

Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi



Analysis for Policy



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Social research number: 29/2026

Publication date: 24/02/2026

Qualitative research with professionals in relation to: Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment (Wales) Act 2020

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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Qualitative research with professionals in relation to: Children
(Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act
2020

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Full Research Report: Tully, M., KilBride, K., Andrews, G. and Howells, J.
(2025). Qualitative research with professionals in relation to: Children
(Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020.
Cardiff: Welsh Government, GSR report number 29/2026.

Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/qualitative-research-professionals>

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily
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Glossary

The Act

Refers to the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020, which removed the legal defence of “reasonable punishment”, with the effect of making it illegal to physically punish a child in Wales.

Cafcass Cymru

Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service. Cafcass Cymru represents children in family court cases in Wales and advises courts on what is safe and in the best interests of children.

Children and Communities Grant (CCG)

Programmes within this grant aim to lessen or remove disadvantages to vulnerable people to enable them to have the same life chances as others.

CPS

Crown Prosecution Service. The independent prosecution service for England and Wales, responsible for prosecuting criminal cases investigated by the police.

Flying Start

A Welsh Government programme providing free part-time childcare, health visiting, parenting support and early language development for families with children under 4 in disadvantaged areas.

Families First

A Welsh Government programme that promotes multi-agency working to provide coordinated support for families, focusing on prevention and early intervention.

Local authority

The public body responsible for delivering services such as education, housing, social services and safeguarding at local government level.

MASH

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. A team where agencies such as local authority children’s services, police, health and others work together to respond quickly to safeguarding concerns.

MyConcern

An online safeguarding system used in education and other settings to record, monitor and manage concerns about children.

Out of court / out of court disposal

Out-of-court disposals (OOCs), such as Community Resolutions and Conditional Cautions, offer an alternative to prosecution for less serious offences by focusing on rehabilitation through conditions like attending a course or participating in other interventions. In this report, it refers specifically to the out of court parenting support option, which requires parents to engage with parenting support as a condition of resolution.

Out of Court Parenting Support (OOCPS) Scheme

Part of the CCG, the scheme involves Welsh Government funding provided to local authorities to deliver parenting support in conjunction with an out of court disposal, offering an alternative to criminal prosecution.

Section 47 enquiries

Enquiries made by local authorities under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 when there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. They are a part of child protection procedures.

UNCRC

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. An international human rights treaty that sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of children. The Act aligns with Article 19 of the UNCRC, which provides a right for children to be protected from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents or others who look after them.

Wales Safeguarding Procedures

National safeguarding guidance in Wales that sets out common standards, processes and expectations for safeguarding children and adults at risk. This is also referenced in the [All Wales Practice Guide](#) specifically in relation to the legislation.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research aims

The Welsh Government commissioned Miller Research to undertake qualitative research with a range of professionals across health, education, crime and justice, local authorities and the third sector. The aim was to explore the ways in which the introduction of the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020 (hereafter referred to as 'the Act') has affected the frontline delivery of services that engage with children and families. The Act removed the legal defence of 'reasonable punishment', which had previously been available to parents and those with parental responsibility, with the effect of making it illegal for anyone to physically punish a child in Wales.

The Act places a duty on Welsh Ministers to conduct a post implementation review and to publish an interim report 3 years and a final report 5 years after the Act came into force in 2022.

The findings from this research have contributed to the 3-year-post-implementation review of the Act. Specifically, the research provided contextual information from the perspective of relevant professionals to add to the existing research evidence base on the impact of the Act to date.

The specific objectives of the research were to:

- capture levels of awareness of the Act amongst professionals interacting with children and families
- explore professionals' knowledge of materials/guidance produced by the Welsh Government relating to the Act and any other guidance produced in response to the Act and where to access this information and guidance ^[footnote 1]
- establish views from professionals about the training and support available to them in relation to the Act, along with their perceptions of the value and accessibility of this support
- investigate how far the Act has empowered professionals to provide clear, unambiguous advice to parents and carers that any level of physical punishment is illegal in Wales
- explore the referral process followed by professionals when identifying instances of physical punishment
- understand how professionals identify and handle cases not deemed physical punishment under the Act
- understand any effects the Act has had on professionals' workload and varied working practices, including training because of the Act
- capture professionals' perspectives on the extent to which the Act equips them to protect Children's Rights, and how it has enabled them to protect Children's Rights to be protected from violence, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Footnotes:

[1] This included any guidance produced by their own organisation.

- understand the differences between the referral process to children’s services (before physical punishment of children by parents and carers became illegal) and the referral process to the criminal justice service after the Act came into force

1.2. Policy context

1.2.1. The Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020

This section of the report provides an overview of the policy context to the [Children \(Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment\) \(Wales\) Act 2020](#), hereafter referred to as The Act. The Act sits within Wales’ wider policy on equality and human rights, in particular the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011.

The Act removed the long-standing common-law ‘reasonable punishment’ defence in Wales. The legislation did not create a new criminal offence, rather it removed a 160-year-old legal defence that had previously been available to parents and those with parental responsibility. The legislative change gives children in Wales the same legal protection from assault as adults. Any physical force used with intent to punish a child, for example smacking, hitting, slapping, shaking or rough handling, is now a crime. The courts will apply the existing offences of common assault or battery, and parents can no longer rely on a potential defence of ‘reasonable punishment’ in the way they could prior to the Act coming into force. The policy intent is rights-based, to align the law in Wales with Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and combines legal reform with a preventative, support-led approach aimed at reducing use of physical punishment while avoiding unnecessary criminalisation of families.

The Welsh Government undertook an extensive multi-media public awareness campaign before the legislation came into force to ensure as many people as possible were aware of the forthcoming change in the law. To support professionals, parents and the public in understanding the change in law, the Welsh Government developed a range of explanatory resources. The Welsh Government website provides a range of information for members of the public and professionals including leaflets available in multiple languages, short films of the views of professionals, a poster, briefing note and sector-specific fact sheets.

The Welsh Government also worked with partner organisations, such as Children in Wales, to develop resources aimed at helping to support professionals communicate with children and families about the change in law ([Timmins, 2025](#)). The Welsh Government has continued to raise awareness of the law and provide information, advice and support for parents about positive alternatives to physical punishment, through the TEULU Cymru communications approach linked to the Parenting: Give it time campaign.

A further key development was the introduction of the Out-of-Court Parenting Support (OOCPS) Scheme. Between April 2022 and March 2025, the Welsh Government provided up to £2.4 million in funding to enable parents to access bespoke parenting support and advice as an alternative to prosecution under the Act, helping to ensure that the response to

physical punishment is proportionate and focused on behaviour change rather than criminalisation. This is delivered through local authority services and sits alongside existing programmes providing parental support such as Flying Start and the Healthy Child Wales Programme. Local authorities often embed out-of-court parenting support workers within existing family support services and establish information hubs to adapt and share resources locally.

1.2.2. Wider relevant legislation and policy

[The Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) places a statutory duty on public bodies to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking a long-term, preventative, integrated and collaborative approach to policy and service delivery. It requires public services to set and work towards wellbeing objectives, involve people and communities in decisions, and prioritise prevention and sustainable outcomes rather than short-term fixes.

The Act, which removed the legal defence of reasonable punishment of children, reinforces these wellbeing principles by shifting the emphasis from tolerating physical punishment to protecting children and promoting positive parenting. In practice, the Act complements the Well-being Act's focus on prevention and collaboration: it increases the imperative for multi-agency, early-intervention services to be available and coordinated so that safeguarding and supportive responses become the norm.

[The Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) places duties on local authorities around joint working, early intervention and prevention and underpins schemes such as the OOCPS Scheme. It establishes statutory duties on local authorities and partner agencies to promote wellbeing, intervene early and work jointly to protect children, including duties to report and to co-operate. These duties provide the operational framework for implementing the Act as the latter removed the 'reasonable punishment' defence rather than creating a new offence. Agencies use the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Wales Safeguarding Procedures, as well as the [All Wales Practice Guide](#), to determine whether a safeguarding referral, an assessment or an out of court disposal (OOCDS) with parenting support is required. It supplies the legal powers and partnership routes involving referral, assessment, support or protection plan, and use of OOCPS where appropriate, that turn the Act's legal change into front-line practice.

[The Rights of Children and Young Persons \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#) places a duty on Welsh Ministers to have due regard to the UNCRC when exercising their functions. Article 19 of the UNCRC provides a right for children to be protected from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents or others who look after them. This qualitative research has explored the extent to which professionals feel equipped to provide rights-based advice and whether they consider referral practices support children's right to protection from violence while also securing proportionate, family-centred outcomes.

Other relevant cross-cutting legislation include the [Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) and the [Equality Act 2010](#). This research considered how safeguarding responsibilities operate in practice, and whether any tensions,

for example, between adult victim support and child-protection thresholds affect referral decisions and inclusive engagement practice including access for groups with protected characteristics, neurodivergent families, British Sign Language users, and Welsh-language speakers.

1.2.3. Other related policy

The Welsh Government has combined legislative change with information, communications and support offers for parents and professionals. The OOCPS grant funds bespoke parenting support that police forces can offer in conjunction with an OOCDC and an alternative to criminal prosecution, where appropriate. This parenting support is closely aligned with universal and targeted services such as [Flying Start](#) and the [Healthy Child Wales Programme](#), which emphasise behaviour-management and early support for parents and caregivers, as well as the [Parenting. Give It Time](#) campaign, which provides practical tips and expert advice on parenting. Moreover, local authorities delivering OOCPS often establish dedicated information hubs for parents and professionals to provide accessible, up-to-date guidance, and self-help resources.

Official guidance and expectations for professional practice centre on giving clear advice to parents about the legal change, on identifying and responding to instances of physical punishment in line with safeguarding duties, on distinguishing less severe disciplinary action from abuse, and on signposting families to support.

1.3. Report structure

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- section 2 sets out the method undertaken in this research
- section 3 covers the findings from the research
- section 4 provides the conclusions to the research

2. Methodology

2.1. Scoping and preparation

The research began with a short scoping phase involving a review of policy documents and 7 scoping interviews, which were primarily with policy officials within the Welsh Government. The purpose of this preparatory phase was to understand the background and context to the Act, including the details of the communications and engagement campaign around the Act prior to it coming into force, and training or guidance for professionals that was produced by the Welsh Government in relation to the Act. The scoping interviews also provided Welsh Government officials with the opportunity to contribute suggestions around the sample structure and discussion topics for the main fieldwork phase.

2.2. Fieldwork Phase

2.2.1. Qualitative interviews with professionals

The core element of the research involved 41 semi-structured, qualitative interviews with professionals working across a range of sectors including social services, health, criminal justice and education. The fieldwork used a purposive sample of professionals involved at different stages of the Act and across different professional groups to secure a wide range of different viewpoints. In total, interviews were conducted with:

- 15 out of court parenting support workers
- 5 directors of child services
- 4 safeguarding and parenting leads
- 3 children and family court advisory and support service (Cafcass Cymru)
- 2 members of staff in family support services
- 2 senior family support workers
- 2 police officers
- 2 head teachers
- 1 consultant paediatrician
- 1 midwife
- 1 health visitor
- 1 representative from a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH)
- 1 Flying Start lead
- 1 senior district crown court prosecutor

Interviews were conducted over Microsoft Teams between June and August 2025 and focused on each of the aims of the research. Topic guides for this research can be found in Annex A.

2.2.2. Online survey of professionals

Although the main objective of the research was to capture qualitative data from professionals, the in-depth interviews were complemented with an online survey of relevant professionals, to extend the breadth of engagement. The bilingual survey was open between 14 July 2025 and 21 August 2025 and received a total of 135 responses. The survey questionnaire (please see Annex B) covered the same aims of the qualitative research, although it included fewer, and more closed questions than the qualitative interview topic guides.

The breakdown of respondents by profession is outlined below:

- local authority and out of court parenting support workers: 26%
- other local authority/government: 23%
- childcare and play practitioners 22.5%
- healthcare: 10%
- police force: 9%
- education: 6%
- social services: 3%
- family advice and support services: 2% ^[footnote 2]
- not applicable or unsure 0.7%

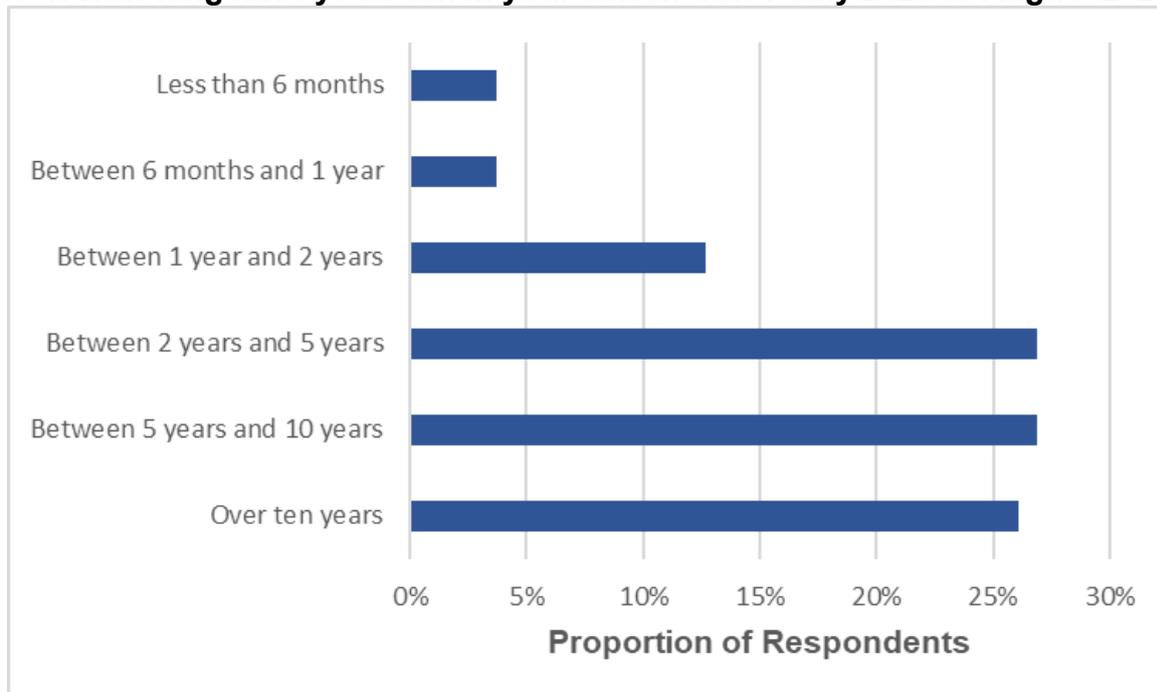
Survey respondents were also asked how long they have been in their current role. More than half of respondents (53%) had been in their current role at least 5 years, whilst just under 8% had been in post less than a year. The full breakdown is shown below ^[footnote 3].

Footnotes:

[2] Total may not add up to 100%, due to rounding.

[3] Total may not add up to 100%, due to rounding.

Figure 1: How long have you been in your current role? July 2025 to August 2025



Source: Source: Survey of professionals Q2. N=134

Description of Figure 1: A bar graph showing how long professionals who responded to the survey have been in their role. Most have been in the role more than 2 years with 27% between 2 and 5 years, 27% between 5 and 10 years, and 26% over 10 years.

2.3. Limitations

This report presents primarily qualitative findings and should be considered in that context. The research draws on the views and experiences of professionals working with children and families, gathered through in-depth interviews and an online survey. Qualitative methods are designed to explore perspectives and identify common themes rather than to generate statistically representative results. The findings therefore provide illustrative insights into professional experiences and perceptions rather than quantifiable measures of impact.

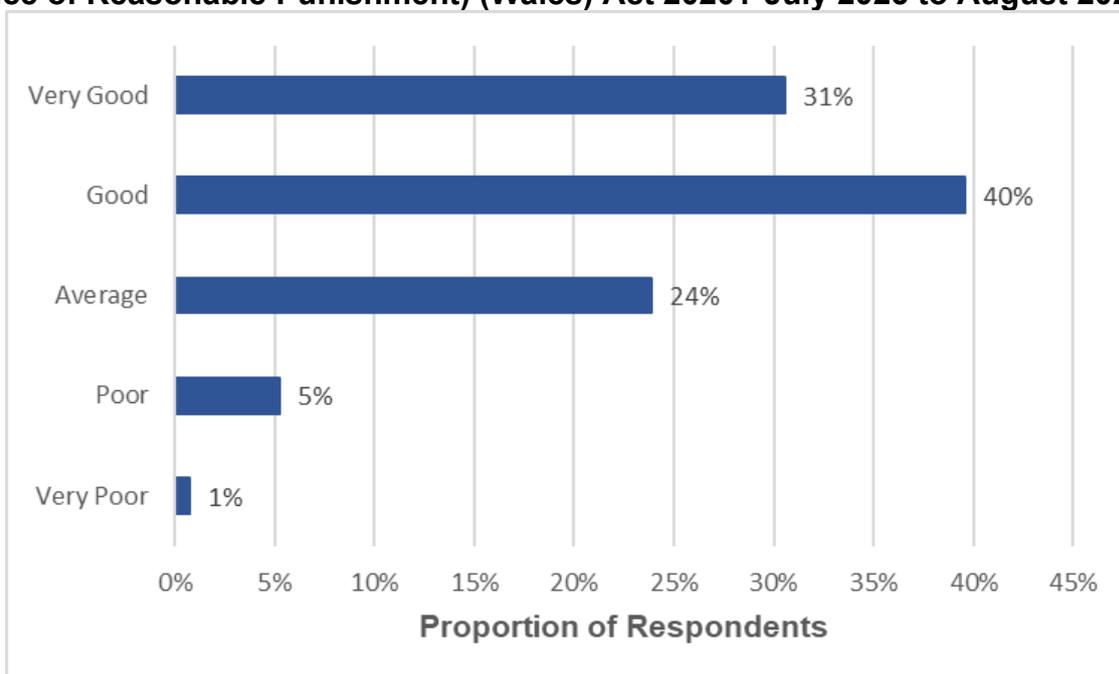
Participants represented a range of roles and levels of seniority within their respective sectors. This diversity offers a broad overview of practice and opinion but also means that perspectives may vary according to individuals' responsibilities, professional background and level of involvement in frontline delivery. The findings should therefore be interpreted as reflecting a range of professional viewpoints rather than a single, sector-wide position.

3. Findings

3.1. Professional awareness of the Act

Professionals are almost universally aware of the Act and its purpose, as indicated in Figure 2 below. All professionals interviewed displayed an accurate understanding of the Act, perhaps because they were aware in advance of the interview that they would be discussing the Act. Self-rated understanding of the Act amongst survey respondents was also high, with 71% of survey respondents rating their understanding as good (40%) or very good (31%). Only 6% rated their understanding as poor (5%) or very poor (1%), as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: How would you rate your understanding of the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020? July 2025 to August 2025



Source: Source: Survey of professionals Q3. N=134

Description of Figure 2: A bar graph showing how professionals rate their own understanding of the Act. It shows a clear trend for professionals to say they have a good (40%) or very good (31%) understanding, compared to an average understanding (24%). Just 5% rated their understanding as poor and 1% as very poor.

Extent of understanding covered a large part of discussions about the Act’s remit and purpose. During qualitative interviews, many professionals noted that by removing the defence of reasonable punishment, the Act has made it illegal to physically punish children in Wales. One professional commented: “I don’t think there’s anybody [working] in safeguarding who isn’t aware of the law change.” Others noted that the Act and the associated legal change is commonly called a “smacking ban”. Many, including professionals in health, education, local authorities, and Cafcass Cymru explained how the Act brings clarity and makes their roles easier, by removing any misunderstanding about what is and is not acceptable parenting behaviour. Others said that it strengthens

professionals' authority in protecting children's rights and gives children the same legal protections as adults. More nuanced understanding was shown by some who explained how the Act played a role in improving parenting. They described how the intent was not to criminalise parents, but to educate and change parenting culture, through parenting support programmes including the tailored parenting support provided in conjunction with an OOC.

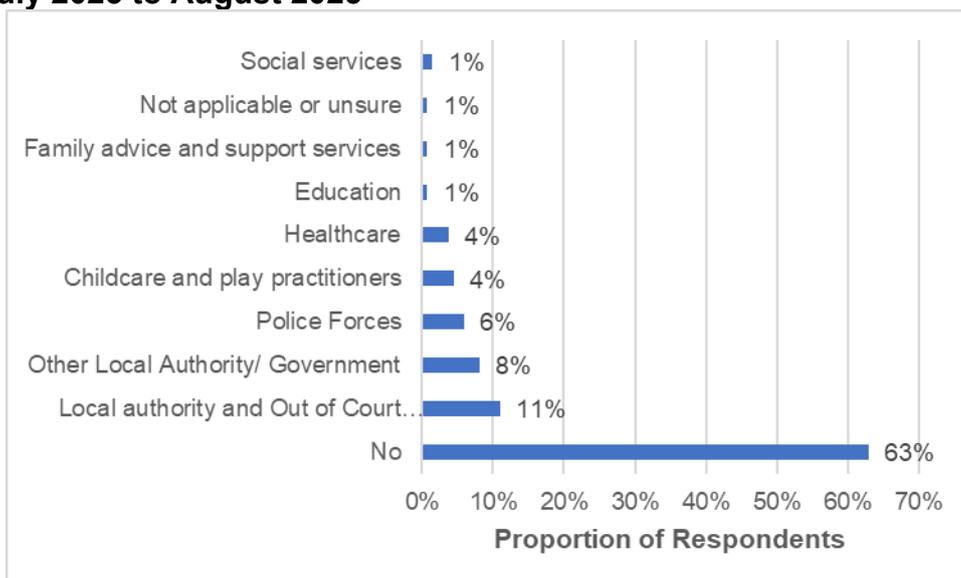
Although overall understanding of the Act was high, there were occasional references to colleagues who were less familiar with the rationale behind the change. A small number of interviewees suggested that professionals who do not work with children on a daily basis, particularly in parts of the health sector, may have a more limited awareness of the evidence underpinning the legislation or the reasons for removing the defence of reasonable punishment. However, this view was not widely shared, and others emphasised that the Welsh Government's communication and publicity work had been effective in embedding knowledge of the Act across the workforce.

3.2. Awareness of Welsh Government produced materials and any guidance produced in response to the Act

Awareness of materials and guidance produced by the Welsh Government in relation to the Act was more mixed. While many professionals recalled the high-profile awareness-raising campaigns directed at the general public, there was less consistent awareness of materials specifically designed for professionals.

Just under two-thirds (63%) of survey respondents were unaware of any materials, guidance or training for professionals relating to the Act, as shown in Figure 3 below. Amongst the remaining 37% who were aware, awareness was lowest amongst those working in healthcare, education and the police and amongst childcare and play practitioners. Of those who were aware of materials, guidance or training almost all were out of court parenting support workers or professionals in social services or other local authority / government roles; however, a large proportion of respondents in these 3 groups were unaware of any training, information or guidance available to people in their profession in response to the Act.

Figure 3: Are you aware of any training, information or guidance available to people in your profession in response to the Act? (e.g., practice guides, videos, leaflets, courses) July 2025 to August 2025



Source: Source: Survey of professionals Q6. N=135

Description of Figure 3: A bar graph showing 63% of professionals are not aware of any training, information or guidance available to people in your profession in response to the Act. The graph separates out responses of those who are aware into the sectors they work in. Local authority and out of court staff are the most likely to be aware (11%) followed by other local authority / government professionals (8%) and police forces (6%).

Among those familiar with guidance, several professionals (including those working in social services, the criminal justice sector, health and education) referred to resources produced by their own organisations such as an internal online media pack, which included an introductory training video for staff. Out of court parenting support workers highlighted that the guidance and training opportunities shared by the Welsh Government had been helpful in supporting their work. Health professionals also noted that literature aimed at supporting families had been produced and were considered useful when engaging with parents. One professional commented that the guidance was “really helped everybody to understand, that this is not about punishment”, but rather about supporting and educating parents to parent more effectively.

Not all professionals, however, were aware of guidance and materials tailored to their role or sector. Some explained guidance and materials were most visible around the time of implementation, but appeared to lessen in subsequent years, with several stating they were “not aware of any follow-up support.” In response, many local authorities developed their own resources, such as leaflets, emails, and internal communications, to ensure staff had the necessary information. For some – primarily those working in out of court parenting support – this was seen as appropriate given that local authorities commonly adopt their own methods and approaches. For others (including health professionals and those in the criminal justice sector), a more unified and consistent approach from the Welsh Government would have been preferable. A small number of professionals also suggested that wider

dissemination of support materials may have been hindered by the pandemic, when public messaging was dominated by information on social distancing and other related health priorities.

Despite these variations in awareness of available support and resources between professionals, public-facing campaigns were largely valued by professionals. Many reported that social media campaigns and in-person activities, such as distributing flyers in supermarkets and community centres, not only raised awareness among parents and carers but also helped clarify the law for professionals themselves. These campaigns gave professionals greater confidence when discussing the legislation with families and reinforced the clarity the Act was intended to provide.

3.3. Professionals' use of support available on the Act and their views on its usefulness and accessibility

For those professionals who were aware of, and had received, support and guidance, the materials were described as useful in providing clear and tailored advice relevant to different sectors. In most instances, this related to materials produced by the Welsh Government (for example fact sheets for different sectors and online videos on the Welsh Government website), although some professionals commented on materials developed by their own organisations. Factsheets developed for specific professional groups were valued for setting out expectations and explaining how the legislation affected day-to-day practice. One out of court parenting officer described the guidance as “good and up to date.” The flexibility of the resources was also considered a strength, on the grounds that local authorities were able to adapt them to suit local needs and contexts. In some areas, internal training sessions were delivered to different teams, which not only provided reminders and updates on the legislation, but also created space for interactive discussion. One local authority interviewee commented that the guidance from the Welsh Government was “clear-cut and transparent”, enabling them to “hit the ground running.” For CPS staff, guidance on parenting programmes was viewed as especially beneficial in supporting decision-making around out of court outcomes.

Alongside these strengths, professionals also identified areas where additional guidance would be welcome. A number expressed a desire for more information about the rationale behind the legislation, including why physical punishment is harmful to children and why the defence of reasonable punishment was removed. Some suggested that this could be reinforced through clearer national scale messaging. Others commented that the pre-recorded online training did not provide an opportunity for professionals to ask questions about the Act or to challenge the information being shared and suggested that more interactive training formats would have been preferable.

Practical aspects of implementation were also raised. Several professionals felt that more clarity was needed around reporting and monitoring processes, particularly in relation to what information should be collected for referral of cases and equality monitoring. A local authority manager noted that further guidance on working with schools, and the forms of

support available to schools following disclosure of a parent physically disciplining their child, would encourage stronger collaboration across sectors and referral of these cases to the police. It was suggested that “schools are hesitant to contact the police [because] they don’t want to harm relationships with families” and therefore the scale of physical punishment being disclosed in schools is not necessarily reflected in referral figures.

This feedback from professionals working with schools was echoed by health professionals, who also emphasised the importance of consistent public health messaging across Wales on the Act.

Survey findings reflected this mixed picture. Of those who were aware of guidance, 42% of respondents rated Welsh Government guidance on the Act as good or very good, a further 38% described it as average and 8% as poor. There were no notable sectoral trends in this response however, with professionals in all sectors (including those working in local authorities, police, healthcare and education) considering guidance as good or very good whilst other representatives from each of these sectors rating it as poor or very poor. This indicated a level of subjectivity in this feedback and/or geographical differences in the type of guidance shared or how effectively it has been disseminated.

Several professionals also stressed the importance of reaching diverse communities more effectively. It was suggested that engagement could be strengthened by working in partnership with community leaders, particularly when working with Traveller groups or ethnic minority communities. Out of court parenting support workers also recommended creating more opportunities for knowledge sharing between local authorities; specifically in relation to engaging harder-to-reach groups, while one health stakeholder suggested that more “targeted outreach [to] Cardiff’s multicultural population [where] many are unaware of the law” should be linked to wider national campaigns.

This relates to another theme mentioned by a small proportion of health and education professionals, which was the need for “an information refresher”. One commented that “it would be useful to re-circulate and re-publicise some of the materials that came out initially as the Act came into force.” Several professionals noted that it would be helpful to have reminders of the Act, either through re-publication of existing resources or by issuing updated information packs.

Collaboration between local authorities was widely viewed as a strength. The out of court parenting network, established following the Act, was frequently praised as a valuable forum for sharing ideas and exploring training opportunities. One out of court parenting support worker also mentioned the value of having Welsh Government staff attend network meetings “to help answer questions” whilst another cited “a training video” that the Welsh Government produced in response to a request for more guidance, which “was really helpful to out of court [parenting support] officers [sic].” A further 2 out of court parenting support workers noted that regional groups had been established that had been “really helpful for practitioners” providing them with an opportunity to share “information available from Welsh Government.” Nonetheless, this positive feedback was caveated in one case, where the out of court parenting support worker felt it would be useful to have more consistent, Wales-

wide “formal training or on-going supervision from Welsh Government” to address any regional differences in practice.

3.4. Providing clear advice: professionals’ role in communicating the illegality of physical punishment in Wales

In the same way that professionals across all relevant sectors generally demonstrated a good level of understanding of the Act and what it represents, the consensus was that the change in legislation has created clarity for parents in relation to the law around physical punishment. Stakeholders referred to the “confusion”, “ambiguity” or “grey area” that existed prior to the Act, when some level of physical punishment of a child could be defended as “reasonable punishment”, which in itself was subjective: “I think it's much clearer ... there's no grey area ... before the Act came in, you thought, ‘What is too much?’ You know it is a fine line” (education professional).

Out of court parenting workers (most of whom worked in roles delivering parenting support before the Act came into force) commented that the Act has removed any awkwardness or difficulty when discussing parenting practices, particularly with parents who would not have opposed physical punishment of their own volition: “If parents argue [in defence of physical punishment] based on tradition or culture we can explain it is illegal” (out of court parenting worker).

It was also suggested that the Act and the removal of any legal defence of physical punishment aligned much better with a “holistic perspective on parenting” that many of the out of court parenting programmes (and other parenting programmes, for example those delivered through Flying Start and Families First) are delivering. Related to this, a Cafcass Cymru staff member considered it “really helpful” that professionals “no longer rely on wellbeing arguments” such as “don’t smack because it harms self-esteem”, but instead “can point directly to legislation”.

A minority of professionals (including some of those working in education and health settings) felt that whilst the Act had provided clarity both for parents and the professionals engaging with them, more guidance was needed in terms of communicating the legislation and why it was brought in to parents. For example, it was noted by 2 health professionals that it would be useful to have a succinct summary of the research evidence of the detrimental impact that physical punishment can have on children, which could be shared with parents during discussions. Despite the existence of the out of court parenting support as well as a range of other pre-existing parenting programmes (including positive parenting initiatives like Parenting. Give it time), one teaching professional felt that more hands-on support was needed for some parents on positive parenting techniques – for example parenting classes – particularly for those who had physically punished their children in the past.

One professional working in children’s services reported isolated instances where staff avoided having conversations about physical punishment with parents, given the risk that

this could lead to disclosure by the parent and the need to involve the police, which could consequently jeopardise their professional relationship with the family.

Interviewees were virtually unanimous in being confident that the Act has enabled them or their organisation to provide clear, unambiguous advice to parents and carers that any level of physical punishment is illegal in Wales.

The majority (59%) of survey respondents reported that they had experience of discussing the Act and its legal changes with parents or caregivers in their current role. Interestingly, the profile of professionals who had experience of discussing the Act with parents and those who did not have experience was very similar, with each of the main sectors (including social services, education, health, police and childcare) included in both cohorts. This is likely to reflect the fact that in some cases the survey was completed by professionals in senior roles, who would no longer have direct engagement with parents and carers.

In terms of confidence in delivering this message, a larger majority (68%) of professionals who answered this question in the survey were either confident (33%) or very confident (35%) that that the Act has enabled them or their organisation to provide clear, unambiguous advice to parents and carers that any level of physical punishment is illegal in Wales. Fewer than 1 in 20 (4%) responded that they were not confident in response to this question, whilst 28% claimed to be “somewhat confident”.

Interviewees and survey respondents were also asked whether they felt there was any confusion or misunderstanding amongst parents who they worked with about the law. More than half (60%) of respondents considered there was “some confusion” amongst these parents, with some citing cultural and language barriers, a lack of knowledge and lack of awareness of the promotional campaign around the law hindering understanding for some parents.

Interviewees referenced confusion or misunderstanding amongst certain groups, specifically:

- older generations (including grandparents) who grew up at a time when physical punishment of children was widespread
- asylum seekers and other people who were not born in the UK and may be unaware of different laws in Wales

It was also noted that there remains a minority of parents in Wales with “entrenched beliefs” around their rights as a parent to choose how to manage their children’s behaviour. Some professionals provided a more nuanced picture of parental misunderstanding. For example, one health professional commented: “[there are] definitely the people who think it’s a smacking ban – rather than extending to children the existing laws that protect adults from grievous bodily harm.” This same individual felt it is important “to get the word across that it’s not the [smacking ban], because otherwise somebody might burn a child ... because [calling the Act a smacking ban] almost minimises the fact that this is actually abusing somebody.” (Health professional). Whilst the Act has never been promoted as a “smacking ban” by the Welsh Government, this professional felt that this pejorative label that had

inadvertently gained traction on social media had undermined the aim of the Act, which was to protect children from all forms of violence.

Another professional reported that parents say they are unaware of the Act and the change in the law, but that as professionals working in safeguarding, they do not know whether the parents are telling the truth.

Other professionals from a range of sectors including health, social services, several out of court parenting support workers and Cafcass Cymru felt there was no confusion or misunderstanding amongst parents in relation to the law. One stakeholder commented: "It's made it black and white ... ultimately they [parents] welcomed it because it was really clear, ok, this [physically punishing a child] is not acceptable." (Health professional)

Out of court parenting support workers stated that "parents know why they are being referred [for out of court parenting support]" and that "the law itself is quite self-explanatory". It was also suggested by one director of children's services that the increase in self-referrals to parenting support was an indication of parents being aware of the law and the need to avoid using physical punishment.

One out of court parenting support worker noted that some parents can be "scared" about having a criminal record or the potential damage done to their reputation or career as a result of having to attend a parenting support programme as a condition of receiving an O OCD. Although it is only a subtle difference, this individual suggested that it was the potential repercussions of a prosecution that can be the main focal point in relation to the Act for some parents, highlighting the need for awareness raising that the Act is about positive parenting rather than criminalising parents.

3.5. Professional practices

The professional approach to responding to incidents of (alleged) physical punishment does not follow a single, uniform pathway that is consistent across Wales. Instead, a range of practitioners become involved at different stages, depending on how concerns first emerge and how cases progress through safeguarding and legal systems. For some, their role centres on the early identification of potential incidents, often through day-to-day contact with children and families in education, health, or community settings. Others encounter cases only once they have already been referred or escalated, contributing specialist assessments, interventions, or legal decisions.

3.5.1. Identifying cases of physical punishment

The identification of physical punishment is a multi-layered process that involves a range of professionals working with children and families. While routes into the system vary, frontline staff in education, health and social care often play the most significant role in first recognising concerns.

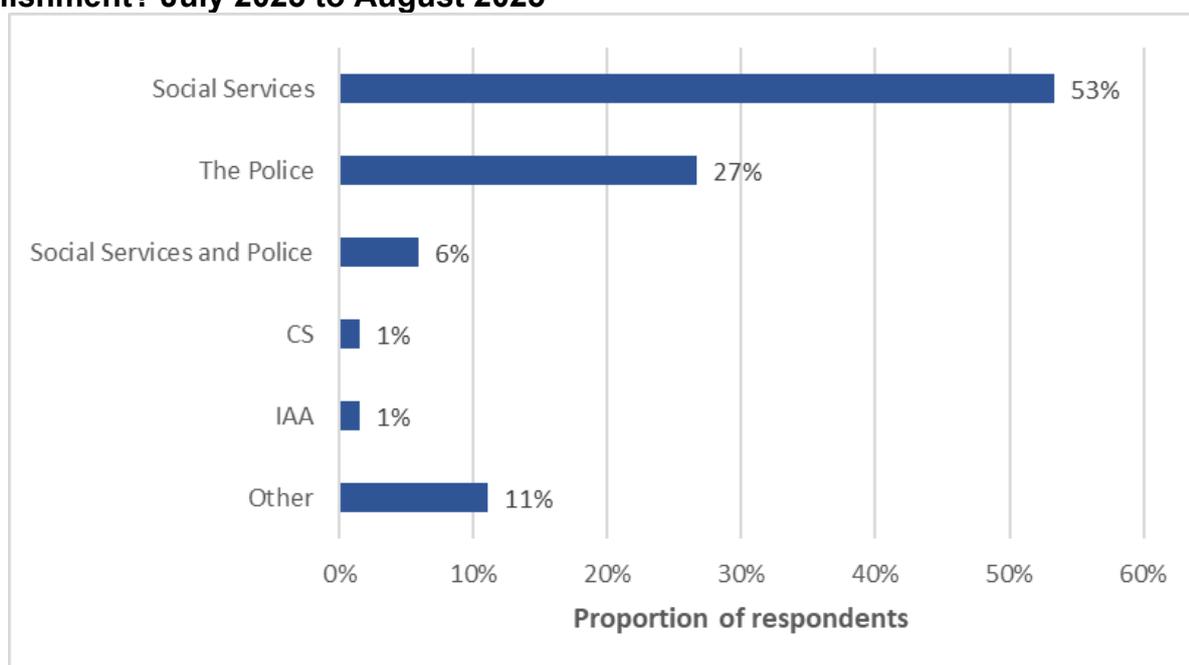
Professionals working in education settings who participated in interviews suggested they are frequently among the first to identify potential cases. Staff may notice visible injuries or

observe changes in a child’s behaviour that raise concern. Children themselves sometimes disclose that they have been physically punished, and such disclosures are usually made to a trusted adult in school or other setting (e.g.: childcare).

Health and family support services also reported contributing to early identification. Home visits, whether conducted as universal contacts by health visitors or more targeted support through enhanced family programmes (e.g.: Flying Start), can bring issues to light. Although these visits are not specifically designed to detect physical punishment, they can reveal injuries or family dynamics that trigger concern.

For many professionals, cases are first identified on the submission of a safeguarding referral to the local authority. Interviewees noted that referrals can originate from other professionals, the police or, in a minority of instances, parents who self-refer. Local authorities then carry out initial investigations, which may lead to a multi-agency strategy discussion to determine whether Section 47 enquiries are required. If so, and where they are not already involved, the police become engaged at this stage.

Figure 4: Where would you make a referral to if you had identified a case of physical punishment? July 2025 to August 2025



Source: Survey of professionals Q14. N=135

Description of Figure 4: A bar graph showing where interviewees would make a referral if they had identified a case of physical punishment. It shows that just over half (53%) would refer to social services, whilst 27% would refer to the police. Others would refer to both (6%) or a range of other options (13%).

Some professionals encounter cases only once they have been identified and referred by others. Out of court parenting support workers, for example, do not identify cases directly but respond to referrals passed on by other agencies. Similarly, the CPS becomes involved

only after police investigations or during legal proceedings. In both instances, the identification of physical punishment has already occurred elsewhere.

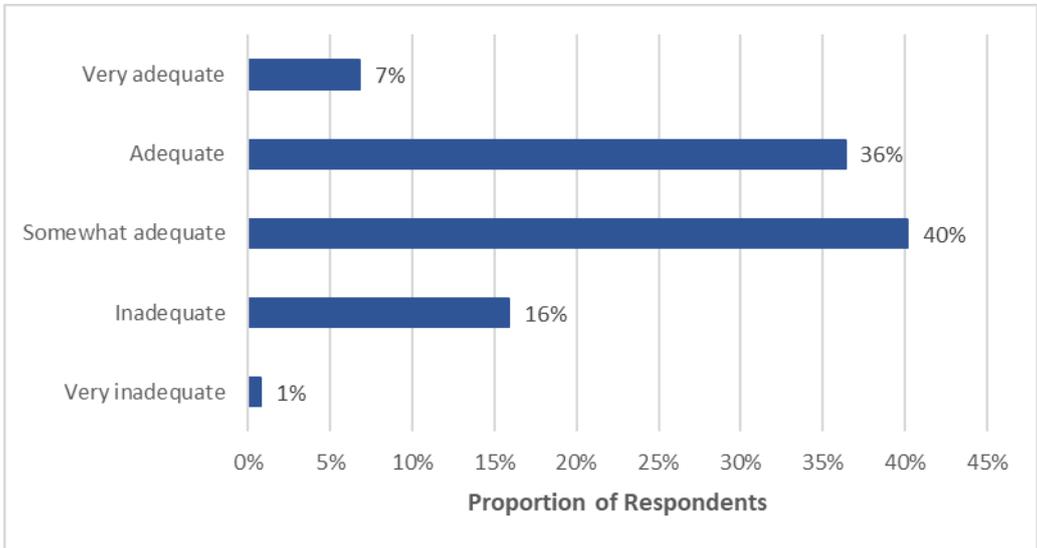
Interviewees noted several challenges in identifying cases. Ambiguity can be a problem, particularly where disclosures are made by very young children. Accounts may change over time, or children may be unwilling to repeat their disclosures to other professionals. Where there is clear physical evidence of injury, professionals reported that cases were easier to identify and act upon.

Another difficulty arises from over-reporting. A health professional involved in safeguarding reported that early years professionals (for example child-care workers) can be excessively cautious, making referrals to social services for bruises or marks that are later found to have non-safeguarding causes. While this caution stems from a desire to avoid missing serious concerns, it can damage trust between parents and professionals.

Despite the challenges, most interviewees expressed confidence in methods used for identifying cases of physical punishment. They highlighted the value of experienced and qualified staff, and the strength of relationships between agencies, as factors that underpin effective practice.

Survey findings supported this view. Just over two-fifths (43%) of respondents described current practices for identifying and handling cases as adequate or very adequate, compared to around one-sixth (17%) who considered them inadequate or very inadequate.

Figure 5: To what extent do you think the current methods for identifying and handling cases of physical punishment are adequate? July 2025 to August 2025



Source: Survey of professionals. Q12. N=135

Description of Figure 5: A bar graph showing to what extent professionals think that current methods for identifying and handling cases of physical punishment are adequate. It shows that a similar proportion consider the current methods somewhat adequate (40%) or

Adequate (36%). Some consider methods inadequate (16%) a few consider current methods very adequate (7%), and a minority think they are very inadequate (1%).

3.5.2. Deciding what is and is not a case of physical punishment

Deciding whether a case constitutes physical punishment involves a sequence of judgements by different professionals at different points in the process. These judgements are not always straightforward. In some instances, cases are more severe than physical punishment and therefore treated as a potential child protection matter. In other instances, the cases do not meet the threshold for further action.

The first stage of decision-making typically rests with frontline practitioners. Their assessment is guided by professional experience and the policies or guidance relevant to their role.

Interviewees were clear that thresholds for intervention have not changed as a result of the Act. This means that not all incidents of physical punishment are treated as child protection cases. Factors influencing decisions include the degree of injury sustained, any previous involvement of the family with police or social services, and evidence of violence in the home. A professional working within a MASH explained that these factors remain central to determining whether or how a case proceeds. This perspective was echoed by other professionals who described the importance of weighing multiple elements of family history and context alongside the immediate incident.

Parental admission of physical punishment is also seen as a critical factor. Access to an OOCPS is dependent on the parent accepting responsibility for the offence they have committed and expressing genuine remorse and, in cases where relevant, there being sufficient evidence to proceed. Without admission, it is more difficult for professionals to progress a case through the OOCPS pathway. Where parental admission is absent, cases may be referred to the CPS for a decision around whether to charge the parent and bring them through the criminal justice system. According to the experience of some interviewees, this is relatively rare, and it is generally the more severe cases involving clear physical harm that progress this far.

Police investigate all cases that come to their attention, whether referred by other agencies or identified directly. Their decision-making reflects similar considerations to those used by local authorities. The availability and strength of evidence play an important role in determining the outcome. Possible decisions at this stage include taking no further action, issuing a conditional caution, pursuing an OOCPS, or proceeding to prosecution.

The [Out of Court Parenting Support Grant Guidance](#) refers to the 2 tests that police and the CPS need to apply when considering whether to take action in a case of physical punishment of a child, namely:

- is there sufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction?
- is a prosecution in the public interest?

These tests were mentioned by interviewees from both the CPS and the police.

Across all agencies, decision-making combines the use of strict criteria with the professional judgement of staff. This balance ensures that referrals consider both the evidence available and the relevant professional's assessment of risk to the child. The result is a process in which not all cases of physical punishment trigger the same level of response, but where decisions are made with reference to the severity of the incident and the wider context of family circumstances.

3.5.3. How do professionals refer cases when identified?

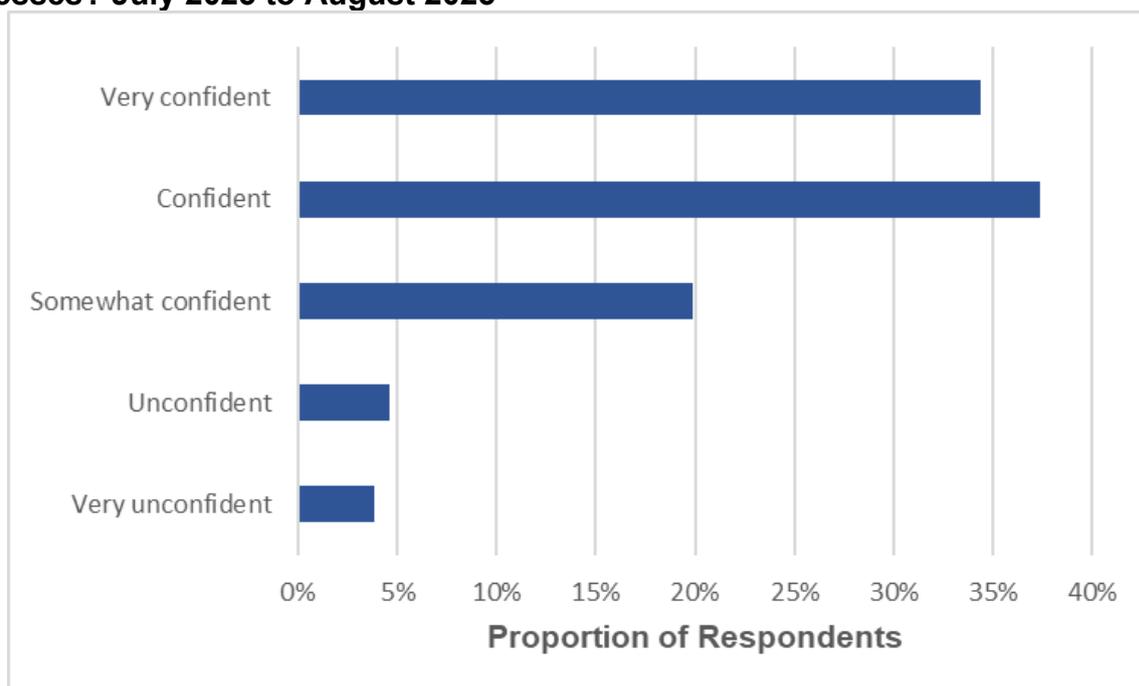
Referring cases of physical punishment most commonly involves professionals sharing information with local authority safeguarding teams. While terminology varies between sectors, with references to "social services" in education, "local authority safeguarding" in health and simply "the local authority" in Cafcass Cymru, the referral routes are broadly consistent.

Local authority safeguarding will typically determine 1 of 2 referral routes. Either:

- parenting support, possibly through an existing programme such as Families First, or
- referrals to the police

In practice, these routes are not always mutually distinct. A children's services professional and a safeguarding lead (from different local authorities) both explained that staff were clear about escalating all incidents of physical punishment to the police and to parenting support "as soon as possible".

Figure 6: How confident do you feel in making referrals and navigating these processes? July 2025 to August 2025



Source: Survey of professionals. Q15. N=135

Description of Figure 6: A bar graph showing how confident professionals feel making referrals and navigating processes. The graph shows most professionals (72% of survey respondents) expressed confidence in this process and are either confident (37%) or very confident (34%) in making a referral.

Most referrals to the police usually come from professionals in other organisations, with the highest numbers reported to be from local authority social services. One professional working in a police force said most cases are not progressed by the police, and instead, following an assessment of the level of injury and the wider circumstances they would be referred back to social services to implement positive parenting support.

Out of court parenting support was originally designed as an option so that police did not need to progress all cases to criminal prosecution. Some out of court parenting support workers described close contact with the police. Good relationships exist with communication back and forth on parental engagement (or non-engagement) with support. However, many interviewees reported that the number of out of court referrals from the police were much lower than expected. Several out of court parenting support workers and local authority managers also reported that information within police referrals was, in some cases, brief and lacked detail.

There is a desire amongst some out of court parenting support workers to know the number of cases that police have handled, what the outcomes were, and how many progress to court or result in an OOC. Some of these out of court parenting support workers considered the low number of referrals could be attributed to the variable approaches adopted or to discretion taken by individual police officers, with one describing police referrals as “incredibly inconsistent”. Another out of court parenting support worker was

concerned that, in their opinion, cases seemed to be handled differently by the police depending on the socioeconomic status of the areas in which they worked.

Where there is evidence and it is deemed appropriate, the police can charge even in less serious cases. The difference between a case going to a charge or a community resolution depends on the presence and timing of remorse for the incident, and the extent of previous police and social services involvement for the individuals. Ambiguous cases, or those deemed more serious, are referred to the CPS. They may also decide that an out of court referral is the most appropriate outcome, meaning the case is sent back to the police to arrange the referral to out of court parenting support.

In some local authorities a third party manages diversionary routes from some police forces into out of court services. There are mixed opinions on the merit of this, with some out of court parenting support workers unsure about the added value of this process. Another parenting support worker described how initially it felt like there were too many people involved in each case, but that their opinion has since changed and the involvement of the third party is now seen as a benefit.

Most cases seen by out of court services are referred by social services or other family support. Out of court services are often located within the same structures as programmes such as Families First and Flying Start, so there are clear pathways and relationships between them. In many instances this referral is direct and informal because cases have not reached the threshold for police involvement.

For some cases of physical punishment, when other agencies are already involved, out of court parenting support workers do not take an active role in providing support but simply monitor progress. In some cases, it is the out of court parenting support workers who refer to other support. An example given was for an attachment support course run by a Flying Start team. This type of support can extend beyond the timelines for support given by out of court parenting support workers.

Due to the varied referral routes, and the reported inconsistent levels of communication from the police to other professionals by some interviewees (particularly out of court parenting support workers) across Wales it is difficult to judge the effectiveness of referral pathways. Notably, some interviewees felt that there was inconsistent communication from the police and varying processes between local authorities. One children's services manager described referral processes as overly complex, involving unnecessary back-and-forth between agencies. However, due to the variations between areas and organisations across Wales – i.e. the wider context in which referral of cases operates – it was recognised that a single process is unlikely to be possible. Furthermore, the prevailing picture is of a system that is broadly considered effective, albeit with areas for refinement in how cases are referred and handled across agencies.

3.5.4. Cases that are not considered physical punishment

Findings from interviews suggested that in practice, a case will not be considered physical punishment for 2 main reasons. Either it is decided that it is less serious and so does not

necessitate police or child protection procedures, or the case is more serious, and it is categorised as abuse and results in a Section 47 enquiry.

Cases that do not meet child protection thresholds will often still involve a level of intervention by professionals, including those working in out of court parenting support or social services. This takes the form of early intervention and prevention aimed at supporting the whole family. A manager of local authority professionals described teams using emotional approaches, working on relationships based on child development research. This is often delivered in group settings. An out of court parenting support worker reported that their staff training and knowledge is used to adapt approaches so that they can prevent cases escalating to more serious incidents. Another safeguarding professional who participated in an interview agreed that early support was prioritised, and police are kept informed of progress whilst deliberately avoiding escalation unless child protection thresholds are met.

When a case is considered more serious than physical punishment, professionals use escalated processes. For physical abuse these processes existed before the introduction of the Act. As described above in Chapter 3.5.2, a case will be considered more serious based on the level of injury, or the methods used to physically punish a child, as well as incident history for the family. Decisions are made in the strategy discussions, which are held within 24 hours of a safeguarding referral being made.

Another possible response is to treat cases no differently whether they are physical punishment or not. One local authority manager suggested that there was no clear alternative process and that all incidents go towards a Section 47 investigation, even when relatively minor, creating additional burden and considerable backlog for professionals. This point was not mentioned by other interviewees and therefore should be interpreted as an isolated viewpoint. A manager in another local authority area described 2 social work teams having daily statutory discussions with police that considered 3 to 4 cases per day.

Other interviewees expressed an alternative view, for example those in the police explained how there is no longer a distinction between punishment and abuse in the law and so all should be treated the same. An out of court parenting support worker stated that professionals had a duty to refer all cases to the police and should not decide on the proportionality themselves. Safeguarding procedures for professionals do not make a distinction, and, in the example of education professionals, all cases are monitored and recorded into safeguarding systems (such as MyConcern) even if they are unclear, to ensure there is evidence if escalation is later required.

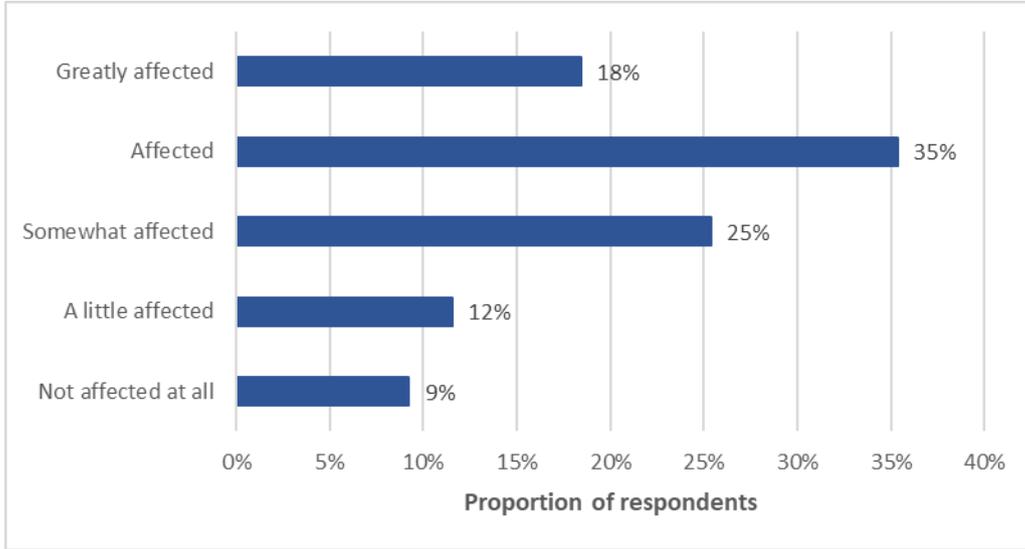
3.5.5. Impact on processes

Since the introduction of the Act, safeguarding processes have remained largely the same, however there is now the additional option of referring cases to OOCPS. As reported in the survey and interviews, there are mixed views on the extent to which processes for professionals have changed since the introduction of the Act. The evidence presents a complex picture of how professional practice has evolved since the introduction of the Act.

While some professionals described closer collaboration and clearer processes, others reported reduced coordination or inconsistent understanding between agencies.

Figure 7 presents survey findings on respondents' views on how identifying and handling cases of physical punishment has been affected by the Act.

Figure 7: To what extent do you think your profession's approach to identifying and handling cases of physical punishment has been affected by the Act? July 2025 to August 2025

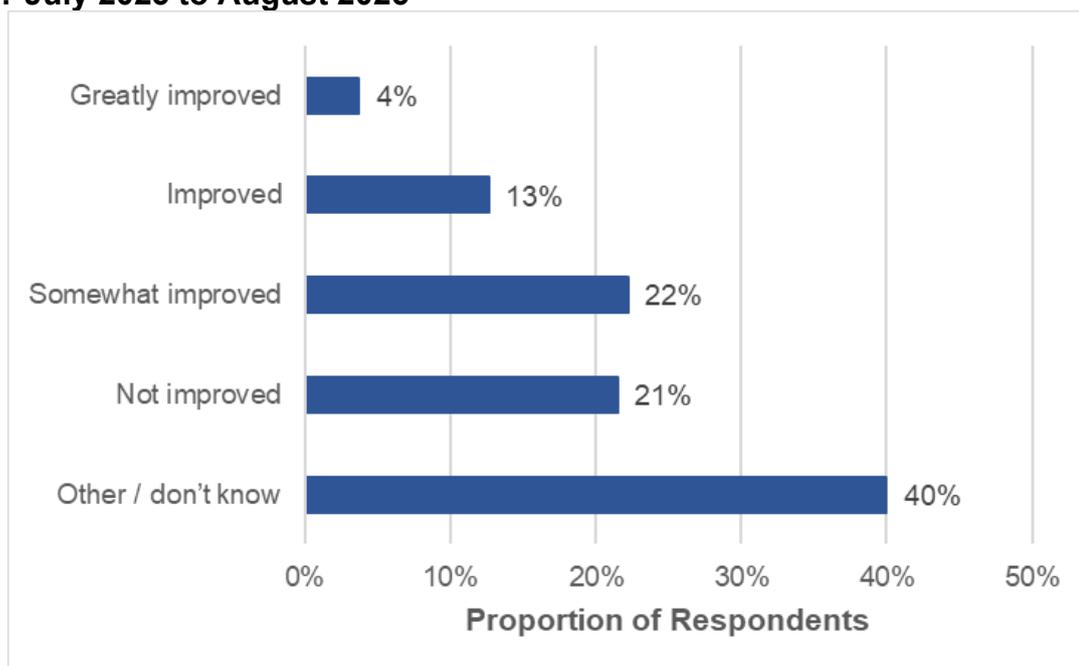


Source: Survey of professionals. Q13. N=132

Description of Figure 7: A bar graph showing to what extent interviewees think that their profession's approach to identifying and handling cases of physical punishment has been affected by the Act. It shows that most survey respondents (91%) felt that their profession's approach to identifying and handling cases of physical punishment had been affected by the Act to some extent. More than half (53%) felt that their approach had been affected or greatly affected by the Act.

Further survey findings on processes found that 21% of respondents suggested that processes had not improved at all and 17% reported that processes had improved (13%) or greatly improved (4%) since the introduction of the Act.

Figure 8: To what extent have referral pathways between agencies improved because of the Act? July 2025 to August 2025



Source: Survey of professionals Q17. N=135

Description of Figure 8: A bar graph showing to what extent interviewees believed that pathways between agencies have improved because of the Act. Overall, 39% felt that they have improved, with 4% feeling they have improved greatly, 13% that they have improved, and 22% feeling they have improved somewhat.

In interviews where professionals said processes remained “business as usual”, the addition of the Act was reported to have simply mirrored practice that previously existed. For example, a interviewee from the police explained that all cases would have triggered some sort of safeguarding process regardless of the Act. An interviewee in the CPS offered the same view, explaining that the relationship between the police investigation and the CPS is unchanged from those applying to other laws. Local authority managers also stated that the type of support offered, and the processes for making safeguarding decisions was no different than before. For some, this lack of change is underlined by the low number of referrals they are receiving, particularly in the CPS and in one of the local authorities areas that took part in the research.

Other interviewees described different experiences with some local authority interviewees reporting an increase in the number of referrals to pre-existing systems and subsequent Section 47 enquiries. For example, a safeguarding professional noted that whilst the referral route into the safeguarding hub – i.e. the process or pathway – had remained the same, the volume of referrals has increased as a consequence of professionals reporting all cases of concern: “we are getting more referrals into the MASH team because [professionals working with children] feel they've got that duty to report everything to us and [to] the police ... before the health visitor might have just dealt with the situation.”

Accounts of collaboration with the police were divided, reflecting both improvements in partnership working and concerns about declining coordination and variable practice across areas. Interviewees in the police and a health profession described better relationships between police and professionals across other sectors, where the latter described how police processes have adapted from being initially a “little heavy handed” towards parents, and are now seen to “have a great relationship” with children and families.

Immediately following the introduction of the Act, good levels of cross organisational working between the police and other services were reported by some interviewees. However, this collaborative approach was considered to have lessened as time went on. One out of court parenting support worker attributed this to a turnover of police staff who have a different level of understanding of the Act, resulting in fewer referrals. Another out of court parenting support worker explained that some social workers are bypassing referring to the police and sending cases directly to Early Help Services or other routes, with continuous training required to overcome this. A safeguarding interviewee had a similar view that in their area the intended OOCDC route is rarely used and cases are referred directly to children’s services instead. The interviewee commented that if the parent refuses to engage in the parenting support offered then because these referrals have not come through an OOCDC order “we can’t enforce [engagement in the parenting support] then” and the case “gets closed down”. The interviewee went on to say: “whereas if they [the police] are going through the out of court disposal route, which rightly they should be, then [engagement with parenting support] is being monitored as well by the police.” The interviewee also commented that this means that the relatively low number of referrals to the out of court parenting support worker in their local authority inaccurately reflected the number of parents being referred to children’s services following an incident of physical punishment.

Despite the mixed evidence across sectors, professionals provided several examples of positive change since the introduction of the Act. In some areas, processes have become clearer and more consistent, with agencies reporting smoother collaboration and faster decision making.

Some processes have become simpler because of the Act. An interviewee in safeguarding described how the police can now resolve cases of no concern more quickly, reducing the need to involve social services unnecessarily. This was viewed positively by social services, although some survey respondents noted that the police feel under greater pressure as a result. One police interviewee explained that decision making has become more straightforward because the removal of the reasonable punishment defence eliminates uncertainty about whether an offence has been committed. For one out of court parenting support worker, having a police officer based in the same office has made making referrals and collaboration easier.

The [Out of Court Parenting Support Grant](#) is provided to local authorities to enable them to deliver the out of court parenting support for cases referred by the police or other services as appropriate. This has led to changes in processes within local authorities as they have introduced this service. Local authorities have embedded the out of court parenting support workers into existing parent support services, a decision explained by one local authority

manager as based on the funding arrangements, as they reported that it is not viable or desirable to create a new standalone service.

This integration of out of court parenting support within wider parenting services was viewed positively by professionals. It enables local authorities to provide more rounded and flexible support to parents, children, and families. A local authority manager explained that this structure allows cases to be “stepped down” smoothly to other forms of support, as established relationships between professionals and parents make transitions easier. Equally, cases can be escalated when additional intervention is needed. One out of court parenting support worker described the approach as creating “one front door” for parenting support, a model further strengthened in their area by moving safeguarding responsibilities from the education directorate into social services.

Therefore since the Act, professionals have worked via existing channels to provide support aligned with positive parenting practices to prevent escalation to physical punishment, “we're tackling root causes to prevent them getting into that crisis or that reactive stage where they do something [and] then bitterly regret it” (out of court parenting support worker). One interviewee working in out of court parenting support services noted “we've always worked to try and help parents do that [adopt different behaviour management techniques]. But what we did [since the Act] was ramp that up.”

In terms of the effect on overall practice, professionals reported that while the Act has not changed safeguarding thresholds, it has influenced how cases of physical punishment are identified, assessed and referred across Wales. Education, health and social care practitioners continue to be central to early identification, though challenges such as ambiguous disclosures and occasional over-reporting remain. Parental admission plays an important role in determining whether cases progress through OOCPS or are referred to the CPS, although such referrals are rare. Referral pathways typically begin with local authority safeguarding teams, but the use of the OOCPS route varies, with some professionals noting inconsistent communication and differing practices between areas. Overall, professionals considered current methods broadly adequate, though experiences varied depending on local structures, levels of interagency coordination, and how fully the Act has been embedded into everyday practice.

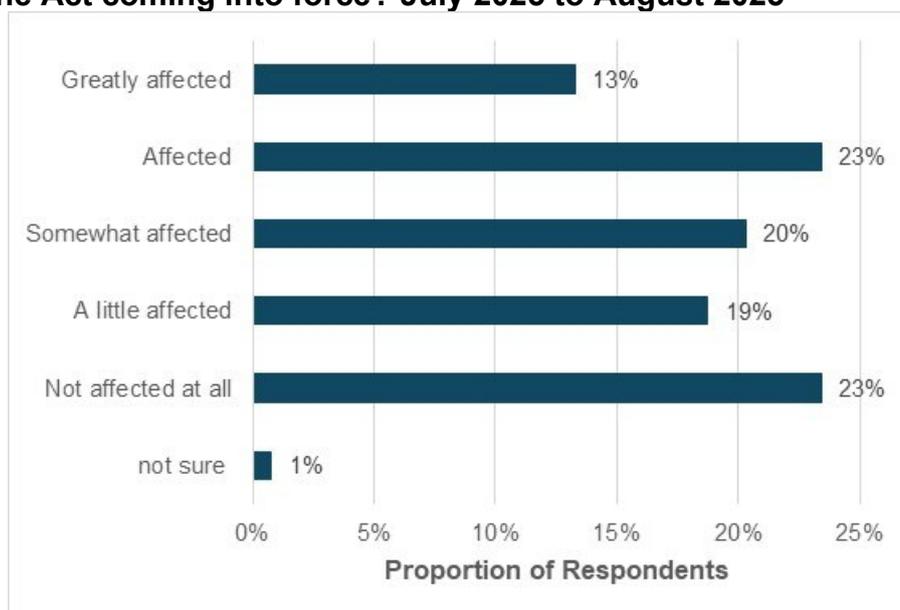
3.6. Effect on workload

Both the interview feedback and survey data indicate that the Act has had an inconsistent effect on the workloads of professionals. There is difference reported between, and sometimes within, sectors. This is often the result of differences in roles, perspectives and expectations.

For some, workload has not been affected. This was reported by some interviewees working in education, health, the CPS, some local authorities, and one police professional. Notably in some instances, this feedback was in direct contradiction to other interviewees working in the same or very similar roles elsewhere in Wales, indicating the variation in practice and experiences across the country. Overall, views on how the Act has affected

workload appear mixed, a trend that is further demonstrated within Figure 9, which shows survey respondents' views on the extent staff workload has been affected by the implementation of the Act. Amongst survey responses, whilst 76% of respondents reported that their workload had been a little affected (19%), somewhat affected (20%), affected (23%) or greatly affected (13%), nearly a quarter (23%) of professionals across all sectors reported that the Act had no effect at all on the workload of their organisations. As with the effect of the Act on professional processes (Chapter 3.5.5) where some interviewees reported little change as a result of the Act, this is because, in the words of an education interviewee, the Act “falls alongside our safeguarding anyway”, and has not been difficult to implement.

Figure 9: To what extent (if at all) has your organisation’s staff workload been affected by the Act coming into force? July 2025 to August 2025



Source: Survey of professionals Q16. N=128

Description of Figure 9: A bar graph showing to what extent interviewees think that their organisation’s staff workload has been affected by the Act coming into force. More than one third (36%) of respondents felt that staff workload had been affected (23%) or greatly affected (13%), whilst 39% thought it had been somewhat (20%) or a little affected (19%).

Some out of court parenting support workers found the lack of effect on workloads unexpected, as it was assumed there would be more cases to handle. Roles for delivering out of court parenting support were created with the expectation of being “inundated”, but as the number of referrals from the police has been low, this has not happened.

An education interviewee highlighted a more general long-term trend of an increasing need for parenting support that was unaffected by the Act. Those interviewed working in out of court parenting support services, other local authority professionals, and Cafcass Cymru agreed with this sentiment. The causes for this, and any occasional peaks in workload, were variously attributed to the long-term effects of the Covid pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, housing challenges and the wider social policy landscape. In one example, it was reported

that a role for an out of court parenting support worker has been merged with providing other parenting support, as the Act alone has not created the enough work for them to do.

For other professionals, the Act is attributed to changes, as indicated in Figure 9 above, which shows that 23% of survey responses saying it has affected, and 13% saying it has greatly affected workloads. As expected, out of court parenting support workers reported a change, as their roles have only been in place since the Act came into force.

One interviewee working in children's services commented "all cases [are] funnelled through a Section 47 [enquiry], even when minor, creating unnecessary burdens." The same interviewee commented that "Section 47s [sic] are really time intensive and create backlogs." This was an isolated example however and should not be seen to reflect practice across Wales. An interviewee from the health sector reported that "workload increased initially" and suggested this could be "as a result of professionals perhaps looking for it more", which the interviewee suggested was particularly an issue amongst those working in childcare settings.

Similarly, some police interviewees generally reported an increase in the number of "low level, non-injury" incidents that are now referred to the police as a potential crime, where previously they would have been handled solely by children's services. Additionally, an increase in police paperwork relating to the Act was reported especially for more senior staff. It should be noted that the Act was reported to have more of an effect on workloads by police professionals who responded to the survey than in interviews with senior police professionals.

Many others reported a change in workloads but suggested that it was manageable. This aligns with feedback from around 40% of survey respondents, who suggested that their workload had been a little affected (19%) or somewhat affected (20%). An out of court interviewee described being initially overwhelmed and that supportive structures, referral processes and pathways have helped. Other similar comments suggested a reason for an initial increase being professionals "looking for it [physical punishment] more" (education professional). One safeguarding professional agreed, reporting that they were receiving more calls for advice, however caseload numbers had actually dropped as their local authority process is to not refer every case to safeguarding colleagues.

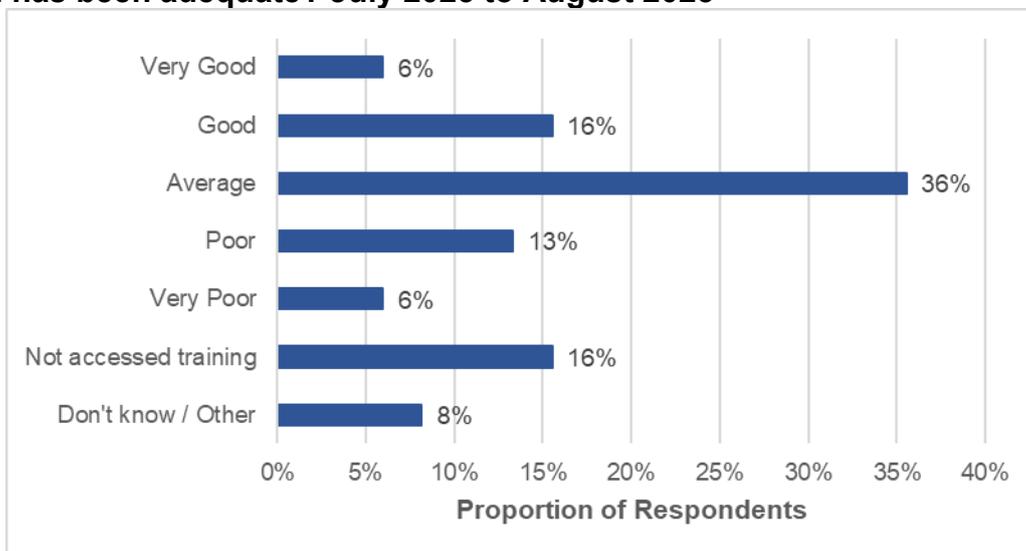
To summarise, findings from both interviews and survey data showed that the effect of the Act on professional's workload is somewhat varied across different local authorities and sectors. This was especially reported to be an issue during the initial period after the Act had been introduced but there was also some variation depending on where in Wales professionals were based, indicating a clear difference in practice and experiences across the country. The variation of workload depended on the pre-existing internal structures as well as the role of the professionals. However, it was also reported that through clearer multi-agency guidance and more refined referral pathways the impact on workload is being partially mitigated. Furthermore, it appears that the Act has not had a significant impact on workload for many of those interviewed. There are some exceptions to this, where workload has increased such as within the police, however this is not an overarching trend.

3.7. Training

Interviewees described a range of training and learning opportunities following the introduction of the Act. Much of this has been incorporated into existing safeguarding structures, with the legislation now embedded in annual safeguarding updates across sectors such as education and health. In some sectors (for example health), training was delivered through mandatory online modules setting out the implications of the Act for professional practice, while others accessed content through training portals or in materials produced by the Welsh Government.

There was a slight balance of opinion in favour of the adequacy of training amongst survey respondents, 36% considering it to be adequate and a further 22% felt that it was either very good (6%) or good (16%).

Figure 10: To what extent do you think the training, information and guidance provided has been adequate? July 2025 to August 2025



Source: Survey of professionals Q9. N=135

Description of Figure 10: A bar graph showing to what extent interviewees think the training, information and guidance provided has been adequate. Overall, 22% felt that the training is either very good (6%) or good (16%), whilst 36% judged it to be average and 13% poor.

Interviewees highlighted, in the few instances of it happening, the value of informal, multi-agency learning, where staff in different sectors such as health, education and police shared perspectives and learned from each other. Several reported adopting specific models and approaches to support practice, such as the [Signs of Safety model](#). Others drew on wider parenting and health resources such as reflective listening, mindfulness, and [Triple P programmes](#).

Some interviewees described more formal training directly linked to the Act. For example, Cafcass Cymru staff received structured training prior to the Act coming into force, which reportedly continues to inform practice. Local authorities and safeguarding hubs also developed bespoke resources, including regular service updates, information leaflets, and flowcharts that serve as guides for decision-making. The CPS created a training package

internally to ensure consistency across lawyers and avoid regional variation in interpretation of the Act, which remains accessible for new personnel: “we need to make sure everybody was approaching [physical punishment] case[s] in the same way ... it would have been very unfair for one person to be prosecuted and taken through the court [whilst] for a very similar case someone else received a community resolution or conditional caution ... almost like a post code lottery type effect.” (Interviewee in the criminal justice sector).

Nonetheless, some gaps in training provision were reported. Out of court parenting support workers who were interviewed noted that the quality and availability of training varied across local authorities. In some areas, out of court parenting workers relied on training suggestions from the Welsh Government or continuing professional development opportunities funded through the [Children and Communities Grant](#). Responsibility for developing training was reported to lie with local authorities, which was seen to create inconsistency across Wales (for instance in relation to the referral process to out of court parenting support) and results in some less experienced professionals being left without adequate support. High turnover of staff in children’s services was also identified as a challenge, leading to calls for induction training and annual refreshers on the Act and its implications for relevant staff. Frontline police officers were identified by a safeguarding interviewee as requiring further training to strengthen their understanding of the Act and to ensure consistency in the application of out of court responses.

Interviewees also identified a need for training that better reflected the realities of practice within their respective sector. In some cases, this was about training within their relevant organisation, for example within the police forces, again, to ensure consistent approaches to using OOCd. In other cases, interviewees identified a need for the Welsh Government to provide more training and guidance at a national level to ensure consistency of practice across local authorities, for example on data collection and monitoring requirements and on working with families from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds and asylum seekers who may have different parenting practices or varying levels of awareness of the law.

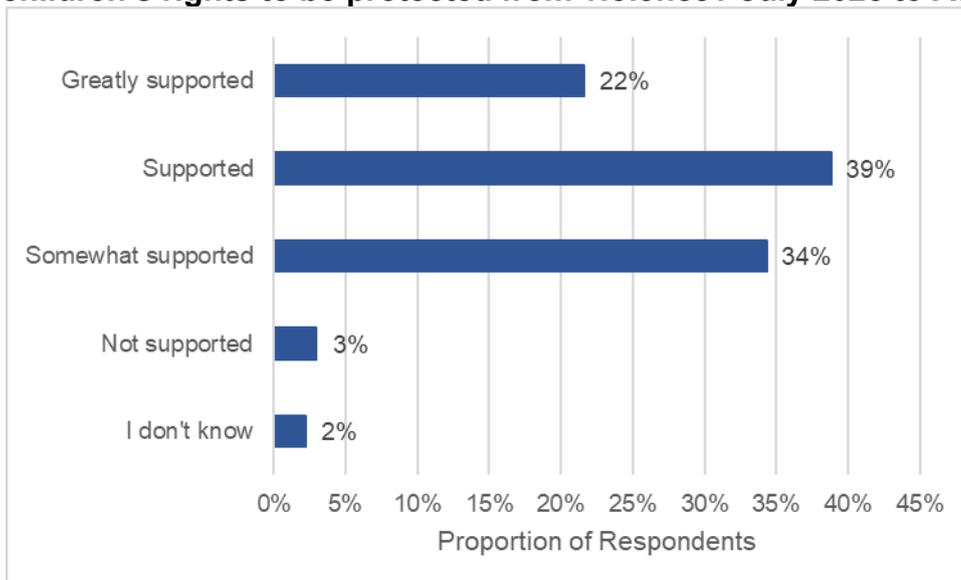
In a small number of cases, interviewees reported that the Act had not changed their training needs, as Wales Safeguarding Procedures already included physical abuse as a category of concern. These interviewees explained that a trauma-informed approach remained central to their practice, and the Act simply reinforced existing safeguarding priorities.

3.8. Professionals’ views on the extent to which the Act has enabled them to protect Children’s Rights

The principal aim of the Act is to help protect children’s rights by prohibiting the physical punishment of children by parents and those acting in loco parentis within Wales. This research into how the Act has affected frontline services for children and families from the perspective of those delivering these services has therefore included consideration of the extent to which the Act has enabled these professionals to protect children’s rights, in line with this aim.

Almost three-fifths of survey respondents (59%) felt that the Act had supported them in their role in protecting children’s right to be protected from violence, including 38% who said it had supported them and 22% who said it had greatly supported them. A further 33% reported that it had somewhat supported them in this role. Only 3% of respondents (one childcare and play practitioner, one respondent working in family advice and support services, and 2 respondents who selected “other local authority/government”) felt that the Act had not supported them.

Figure 11: In your opinion, to what extent has the Act supported your role in protecting children’s rights to be protected from violence? July 2025 to August 2025



Source: Survey of professionals. Q18. N=134

Description of Figure 11: A bar graph showing to what extent interviewees think that the Act has supported their role in protecting children’s rights to be protected from violence. Almost all (95%) respondents felt the Act had provided support; either greatly (22%), somewhat (34%) or supported (39%).

A similar trend was noted amongst interviewees where the general consensus was that the Act has had a positive influence on the extent to which they feel able to protect children’s rights, by explicitly prohibiting physical punishment of any kind: "100% [the Act has better enabled me in my role to protect children's rights to be protected from violence] because it's just made it black and white. You know, very clear. There's no place for debate about it." (Health professional)

A professional within the criminal justice sector noted that because of the Act, children now have the same right to protection from violence as adults. A health professional felt that although physical punishment was already considered taboo by most parents, the threat of prosecution has created a deterrent for "people who really, really, don't believe that it [physical punishment] is a problem", thereby preventing parents from resorting to physical punishment.

A Cafcass Cymru professional noted that the Act had given them “more muscle” to protect children’s welfare and had provided “clarity” in the legal protection offered to children by removing the long-standing “loophole” or defence of reasonable punishment, which enabled parents, in some cases, to physically punish their child without incrimination. It was also suggested that children themselves were aware of the Act and legal implications that it has and are “in general... more confident about their rights.” (Cafcass Cymru staff member).

Those working as out of court parenting support workers cited the influence they have over parents (as a direct outcome of the Act) in developing positive parenting skills and helping them to use “alternative methods of discipline”. One out of court parenting support worker suggested their work had “opened up the eyes of parents” and helped to “overcome the mindset of ‘it [physical punishment] never did me any harm’”.

In answering this question, most professionals identified the protection afforded to individual children, including those whose parents cease to use physical punishment or are prevented from using it in the first place, as a result of the Act coming into force. In some instances, however, out of court parenting support, and health, professionals referred to “wider reaching”, or indirect benefits in terms of children’s rights created by the Act. Several pointed to intergenerational or cyclical benefits as we “end up with a country of well-adjusted adults and children ... children become adults who then become parents. So actually, if we can get that culture change across, then it will be really helpful [for children’s rights] in the long-term.” (Health professional).

One out of court parenting worker commented the Act has the potential to “break the cycle of abuse and offer some subliminal messaging to children” and that it “will encourage generational change.” Another out of court parenting worker made a link between physical punishment and domestic violence, suggesting that as the Act has helped prevent “physicality” and “aggression” being the “go-to” that “hopeful[ly] there will generally be less violence in the majority of homes.”

A small minority of interviewees shared a more nuanced or less optimistic view on this issue. For example, one professional with a background in safeguarding was concerned that the Act had undermined children’s rights because “it’s taken focus away from the children that need protecting” which means “serious abuse cases risk being overshadowed.” It should be noted that as described in Chapter 3.6 many professionals did not describe a significant increase in workload as a result of the Act, although it varied in and between sectors.

Another professional in children’s services expressed concerns about the longer-term consequences for families (including children) of any “unintended fallout when responses feel punitive rather than educational.”

4. Conclusions

The aim of this research was to explore the views of professionals working within health, education, crime and justice, local authorities and the third sector on how the Act has affected the frontline delivery of services involving children and families. Amongst those professionals who contributed to the research there was almost universal awareness of the Act and its rationale, which is to help protect children's rights by prohibiting the physical punishment of children by parents and those acting in loco parentis within Wales.

In terms of awareness of materials and guidance produced in response to the Act, professionals were typically aware of what was widely considered an extensive volume of awareness-raising material largely aimed at the public. This public-facing material was considered useful by some professionals, both in terms of clarifying the law in their mind and providing them with accessible information to share with parents. Some professionals also noted that social media campaigns and in-person activities, such as distributing flyers in supermarkets and community centres, raised awareness and understanding amongst parents whilst also helping clarify the Act for professionals themselves.

There was however less awareness of information or guidance from the Welsh Government specifically aimed at professionals. Furthermore, it was noted that following an initial surge in promotional activity in 2022, the information has become less visible, and many professionals called for more visibility of the materials. In response to this, many local authorities developed their own resources such as leaflets, emails and internal communications ensuring that staff had the necessary information and understanding. It was suggested that a wider dissemination of information support materials may have been hindered by the pandemic, when other public messaging campaigns were a priority. Therefore, awareness of materials and guidance in response to the Act overall seemed to be somewhat lacking, with a general reliance on internally created resources and the wider public campaigns.

The research captured views on the extent to which the law has enabled professionals to provide clear, unambiguous advice to parents and carers that any level of physical punishment is illegal in Wales. The feedback on this issue was generally consistent across all sectors, where it was felt that the Act had helped professionals when discussing physical punishment with parents by removing the ambiguity or 'grey areas' around levels of acceptability. Survey data collected as part of this research also demonstrated that the majority (68%) of professionals responded that they felt either confident (33%) or very confident (35%) that the Act has enabled them to provide clear, unambiguous advice to parents and carers that physical punishment is illegal in Wales. In a society where physical punishment was already widely considered unacceptable, the change in legislation has also helped professionals give guidance on parenting practices, including methods of discipline that do not involve physical punishment. There remains evidence of some confusion amongst certain groups of parents and carers, with older generations, those in ethnic minority groups and people who have recently moved to Wales being reported to be more likely to claim unawareness of the legislation or to question the legitimacy of the change in law. Findings also highlighted that there remains a minority of parents in Wales with

entrenched belief that parents have the right to choose how they manage their child's behaviour. Overall, it appears that the Act has been successful in ensuring that professionals can provide clear and unambiguous advice to parents and carers, with an acknowledgment that there is still a minority of cases where more targeted support and communication may be needed with some families.

Most interviewees expressed confidence in methods used for identifying cases of physical punishment. They highlighted the value of experienced and qualified staff, and the strength of relationships between agencies, as factors that underpin effective practice. Across all agencies, decision-making combines the use of strict criteria with the professional judgement of staff. This balance ensures that referrals consider both the evidence available and the professional assessment of risk to the child. The result is a process in which not all cases of physical punishment trigger the same level of response, but where decisions are made with reference to the severity of the incident and the wider context of family circumstances.

In more minor cases considered not to meet the threshold for physical punishment, the approach adopted by professionals, typically those working in social services or health, would involve early intervention and record keeping, in the interests of preventing an escalation to something more serious and creating an evidence-base. For more serious cases, such as extreme physical abuse, professionals would adopt more escalated procedures with decisions being made swiftly at cross-professional strategy discussions, based on processes that existed prior to the Act coming into force – typically a Section 47 enquiry. The research found that most professionals were confident in identification processes of physical punishment. However there still appears to be some confusion regarding the 'correct' referral process as it varies somewhat between local authority and role.

Professionals' views on the effect of the Act on these processes varied. In some sectors, it was suggested that processes have not changed substantially, with professionals noting that similar cases identified prior to the Act would have triggered safeguarding processes anyway. It appears that the change in law has, however, resulted in more interagency working, for instance, there is now a lower threshold for police involvement. Conversely, there are fewer referrals than expected between agencies in some areas, particularly between police and children's services. For some professionals, there had been a decline in the collaboration with the police, despite there being an initial surge when the Act was first implemented. Overall, there was an aspiration for more consistent, more collaborative processes going forward primarily across different agencies but also within some internal structures.

The implementation of OOCPS within wider parenting services has been widely viewed as a success by professionals. Local authorities have been able to provide more rounded and flexible support to parents, children and families. OOCPS has been praised for establishing strong relationships between professionals and parents, whilst also escalating cases when additional intervention is needed. Overall, the impact of the Act on processes has been mixed across different local authorities with some variation dependent on the organisation and the pre-existing internal structures. The largest impact on internal processes has been

the implementation of the OOCPS, which has created a new avenue within existing internal referral processes.

Regarding the impact of the change in legislation on professionals' workload, opinions varied, both between and within sectors. For many practitioners, particularly those working in health and education, the Act was deemed to align closely with their existing responsibilities and safeguarding responsibilities and not considered to have had a significant effect on workload. For some professionals, particularly in policing and local authorities, the Act was reported to have led to increased workloads particularly during the initial period after the Act had been introduced. This was seen as a result of more time-intensive processes and reclassification of low-level incidents as crimes, increased use of Section 47 and in some instances the sense that professionals working with children have a heightened awareness of the need to identify and address cases of physical punishment. However, many reported these changes as manageable, with initial challenges being eased by clearer referral pathways and support structures. Professionals who reported minimal effect were typically in roles already closely tied to safeguarding or working in local authorities where only a small number of referrals for parenting support had been made by the police. There was also a trend in terms of seniority, with staff in senior positions being less likely to report an impact on workload than frontline staff.

The research has found that training for professionals in relation to the Act has largely been integrated into existing safeguarding frameworks and developed locally by organisations, with tools such as flowcharts used to support decision-making. Going forward, professionals emphasised the need for more structured, consistent, and accessible training, including regular refreshers to ensure consistency both across Wales and within individual organisations.

The final element of the research was to capture professionals' views on the extent to which the Act has enabled them to protect children's rights. Most of those engaged in the research believed that the change in legislation has had a positive impact on their capacity to protect children's rights, given that it not only reinforces the existing taboo around physical punishment but also introduces the added risk of prosecution for parents who physically punish their children. Interview and survey findings identified that the Act has had a positive influence on professional's ability to protect the rights of children, particularly as the Act explicitly prohibits physical punishment of any kind and thereby removes any confusion. Amongst a minority of professionals, there was some concern that the focus on low level physical punishment puts more serious cases at risk because of capacity issues; however, the general consensus was that overall the Act has strengthened protection for children and their rights in Wales, supporting the Welsh Government's approach that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the basis for all policy on children. Professionals also referred to the "wider reaching" or indirect benefits of the Act, particularly in terms of instigating intergenerational and cultural change for both parents and children. Overall, it is apparent that professionals are in agreement that the Act has enabled them to better protect children's rights, through increased awareness of the Act and through the implementation of referral systems such as the OOCPS. It is hoped that the Act will trigger widespread and long-lasting change for children and families in Wales.

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Annex A Topic guides

This is the main topic guide used for the interviews. Some questions were adapted for:

- directors of children's services
- out of court parenting support workers
- CAFCASS Cymru
- family courts
- police and safeguarding hubs

Practitioner interview

Miller Research has been commissioned by the Welsh Government to identify and assess the effect of The Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales Act) 2020 (hereafter referred to as the Act) on working practices of professionals involved in frontline delivery of services for children and families. As part of this research, we are speaking to professionals working within a range of sectors, including education, health, social services and the police, amongst others.

This research aims to gather information on awareness of the Act amongst professionals, the impact of the Act on professionals' working practices, and professionals' views on the extent to which the Act has enabled them to better support the rights of children in Wales to be protected from violence. The findings from the research will contribute to the statutory 3-year interim post implementation review of the Act.

Thank you for participating in the research. Your contribution will be anonymised through the analysis process, and your contact details will be used for internal record keeping only. Are you happy for this interview to be recorded? This recording will be deleted once notes have been made.

1) Introduction

1a) Can you tell me a bit about your role and how it relates to supporting children and families.

1b) How does your role involve or relate to safeguarding or child protection?

1c) How long have you been working in your role?

2) Implementation of the Act

2a) What is your understanding of the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020?

2b) In your role as a have you ever had to discuss the Act and the legal changes associated with the Act with parents or caregivers and/or children and young people?

If yes, probe for their experience of these discussions, e.g.:

- i) What prompted the discussion?
- ii) Levels of awareness and understanding of the legal changes amongst parents and carers and how they handled situations where parents or caregivers were unaware of legal changes.
- iii) Reaction from parents and carers to the discussion.

2c) How confident do you feel in discussing the Act and the legal changes associated with the Act with parents or caregivers?

- i) What further information/support might you need, either from Welsh Government or other sources?

2d) How confident do you feel in discussing parenting practices or discipline methods with families?

3) Training and Professional Practices

3a) Are you aware of any materials or guidance for people in your profession in response to the Act? E.g. practice guide, videos, etc. Probe for who produced these materials or guidance (including awareness of anything produced by Welsh Government).

If so:

- i) What is your understanding of the format/content and purpose of this materials/guidance?
- ii) Are you aware of where people in your profession can access this materials/guidance?
- iii) Are you aware of where people in your profession can access additional information and guidance for people in your profession in relation to the Act beyond this materials/guidance? If applicable: What is the content and format of this information and guidance? How have you used it?
- iv) In your role, do you offer alternatives to physical punishment to parents and carers? How confident do you feel in communicating this information?

3b) Have you received support from Welsh Government or your own organisation (e.g.: training, guidance, information, comms materials etc) regarding the Act?

- i) If so, what was the nature of this training or wider support? Do you feel it was sufficient? Eg. ESR training (health professionals), police training, briefing etc. If not, what further support or training do you think you need?

3c) To what extent has any of this training/support been disseminated / embedded across your organisation? Probe for approach and perceived effectiveness of any dissemination activity.

3d) How does your organisation typically communicate legal changes or policy updates – like those associated with the Act – to staff? Probe for whether the interviewee has been involved in any of this communication and the nature of any ongoing support for staff in relation to legal changes like this.

3e) To what extent do you think support for people in your profession in relation to the Act has been adequate? Please consider support from Welsh Government as well as from your own organisation.

3f) What further support and guidance could the Welsh Government offer to better support people in your profession in relation to the Act?

4) Current practice

4a) In what circumstances would you identify cases of physical punishment?

- i) Can you provide an example of where you have identified a case of physical punishment?
- ii) In what way did you subsequently handle cases of physical punishment? (remind interviewee that they do not need to provide personal details)

4b) To what extent do you think these are adequate methods of identifying and handling cases of physical punishment?

- i) What more could be done to aid identification?

4c) To what extent do you think the way in which people in your profession identify and handle cases of physical punishment has been affected by the Act? Probe for Cafcass, procedures etc.

4d) What processes are currently in place for people in your profession to refer cases of physical punishment? Probe for where they refer, what processes they use and perceived effectiveness of these processes.

- i) How confident do you feel in making referrals and in navigating the processes? Have you needed to have support from colleagues/management?

4e) What processes are in place to handle cases that are not considered physical punishment – i.e.: cases that would be considered abuse?

- i) How are these cases supported?
- ii) How is this mitigated? Probe for what they do, what processes they use and perceived effectiveness of these processes

5) Workload and Support

5a) To what extent (if at all) have staff workloads in your organisation been affected by the Act coming into force?

i) [If applicable] Since the Act has come into force, have any processes been introduced to support staff workloads and manage cases of physical punishment of children amongst people in your profession? If yes, probe for nature of these processes and perceived effectiveness.

5b) To what extent have referral pathways between agencies changed or improved as a result of the Act?

5c) How, if at all, has the management of cases of physical punishment of children evolved or changed since the Act came into force?

5d) In your opinion, to what extent has the Act better enabled you in your role to protect children's right to be protected from violence?

5e) If relevant: How has the process of referral to police and criminal justice changed since the implementation of the Act?

5f) How does this compare to the previous referral route into social/ children's services prior to the Act?

5g) How, if at all, has multi-agency working (involving your profession and/or your organisation) evolved in response to the Act?

i) How, if at all, have you/your organisation engaged with other stakeholders, community groups or voluntary organisations to reinforce the message and practice changes brought by the Act?

6) Effect on parents / carers and children in Wales

6a) To what extent has the Act enabled you/ your organisation to provide clear, unambiguous advice to parents and carers that any level of physical punishment is illegal in Wales?

6b) To what extent do you think there is confusion or misunderstanding amongst parents or carers around the law?

6c) If so, how do you think confusion or misunderstanding can be reduced / avoided?

6d) How, if at all, do you expect The Act to impact the wellbeing and safety of children in Wales in the future?

6e) In your experience, do parents or caregivers from diverse cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds have differential understanding and awareness of the law on physical punishment?

i) How do you tailor your approach to address any cultural or language barriers?

ii) Are there any particular groups/communities who would benefit from targeted comms?

7) Next Steps

7a) Are there any actions you think should be taken by the Welsh Government in relation to the Act?

7b) Is there anything else you would like to mention regarding The Act and its impact?

Annex B Survey

Miller Research has been commissioned by the Welsh Government to identify and assess the effect of The Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales Act) 2020 (hereafter referred to as the Act) on working practices of professionals involved in frontline delivery of services for children and families.

This research aims to gather information on awareness of the Act amongst professionals, the impact of the Act on professionals' working practices, and professionals' views on the extent to which the Act has enabled them to better support the rights of children in Wales to be protected from violence. The findings from the research will contribute to the statutory 3-year interim post implementation review of the Act.

Section 1: introduction

1. In which of the following sectors do you work?
(Open text or select from list)

- healthcare
- police Forces
- social services
- family advice and support services
- local authority and out of court parenting support workers
- Crown Prosecution Service
- His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal services
- family courts
- Cafcass Cymru
- other local authority/ government
- legal
- childcare and play practitioners
- education
- other (please specify) (10 words or fewer)
- not applicable or unsure

2. How long have you been in your current role? (Open text or select from list)

- less than 6 months
- between 6 months and 1 year
- between 1 year and 2 years
- between 2 years and 5 years
- between 5 years and 10 years
- over 10 years
- other (please specify) (20 words or fewer)

Section 2: understanding and implementation of the Act

3. How would you rate your understanding of the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020? (Select from list)

- very good
- good
- average
- poor
- very poor

4. In your current role, have you ever had to discuss the Act and its legal changes with parents or caregivers? (Select from list)

- yes
- no

5. How confident do you feel in discussing the Act and its legal changes with parents or caregivers? (Open text or select from list)

- very confident
- confident
- somewhat confident
- unconfident
- very unconfident

Section 3: training, information and guidance

6. Are you aware of any training, information or guidance available to people in your profession in response to the Act? (e.g., practice guides, videos, leaflets, courses)

- yes
- no

7. If yes, what type of training, information or guidance have you used?
(Open text) (50 words or fewer)

8. If yes, where can the training/information/guidance be accessed?
(Open text) (50 words or fewer)

9. If yes, to what extent do you think the training, information and guidance provided has been adequate? (Consider support from both the Welsh Government and your organisation.) (Open text or select from list)

- very good
- good

- average
- poor
- very poor
- other, please specify (50 words or fewer)

10. What further information or guidance could the Welsh Government offer to better support your profession in relation to the Act?

[Open text] (100 words or fewer)

11. What further information or guidance could your organisation offer to better support your profession in relation to the Act?

(Open text) (100 words or fewer)

Section 4: current practice

12. To what extent do you think the current methods for identifying and handling cases of physical punishment are adequate?

(Select from list)

- very adequate
- adequate
- somewhat adequate
- inadequate
- very inadequate

13. To what extent do you think your profession's approach to identifying and handling cases of physical punishment has been affected by the Act? (Select from list)

- greatly affected
- affected
- somewhat affected
- a little affected
- not affected at all

14. Where would you make a referral to if you had identified a case of physical punishment?

- police
- social services
- other (please specify)
- don't know

15. How confident do you feel in making referrals and navigating these processes? (Open text or select from list)

- very confident
- confident
- somewhat confident
- unconfident
- very unconfident
- other, please specify (100 words or fewer)

Section 5: workload and support

16. To what extent (if at all) has your organisation's staff workload been affected by the Act coming into force? (Open text or select from list)

- greatly affected
- affected
- somewhat affected
- a little affected
- not affected at all
- other, please specify (100 words or fewer)

17. To what extent have referral pathways between agencies improved because of the Act? (Open text or select from list)

- greatly improved
- improved
- somewhat improved
- a little improved
- not improved at all
- other, please specify (100 words or fewer)

18. In your opinion, to what extent has the Act supported your role in protecting children's rights to be protected from violence? (Open text or select from list)

- greatly supported
- supported
- somewhat supported
- not supported
- not supported at all
- other, please specify (100 words or fewer)

Section 6: effect on parents/carers and children in Wales

19. How confident are you that the Act has enabled you/ your organisation to provide clear, unambiguous advice to parents and carers that any level of physical punishment is illegal in Wales? (Open text or select from list)

- very confident
- confident
- somewhat confident
- unconfident
- very unconfident
- other, please specify (100 words or fewer)

20. To what extent do you think there is confusion or any misunderstanding amongst parents or carers around the law? (Open text or select from list)

- no confusion
- some confusion
- a lot of confusion
- other, please specify

How could any confusion or misunderstanding be avoided?

(Open text) (100 words or fewer)

21. Is there anything else you would like to mention regarding the Act and its impact? (Open text) (200 words or fewer)

Thank you for participating in this survey. Would you like to tell us more about your views and experiences since the Children (Abolition of Defence of Physical Punishment) Act (Wales) 2020 was implemented? We are carrying out interviews with practitioners and would like to hear from you! The interview would last up to an hour and can be carried out online or by telephone.

Would you be interested in taking part in an interview?

- yes
- no

If you are happy to take part in an interview, you will be directed to another form so that you can provide your contact details.

(Link to Second Smart Survey response)

Thank you for your interest in taking part in an interview.

Please share the following information so we can contact you if you are selected to take part in an interview.

We will only use your contact details to get in touch with you if you are selected to take part in an interview.

- first name and surname:
- telephone number:
- email address:

What role do you currently work in?

If you are selected for an interview would you prefer to do so in Welsh or English?

- Welsh
- English
- either