



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

RESEARCH, DOCUMENT

The Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020: data release for March 2022 to March 2023

An overview of data relating to the monitoring of The Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020.

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Background

The figures that have been reported in the [previous release](#) have been revised and included in this release.

The Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act (the Act) received Royal Assent in March 2020 and after a two-year implementation period, came into force on 21 March 2022.

The overarching objective of the legislation is to help protect children's rights by prohibiting the use of physical punishment against children, through the removal of the defence of reasonable punishment. This means that the defence is no longer available within the territory of Wales to parents or those acting in loco parentis (acting with parental responsibility), as a defence to a charge of common assault and battery on a child in their care.

Section 3 of the Act requires Welsh Ministers to prepare, and lay before the Senedd, two reports on the effect of the Act. These must be produced as soon as practicable three and five years after the Act came into force (2025 and 2027).

To support these reports the Welsh Government collects data from local authorities, the police, and the Crown Prosecution Service to measure the impact that the Act has on public services. This report summarises data collected for the first 12 months following implementation of the Act, covering the period 21 March 2022 to 30 March 2023.

The Out of Court Parenting Support Grant has been offered by the Welsh Government to local authorities since March 2022. The grant was created in preparation for the Act coming into force. It funds bespoke parenting support which the police can refer people to as an alternative to prosecution, in cases where the police decide it is appropriate to offer an out of court disposal.

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Local authorities record data about the number of referrals for parenting support received from the police, take up and completion rates and outcomes for individuals. Demographic data and data about requests for the intervention through the medium of Welsh are also collected. A summary of this data for the first year since the Act came into force is presented below. The data should be interpreted with caution given that it relates to one year only. All numbers are rounded to the nearest five to minimise any risk of data disclosure.

Main findings

Out of Court Parenting Support Grant: 21 March 2022 to 30 March 2023

During the first year following the Act coming into force, there were 130 referrals for out of court parenting support across Wales by the police, including 60 made within the first six months.

Of the 130 referrals, 120 individuals chose to take up the offer of parenting support, and of those, 95 have so far fully completed the sessions and 20 have partially completed the sessions. Some individuals have disengaged from the support before completion of the sessions; this means that the number of individuals who have completed and partially completed the sessions may be less than the total number of individuals who took up the support.

Of the people who chose to take up the offer of parenting support, 88% of the individuals identified as “White”, 4% identified as “mixed / multiple ethnicity”, 4% identified as “Asian / Asian British”, 4% identified as “Black / African / Caribbean / Black British”, and 4% identified as “other ethnicity”. Just over half of the individuals (54%) were male and 46% were female. The proportion of disabled people was one in 25 individuals (4%).

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Five requests for parenting support through the medium of Welsh were made.

Individuals completing the parenting support are asked to complete a post support questionnaire issued by local authorities. Of the total individuals who completed the questionnaire, 80 self-reported a positive outcome; this is defined as an improvement in the child's behaviour, or in parental wellbeing or efficacy.

Referrals to social services: 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 (baseline data)

The Welsh Government monitors the number of contacts to social services and the number of assessments completed by social services that relate to physical punishment of children. These metrics were introduced as part of the [Performance and Improvement Framework for Social Services](#) and have been collected since April 2021, one year before the Act came into force.

In the year before the Act came into force, there were 3,245 contacts to social services recorded where physical punishment of children was a factor. In around half of these (1,635) physical punishment was recorded as the only factor.

In the year before the Act came into force, there were 1,627 assessments recorded by social services where physical punishment of children was a factor. In almost half of these (722) physical punishment was recorded as the only factor.

Referrals to social services: 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

Please note, caution should be taken when making comparisons between the baseline Social Services data and the 2022-23 data. Fewer local authorities provided data in 2021-22 and some only provided data for six months. Some local authorities also reported changes in how assessments were undertaken

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and reported between the two years.

In the year following the Act coming into force, there were 4,855 contacts to social services recorded where physical punishment of children was a factor. In just under half of these (2,257) physical punishment was recorded as the only factor. The most recent figures are available on [StatsWales \(Number of contacts received during the year where physical punishment was a factor, by local authority\)](#).

In the year following the Act coming into force, there were 3,168 assessments recorded by social services where physical punishment of children was a factor. In almost half of these (1,504) physical punishment was recorded as the only factor. The most recent figures are available on [StatsWales \(Number of assessments completed during the year where physical punishment was a factor, by local authority\)](#).

Crown Prosecution Service

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in Wales are able to monitor the number of cases relating to the Act which are referred to them, as well how many of these cases are charged, and what the outcomes of these cases are.

It is not currently possible to publish figures relating to referrals to the CPS in Wales, as the number reported is fewer than five, posing a risk to personal information being disclosed.

Contact details

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

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