

# Children Are Unbeatable! Newsletter England

Issue No. 16 – June 2015 (see [website](#) for previous issues)

## *Dear Supporter,*

This special newsletter asks for your help in our campaign to ban the physical punishment of children in England in this Parliament. We are determined that children should not wait for another five years before gaining equal protection from assault. Hitting children is wrong: it is a violation of their rights, is associated with many damaging outcomes and is entirely unnecessary in raising happy, healthy and well-behaved children.

Children Are Unbeatable! is the largest alliance ever to campaign on a children's issue in the UK. Over 700 children's organisations support the removal of the "reasonable punishment" defence under section 58 of the Children Act 2004. Such a large consensus should be able to persuade the Government to do the right thing, not least because:

- the evidential case for a ban grows stronger by the day,
- a majority of European children live in countries which have banned all physical punishment; the number of countries worldwide with a ban stands at 46,
- parental support for smacking in the UK is diminishing,
- child protection is a priority for the new Government and a smacking ban is a tested, low-cost and necessary measure for effective child protection,
- Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland look likely to ban in the next three years.

Under the Coalition Government, CAU! took a tactical decision to keep a low media profile in England. Instead we focused on increasing support in specific areas (human rights, child protection, child health, public health, human rights, domestic and gender violence and parent support), consolidating the research evidence, addressing the arguments of those opposed to a smacking ban, redesigning the CAU!-England website and supporting positive developments elsewhere, particularly Wales. We believe this has built the foundations for a viable campaign, even in an inimical political climate.

## **What is needed?**

Listed here are some of the things we think are needed to advance this campaign, but we are keen to hear **your ideas** – all comments and suggestions on what we should be doing are warmly welcome.

*For suggestions, offers of help or requests for further information about any of the proposals below, please contact Rachel Hodgkin, CAU! policy development, [rachel.hodgkin@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:rachel.hodgkin@blueyonder.co.uk), tel 0208 889 9034*

- **Keeping the issue visible**

The Government frequently consults on policy proposals or sets up inquiries into matters which are relevant to this campaign. However, member organisations often fail to mention the importance of repealing section 58 because they believe such a recommendation will fall on deaf ears. But if physical punishment is never raised the Government can claim it is not important. Pressure has been put on people conducting independent inquiries not to address the issue and we have noticed it is never mentioned in official guidance, regardless of its relevance. Please **do not forget to recommend the repeal of section 58**, however briefly, in all appropriate responses and submissions.

- **Widening our support base**

Children Are Unbeatable! is supported by more or less all children's organisations in the voluntary sector and by many faith groups. We need to widen this to public bodies, civil society (particularly parents) and professional groups.

For example only a minority of Local Safeguarding Children Boards are currently signed up in support of our aims. Our aim is to persuade all LSCBs to support: if you belong to an **LSCB** which is not yet a supporter (see our [website](#)) please contact us. Another example is the group of 21 senior **academics** in Wales who formed "[Academics for Equal Protection](#)" to lobby the Welsh Government for a legal ban on smacking. We are looking for volunteer academics to start a similar initiative in England (or UK-wide).

Other sectors which could provide organised support include **early years, pre- and post-natal support, health, parent education, juvenile justice and teaching**. Please give us your suggestions as to how to recruit support from these groups or other areas we should explore.

In the 1990s, many distinguished individuals signed up to the aims of Children Are Unbeatable! We need to augment these with **young celebrities**: will you help us identify and recruit them?

Finally, we know that where smacking is concerned the Government is primarily interested in the views of **parents**, which are given much more weight than the views of professionals or of children themselves. Many parents actively support giving children full protection from assault (regardless of whether they themselves have smacked or not) and we are seeking volunteers to start a "parents against smacking" movement.

- **Finding active supporters**

We urgently need individuals from all over England to help with the campaign – for example by writing letters to MPs, participating in debates on television or radio, sending tweets, blogging or writing to the print media, distributing our materials and recruiting new supporters.

- **Collecting information about parliamentarians and political parties**

We are keen to learn about the attitudes of all MPs to this campaign. While many Conservatives have traditionally not supported a smacking ban we should not assume this to be the case. **Information about all MPs (and peers)** including any relevant interests and points of contact, is very welcome. We are also anxious to know about any policy formulation on this issue within the political parties.

- **Evidence and case examples**

There are over 150 research studies showing the potentially harmful effects of “ordinary” physical punishment. However very few of these have been conducted in the UK. In particular there is a notable silence in this country about the **role physical punishment plays in child abuse cases** and we are therefore encouraging supporters to provide us with any evidence – however limited – on this subject.

In addition, while academic research is obviously important it is clear that politicians and the media also respond to stories about individuals. Any anecdotes or field research you can provide to illustrate either the **damaging effects** of lawful physical punishment – for example how section 58 has frustrated attempts to help children or how children actually experience physical punishment – or about the **benefits** that follow from parents giving up smacking would be extremely useful to us.

*All good wishes,*

*Peter Newell,  
Coordinator, Children Are Unbeatable!*