

### **Equal Protection – information for families about changes to the law**

*On 7th November 2020 Scots law changed meaning that parents/carers in Scotland can no longer use physical punishment as a reasonable form of disciplining their child. Children now have the same rights as adults to be protected from any form of physical assault.*

*There are lots of different words for physical punishment including:*

*smacking,  
skelping,  
hitting and  
slapping.*

*The most important things to know about why the law is changing and what it means for families are:*

- The change in law means that you can still stop your child from getting into danger for example grabbing them if they run into the road but you won't be able to smack them afterwards.*
- Many families in Scotland already raise their children without using physical punishment. There are lots of different ways to raise your children without physical punishment and you can still choose between these in how you manage your children's behaviour and bring them up. There's lots of support out there for parents and carers who would like to talk about other options.*
- Physical punishment doesn't work – there have been lots of studies from around the world which show that physical punishment doesn't teach children to behave differently and that it can make relationships between children and their parents/carers worse.*
- Physical punishment can harm children – today we know a lot more about how children's brains develop and it has been repeatedly shown that physical punishment can do long term harm to children's physical and emotional health.*

**Everyone** *now has a duty to act if they witness, or are aware of a child or young person being physically chastised. This is now a crime and if reported as such, will be investigated by the Police just like all other crimes.*

*If you need to talk to someone about what the change in law means for your family, or managing your children's behaviour our [Children 1st Parentline](#) team can give you free, non-judgmental support. If you need to talk – we're here for you.*