



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

21 March 2022

Ending Physical Punishment in Wales

21 March 2022 is a historic moment for children and their rights in Wales. From this day on, physically punishing children will be **illegal** in Wales. We want to protect children and their rights, to help give them the best start in life.

What is physical punishment?

There are lots of types of physical punishment. It can mean smacking, hitting, slapping and shaking.

But there are other types too.

It isn't possible to give a set list of what makes up physical punishment because it can be anything where a child is punished using physical force.

Research suggests that any type of physical punishment could be harmful to children.

What does the change in law mean?

- All physical punishment will be **illegal** in Wales.
- It will give children the same protection from assault as adults.
- It will make the law clearer - easier for children, parents, professionals and the public to understand.



Will the change in law apply to everybody in Wales?

Yes, it will apply to everyone - parents or anyone who is responsible for a child while the parents are absent.

And as with other laws, it will apply to visitors to Wales too.

Physical punishment is already illegal in schools, children's homes, local authority foster care homes and childcare settings.

For more information on ending physical punishment in Wales go to:
gov.wales/EndPhysicalPunishment

For positive parenting tips and information go to: *Parenting. Give it time:*
gov.wales/giveittime

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Ending Physical
Punishment



What happens if people physically punish a child from 21 March 2022?

Anyone who physically punishes a child:

- will be breaking the law
- risks being arrested or charged with assault
- may get a criminal record, which is the same for any criminal offence.

Information, advice and support is available for anyone who needs it, to help them find positive ways to manage children's behaviour and to help avoid such a situation ever happening.

Is it legal to use physical punishment against a child now?

It's a bit of a grey area. Hitting a child is common assault. If a parent or someone with parental responsibility for a child is charged with common assault against the child, they could try to use the defence of reasonable punishment. From 21 March 2022, this defence will no longer be available in Wales; all types of physical punishment will be illegal.

What should I do if I see a child being physically punished or if I am concerned about a child?

- Contact your local social services department.
- You can also call the police in an emergency, or if a child is in immediate danger.

Where can I get advice and support?

- ***Parenting. Give it time*** offers positive parenting practical hints, tips and expert advice to encourage good behaviour from children and alternatives to physical punishment. Their [parenting support page](#) offers links to further support and helplines.
- Universal parenting support and advice is provided by midwives, health visitors, GPs and [Family Information Services](#).
- Early help programmes such as [Flying Start](#) (if you live in a Flying Start area) and [Families First](#).



Positive parenting

top tips

- Give genuine praise for positive (good) behaviour.
- Have clear family rules suitable for your child's age and ability.
- Plan ahead for times where children tend to behave in challenging ways (e.g. take a snack or toy on shopping trips).
- Try and think about what's going on under the surface of tricky behaviours – is your child **Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired (HALT)?**
- Connect a feeling to the behaviour e.g. *'I think you are throwing the toys because you are cross, but we don't hurt people.'*
- Develop a routine that works for your family.
- Model the behaviour you want to see - a child won't understand that hitting or shouting is not allowed if that is what they see adults do.

Visit ***Parenting. Give it time*** for more information.

**Times have changed. Attitudes have changed.
There is no place for physical punishment in a modern Wales.**