



Children are unbeatable!

Campaign against the use of physical punishment



RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

“TACKLING VIOLENCE AT HOME”

Children are Unbeatable! welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation paper “Tackling Violence at Home” and has no doubt that many of its own members will respond in depth to the questions found within this consultation.

The aims of **Children are Unbeatable!** Campaign are to seek legal reform to stop physical punishment and to promote positive parenting. This UK-wide campaign wants to help change society away from violence to a society based on human rights that recognises that children have the same human rights as adults, including the right not to be hit.

Definition of Domestic Violence

In recognising that everyone, including children, has basic human rights of respect and protection under the law and that it is no more acceptable to hit a child than it is to hit anyone else, **Children are Unbeatable!** asks that children and young people be included in the proposed definition of domestic violence. At present they are not mentioned and the impact of domestic violence on them needs to be recognised.

Prevention

We urge the Government to provide effective protection for women and children, with particular needs being met for children and young people and their families from ethnic minorities and for those children with disabilities. We also recommend the need for children and young people to be given adequate information so that they are able to protect themselves from domestic violence and are able to develop healthy relationships without the threat of violence.

In addition to age-appropriate information for children, we support the promotion of public awareness campaigns for children as well as adults so that all can learn how to prevent domestic violence or how to seek help if suffering from it.

Protection and Justice

We recommend that professionals within the court system who deal with children and their families should receive appropriate training on how best to protect and support these vulnerable young people. We also ask that the best interests of the child be paramount in all child contact provisions.

Support

Children are Unbeatable! recognises the value of producing information materials to highlight the issue of domestic violence and to reinforce that domestic violence is not acceptable anywhere. As we have tried to do with our own information material, we would encourage the Government to make information on domestic violence available to a broad range of people and to do so in different formats. This needs to include accessible information to children and young people, taking into account age and development.

Children need a secure process to follow once they have made a disclosure of domestic violence. A protocol is needed for professionals to deal with children following disclosure so that the child is given the utmost support. This applies to health, educational and legal professionals and multi-disciplinary training is recommended.

Children's support services are essential to help children who have experienced domestic violence to deal with both the crisis of moving away from the violence and the recovery period.

Equality Implications

Children are Unbeatable! is keen that all children and young people will be protected, informed and supported within the proposed domestic violence strategy. Our own work benefits all children in Northern Ireland and we hope that this new strategy will make a positive difference to children and young people, both to those who have experienced

