

## Parents should have more legal leeway in spanking: London mayor

tralee pearce

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Britain's Boris Johnson  
Nigel Roddis/Reuters

Boris Johnson sympathizes with parents who just aren't sure how hard they can smack their children – legally speaking.

The mayor of London told the BBC he thinks parents should have more leeway, comments in line with the argument that last summer's London riots were, in part, caused by parents easing up on physical punishment.

"People do feel anxious about imposing discipline on their children, whether the law will support them....," he told the BBC.

"Parents ... should be seen as the natural figures of authority."

A U.K. law in place since 2004 allows parents to smack their kids without causing the "reddening of the skin," according to The Telegraph.

While Mr. Johnson did add that parents should not be given a free pass for "for physical abuse or for violence," the comment raises the question of where to draw the line.

British member of Parliament David Lammy argues that working-class parents in his constituency are worried about their children being wooed by gangs and a life of violent crime.

He has said that the newer definition of not reddening the skin is confusing for his non-white constituents.

But Toronto child-psychology expert Wang Lee says there is a tremendous body of research on the negative impact of corporal punishment.

Smacking your child models aggression, says Prof. Lee, of the Jackman Institute of Child Study. Not only does corporal punishment negatively affect general cognitive abilities such as IQ, a recent study of Prof. Lee's found that children who experience corporal punishment come to excel in lying. "You're not only making the child delayed in cognitive development, but you're making them more dishonest. You also make them devious. There's a social consequence."