

Most parents think it's wrong to smack a child – new research

The 'Parental Attitudes Towards Managing Young Children's Behaviour 2017' research found 11% of parents with young children reported they had smacked their children in the last 6 months as a way of managing their behaviour. This figure has halved from 22% in 2015.

The research shows 81% of parents disagreed that "it is sometimes necessary to smack a naughty child", a significant increase from 71% in 2015.

The number of parents who reported they may smack a child under certain circumstances has fallen from 44% to 31%. Within this, only 5% reported they are comfortable with the idea and would do it when necessary, with a further 26% not liking the idea but saying they will if nothing else works.

Parents reported using a wide variety of alternative techniques to manage their children's behaviour. The most frequently reported techniques were:

- Praising good behaviour,
- Developing routines,
- Saying no, and
- Telling them off.

The Welsh Government plans to end the physical punishment of children in Wales. The proposed legislation is part of a much wider package of measures the Welsh Government is taking to support children to have the best start in life, and to support parents to do the best job they can.

When parents were asked whether there should be a complete ban on smacking, the balance of opinion is with those who think smacking should not be allowed with 48% agreeing with a ban and 39% disagreeing. There has been a small change in support for the ban since 2015 when 46% agreed and 43% disagreed.

Welcoming the research, Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

"I'm very pleased to see from this research that so few parents think that smacking a child is sometimes necessary, and that fewer parents are using physical punishment to manage their child's behaviour.

"This is exactly the culture change we want to see happening in Wales. While it's great to see that 81% of parents think it's never acceptable to smack a child, as a government, we want to ensure every parent recognises that it's never acceptable to smack a child. This is why we intend to bring forward legislation to make it clear that physically punishing a child is no longer acceptable

in Wales.”

It is currently against the law for a parent or carer to physically punish their child, except where this amounts to ‘reasonable punishment’.

The proposed legislation would not involve the creation of a new offence. It would instead remove the defence of ‘reasonable punishment’ to the existing offences of assault and battery. It would mean any adult looking after a child would no longer be able to use physical or corporal punishment against them.