

Children Are Unbeatable! Newsletter England

Issue No. 4 – January 2011 (see [website](#) for previous issues)

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Parliament and Government

Since our last newsletter, we have gained some new supporters in Parliament, including crossbench peer Baroness Howe of Idlicote and independent MP Lady Sylvia Hermon, former lecturer of European, International and Constitutional Law at Queen's University, Belfast. Within the Liberal Democrats, Dan Rogerson MP (Co-Chair of the Lib Dem Education, Families & Young People Committee) has signed up as a supporter, along with Baroness Hussein-Ece (Commissioner for the Equality and Human Rights Commission), Baroness Jolly, Lord Sharkey and Lord Shipley. Labour MPs Nic Dakin and Bill Esterson (both members of the Education Select Committee) have also signed up as supporters. Joan Bakewell, a longtime supporter, has become a Labour peer.

The Coalition Government has so far made no official pronouncements on the issue of physical punishment. Before the election the Conservatives indicated they shared the previous Government's view (not approving physical punishment but not wishing to criminalize parents who smack) while the Liberal Democrats officially support legal prohibition of all forms of physical punishment.

Two independent reviews set up by the Government and due to report in early 2011 – the review of child protection by Eileen Munro and the review of early intervention by Graham Allen, Labour MP – showed potential to recommend

the outlawing of physical punishment. However the Munro inquiry has already ruled the issue outside the remit of its review. The Allen review arose from a joint report by Graham Allen and Iain Duncan Smith on early intervention which lays great stress on the link between dysfunctionality in adult life and violent treatment in early years. It emphasizes the need to identify preventive remedies which “drain the swamp” rather than just “swat mosquitoes”. The Children Are Unbeatable! Alliance’s lengthy [submission of evidence](#) on early intervention covered the inherent dangers of current law on physical punishment, research evidence on its negative impact on children, the scale of the problem, evidence from countries that have banned physical punishment and the attraction of making a low-cost intervention which commands support of all the professional bodies. Unfortunately Graham Allen’s first [report](#), like every other official or independent report on the mistreatment of children in the last decade, fails to mention the subject of physical punishment.

The Children’s Rights Alliance for England (CRAE) continues to challenge the deliberate use of pain as a means of restraint in secure training centres (STCs), including threatening legal proceedings. Answers to parliamentary questions revealed that in the year 2009-2010, 111 children suffered injuries following restraint, including three incidents where restraint was stopped because a child complained of difficulty in breathing, and that 28 members of staff were disciplined, suspended or dismissed between 2006 and 2010 following a restraint incident in STCs.

What you can do:

[Find out who your MP is](#)

[Ask your new MP to support the Children Are Unbeatable! Alliance](#)

[Contact CRAE if you know a child who has experienced painful or degrading forms of restraint during a custodial sentence](#)

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Child protection

Since the last newsletter, three more Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) have signed up to the aims of the Alliance. They are Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and Tameside, taking the number of supporting LSCBs to 29 – one board short of a fifth of the total. While this is not the landslide we hoped for in response to the letter sent to LSCB chairs in the summer (see Newsletter 3) there are still many boards considering their response to the request for support.

LSCB support is much higher in some regions than others. In the north-east half of the ten boards have signed up to the Alliance’s aims, with only one having actively declined. By comparison, only one of the 12 LSCBs in Yorkshire & Humberside has registered its support (York City) – although this is mirrored by only one having declined. Here is the list of supporting LSCBs shown by region:

North-east

Durham
Newcastle-u-Tyne
North Tyneside
South Tees
Sunderland

North-west

Manchester
Oldham
St Helens
Tameside

West Midlands

Dudley
Wolverhampton

East Midlands

Lincolnshire
Derby

Yorkshire & Humberside

York City

East Anglia

Cambridge
Essex
Havering
Norfolk
Peterborough

South-west

Swindon
Wiltshire

South-east

Isle of Wight
Oxfordshire
Reading
West Berkshire

London

Croydon
Lewisham
Redbridge
Westminster

What you can do

Let us know if you are a member of a Local Safeguarding Children Board. Encourage your LSCB to support the Alliance – especially if they have not yet made a decision.

Tell us about any local or national possibilities for the Alliance to discuss changing the law on physical punishment with child protection professionals, and to encourage their support for the Alliance. Opportunities might include conferences, training sessions or informal meetings.

For more information or materials for LSCBs, please contact Pat Gordon-Smith on 07528 275646; pat.gsmith@yahoo.co.uk

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Faith groups

The Churches' Network for Non-violence (CNNV) is giving advance notice and a call for papers for a conference, "Faith and Vision into Action – Ending Corporal Punishment of Children", to mark the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible, on August 22-24 2011 in Westminster College, Cambridge. Religious communities across the world are involved in the growing global movement to prohibit and eliminate corporal punishment of children, but some groups and individuals still use their faith and scriptural texts to justify this common form of violence against children. The conference will bring together

people who are committed to the prohibition and elimination of all corporal punishment of children. It will provide opportunities for participants to contribute ideas, insights and scholarship towards the development of tools and resources, to meet the challenges posed by those who condone corporal punishment of children and use their religious faith and the Bible to justify their position. Children and young people will be involved and their ideas and contributions will be included.

The deadline for submission of papers is May 20 2011. For full guidelines and a submission form, please contact: info@churchesfornon-violence.org or [download](#) it.

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Across the world

The new global progress report [Ending legalised violence against children: Global report 2010](#) has been published (available on-line; a limited number of hard copies is available from info@endcorporalpunishment.org). The report reviews progress towards prohibition of corporal punishment of children throughout the world in the context of follow up to the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children. It includes a major section on what it means to achieve law reform, and how to do it, as well as detailed information on law reform opportunities and active campaigns on the issue in all regions.

In addition, the African Child Policy Forum, the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children and Save the Children Sweden have jointly published [Ending legalised violence against children: All Africa report 2010](#) which documents the progress that is being made across Africa and the amount of work that is still to be done on the issue, providing a state by state analysis of corporal punishment of children in all settings—the home, schools, penal systems and alternative care settings—and an overview of current opportunities for achieving legal reform.

The Global Initiative has also recently published with Save the Children Sweden [The Campaigns Manual: Ending corporal punishment and other cruel and degrading punishment of children through law reform and social change](#). The manual aims to support child rights advocates in challenging corporal punishment of children in all settings – in the home, in schools, and in justice and care settings. It includes the main arguments against corporal punishment, strategies for law reform, how prohibition works in practice, how to change attitudes and information on available resources for campaigning.

For further information on this and all aspects of prohibition worldwide, see the [Global Initiative website](#). For regular updates on global progress, including news of new campaigns, research and resources, sign up to the Global Initiative e-newsletter (email info@endcorporalpunishment.org).

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Research

UK parents' ambivalent attitudes to physical punishment

A comprehensive review of the literature on parental views of physical punishment shows that parents are often ambivalent about physical discipline, do not view it as an optimal method of behaviour management and are more prone to smack when stressed or angry. Nonetheless, many parents continue to smack despite the fact they do not believe it to be effective. Reliance on parents' opinions to determine a smacking ban should, the authors argue, be reconsidered in the light of this ambivalence;

Bunting L and Webb M A, *Two Minds? — Parental Attitudes toward Physical Punishment in the UK*, Children and Society, June 23 2009

Irish parents support smacking ban

A [survey](#) of 1,353 parents of children under 18 commissioned by the Irish Minister for Children and Youth Affairs found that only 34% of parents said that smacking should remain legal while 42% said it should become illegal and a further 24% thought it should be illegal for children of certain ages (believing that parents should retain the right to hit children between, say, five and ten years). 64% agreed that “smacking is not necessary to bring up a well-behaved child” but only 30% agreed that “smacking is wrong and should never be used.” The majority (80%) reported feeling guilty or sorry after the last time they had smacked their child and only 5% said they felt “better” after smacking.

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And finally...

Children are Unbeatable! pays tribute to Claire Rayner who died in October 2010. Claire was our most energetic supporter, always happy to chair conferences, write articles or participate in media debates, as well as working behind the scenes (for example ensuring that all the UK agony aunts supported the aims of CAU!). She was empathetic not only with the child victims of physical punishment but also with their stressed and muddled parents. Never mawkish, never judgmental, never compromising on children's right not to be hit and full of wit and good sense, she is much missed.

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