

GOVERNMENT SMACKING BAN CLAIMS 'DISINGENUOUS' SAY CHILDREN'S CAMPAIGNERS

The Government's claim that a ban on smacking children would be an unacceptable intrusion into family life are 'disingenuous and misleading' say children's rights group, Action on Rights for Children (ARCH).

At the same time as the 'reasonable chastisement' amendments to the Children Bill are debated, Peers will also be debating Government plans to monitor every family in England and Wales via a database system.

The [Children Bill](#) contains proposals to open a central file on every child, and permit professionals to share confidential information about families without their knowledge or consent whenever they have a 'concern' about a child or parent. These 'concerns' can include information about medical problems or educational achievement - not just worries that a child is being abused. Professionals would then decide what intervention the family needs.

'We do not understand how the Government can say that it does not want to intrude into family life, when it is seeking to establish a comprehensive family surveillance system,' says Terri Dowty, Policy Director of ARCH. 'Under cover of the publicity surrounding the smacking debate, a real nanny state will be created - with parents reduced to the role of nannies.'

ARCH dismisses Government claims that the database idea came from Lord Laming's Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié. The proposals were contained in a Government Performance and Innovation Unit report published before the Laming Inquiry even opened. Under pressure from Peers during Committee Stage of the Children Bill, the Government admitted that Lord Laming was not the source of the idea.

'A children's database has more to do with an infatuation with information technology than with child protection. Rather than wasting millions on watching families and talking about them behind their backs, we should be spending the money on protecting children who are in danger.'

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NOTES FOR EDITORS:

1) ARCH - Action on Rights for Children - is an Internet-based UK-wide network of families committed to the rights of children. Through its network, ARCH disseminates information to families, and gathers opinions on issues affecting children in order to represent them to policy-makers at both local and national level. For more information see: www.arch-ed.org

2) The Children Bill is online at:
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200304/ldbills/035/2004035.htm>

3) The Performance & Innovation Unit Report 'Privacy & Data-Sharing: the way forward' published April 2002 is at: <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/su/privacy/11.htm>