
UK Government Rules Out Complete Ban on Smacking

A complete ban on smacking in the UK has been rejected by the government after a review suggested most parents, but not children or practitioners, opposed one.

The Government has been reviewing the law, which allows parents and some other carers to justify common assault as “reasonable punishment”.

Practitioners felt that the only way to protect children was to ban physical punishment outright. Meanwhile, most children who took part in the study “felt that smacking was out of place in modern childhood.”

But it was the views of parents, who were mostly opposed to an outright ban, which dominated.

Peter Newell, of the Children are Unbeatable! Alliance said: “The Government consulted very widely and found that an overwhelming majority called for children to enjoy the same rights to protection as adults. Support for banning smacking among parents is up to around 20 per cent and increasing. But of course this is an issue of human rights and equality on which Government must lead not follow public opinion. We hope to get the issue back before Parliament very soon.”

Minister Kevin Brennan said the relevant provisions in the 2004 Children’s Act appeared to be working and would not change further. He told MPs that while many parents said they did not smack children, most said it should not be banned outright.

He said it was the “common sense position” but other campaigners said the decision was a “missed opportunity”.

Disappointment

England’s Children’s Commissioner, Sir Al Aynsley-Green, was “deeply disappointed” by the

government’s decision. Children and young people should have the same right to protection under the law on common assault as that afforded to adults. There is no good reason why children are the only people in the UK who can still be lawfully hit,” he said.

For the Conservatives, Tim Loughton said: “Clearly, if any adult is responsible for abuse and violence towards a child they need to face the full rigour of the law. But there is a world of difference between that and criminalising loving parents that use chastisement as they see fit in the interest of their child.”

The Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights instruments have recognised the right of the child to respect for the child’s human dignity and physical integrity and equal protection under the law.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has formally recognised that corporal punishment violates the Convention in General Comment number 8

[Source: BBC; www.bbc.co.uk, The Guardian; www.guardian.co.uk]

Further information

UK: Child laws are fuelling rise in smacking, warns charity (17 September 2007)

South Africa: ‘No biblical justification’ for hitting child (8 August 2007)

UK: Bid to end smacking in shops

Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children: The human rights imperative to ban all corporal punishment

DCI-IS is pleased to announce the official launch of its new website!

Their website can be accessed at the same address: www.dci-is.org For the moment, the text is only available in English; however, The site will be translated into French and Spanish as soon as possible.