

# So-Called 'Cinderella' Law Could Make Christian Parents Criminals

Queen Elizabeth's speech last week included controversial plans for a new law that would criminalize parents if they emotionally neglect their children.

Dubbed the "Cinderella law," commentators have sounded a note of caution over the plans, some saying that the law will be hard to implement and others that it could work against religious parents.

The proposals were included as part of a Serious Crime Bill and carry a maximum sentence of 10 years for anyone deliberately harming a child's "physical, emotional, social or behavioral development."

Writing in *The Times*, Libby Purves warned that religious parents could fall foul of the law for teaching them any beliefs which contradicted what they were being taught at school.

And a *Telegraph* editorial questioned whether the plans would work "in a just and fair way."

The new legislation has been proposed out of a concern that the law needs strengthening in this area.

However, current legislation (The Children and Young Persons Act 1933) already covers situations where someone "willfully assaults, ill-treats, neglects, abandons or exposes [a child] or causes or procures him to be assaulted, ill-treated, neglected, abandoned or exposed, in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to health including injury to or loss of sight, or hearing, or limb, or organ of the body,

and any mental derangement.”

Christian Concern CEO Andrea Williams commented: “This proposed legislation is deeply concerning. Whilst we must make sure that the welfare of children remains a priority, these proposals could see parents unfairly criminalized.

“What is meant exactly by ‘emotional neglect’? Perfect parents do not exist. Doubtless there are many excellent parents who have not always attended to the emotional needs of their children. Would they be criminalized?

“The State must give room for parents to bring up their children as they see fit, whilst ensuring that children are properly cared for. The proposals would force parents into a very narrow view of what constitutes good parenting.”