

BE REASONABLE CAMPAIGN RESPONDS TO DISAPPOINTING STATEMENT FROM THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER

Be Reasonable responds to the disappointing comments from the Children's Commissioner backing the criminalisation of ordinary parents.

A spokesperson for the Be Reasonable campaign commented: "We are disappointed that the Children's Commissioner is unwilling to listen to parents and ordinary families in her rigid determination to criminalise them for disciplining their children in a loving and caring way.

"In her statement she entirely misrepresents the reality of changing the law by claiming it 'does not create a new criminal offence'. The truth is, removing the reasonable chastisement defence from the law will render all mild smacking a criminal offence.

"Even worse, as the then Children's Minister freely admitted in the Welsh Assembly in January 2015, if you remove the reasonable chastisement defence, even picking up an uncooperative child to sit them on the naughty step could be criminalised; because even the lightest physical contact would technically become an assault.

"The Children's Commissioner's failure to recognise the unique, and wonderful, relationship of care and responsibility which a parent holds in relation to their own child, means she chooses to be wilfully blind to the difference between a parent who lovingly corrects their own child, and a thug assaulting a stranger in the street. Nor does she recognise that when a parent does go too far, the law can and does already intervene, as we saw in the recent case on Caldey Island.

"Some countries have chosen to criminalise parents and take their children away for using reasonable chastisement. The vast majority of countries, including France, Canada and the US have not.

"The Children's Commissioner shows no awareness of the huge controversy that still exists in countries where it has been banned. In New Zealand for example, politicians ignored a referendum in which 87 per cent of the public voted against parental smacking remaining a criminal offence.

"The Commissioner also ignores entirely the results of the ComRes poll unveiled yesterday showing that 85 per cent of people in Wales were smacked as children and 76 per cent are opposed to making parental smacking of children a criminal offence. And nearly 80 per cent are concerned it will make it harder for police and social services to tackle actual child abuse.

"While there may be majority support for this misguided idea among the political elite, in the real world of family life, the plan is deeply unpopular.

"Yes, we need a 'cultural change': not from parents, but from politicians and out-of-touch bureaucrats fixated on the idea that parents are incapable of bringing up their own children and need the State to tell them how to do it on pain of criminal sanction. We used to watch out for one another, now we just watch one another."



ENDS

For further information, please contact Alistair Thompson of Media Intelligence Partners on 07970 162 225.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

The Be Reasonable campaign is a grassroots campaign of parents and supportive groups with a single goal: to discourage the Welsh Government from pursuing its pledge to outlaw reasonable chastisement of children by their parents.