

# Children Are Unbeatable! Newsletter England

Issue No. 14 – November 2014 (see [website](#) for previous issues)

If you do not want to receive further issues of the newsletter, please inform Miranda Horobin at [info@childrenareunbeatable.org](mailto:info@childrenareunbeatable.org).

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## Parliament and Government

### Wales

Wales continues to move slowly towards a ban on all forms of physical punishment. The Labour minority leadership has now agreed that a ban is Welsh Labour policy but appears to be resisting attempts to use the current domestic violence Bill to achieve it. There is also a proposal, under discussion with the other parties, to establish a National Assembly Committee in the next period to consider how – as opposed to whether – a ban will be implemented.

### England and Wales

Chris Grayling, Secretary of State for Justice, has authorised regulations which allow staff to use force “for the purposes of good order and discipline” in proposed private “secure colleges” for convicted children. Although the Court of Appeal judgment held in 2008 that it was not lawful to use force for this purpose, the Government claims that the new rules conform to this ruling because pain-inducing techniques being used for this purpose are prohibited as is any form of restraint being used as punishment. However, ten years ago 14-year-old Gareth Myatt was killed by “non-painful” restraint techniques which were inflicted “for the purposes of good order” because he refused to clean a toaster. In such circumstances it is difficult to see how a line between “physical punishment” and “restraint for the purpose of good order and discipline” could ever be drawn.

### What you can do

This newsletter only goes to CAU! supporters in England – [CAU!-Cymru](#) is separately coordinated – but if any readers have supportive contacts in Wales, please send details to Sara Reid, Coordinator of CAU! –Cymru: [sara.reid.cymru@gmail.com](mailto:sara.reid.cymru@gmail.com) .

## **Westminster**

Although there are currently no viable opportunities for law reform in England under the Coalition Government, we need to recruit as much parliamentary support as possible – please write to your MP (or friendly Peer) to ask them to support CAU! Click for the information you need:

- To find out if your [MP is a CAU! supporter](#);
- Suggestions for what to [write to your MP](#)
- For hard copy and online [sign-up forms](#).

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## **Across the world**

### **Four more countries ban all physical punishment**

Bolivia, Cabo Verde, Argentina and San Marino have now joined the list of countries that outlaw all forms of physical punishment of children, bringing the total number worldwide to 42.

### **UNICEF research**

In September UNICEF published a major report [Hidden in Plain Sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children](#) which identifies physical punishment as the most common form of violence against children, pointing out that more than two billion children have no legal protection from it and that most physical punishment occurs in the home, the place where it is least likely to be prohibited. Drawing on data from 62 countries, the report states that about four in five children aged 2-14 are subjected to violent punishment in the home, and 17% experience severe physical punishment (being hit on the head, ears or face or being hit hard and repeatedly).

Another new UNICEF report, [Ending Violence Against Children: Six Strategies for Action](#), argues that legislation outlawing corporal punishment effectively disseminates the unacceptability of violence.

### **Regional inter-governmental organisations promote prohibition**

A [meeting of regional inter-governmental organisations](#) agreed in July to promote prohibition of corporal punishment of children. Representatives of the Caribbean Community, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Council of Europe, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the League of Arab States, MERCOSUR and the Latin-American and Caribbean Movement for Children met in Jamaica at a cross regional meeting “for advancing the protection of children from violence”.

### **USA debates race and physical punishment**

The arrest of American football player Adrian Peterson for beating his four year old with a thin branch triggered a nationwide debate on physical punishment, with particular regard to African American forms of discipline. While Peterson expressed baffled dismay at his parenting methods being questioned, a number of black commentators denounced the black American tradition of “whipping children”. For example [Steve Holmes](#) wrote for CNN

about the research findings on the negative outcomes for children who are spanked. He went on to say:

“What is less spoken about is how much spanking and other tough punishment of children harms the community. Studies have showed that physical punishment is associated with legions of sullen, angry, violence-prone boys – and don't forget, black boys are more likely to be spanked than black girls – who menace their communities and beat their wives and girlfriends and, of course, their children. "I think we have to ask ourselves (the) question, because anger is also at the bottom of a lot of the rage and the violence and the killing," Harvard psychologist Alvin Poussaint said at a panel discussion on black men a few years back, referring to both physical and psychological abuse inflicted on black boys. "It's a lot easier to pull the trigger if you are enraged."”

For further information about worldwide progress visit the [Global Initiative to End Corporal Punishment](#); to receive its newsletter contact [info@endcorporalpunishment.org](mailto:info@endcorporalpunishment.org).

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## Research

Research into the effects of physical punishment in the UK is relatively rare, making a recent [study](#) by health researchers in Glasgow into the possible association between being smacked as an infant and later behavioural problems particularly welcome. Using data from the “Growing Up in Scotland” cohort the study identified children whose main carer reported having smacked them in their first two years (excluding children whose behaviour had elicited significant concerns). The study found that the smacked children were twice as likely to have emotional and behavioural problems at four years, as measured by parental assessment, than those who had never been smacked. The association remained significant after adjusting for child age and sex, caregiver age, sex, ethnicity, educational attainment and mental health status, sibling number, structural family transitions and socioeconomic status. The research thus concluded that smacking “may be a modifiable risk factor for emotional and behavioural difficulties in preschool children”.

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## And finally...

For those who do not accept either children's human right to be protected from physical punishment or the cumulative research showing its damaging effects, a new [study](#) has examined the economic benefit of potential targets for tackling violence. It found that eliminating severe physical punishment of children would be one of the most “high-yielding” targets, saving \$11 for every dollar spent on this target.

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