

The Law and how it applies to you as a parent or carer

UK law protects any child from cruel and abusive treatment by their parents or carers up to 18 years of age.

It is against the law for a parent to use physical punishment on their child that causes bruising, either by hitting or using an implement to inflict injury.

It is against the law for anyone other than the child's parent to use ANY form of physical punishment.

Diversity

Many different ideas exist about how to be a 'good' parent and these can often vary within families, ethnic groups and communities. British society acknowledges and affirms cultural diversity but children, whatever their cultural background, always have a right to be protected. Anything that causes harm to a child, whether part of a cultural or faith tradition, is never acceptable. Some practices that may be culturally acceptable in some countries are banned by law in the United Kingdom, and indeed in many other countries.

For more information and support

In the first instance you can talk to your School's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who will be able to give you advice and support regarding any questions you may have about the contents of this leaflet.

If you are worried that a child is at risk of significant harm you **must** contact our **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)** on 020 8227 3811 or out of hours 020 8594 8356.

For details on early help and what support is available please contact 020 8227 5600 or visit www.lbbd.gov.uk/where-to-go-for-early-help-and-support-for-families

Please visit www.lbbd.gov.uk/holiday-activities for details of children's, activities, programmes and sport. This page also has a link to information on getting support and advice regarding money worries, accessing foodbanks, finding a childcare provider and details on the provision for children with disabilities and additional needs.

National resources

www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/
www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/
<https://afruca.org/manual/>

Disciplining your Children

Alternatives to Physical Punishment
July 2021



**BARKING &
DAGENHAM
SAFEGUARDING
CHILDREN
PARTNERSHIP**

The aim of this leaflet is to support parents and carers to feel confident in managing their children's behaviour and to seek advice if they are having difficulties.

What is Physical Punishment?

Physical punishment, physical chastisement or corporal punishment is using any physical force to punish a child for wrongdoing.

Effects of Physical Punishment on Children

Physical punishment may influence behaviour in the short-term. However, physical methods of discipline are associated with increased child aggression, antisocial behaviour, increased violent and criminal behaviour in adulthood, lower intellectual achievement, poorer quality of parent-child relationships, mental health problems (such as depression), and diminished moral internalisation.

Discipline

Discipline should not be seen the same as punishment. It includes being a positive role model and setting good examples for your child.

It also includes negotiation and compromise, instruction, providing boundaries, guidance, advice, and helping your child set realistic goals. There are lots of different ways of disciplining a child and if you restrict yourself to simply reacting against behaviour you don't like, you will be missing lots of opportunities to bring positive, loving discipline into their life.

Introducing sanctions or punishing your child is only a part of the process and should only be done in ways that are fair – never abusive.

Above everything else, children need to know they are loved unconditionally, even when they are behaving badly. This will help in developing a healthy self-esteem which is very important for your child's emotional wellbeing.

Make sure you also praise your child's good behaviour. Praising a good behaviour is called positive reinforcement and leads to more of that behaviour.

Boundaries

We all know that children test limits at some time or another, pushing boundaries is an important part of growing up and becoming more independent, and one day, thinking for themselves and making good choices.

We set 'boundaries' about what we expect of our children and family. If these boundaries are too loose then children have little direction and the balance of power shifts towards the child. If they are too harsh then children do not develop their own sense of responsibility. Think about the rules in your house and explain these to your children. Tell them about why you think these are important. Give them a chance to discuss the rules and to know when things might be changeable. For instance, during school days you expect a fixed time for bedtime but at weekends this could be later. Clear limit setting provides children with a sense of safety, stability, predictability, and security.

Consistency

It is important that children have routine and predictability. They need to know that there are consequences for how they behave. Rewarding positive behaviour is, generally, more effective than punishing challenging behaviour. Praise and encouragement are powerful tools for developing good habits. However challenging your child's behaviour is, it is important to be as consistent and fair as possible. Managing your child's behaviour works best when you let your child know in advance what you expect of them.