

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Monday December 23 2024,

Safeguarding harm

Sir, Amanda Spielman ([Thunderer, Dec 20](https://www.thetimes.com/article/safety-of-children-must-come-before-cultural-sensitivity-s3ksbq6mr)) is to be congratulated for highlighting how the approach to safeguarding children can actually harm them. It is a shame that in this area opinion and cultural sensitivity take priority over “going after the science”. Research shows that children in toxic family situations are more likely to die in infancy, not only as a result of abuse but also from purely medical causes. Remaining in these environments harms mental, physical and social wellbeing throughout a person’s life. The earlier a child can be placed in a nurturing environment the better the outcomes.

Where possible, families need to be strengthened, ideally by preventive work, such as using schools and antenatal classes to focus on forming strong relationships. A very simple first step would be a ban on smacking, which has been clearly shown to cause harm. A ban would not only reduce physical abuse, it would also make the safeguarding waters less murky.
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