Compensation Act (2014:322), Section 9.

\(^7\) www.jagvillveta.se
is an educational and informative game on the website for young children. A special target group are children living with special protection measures like a visiting ban for one of the parents.

In order to reach and inform young children (4-7 years), the Authority collaborated with an illustrator and a publisher to develop a children’s book, which was distributed to pre-schools, day care centres, centres for families and victim support. The main character in the book is Liten (Tiny) who experiences a conflict in the home. The illustrations and the story are not very explicit about violence but indicate clearly that something is wrong in the home. The book is about the strategies that Liten finds in difficult situations, for instance to protect one of the adults and to divert attention to something else or to escape.

What came up in the preparations for this book is that it is difficult for children if adults promise something that cannot be fulfilled. In some situations, children might want to rely on the adult they disclose to, to find a solution to their situation or to keep the child’s disclosure confidential. The latter is however not possible when adults are bound by reporting obligations. For this reason, the book remains open ended. The book informs children that there are also other people who are scared in the home, that they are not the only ones experiencing this and that there are adults who can help. It encourages children to tell someone about it.

As a project evaluation revealed that the pre-school teachers or staff are very important for children, the Authority has developed a guidance tool for pre-school staff to help them talk with children about difficult themes, and talk to victimised children and report suspected abuse. The guidance includes a section for children with a number of exercises, which could be used in regular activities in pre-school, for instance when there is time for reading or music.

**Reflections on the rights of children who have experienced violence to access support:**

- **Child-friendly material helps communicating** with children about difficult situations, conflicts and violence in the home, even with very young children.

- **In order to disclose violence, children need a trusted person and a place where they feel comfortable.**

- **Pre-school staff and teachers should be trained to identify children who have experienced violence** as well as children at risk, to respond in an appropriate way to disclosures by children and to ensure the referral and follow-up of the child.

**Parental support programmes**

The goal of the Government of Sweden is to ensure that all parents shall receive different forms of support until the child turns 18 years old. Parental support is understood as an activity that gives parents knowledge about the child’s health and emotional, cognitive and social development, and that strengthens parents’ social networks and relations with each other and their relationship with the child. Strengthening social networks is strategic as it supports parents in everyday life, including in accessing knowledge and information. This is considered particularly important for newly arrived migrants and refugees who do not yet have a social network. The overall objective is to strengthen the health and development of children and protect children from violence, which is harmful for their health and development. This definition of parental support excludes the economic support to parents, which is however also
important for parents and is regulated under different programmes. Parental support includes universal support, which is not stigmatising.\textsuperscript{75}

The government has been implementing a national strategy on parental support, which will be renewed. The strategy foresees that parental support is provided in a proactive way so that parents are not expected to ask for it but are included in a universal way. At the national level, a Family and Parental Support Authority was established in 2015, which is the leading national body in this area and provides knowledge and support for the regional level, as the county governments are responsible to develop their own parental support programmes. In addition to this structure within the public administration, the NGOs have an important role in developing and implementing parental support programmes.\textsuperscript{76}

The national strategy foresees also a range of activities in order to include families that are considered difficult to reach. They include local initiatives such as home visits by midwives that are conducted in cooperation with social workers. The purpose is that two persons from the social services come along to the first home visits, so they can introduce themselves and invite the parents to contact them if there are any problems. This approach has proved effective in reaching families with very young children as parents tend to listen to the advice of medical staff, such as midwives, and are more open to follow that advice.\textsuperscript{77}

There is a wealth of parental support and parenting training programmes that state agencies and service providers can choose from. Some of these programmes have been evaluated and are considered to be evidence based. When selecting a programme, it is important to have a look at the criteria that were used for the evaluation and the approach of the programme itself. Not all the programmes that are considered evidence based are also sensitive to children’s rights and needs. For the implementation of the legal prohibition of corporal punishment, it would be recommendable to promote parenting training and support programmes that are child rights-based, prevent violence and reflect the ethos of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.\textsuperscript{78}

The main parenting programmes that are in use in Sweden include the following: The Circle of Security (COS) promotes attachment, self-regulation and social competence. The International Child Development Programme (ICDP) promotes positive development, prevents mental health problems and promotes parental skills. The Incredible Years promotes and treats behaviour problems. The Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting (PDEP) promotes children’s rights, healthy development and effective parenting. The Communication Method (KOMET) promotes communication, relation and safety and reduces conflicts. The programmes Circle of Security, and the International Child Development Programme are very broadly spread and used in Sweden. In addition, also the Incredible Years programme is applied, although it is used more in Norway, Estonia and Denmark. Joan Durrant’s programme has spread a bit in Sweden. It is the only parenting training programme that explicitly aims to prevent violence and focuses on this matter. The other programmes are more general and

\begin{thebibliography}
\item Munkelt, Jenny, \textit{Strategic Work With Parenting Support}, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Presentation, Stockholm, 10 May 2017. \textsuperscript{75}
\item Munkelt, Jenny, \textit{Strategic Work With Parenting Support}, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Presentation, Stockholm, 10 May 2017. \textsuperscript{76}
\item Munkelt, Jenny, \textit{Strategic Work With Parenting Support}, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Presentation, Stockholm, 10 May 2017. \textsuperscript{77}
\item Munkelt, Jenny, \textit{Strategic Work With Parenting Support}, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Presentation, Stockholm, 10 May 2017. \textsuperscript{78}
\end{thebibliography}
contribute to violence prevention, although it is not that outspoken or directly addressed in the programmes.  

The experience with parenting training programmes in Sweden has shown that despite the wealth of available programmes, the choice of programmes is not always adequate for all target groups and specific needs. In general, it would be important to provide for clear guidance in how to match parents’ needs with the most suitable programme for them.  

An area where more specific training could be useful is the parenting training in preventing violence, including corporal punishment, with very young children. At the same time, the programme developed by Joan Durrant is known and appreciated for being so comprehensive and child-centred that it could be applied for any context and any target group, irrespective of the national and socio-cultural context or the background of the participating parents. This universality derives from the fact that the programme is strongly based on children’s rights and needs and trains parents in establishing a positive, nurturing and respectful relationship with their children and generally trains on violence prevention, which helps managing conflicts of any nature. Due to the comprehensiveness, the programme has a certain volume, which may be too lengthy for some contexts and cases. Some of these programmes are however costly and especially for professional trainers, the participation in train the trainer courses is not always easily accessible and affordable.

Reflections and lessons learned on parenting training programmes:

- It is important to provide for a matching of parents and the most appropriate training programme to meet their needs.
- The choice of available programmes needs to be appropriate for the diverse needs in the population.
- Parenting training programmes that have been evaluated positively should be prioritised and the evaluations should be guided by a child rights-based approach.
- Training needs to be available and accessible for parents. Training on how to deliver parenting training programmes and specific methods has to be made accessible for relevant professional groups.
- Sweden has made good experience with developing a national strategy on parenting training that is being periodically updated.

Preventing violence against children with disabilities

The Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have criticised Sweden for the limited availability of data concerning the rights and situations of persons with disability. The recommendations received from these Treaty Bodies

79 Norlén, Anna, Overview of Preventive Programmes and Initiatives – Experiences from clinical treatment for children exposed to violence and abuse, Ericastiftelsen, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.
80 Norlén, Anna, Overview of Preventive Programmes and Initiatives – Experiences from clinical treatment for children exposed to violence and abuse, Ericastiftelsen, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.
81 Norlén, Anna, Overview of Preventive Programmes and Initiatives – Experiences from clinical treatment for children exposed to violence and abuse, Ericastiftelsen, Presentation, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.
point to the need to develop research and statistics, gather disaggregated data, strengthen national strategies and improve the level of information and knowledge in this area.\footnote{This section was informed by: Velander, Christina, \textit{Preventing Violence Against Children With Disabilities}, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Presentation, Stockholm, 10 May 2017.}

In 2016, the Swedish Government commissioned research into the prevalence of violence against children with disabilities. The study revealed that children with disabilities or chronic diseases are twice as much exposed to bulling as other children. Physical maltreatment of children with disabilities occurs principally at home, while bullying takes place at school or online. A survey with a non-representative sample of 20-year olds with disabilities revealed that 15\% reported to have been beaten, kicked or experienced other forms of violence by their parents while growing up. The reasons for this are considered to be connected to the higher levels of stress that parents of children with disabilities are facing in daily lives, the taboo to talk about these matters between parents and professionals. There is still a need for more research in this area, including with regard to different types of disabilities of children. Very little information is available about children with severe disabilities, including communication disabilities, and to what extent they are exposed to violence or corporal punishment, and in general the available data are barely disaggregated by gender.

The Ministry of Health and Welfare commissioned the National Board to explore the situation concerning the support for parents with children with disabilities. The Board has been tasked to gather information on what kind of support these parents need and to develop concrete recommendations on the types of services required for this group and how different agencies and service providers need to cooperate to this end. Experience has shown that parents of children with disabilities have to be in contact with many different authorities and that creates a certain level of stress, which is not helpful.

At school, there are two parallel approaches concerning children with disabilities. While there are special schools for some groups of children, for instance children who cannot hear, other children are included into mainstream schools. Experience has shown that these children are however not always effectively included in all school activities and remain excluded in particular from the sports classes. This creates deficits that parents often have to make up for and which can further increase the stress level of parents.

Through this research and other activities, the Ministry of Health and Welfare has gained a good understanding of the challenges in ensuring nonviolent childhoods for children with disabilities, which need to be addressed in the near future. What is known is that the stress for parents of children with disabilities is very high so the children are considered to be in a situation of risk of being beaten or abused. Professionals find it often difficult to address the topic of violence with parents of children with a disability, due to the taboo attached to the matter. There is also a need for more information and more education on violence prevention, the rights of children to grow up free from violence, inter-personal relations and information about sexual reproductive health specifically for children with disabilities. The existing educational material for children with disabilities needs to be modernised. In addition, it would be important to ensure that strategies, preventive measures and studies on children generally include a disability perspective. There is a need for information and further education for adults who get in contact with children with disabilities: parents, professionals in schools, the medical and social care systems and the legal professions. Those who are trained specifically to work
with children with disabilities need to acquire knowledge about violence against children, including through the standard training curricula and on the job training.

The Swedish Inheritance Fund as well as the County Administrative Board in the county of Östergötland have funded some projects in this area, for example projects combating violence and oppression in the name of honour. The Swedish Inheritance Fund supports civil society organisations with approx. 600 million SEK annually (approx. 61.5 Euro) including for supporting parents in preventing violence against children. One of these projects (TRIS) is targeting children and youth with intellectual disabilities and provides a tool for professionals to facilitate the communication with the children and youth and helping them to express what kind of violence they have experienced.83

An important institution at the national level to promote the rights of persons with disability, including children, is the Agency for Participation84. The agency's mandate is to promote the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Sweden, to monitor the developments, initiate research, propose methods and guidance, and to ensure other necessary follow-up in this area, including the periodic reporting to the Convention's Treaty Body.

Reflections on non-violent childhoods for children with disabilities:

- **Children with disabilities are known to be at a high risk** of experiencing corporal punishment and violence.
- **Parenting support programmes** need to be in place specifically for parents of children with disabilities.
- **Violence against children with disabilities is an under-researched area** in Sweden where more data and analysis are needed in order to develop better prevention programmes.

Preventing men’s violence against women and the child rights implications

In 2016, the government of Sweden presented a communication on a new gender policy and, in this context, is currently drafting a strategy on preventing and combating men’s violence against women and violence in close relationships. The strategy pursues the overall objective that men’s violence against women must stop and that women, men, boys and girls must have the same rights. The strategy is strongly considering the child rights implications in this area.85

The strategy includes four main objectives, which shall guide all government actions in this area for the next 10 years. It provides for measures for implementation and follow-up and part of that is the setting up of a new government agency for gender equality as of 2018. The strategy provides for the development of an action plan for the years 2017-2020, which includes tasks for the state agencies, government inquiries and grants for civil society organisations.

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84 [http://www.mfd.se/other-languages/english/](http://www.mfd.se/other-languages/english/)
85 This section was informed by: Florin, Öla, _Preventing Men’s Violence Against Women and the Child Rights Implications_, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Presentation, Stockholm, 10 May 2017.
As the strategy covers all stages of life, it includes girls and boys and there is a direct overlap with child rights issues that are dealt with by other departments and other sectors. The objective is to ensure that children’s rights, in particular the right to grow up free from violence, are always considered in the context of the strategy and its implementation.

Men’s violence against women is defined as psychological, physical and sexual violence, violence in the name of honour, trafficking and commercial exploitation of the female body, including in the media, in pornography and advertisement, and prostitution and trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The scope of application is broad, as the strategy considers that some of these phenomena include men as victims or adversely affected by this violence as well as women as perpetrators. While the strategy recognises that men’s violence is specifically targeting women and violence affecting women is typically perpetrated by men, it does not exclude violence committed by others and may include women’s violence against men or women and violence by or against persons who do not identify as women or men.

The strategy considers vulnerability related to different life situations and circumstances and the complexity of the lives of people. The objective is to address masculinity and any behaviour that violates the integrity of women and girls, and to engage men and young boys more systematically in violence prevention.

The strategy has four overarching objectives: 1) Universal prevention by targeting broad groups of the population even where violence has not yet been confirmed as well as specific prevention measures with target groups that are known to be particularly at risk of violence. 2) Improved identification, protection and support for persons at risk and persons who are affected by violence. 3) More effective crime control measures. 4) Improved knowledge and development of methods to achieve the other objectives.

A particular interest with the strategy is also to improve the communication and participation of children in preventing and responding to violence. Evidence and knowledge have shown that authorities may not properly investigate what children think, how they perceive the problems they are confronted with and how they would like to solve them. In responses to domestic violence and intimate partner violence, children are often considered as an appendix to the parent. There are at present also no statistics in the social services area of interventions due to intimate partner violence or domestic violence and how children have been supported specifically in these situations. Possible ways for addressing this issue and creating specific statistics in this area are currently being explored and would require law reform.

The strategy promotes a stronger attention to the rights and interests of children in certain situations related to gender-based violence. One of these areas aims to strengthen the child rights perspective in shelters and safe houses: The majority of the persons hosted in Swedish shelters today are children, they are most often staying at the shelters together with their mothers. In many cases, the social workers have however not assessed properly the needs of the children with regard to help and support. A government inquiry is currently looking into how the rights and interests of the children in the shelters can be safeguarded. For the Non-Violent Childhoods project, it could be interesting to connect with this work. There are positive experience in this area from other Nordic countries. Denmark, for instance, was the first of the Nordic countries to make it legally mandatory that children’s needs are assessed when
referred to a shelter with an adult. The commission conducting the Swedish inquiry will visit Denmark, as well as Norway, in order to learn from this experience.

**Reflections on the child rights implications of policies related to gender equality and gender based violence:**

- Responses to domestic violence and intimate-partner violence are often focused on the adult victims. The experience from Sweden shows that the children are often overlooked in this context and important opportunities for support and prevention are missed. The *communication with children and their participation in programmes targeting parents as victims of violence has to be strengthened.*

- *Children who are staying in shelters together with a parent need to be assessed and supported specifically.* There is a need for a more specific child rights approach in support programmes for parents affected by violence.

- The *prevention of violence against children* and promotion of non-violent childhoods is an area that *needs to be integrated into all relevant political planning and programming processes.*

**Difficulties in talking about corporal punishment: Preventing it from becoming a taboo**

Almost 40 years after its enactment, the legal ban of corporal punishment has achieved a high level of awareness and cultural change in Sweden with regard to the way children are treated and considered as rights holders and members of the society. The change that the Swedish society has gone through is one of the most notable change processes in the country’s history. The social support for non-violent childhoods is perceived to be so strong, that there are indications that it becomes almost a taboo to speak about aggressions and violence in the family and in the home. For children and parents alike, there is shame associated with any thoughts or acts of violence towards children or between the parents. The taboo might have developed when the Swedish society and state moved towards a zero tolerance to corporal punishment. This development is posing some challenges and obstacles in addressing corporal punishment and violence against children.86

When social workers get in contact with migrant and asylum seeking families, there are less such taboos specifically concerning the use of corporal punishment and it can in some cases be easier to talk about violence in the family.87

**Reflections on preventing violence against children becoming a social taboo:**

There is a need for *new approaches to overcome any taboos* associated to corporal punishment and violence against children in order to encourage a more open dialogue in society about the prevention of corporal punishment. Inspiration could be found in other areas


87 Discussion during the Swedish Consultation for the Non-Violent Childhoods Project, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.
where social taboos had to be overcome, for instance with regard to violence in the name of honour, or persons with psycho-social disabilities who broke the taboo by talking themselves about their challenges. The approach to provide universal parental support programmes can also be helpful in overcoming the social taboo, and strengthening the role of the health care sector in informing and supporting parents and directing them to sources of support. Where

**Parenting helplines** offer support, despite the difficulties of talking about corporal punishment and irrespective of any taboos, and provide a possibility for parents to seek information, advice and support in an anonymous and confidential way, to ask questions without fearing stigmatisation.

The dialogue between parents, social workers, researchers and other professionals should remain open and active. It is important to **encourage an open discussion about risks of violence, including corporal punishment**, in the home as well as **alternatives and positive strategies that parents use** in relation to their children.

**Promoting non-violent childhoods among immigrants and asylum seekers: New challenges in a less homogeneous society**

When the prohibition of corporal punishment was enacted into law in 1979, there was a strong political consensus across all political parties and the population behind this law reform. At the time, Sweden had a very homogeneous population, which is no longer the case today. The achievements of the Swedish society to reduce and prevent corporal punishment of children need to be sustained in light of the changing social environment and high numbers of migrants and asylum seekers arriving in the country from different places all over the world. Today, the knowledge, reflections and level of awareness in Sweden needs to be reconsidered and presented in a new way in order to reach also the newly arrived children and parents. It requires learning and adaptation not only from the new citizens but also from Swedes and professionals working with and for parents and families. The zero tolerance approach that has established itself in Sweden needs to be adopted also by the new population groups.89

There is generally a difference in working with families from the Nordic countries and families coming from other parts of Europe and the world. Social workers take different approaches in their contacts with families from abroad. Some state that they stick exactly to the same methods and procedures they apply with Swedish and Nordic families and this has advantages in the case assessment process as it helps ensuring that the child remains in the centre of the attention. In order to identify and end violence against children in families from other regions of the world, there may however be a need for different strategies and approaches. This constitutes a huge challenge for social workers today as they need to understand how they can treat persons in a different way in order to prevent discrimination and exclusion, in order to achieve the same results and while remaining fully in compliance with the national law.

There are in fact at least three different reasons why it is likely that children in migrant and asylum seeking families have a higher risk of being exposed to corporal punishment and

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89 This section was informed by the discussions during the Swedish Consultation for the Non-Violent Childhoods Project, Stockholm, 8 May 2017.
violence. This may be the case due to different cultural ideas, a different understanding of childhood, and because the parents are often affected by war and disasters and suffer additional high levels of stress due to matters related to their immigration status and trauma.

Many families arrive in Sweden from societies where there is a higher level of social tolerance towards violence in the family, it may be legal and common to hit children in families and it may also be legal and socially condoned for men to hit their wives. There may be imbalances in the power relations between men and women, adults and children. Violence in the name of honour needs to be discussed, understood and addressed as one of the forms of violence and risks that children in the migrant and asylum seeking population are particularly affected by.

Today, newly arrived persons are mostly informed about the ban of corporal punishment but they are not necessarily trained on positive discipline and parent-child relations. There remains therefore a gap in equipping the newly arrived families with skills, knowledge and methods for positive parenting.

_ Inspiring example in reaching out to migrant and asylum seeking youth for violence prevention and support:_

Many municipalities or county councils in Sweden are operating youth clinics. These youth clinics have started to working with migrant and asylum seeking youth specifically. Together, they have created a web-based youth clinic, which is administered by the county council in Stockholm. All the information on youth clinics is available online in the five most important languages of asylum seekers. Together with the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, the youth clinics will develop training courses linked to this website. There is also a need to adapt the information to the needs of the migrants and asylum seekers to make sure everyone has access to the same type and quality of information.90

**The Church of Sweden promoting non-violent childhoods in a largely secular society**

The Swedish Church is an Evangelical Lutheran church and the main religious congregation in Sweden. Approximately 70-80% of the Swedish citizens are members of the Swedish Church, mostly persons of Swedish origin who were born in Sweden, so the membership is a largely homogeneous social group. The Church of Sweden promotes the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in many different ways. All decisions that are taken within the Swedish Church, from the level of the Archbishop through to the local level of the parishes, must be analysed for their consequences on children.91

Within the parish, there are several ways of working with families and parents: the priest, the deans and the pedagogues or teachers have all their specific roles in this. Most parishes offer counselling for parents and individuals and there are usually networks for family counselling in large parishes. The large parishes would usually employ family counsellors and the dean is the head of this family counselling network. Most parishes offer an open space for new parents to meet one another while they are on parental leave. In these open spaces, the new parents

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91 This section was informed by: Helena Hahr Kamienski, Svenska Kyrkan (Swedish Church), 10 May 2017.
get together and discuss specific themes. There are often also children’s groups where children meet and talk about the Christian faith, and different groups for children with special needs, such as matters related to drug abuse, mental health issues or abuse. The resources to finance this work are from within the church budget. The family counselling bureaus of the parishes can also apply for funding from the municipality, as other service providers do.

The church and the parishes can offer a neutral space for parents to seek advice. The counselling with the priests offers confidentiality and privacy. Some people seek counselling from the priest even if they are not regular church goers. In Swedish society, the priest stands for moral values and is considered a trusted figure. The confidentiality of the meeting with the priests can help parents to speak openly about matters of aggression and violence, including corporal punishment, in the family.

Many deans support children and families, for instance they could accompany a family to the social worker when there are problems. The deans are trained, competent and knowledgeable in child protection matters but is not part of the official child protection system, although they are linked with it and participate in it. The deans have an advantage as they are not part of the bureaucracy of the public child protection system and have more freedom in how they manage their time in contact with community members. The deans are obliged to report to social workers if they get to know about a case of violence against a child.

The parishes work also with youth groups and these youth groups are organised in the Swedish Church Youth (Svenska Kyrkan Unge). Many youth groups have their own boards and can organise themselves and decide what to discuss and which themes to work with. They do discuss nonviolence, including at the level of the Diocese and at the national level.

The organisation Swedish Church Youth (Svenska Kyrkan Unge) is closely connected to the Church of Sweden. It is represented in the relevant national networks concerning child protection and children’s rights. In addition to the Swedish Church, the Organisation of Swedish Churches is an umbrella organisation for all the Christian churches in Sweden. There is also an inter-faith network, which is growing and getting more and more important.

**Reflections with regard to the role of the church in promoting non-violent childhoods:**

- The employees of the church can play an important role in **providing a neutral space and support for families and children in the parishes**. They share many important skills and capacities with the social services without being confined by the same level of bureaucracy. This frees up time for engaging with children and families, offering support and mediation and facilitating the contact with and referral to the formal child protection system.
Campaigning and use of social media

As part of the Non-violent Childhoods project and during the Swedish consultation, different campaign ideas were discussed. These ideas will be elaborated during the upcoming other national consultations and during the expert meetings.92

One of the first ideas was to identify well-known persons in each country and engage them as ambassadors for non-violent childhoods. These ambassadors and others could be photographed holding up hand-written signs and have their photos posted on social media, including Instagram and snapchat.

Webinars are built into the project that could later on be used as part of the social media campaign. Among the challenges discussed was the question of how to reach risk groups without stigmatising them. A possible solution is to engage and target teenagers, without any distinctions, before becoming parents.

In addition to campaigning for the focus themes of the Non-Violent Childhoods initiative, it will also be important to advocate with national partners to ensure the follow-up to this project.

Campaign examples and ideas:

- The story-telling approach is an effective way for campaigning and for engaging children in the development of campaigns. The method can be designed in a child-sensitive way and can be adapted to many different contexts and needs. Participating in story-telling activities can also be fun for the children who take part in this exercise. Research has shown that key messages are conveyed more effectively through the story-telling approach than simply by communicating information, as they succeed to communicate information in combination with emotions that the audience can directly relate to.

- The Council of Europe has developed a database of campaign material that can be consulted for the development of campaign ideas and approaches.93

- Key messages could be communicated through a children’s book, using the Swedish example of “Liten” (“Tiny”) as an inspiration, which has been developed by the Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority in cooperation with a publisher and an illustrator.94

- You Tube stars could be engaged as ambassadors, although this could potentially be sensitive if any issues about the person come to the public later on that might be in contradiction with the messages conveyed.

- It could be useful to develop internet-based campaigns.

Partnership with the private sector:

- Campaigns could be developed in partnership with the private sector, wherever this appears appropriate and feasible. An example is the campaign developed by Save the Children in Latin America against hitting children with flip-flops (sandals), where

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92 This section was informed by Helena Lindemark, 2022 Initiative, Tríona Lenihan, Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, Turid Heiberg, Shawnna von Blixen, Marlene Riedel and Daja Wenke, Non Violent Childhoods Project, Council of the Baltic Sea States.


94 See: https://www.jagvillveta.se/Bilder/Filer/Liten_140901.pdf.
messages were written on the shoes. Other examples of private sector involvement in child rights campaigns include the Body Shop’s campaign against sexual exploitation of children and UNICEF Egypt’s collaboration with a well-known Egyptian jewellery designer.

- Products that many children get in contact with and where messages could be printed are ice-cream or candy bags.

**Partnership with the health sector:**

- Health insurance companies or health care agencies could be important partners for campaigns as they might have an interest in supporting or leading a campaign for non-violent childhoods. In Sweden, for instance, Scandia and Trygg Hansa could be contacted.

- Key messages and short articles could be disseminated through health-focused newsletters or printed in health-related magazines, as for instance those that are available from pharmacies.

**Partnership with service providers:**

- Specialised organisations that are in contact with parents who have substance abuse or mental health problems would be important partners for developing campaigns that reach specifically these groups.

**Partnership with artists, musicians and the media:**

- Animations could be useful, especially if they work with gender and colour neutral figures, with a voice over, where you don’t see the character’s mouth moving. To do that, it would be important to get an illustrator on board to do the drawings and to get famous voices for the animation.

- Popular song writers and singers could be invited to compose songs that address themes related to non-violent childhoods.

- Universities and institutes that teach media, movie making and theatre and their students could get involved to produce short videos or movies and theatre workshops.

- If children participate in making a video- or theatre-based campaign, they might also get involved in the final conference either personally or by screening their production.
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Non-violent Childhoods - Moving on from corporal punishment in the Baltic Sea Region

www.childrenatrisk.eu/nonviolence

The Baltic Sea Region is fast becoming a no-corporal-punishment zone for children as 10 out of 11 countries have prohibited corporal punishment by law. Sweden was the first country in the world to enact a legal ban in 1979; Finland achieved prohibition in 1983 and Norway in 1987. The other Nordic and Baltic countries followed; Denmark in 1997, Latvia in 1998, Germany in 2000, Iceland in 2003, Poland in 2010, Estonia in 2015 and Lithuania adopted a legal ban in February 2017. While law reform was a milestone achievement in each country, it marked also the starting point of a seminal process to bring the ban from law into practice. The region combines countries with over 30 years of experience with implementing the legal ban and countries just embarking on this route to ensure childhoods free from violence.

The Non-Violent Childhoods initiative draws on the outstanding commitment and leadership of change makers in the Baltic Sea Region. They include public officials, service providers and practitioners, researchers, advocates, independent institutions and citizens, including children and young people as well as parents, guardians and caretakers, faith-based organisations and the media.

The overall objective of the Non-Violent Childhoods initiative is to promote the full implementation of the legal ban of corporal punishment through collaborative, multistakeholder planning and action in the Baltic Sea Region. The initiative raises awareness of the harmful impact of corporal punishment and highlights good practices in changing attitudes and behaviours for children to grow up free from violence.

During May and June 2017, the first national consultations were convened in Sweden and Finland. National consultations will also take place in Latvia (9–11 October 2017), Estonia (15–17 November 2017) and Poland (29 November – 1 December 2017). In addition, a series of thematic expert consultations will be convened in the first half of 2018.
The combined learning from this consultative process informs the development of a set of guidance material for parents, children, practitioners, advocates and policy makers. Each guidance material is focused on a specific theme and target group:

1) The communication of the legal prohibition of corporal punishment in the home in order to raise awareness of the legal ban as a preventive and educational measure rather than a law aimed at criminal investigations and proceedings;

2) Communication and campaigns related to the legal prohibition of corporal punishment with the aim to sensitise the population, practitioners and political decision makers to non-violent childhoods;

3) Parenting programmes and non-violent discipline options for parents; and

4) Guidance for service providers in different fields such as health, education and social services.

Based on the experience in the Baltic Sea Region, the guidance will convey key messages and best practices with global relevance. A general guide for the implementation of the legal ban of corporal punishment will be prepared in order to provide more comprehensive guidance on measures for bringing the national laws into practice.

The Non-Violent Childhoods initiative is coordinated by the Children at Risk Unit at the Council of the Baltic Sea States in collaboration with the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children. The project partners are the Ministry of Social Affairs in Estonia, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in Finland, the Ministry of Welfare in Latvia and the Ombudsman for Children’s Rights in Poland as well as the Coordination on the Rights of the Child in the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in Sweden. The project is implemented with the expertise of a reference group with the participation of the Council of Europe, Save the Children Sweden and the Swedish Institute alongside national experts, Ombudsoffices for Children, Chancellors of Justice and other human rights structures. Representatives and experts from all the countries in the Baltic Sea Region, including children, will be involved in the project. The outcomes of the initiative will be presented at a European conference at the end of 2018.