



Media Statement



**EMBARGOED UNTIL 5 PM
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Parents say smacking is the least effective discipline

Research commissioned by the Littlies Lobby shows the majority of parents or primary caregivers of children under five years who responded to our survey consider smacking to be the least effective way to guide and discipline children.

The mail survey, conducted in April 2005, was of 1367 readers of the magazine Tots to Teens¹ who were parents or primary caregivers of children under five years.

Littlies Lobby Coordinator, Deborah Morris-Travers said, "Our research reinforces the findings of a significant number of international studies showing that smacking is the least effective way to discipline children. Our results indicate a high level of awareness among our respondents that smacking is ineffective."

In the survey, 71 percent of respondents described smacking as an ineffective way to guide children to behave well. 96 percent of parents said "praising and encouraging good behaviour" was the most effective. This was closely followed by "leading by example." Other effective strategies that rated higher than smacking were giving small rewards for tasks well done, talking to them about what is right and wrong, taking time out, and taking away privileges.

"Physical punishment fails to effectively teach children how to behave well and has been shown to have a range of negative impacts on the health and wellbeing of children.

"It's great to see the awareness that positive parenting strategies are the most effective ways to guide children. This may be a reflection of the increased availability of information about child development and parenting education.

"However, our research also shows that parents often seek advice and support from friends, their own parents and parenting magazines so it's likely that information about the success of positive parenting strategies is also being shared between parents," concluded Ms Morris-Travers.

The Littlies Lobby is a joint initiative of Plunket and the Children's Commissioner. The project is designed to increase awareness of the importance of the early years of a child's life and promote the wellbeing of children and families.

Conducted by UMR Research, the mail survey had a margin of error of plus or minus 2.7 percent.

Ends

¹ Tots to Teens is free magazine for parents with children aged 0 -12 years old. It is distributed through retailers, libraries, family venues as well as Plunket, schools and childcare facilities. It has a national circulation of 130,000 per issue and regional editions in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

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