



Joint Committee on Human Rights

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From Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP, Chair

Pauline Latham MP

Member of Parliament for Mid Derbyshire

24 November 2021

Dear Pauline,

On behalf of the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR), I wanted to congratulate you on the introduction of, and progress on, the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill.

As you are aware, the JCHR examines matters relating to human rights within the United Kingdom and scrutinises Bills for their compatibility with human rights.

The marriage of a person under the age of 18 is child marriage. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommends that there should be no legal way for anyone to marry before they turn 18, even if there is parental consent. In 2016, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child made the following recommendation in respect of the UK: "The Committee recommends that the [UK] raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years across all devolved administrations, overseas territories and Crown dependencies".¹ The UN sustainable development goals require all countries to "eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations by 2030".² We do note that the Bill extends to England and Wales, and that such laws would remain in place in Scotland and Northern Ireland absent legislative changes in those jurisdictions.

The JCHR therefore welcome this Bill, which is a positive step in protecting children's human rights and in furthering compliance with international human rights standards prohibiting child marriage.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP

Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights

cc. Tom Pursglove MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Home Office and Ministry of Justice

¹ [UNCRC concluding observations in respect of the UK](#), 2016, paragraph 20.

² [UN Sustainable Development Goal Target 5.3](#)