

Wales sets out plans to end the physical punishment of children

The Minister for Children and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies, has today launched a 12 week consultation on the Welsh Government's proposal to remove the defence of reasonable punishment in Wales – 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 their parents to do the best job they can.

The Welsh Government has a long standing record of working to ensure children have the best start in life and of promoting children's rights. This is why the Welsh Government is now intending to bring forward legislation to make it clear that physically punishing a child is no longer acceptable in Wales.

The proposed legislation would not involve the creation of a new offence. It would instead remove a defence 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.

The Minister said the Welsh Government's aim was to accelerate existing trends in the way parents in Wales discipline their children and to support them in feeling confident to choose positive and more effective methods of discipline.

Launching the consultation, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“We all want to give our children the best start in life. As a parent of three boys myself, I know being a parent can sometimes be a challenging experience. Children do not come with an instruction manual and sometimes parents need guidance and support to help them raise healthy and happy children.

“Our knowledge of what children need to grow and thrive has developed considerably over the last 20 years. We now know that physical punishment can have negative long term impacts on a child's life chances, and we also know it is an ineffective punishment. Whilst physically punishing children was accepted as normal practice in previous generations, we know that it is increasingly being seen as less acceptable and parents feel less comfortable.

“We want parents in Wales to be confident in managing their children's behaviour without feeling they must resort to physical punishment. If there is any potential risk of harm to a child then it is our obligation as a Government to take action. Legislation was introduced many years ago to stop physical punishment in schools and childcare settings – now is the time to ensure it is no

longer acceptable anywhere.

“This is why as a Government we are bringing forward legislation to remove the defence of reasonable punishment, to make it clear that physically punishing a child is no longer acceptable in Wales.

“I am aware there are differing views on this legislation; this consultation provides an opportunity for everyone to have their say to help us try to address concerns as the legislation develops.”

The consultation closes on 2nd April 2018.