

Good news on smacking, but concerns remain

The Christian Institute has welcomed the Executive's decision to drop plans for a ban on the smacking of children under the age of three.

The Executive's policy U-turn was announced after the plans were criticised in a report published by an influential committee of MSPs.

The report from the Justice 2 Committee said there was "no convincing evidence" that an under-three ban would offer any further protection for children.

The report also stated that the current law – which allows parents to use 'reasonable chastisement' – was working well.

The Justice 2 Committee was concerned that an under-three ban

would lead to ordinary families being prosecuted for moderate smacking.

The Justice 2 Committee was also concerned about other plans to outlaw shaking and the use of implements. This would apply to children of all ages.

Some members of the committee felt the existing law offered enough protection for children. But a majority said they "accept the intention behind the ban on shaking or the use of an implement. However, we feel that these provisions may require further clarity."

The committee said that a ban on shaking might make more sense for very young children. The committee noted that, "Shaking a very young child is a different

proposition to shaking a teenager who may indeed be taller and stronger than their parent."

The committee also advised that there should be a clearer definition of what constitutes an 'implement'. The committee suggested that, under the bill, even a sock may be considered to be an implement.

Three MSPs on the seven-strong committee voted in favour of keeping the current law unchanged. They were Bill Aitken (Con, Glasgow), Duncan Hamilton (SNP, Highlands and Islands) and Alasdair Morrison (Lab, Western Isles).

The Christian Institute maintains that the existing law offers adequate

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Key vote on gay adoption is expected in House of Lords on 16 October



The bill proposing to allow homosexual couples and unmarried heterosexual couples to adopt children is currently before the House of Lords. The crucial vote is expected on 16 October.

The proposals currently only affect England and Wales, but there will be great pressure for similar

measures in Scotland if the plans go ahead.

Colin Hart, Director of The Christian Institute said, "The overwhelming evidence is that unmarried and gay adoption would be bad for kids. The research is crystal clear, children need a female role model in a permanent relationship."

News in Brief:

Executive dumps plan to ban smacking under-threes

The Scottish Executive has dropped its proposal to outlaw the smacking of children under the age of three. However, deep concerns remain about other proposals to outlaw shaking and the use of implements.

Lords' gay adoption vote expected on 16 October

A crucial vote on whether to allow homosexual couples and unmarried heterosexual couples to adopt children is expected in the Lords on 16 October. Christian Institute supporters will be contacted soon and asked to write to Peers.

Venue for Inverness meeting changed after recent floods

The Christian Institute has had to change the venue of its upcoming meeting in Inverness following recent floods in the city. See overleaf for details.

Institute patron, Lady Young, has died after a long illness

Patron of The Christian Institute, Lady Young, died at her home in Oxford on Friday 6 September.

Good news on smacking, but concerns remain

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protection for children and opposes any change in the law. However, if there is to be a ban on shaking and the use of implements, then the Institute agrees that these provisions must be clarified.

The plans to change the law on smacking are contained in the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill. The Scottish Parliament recently debated and voted in favour of the general principles of the bill.

In the debate, the SNP's Fergus Ewing echoed the position of The Christian Institute. He said: "there is no mandate for the measures and I welcome the climbdown

from and abandonment of the original proposals."

"I fail to be convinced that the existing common law of Scotland, interpreted by independent sheriffs, cannot continue to do the job that it has done."

Spokesman for the Conservative party, Lord James Douglas-Hamilton said: "We have repeatedly said that a ban on smacking is unnecessary, unwarranted, unworkable and unenforceable. The proposals reeked of the nanny state and were an insult to Scotland's parents."

Colin Hart, Director of The Christian Institute, said: "We are delighted at the news that the under-three ban is to be

Key findings from the Justice 2 Committee:

- There is no evidence that the current law fails to properly protect children from abuse.
- Plans to completely outlaw shaking children or the use of implements might prove overly inflexible – at the moment courts can consider other factors for each individual case.
- The provision to ban shaking makes more sense for very young children – shaking a very young child is a different proposition to shaking a teenager who may be taller and stronger than their parent.
- It may be advisable to define more clearly what is meant by 'an implement', for example would a sock be defined as an implement?
- The provisions for a blanket ban on shaking and the use of implements may require further clarity.

dropped."

"However, we remain concerned by proposals for an outright ban on shaking

and use of implements. These proposals are too inflexible and will catch innocent parents."

Floods force change of venue for Inverness meeting

Following recent floods, The Christian Institute's meeting in Inverness has moved venue. The meeting will now take place in the Royal Highland Hotel, Academy Street, Inverness.

The former venue, the Thistle Hotel, has been damaged by flooding and is currently unavailable. The time and date of the meeting remain unchanged. The meeting will start at 7.30pm on Thursday 26 September.

The Christian Institute's Deputy Director, Simon Calvert, and Researcher, Chris Prest, will speak at the meeting. Topics covered will include smacking, divorce, cannabis and adoption.

The meeting will give practical ideas for action and will also consider issues of religious liberty.

Patron of The Christian Institute, Lady Young, has died

The Christian Institute was saddened at the news of the death of Institute patron, the Baroness Young.

Lady Young died on Friday 6 September at her home in Oxford after a long illness.

Director of The Christian Institute, Colin Hart, said, "Lady Young was a person of tremendous Christian integrity and courage."

Tributes to Lady Young can be read on the Institute's web site, www.christianscotland.org.



For more news log on to The Christian Institute's website:

www.christianscotland.org