

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt

Máinnystrie O tha Laa

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Kathy O'Hanlon
Clerk to the Committee for Justice
Room 242
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast BT4 3XX

21 November 2025

Dear Kathy,

REMOVAL OF THE DEFENCE OF REASONABLE CHASTISEMENT

Thank you for your letter of 12 November following the joint evidence session on 6 November with officials in DOJ and DOH.

DOJ officials have followed up with colleagues in the Welsh Government and the Public Prosecution Service and can advise the following in response to each of the questions:

What happened to those who did not take part in the out of court support scheme (30 people)

There is no data held about those who did not take part in an out of court support scheme. The latest statistics about those referred to the Out of court scheme are available here:

[The Children \(Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment\) \(Wales\) Act 2020: April 2024 to March 2025](#)

In the period April 2024 - March 2025 110 individuals were referred, of which 100 took up the support.



Whether the number referred to the scheme (365) refers to individuals or parent/family groups

The 1:1 tailored parenting support is intended to be provided to the individual who has committed the offence. In the case of the published statistics this is number of individuals.

For those not reporting a positive outcome – the reasons for their views and if anything further happened in respect of those participants; and

Data on this is not collected as part of the monitoring data, the latest data for the same period above indicates 95 individuals returned a post support questionnaire and indicated a positive outcome

Why the Public Prosecution Service case management system does not enable cases where reasonable chastisement was used as a defence to be identified.

There has never been a formal requirement in terms of monitoring the defence and therefore the relevant field was never added to our Case Management System (CMS).

The PPS deals with nearly 40,000 cases each year, covering many different offences and case types. The CMS itself is a complex database, requiring data entry at many different points in the criminal justice process which often varies depending on case type. As such, it is simply not possible to record all relevant information *in a structured way* and, generally speaking, new fields will only be added to the system where there are clear business or other reasons for doing so.

Yours sincerely

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**DAVID GRAHAM
DALO**



Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Justice

David Graham
DALO
Department of Justice
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12 November 2025

Removal of the defence of reasonable chastisement

Dear David

At its meeting on 6 November 2025, the Committee for Justice heard joint oral evidence from the Department of Health and Department of Justice on the removal of the defence of reasonable chastisement.

During the session, the officials agreed to provide the following:

- Further information on impacts and outcomes in Wales following the repeal of the defence of reasonable chastisement, to include (if available):
 - What happened to those who did not take part in the out of court support scheme (30 people);
 - Whether the number referred to the scheme (365) refers to individuals or parent/family groups;
 - For those not reporting a positive outcome – the reasons for their views and if anything further happened in respect of those participants; and

- Why the Public Prosecution Service case management system does not enable cases where reasonable chastisement was used as a defence to be identified.

I should appreciate a response by 26 November 2025.

Yours sincerely

Kathy O'Hanlon

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