

<b>Gwybodaeth ychwanegol a anfonwyd wedi'r sesiwn dystiolaeth ar 16 Mai 2019 (Saesneg yn unig)</b>	<b>Additional information sent following evidence session on 16 May 2019</b>
<b>Oddi wrth: BASW Cymru</b>	<b>From: BASW Cymru</b>

## **BASW Cymru - informing information** **on the abolition of the Reasonable** **Chastisement Defence**

The information and links below contain a myriad of informing information on the position that BASW Cymru reached.

BASW Cymru fully supports the removal of the 'Reasonable Chastisement' Defence.

# BASW

## Cymru

### **A review of the evidence on the physical punishment of children**

#### **Excerpts from the study**

This report was commissioned by NSPCC Scotland, Children 1st, Barnardo's Scotland and the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland.

Physical punishment is related to detrimental childhood and adult outcomes

Over the past decade, a vast body of research has accumulated on the consequences of physical punishment for children's health and development, as well as their later-life health and wellbeing. The current review identified 74 longitudinal studies and two review articles on the outcomes of physical punishment that were published since 2005.

There is strong and consistent evidence from good-quality research that physical punishment is associated with increased childhood aggression and antisocial behaviour. The multitude of these studies, which include observational, gene-environment and experimental designs, and the consistency of their findings suggest that these links are indeed causal. Several studies showed that the relationship between physical punishment and problem behaviour is reciprocal: physical punishment exacerbates existing problem behaviour, leading to a vicious circle of cascading conflict. In other words, parents who are using physical punishment in response to perceived problem behaviour are likely to make it worse.

Moreover, there is fairly consistent evidence for a link between childhood physical punishment and adult aggression or antisocial behaviour, suggesting that the effects of increased aggression among children who were subjected to physical punishment carry over into adulthood.

Physical punishment also affects children's emotional and mental health. There is good evidence that the experience of physical punishment is related to depressive symptoms and anxiety among children. Links with depressive symptoms and reduced self-esteem in later life were also reported, but were less consistent. Other negative outcomes of physical punishment include parent-child conflict, adult mental illness and adult substance abuse. Associations between physical punishment and children's cognitive ability have also been studied, but with conflicting results.

One argument that is brought forward again and again is that physical punishment is not harmful in the context of an otherwise loving and warm family environment. However, the majority of studies that tested this hypothesis found that the harmful effects of physical punishment were the same even when levels of maternal warmth were high – the 'loving smack' might be a myth.

Physical punishment is related to an increased risk of child maltreatment

A link between physical punishment and child maltreatment was consistently supported in the reviewed literature. Physical punishment carries a worrying and serious risk of escalation into injurious abuse and maltreatment. The evidence supports the notion that physical punishment and physical abuse are part of

a continuum of violence, differing only by severity or degree.<sup>5</sup> The fact that definitions of severe physical violence differed substantially between studies from different countries further underscores this view. For example, in contrast to studies from the US and Canada, a study from Finland (where physical punishment has been prohibited since 1983) adopted a much stricter definition of abuse that included slapping and hitting. These differences serve as an important reminder that such definitions are shaped by societal attitudes.

#### 1.4 Conclusion and recommendations

Physical punishment is still common in Scotland and the UK. This is despite its negative effects being known and despite that it constitutes a clear violation of children's human rights. The results of the current review support and corroborate

the findings of the numerous reviews and analyses that have preceded it, including those of the NI Review. A large number of good-quality studies have been published since 2005, and the vast majority of this international research evidence confirms previous findings for the harmful effects of physical punishment, including the risk of escalation into physical abuse.

The policy recommendations that follow from the evidence presented in this report are in line with previous recommendations made in the NI Review:

1. All physical punishment of children should be prohibited by law. Children should be afforded more, not less, protection from violence than adults.
2. Legislation should be accompanied by large-scale information and awareness campaigns to inform the population of the merits of positive parenting and the harm caused by physical punishment. These should be aimed at different levels: individuals, communities and the whole population.
3. It is important to support parents in using positive parenting strategies, through providing information via different channels (GP's, health visitors, schools, mass media), as well as through offering parenting programmes.
4. Organisations and professionals concerned about child welfare, including teaching, health and social care professionals, as well as charity organisations, need to be galvanised and should work together to develop advocacy and lobbying strategies which call on policymakers for an urgent change in legislation to end all physical punishment of children.

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1117/equally-protected.pdf>

### **Corporal punishment study**

#### **Excerpts from the study**

What can be perceived as normative CP and appropriate parenting, such as spanking, can also be considered abusive when taken to its extreme (e.g., spanking on the face, multiple episodes of spanking per day; Gershoff 2002b). Research indicates that the greater the frequency and severity (e.g., use of objects) of CP, the greater the likelihood that parents will use harsher punishments, which approach and potentially meet current definitions of child physical abuse (Belsky 1993; Gershoff 2002a; Straus and Stewart 1999; Zolotor et al. 2008)

Indeed, one of the major limitations of the literature on CP is the lack of consensus about its definition (Benjet and Kazdin 2003; Ripoll-Nunez and Rohner 2006). Different terms (e.g., physical punishment, harsh punishment, spanking, striking, hit with object, beat) have been used interchangeably in the research literature (Benjet and Kazdin 2003; Gershoff 2002a; Hicks-Pass 2009), and these terms target physical discipline behaviors ranging from mild to severe forms of punishment that approach physical abuse. Gonzalez and colleagues (2008) suggested that attempts to specifically target CP and draw the line between CP and physical abuse according, for example, to the parent's intent or use of objects, have not proven useful. Still, the presence of physical injury (or risk of injury) has been used to distinguish CP and physical abuse in the medical community and in identifying children in need of protection (Durrant et al. 2009; Gonzalez et al. 2008).

Result from the chi-square analysis confirmed the presence of a relationship between experiences of having been spanked and child physical abuse. In particular, participants who reported experiences of spanking had a higher than expected risk of also reporting physical abuse in childhood

Results revealed that the frequency of spanking experiences was positively associated with other disciplinary strategies (i.e., psychological aggression and positive discipline). In fact, the different disciplinary strategies appear all positively correlated, reflecting their co-occurrence

Nevertheless, the highest correlation observed was between spanking frequency and psychological aggression, suggesting that negative forms of discipline tend to occur together. As for the other parenting variables, results revealed that the frequency of spanking was associated with more impulsive parental discipline and with less parental warmth/support. In fact, warm and supportive parenting appeared to be positively associated with consistency in discipline while negatively associated with impulsiveness and anger, two parental characteristics that seems to co-occur according to the correlation results. Finally, spanking frequency was associated with more intimate partner verbal and physical violence, two forms of family violence that also appear to co-occur based on our results. Among participants who reported having experienced spanking at around the age of 10, results for variables that might distinguish the two subgroups of participants are presented in Table 4. Interaction terms of spanking with all other parenting variables were examined, but none were found to be statistically significant at the  $\alpha=0.05$  level. Findings indicated that, after controlling for sex and ethnicity, the frequency of spanking reported by participants was a statistically significant predictor of reported experiences of physical abuse. The first regression model revealed that 24 % of the risk of experiencing physically

abusive behaviours from a parent was explained by the frequency of spanking experiences. This relationship remained significant even when a number of additional parenting and family environment variables were included. Specifically, among participants who reported experiences of spanking at around age 10, the odds ratio obtained in the final regression model indicated that for every 1- point increase in spanking frequency, the risk of experiencing physical abuse increased by 23 %. In addition, results indicated that perceived parental impulsiveness in discipline and physical violence between parents were significant predictors of childhood physical abuse among participants who reported childhood experiences of spanking. Specifically, according to odds ratios, for every 1-point increase in the parental impulsiveness scale, there was a 29 % increased risk of experiencing childhood physical abuse. Similarly, for every 1-point increase in the intimate partner physical violence scale, the risk of experiencing childhood physical abuse increased by 32 %. Taken together, the frequency of spanking experiences, parental impulsiveness, and intimate partner physical violence explained 50 % of the risk of participants also reporting experiences of abuse in childhood.

\*Furthermore, because of the associated risk of child physical abuse, our findings reinforce efforts to advocate against the use of any form of CP in order to promote children's healthy development and to protect their rights to integrity and dignity.

The observed association between spanking frequency and risk of childhood physical abuse is consistent with Gershoff's (2002a, b) process-context model, which suggested that the greater the frequency (and severity) of CP, the greater the likelihood that parents will use punishment which approaches definitions of child physical abuse. These findings are also consistent with the continuum of violence position, according to which physical punishment and physical abuse are quantitatively different, and vary only in terms of severity or frequency (Gonzalez et al. 2008). It is interesting to note that this relationship was significant even though the frequency of spanking was quite low among our participants. This is important because it suggests that self-report of spanking experiences, even when its frequency is relatively low, still increases the odds of experiencing physical abuse. Once again, this finding contradicts the conditional CP view, according to which occasional, mild spanking does not pose a significant risk to children (Larzelere and Kuhn 2005).

In line with our expectations and Gershoff's (2002b) process-context model, the risk of child physical abuse was predicted by an increase in perceived parental disciplinary impulsiveness. Specifically, individuals who experienced spanking and

who perceived their parent as impulsive in discipline (i.e., reacting without control and/or planning) were at greater risk of experiencing childhood physical abuse. Vasta (1982) suggested that when parents are emotionally aroused, they may react impulsively to both external (e.g., child misbehavior) and internal (e.g., anger) stimulation. With regard to anger, it may lead to a failure to monitor, adjust, and/or control reactions in the disciplinary moment (Russa and Rodriguez 2010). In our analyses, perceived parental anger in discipline did not, as expected, appear as a significant predictor of physical abuse. However, its correlation with parental impulsiveness was positive and significant so it may be that the shared variance between constructs contributed to the lack of statistical significance for our variable of anger. Nevertheless, it seems important for future studies to investigate the potential mediating effect of parental anger in the relationship between parental disciplinary impulsiveness and childhood physical abuse.

Finally, in line with our hypotheses, the risk of child physical abuse among participants who reported spanking experiences was predicted by increasing physical violence between parents. This finding is consistent with research suggesting that the level of violence toward a child is linked with the amount of violence present within the intimate partner relationship (Button 2008; Slep and O'Leary 2005). It may be that physical abuse is fostered by an overall physically hostile family environment. Furthermore, we may hypothesize that verbal intimate partner violence did not emerge as significant because of the physical nature of both spanking Table 4 Predictors of childhood physical abuse among participants

The fact that the other variables (i.e., positive discipline, psychological aggression, parental consistency, parental warmth/support) were not significant predictors of child physical abuse might suggest that co-occurring disciplinary strategies and parenting style do not influence or counteract the abuse risk associated with spanking.

Results from the present study therefore contribute to the literature by demonstrating that, among individuals who experienced spanking, differences in parenting style and strategies do not influence the abuse risk, nor do they moderate the impact of spanking frequency (interaction effect not significant). Spanking by itself, and especially when it is used more frequently, in an impulsive manner, and within a context of a more physically violent family, increases the risk of abuse.

It should be noted that the association between CP and psychological aggression was the highest observed among the predictor variables. It is possible that the shared variance between the two constructs prevented psychological aggression from appearing as a significant predictor of physical abuse risk among individuals who experienced childhood spanking. However, this correlation is consistent with

previous research from population-based studies suggesting that intra-familial forms of violence (i.e., CP, psychological aggression, physical IPV, physical abuse) tend to occur together (Clément et al. 2013; Dufour et al. 2011; Thompson et al. 1999; Trocmé et al. 2010).

(/CP\_and\_Physical\_Abuse\_J\_Fam\_Violence\_2015.pdf

<https://www.coursehero.com/file/37948473/CP-and-Physical-Abuse-J-Fam-Violence-2015pdf/>

<https://www.coursehero.com/file/p6d8ilng/Nevertheless-the-highest-correlation-observed-was-between-spanking-frequency/>

### **List of informing articles**

#### **Articles**

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2018/10/15/total-smacking-ban-makes-societies-less-violent-study-suggests/>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/reasonable-chastisement-is-really-child-abuse-5353289.html>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2017/12/the-fourth-r/547583/>

[https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0145213417304076?\\_rdoc=1&\\_fmt=high&\\_origin=gateway&\\_docanchor=&md5=b8429449ccfc9c30159a5f9aeaa92ffb#sec0005](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0145213417304076?_rdoc=1&_fmt=high&_origin=gateway&_docanchor=&md5=b8429449ccfc9c30159a5f9aeaa92ffb#sec0005)

#### **Studies**

<http://www.assembly.wales/research%20documents/19-019/19-019-web-eng.pdf>

[http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/42308/8/15718182\\_025\\_01\\_s009\\_text.pdf](http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/42308/8/15718182_025_01_s009_text.pdf)

[https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/media/627454/43\\_law\\_reform\\_essay.pdf](https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/media/627454/43_law_reform_essay.pdf)



<https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/6886/10/chastisement.html>

<https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/6886/7/S58%20Review%20Report.pdf>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2015/equally-protected/>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3768154/>

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