

Submitted to DCSF Review of Section 58 as part of the NSPCC's response.
August 2007.

Children and young people's voices on physical punishment

“It just shouldn’t happen. They don’t deserve
it.”

Girl aged 14

These pieces of work were produced by children and young people working with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and the Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE) between 2005 and 2006. The children and young people involved were aged between 10 and 18 years, and came from a diverse range of settings including schools, youth groups, young offenders institutions and NSPCC services from across England. They were contributing to the United Nations Secretary General's Global Study on Violence Against Children.

For the poetry and statements contained in the first section the children and young people involved were provided with a blank template and asked to express their views on any type of violence. The pieces that form this collection of work have been drawn from those children and young people who chose to express their views and feelings on the issues relating to physical punishment.

The second section contains a series of quotations from children and young people who completed a questionnaire for the UN Study on Violence Against Children. The collection powerfully expresses children and young people's views on the issue of physical punishment.

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1. Young people's voices: poetry and statements

I think that violence against children is a terrible thing and no one should be allowed to do it. I know that parents think hitting their children is a good way of making children do the right thing, but it makes children think of their parents as a scary person, not a loving person. Parents take their anger and stress out on their children and should learn to stop.

Boy in Year 6

VIOLENCE IN THE HOME

Violence to kids should be banned,
First it's a push then a whip of the hand,
Leaving scars on their faces,
Visible bruises in all different places.

Sometimes the hits can be extremely hard,
They can leave you physically and emotionally scarred.
The abuse they receive plays on their mind,
So when disciplining your child, leave the violence behind.

Group of girls and boys

Violence is a crime and police do hardly anything to prevent this act from happening. Some adults just smack their children and some severely beat them, but, whatever deed they do, if it leaves a mark, it's still against the law.

I think that abuse should not happen, in whatever form it takes. If the attackers put themselves in the child's position, they might realise not to hit them.

Anon in Year 6

Children cry, we wonder why.
Children die, we wonder why.

They're prisoners in their own homes,
Always home alone.

They get beaten with a fist or leg
As the child pleads for mercy and begs.
Children should have a right to say stop!

On the TV we see adverts to make us aware, but does
anyone listen?
Children should have the right to be free from violence.

Anon

I think hitting children is bad because when you hit your children, they can grow up thinking it is alright to hit, and when they have children, they will hit and hurt them. The parents could also get themselves into trouble and go to prison. Also, when children get hit, it is down to parents being stressed and taking it out on the children.

Anon

Why smack your children
When they won't obey?
Discipline is the only way.
Tell them off,
That might work.

Why hurt your children?
You're meant to love them!
Even if it doesn't hurt,
Don't you think they'll do it again?

Why hurt your children
When they won't obey?
Discipline is the only way.

Girl aged 11

Dear Teddy

Teddy, she hit me hard, she called me names, she told me I'm really bad and I should be ashamed. I said, "I love you, mummy", but she didn't understand. She just said, "Shut your mouth."

Teddy, I wish you were real and not just a teddy, then you could help me to tell all mummies how sad it makes us feel.

Because the outside pain goes away, but the inside never heals.

Girl aged 11

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Hurt
Young People
Sick
Intimidating
Anger
Important
Aggressive
Bullying
Understanding
Scars
Emotions

Girl

There once lived a boy and a father. The father kept hitting the boy if he did something wrong. The boy cried and cried after each hit.

One day the boy was sitting on a log when a fairy appeared. She asked what was wrong and the boy told. The fairy disappeared and reappeared at the boy's house. The fairy went to find the father. She found him and took him to the future and showed what will happen and returned to the past.

The father now learnt a lesson and what not to do. So never hit your children or something horrible will happen to the future.

Boy in Year 6

Violence Against Children

... Parents can sometimes lose their temper on their kids for no reason. When parents have a bad day, sometimes the blame goes on their children and they can lose their temper. I hope these problems with violence will be over in the future.

Boy in Year 6

No longer can I bear this pain,
It's been too long, I'm going insane.
I feel like I'm all alone,
I can't tell anyone, not even moan.
Even though I smile and hide my pain,
In my mind there is still rain.
There is still pressure and sadness,
There is nothing to smile about, no happiness.
When I go out, I hide my tears,
When I go back home, a black screen appears.
The black screen symbolises my pain,
Fearing the pain of my dad's cane.
I need help to stop bullying,
To stop this hurting and suffering.

Girl aged 13

It just shouldn't happen. They don't deserve it.

Girl aged 14

I hate violence against children.
Adults forget
That they were children once.
It hurts them, I bet.

There's no need for violence against children.
How dare they!
Just tell us off
And get on with your day.

It's horrible, violence against children.
Can't people see
It's hurting children,
It's hurting me!

I hate it, there's no need, it's horrible,
Violence against children.
Do you always want to see them cry?
So for the sake of the children,
Stop, please try!

Girl aged 11

I think that violence against children is wrong. I understand that some people might say that hitting children makes them stop being naughty, but it actually doesn't! Children are very stubborn and if you do something that makes them upset, to stop them being naughty, they keep on being naughty!

When you are violent towards children, they are not just mentally hurt but also sociologically. Children get very disturbed and that reflects in what they do. They don't concentrate at school or at anything else. They are sort of in their own little world, doing their own things. Violence ruins a child's future, violence ruins everything! Violence should be stopped by us – now, not in the future!

Girl aged 11

What's the point of hitting a child? It doesn't change what they may have done wrong! How can people feel good about themselves when they have made a child so unhappy? And how is a child meant to speak out when they are so scared of getting hurt? I think it's time we made a stand! Millions of people can have children and the ones who can do this! What is wrong with the world we live in? How can we make a change?

Girl aged 15

Once, when I saw violence, I just watched in silence. After,
I would feel sad and bad and wish I could have helped that
young lad from being threatened and beaten to his feet.
Oh, I wish I could have helped that young lad.

Boy in Year 6

Hi! I'm Emily and I am ten years old. Every night my dad comes into my room, very drunk, and hits me. It is very scary and loads of other kids in my school get hit. I don't think it is good to hit children, as they normally didn't do anything.

If you hit babies, they could get more hurt than if you hit me, as they don't have as strong bones as me.

I think that hitting children is wrong and everybody should help to stop it.

Girl aged 11

When you have a child you agree to love them, they are your responsibility and it is your job to protect them against harm. Hitting a child IS harming a child both mentally and physically, even in very minor forms. A child should be able to trust and respect their parents and feel safe with them, not afraid of them. Hitting a child or threatening to hit a child seriously damages them and changes their opinions of people's rights/ their life very negatively. It can lead to them hitting their children and behaving violently. As well as in serious forms lead to depression, suicide and serious emotional damage. The only reason hitting a child sometimes makes them behave is because they are SCARED not to, this is sick.

Girl aged 15

I think violence
Is wrong.
Children get hurt,
Children are sad,
Sometimes when they
Don't deserve to be!

Violence is cruel,
It is evil,
Sometimes it gets out of hand!

If you stop,
Stop the violence,
Everyone would be happy!

Girl aged 11

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2. Young people's voices: quotations

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

Physical abuse: It can actually really hurt and more emotional feelings than insults.

[What would you say to people who are violent to children and young people?]

Don't do it because it's wrong and can cause emotional scaring and horrid memories for the child/young person and can really ruin their confidence.

Girl aged 9

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

Hitting: It's horrible it really hurts, you feel small inside and you can't do anything.

[What would you say to people who are violent to children and young people?]

To stop it because it's horrible and ask them what they get out of it.

Girl aged 10

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

A big hit: Afterwards it still hurts and leaves a red mark.

[What would you say to people who are violent to children and young people?]

Stop it because do you know what it does to them? It makes them feel like it's OK to hit someone.

Boy aged 10

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

Hitting: You can get hit, slapped, beaten up, threatened to be killed by punching

[What would you say to people who are violent to children and young people?]

They should try and change because young people will grow to carry on from where their parents left off.

Boy aged 10

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

Physical abuse: people suffer from injuries and marks, and they die because of just getting beaten up.

[What would you say to people who are violent to children and young people?]

They should stop now because when they have children of their own, they could get beaten up as well of their parents.

Boy aged 10

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

Hitting: You can't really do anything about it. Bullying is easier because you can talk about it more easily.

[What would you say to people who are violent to children and young people?]

Stop it. It really hurts. Physically and mentally. Why are you doing it? What is the reason?

Girl aged 10

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

Physical abuse: It probably hurts inside as well as outside.

[What would you say to people who are violent to children and young people?]

Stop: It's not nice to be violent. It hurts a lot. Stop right now, please!

Boy aged 10

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

Hitting: It really hurts and can damage a child's brain if it is on the head. Children lose self-confidence and feel they are not loved.

[What would you say to people who are violent to children and young people?]

I would probably be too scared to make a noise if I saw someone being cruel to a child but in my head I would be crying and yelling, "Stop! Stop! Stop it you horrible, nasty thing, I hate you!"

Girl aged 10

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

Physical abuse: it can really hurt and sting for days, even weeks.

[What would you say to people who are violent to children and young people?]

Why do you do this? Would you like to be treated that way? Then stop now.

Boy aged 10

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

Violence at home: your family feel they can do whatever they want to you because you're at home

[What would you say to people who are violent to children and young people?]

Stop doing it, you're making people depressed and unhappy and it probably hurts a lot. How would you feel if that were to happen to you?

Girl aged 10

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

Physical abuse: It can leave you with marks for the rest of your life.

[What would you say to people who are violent to children and young people?]

Stop. How would you like it if you were beaten etc and you're much older.

Boy aged 10

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

Physical abuse: it sometimes scars people for ever. I think it is used by parents as a way of telling children not to do something.

[What would you say to people who are violent to children and young people?]

Why do you do it? What's the point? If you really have to, just tell them off, without using verbal abuse.

Girl aged 10

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

Physical abuse: It can damage you on the inside and on the outside.

[What would you say to people who are violent to children and young people?]

It is wrong and you shouldn't be doing this.

Girl aged 11

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

Physical abuse: Children are fragile so they need to grow up, not get beaten up

[What would you say to people who are violent to children and young people?]

Can't you see you are hurting your child? You are not helping them, you are hurting them, and I will call the police if you don't stop.

Girl aged 12

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

Smacking: adults do it to little children who can't protect themselves. The government have stupid laws on this.

[What would you say to people who are violent to children and young people?]

Why do you do it? Think about the effect [sic] it has on people's lives.

Girl aged 14

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

Physical: it is very hurtful and could leave life-long scars.

[What would you say to people who are violent to children and young people?]

Advise them and make them understand how young people feel and behave

Girl aged 16

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

Physical abuse: It can cause bruises and it can cause problems with you're [sic] brain for instance by slapping someone you can hit them in the eye and they won't be able to see

Girl aged 9

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

Physical abuse: It can damage you on the inside and on the outside

Girl aged 12

[What do you think is the worst type of violence against children and young people?]

From parents: It makes the child feel like they are alone, as they usually go to their parents for help.

Boy aged 13

[What would you say to people who are violent to children and young people?]

What is the point of being violent to kids, and why do you beat your children if you don't beat anyone else? You must talk to someone.

Boy aged 11

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