



Physical Punishment

Our vision is that all children in Leeds are safe and nurtured, and can grow into happy, capable adults. To achieve this vision, we want to work with communities and parents to develop knowledge and skills in parenting and prevent children from being physically punished.

We know that children need.....

Love and Warmth



Talking, Listening and Positive Praise

Limits and Boundaries



Guidance and Understanding

Consistency and Consequences



A Safe and Structured Environment

Ask yourself.....

- How do you punish your children?
- How do other people punish your children?
- How does this make your children feel?

Alternatives to physically punishing children



Have clear and consistent rules and boundaries.
Have consequences for broken rules or boundaries and stick to them!



Be a good example to your children – if you are violent they are likely to be so too.

Ignore behaviour you do not want to see (unless there is a safety issue).

Give no cost / low cost rewards and attention for positive behaviour.

Communication is the key. Talk to your child – find out the underlying reasons for the misbehaviour, they still need your respect, guidance and love.

Don't lash out - do walk away, count, breathe – give yourself time and space to calm down and think of the best course of action.

Be assertive and use 'I' statements' (e.g I feel really disappointed when you...)
Give positive attention & praise good behaviour (you want to see more of it).

Effects of Physical Punishment on Children:

- Direct physical harm (injury): cuts, bruises, reddening of the skin, scratches, swelling, broken bones.
- Direct mental harm: anxiety, isolation, feeling victimised, damage to self-esteem, reduce confidence

Smacking may look like it stops behaviour in its tracks, it may even feel like it relieves tension for parents, but it can also have some undesirable long-term consequences. Some children who are smacked, find it very difficult to get over this.

- Increased risk of anti-social behaviour: graffiti, nuisance behaviours, criminal damage
- Increased aggression in children: fighting with siblings and friends, dealing with conflict using violence, attention seeking behaviour

If you smack, children may hit back and may fear, but not respect you. Most parents feel guilty after smacking

- Increased violent and criminal behaviour in adulthood
- An acceptance that violence is ok: if children are raised in an environment where violence is used, they may come to think it is ok

- Increased risk of criminality: this could have severe longer term effects both in terms of their behaviour and the potential to be imprisoned
- Damaged education

Children may find it difficult to concentrate in school if they are being physically punished at home. If their education suffers, their aspirations and options for the future will also suffer.

- Damaged family relationships and resentment: it is highly likely that physical punishment will cause your child to resent you later in life. This could affect your longer term family dynamics and relationships.

If a child hits or bites, don't bite back!

This gives a confusing message that it is acceptable to use force or to hit physically when you're angry.

Children learn from the adults around them – if they see you being violent, in their world, this means it is acceptable.

Once this 'value' is accepted as 'normal' it will be difficult to undo the damage.

Physical Punishment is using any physical force to punish your child for wrongdoing. There is no justification for smacking or physically punishing children. Strict punishments and smacking always makes matters worse.

The Law.....

Smacking or otherwise physically harming a child is an assault.
(Offences Against the Person Act 1861)

You could be arrested, made to appear before a Criminal Court and could receive a custodial sentence of up to 5 years.



If you are concerned that a child is at risk of significant harm, you MUST contact Childrens Social Work Service on 0113 376 0336 (out of hours 0113 240 9536)

There is help and support available to parents. For more information on Family Support, please contact your child's school or local Children's Centre in the first instance. For more information on Parenting programmes across Leeds, please contact the Family Support & Parenting Team on 0113 378 5300. For Family Support agencies available across Leeds, please contact the Family Information Service www.familyinformationleeds.co.uk Tel: 0113 247 4386