

## Media release

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### Smacking – “It’s wrong, full stop” say children

*“It’s bad that they are smacking them. It’s good that they are disciplining them but they shouldn’t be hitting them really hard. Maybe they could send them to the corner”* -

11-year old girl who participated in the What’s Up survey.

The debate around the Referendum ’09 on physical punishment has been widely debated by adults but who is listening to the voice of those who are at the centre of this debate – the children?

As New Zealand’s largest telephone helpline for children and young people, 0800WHATSUP provided an opportunity for children and young people to express their views about physical punishment and whether or not adults should be able to claim a legal defence if charged with assaulting a child<sup>1</sup>.

“The initial results from the survey show that the majority of callers (more than 55 percent) do not think parents taken to court for hitting a child should be let off if they say they were disciplining the child”, says Murray Edridge, Chief Executive of Barnardos New Zealand.

“Despite this, comments from the children and young people who participated in the survey suggest many children are conditioned to expect and accept physical discipline from parents. Importantly, many of the callers suggested that parents should be let off with a warning or community service if they perpetrated low levels of violence against children”.

“This is how the child discipline law is working in practice. Parents are not being prosecuted for lightly or occasionally smacking a child, only serious levels of violence are being prosecuted”.

“Barnardos welcomes the sample of results in the survey that provide valuable insights into the views of children and young people about physical punishment. We are pleased that What’s Up has done this survey, giving children and young people the opportunity to express their point of view about a subject matter that affects them most in Referendum ’09”, concluded Mr Edridge.

The full report can be read on [www.barnardos.org.nz](http://www.barnardos.org.nz)

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<sup>1</sup> The telephone survey was conducted from 27 April to 10 May and was successful in eliciting a large proportion of meaningful votes and comments, with a response rate of around 10%. What’s Up continues to invite children and young people to express their point of view on the matter of “smacking” until the referendum closes on 21 August.

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