



NSPCC

Dear Prime Minister,

Every child deserves more than just safety. They deserve to grow up in a world where they are loved and protected from harm.

Yet in England, an outdated and damaging defence in the law still allows a parent or guardian to argue that it is okay to physically harm their child, under the guise of 'reasonable punishment'.

We believe that it is never 'reasonable' to hit a child. It is harm, plain and simple. And the current law sends a dangerous message that striking a child can be excused.

The evidence is overwhelming. Decades of research shows that harming a child can have lasting consequences, undermining their mental health, damaging trust and worsening behaviour.

The impact of physical punishment can be subtle, showing up as fear, anxiety, low self-esteem, difficulty controlling emotions, increased aggression and strained relationships. It teaches children that violence 'corrects' behaviour and that those closest to them can also be the ones who hurt them.

This is not the lesson we want to pass on to our next generation of children.

Adults benefit from robust legal protections that safeguard them from assault. How is it acceptable that children have less protection from physical harm than adults?

Removing this defence would be a powerful step towards keeping our children safe. It would support parents to raise their children with empathy, and it would give professionals the clarity they tell us they want.

It would affirm a simple truth: that children deserve the same protection from assault that every adult enjoys.

Scotland, Wales and over 65 countries across the world have already taken steps to end physical punishment against children, recognising that protecting them from harm is a fundamental responsibility and not up for debate.

This outdated defence has no place in 21st century England.

Prime Minister, this is your opportunity to be brave and lead with courage and compassion.

We ask you to stand up, alongside us, for every child's right to safety, dignity, and respect. It's time to end the physical punishment of children in England, for good.

Yours sincerely,

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