the state of the nation report

fractured families

December 2006

About the Social Policy Justice Group

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Foreword by Iain Duncan Smith

This Report paints a worrying picture of family breakdown in the UK. We now have one of the highest divorce rates in the Western world and the fabric of family life has been stripped away in the past thirty years. This study also shows more clearly than ever the destructive effects of family breakdown upon millions of children, as well as the links between family breakdown and addictions, educational failure and serious personal debt.

I believe that strong families and strong communities are at the heart of the welfare society. From the cradle to the grave, we depend upon families and not enough is being done by Government to strengthen family life. I call upon us all to address the challenges of family breakdown in a responsible way and prevent the demise of the welfare society.

My thanks to Samantha Callan and her committee, all of whom have worked incredibly hard and literally toured the country speaking to as many people as possible.

Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP

Foreword by Dr Samantha Callan

This report has sought to pull together, in a thorough and wide-ranging way, the nature of the considerable problem of family breakdown our nation is facing today. It represents an enormous amount of work, all of which was achieved by the voluntary and sacrificial donation of committee members' time. No member of this committee was paid by the Conservative Party or the Social Justice Policy Group, but gave their time freely because of their dedication to the issues involved. From the outset we have been keen to stress our independence from any narrow interest group whether it be a political or other ideologically-aligned party.

We are keenly aware that the conclusions we have come to are not those usually found in the present government's policy documents or contemporary academic literature but have been faithful to our reading of the evidence garnered throughout the review process. However, it is not our wish to enter into the usual polarities which are described in the prologue but rather to be involved in building a pro-family consensus across the usual divides.

As committee chair I would like to thank profoundly the members of the committee, all of whom have carried out this work without dropping their voluntary sector or professional responsibilities. The fact that they have maintained their involvement in occupations which bear a high degree of relevance to the issue of family breakdown has enriched the project immeasurably. Their ongoing expertise in such diverse fields as family law, child psychology, relationship education, disability services provision and academic research has meant that the process was informed by the widest range of evidence and indubitably grounded in reality. All of the members of the group (and the various research associates), have been closely involved in the writing of this report, so their views have not been filtered through professional writers (although consistency of style has of course been a goal.)

Their families should also be thanked, as such a large percentage of the effort which has gone into this project has been expended in time which might otherwise have been spent with them.

With thanks to

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Alone in London (Youth Homelessness project specialising in family mediation) Association for Family Therapy

CAMHS; Brighton and Hove

Community Education and Training Academy, Birmingham; With thanks to all lone parent contributions.

YMCA, Lansworth House, Brighton, and 4 YMCA residents from other regional areas.

A6 Executive summary - fractured families

The family is where the vast majority of us learn the fundamental skills for life; physically, emotionally and socially it is the context from which the rest of life flows. However family life in Britain is changing such that adults and children today are increasingly faced with the challenges of dysfunctional, fractured, or fatherless families. This is especially the case in the least advantaged sections of society but these trends also profoundly affect people across the socioeconomic spectrum. In this report we have sought to explore the current state of the family, and the extent, consequences and causes of family breakdown.

The full report comprises four main sections and a short concluding section intended to point towards a further report (to be published in June 2007) which will propose policy solutions based on the identified problems. This Executive Summary therefore covers the four main sections in turn (introductory comments, the state of the nation with regard to family breakdown, effects of family breakdown and, finally, causes of family breakdown) and then briefly summarises the direction of travel which policy recommendations are expected to take. Section numbers in the report (such as, for example B4 or D9) to which the summary is referring are indicated.

SETTING THE SCENE

We have adopted an inclusive use of the term 'family breakdown' (see A8) which can be summed up in three key words: dissolution, dysfunction and 'dad-lessness'. Our interest is not narrowly restricted to what happens when parents separate or divorce, partly because solo parenthood (usually solo motherhood) is a growing family type in this country. 15% of all babies are born and grow up without a resident biological father.

A key consideration in a report which looks at the causes and effects of family breakdown is the extent to which it is possible to state with certainty the direction of causality or indeed the extent to which interrelationships between factors are correlational rather than causal (see B1). We emphasise the complexity of the relationships between various factors implicated in and affected by family breakdown and have attempted to represent this in the simple diagram below (Figure 1).

Discussion about family breakdown is highly contested and its treatment by social policy is problematic (see A7). At first sight the aim of policy to support all kinds of families appears laudable but it ignores the fact that some family types, on average, result in better outcomes for children and adults than others.

Figure 1. The systemic nature of family breakdown (ie. cause and effect interact)
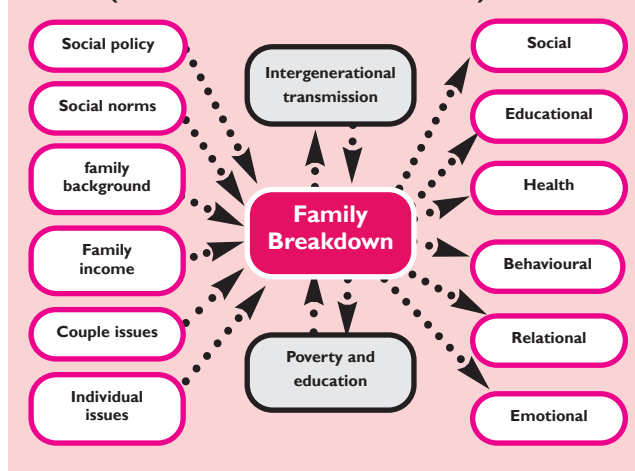
We reject the comfortable mantra that policy can or should be wholly morally neutral (see A8) on the grounds that this is unworkable in practice. Although moralising (in the pejorative and judgemental sense) is to be avoided, committed relationships are essential for the social ecology of the family, the community and the country, and families which are formed on the basis of these should therefore be encouraged. The policy-making community (which includes politicians, policy-makers and academics) has been markedly reluctant to grasp the nettle of family breakdown by being clear about the benefits of marriage and committed relationships, and the merits of supporting and encouraging them (see A7). The last forty years have seen sweeping demographic changes which have profoundly affected the whole of our society yet there is no significant debate concerning its causes, effects and likely remedies.

One of the most important factors implicated in poverty and a low sense of well-being is the issue of family breakdown yet in this area, perhaps more than in any other, politicians, policy-makers and academics *inter alia*, are aware of their own frailty. Many of their own families have endured dissolution and other forms of breakdown, and they are understandably determined not to moralise. They are also reluctant to support an institution which may not have served them well, either because their own parents parted or because their own marriages and partnerships have faltered. However, this issue cannot be left undebated when its associated costs, across so many measures, are so high. Personal difficulties in sustaining committed relationships or close prox-

imity to family breakdown in the lives of family, friends and colleagues, have, we feel, clouded policy considerations for too long. For this reason we urge readers of this report to lay to one side their own experience and consider the evidence-based case we make for meeting the challenge of family breakdown.

The introductory section (A7) establishes from the outset that relationships between adults have to be included as a key concern of family policy rather than of peripheral interest as is currently the case. This should not push concerns about children's welfare off the agenda, but children's welfare is tightly bound up with the quality of their parents' relationships and they are, often, the most vulnerable when families break down. Current child-centred policies (see D5) which do not adequately recognise this, will not best serve the children they purport to serve, the wider family, or society at large. Indeed, we will be investigating how to construct truly family-centred policies which will aim to deliver greater stability and secure relationships.

THE FAMILY IN BRITAIN TODAY

Family breakdown, in all its forms, is occurring at a greater rate today than ever before. Family stability has been in continuous decline for four decades and that is why we have felt the need to look so closely at the causes and consequences of this trend for society.

Demographic shifts – B1

Since the early 1970s there has been a decline in marriage (such that the annual number of couples getting married has fallen by one third and marriage rates have fallen by two thirds), and a marked rise in the numbers of lone parent families. However, divorce rates have stabilised since 1980 and the ongoing rise in family breakdown affecting young children has been driven by the dissolution of cohabiting partnerships. The majority of these are less stable than marriage being more than twice as likely to break up.

Repeating cycles of breakdown – B5 and B7

The intergenerational transmission of family breakdown is indicated in our high rates of teenage pregnancy. Girls who come from fatherless or broken homes and whose mothers gave birth in their teens are greatly overrepresented in teen pregnancy statistics, as are young women from social class V. The latter are more than ten times as likely to be very young mothers as those from social class I and will typically be subject to ongoing financial difficulties throughout the lifecycle. Furthermore family breakdown in the form of abuse, neglect or insufficient nurture, creates a cycle of psy-

chological distress in which 'damaged' individuals go on to create more dysfunctional families which are then subject to further breakdown.

Variation across ethnic divides and national boundaries – B8 and B9

It is clear that there is considerable ethnic variation in levels of family breakdown. In 2001 85% of Indian families with dependent children were headed by a married couple, whereas 50-60% of black families were headed by a lone parent, typically the mother. When looking at variation across Western nations our lower marriage rates and later age of marriage seem to be typical but our norms regarding marriage as being the conventional setting for having children appear to be less strong. The trends towards single mother households and youthful pregnancy are particularly pronounced in the UK when compared with other European nations.

The gap between aspirations and achievement –A7

In spite of such statistical trends, aspirations remain high for marriage. British surveys consistently report high scores for adults (nearly 70%) and young people (over 80%) who wish to get married at some time in the future (and remain with one partner for life). Among young people, there is a distinct possibility that the significant gap between aspirations and achievement will open up even further if present trends continue.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAMILY BREAKDOWN

Family breakdown, whether by dissolution, dysfunction or 'dad-lessness', has many and varied effects and few of them are beneficial to the individuals, their wider family, or society at large. Amongst a representative sample of 2,447 UK adults surveyed by YouGov for this policy group (see C2), social problems were found to be more prevalent amongst those who had personal experience of family breakdown. Those not brought up by both parents were more likely to have experienced educational problems, drug addiction, alcohol problems, serious debt problems, or unemployment. On its own, this survey demonstrates correlation rather than cause. However it gives a good indication of the range of problems typically associated with family breakdown.

Dysfunctional families – C3

In terms of dysfunction we identified a breakdown of nurture within many families such that there is an increasing number of families who cannot offer certain core needs to their offspring: secure attachment, protection, realistic limits and self control, freedom to express

valid emotions, autonomy, competence and a sense of identity, spontaneity and play. Educationalists with whom we consulted flagged up the marked increase in extreme emotional problems they encounter in children under their care, citing family breakdown, inadequate parenting and social deprivation as key causes.

Poverty and welfare dependency – C5

The failure to form a durable bond between a mother and father often leads to welfare dependency. This report makes clear the extent to which families suffer financially after family breakdown. Fatherlessness has adverse effects not only on children but also on men who have never benefited from a relationship with their children, on women who have to cope, to a large extent, on their own, and on the wider society which bears the financial burden. Family breakdown is both contributor to and a consequence of poverty and most other social problems.

The Institute for Social and Economic Research states that after a marital split women are on average 18% worse off and men are on average 2% better off, which implies that the state is picking up an enormous tab for family breakdown. Successive governments have neglected to consider adequately the distinct possibility that much breakdown might be preventable and that many marriages and partnerships might be worth saving, in financial as well as emotional terms.

Delinquency and crime – C4

The impact on crime is illustrated by the fact that 70% of young offenders come from lone-parent families and levels of all anti-social behaviour and delinquency are higher in children from separated families than in those from intact families. One third of prisoners and more than half of all young offenders have been through the care system (and have therefore experienced some form of family breakdown).

Impact on the elderly- C9

Care for the elderly is also compromised due not only to the increased complexity of family relationships (which has confused duties of care) but also to the changing ethos of relationships. In a society characterised by high levels of breakdown it is no longer seen as a moral duty to look after aging parents or blood relatives; care and help provided depends on the quality of relationship. The burden of care is shifting further onto the state and this trend is likely to continue given the greying of the population. (The Local Government Association has estimated that between 2002-3 and 2005-6 demographic changes alone will result in an increase of £146 million in the cost of providing services for what they term "adults and the elderly.")

Costs to the nation – C11

Family breakdown represents a significant economic burden. The cost to the country is now well over £20bn per annum, a significant proportion of which is paid in benefits to lone parents. If there were less family breakdown and lone parenthood, there would be fewer children taken into care, less homelessness, less drug addiction, less crime, less demand on the health services, less need for remedial teaching in schools, better average educational performance and less unemployment. All of these would save the taxpayer money and some would contribute to better economic performance in the country as a whole.

Effects on housing – C8

Housing stocks are under immense pressure having expanded by only one third since 1971. Over this same period dissolution and lone parenthood have sharply increased in frequency producing greater numbers of separate family units who require their own dwellings. For those partners forced to leave the family home the future is often uncertain and it is difficult to obtain official support. At the same time there are concerns that social housing is often used less efficiently due to the reduction in the number of adults in a property following divorce. Housing is expected to support positive parental contact following separation, but it is difficult to justify providing multi-bedroom accommodation which is only fully used one night a week.

Not withstanding such practical considerations we are not advocating that all families should stay together for the sake of the housing stock or the economy. Rather we are flagging up here and elsewhere that those who are hardest hit by family breakdown tend to be those in the poorest sectors of society.

THE CAUSES OF FAMILY BREAKDOWN

The factors which drive family breakdown are varied and complex. They exist at a personal and family level, and are impacted by a wide variety of external social factors. Many of the social problems which drive family breakdown are also exacerbated by it as we noted above.

Family structure and family process – D3

It is evident from the research that family problems do not vary so widely as to make policy solutions an unrealistic goal. We have concluded on the basis of the extensive evidence that both family structure and family process matter. The statistics indicate that marriages are far more likely to provide a stable environment for adults and children than cohabitation and are more resilient when the family is facing a crisis or stressful life event such as childbearing. Importantly we also conclude that family process

matters and that families work best and thrive when conflict is low. Indeed, conflict management within families has to be a key consideration for public policy as the key issue for children's wellbeing is the level of conflict between their parents, not the level of happiness in their parents' relationship.

The role played by poverty – D4.1

Research and anecdotal data highlight the extent to which financial worries and debt place enormous strain on family life. We quote research on low-income families which acknowledges that "In addition to the constant stress of making ends meet financially, and of working in unstable, low paying jobs, they have the frustrations of living in sub-standard housing in poorly serviced neighbourhoods, without adequate transportation and they and their children are continually in fear of crime and violence. Members of their immediate or extended families may be struggling with depression, alcoholism or drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, or may be in and out of jail or some combination of those problems. Domestic violence is more prevalent….black and other minority individuals are constantly exposed in the workplace or on the streets to incidents of racism and discrimination. Service providers who work with these couples note how often these accumulated stresses spill over into home, and anger and frustration too often poison their relationships between parents and children."

Poor housing as a contributor to family breakdown – D4.2

Similarly, we look closely in this section on the effect of poor or inadequate housing on family stability and conclude that housing policy can inadvertently drive or at least accelerate breakdown if families are housed at a remove from their extended family or a local support network. Moreover we find that families who have little choice about their housing are at a significant disadvantage. They are placed under pressure by an inability to mould the space in which they live, to change or alter that space as the needs of family members change over time. The housing charity Crisis explained to us that "housing should not be interpreted merely as a physical space - but rather as providing 'roots, identity, security, a sense of belonging and a place of emotional wellbeing' - and the impact upon families of inadequate housing should be seen through this multi-dimensional prism."

Employment factors – D4.3

The presence or absence of appropriate employment is another important influence on family formation and sustainability. Research indicates that there is a rela-

tionship between the level of lone parenthood in a particular geographical area and poor job opportunities for men. Employment opportunities appear to play an important role in influencing the supply of marriageable men.

Tax and benefits – D5.1

Related to this is what has been termed the "partnership penalty" which the welfare state imposes on poor couples. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has shown that families on modest incomes may suffer a large financial penalty if the parents live openly together. Tax credits are assessed against the joint income of a household so make no allowance for the expenses of an additional adult. Moreover, the proportion of disposable income derived from child-contingent support has been rising over the past 30 years. Such support now provides round 30% of the disposable income of the average lone parent family as compared to less than 10% for the average couple family with children.

Obviously there are economies of scale associated with living together as a couple but these may be less than the penalty in tax credit terms. We are concerned at the inherent unfairness of such a system. It is effectively a highly retrogressive tax which affects the poor but not those whose incomes are too high for them to be affected by welfare benefits. In poorer sections of society this may be interacting with the employment factors already mentioned thus deterring marriage and making these and other partnerships more unstable.

As nearly half of all children in poverty live in couple families such a policy will not further any party's aim to reduce child poverty. Furthermore this present system encourages fraud, penalises commitment in relationships and has led researchers to conclude that the tax and benefits system has in fact been a significant factor behind dissolution and the growth of lone parent families. We found evidence of a widening gap between middle-class and working-class behaviour with regard to family formation, as the latter have experienced the most marked rise in births outside marriage since 1960. There has been a shift in social norms which has been influenced in no small measure by the establishment of a comprehensive welfare state which has provided government support for lone mothers.

The dilemma for policy- C5

Obviously this poses a fundamental dilemma for policy: how can government promote family stability without undermining lone parent families and, conversely, how can government support lone parents without undermining family stability? This working group report in no way

intends to stigmatise lone parents who do a very difficult job, usually with far fewer resources than couple families. As the National Council for One Parent Families states, "lone parenthood is rarely a lifestyle choice." However, to date family stability has been almost completely ignored and support for lone parents has been the focus.

The legal system – D5.2

The legal system has also, albeit inadvertently, been a further contributing factor to the decline of family stability. One study looking at the divorce rate suggests that across 18 European countries, the combined effect of all legal reforms conservatively amounts to 20% of the increase in divorce rates between 1960 and 2002. Currently the recommendations of the Law Commission to extend rights to cohabiting couples are under review. Our research indicates that these proposals are highly likely to encourage more couples to cohabit and thus enter into inherently less stable relationships. We support calls from many other consultees to educate cohabiting couples about the precariousness of the legal basis upon which their relationship currently rests rather than take matters out of their hands in the ways suggested.

Central to this argument is the robust evidence that the dissolution of cohabiting partnerships is the main driver behind lone parent family formation in the UK (see B4). Nearly one in two cohabiting parents split up before their child's fifth birthday compared to one in twelve married parents. Three quarters of family breakdown affecting young children now involves unmarried parents. A new study commissioned for this policy group looked at family breakdown amongst the Millennium Cohort Study of 15,000 mothers with three year olds. Cohabiting parents with young children were more than twice as likely as married parents to split up, regardless of age, income and other socio-economic background factors.

Finally there is also a strong intergenerational transfer among many of these factors which means these problems are now deep rooted and long term (see D7).

POLICY DIRECTION

This report establishes a baseline which sets the likely direction of travel of the policy recommendations we will be making in June 2007 (see section E).

We believe that from the evidence gathered and presented here one cannot but conclude that family breakdown in all its forms is of serious concern to society at large, as well as to the individuals intimately impacted. For this reason we believe that we should rigorously explore what family-centred policies, rather than child-centred policies might look like. We are concerned that current policies, such as those encouraging the highest possible labour market participation for mothers (in the interest of alleviating child poverty) have not adequately considered the deleterious impact on families and relationships. The vital role of parenting cannot be outsourced to external providers or squeezed into ever tighter time slots.

Secondly, it is clear, that we should be emphasizing prevention as well as cure. We will be looking at how to stabilise current families we well as how to re-establish stable family relationships and structures as a part of a socially responsible society. Marriage continues to offer the most stable and durable framework, but there is not a high level of awareness of these benefits.

Thirdly, and in relation to this last point, we want to look closely at how we empower individuals, rather than the state, to raise their families and how to align services in a way that offers families genuine choice. We have, for example, become aware of the huge strain placed on relationships in families where there is disability. Not only does dealing with the disability produce tension but in large measure so too does fighting for care, education and other support services. If we are implicating the welfare state in the rise of family breakdown, we need to consider workable adjustments and indeed complements to it. The notion of the welfare society embraces a social responsibility agenda which begins to consider how to encourage people to make decisions based on the wider good of society, on deferred gratification rather than instant returns. It also draws in the wealth of talent and energy in this country's voluntary sector organizations.

We will therefore be looking at overall government policy towards marriage, cohabitation, and lone parenthood; the scope and limitations of both widely-applied and finely-grained policy initiatives; legal aspects of marriage, cohabitation & lone parenthood; tax and benefit incentives and disincentives that influence family outcomes; other government policies and messages that influence family outcomes; the provision of preventive relationship and parenting education; the provision of other relationship and parenting interventions; the publication and use of relevant statistical data; the role of local government and the role of the voluntary sector.

By so doing we hope to establish a policy framework which will support the families of Britain achieve what they almost universally desire, a stable, nurturing and permanent environment to the benefit of its members, the wider family network, and society as a whole.

A7   Prologue

This report and the one following it in June 2007, are intended to provide recommendations to the Conservative Party on the subject of family policy. More specifically they consider how family policy must be designed in order to provide the surest support for the nation's families and to best prevent breakdown. Firstly it must be clearly stated that family policy has to be about the family, it has to be about relationships, usually between parents themselves and between parents and their children. When policies specifically concerned with children or women are equated with family policy this is incorrect (Bogenschneider 2000).[1] Also, when family policy is exclusively concerned with the parent-child relationship and ignores the relationship between the adults in the family or non-custodial parents then again there is a hiatus which cannot be disregarded.

Although this working group completely agrees with the sentiment that "every child matters", an exclusive focus on or excessive preoccupation with children ignores the importance to those children of the relationship between their parents. Penny Mansfield, Director of One Plus One states that "The evidence is compelling that stable, harmonious relationships improve the quality of life for adults and children but how do we - or indeed can we – create the conditions in which such relationships are nurtured? Whilst there is ample evidence that the quality of parental relationships is a critical social factor for children, politicians, policy makers and practitioners are wary of adult relationships. Current policy mainly addresses families as individuals, ignoring the defining feature of adult life, for good and ill, interdependence."[2]

This report will provide *inter alia* a report of the state of the nation with regard to family breakdown. At this point it is necessary to sketch out briefly what we have found to be the state of the nation with regard to the discussion about family breakdown, especially within the academic and policy-making communities. Commentators have noted that "Family research and policy work reflect a range of political, moral and academic positions and as such are often hotly contested. Thus the potential to debate and develop evidence-informed policies could be difficult." (McKie and Cunningham Burley 2005)[3] This is particularly the case with the issue of family breakdown, making its treatment by social policy especially problematic.

Uncontested, however, is the notion that the family, one

of the welfare pillars of society (Esping-Anderson et al 2002)[4] has been caught up in a series of dramatic social changes affecting all industrialised countries. These changes have led to huge variations in family living arrangements as a result of a declining fertility rate and increases in cohabitation, single-parenthood, parental separation and divorce, step-families, same-sex unions and people choosing to live alone.

Contrasting interpretations of these shifts in family living arrangements have led to the formation of two polarised perspectives on modern relationships, (Walker 2006)[5] one of which is largely negative and one which is primarily positive. It is when these perspectives clash in public debate that the controversial nature of family breakdown becomes particularly apparent. The more pessimistic view of family change equates change with decline. The growth of individualism is regarded as a threat to the stability of the family and the well-being of children, and the breakdown of family ties is more broadly associated with societal demoralisation, alienation and fragmentation. Opposing this view is the more liberal and optimistic perspective that family change is positive, as breakdown frees adults and children from oppressive and conflictual situations. Greater diversity and choice are equated with greater democracy in personal relations and children's resilience and adaptiveness are emphasised, rather than their vulnerability in post-separation contexts. The policy response advocated by the latter perspective is one of greater support to parents and children to enable them to exercise their choices and rights responsibly as circumstances change.

Our group would concur with the judgment that there are serious limitations to both of these perspectives (Walker 2006,[6] Williams 2004[7]). The more pessimistic view of the family, in its most polarised expression, is inherently retrogressive as it usually advocates "turning the clock back" to a golden age of marriage and family. Harking back ignores not only the ways in which more rigid role expectations of partners were potentially oppressive for both men and women, but also the profound differences in the labour market partly provoked by women's increased educational qualifications. Such developments have challenged the traditional stereotype of the male breadwinner and the at-home mother. The more optimistic view is usually challenged on the grounds that it ignores continuing inequali-

1   Bogenschneider K., 2000, "Has Family Policy Come of Age? A Decade Review of the State of U.S. Family Policy in the 1990s" Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 62, pp. 1136-1159

2   Mansfield P., 2004, "The Missing Link in Parenting Education and Support" in One Plus One: The Bulletin, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 10-11

ties in today's couple relations (Williams 2004)[8] in terms of the domestic division of labour and persistence of domestic violence which, according to the Home Office,[9] one in four women will experience at some point in their lives.[10]

However, our group is of the view that the supposedly optimistic view of modern trends conceals a profound pessimism, since it assumes that nothing can be done to reduce the rate of family breakdown. Hence, its main focus is on policies for dealing with the consequences of breakdown, in particular on mitigating the effects of separation on children. It is also unrealistic about the difficulties for both adults and children of living in blended or stepfamilies and about the fragility of such families. More than half of remarriages involving children end in divorce and one in four stepfamilies break down in the first year (married or otherwise). They are also contexts in which children often feel alienated or unwelcome. They often lose contact with one set of biological grandparents and, if the stepfamily does not remain intact, they can lose stepsiblings with whom they may have built up relationships which are precious to them.

This working group contends that although there appears to be no script for marriage and intimate relations, and expectations differ greatly from those of earlier generations, most marriages do still last a lifetime and most people do still marry (as the report shows, six out of seven couples in the UK are married). The trend towards greater fragility need not be an uncheckable one. However, for this to be the case, the optimists' call for greater support for parents and children to exercise informed choices and rights responsibly must be heeded. If people were better informed about the possible effects of relationship breakdown on adults, children and ultimately on society, this might, in many cases, act as a deterrent. (Similarly, we advocate below that raising awareness that there is no such thing as common-law marriage is preferable to changing the law to protect cohabitees.) Qualitative research indicates that many people who have initiated family breakdown would have found it helpful to have been warned about the harsh realities of post-separation/divorce family life (Walker 2001,[11] Walker et al 2004[12]).

This working group has attempted to couch its com-ments across the three phases of this policy development process in terms of the need to support people in families. However our group has been struck by Glenn and Sylvester's[13] conclusion that the statement "all kinds of families deserve support" is problematic because it ignores the fact that some family types are on average more advantageous to children (and adults) than other family types. These authors prefer the alternative formulation, "people in all kinds of families deserve support". They "fail to see how denying that people in some kinds of families face greater difficulties than others is conducive to effective support of those people with the greater needs. If, as research indicates, divorce and unwed childbearing tend to disadvantage children, it does parents and their children a disservice to pretend that family structure is irrelevant or outside the bounds of appropriate research. Scholars should continue to study family structure and the mechanisms through which it may affect child well-being so that personal and policy decisions can be based on sound knowledge."

The current government has clearly expressed a commitment to support the increasingly challenging job of parenting (Quinton 2004[14], DfES 2004[15]). However, an intention to support the couple relationship upon which most families are still founded has been far less clearly stated, despite the evidence of high rates of relationship breakdown and many theorists' explanations for breakdown, couched in terms of fragility. When seen in this light, all families are, to some extent, potentially fragile and in need of support. Whilst this might seem to be a call for greater state intrusion into family life this need not be the case as will be seen by looking more closely at what is meant by support. Firstly however it is necessary to make the simple point that public and private spheres are in no way insulated from each other. As Bourdieu (1996:25)[16] states "The public vision…is deeply involved in our vision of domestic things and our most private behaviours themselves depend on public actions, such as housing policy or, more directly family policy. The public/private boundary does not suggest two isolated spheres but a permeable interface, which shapes and is shaped by our personal lives". This viewpoint has to be held in tension with other viewpoints, like that of anthropologist Geoff Dench[17], who states that we must relearn the

3   Cunningham-Burley S. & McKie L., (eds) 2005, Families in Society: Boundaries and Relationships Bristol, Policy Press

4   Esping-Anderson G., Gallie D., Hemerijk A. & Mykes J., 2002, Why we need a new welfare state, Oxford, Oxford University Press

5   Walker J., 2006, "Supporting Families in Democratic Societies: Public Concerns and Private Realities" keynote paper at 53rd ICCFR International Conference Families and Democracy: Compatibility, Incompatibility, Opportunity or Challenge? Lyon, France

6   ibid

7   Williams F., 2004, Rethinking Families, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

8   ibid

9   Home Office, 2000, British Crime Survey 2000, London, HMSO

10   Although such headline statistics do not make it clear that the odds of suffering domestic violence are significantly lower for married partners than for other marital statuses (Finney A., 2006, Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking, findings from the 2003/4 British Crime Survey, Home Office Online Report 12/06).

lesson that a sound polity has to be built around respect for the autonomy and privacy of the private realm.

Ghate and Hazel[18] contend that informal support from partners and children in families is far more important than is generally recognised and they make the key point that relationships between individuals lie at the heart of support. We would go further and suggest that it is intact relationships that are most supportive. Supporting families must start with acknowledging this pervasive social reality. Institutions, such as healthy marriage, which encourage support within families cannot be ignored or downplayed in favour of helping people better manage family breakdown although this is also a legitimate focus of policy as "picking up the pieces of fragmented lives is no easy task" (Walker 2006).[19]

MARRIAGE – MOST SUPPORTIVE IN PRACTICE

It is the contention of this working group that committed relationships are essential for the social ecology of the family and it is family forms which are based on such commitment which require public encouragement. This contention is based upon our extensive reading of the social science literature. It is also based on anecdotal evidence obtained during this policy development process and throughout the professional lives of the practitioners and academics who comprise the group. It is impossible to escape the importance of family structure when discussing commitment (although this need not exclude a consideration of the importance of relational quality). Statistically the chances of staying together without marriage are low. Although referred to dismissively by Philip Larkin as "bonds and gestures pushed to one side like an outdated combine harvester", D H Lawrence made the crucial point that "it is marriage, perhaps, which had given man the best of his freedom, given him a little kingdom of his own within the big kingdom of the state." He goes on to ask "Do we then want to break marriage? If we do break it, it means that we fall to a far greater extent under the direct sway of the state."

Certainly this is true of the many families in which fathers do not play an active economic role. A central but neglected issue when considering family structure concerns the role of fathers. In comparison with the clear legal responsibilities and only slightly more implicit social responsibilities entailed by marriage, informal family arrangements leave fatherhood on a far more insecure footing. Fathers' rights in and duties towards their children are far less sharply delimited. A central issue that has to be addressed when considering lone parenthood is that of fatherlessness. Kiernan et al (1998:8)[20] state that, "lone motherhood is the prominent manifestation of the separation of marriage and parenthood to which the increase in cohabitation, extra-marital childbearing and divorce have been major contributors…what seems to be central is the way the meaning of marriage has changed such that parenthood has become detached from it." Returning to the dichotomization of optimists and pessimists mentioned earlier, the former overlook the concept of marriage as the nursery of obligations and argue that the quality of commitment can be just as high outside of formal arrangements. However, this view neglects the meaningful and beneficial life script which marriage provides, especially for men.[21]

This report therefore challenges the rather evasive use of language which characterizes public discussion on the family, one example of which would be "what matters is the quality of parenting. There can be good parenting in any family type – married couple, cohabiting couple, single parent etc." It is patently obvious that this is true, but it ignores the fact that good parenting is more likely, and far easier to achieve, in some family types than others. It is analogous to saying that some people manage to drive safely without a seatbelt. There are even circumstances where it is better not to be wearing a seatbelt. For example, it is easier to escape from a burning car if you are not wearing a seatbelt. However, it is on average safer to wear a seatbelt and this is the normal justification for making seatbelts compulsory. It is likely that most people who refuse to be "judgemen-

11   Walker J., (ed), 2001, Information Meetings an Associated Provisions within the Family Law Act 1996 Final Evaluation Report, London, Lord Chancellor's Department

12   Walker J., et al, 2004, Picking up the Pieces: Marriage and Divorce Two Years after Information Provision, London, Department for Constitutional Affairs

13   Glenn N., & Sylvester T., 2005, The Denial: Downplaying the Consequences for Children of Family Structure, Institute for American Values

14   Quinton D., 2004, Supporting Parents: Messages from Research, Jessica Kingsley Publishers

15   DfES, 2004, Every Child Matters: Change for Children, DfES-1110-2004

16   Bourdieu P., 1996, "On the Family as a Realised Category", Theory, Culture and Society, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 19-26

17   Dench G., 2003, Rediscovering Family, Hera Trust

18   Ghate D. & Hazel N., 2004, Parenting in poor environments: Stress, support and coping. Policy Research Bureau, London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers

19   *ibid*

tal" about family types are simultaneously in favour of compulsory seatbelts for safety reasons based on a comparison of risks, yet the same willingness to compare risks is not extended to a consideration of family types.

This is highly understandable and most likely rooted in the practice and concepts of personal (or family) therapy. When seeking to help an individual with serious personal or family problems it is quite justified to say "people of your type can be successful." The only alternative is to say "give up now." However, the fact that something is appropriate in the context of therapy does not mean that it is appropriate in the context of government policy. It may be right to say to a single mother "someone like you can bring up your child well". It does not follow that the government should be neutral between family types, or should provide support for single parents in such a way as to undermine marriage or stable couple relationships. Therapy is concerned with the potentialities of a given individual in a given situation. The present government's "non-judgmental" approach to family policy reflects the intrusion of therapeutic thinking into areas where it is not appropriate.

It also reflects the fact that in this area, perhaps more than in any other, politicians, policy-makers and academics *inter alia*, are aware of their own frailty. Many of their own families have endured dissolution and other forms of breakdown, and they are understandably determined not to moralise. They are also reluctant to support an institution which may not have served them well, either because their own parents parted or because their own marriages and partnerships have faltered. However, this issue cannot be left undebated when its associated costs, across so many measures, are so high. As this report makes clear, the last forty years have seen sweeping demographic changes which have profoundly affected the whole of our society. Yet there is no significant debate concerning the causes, effects and likely remedies of the high levels of family breakdown which have characterised this period and continue to be such a salient feature of our social ecology. Personal difficulties in sustaining committed relationships or close proximity to family breakdown in the lives of family, friends and colleagues, have, we feel, clouded policy considerations for too long. For this reason we urge readers of this report to lay to one side their own experience and consider the evidence-based case we make for meeting the challenge of family breakdown.

This evasion has led to a blurring of the distinction between different family types in government documents and statistical presentations, most notably the distinction between married and cohabiting couple families. As this report will make clear, such a conflation of categories is untenable given the difference in outcomes which different family types tend, on average, to experience. Moreover in the present era of transparency an increase in information should be desirable and it is anomalous that government sponsored surveys and publications do not distinguish between marriage and cohabitation.

CONCLUSION

Language is important. Official discourse increasingly avoids using terms specifically associated with marriage, such as "married", "marital status", "husband" or "wife" and instead prefers supposedly neutral terms such as "couple" or "partner". However this ignores the enduring aspirations of adults and young people to marry. When MORI asked 805 adults which lifestyle they would most prefer the sample showed overwhelmingly that they would choose marriage over cohabitation (only 4% chose being unmarried with a partner and children, while 68% chose being married and with children. Other British surveys consistently report high scores (nearly 90%) for young people who wish to get married at some time in the future[22] and an on-line survey conducted by a teen magazine this year found that 92% believed in marriage, and 60% felt it was best for couples to marry before having children.[23] Our politicians do realise this and occasionally acknowledge it. Whilst Trade and Industry Secretary, Patricia Hewitt herself stated that "What's most important to people is their personal relationships, what makes most people happiest is a good marriage, a good family life."[24]

If terms such as "married" or "marital status" are no longer used in official discourse, the effect will be to undermine marriage as a social institution, so that people may eventually come to view marriage as a trivial ceremony with no real significance despite strong evidence to the contrary. The new use of language may have the benign aim of reducing the stigma of divorce, single parenthood or family breakdown in general but it threatens to elide over the very real differences in outcomes which intact and fractured families tend to experience. We acknowledge that there are no guarantees of good outcomes in

20   Kiernan K., Land H. & Lewis J., 1998, Lone Motherhood in Twentieth-Century Britain, Clarendon Press, Oxford

21   Geoff Dench goes further in stating that unless adult men are given clear rights and duties their attachment to society itself, let alone to their children, is very tenuous.

family life and support for the family unit has to be a priority of government. However, an administration which aims, as David Cameron states, to help people come together and stay together,[25] has to be willing to confront the considerable challenge of family breakdown. It cannot do this effectively whilst being hampered in its efforts by biased and incomplete information and by the presence of no-go areas of public policy.

22   Opinion Research Business poll, 2000,Young People's Lives in Britain Today

23   The Young People's Survey of Great Britain, commissioned by Bliss magazine, 2004

24   Quoted in Daily Telegraph article by Rachel Sylvester, 15th October 03, "We've failed mothers who stay at home, admits Hewitt"

25   Speech reported on http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4801634.stm

A8   Introduction

THE SOCIAL JUSTICE POLICY COMMISSION, A WORK IN THREE PHASES

To reiterate, the Family Breakdown working group has been charged with making policy recommendations to the Conservative Party which will address issues of social injustice in British society today. Family breakdown disproportionately affects the vulnerable and low income communities as this first report shall show and is therefore an appropriate subject for a commission on social justice. Indeed the particular concern of this report is the impact of family breakdown on the poorest in British society. A key principle of social justice is that of equality of opportunity. Children's life chances should depend only on their own motivation and abilities but the reality is that the families in which they grow up tend to have a huge influence on outcomes for children. Income is an important variable but so too is the extent to which a child's family is a haven of nurture for all of its members, rather than a conflicted, fissive and stressful environment.

The group has been asked to examine, *inter alia*

- the link between family breakdown and educational underachievement, mental health problems, addictions and criminality
- the challenges facing young people and their parents with particular regard to possible barriers to the fulfilment of teenage aspirations
- the challenges facing disabled children and their parents
- the challenges facing the elderly and their carers
- ethnic and cultural variations in all of the above

In accordance with this remit, the Family Breakdown Working Group, has completed phases one and two of the policy recommendation process. The first two sections of this report scope out the scale of the problem facing the United Kingdom today in terms of family breakdown. Thus we have written on the state of the nation with regards to family breakdown (section B) and the effects of family breakdown on the fabric of society, the local community, the family itself and the individual (section C). The second phase of this process examines what has caused family breakdown (section D).

Now that a rigorous understanding of the cause and effects of family breakdown has been documented, the group is in a much better position to begin to consider policy solutions for its alleviation. It is important to note from the outset however the systemic nature of family breakdown, that cause and effect interact. We emphasise the complexity of the relationships between various factors implicated in and affected by family breakdown and have attempted to represent this in the simple diagram below (see figure 1).

Figure 1.The systemic nature of family breakdown (ie. cause and effect interact)
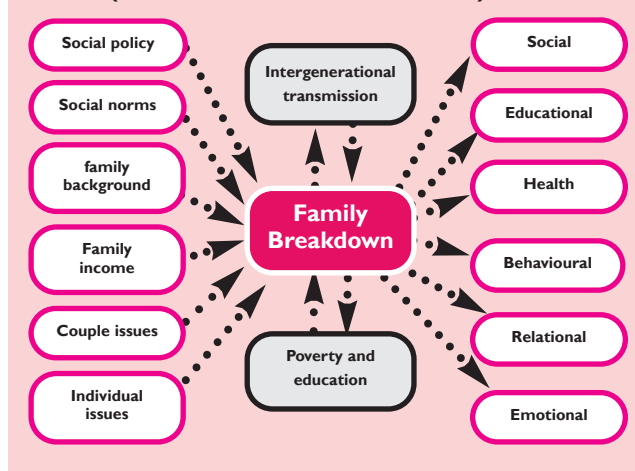
An understanding of the interrelatedness of these factors is essential when reading through this report and the one which will follow it. Therefore this theme is revisited at key points in order to stress that we are not suggesting that simple solutions will reverse social trends which have been developing over four decades. We are not advocating "turning the clock back" but neither does our consideration of the issues persuade us that it is any longer possible to accommodate these trends or deny that they are having a serious effect on the social ecology of this nation.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "FAMILY BREAKDOWN"

This report uses the term "family breakdown" in a broad sense. Patterson and Garwick state that "In essence, family breakdown and dissolution occurs when family members can no longer agree sufficiently on the rules for their relationship. The structure becomes uncoupled and two separate family units result."[26] This need not imply that a couple or a family have ceased to live under the same roof but suggests that they have ceased functioning as an effective nurturing unit. However, such a definition does not

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26   Patterson J., & Garwick A., 1994, "Levels of Meaning in Family Stress Theory" Family Process Vol. 33, pp. 287-304

encompass the issue of unpartnered childbearing which often creates fragile families with little or no father involvement. This fragility is not the result of family breakdown *per se* but flows from the lack of commitment and informality of many contemporary relationships which, as Mansfield (2005) states, "creates challenging issues for families and public policy."[27] Bearing in mind this inclusive use of the term, we will be considering (a) what creates a predisposition to family breakdown, (b) what actually triggers it and (c) the ripple effect across the wider, extended family (such as the tenuousness of the link between paternal grandparents and their grandchildren when parents either separate or share only the most informal of bonds.)

It is important to acknowledge that there is a minority of families which are characterised by certain qualities which have damaging outcomes for mental and physical health. Whilst families may break up when couples' relationships falter, there can be a breakdown in healthy family functioning in intact families which must also be of concern to policymakers. Research consistently suggests that families in which there is overt conflict (violence and aggression) and deficient nurturing (where relationships are cold, unsupportive and neglectful) leave children vulnerable to a wide array of mental and physical health disorders (Repetti et al 2002).[28] These inherently risky families may have two resident biological parents but children growing up in them are especially likely to develop health threatening behaviours including smoking, drug abuse, early and promiscuous sexual activity.

Risk of these behaviours is also correlated with family structure, for example, whether or not a child grew up knowing his or her father and also with poverty, two important issues to which we will return throughout the report. The key point to make at this stage is that whilst we are detailing the disadvantages which accrue to families which do not remain intact, this is not the only aspect of breakdown which will be of concern. We are not arguing that domestic stability is all that matters, rather that it is a neglected area for policy regardless of the benefits that it affords to individuals and the wider society.

Whilst the importance of material poverty cannot be neglected, and is the exclusive concern of another working group within the Social Justice Policy Group, we would concur with Dixon and Paxton that "despite significant extra resources for public services and the reduction of poverty over recent years, major progress is still needed to transform Britain into a truly prosperous, fair and 'decent' society."[29] It is our view that a courageous shift needs to be made towards tackling a key dimension of unequal life chance which is the extent to which children are being brought up in a home with both biological parents and the security of an expectation that this domestic set-up will be as permanent as human mortality allows.

The Fabian Society states that the most fundamental life chance is perhaps the chance to live a fulfilling and rewarding life, beginning in childhood. "Children must be given the chance to enjoy a happy and flourishing childhood….we therefore reject narrowly instrumental approaches which concentrate exclusively on those outcomes in adulthood that relate to people's productivity as economic agents."[30] We share this distaste with an emphasis on the economic and note that when their focus groups were asked to think about child poverty in the UK, many looked for a definition which focused not on financial resources but rather on the absence of loving and supportive parental relationships. Many gave examples of parents who had been able to raise children in a caring and supportive manner despite low income and also saw how children could be "poor" in an affluent family.

However, polling conducted by YouGov for the Social Justice Policy Group found that childhood in a broken family is more likely than average to be unhappy. Furthermore it is more likely to involve violence, abuse, debt and drug/alcohol problems, as wellas high levels of anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts and mental illness. Poignantly, children in broken families are more likely to go to bed without having bedtime stories read to them.

Obviously this could be because lone parenthood is concentrated at the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum where adult illiteracy or reading difficulties may be an issue. Or it could be because mum or dad are carrying the load on their own and are working outside the home at this time - or are just too tired. A practitioner who works with single parents, widowed with young children himself, told the working group "Nearly every single parent that I have met is a 'mini hero' doing their very best for the child/children, often struggling with huge problems and frequently emotionally drained. Understandably, they struggle to find the emotional capital which is one of the key building blocks of family life.

27   Mansfield P., 2005, "Marital Relationships: Someone who is there for me" in Buonfino A. & Mulgan G., (eds) 2005 Porcupines in Winter, Young Foundation

28   Repetti R., Taylor S., &. Seeman T., 2002 "Risky Families: Family Social Environments and the Mental and Physical Health of Offspring", Psychological Bulletin, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp. 330-366

29   Pearce N. & Paxton W., (eds) 2005, Social Justice: Building a Fairer Britain, ippr/Politico's p. 58

30   Fabian Society, 2006, Narrowing the Gap: the Fabian Commission on Life Chances and Child Poverty, p. 21

31   *ibid*

Family breakdown is, in some ways, no respecter of class, affecting as it does people across the full socioeconomic spectrum. However, it will be an essential task of this working group to establish the extent to which negative outcomes of family breakdown are exacerbated by low income. Again, we concur with the Fabian Society's assessment that all parents and children face risks and challenges in modern Britain and that what needs to be developed is an understanding of how these risks and challenges can be more problematic for groups such as those with low incomes or low qualifications.[31] Obviously there are different resources available to parents from different social classes and we have been careful not to minimize the importance of family income on the grounds that other factors are also important for children's life chances.

It must be clearly stated that no straightforward cause and effect analysis is intended at any point in this report. In presenting the data in Part B, the "State of the Nation" summary, we are presenting a lot of fairly stark statistical data, (indicating for example which family type future criminals are most likely to come from) but insist from the outset that we are not establishing causal relations but rather correlations. The complexity and sensitivity of the processes by which experience in childhood affects outcomes in later life is almost universally acknowledged by academics and practitioners in the family studies field, however, no one would advocate inactivity in favour of hand-wringing over the complexity.

Finally, it is argued that in an increasingly diverse society policy has to send signals without moralising (in the pejorative sense of judgementally "indulging in moral pronouncements; of expositing *often superficially*, [our emphasis] a particular moral code")[32] but policymakers like Geoff Mulgan are beginning to challenge the assumption that this precludes the inclusion of moral considerations. He states that "we need to rescue back…the insight that politics and policy are fundamentally moral activities and that they are most likely to succeed when they both resonate with and help to shape the moral metaphors through which the public see the world."[33] For example, the importance of fathers in children's lives is almost uncontested but even at an early stage in this policy making process we are concerned about the lack of father involvement in the lives of an increasing proportion of Britain's children. The report highlights the extent to which this is the case and the research evidence as to the risk factors which fatherlessness entails.

We would argue that we need to change the terms of the debate around the family in the UK. As we draw near to the end of the first decade of the 21st century we have to draw attention to the significance of fatherlessness often implicated in lone parenthood and family breakdown in general as we indicate earlier. We are not arguing for the imposition of one particular family form but for the acknowledgement that procreation brings with it certain responsibilities which men and women must jointly bear. Many men have not chosen to be excluded from these responsibilities although some have. Shifting expectations through pulling policy levers that paternity necessitates the bearing of responsibility in all but the most extreme of circumstances would resonate with and shape public opinion in the way Mulgan suggests above.

METHODOLOGY

"It is possible to read whole bookshelves of policy and analysis without any sense of real people, their voices and relationships".[34]

As will be apparent from the biographies of working group members, a broad spectrum of people, ranging from academics to practitioners, has been involved in this process. All have remained in post rather than working exclusively for the Social Justice Policy Group which means, for example, that the practitioners have continued their involvement with front-line service delivery throughout its duration.

This report from phases one and two of the process will draw material from three main sources: academic literature, anecdotal evidence eg. from hearings and data obtained from polling conducted by YouGov for the Policy Group. More hearings will take place as the third phase progresses but to date there have been four days of hearings; two in London, one in Birmingham and one in Brighton. The hearings were attended by service-providing organisations, national and local charities and individuals. A complete list of those attending these hearings is included in section A5, as is a list of all the events which working group members have attended and the people and organisations with whom they have met outside of formal hearings.

This report can therefore rightly claim to be grounded in the reality of British life today. It aims to stand out on the bookshelf of policy and analysis to which the earlier quote refers, by conveying a rich sense of the many "real people, voices and relationships" which the working group encountered throughout the process.

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32   http://www.wordwebonline.com/en/MORALISING

33   Mulgan G., 2005, "Going with and against the grain: social policy in practice since 1997" in Pearce, N. & Paxton, W. (eds), 2005, Social Justice: Building a Fairer Britain, p. 104

34   *ibid* p. 94

SECTION B
family formation, stability and breakdown

B1 Introduction

Summary: To present the current status and trends in UK family formation, stability and breakdown, we have drawn largely on cross-sectional surveys from the Office of National Statistics. We have taken as much care as we can to report findings as objectively as possible. We have also attempted to be especially clear where we find evidence of cause from longitudinal studies. We therefore encourage readers to treat the majority of our statements as correlational unless clearly stated otherwise.

PURPOSE OF THIS SECTION

Before evaluating the changes in family formation, stability and breakdown in Britain today we need to establish as far as possible the current status and trends. This section presents these to the extent that there are available statistics and measurements. In looking at the breakdown of families we need to recognise that the three different types of breakdown (as set out in A8) each have different measurements, and the availability of statistics varies. For family dissolution we have the available data on marriage and divorce, but increasingly families may not have passed through these formal stages so we have used available survey data to estimate the extent of cohabitation and the subsequent dissolution of such unions. For lone parenthood, and for fatherless families, we have to rely heavily on data from sources such as benefit claims, which reflect only current status, and not the route to it. Reliable statistics recording the prevalence of family dysfunction are also difficult to obtain because of definitional problems associated with the term.

STATISTICAL EVIDENCE
AND THE PROBLEMS WITH IT

In gathering evidence for our "State of the Nation" section, we rely largely on national data published by the Office of National Statistics[35]. Some of this data originates from longitudinal panel surveys – e.g. the British Household Panel Survey – where information is collected from a sample of individuals annually or on some other regular basis. Other data comes from cross-sectional surveys – such as the national Census – where information is reported as frequency data only.

The inevitable problem faced by policy makers is how to interpret such statistical evidence. Ideally, we would like to know that A causes B. We could then propose ways of influencing A in the reasonable expectation that A will also influence B. However with most statistical evidence, especially that in this section, it can be difficult or impossible to draw clear causal conclusions.

As far as possible, we aim to avoid the common error of implying causation from correlational data. Family formation, stability and breakdown are prime areas for such error. For example, supposing that national census surveys show that poverty levels tend to be higher in areas where there is more divorce, it would be equally wrong to conclude from this evidence alone either that "Poverty causes family breakdown" or that "family breakdown causes poverty". It is possible that one causes the other. However it is also possible that both factors are caused by some unmeasured third factor, such as education, social attitudes, mental health or provision of public services. This is known as spurious correlation. Even if there is a causal connection its direction may be difficult to decide, or causality may run in both directions. Thus, poverty may lead to breakdown because it creates stress between family members, whilst family breakdown may itself lead to poverty.

Language is also very important here. The phrases "Those in poverty are twice as likely to experience family breakdown" and "Families that break down are twice as likely to experience poverty" may both be fully compatible with the underlying data. However such phrases can also unintentionally suggest cause. Politicians and lobby groups are frequently guilty of drawing unjustified conclusions from one finding and ignoring another which can lead to ineffective policy that only treats part – possibly even the wrong part – of the problem.

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35   Most data in this section is taken from multiple sources within published ONS tables. These are not separately referenced herein.

Nonetheless, there are statistical methods available to suggest how one factor does predict or cause a particular outcome. This usually comprises a body of evidence that includes a detailed longitudinal analysis of individuals over time, where a clear order of events can be established. Such analysis may then show that "families in poverty are subsequently more likely to experience family breakdown" and/or that "families that break down are subsequently more likely to experience poverty". Even then researchers may emphasise findings that support their own hypothesis or personal bias and disregard other equally valid findings. A careful reading of the underlying analysis is always required where cause is claimed.

One further issue clouds research on family formation, stability and breakdown. Gold standard studies ideally require random allocation of participants to each condition to be investigated. It is clearly impossible and absurd to instruct random groups of people to get married or cohabit, to stay together or split up. Causal conclusions may well be supported by a large or even overwhelming body of evidence. But the absence of randomized studies in this field will always create an Achilles heel to those who dislike or disagree with such findings. The cry "more research is required" seems destined to be heard in perpetuity.

In conclusion, we have taken as much care as we can to report findings as objectively as possible. We have attempted to be especially clear where we find evidence of cause. However it also takes self-awareness and restraint on the part of any reader to resist subconscious causal conclusions when reading that "A is more likely than B to experience C". We therefore encourage readers to treat the majority of our own statements as correlational unless clearly stated otherwise.

B2 Household composition

Summary: The most significant change in both household and population composition within the last generation has been the decline of marriage and corresponding rise in the single person population. This has taken place in two distinct waves: increasing divorce rates during the 1960s and 1970s; increasing cohabitation during the 1980s and 1990s. In spite of these real and substantial changes, it is important not to overstate the death of the family. Three quarters of today's young adults will marry at some stage, 84% of all Britain's couples are married, and marriage remains the norm.

Arguably the most significant change in both household and population composition has been the relative decline of marriage within the last generation.

This change has taken place in two main waves. The first wave was the increase in divorce rates during the 1960s and 1970s. The second wave was the increase in cohabitation during the 1980s and 1990s. We cover these trends in more detail in sections B3 and B4.

The proportion of adult population who were married fell from 68% in 1971 to 54% in 2001, according to the Office of National Statistics (ONS). The Government Actuary Department (GAD) forecasts predict that this proportion will continue falling to 41% in 2031.[36]

"I don't like living with my mum and her boyfriend. They don't love me. Since the divorce I never see my dad and I have to lie and say everything is ok to the social worker or my mum will get angry." Katie, 10

The proportion of households who were couples – whether married or unmarried – fell from 70% in 1971 to 58% in 2001. The more gradual nature of this decline is accounted for by the emergence of unmarried cohabiting couple households.

In 2003, there were an estimated 2 million cohabiting couples and 11 million married couples. Cohabiting couples therefore now represent 10% of households and 16% of all couples. Married couples represent 53% of house-

Population legal status (actual & projected)
(England & Wales, Source ONS, GAD)
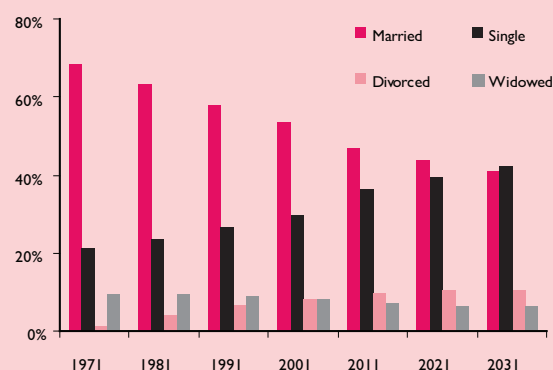
Population couple types (actual & projected)
(England & Wales, Source ONS, GAD)
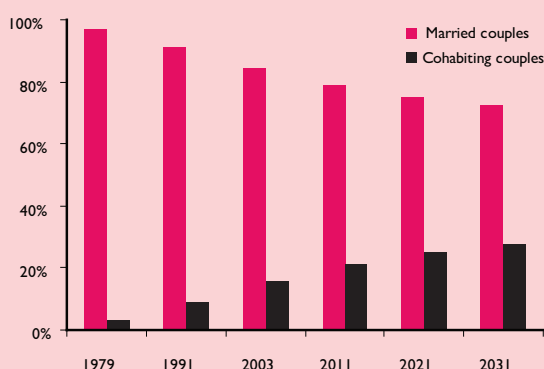
Household living arrangements (actual)
(England & Wales, Source ONS)
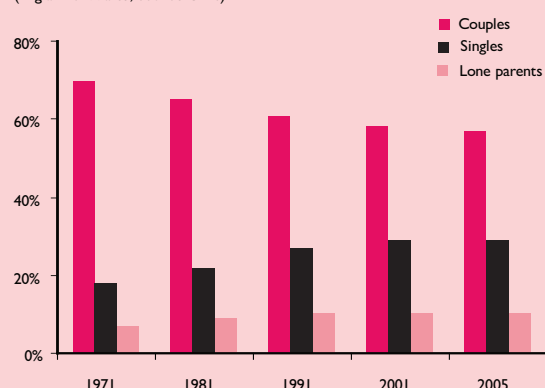
holds and 84% of couples. GAD forecast a doubling of cohabiting couples by 2031 to 3.8 million. However they will still only represent a minority 16% of households and

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36   These forecasts may be unduly pessimistic in the light of recent trends outlined below in section B4

37   Again, this forecast seems inconsistent with the levelling out observed recently and described in section B4.

28% of couples. Married couples will retain their clear majority as 41% of households and 72% of couples.

Alongside changes in couple households, family breakdown has increased dramatically. The number of divorcees has risen sevenfold from 0.5 million in 1971 to 3.5 million in 2001. GAD forecasts a further increase to 5.1 million in 2031.[37]

There are no publicly available figures for separated former unmarried couples. We have included some estimates of this in the following section B3.

The proportion of lone parent households has increased from 7% in 1971 to 10% in 2001. The rise here significantly understates increases in family breakdown because data excludes those who form a new couple and those whose children are over 16. The remaining reduction in couple households is accounted for by the rise of one person households from 18% in 1971 to 29% in 2001.

B3 Families with dependent children

Summary: Amongst families with dependent children, the main long term trend has been the increase in lone parent families, up from 6% in the 1970s to 27% of families today. This rise has been matched by the decline of couples with three or more children. The majority of couples with children remain married. 63% of families are headed by a married couple compared to 10% by a cohabiting couple. The ongoing increase in family breakdown, especially that involving young children, is now driven entirely by the increase in unstable cohabiting partnerships.
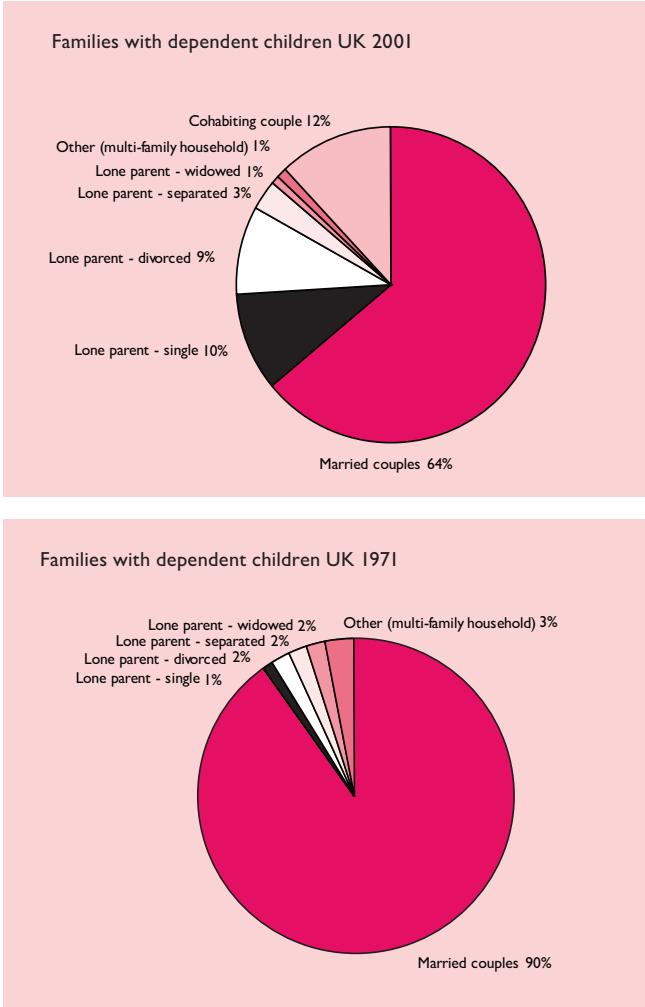
Dependent Children by family type

	1972	1981	1992	2001	2005
Couple families					
1 child	16	18	17	17	18
2 children	35	41	38	37	23
3 or more children	41	29	28	24	23
Lone mother families					
1 child	2	3	5	6	7
2 children	2	4	6	8	9
3 or more children	2	3	5	6	6
Lone father families					
1 child		1	1	1	1
2 or more children	1	1	1	1	1
All children*	100	100	100	100	100

*Excludes cases where the dependent child is a family unit, for example, a foster child

Source: General Household Survey

According to the General Household Survey, there were 7.1 million families with dependent children in Great Britain in 2002. Of these, 4.5 million families (63%) were headed by a married couple, 0.7 million (10%) by a cohabiting couple, and 1.9 million (27%) by a lone parent.

Pie charts drawn up from the censuses in 1971 and 2001 indicate the shift that has taken place in family formation over the last thirty years (see adjacent[38]). Aside from the more recent emergence of cohabiting couple families, the main long-term trend since 1972 has been the rise of the lone parent family. Prior to 1996, data was not collected on whether couples were married or cohabiting.

Families with dependent children UK 2001

Cohabiting couple 12%
Other (multi-family household) 1%
Lone parent - widowed 1%
Lone parent - separated 3%
Lone parent - divorced 9%
Lone parent - single 10%
Married couples 64%

Families with dependent children UK 1971

Lone parent - widowed 2%
Lone parent - separated 2%
Lone parent - divorced 2%
Lone parent - single 1%
Other (multi-family household) 3%
Married couples 90%

One in three children nowadays will experience parental divorce or separation before the age of 16. 90% of children born in 1958 were still living with both natural parents at 16, but for children born in 1984-6 the proportion is down to 65%.[39] Using 5 year break-up rate data from Kiernan[40] combined with ONS data on births and divorce rates, Benson[41] estimates 30,000 children under five experience the break-up of their married parents and 90,000 children experience the break-up of their unmarried parents annually. In other words, as the number of divorces affecting young children declines, family break-

38   Figure taken from Williams F., 2004, Rethinking Families, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation p. 13

39   Vaitilingam, R., 2004, Seven Ages of Man and Woman, Economic and Social Research Council, June 2004

40   Kiernan, K., 1999, "Childbearing outside marriage in Western Europe" Population Trends, Vol. 98,pp. 11-20.

41   Benson, H., 2005, What interventions strengthen family relationships: A review of the evidence. Paper presented at 2nd National conference on relationships education. London

Families with dependent children
(Source: GHS, 2002)
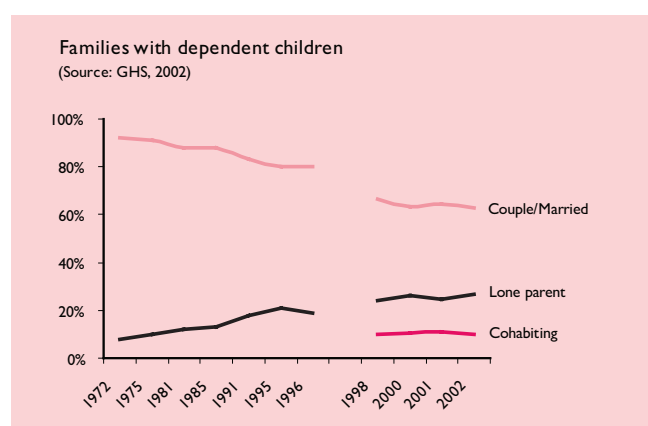
down trends are being driven entirely by the increase in unstable cohabiting partnerships. There is no sign that this trend has slowed.

According to the same study by Benson, only 11% of family breakdown in 1960 involved unmarried families. This had risen to 25% by 1980. Today, unmarried parents account for approximately 75% of family breakdown involving young children. These estimates have now been updated using the more robust Millennium Cohort Study data on 15,000 mothers with three year old children. In this large scale study, unmarried parents account for 73% of family breakdown.[42]

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42   Benson, H., 2006, The conflation of marriage and cohabitation in government statistics - a denial of difference rendered untenable by an analysis of outcomes. Bristol Community Family Trust (included as Appendix 3 to this report)

B4 Marriage, divorce & cohabitation

Summary: There are signs that family trends are stabilizing after two generations of tumultuous change. Following a steady two thirds fall in marriage rates since 1970 – as more people divorced, delayed or shunned marriage altogether – marriage appears to have bottomed out. Divorce rates have been virtually unchanged for two decades now since their six-fold rise during the 1960s and 1970s. Compelling evidence suggests that cohabitation may also be about to peak following its rise in popularity during the 1980s and 1990s. Recent policy to conflate married and cohabiting couples in government sponsored outcome research is exposed as untenable by a major new study commissioned for this group.

MARRIAGES & MARRIAGE RATES

Marriages
(England & Wales, Source ONS)

Marriage rates
(England & Wales, Source ONS)
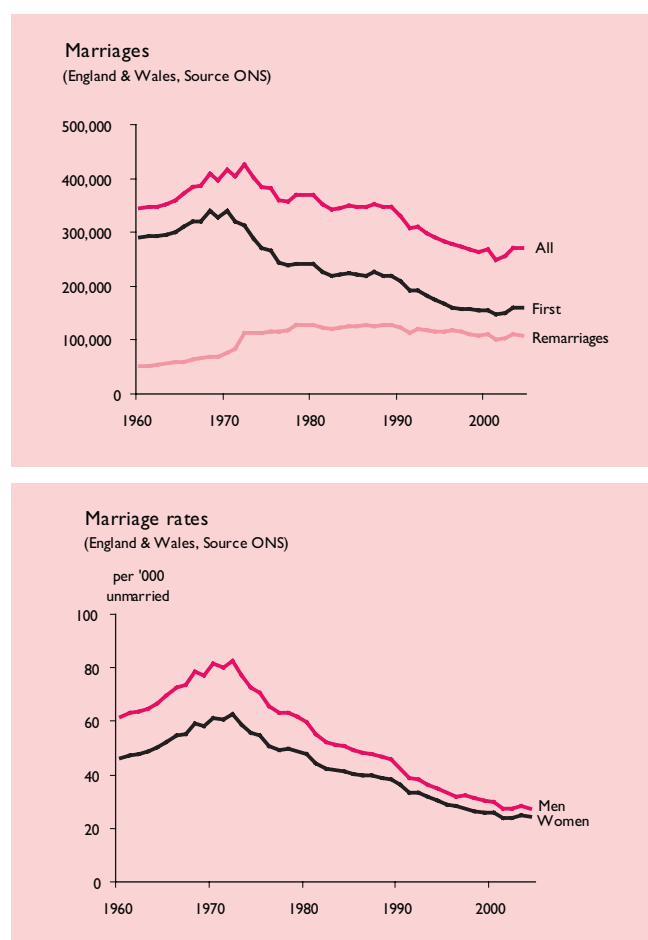
Since peaking in 1970, the annual number of couples getting married has fallen by one third. However this understates the true decline of marriage. Marriage rates, the rate at which unmarried couples get married, are dependent on both number of marriages and the size of the unmarried population. As the unmarried population has risen – the combination of fewer marriages, more divorces, and an increase in the adult population – marriage rates have fallen even faster than marriage numbers. Whereas the number of marriages has fallen by 35% - from 415,000 to 270,000 weddings per year in England & Wales – the marriage rate has fallen by 64% - from 71 to 26 per 1,000 unmarried adults per year.

The decline is most pronounced amongst the number of first marriages, of which there were 52% fewer in 2004 compared to 1970. The number of remarriages has remained steady since 1972 at around 110-120,000 couples per year, cushioning the overall downtrend in marriages. Whereas 18% of weddings involved remarriages in 1970, 40% of today's weddings are remarriages. In recent years, there have been signs that the downtrend has stopped although not yet reversed. Since reaching an all-time low in 2001, there has been an 8% rise in the number of both first marriages and remarriages. Marriage rates however have remained unchanged.

Amongst other trends, couples are getting married increasingly through civil ceremonies. A diminishing minority of weddings now involve religious ceremonies – 32% in 2004 vs. 60% in 1970. The main beneficiary of this shift appears to be civil ceremonies in approved premises, introduced in 1996. Nearly half of civil weddings are now conducted in approved premises, comprising 31% of all weddings in 2004.

Current estimates[43] are that 73% of men and 77% of women now in their mid-30s will marry or have ever married compared to 93% of men and 95% of women now in their mid-60s. Put another way, on current trends, around one quarter of all young adults will never marry. Part of the decline in marriage is explained by couples waiting to marry until they are older. The mean age for couples marrying for the first time is now 31 for men and 29 for women, around seven years older than their counterparts in 1970. The mean age for all marriages is now 36 and 33 for men and women, over eight years older.

One trend that has changed little is the age gap between men and women, which has remained a little over 2½

43   Schoen, R. & Canudas-Romo, V., 2005, "Timing effects on first marriage: Twentieth-century experience in England and Wales and the USA" Population Studies, Vol. 59, pp. 135-146

years amongst all marriages and a little under 2½ years amongst first marriages only.

DIVORCES & DIVORCE RATES

Divorces
(England & Wales, Source ONS)

Divorce rates
(England & Wales, Source ONS & estimates)
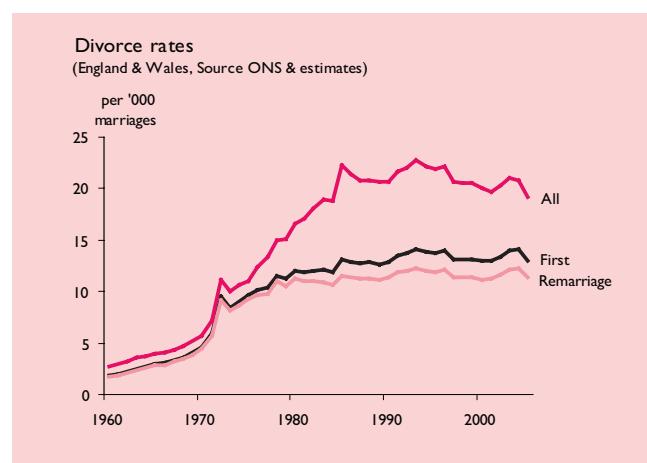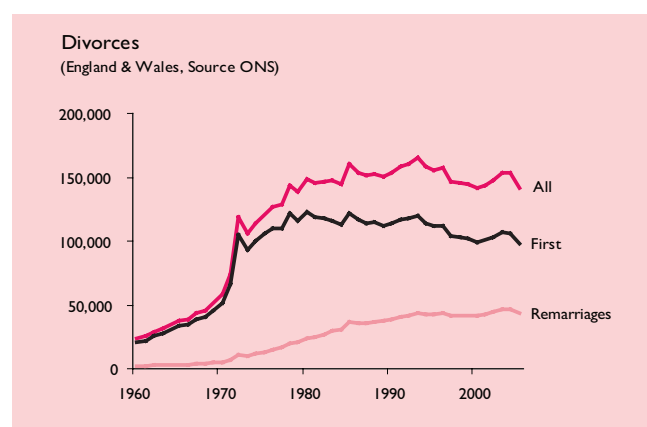
The number of divorces in the UK doubled between 1960 and 1969 and doubled again between 1969 and 1972, following the 1969 Divorce Reform Act. Since 1980 however, the number of divorces has levelled out at a steady 150,000 per year. In 2005 the figure stood at 141,750 for England & Wales.

Amongst divorces from first marriages, the trend is similar. Following a rapid rise during the 1960s and early 1970s, the number of divorces has levelled off and even declined gradually. This decline in divorces amongst first marriages has been largely matched by a similarly gradual increase in divorces amongst remarriages. Whereas divorces amongst remarriages comprised 9% of all divorces in 1970, they comprised 31% in 2005.

Divorce rates have followed similar tracks to divorce numbers. From 1.8 divorces per 1,000 marriages in 1960, divorce rates rose steadily to 13.1 in 1985. However divorce rates have barely changed during the last two

decades, fluctuating within a narrow 10% band from 12.9 to 14.1. In 2005, the figure was 13.1 divorces per 1,000 married couples.

Because the Office of National Statistics does not record the population of first time and second time married couples, there are no official data on divorce rates for first and second marriages. However estimates can be made based on cumulative post-war population data, cross-checked against General Household Survey evidence which suggests that 15% of married couples involve remarriages for one or both spouses. Benson[44] thus estimates current divorce rates at 11-12 per 1,000 first marriages and 19-20 per 1,000 remarriages, making remarriages twice as likely to fail as first marriages.

The average age at divorce has increased by 5 years since 1970, less than the 8 year increase in the average age at marriage. The mean age at divorce is 42 for husbands and 40 for wives. The difference is partly accounted for by the increase in the average duration of marriage that ends in divorce, now 11.5 years compared to 10.5 years in 1970. The remaining difference is due to the growing contribution from the divorce of remarriages involving older couples.

It is important to recognise that this data on marriage duration only concerns marriages that end in divorce. Part D6 of this report details the trajectory of divorce risk over time. Our own estimate of cumulative lifetime divorce risk, based on British panel surveys,[45] is that 45% of marriages end in divorce. Therefore the majority of marriages last a lifetime, not just 11 years.

COHABITATION

When summarising the broad sweep of family trends over the last 40 years, the rise of divorce was the main trend during the 1960s and 70s and the rise of cohabitation was the main trend during the 1980s and 90s.

"The traditional nexus between marriage and childbearing has been eroded, a development facilitated by the advent of effective contraception and legal abortion"[46]

Before the pill was made widely available on the NHS in 1975, over 90% of children were born to married mothers. The number of births to unmarried mothers increased dramatically from 54,000 in 1975 to 276,000 in 2005, a fivefold rise from 9% to 43% of all births.

Accurate national data on the cohabiting population are not available before the late 1990s. Surveys suggest there were fewer than 400,000 cohabiting couples as

44   Benson, H., 2005, What interventions strengthen family relationships: A review of the evidence. Paper presented at 2nd National Conference on Relationship Education. London

45   Ermisch, J., 2002, When forever is no more: Economic implications of changing family structure. ISER, University of Essex

46   Kiernan, K., Land, H., & Lewis, J., 1998, Lone Motherhood in the Twentieth Century: from footnote to front page. Oxford, Oxford University Press

recently as 1979, increasing to 1.1 million in 1991 and 1.5 million in 1996 – equivalent to 16% of all couples[47].

Family Trends - Divorce & Cohabitation
(England & Wales, Source ONS)

Births & Marriage
(England & Wales, Source ONS)

Predicted births outside marriage
(England & Wales, Source ONS & estimates)
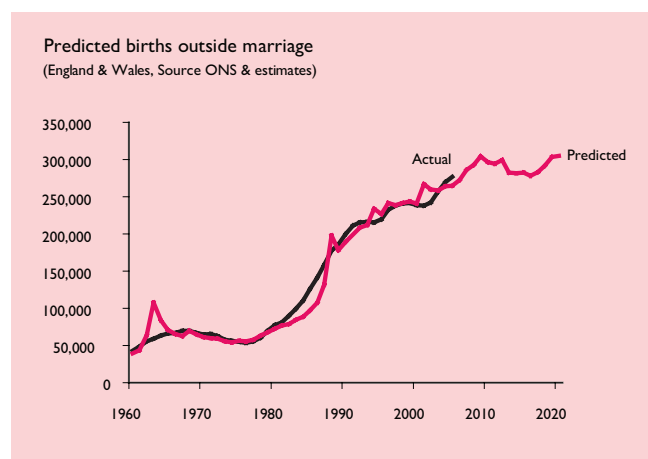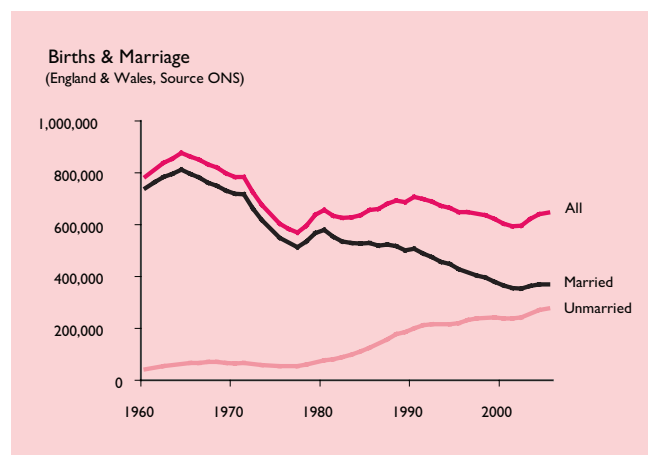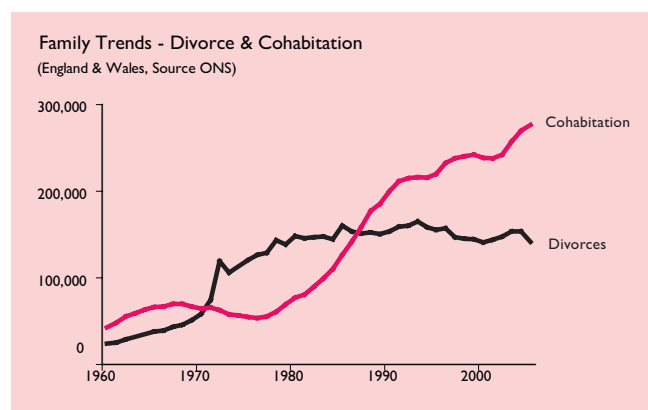
The majority of cohabiting couple relationships are less stable than marriage[48]. Sections D1 and D3 of this report discuss some of the reasons for this. Half of all cohabiting

relationships that do not lead to marriage end within 39 months[49]. A study of Millennium Cohort Study data on 15,000 mothers with young children, commissioned for this report, found that cohabiting couples are more than twice as likely as married couples to split up, even when accounting for income and other socio-economic factors[50]. In this new study, 20% of "cohabiting" couples – 32% of "cohabiting" and "closely involved" couples – split up before their child's third birthday compared to less than 6% of married couples. An earlier study found that 43% of cohabiting couples had split before their child's fifth birthday[51].

There is compelling evidence that the trend towards cohabitation has been influenced by the increase in divorce. Throughout Europe and the US, children of divorced or separated parents are more likely to cohabit[52]. One plausible explanation is that children avoid marriage as adults because of scepticism about the permanence of relationships.

A striking example of this correlation between parental separation and cohabitation is shown by mapping family breakdown onto births outside marriage 16 years later based on our own analysis of ONS birth and divorce data, combined with estimates of family breakdown amongst cohabiting parents[53]. The measure of family breakdown used includes the number of divorces plus an estimate of the number of separations amongst cohabiting parents. Used as a predictor, this suggests that the increasing trend towards cohabitation will peak around 2010.

THE CONFLATION OF MARRIAGE AND COHABITATION IN GOVERNMENT STATISTICS.

Two parent families do not just comprise married and cohabiting couples. Altogether there are four possible combinations: married biological parents, married step parents, cohabiting biological parents and cohabiting step parents. Research in the US finds distinct outcome differences between all of these four couple types. For example, the risk of child poverty is lowest amongst married families, followed by married stepfamilies and two to three times higher amongst cohabiting biological or step families[54].

47   General Household Survey, 2002, ONS

48   In the sense that they are either relatively short-lived or are the precursor to marriage.

49   Rickards, L., Fox, K., Roberts, C., Fletcher, L., & Goddard, E., 2004, Living in Britain: Results from the 2002 General Household Survey, Office of National Statistics: HMSO.

50   Benson, H., 2006, The conflation of marriage and cohabitation in government statistics - a denial of difference rendered untenable by an analysis of outcomes. Bristol Community Family Trust, included in this report as Appendix 3

51   Kiernan, K., 1999, "Childbearing outside marriage in Western Europe" Population Trends, Vol. 98, pp. 11-20.

52   Kiernan, K., 2003, Cohabitation and divorce across nations and generations, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, LSE, CASE paper 65.

53   Benson, H., 2005, What interventions strengthen family relationships? A review of the evidence. Paper presented at 2nd National Conference on Relationship Education, London

54   Manning, W. & Brown, S., 2006, "Children's Economic Well-Being in Married and Cohabiting Parent Families" Journal of Marriage and Family, Vol. 68, pp. 345-362.

Following UK abolition of the term "marital status" in 2003, most government-sponsored family research – e.g. Social Trends, Labour Force Survey, Family Resources Survey – refers only to "couple parent families". Where marriage is distinguished – e.g. Population Trends – it tends to involve population data rather than an analysis of outcomes.

An especially clear example is the series of reports commissioned by the Department of Work and Pensions based on the Families and Children Study (FACS). Prior to 2003, FACS research distinguished family outcomes according to a variety of family structures, including marriage[55]. After 2004, FACS research refers more narrowly only to "couple parent" families and "lone parent" families[56][57][58]. With notable exceptions,[59,60,61] few UK researchers consider outcome differences between couple family types, let alone why these might occur.

To determine the importance of this issue, a new study (See Appendix 3) commissioned for this group looked at differences in family breakdown outcomes. Benson considered it essential to separate out marital status despite the government's tendency to conflate them in statistical terms. Such an analysis is possible because the underlying data still exists.

Drawing on data from the Millennium Cohort Study of 15,000 mothers with three year old children, the analysis is the largest scale UK study of family breakdown to date. The results show substantial differences in family stability between married and unmarried couples in the early years of parenthood, even after discounting socio-economic factors such as age, income, education and race. Most notably, the difference in family breakdown risk between married and cohabiting couples is sufficient that even the poorest 20% of married couples are more stable than all but the richest 20% of cohabiting couples.

It is hoped that these robust findings will encourage UK researchers to explore how and why family structure influences outcomes above and beyond the selective influences of socio-economic background. The findings also call into question the wisdom of conflating couple types in UK government-sponsored or any other family outcome research.

A NOTE ON MARRIAGE, COHABITATION AND COMMITMENT

Mansfield (2005) states that the complexities of commitment need to be unravelled if we are to appreciate how it underscores supportive relationships in modern Britain. Johnson (1991) has broken the concept of commitment into three dimensions:

- Structural Commitment – feeling one has to continue a relationship because of constraint from external pressure (such as marriage vows) and censure from others;
- Moral Commitment – feeling one ought to continue a relationship in terms of one's own value system (this can come from religion or a culturally rooted sense that marriage is for life or that a partnership involving children should not be severed simply for personal gratification);
- Personal Commitment – feeling one wants to continue a relationship because it is satisfying and pleasurable.

Relationships nowadays, especially where there is no legal constraint from marriage, are held together solely by what David Popenhoe calls the "thin and unstable reed of affection"[62] (in other words, personal commitment only) whereas relationships based on the notion that marriage is for life and everything reasonably possible should be done to preserve the union, are strengthened by the marshalling of structural and moral commitment.

Finally, Smart and Stevens (1997) also identified a continuum of commitment among unmarried parents ranging from mutual to contingent commitment. Mutual commitment is where there is some agreement on what is expected of the relationship and people have a long term perspective. Contingent commitment pertains where issues are not resolved and the relationship is maintained out of expediency. At the far end of the mutual commit-

55   Marsh, A. & Perry, J., 2003, Family change 1999 to 2001. DWP research no 181. CDS, Leeds

56   Barnes, M., Willitts, M., Anderson, T., Chaplin, J., Collins, D., Groben, S., Morris, S., Noble, J., Phillips, M., & Sneade, I., 2004, Families and children in Britain: Findings from the 2002 Families and Children Study, Department of Work and Pensions, Research Report No 206

57   Barnes, M., Lyon, N., Morris, S., Robinson, V., & Yee, W.Y., 2005 Family life in Britain: Findings from the 2003 Families and Children Stud,y Department of Work and Pensions, Research Report No 250

58   Lyon, N., Barnes, M, & Sweiry, D., 2006, Families with children in Britain: Findings from the 2004 Families and Children Study (FACS), Department of Work and Pensions Research Report No 340

59   Kiernan, K. & Pickett, K., 2006, "Marital status disparities in maternal smoking during pregnancy, breastfeeding and maternal depression" Social Science and Medicine, Vol. 63, pp. 335-346

60   Ermisch, J. (2006) An economic history of bastardy in England and Wales ISER working paper 2006-15. Colchester, ISER, University of Essex

61   Steele et al, 2006, state that "Our study builds on previous research in various ways. Firstly whereas other studies that have jointly modelled partnership formation and dissolution grouped together marriage and cohabitation, we treat them as separate partnership states"

62   Popenoe D., 2005, The State of Our Unions

ment range these relationships are far more marriage-like in that there is some moral commitment to see things through and often some structural commitment in the form of jointly owned property. Contingent commitment is likely to involve largely personal commitment.

Mansfield concludes that although religion/belief[63] is a powerful source of moral commitment, even non-believers can nurture it, through developing their knowledge about relationships and their understanding of how they matter to wellbeing and especially to children's outcomes. This suggests a potential role for relationship education in bolstering moral commitment.

To conclude, as much of this section has shown, outcomes for children are markedly better when it is clear that two parents are there for the duration. Healthy marriage (high in structural and personal commitment), well-supported from prevailing cultural messages (moral commitment) provides the most secure foundation both for their upbringing and for their parents' adult lives.

COHABITATION OF SAME SEX COUPLES AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS

As with the cohabiting heterosexual population, data on the UK 'same sex' population is less easy to ascertain compared to data on the married and single population. The government consultation paper on civil partnerships[64] states, "There is very little reliable data about the size of the LGB (lesbian, gay, bisexual) population". NATSAL 2000 found that 5.4% of men and 4.9% of women had ever had a same-sex partner, including 2.6% who had had recent experience and Government forecasts for take-up of civil partnerships are based on this estimate. However, the Census found that only 39,281 couples, 0.3% of all couples, actually live together as same sex couples. The Labour Force Survey also found that 0.2% of UK households are same sex couples.

An ESRC report[65] using Census data found that the prevalence of same sex couples varies greatly throughout the UK. Brighton hosts 1,700 same sex couples, the highest proportion in the UK at 2.67% of all couples. At the other end of the scale, Teesdale reportedly hosts just 6 same sex couples. In only four areas of the UK do same sex couples account for more than 1.6% of all couples. It is probable that in areas where it is less socially acceptable to live openly in a same sex partnership there will be underreporting, but numbers are still likely to be low.

Data on civil partnerships does not particularly clarify the issue. The General Register Office reported that 6,516 couples formed civil partnerships in England and Wales between inauguration in December 2005 and March 2006, of whom 4,311 were male couples and 2,205 female couples. According to data provided by local registrars, by November 2006, 236 of the 662 civil partnerships recorded in Brighton and 40 of the 111 civil partnerships recorded in Bath took place in these first four months. Assuming that seasonal trends are broadly similar for both civil partnerships and heterosexual marriages, this suggests an annualised figure of around 13,000 civil partnerships based on the April to November period only. However this figure, equivalent to around 5% of heterosexual marriages, is likely to include an unknown quantity of people who had been waiting, often for a considerable time, to form a civil partnership. In other words, initial numbers might have been atypically high to satisfy a backlog of demand.

Although not as mature as the literature on outcomes for children born to married and cohabiting parents, research indicates that amongst the one in five gay adults who are also parents,[66] parental intent, nurture and provision is little different to that found amongst heterosexual parents.[67] Outcome studies suggest young children do better with two gay parents than with one lone parent[68] and that family breakdown affects children in similar ways to those of heterosexual parents.[69]

63   Early findings from the Millenium Cohort Study suggest that those placing themselves in the 'Christians' category are less likely to split than non-Christians. Muslims and Asians also have lower overall break-up rates, but this analysis does not control for age and education so is therefore worthy of further enquiry but at present incomplete.

64   Women and Equality Unit (2003). Civil Partnership: A framework for legal recognition of same sex couples. Department of Trade and Industry.

65   Duncan, S. & Smith, D. (2004). Seven Ages of man and woman (pp16-19). Swindon: ESRC.

66   Morgan, L. & Bell, N. (2003). First out: Report of the findings of Beyond Barriers survey of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Scotland. Glasgow: Beyond barriers

67   Tasker, F. (2005) Lesbian Mothers, Gay Fathers, and Their Children: A Review. Journal of developmental & behavioral pediatrics, 26, 224-240.
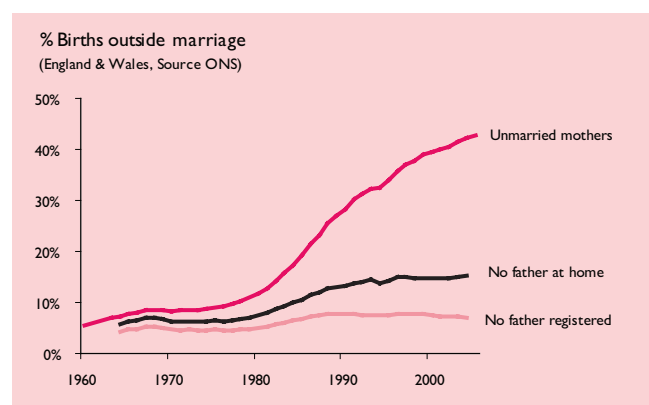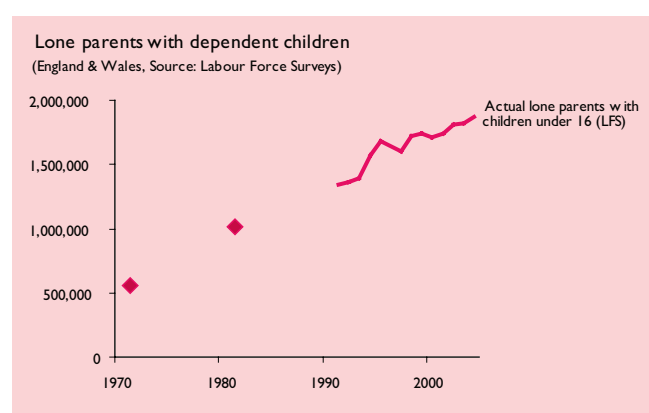
68   Golombok, S., Perry, B., Burston, A., Murray, C., Mooney-Somers, J., Stevens, M. & Golding, J. (2003). Children with lesbian parents, A community study. Developmental psychology, 39, 20-33

69   Golombok, S., Spencer, A. & Rutter, M. (1983). Children in lesbian and single-parent households, Psychiatric appraisal. Journal of child psychology and psychiatry, 24, 551-572

B5   Lone parent households

Summary: Lone parenthood is most obviously an issue of public concern because lone parents are by far the most likely household type to be living in poverty. We estimate that nearly half of all lone parent households are formed following divorce. The remainder is formed mostly following separation of cohabiting couples or by sole registration of mothers at birth. Although overall rates of poverty have reduced during the past decade, lone parents – especially those not in work – remain consistently 2.5 times more likely than couple parents to be living in poverty.

Lone parents with dependent children
(England & Wales, Source: Labour Force Surveys)

% Births outside marriage
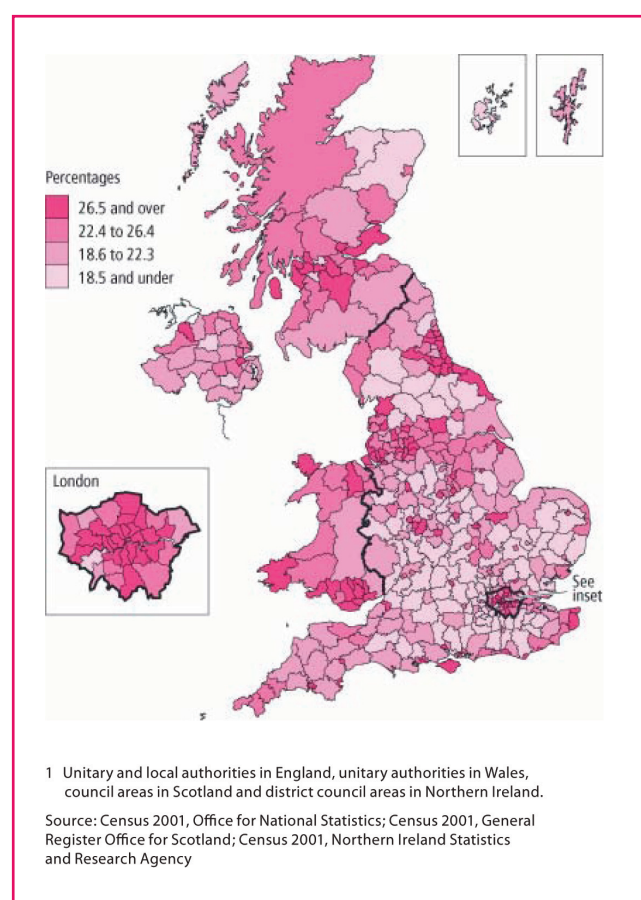(England & Wales, Source ONS)

Lone parent households are formed from three main sources: solo mothers who do not register the father's name, unmarried mothers who register the father as living at a different address, and married or unmarried cohabiting couples who divorce or separate.

Office of National Statistics birth data shows that births outside marriage rose sharply from 8% in 1970 to 12% in 1980, 28% in 1990 and 43% in 2005. 26% of all British children (around 2.3 million children) are currently living in lone parent households.[70] This figure has risen from 21% in 1996; ten years earlier it was just 15%.

One fifth of births outside marriage involve registered fathers who do not live with their child. A further one fifth involve sole registered mothers where no father is recorded. Altogether 15% of all babies are born and grow up without their biological father living in the house.

Based on Labour Force Survey data, the Office of National Statistics estimates that lone parent households have increased steadily from 0.6 million in 1971 to 1.0 million in 1981, 1.3 million in 1991 and 1.9 million in 2004.

Our very unofficial estimate is that approximately 24% of

1   Unitary and local authorities in England, unitary authorities in Wales, council areas in Scotland and district council areas in Northern Ireland.

Source: Census 2001, Office for National Statistics; Census 2001, General Register Office for Scotland; Census 2001, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

today's lone parent families were formed by solo mothers, 45% resulted from divorce, and 31% from the separation of unmarried parents. These estimates contain considerable potential for error, because people move in and out of partnership states, and should be regarded as a guideline only.

These figures were arrived at by assuming the following: Out of 3,083,000 children under 16 living in lone parent families in 2004, 737,000 children (24%) were born to sole-registered mothers cumulatively during the previous 15 years. Amongst children experiencing parental separa-

tion, we estimate a 60:40 married/unmarried ratio based on 149,000 children under 15 experiencing divorce in 2004 and 100,400 children under 15 experiencing unmarried separation. This latter figure represents a conservative 10% addition to Benson's (2005) estimate of 91,000 children under 5 experiencing family breakdown of their unmarried parents.

LONE PARENTS AND POVERTY[71]

According to the Family Resources Survey, child poverty levels – as measured by household income below 60% of median – have reduced gradually during the last decade in all family types. The proportion of couple parents living in poverty has fallen from 25% to 20%. The proportion of lone parents in poverty has fallen from 57% to 48%. (FRS data does not distinguish between married and unmarried couple parent families)

However throughout this decade, the gap in poverty levels between couple parent and lone parent families has remained virtually unchanged. Lone parents remain 2.4 to 2.5 times more likely to live in poverty compared to couple parents. The high risk of poverty faced by lone parents is illustrated by comparison with a range of other family types over a three year period. 48% of lone parents live in poverty compared to 23% of single males or single females, the next highest risk categories.

The risk of poverty is moderated strongly by whether lone parents work or not. 72% of lone parents not working live in poverty, down from a peak of 83% in 1997/8 but little changed from 1994/5. For lone parents in part-time work, the risk is substantially lower at 27%, down from a peak of 43%, but again little changed over a decade. Lowest of all is the risk faced by lone parents in full-time work, fluctuating between 9% and 17% over the decade.

It is very clear from this data that lone parents in full-time work are far less likely to live in poverty than those in part-time work or no work at all. However it is important to remember that this finding does not necessarily show that poverty will reduce if lone parents can be encouraged to work. As with all cross-sectional data, there are problems in disentangling cause, effect and other confounding factors. For example, many lone parents may not work because

they have young children to look after and lack the capacity to work. Lone parents who work may simply be those with greater skills, more time or more savings.

The very consistency of the poverty gap between couple and lone parents suggests the problem is about more than work. Ironically, the same people who tend to argue in favour of work as a way to reduce poverty amongst lone parents also tend to argue against marriage as a way to reduce family breakdown, yet the type of cross-sectional evidence cited is similar in both cases. We would suggest that a less ideologically driven approach to public policy could shed more light on both issues.

Risk of child poverty
(Source Family Resources Survey)
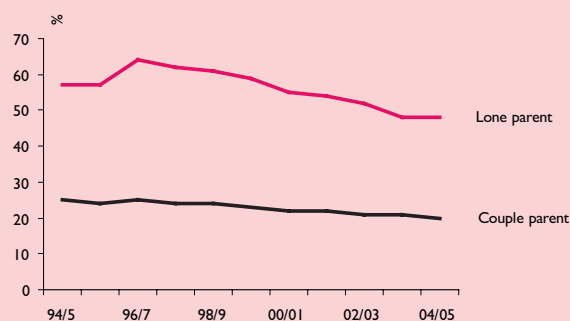
Risk of poverty - lone parents and work
(Source FRS)
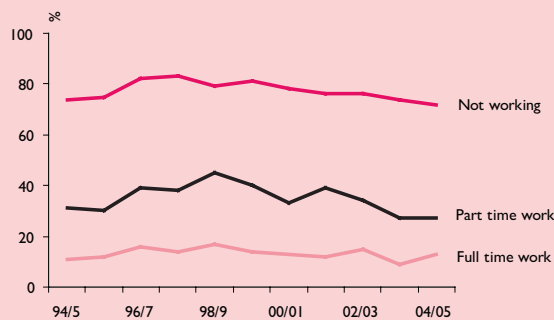
Risk of poverty (below 60% of median income)
Average 3 years 2002-5 (Source: FRS)

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71   More statistics and commentary on the link between lone parenthood and poverty are included in section C5

Teenage conceptions by age at conception and outcome, 2003

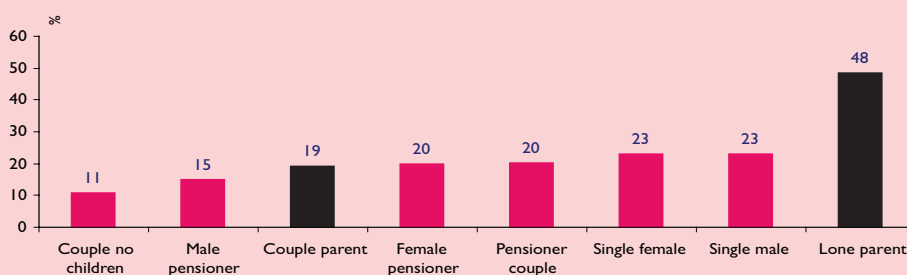|	Conceptions (numbers)	Leading to abortions (%)	Rates per 1000 females		
			Leading to maternities	Leading to abortions	All conceptions
Under 14	334	62	0.4	0.6	1.0
14	1888	64	2.0	3.6	5.7
15	5802	55	7.7	9.4	17.2
All aged under 16	8024	57	3.4	4.6	8.0
16	13303	46	21.7	18.4	40.1
17	20835	41	37.5	26.1	63.6
All aged under 18	42162	46	13.7	11.5	42.3
18	26610	38	50.2	30.4	80.6
19	29820	35	60.4	32.3	92.7
All aged 8under 20	98592	40	35.7	24.1	59.8

Source: Office for national statistice

Rates for females under 14, under 16, under 18 and under 20 are based on the population of females aged 13, 13 to 15, 15 to 17 and 15 to 19 respectively

TEENAGE MOTHERHOOD

Of course, not all teenage mothers are lone parents. However, the UK has the highest teenage birth rate in Europe, and 90% of births to teenage girls take place outside marriage.[72] The Teenage Pregnancy Unit reported in 2004 that pregnancies among under-18s rose from 38,439 in 2001 (of which 46 per cent were aborted) to 39,286 in 2002. In terms of who is most likely to be in this category, Ermisch and Pevalin (2003) found that women whose mother was a teenage mother herself are about twice as likely to have a teen birth as those born to older mothers and girls from divorced families are almost twice as likely as their contemporaries to become teenage lone mothers.[73] Teenage sexual activity is much more widespread among children of divorced, broken and single parent homes.[74] In addition, Botting et al (1998) report that pregnancy rates among teenage girls living in the most deprived areas are six times higher than in the most affluent areas. Young women from unskilled manual backgrounds (social class V) are more than ten times as likely to become mothers as those from a professional background (social class I).[75]

In order for targets to be met on reducing teenage pregnancy Beverley Hughes correctly recognised the limits of government initiatives, saying in May 2005 that ministers had "reached a sticking point" where their efforts could not by themselves solve the problem of teenage pregnancy. The government is currently failing to make enough progress to meet its target of halving teenage conceptions by 2010 and urgently requires parents to fill the gap. The Children and Families minister is right when she says that all the evidence shows that "we really need parents to see themselves as making an absolutely unique and vital contribution to this issue", mainly by talking openly to their children about sex.

However, this presupposes a quality of relationship between parents and children which may be least likely to exist in communities which experience highest rates of teenage pregnancy due to the prevalence of family breakdown or family dysfunction. Those least likely to have experienced a loving, intact, home are least likely to be able to have the kind of communication with their parents the minister recommends. Moreover they are far more likely to want to plug the emotional hole in their lives with a baby of their own. Grassroots service providers like Love4Life in Loughborough, who go into schools and talk to young people about sexual health, self-esteem, positive relationships, body image, drugs and alcohol, healthy eating etc have found that many very young mothers have babies to create the family they have never experienced.

72   ONS

73   Ermisch, J. & Pevalin, D., 2003, Who has a child as a teenager? ISER working paper 2003-30, Colchester: ISER, University of Essex

74   Family breakdown as risk factor and consequence of teenage parenthood is referred to extensively in SEU, 1999, Social Exclusion Unit Report on Teenage Pregnancy Cm 4342, HMSO

75   Botting B., Rosato M. & Wood R., 1998, "Teenage mothers and the health of their children", Population Trends, Vol. 93, Autumn 1998

B6   Stepfamilies

Summary: According to the Office of National Statistics, step-families are the fastest growing family type. Stepfamilies now comprise 10% of all households with dependent children. Just over half of these involve married stepfamilies; just under half are cohabiting stepfamilies. Outcome research reveals both advantages and disadvantages when parents remarry. Children benefit from the prioritization of additional parental time and resources. However family breakdown is especially high amongst stepfamilies as their marriages face the additional strains of role ambiguity – balancing the often conflicting needs of both marriage and parenting.

Stepfamilies are the fastest growing family type in the UK, statistics for which population are included in the table opposite. According to the 2001 Census there are 631,000 stepfamilies with dependent children in England and Wales, of which 346,000 are married couple stepfamilies and 285,000 were cohabiting couple stepfamilies. Overall, in 2001 in England and Wales, 10% of all families with dependent children were stepfamilies.

The Policy Studies Institute has estimated that by the year 2010 there will be more reconstructed or blended families than nuclear families. Men are increasingly likely to be living with other men's children whilst their own grow up elsewhere. Since most children remain with their mother following divorce or separation, most stepfamilies have a stepfather rather than a stepmother. 17% of dads born in 1970 are stepfathers, nearly double the number among men born just 12 years earlier.[76]

> "The most important thing to remember, and the most dangerous to forget, is that they are all formed out of loss. They come into being because of a death, a separation, or a divorce."
> *Dorit Braun, Chief Executive of Parentline Plus.*

"Blended", "recombined" or stepfamilies can provide parents and children with a partner to share the load, and additional adults to provide financial support and nurture as they have the potential to widen kin networks. Demographers at

UCLA have found that teens are more likely to have parents at home to supervise them if they are living in stepfamilies rather than with single mothers and children are much less likely to be living in poverty if they are stepchildren.[77]

Research has indicated that step-family life is framed around a sense of responsibility for dependent children and the requirement to put the needs and interests of children first.[78] However their complexity, and the difficulties which all family members face in establishing them, cannot be underestimated.[79]

Stepfamilies* with dependent children**, by family type, 2001

	%	000s
Married couples with children from:		
woman's previous marriage/cohabitation	81	303.9
man's previous marriage/cohabitation	15	57.0
both partners, previous marriage/cohabitation	4	16.4
All married couples stepfamilies	100	377.3
Cohabiting couples with children from:		
woman's previous marriage/cohabitation	85	265.8
man's previous marriage/cohabitation	10	32.4
both partners, previous marriage/cohabitation	5	15.1
All cohabiting couples stepfamilies	100	313.3
All couples with children from:		
woman's previous marriage/cohabitation	82	569.7
man's previous marriage/cohabitation	13	89.4
both partners, previous marriage/cohabitation	5	31.5
All married couples stepfamilies	100	690.7

* All stepfamilies where the family reference person is aged 16 and over. A 'stepfamily' is one where there is a child (or children) who belongs to only one member of the married or cohabiting couple

** A dependent child is a person in a household aged 0 to 15 (whether or not in the family) or a person aged 16 to 18 who is a full time student in a family with parent(s)

Source: Census 2001, office for national statistic; Census 2001, General Register Office for Scotland; Census 2001, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

A 2005 report from Parentline Plus which analysed recent research including the results of 14,500 calls from stepfamilies to its helpline revealed high levels of depression and anxiety. Role ambiguity and role strain characterize many step-parents' relationships with their children[80] and these were found

76   Vaitilingam, R., 2004, Seven Ages of Man and Woman, Economic and Social Research Council, June 2004

77   For example, 46% of children lived below the poverty line if their parents never married and their mom stayed single, compared with 12% in stepfamilies, according to Sweeney M. M. (2003). Are Stepfamilies Associated with the Emotional Well-Being of Adolescents? Presented at the Society for Research in Child Development, Tampa, FL.

78   Ribbens McCarthy J., Edwards R., & Gillies V., 2003, Making Families: Moral Tales of Parenting and Step-Parenting, Sociology Press, London

79   Research shows that realistic expectations, which include time to establish roles, are related to stepfamily success (Weaver S.E. & Coleman M., 2005 "A mothering but not a mother role: A grounded theory study of the nonresidential stepmother role" Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 2005 Vol. 22, No. 4, pp. 477-497)

80   *ibid*

to negatively influence marital relationships and were related to feelings of stress and inadequacy.

> "I don't like living with my mum and her boyfriend. They don't love me. Since the divorce I never see my dad and I have to lie and say everything is ok to the social worker or my mum will get angry."
>
> *Katie, 10*

Such feelings are common whether or not stepparents are living under the same roof as their stepchildren and one study found that more non-residential than residential stepmothers perceived that not having stepchildren would improve their marital relationship.[81] At least half of remarriages involving children will end in divorce, and one in four stepfamilies break down in the first year yet stability is a key determinant of whether or not stepfamilies enhance children's well-being.[82]

Children living in stepfamilies are three times more likely to run away from home than children living with both their natural parents; children of lone parents are twice as likely to do so.[83] 25% of all youngsters living in stepfamilies run away before they are 16, and many are younger than 11. Even if children do not run away, many leave home earlier than they might otherwise as "The desire for flight, sadly, is common to many stepchildren."[84]

81   Ambert A-M., 1986, "Being a Step-parent: Live-in and visiting step-children" Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 975-804

82   Sweeney M. M., 2003,. Are Stepfamilies Associated with the Emotional Well-Being of Adolescents? Presented at the Society for Research in Child Development, Tampa, FL.

83   Rees G. & Rutherford C., 2001, Home Run: Families and Young Runaways, Children's Society also Bradshaw, J. (ed.), 2001 Poverty: The Outcomes for Children, Family Policy Studies Centre: London

84   Yvonne Roberts, The Guardian June 29th 2005, "The fear of every step-parent is that they really are a monster"

B7   Dysfunctional/chaotic families

Summary: Dysfunctional families typically embrace a range of extremes that encompass either absence or excess of otherwise normative behaviours, such as touch and affect. Dysfunction is especially relevant to the early years of a child's nurture and attachment, where brain development is most critical. A significant minority of families are dysfunctional as a consequence of their own environmental or familial backgrounds. In this way, dysfunction tends to transmit itself through the generations.

DEFINITION OF DYSFUNCTION

Dysfunctional families are characterised by emotional disadvantage within the family and relationships which can range from neglectful and unsupportive, overwhelmingly protective or hostile, to physically or sexually abusive.

These families whilst appearing intact, have a dynamic which not only creates vulnerability in children to a wide array of mental and physical health problems, but also exacerbates the difficulties and pressures of the existing relationships within the family unit. However, the scale and level of the effects of such damaging behaviours can vary hugely depending on various protective factors in families' backgrounds, and the surrounding environment. Such families become incubators for the generational transfer of damaging attachment patterns, mental and physical ill-health and chaotic lifestyles that inhibit an offspring's ability to lead a fulfilled life. These damaging effects can be explained neurologically, biologically and behaviourally.[85] Such effects are especially evident in all forms of these individuals' interpersonal communication and in how they relate to the rest of society.

One of the most notable aspects of dysfunctional families is that founding family members often have a psychosocial background that was also damaging and dysfunctional. Such backgrounds contain risk factors from both the family and wider social environment. Environmental risk factors include poverty, homelessness, lack of educational opportunities, poor housing, ethnicity and family structure, (that is whether they were raised in a single parent or stepfamily or in a home headed by a married or cohabiting couples) and premature non-parental child-care. Familial risk factors include: neglect, abuse (sexual, physical and psychological) substance misuse, domestic violence, divorce and parental separation, illness (mental or physical) and disability.

Various core needs in offspring of such families cannot be met and psychological and behavioural effects from these omissions may then be transferred to the next generation, (See D7: Intergenerational transmission), they include:[86]

- Secure attachments to others (including safety, stability, nurturance and acceptance);
- Autonomy, competence and a sense of identity;
- Freedom to express valid needs and emotions;
- Spontaneity and play;
- Realistic limits and self-control.

However these categories, when present in isolation or conjunction also present as protective factors in creating some degree of psychological resilience (see section D2). Experiences throughout life shape the functioning of the brain and early optimal care-giving relationships "promote emotional well-being, social competence, cognitive functioning and resilience in the face of adversity."[87] Caregivers are "the architects of the way experience influences the unfolding of genetically pre-programmed but experience dependant brain development."[88] Traumatic experiences, extremely high levels of frustration of the above core needs, and poor models of behaviour produce stress which affects young brains. The release of stress hormones "developmentally prunes",[89] the connections between neurones and causes their death, creating risk for future emotional and behavioural disturbance because, in essence "human connections create neuronal connections."[90] Vulnerability to dysfunction emerges from the interaction of these factors.

85   Siegal D., 1999, The Developing Mind, Guilford Press

86   Young J., Klosko J., Weishaar M., 2003, Schema Therapy, Guilford Press

87   Cicchetti D., Rogosch F. 1997, "The role of self-organisation in the promotion of resilience in maltreated children," Journal of Development and Psychopathology, Vol. 9, No. 4, pp. 797-815

88   Goldsmith H. et al, 1997, Epidgenetic approaches to Developmental Psychopathology, Cambridge, CUP

89   Schore A., 1997, Early Organisation of the Non-linear Right Brain and Development of a Predisposition to Psychiatric Disorders, Cambridge, CUP

90   Siegal D., 1999, The Developing Mind, Guilford Press

However, the mind does have the capacity to adapt throughout the life-span, therefore other protective factors including education, intelligence and good relationships outside the family unit may foster well-being and social competence.

PREVALENCE OF DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES

There is enormous difficulty in assessing the prevalence of such a concept as the 'dysfunctional' family' and the characteristics which create a 'cascade' of risk throughout its members lifespan. It may be defined in terms of 'child maltreatment', but this misses completely the effects and impact on other members of the family. However considering the various risk factors which contribute to such a family dynamic gives a picture of the level of the problem facing society today.

> "My dad cheated on my mum and now they are splitting up. Mum is always drinking alcohol and taking sleeping pills and I don't know what to do. I hate all the shouting and sometimes I feel like killing myself."
> *Paul 12*

A study commissioned by the NSPCC in 2000 on Child Maltreatment,[91] reports that a third of families questioned felt "considerable stress" within the family, the same proportion reported financial pressure and worries. More than a fifth had experienced the separation of their birth parents, and nearly the same number had to shoulder adult responsibilities at an early age due to parental disability, mental ill health and substance misuse, (the Carer's Association reports that there are between 20,000 and 50,000 young carers in the UK).

26% of the drinking population are classed as hazardous drinkers,[92] and 27% have taken drugs at some time of their lives. Domestic violence accounts for nearly 25% of all recorded crime in England and Wales, every minute of each day the police receive a domestic assistance call.[93] British Crime Surveys from 1993-2003 estimate a million domestic assaults annually.

At any one time at least one in six adults are estimated to have a significant mental illness.[94] (Perhaps surprisingly this same study found that 50% of males with a psychiatric problem own their own homes.) At least 9.2 % of the population has depression and mixed anxiety and 10% of mothers suffer post-natal depression.[95]

Risk factors to families arising from these factors can exist in isolation or in conjunction with each other. The more risk factors which present, the higher the level of dysfunctionality within the family unit – although this is also, obviously, dependent on various protective factors as the definition above suggests. Prevalence of dysfunction can also be estimated by assessing the figures for symptoms of mental and psychological distress and ill-health in children and treating these as a representation of what might be termed the "temperature" of families.

91   Cawson et al, 2000, Child Maltreatment: A study of the prevalence of abuse and neglect, NSPCC

92   ONS, 2002, Tobacco, Drugs and Alcohol Use, London, ONS

93   Amnesty International, 2005, A Global Outrage

94   ONS, 2000, Mental Health Survey London, ONS

95   Comport M., 1987, Understanding Post-natal Depression, London, Corgi

B8   Ethnicity, religion and family type

Summary: Considerable variability of family types exists between ethnic and religious groups. Amongst South Asian families, rates of family breakdown and lone parenthood are relatively low and cohabitation is almost non-existent. Amongst black families, family breakdown, lone parenthood and cohabitation are all relatively high. These family differences persist despite lower than average education and employment prospects for both ethnic groups. Research commissioned for this working group suggests that cultural factors play a significant and unique role in the choice of family type and subsequent risk of family breakdown, independent of economic factors.

There are marked differences between ethnic groups in the extent of marriage, cohabitation and lone parenthood (Figure above). Amongst UK families with dependent children, the highest rates of marriage, and the lowest rates of cohabitation and lone parenthood occur amongst Asians. In the census year 2001, 85 percent of Indian families with dependent children were headed by a married couple. At the other extreme are the various groups classified as "black" in which 50 to 60 percent of families are headed by a lone parent, typically the mother, and another 10 percent are headed by a cohabiting couple. The contrasts are even more striking for extra-marital births. In 2004, only 1.9 percent of mothers born in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh gave birth to a child outside of marriage. For mothers born in the Commonwealth Caribbean the figure was 59.4 percent. For mothers born in the UK, the figure was 47.5.

The very high rates of lone parenthood and extra-marital childbearing amongst the various black ethnic groups may be partly due to economic factors, such as poor employment opportunities for black men and the resulting absence of "marriageable men" for potential mothers. Consistent with this is the fact that unemployment rates are higher than average for black men, and their educational qualifications are also lower than average. However, the same is also true of Pakistani and Bangladeshi men, yet rates of lone parenthood and non-marital childbearing are very low amongst these ethnic groups.

In a geographical study of the UK, Rowthorn and Webster (2006) found that ethnicity has a significant relationship with lone parenthood. Controlling for economic variables, such as education, housing tenure and unemployment, they found that lone parenthood is higher than expected in areas, such as Lambeth, that contain a high proportion of black ethnic groups. Conversely, lone parenthood is lower than expected in areas, such as

Families with Dependent Children:
by Ethnic Group and Family Type UK 2001

Legend:
- Married couple
- Lone-parent
- Cohabiting couple
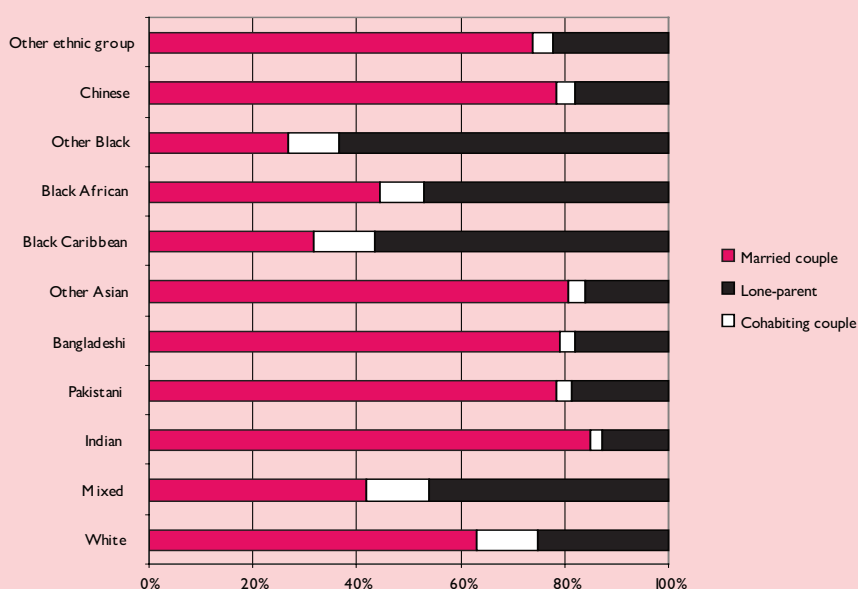
Source: Focus on Families from the Census of Population

Families with Dependent Children by Religion, UK 2001

Legend:
- Married couple
- Cohabiting couple
- Lone parent
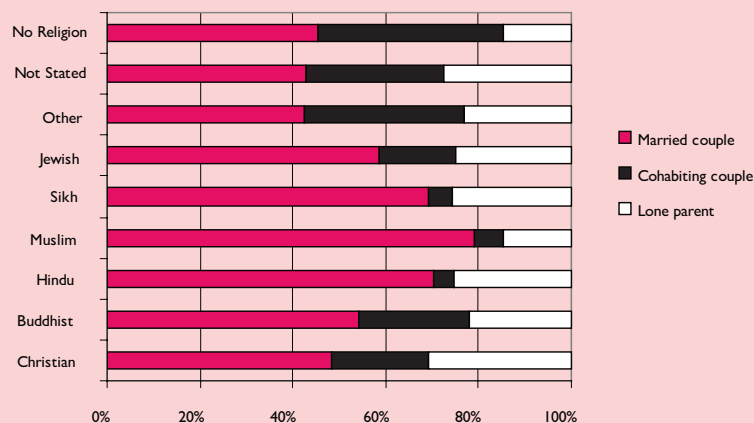
Source: Focus on Families from the Census of Population

Tower Hamlets, which contain a high proportion of Asian ethnic groups.

Similar results were obtained by Benson (2006), who used data from the Millennium Cohort Study to examine the risk that a couple would separate within three years of the birth of their first child.[96] Controlling for the influence of other variables, he found that Black couples were far more likely than average to separate, and South Asian couples far less likely than average to separate. Such contrasts support the view that cultural factors play an important role over and above economic circumstances.

The above ethnic differences are mirrored in the relationship between religion and family type. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs have low rates of lone parenthood and cohabitation plus high rates of marriage. Most of these people are ethnically South Asian (Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi). Cohabitation and lone parenthood are high amongst parents classified as Christian or not-stated, most of whom are ethnically white or black.

Note that respondents who state that they have no religion have high rates of cohabitation but quite low rates of lone parenthood. This may be because many of them come from the middle classes, amongst which lone parenthood is relatively uncommon. It may also reflect an ideological rejection of religion but a commitment to stability. A similar phenomenon is observed in France, where committed non-religious couples often reject legal marriage.

96   Benson, H., 2006, The conflation of marriage and cohabitation in government statistics - a denial of difference rendered untenable by an analysis of outcomes, Bristol Community Family Trust, September.

B9   International comparisons

Summary: In recent decades, family trends have tended to point in much the same direction across Europe. Whereas divorce, cohabitation and lone parenthood have generally increased, marriage has generally declined. In Southern European countries, these trends are least apparent in terms of high rates of marriage and low rates of lone parenthood. In Northern Europe, they are most pronounced. Cohabitation varies more widely within Northern European countries. Across Europe, married parents are consistently less likely to split up compared to cohabiting parents. However these differences in break-up rates are most pronounced in the UK, which also has by far the highest proportion of lone parents in Europe.

This section will look briefly at marriage, divorce, cohabitation and lone parenthood across Europe (and occasionally the US). Before doing so it is important to set the demographic context in which Europe finds itself, which is one of low fertility rates, population ageing and population greying (that is, an increase in the proportion of the old and very old sectors of the population).[97] By 2050, Europe's population is predicted to have declined by nearly 8% from 728 million to 668 million people, even with increased life expectancy and immigration.[98] In Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Hungary and Poland, populations have already begun to decline,[99] while in no member state of the European Union is the fertility rate above replacement level. This is partly due to the advancing age of first pregnancy (the average age of a woman in the European Union at the birth of her first child in 1985 was 24.6, rising to 26.7 years by 2000.[100]
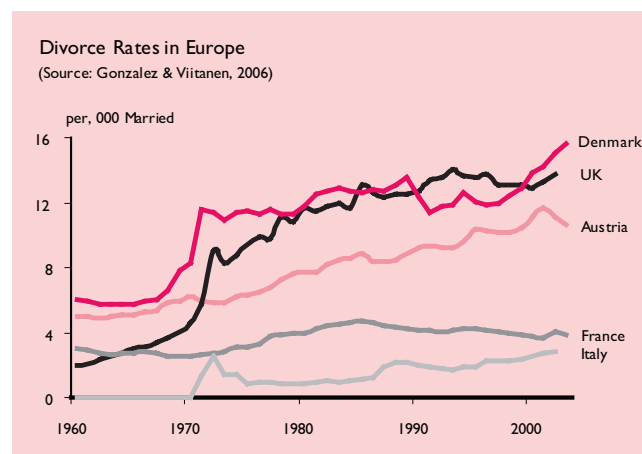
MARRIAGE

Kiernan[101] describes the so-called "golden age" of marriage which prevailed in Western nations from the 1950s up to the 1970s, during which period when marriage was youthful and almost universal. This pattern of marriage receded during the 1970s since which point, and to the present day, marriage rates have declined, average ages at marriage have increased and a growing minority are choosing not to marry. In many western countries the rise

in cohabitation that has occurred, particularly since the beginning of the 1980s, has been one of the most influential factors behind the decline in marriage rates and a movement to a later age at marriage.

Marital Status (25-34 yr olds) in Europe
(Source: Kiernan, 2003)
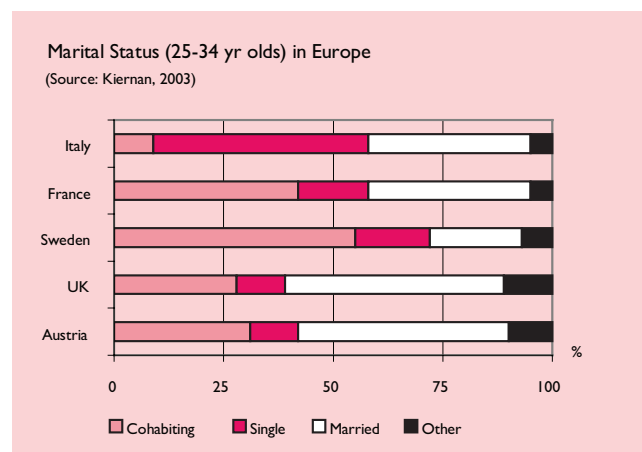
The graph above highlights only five countries but Eurobarometer data[102] indicates that although marriage (among 25-34 year olds) is most popular in the southern European countries of Greece and Portugal, this is much less the case in the other southern European countries of Italy and Spain, which have low proportions in marital unions and the highest proportions of single people. In the

Divorce Rates in Europe
(Source: Gonzalez & Viitanen, 2006)

Nordic countries as well as in France, cohabitation is more popular than marriage at these ages whereas marriage is seemingly more popular in countries such as Austria, the Netherlands, Great Britain, and Luxembourg.[103]

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97   Europe has the highest percentage of people over retirement age in the world at 14.7% of the population, and this is expected to increase to 23.5% over the next 25 years (Kinsella K. & Phillips D.R., 2005, "Global Aging: The Challenge of Success", Population Bulletin, Vol. 60, No. 1)

98   Population Reference Bureau, 2004 World Population Data Sheet

99   Eurostat, 2004, "European demography 2003" Eurostat News Release 105/2004

100   United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2005,'Trends in Europe and North America' The Statistical Yearbook of the Economic Commission for Europe 2005

101   Kiernan K., 2003, Cohabitation and divorce across nations and generations, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, LSE, CASE paper 65

102   *ibid*

103   *ibid*

DIVORCE

It is clear from Gonzalez (2006) that the rise in divorce rates has been very pronounced in Europe since the 1960s. Virtually all European countries experienced less than 2.5 divorces per 1,000 married people in 1960, and many had divorce rates below 1 see chart opposite. By 2002, most European countries had divorce rates around 5 per 1000 married people or higher. Gonzalez' data indicates that the United Kingdom has topped or come close to topping the European table of divorce rate rankings for several decades

When demographers have looked at those who have experienced parental divorce (compared with those who did not), across all nations they are more likely to form partnerships and to become parents at a young age; they are more likely to opt for cohabitation over marriage; they are less likely to have their first child within marriage; and their own partnerships and marriages are in turn more likely to terminate.[104]

COHABITATION

Rather than uniformity across European states in the incidence of cohabitation there is a good deal of diversity, but three broad groupings have emerged.[105] Cohabitation is strikingly common in the Nordic countries of Denmark, Sweden and Finland, and France also has relatively high proportions cohabiting. There is a middle group of countries including the Benelux countries (the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg), Great Britain, Germany, and Austria with intermediate levels of cohabitation.[106] At the other extreme is the set of Southern European countries and Ireland, where cohabitation is less common than in other European nations.

The rise in cohabitation that has occurred, particularly since the beginning of the 1980s in many countries is an important factor driving the rise in non-marital childbearing. Although levels of cohabitation and childbearing outside marriage tend to be in accord, (with countries with high levels of cohabitation having higher rates of non-marital childbearing and vice versa) there are exceptions. Britain, Ireland (and the USA) appear to have higher levels of childbearing outside marriage than one would expect from cohabitation estimates alone, and the Netherlands, West Germany and Switzerland have lower rates of non-marital childbearing than might be anticipated from their levels of cohabitation. This suggests that norms about marriage being the conventional setting for having children may

well be stronger in some countries than others.

Kiernan's[107] study of European countries and the US found that across most countries there has been a discernible movement away from having a child within marriage to having a child within a cohabiting union. Having a child prior to a partnership is a minor practice in many of these countries including those with high levels of non-marital childbearing and those with low levels. However this is less the case in Great Britain (and the USA) where the proportions of first births occurring to solo (ie. non-partnered) mothers have increased.

Births outside marriage in Europe
(Source: Kiernan, 2003)
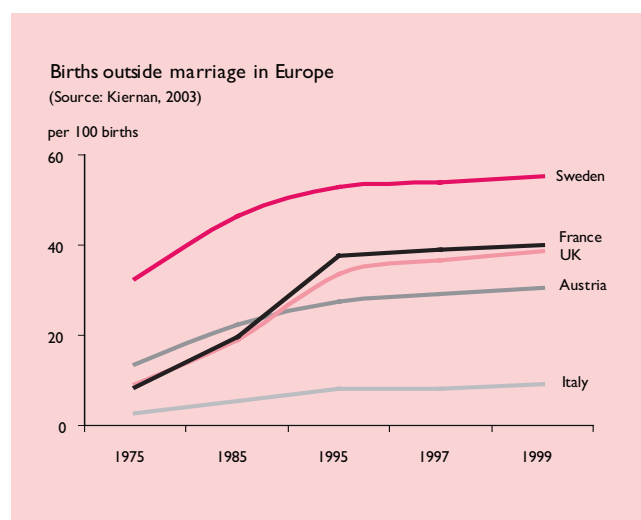
In all the countries included in her analysis children born within marriage were less likely to see their parents separate than those born in a cohabiting union. Within the set of cohabiting unions those that had not been converted into marriages were the most fragile, with at least 1 in 5 of these unions having dissolved by the time the child was 5 years old. Kiernan compared children born within marriage with those born in cohabiting unions that subsequently converted to marriages. In Sweden, Norway, Austria and West Germany she found little difference in the chances of them seeing the break-up of their parents' marriage by their 5th birthday; with less than 1 in 10 of these children having experienced parental separation. However, in France and Switzerland and the USA and most noticeably in Great Britain children born into marital unions were more likely to see their parents remain together until their 5th birthday than those children born into a cohabiting union that converted into a marriage.

104   *ibid*. Kiernan points out that all these factors are in themselves inter-related in that, dissolution is more common amongst those who cohabit or have youthful partnerships or become parents at a young age, and youthful partnership increases the chances of youthful parenthood.

105   *ibid*

106   Evidence from USA surveys suggests that the USA would also fall into this grouping Raley, R.K., 2000, 'Recent trends and differential in marriage and cohabitation: The United States', in Waite, L. et al (eds.), The Ties that Bind: Perspectives on marriage and cohabitation. Hawthorne, New York, Aldine de Gruyter

107   *ibid*

LONE PARENTHOOD

In Gonzalez' (2006) study of single motherhood across Europe, she states that single mother households have become an increasingly frequent family type in many industrialized nations over the past few decades but notes that this trend has been particularly pronounced in the United Kingdom (and the United States).[108]

TEENAGE PARENTHOOD

Similarly youthful parenthood has remained consistently high in Britain[109] (and the USA[110]) in comparison with other western European nations in which teenage fertility rates have been substantially lower and exhibited more marked declines in recent times.

As was noted earlier in this section, across a range of countries children from separated families are more likely to form partnerships and become parents at a young age.[111] This is of concern because a recent cross-national study using the European Community Household Panel Study by Berthoud and Robson (2001) has shown that young mothers and their families experience disadvantage in all of the 13 countries included in their analysis.

Proportion of single women aged 18-35 who are single heads, 2001
(Source: Gonzalez, 2006)
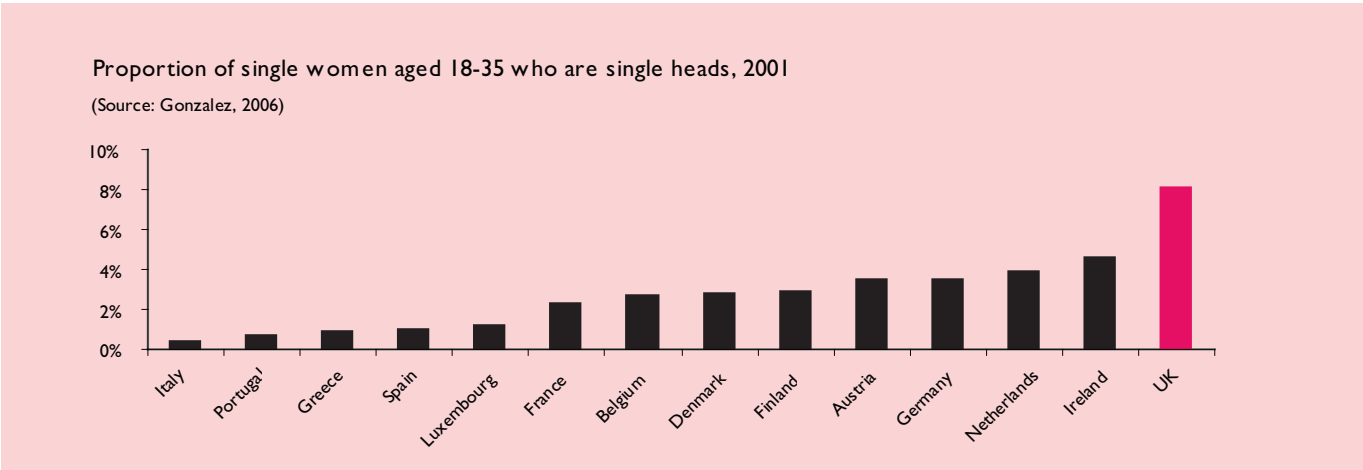
108   González L., 2006, The Effect of Benefits on Single Motherhood in Europe Institute for the Study of Labor IZA DP No. 2026

109   SEU, 1999, Social Exclusion Unit Report on Teenage Pregnancy Cm 4342, HMSO

110   Darroch, J., Frost, J.F. and Singh, S., 2001, Teenage Sexual and Reproductive Behavior in Developed Countries. New York, Alan Guttmacher Institute

111   Kiernan K., 2003, Cohabitation and divorce across nations and generations, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, LSE, CASE paper 65

SECTION C
consequences of family breakdown

C1 Introduction

Summary: Family breakdown affects the individuals involved, the wider family and society at large, and these effects are largely negative. There is a complex relationship between factors which cause family breakdown and the consequences. Whilst in many cases it is impossible to separate the factors, we conclude that family breakdown is a driver for many negative outcomes for children, young people and adults alike.

This section of the report intends to look at the many and varied effects of family breakdown. These are examined at the level of the individual, the family, the community and the wider society. The effects or impacts to which we are referring include those which are both acute (that is the trauma and disruption to family and personal life immediately surrounding a breakdown) and chronic problems (the long term and lasting impacts).

We will show that family breakdown is a problem because it negatively affects children and adults. It has impacts on physical and mental health and can be correlated with child abuse and domestic violence.

Moving on, we will also show that family breakdown is a problem because it negatively affects families and society. For example, we examine the extent to which it increases the risk of crime and takes families into poverty. Research carried out by the DTI's Task Force on Overindebtedness found that a major cause of financial difficulties was relationship breakdown.[112] In section D we will show that family breakdown tends to be reproduced in the next generation. Young people are more likely to have earlier sexual experiences if they come from broken and single parent homes[113] and girls whose mothers were

teenage mothers are themselves far more likely to join this category than those whose mothers were older at first childbirth.[114] The same is true for girls from divorced families and those who have experienced parental divorce are also much more likely to have their own marriages or cohabiting relationships break up.[115]

The charge that may be levelled at our analysis is that we confuse cause with effect. We are aware that many academics and children's charities believe that the link between social problems such as youth crime, juvenile delinquency, school failure and drug abuse among young people is due not to family breakdown but to poverty and inequality and that family breakdown itself is also more likely to occur when families face economic hardship.

We have already stated that we are not proposing that a straightforward, linear cause and effect relationship exists between these problems and dissolution, dysfunction and fatherlessness. We are convinced that there is a complex relationship between these factors at work.

However, when risk factors for some of these social problems are teased out it is clear that coming from a broken home, not knowing one's father, multiple family disruptions etc make it far more likely that a young person will use drugs, commit crimes, go on to have a broken relationship themselves, suffer serious levels of depression etc. We have already acknowledged that in social research terms it is hard to keep all other factors constant other than the one that is of interest but at the very least we consider that it must also be acknowledged that family breakdown is a driver in its own right and must be treated as such, rather than reduced to an inevitable by-product of poverty and inequality.

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112   Consumer Affairs Directorate 2001 Report by the Taskforce on Tackling Overindebtedness (http://www.dti.gov.uk/ccp/consultpdf/review.pdf)

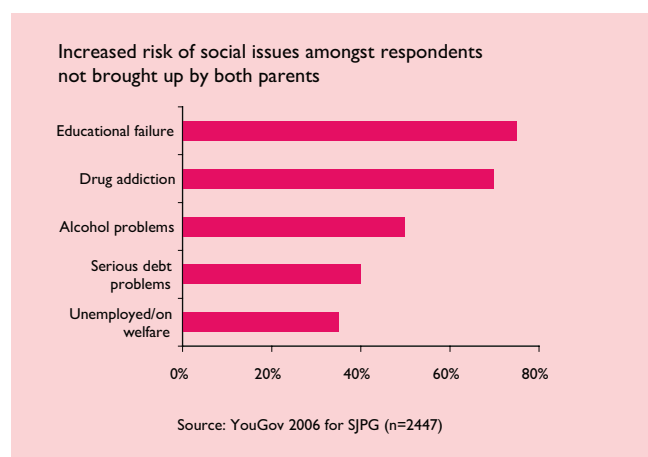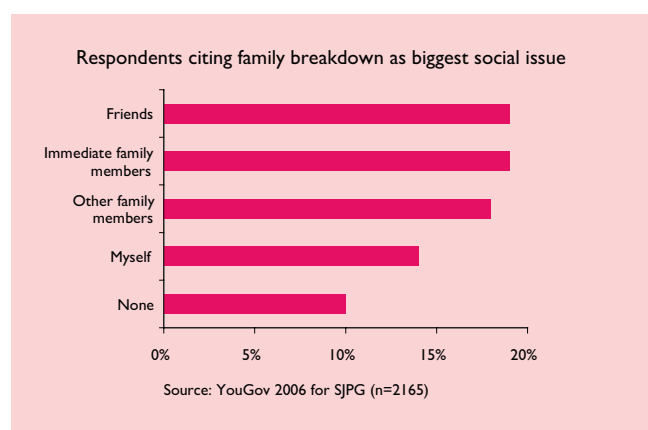113   'Family Matters Institute, 2001, Does Your Mother Know?

114   Ermisch, J. & Pevalin, D., 2003, Who has a child as a teenager? ISER working paper 2003-30, Colchester: Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex

115   Kiernan, K., 1997, The Legacy of Parental Divorce, Joseph Rowntree Foundation; McAllister, F., 1995, Marital Breakdown and the Health of the Nation, One plus One

C2 Impact on individuals and families

Summary: Family breakdown impacts individuals and families in terms of both acute outcomes (ie the trauma etc immediately surrounding a breakdown) and chronic problems (long term and lasting impacts). Being married has been shown to have a significant health benefit, and family breakdown negatively impacts both physical and mental health. Folk-lore has it that individuals leave an unhappy relationship to get happier, but the research shows that those who do split up generally remain unhappy. The impact of family breakdown on children is generally negative. In many cases it has insidious effects which impact their own future capability to maintain healthy relationships.

Respondents citing family breakdown as biggest social issue

Source: YouGov 2006 for SJPG (n=2165)

Increased risk of social issues amongst respondents not brought up by both parents

Source: YouGov 2006 for SJPG (n=2447)

Family breakdown impacts all the individuals directly concerned and has ramifications throughout people's extended families and friendship networks. Indeed, polling carried out by YouGov for this policy group suggests that those who are indirectly affected are more likely to cite family breakdown as an important social issue. It is possible that those who are one step removed from the effects of family breakdown are more aware of, or more willing to admit to, the damage it causes. Whilst we cannot state with certainty that those who have themselves gone through divorce or other form of breakdown are denying how profoundly it has affected them and others like their children, research such as that carried out by Elizabeth Marquardt described below suggests that this might be the case.

A further wave of polling by YouGov for this policy group reveals that the experience of social problems is more prevalent amongst those not brought up by both parents. Amongst a representative sample of 2447 adults, those not brought up by both parents were more likely to have experienced educational failure, drug addiction, alcohol problems, serious debt problems, and/or unemployment and dependency on welfare.

As with any cross-sectional survey, these findings can only demonstrate a correlation between family breakdown and social problems. They do not show a causal link. However they are illustrative of the substantial differences found amongst those from different family backgrounds. It is up to other longitudinal studies to disentangle the effects of socio-economic and other factors.

FAMILY COMPOSITION AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Families can promote or hinder the well-being of individual members. Research has consistently provided evidence that "being married and having a family and friends represents significant protective factors for health."[116] Married individuals fare better in terms of physical health and longevity than the never married, while the never married fare better than the divorced, separated and widowed. Compared to unmarried people, the risk of mortality is significantly lower for those who are married.[117] The effect is stronger in men than women, in that mortality risk for unmarried women is 50% higher than married women; however it is 250% higher for men, indicating a larger benefit for men who marry.[118] Divorced and widowed individuals have higher death rates from coronary heart disease, stroke, many forms of cancer, pneumonia, and cirrhosis.[119]

116   Neyer F., Lehnart J., 2006, "Personality, Relationships and Health, a Dynamic Transactional Perspective", Handbook of Personality and Health, Chichester, Wiley

117   Seeman T., 2001, Social Relationships and Health, Oxford University Press

118   Ross C.E., Mirowsky J.and Goldsteen K., 1990, "The Impact of the Family on Health, A Decade in review," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 52, No. 4, pp. 1059-1078

119   Kaprio J., Koskenru M., Rita H., 1987, "Mortality after Bereavement," American Journal of Public Health Vol. 77, pp. 283-287

The non-married have more physical health problems as indicated by acute and chronic conditions and therefore more days of disability.[120] The "Marriage Effect" was considered to be due to the emotional support given through living with someone rather than alone. However the mere presence or absence of another adult does not explain the effect, research found that unmarried individuals living on their own are no more distressed than those who live with a partner.[121] Having a spouse also enhances attachment and feelings of belonging.[122]

However it is better to live alone than in a marriage lacking consideration, caring, esteem and equity,[123] and in some cases dysfunction in married families may cause more distress than in unmarried families.

PERSONAL HAPPINESS

A representative sample of 2165 respondents polled for this policy group by YouGov, indicated that the happiest people were those who were married, although being in a non-marital partnership made you happier than if you were single. Obviously the quality of relationships is a very important determinant of happiness and researchers have sought to answer the question, does divorce make people happier?

A study by Professor Linda Waite[124] has found that divorce is far from the panacea it is sometimes made out to be for those in unhappy marriages. Conventional wisdom has it that those trapped in unhappy marriages are often better off getting divorced but this major study indicates that the opposite might be true in many cases. Waite found no evidence that unhappy couples who divorced became happier than those unhappy couples who stayed married. In fact two thirds of "unhappy" couples who stuck it out reported that they were happy five years later. Remarkably, 8 out of 10 of "very unhappy" couples reported that they were happily married five years later.[125]

American sociologist, Barbara Dafoe Whitehead describes what happens when divorce rates are high, but her comments apply where family breakdown of all types characterizes society. She says "in a culture of divorce children are the most 'unfree'. Divorce abrogates children's rights to be reasonably free from adults' cares and woes, to enjoy the association of both parents on a daily basis, to remain innocent of social services and therapy and to spend family time in ways that are not dictated by the courts . . . Divorce involves a radical redistribution of hardship from adults to children and therefore cannot be viewed as a morally neutral act."[126]

IMPACT ON CHILDREN

Family breakdown negatively affects children and adults. It can be correlated with child abuse and domestic violence. An NSPCC report into child maltreatment questioned 2,869 18-24 yr olds about their childhood experiences.[127] The research showed that children experiencing frequent changes in family structure were especially vulnerable to abuse. Those who had grown up in lone parent or broken families were between three to six times more likely to have suffered serious abuse. Children on the "at-risk" register are eight times more likely to be living with a natural mother and "father substitute" compared with the national distribution for similar social classes.[128] A recent US study found that children living in households with unrelated adults were nearly 50 times as likely to die of inflicted injuries than children living with 2 biological parents.[129] Cohabitation is less effective than marriage in safeguarding women and children from violence, poverty and neglect. Women are more likely to be physically abused by their live-in boyfriends than by husbands, to be assaulted during pregnancy, and to be at risk of serious injury, than if they are married.[130]

120 Anson O., 1989, "Marital Status and Women's Health, the Importance of a Proximate Adult", Journal of Marriage and the Family Vol. 51, pp. 185-194

121 Hughes M, Gove W., 1981, "Living Alone; Social Integration and Mental Health," American Journal of Sociology Vol 87, No. 1, pp. 48-74

122 House J., Landis K & Umberon D., 1988, "Social Relationships and Health", Science Vol. 241, No. 4865, pp. 540-545

123 Gove W, Hughes M. & Style C.,1987, "Does Marriage have positive effects on the Psychological well-being of the individual" Journal of Health and Society, Vol. 24, pp. 122-131

124 Waite L., et al, 2002, Does Divorce Make People Happy? Findings from a Study of Unhappy Marriages, IAV

125 Gardner and Oswald (2005) have found that divorcing couples reap psychological gains from the dissolution of their marriages by comparing levels of happiness from two years before divorce with levels of happiness two years after divorce. They found that there was a gain in happiness between those times, not withstanding the sharp trough of happiness at the time of the divorce itself. We are not disputing those findings but note that organisations like Relate have found that couples do not tend to present themselves for counselling for some significant amount of time after difficulties begin. The figure of seven years is not atypical. Therefore it is likely that by the two year starting point adopted by Gardner and Oswald there has already been a significant decline in happiness. It is possible that if an earlier starting point had been chosen then it would have compared more favourably with a post-divorce finishing point in terms of levels of happiness. (Gardner J. & Oswald A., 2006, "Do divorcing couples become happier by breaking up?" Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series A (Statistics in Society), Vol. 169, No. 2, March 2006, pp. 319-336

126 Whitehead B.D., 1997, The Divorce Culture Random House

127 NSPCC, 2002, Child Maltreatment in the Family February 2002

128 See Creighton, S.J., 1992, Child Abuse Trends in England and Wales 1988-90 NSPCC; and commentary by Quilgar,D., 2001, Poverty: the Outcomes for Children (Child Abuse) Economic & Social Research Council

129 Schnitzer P.G. & Ewigman B.G., 2005, "Child Deaths Resulting From Inflicted Injuries: Household Risk Factors and Perpetrator Characteristics" Pediatrics Vol. 116, No. 5, November 2005, pp. e687-e693

130 Kiernan, K. and Estaugh, V., 1993, Cohabitation: Extra-Marital Childbearing and Social Policy, Family Policy Studies Centre

Family breakdown dramatically raises the risk of domestic violence – the single biggest predictor of domestic violence is being a separated woman. A key study found that 22% had experienced it in the preceding year.[131] However, there is now heightened awareness that fathers can be very badly affected by family breakdown where custody and contact arrangements prevent them from having a level of access to their children which they deem sufficient for their own emotional health. In our hearings we talked to several fathers who considered that the present legal system did not protect their rights as committed parents.

> "I'm feeling very depressed about my parent's divorce case. I'm tired of all the fights and arguments. I find myself stuck in the middle. I'm worried about my little sister as she does not understand what is happening."
> *John, 16*

We are aware that in every section of society there are also parents who separate amicably and make contact arrangements that are satisfactory for both parents. However a recent research report has indicated that the children from these divorces or separations will not remain untouched by such a process. Elizabeth Marquardt's research[132] indicates that such children, even those whose parents have a best-case scenario separation (ie. where there is regular and unconflicted contact or residence with both parents) often experience significant levels of inner conflict which dominate their childhood and continue into adulthood. They feel pushed to the side of their parents' lives as the latter struggle to reorder their lives after separation. Inner conflict arises in children when they struggle internally to make sense of the differing value systems which their parents found impossible to reconcile, and which may have contributed to the breakdown in the relationship in the first place. Many reported a sense that they had had to grow up too soon and that their childhood was characterised by loneliness.

> "My parents are going through a divorce at the moment and mum is taking it out on me, always shouting and hitting me for everything that goes wrong. I feel scared and do not know what to do now that dad has gone."
> *Abby 13*

These more subtle effects of divorce, which produce no clinical symptoms (rather than the dramatic negative effects on a minority), have been termed "sleeper effects" which become most evident when people leave home and try to form lasting relationships themselves. Marquardt does not argue that no one should ever get divorced nor that divorced people are morally reprehensible. Neither does she deny the "resiliency perspective", that most children of divorce develop into well-adjusted, successful adults. Her contention is that the debate has been dominated by the adult perspective and despite the necessary concern we must continue to show for parents themselves, this should not prevent us from looking unflinchingly at the experience of children of divorce.

131   Mirrlees-Black, C., 1999, Domestic violence: Findings from a new British crime survey self-completion questionnaire. London, Home Office

132   Marquardt E., 2005, Between Two Worlds: the inner lives of children of divorce, New York, Crown Publishers

C3   Impact on mental health

Summary: Family breakdown due to both dissolution and dysfunction both have negative consequences for mental health, particularly in children. Dissolution of a relationship can lead to substantial mental distress, sometimes with long-lasting results. Children of separated parents frequently suppress their pain and grief, releasing the emotions through disruptive behaviour. In dysfunctional families the damage to children may begin at birth with poor attachment resulting in a wide range of anti-social behaviours.

Most research indicates that family disruption and breakdown, whether by dysfunction or parental separation, is a precursor for poor mental health.[133] Divorce and separation are associated with increased mental illness and increased risk of suicide.[134] For example, severe depression is 3 times higher among women and 9 times higher among men who have been separated or divorced compared to stably married and single men and women.[135]

Divorce and separation are among the most stressful life events a person can experience. This would appear to be the case both for the person who sought the separation and for the person who was "separated from" and whether the situation was expected or not. However the more unexpected the situation, the more stressful the initial emotional reactions. It should be noted though that many adults may already come from a background of family breakdown and/or dysfunction, and the process of separation will exacerbate psychological distress. A heightened sense of remorse and guilt are almost inevitable in at least one party, especially where there are children present. Ambivalence, uncertainty and confusion can lead to varying degrees of mental distress and anger in both parties as the family identity goes through this major psychological change. The overall impact is detrimental to both physical and emotional health.

A major psychological aspect of separation is that of grief, resulting in anger and depression at the loss of a partner. Statistics for mixed anxiety and depression have seen a significant rise in the last 10 years, for the entire population. At least 9.2% experienced both, 4.7% reported general anxiety and almost 5% had depression with no anxiety. One in four adults suffer from some form of diagnosable mental disorder.[136] The prescribing of anti-depressants has risen by 700% in the last ten years (some of the rise has been due to the availability of new selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors or SSRI's) and it is thought that on any one day, 33% of visits to GPs' surgeries are for symptoms of depression. All theses figures are expected to rise in the next few years.

"Subtle and complex disturbances in self identity",[137] can be seen in couples separating, with men reporting a feeling of rootlessness and women, unattractiveness. One practitioner who works with separated parents has observed this many times and he told us, "the breakdown of the adult relationship is nearly always accompanied by a sense of failure, disappointment and a lowering of self esteem". The psychopathological effects of divorce are remarkably tenacious, the negative impact on mental health can be found even after re-marriage.[138]

IMPACT ON CHILDREN

The emotional repercussions of parents separating has a significant effect on the future well being of children especially, not just psychologically but also on their social and intellectual functioning as well. When parents separate, upheaval and major life changes occur, resulting in many children suffering feelings of guilt, anger, abandonment and deep seated pain with no outlet, leading directly to depression and anxiety. It is also clear that children's insecurity and distress can sometimes begin years before the divorce or separation, as their parents' relationship goes through the process of breaking down.[139]

When looking at averages, children from divorced parents tend to have lower educational attainment and poorer socio-economic circumstances,[140] together with bed wetting, sleeplessness and delinquency.

Unfortunately these emotions are increasingly misinterpreted and signs of psychological distress are translated as

133   Wade T., Pevalin D., 2004, "Marital Transition and Mental Health" Journal of Social Behaviour Vol. 45, No. 2, pp. 155-170

134   Kposowa K., 2003, "Divorce and Suicide Risk", American Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 149, No. 7

135   Bruce M. & Kim K., 1992, "Differences in the effects of Divorce on Major Depression in Men and Women, American Journal of Psychiatry, Vol.149, No. 7, pp. 914-917

136   Mind organisation

137   Hetherington E., Cox M. & Cox R., 1977, "The Aftermath of Divorce" in Stevens J. & Matthews M. (Eds.), Mother-Child, Father-Child Relationships, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington

138   Friedman H. et al, 1995, "Psychosocial and Behavioural Predictors of Longevity," American Psychologist, Vol. 50., pp. 696-703

139   Palmer S., 2006, Toxic Childhood, Orion Books

140   Wadsworth M., 1979, Roots of Delinquency, Oxford< Oxford University Press

"bad" and "out of control" behaviour. The prevalence of emotional and conduct disorders are found to be 10% of children and 20% of adolescents. Bullying and self-harm are on the increase, both measuress of children's lack of ability to cope with distress and psychological pain. One in fifteen children and adolescents now regularly self-harm[141] and 52% of children indicate that bullying is a major problem. Each week 450,000 young children are bullied at school, one in ten (11%) admit bullying by text message and two out of three girls admit abusing others (which is more than are abused.)[142]

> "My parents have split up. I live with my mum and my brother lives with my dad. I don't get to see my dad much and it makes me sad and I cry every night. I've started drinking alcohol behind my mum's back and also wet the bed."
> *Claire, 13*

Children from such backgrounds are likely to become psychologically disadvantaged, The adjustment of children following parental separation depends on a variety of factors: the level of conflict between parents before and after separation, the quality of parenting from both the custodial and non-custodial parent, changes in the child's standard of living and other stressors such as moving house or changing schools.[143]

Family structure can play an integral part in the prevalence of mental disorders. Children of lone parents whether single or widowed, are about twice as likely to have a mental health problem than those living with married or co-habiting couples, that is 16% as opposed to 8%. Children in re-constituted families fared better without other step-children: 15% as compared with 9%. Children from two children households had lower rates of mental health problems than those in four or five children households: 13% compared with 18%.[144]

HIGH CONFLICT FAMILIES

Conflict and dysfunction within families pose a far greater risk of adult mental health problems than the type of family within which a child was raised (although it is rarer in stable, married couple families as we have stated elsewhere).[145] Marital and parental conflict has been associated with an array of adjustment problems in children, for instance; poor peer interaction, conduct problems, ill health, depression and anxiety, low self esteem, eating disorders, substance misuse and poor attachment (see Section D2).[146] Marital conflict that is "intense, frequent and child related",[147] causes children to have feelings of fear and distress and a desire to intervene in the conflict. Lack of resolution can be associated with "negative affective responses" such as anger, sadness and distress. The combination of hostility and detachment in parental communication is linked with the most destructive form of parental conflict and associated with "maladjustment throughout many levels of the family system".[148] Children tend to display negative affect and non-compliance with peers, they also have higher levels of "acting out" behaviours within the family itself. Such conflict affects the parents' ability to co-parent children, and exhibits as an undercurrent of anger and frustration, which again impacts other family members. These families are unable to function as a unit and have difficulty in synchronising their actions and they have been seen be more likely to separate or divorce.[149]

> "Growing up without a father figure, bullying at school, being gay, my mothers illness, dependency on canabis, cant get a job, live away from my family and friends who i miss a lot, use canabis to relieve boredom/depression"
> *Verbatim comment from polling*

Such harmful parenting may not mean direct physical violence but may include overly punitive discipline, shouting or other emotional abuse.[150] Harsh parenting is a major precur-

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141   Camelot Foundation, The Truth Hurts, National Inquiry 2005

142   Donnellan C., 2006, Bullying, Cambridge Independence

143   Amato P. & Keith B., 1991, "Children of Divorce in the 1990's" Psychological Bulletin, Vol. 110, pp. 26-46

144   Meltzer et al 2004, Mental Health of Children and Young People in Great Britain ONS

145   Earls F. & Jung K., 1987, Temperament and Home Environment Characteristics as Causal Factors in the Early Development of Child Psychopathology, J. Am. Acad. Child/Adolescent Psychiatry, Volo. 26, No.4, pp. 491-498

146   Cummings E. & Davies D., 1994, Children and Marital Conflict: The Impact of Family Dispute and Resolution, Guilford Press

147   Fainsilber L. & Wooden E., 2002, "Hostility, Hostile Detachment and Conflict Engagement in Marriages, Effect on Child and Family Functioning," Child Development, Vol. 73 pp. 636-652

148   ibid

149   Gottman J. & Levenson R.,1992, "Marital Processes Predictive of Later Dissolution", Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 63, No. 2, pp. 221-233

150   75% of all babies are hit before they are one year old (Miller A., 1987, For Your Own Good, London, Virago)

sor to future mental ill health.[151] Thus according to the Wave Foundation, the greatest risk of suffering violence, emotional abuse, sexual assault and murder for people in western society occurs within the home at the hands of other family members, who say that "Violence in the family is more common than love".[152] 42% of murders and manslaughter involve families, 33% of domestic violence victims are children.[153] 20-25% of UK children suffer physical abuse at some level, 6% experience serious absence of care and a further 9% intermediate absence of care.[154]

The effect on the developing child is profound: and indicators show a rise across depression and anxiety disorders, personality disorders, psychosis, addictions, substance misuse, violence and anger disorders and eating disorders. In 2004 one in ten children aged between 5 and 6 had a clinically diagnosed mental disorder.[155] 6% had a conduct disorder, 2% had a hyperkinetic disorder such as ADHD, 1% had an eating disorder, tic or autism, and 2% had more than one type of disorder.

151   Cohen P. et al, 1990, Common and Uncommon Pathways to Adolescent Psychopathology and problem behaviour, Cambridge University Press
152   Gelles R. & Lerner C., 1990, Intimate Violence in Families, Sage
153   Browse K & Herbert M., 1995, Preventing Family Violence, Chichester, Wiley
154   Cawson P., Wattam C., Brooker S. & Kelly G., 2000, Child Maltreatment in the UK, NSPCC
155   Meltzer et al, 2004, Mental Health of Children and Young People, ONS

C4   Impact on crime and youth delinquency

Summary: Poor attachment, inappropriate parenting and high conflict relationships appear to characterise the background of those who end up as young offenders. Studies also show that youth delinquency and substance abuse is associated with family dissolution, or being raised in the care system.

The key point must be made that there are increasing numbers of children growing up in environments with some or all risk factors relating to the nature of the family unit or to the dynamic that exists within that family unit. The biggest cause of psychological damage exists within what is increasingly becoming known as the "toxic family" itself, whether by parental separation or breakdown of relationships within it.

A key rise in crime statistics is in figures for violent crime, including sexual crimes. Recorded violence in the UK and Wales in 2003 showed a 25-fold increase since 1950,[156] which takes into account new reporting methods used since 1999. Serious sexual offences have also risen in the last 15 years: rapes of females by 205%, rapes of males by 495%, indecent assaults of females by 69%. (Kidnapping, arson and violent disorder are also on the increase, as are incidents of domestic violence and violence against children - by both adults and children).

Many clinicians and researchers working in the area of child development, trauma and neurology propose that a "propensity to violence develops primarily from wrong treatment before the age of 3".[157] (See Section D2)

Violence is then "triggered" in individuals with this propensity by a range of psycho-social factors such as individual stress and/or unemployment and poverty indicators. Alcohol, drugs and pornography may exacerbate the violence.

The large rise in the statistics shows that the majority of violence is perpetrated by adolescents. Reasons for this relate to: less social control and reduced supervision of young people in their leisure time; a huge rise in teenage alcohol consumption and drug taking; TV/DVD/computer games modelling violence and pornography; inconsistent parenting and the reduction in stable marital relationships.[158]

"Whilst family breakdown may be a factor in young people's involvement in crime, we need to recognise that it is only one part of a multitude of complex factors, none of which can be separated from the other. We need to give equal credence to the failure of the educational system to meet the needs of youth who are not able to engage with the formal educational system. We need to consider the role of lack of recreational facilities and services for young people outside of school, and the environments in which they are brought up. We need to factor in the lack of employment opportunities for youth which means that they have little to aspire to, the paucity of practical training courses and apprenticeships which traditionally gave male youth a positive way of acting out their masculinity. We need to look at how the social services, mental health systems and other public agencies are failing to meet the needs of young people, and their families. Just as importantly though, we need to consider the role of authority, be that the Government, Police, PCSOs (police community support officers) or local councils and how they engage with youth, or rather how they fail to engage except as a tokenistic gesture or as a punitive force. Until these multitude of factors are addressed with all their complexities, youth - particularly inner city working class youth - will be more likely to become criminalised, and as a consequence, less likely to be given space to participate in society as equal citizens."
EJ Milne, ESRC PhD Researcher,
Department of Peace Studies,
University of Bradford

"My dad walked out when I was young. Once my mum had a new boyfriend, she had more time for him and less time for me. I started going wrong at school. My head just went everywhere. Come 14 or 15 I dropped out of school. I got into fights hoping that I wouldn't live through. I took drugs. Me and the boyfriend got into a fight. The police were called. She wouldn't leave him. So I walked out."
YMCA tenant

156   The Wave Foundation, 2006, Tackling the Roots of Violence

157   www.wavetrust.org

158   Margo, J. and Dixon, M, 2006, Freedom's Orphans: Raising Youth in a changing world, ippr

"We have no social housing here. Yet our huge private rental sector is closed to young people. The young people under 25 that we accommodate have changed in the last 10 years. The number of care leavers especially seems to have increased in the last 4 years. Young people here used to have single issues - either drug or alcohol or criminal justice problems. Now they are more chaotic and are involved in multiple issues. Personally I think the reason is the breakdown of the family. When they arrive with us, we have to teach them how to do basic things like washing up. Most of them have few social skills. I think that goes back to family breakdown as well."

YMCA manager

One of the key inhibitors of developing a propensity to violence is acquiring empathy[159] (see Section D2). Parental separation and family dysfunction disrupt potential and established attachment patterns preventing the acquisition of empathy. Rod Morgan, Chairman of the Youth Justice Board, describes juvenile offenders as being: "the most troubled and troublesome children in our society" drawn mainly from families which have repeatedly broken down internally and externally.[160]

IMPACT ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Compared to children in two parent families, children in one parent families are significantly more likely to smoke weekly (2.4 times at age 12, 1.7 times at age 17), drink weekly (1.6 times at age 12, 1.1 times at age 17), and take drugs weekly (1.7 times at age 13, 1.4 times at age 17).[161] Socio-economic differences of the parents distinguished smokers but not drinkers or drug-users.[162] However parental style – especially parental monitoring, parent/child conflict and child disclosure – correlated with all three child behaviours.[163]

Controlling for other factors, 17 year olds not living with two parents are more likely to smoke (1.4 times), drink (1.3 times), and take drugs (1.5 times).[164] Family breakdown also acts as a trigger for parental alcohol and drug abuse which were then impacted in physical and sexual abuse and neglect by children calling Childline Scotland.[165] 40% of children ringing up mainly with concerns about their parents alcohol problems also reported that they were abused. Similarly, 30% of children citing physical abuse as an issue, described drug abuse as the main problem affecting their parents.

Anonymised transcripts from calls to Childline Scotland were analysed by Edinburgh University's Centre for Research on Families and Relationships in an ESRC-funded project. They found that children and young people's accounts showed a detailed and complex understanding of parental health problems which included drug and alcohol abuse. Trigger factors which led to, or exacerbated, parental health problems were repeatedly identified by children and young people. Separation and divorce and family relationship problems, (as well as bereavement, redundancy and financial problems) were amongst the reasons given by children as triggering parental health problems. These, in turn, impacted on the child in the ways described above.

A much fuller discussion of the interaction between Family Breakdown and substance abuse can be found in the parallel Social Justice Policy Group report on addiction.[166]

159   Siegel D., 1999, The Developing Mind, Guilford Press; & de Zulueta F., 2006, From Pain to Violence, the traumatic roots of destructiveness. Chichester, John Wiley and Sons

160   Morgan R., et al, 2006, Improving Provision for Children who Offend, Karnac Publishing

161   McVie S. & Holmes L., 2005, Family Functioning and Substance Use at Ages 12 to 17, Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime Report Number 9, pp.11-12

162   *ibid* p. 13

163   *ibid* p. 16

164   *ibid* pp.19-23

165   Ogilvie-Whyte, S.; Backett-Milburn K.;Morton, S. Houston, A.; Wales, A. 2005, Childrens Concerns about the health and welbeing of parents and significant others, CRFR/Childline Scotland

166   The full report from this working group is available at http://www.povertydebate.com

C5   Impact on poverty at the household level

Summary: There is a strong correlation between lone-parenthood and poverty. Lone parents are twice as likely to experience persistent low income as couples with children. Over half all lone parents receive some form of income related benefit compared with just 10% of couples with dependent children.

Family breakdown has become more common in Europe, and one of the most common results is poverty. Eurostat data indicate that 24% of the Union's population were living in poverty in 1999 and even after receiving social assistance 15% were still below the poverty line. Many of those in poverty are lone parents who find it very difficult to balance being a parent and holding down a job.[167] The strong correlation between lone parenthood and poverty in the UK has already been touched upon in section B5 and is further described below.

Risk of falling into poverty (below 60% of median income) by family type.[168]	After Housing Costs	Before Housing Costs
Lone parent	**48**	**31**
of which:		
in full-time work	13	9
in part-time work	27	15
not working	72	47
Couple with children	**20**	**16**
of which:		
self-employed	29	25
both in full-time work	2	1
one in full-time work, one in part-time work	6	4
one in full-time work, one not working	21	14
one or more in part-time work	49	40
both not in work	72	61

Firstly it is important to make clear that this commentary is in no way intended to stigmatise lone parents who do a very difficult job, usually with far fewer resources than couple families, as shall be shown. However, as Alison Garnham, from the National Council for One Parent Families points out "for many, lone parenthood is not a lifestyle choice," lone parents rarely choose their status, enjoy raising children on their own, or want their own children to become lone parents themselves. Whatever the route into lone parenthood, relationship breakdown between the parents is always, by definition, implicated and children usually suffer as a result. Financially speaking, women also tend to suffer disproportionately. According to the Institute for Social and Economic Research, after a marital split women are on average 18% worse off,[169] and men are on average 2% better off - often prospering at work and having less financial commitment to the children.

In the UK context, lone mothers are twice as likely as two-parent families to live in poverty at any one time. 69% of lone mothers are in the bottom 40% of household income versus 34% of couples with children.[170] (Only 4% of children living in lone parent households are in the top fifth of the income distribution. The corresponding figure for children living in couple households is 15%).[171] Therefore children living in lone parent households are at far greater risk of being in poverty than children living in couple households, 48% compared with 20% on the After Housing Costs measure and 31% compared with 16% on the Before Housing Costs measure[172] Lone parents have twice as much risk of experiencing persistent low income as couples with children – 50% versus 22%. Low income is defined as spending three out of four years in the bottom 30% of household income.[173] Lone parents are also more than twice as likely (68%) as couples with children (28%) to have no savings.[174]

Lone parents are eight times as likely (45%) to live in a workless household as couples with children (5.4%)[173] and

167   http://www.cec.org.uk/info/pubs/bbriefs/bb35.htm

168   Department for Work and Pensions, 2006, Households Below Average Income Statistics 2004/05,

169   Research cited by Jackie Ashley in her article "Dumping your wife is now as easy as trading your car", The Guardian, Monday February 6, 2006

170   Department for Work and Pensions, 2002, Households Below Average Income 1994/95 - 2000/01, London, The Stationery Office, p. 81

171   Brewer M., Goodman A., Shaw J., & Sibieta L., 2006, Poverty and Inequality in Britain: 2006, IFS

172   *ibid*

173   DWP, 2002, Households Below Average Income 1994/95 - 2000/01, London, Stationery Office, p.141

174   Office for National Statistics, 2002, Family Resources Survey, Table 5.25, p. 103

175   Office for National Statistics, 2001, Work and Worklessness among Households, London, The Stationery Office

our level of lone parenthood greatly contributes to the fact that the UK has the highest rate of children living in workless households in Europe.[176] The highest risk of children living in poverty is in both couple and lone parent households where nobody works (72% for both on the After Housing Costs measure) The lowest risk of children living in poverty is among couple families where both parents are in full-time work, followed by one working full-time and one working part-time.[177] The lowest risk of poverty for children living in lone parent households is where the lone parent works full-time[178] as the table below indicates. (See section B5 for further discussion of this issue.)

> "Living on welfare takes a toll on family life"
> *Mother, lone parent household*

Lone parent households are over twelve times as likely to be receiving income support as couples with dependent children (51% versus 4%). In 2004, more than 900,000 lone parents received Income Support compared to 170,000 couple families. In 2005 the employment rate for lone parents was 55.% (up 0.1% from 2004, whereas the employment rate for married and cohabiting mothers was 71.4%, up 0.4% from 2004.

In 2003/04, 56% of lone parents with dependent children were receiving some form of income-related benefit compared with just 10% of couples with dependent children.[179] 48% were receiving council tax benefit, 45% were receiving housing benefit, 46% were receiving working tax credit or income support and 1% were receiving jobseeker's allowance.   The respective figures for couples with dependent children were, 8%, 7%, 5% and 2%.

176   Palmer G., Carr J., & Kenway P., 2005, Monitoring poverty and social exclusion Joseph Rowntree Foundation

177   Brewer M., Goodman A., Shaw J., & Sibieta L., 2006, Poverty and Inequality in Britain: 2006, IFS

178   *ibid*

179   Department for Work and Pensions, 2004, Income Support Quarterly Statistical Enquiry, May 2004

C6 Impact on educational outcomes

Summary: Impacts on educational outcomes can occur both following the immediate trauma of family breakdown as well as from longer term effects most often associated with poverty. There is evidence of higher achievement amongst intact families with both biological parents. Following dissolution of a family, the stability and quality of relationships with both parents is a key factor. Successive changes and serial relationships appear to have a particularly negative effect.

In July 2006 evidence was taken by Education and Skills Committee on this subject from four leading authorities.[180] The findings below are drawn principally from their evidence.

In assessing the impact on education It is important to separate the acute and immediate (first two year) effects of the trauma of family breakdown from the longer term (chronic) effects. The latter are probably closely linked with other effects of breakdown such as financial hardship. The impacts are hard to measure as there are huge differences in attainment by individual children, and the impacts of family change may be relatively small for individual children.

> "I was doing well at school with good grades. But it changed when my parents split."
> *YMCA tenant*

In looking at the impacts it is important to recognise that the impacts of dissolution and lone parenthood may not be the same. It is also important to consider carefully what is meant by "effect of family breakdown" – is it the immediate impact of family separation; or the consequent effects (such as financial hardship); or indeed the preceding effects such as conflict or violence? The term also implies that there was a (normal, and perhaps happy) family that then broke down. For many this is not the case – their family may never have lived together, or may have involved a sequence of relationships. It is important to view matters from the child's perspective. The critical issue may be the quality of relationships that the child encounters – where they experience depriva-tion, conflict, violence, drink/drugs etc, the separation of a family may come as a relief.

For the major group of the bottom 25% of educational achievers, the key risk factors, which interact, include family income, parental education, prior educational success of the parents and cognitions (values, beliefs, aspirations, expectations in the family) and, finally, family processes, (the kinds of interactions between parents and the children.) Children in single parent households are twice as likely to be unhappy, have low self-esteem, or have mental health problems, even after taking demographic factors into account.[181,182]

If one looks at longitudinal studies of educational achievement then there is a small but discernible gap between children of intact families, and those that split up. However the gap is evident before the breakdown occurs. It is also evident in those families that split up after education is complete. This suggests a correlational rather than purely causal link.

This evidence is somewhat at odds with US data which suggests a stronger correlation between family breakdown and poor educational outcomes. For example: Children from divorced families are almost twice as likely to be expelled from school as are children from intact married families. Children of single, never-married parents are more than four times more likely to be expelled;[183] Children of divorced mothers and children in stepfamilies are almost twice as likely to fail in school and repeat a grade when compared with children raised by both biological parents in an intact marriage. Children raised by a never-married mother are more than twice as likely to repeat a grade when compared with children raised in intact marriages.[184]

The evidence is also somewhat at odds with polling data obtained for the Educational Failure Working Group within this Social Justice Policy Group, which has looked closely at class and racial characteristics of low achievers at school. The YouGov poll mentioned at the beginning of this section, found that white lower class boys from broken homes were the category most in danger of educational failure.[185] Furthermore, other evidence suggests that children of married couples do better at school. In an Australian study

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180 Professor Bryan Rodgers [National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Australian National University, Canberra], Professor Judy Dunn [FBA Research Professor Social, Genetic and Development Psychiatry Centre, King's College London], Dr Leon Feinstein [Director, Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, Institute of Education], and Dr Amanda Wade [Lecturer in Social Work, University of Sheffield].

181 Cockett, M. & Tripp, J.H., 1994, "The Exeter Family Study: Family Breakdown and its Impact on Children." Exeter, University of Exeter Press.

182 Meltzer et al, 2000, Mental Health of Adults and Children in Great Britain. London, HMSO

183 National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health, Wave II, 1996.

184 Dawson D.A, 1991, "Family Structure and Children's Health and Well Being: Data from the 1988 National Health Interview Survey of Child Health," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 53, pp. 573-584.

185 The full report from this working group is available at http://www.povertydebate.com

"In this estate, the problems are beyond the capability or resources of the school. We need more support for families in crisis. I spent most of yesterday afternoon with just one boy. When we can't cope with the children, we send them home. But the parents can't cope with them at home. The work done by our family support worker, working with parent carers and extended family, is the future - it's what's going to move the school forward. Yet the resources for her and our school counsellor are being cut. We've had so many initiatives. All the work that has been done is being wasted. When you seem to be making progress - to mend the family - and the money is taken away … it seems so crazy. Out of 300 children, we have 24 with extreme emotional problems. I've been teaching for 30 years and it's definitely increased. The causes are family break-up, inadequate parenting and social deprivation."

Primary School Headteacher

matching married and cohabiting couples for age, education, socio-economic status, personal attributes and relationship length, children of married couples were significantly more likely to do well at school.[186] US research concurs that children of cohabiting parents do less well – reduced academic performance, more school problems – after controlling for social, economic and parental factors Cohabiting parents spend less time engaged with their children, possibly because specialisation within a cohabiting relationship is less apparent (especially where there is a low sense of investment in the future of the partnership) which may, for example, reduce the time available for helping children with homework.[187]

Following break-up the three factors which are key to educational achievement are a good, warm affectionate relationship with the mother, a good, warm affectionate relationship with the non-resident father and the mother's mental state (for example, the mother's level of depression.)

Grandparents can also play a key stabilising role, particularly as people to whom a child can turn for explanations of change etc.

The situation for a child after initial family breakdown can also vary enormously, particularly in respect to step-parents which can be both positive (for example due to improved economic prospects) but also negative (with changed adult relationships). The worst scenario seems to pertain when there is a whole sequence of changes that the child has to cope with in regard to multiple relationships.

Children in step-parent situations tend to leave home earlier and this may impact their prospects for further education. A recurring theme we found in the research and anecdotal data is the quality of time spent with the child and the quality of the relationship. These are key protective factors for the child. This may be from the parents (ideally), but may also be with grand-parents or other carers. A key pressure on lone parents is the lack of available time, the balancing of economic, parenting and social demands, and the frequent occurrence of sleep deprivation.

Finally it is worth mentioning at this point that children who lose a parent through death generally do fine in later life but there are some studies of children in where parental death has indicated problems, particularly where the death is preceded by long periods of disruption. A chronic illness that leads up to the death can create hardship and other disruptions in the family which may have a profound effect on children's education.

186   Sarantakos, S., 1996, "Children in three contexts: family education and social development" Children Australia, Vol. 21.

187   McLanahan, S. & Sandefur, G., 1994, Growing Up With a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

C7 Impact on housing and homelessness

Summary: Family dissolution is placing substantial pressure on the availability and suitability of housing, in both the state-supported and privately owned sectors. The use of housing is generally less efficient particularly where the parent who does not have custody requires space to house the children periodically.

The breakdown and separation of families presents a huge challenge for housing. The dissolution of the traditional family unit and the growth of alternative family structures both place additional stress upon a national housing stock which remains essentially static.

The practical effects of the social changes which have occurred in recent generations are very apparent in policy areas such as housing. The dissolution of the traditional family unit, the growth of single parent families and the modification of conventional social structures are all added complexities which have appeared on a large scale in the last twenty to thirty years. Further, when families are separated questions arise regarding the best form of separation, how to house each constituent part of the unit and, crucially, how to ensure that any separated individuals remain able to maintain relationships over wider distances.

> "In housing these days we must think wider than the 'nuclear family' unit"
> *Dominic Williamson, Homeless Link*

Around 40% of married people eventually divorce (see section B), with in excess of 150,000 divorces recorded every year since 1980.[188] According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, over half the parents they sampled had left the matrimonial home following a marriage breakdown.[189] By contrast, the total number of new houses built between 2002 and 2003 was 184,000[190] (representing less than 1% of total dwellings in the United Kingdom[191]). According to the Office of National Statistics, in a generation (1971 – 2004), housing provision expanded by only a third. Thus, with rapid social changes sweeping through society over the same few decades, the impact upon housing is huge.

Family breakdown affects all parts of society, but the effect in the housing sector may be disproportionately felt by those who are less financially secure.[192] As divorce or separation is a main catalyst for entry into poverty, these individuals are more likely to come under the aegis of state-supported housing provision. Thus, divorce is a leading contributor to additional pressure upon social housing, which already struggles to provide sufficient accommodation for the most vulnerable sections of our society.

In a scenario of greater family unit separation, housing stock is less efficiently distributed. It is almost universally the case that mothers with children retain existing housing at the time of separation, benefiting the children for whom housing provides perceived stability. This creates two areas of pressure upon social housing stock:

- existing housing is less effectively used, given the reduction in number of persons in residence (with little effective attempt to re-house, even if this were appropriate);
- a need for the leaving party (usually the father) to be found accommodation (although he does not necessarily qualify as statutorily homeless under current legislation). The Joseph Rowntree Foundation reported that immediately following divorce or separation, men were much likely to be forced to move several times before finding a "secure home".[193]

> "The pressure on shared ownership properties is huge - a lot of it coming out of relationship breakdowns with sizeable chunks of equity, distorting the market and eclipsing firsttime buyers"
> *Denise Reeves, former Head of Special Projects, Pavilion Housing Group*

Thus, the growth of divorce and separation rates has significantly increased demand for accommodation. From the perspective of the private sector, some commentators believe that this is leading to distortion of the market for

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188   http://www.statistics.gov.uk/STATBASE/Expodata/Spreadsheets/D7263.xls

189   Douglas et al, 2000, How Parents Cope Financially on Marriage Breakdown, JRF, p. 2

190   http://www.statistics.gov.uk/STATBASE/Expodata/Spreadsheets/D7711.xls

191   http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=1364

192   "Separations and divorce are usually the main cause of poverty entry …" according to Oxley H., Dang T.T. and Antolin P., Poverty Dynamics in Six OECD Countries, OECD Economic Studies, No. 30, 2000/2001 p.10, see also Douglas et al 2000, How Parents Cope Financially on Marriage Breakdown, JRF, p. 2, "There is considerable evidence demonstrating the often substantial drop in the standard of living likely to be experienced by carers … and children when the family is broken up."

193   Douglas et al 2000, How Parents Cope Financially on Marriage Breakdown, JRF, p. 2

property, with a disproportionate number of "second" first-time buyers – older people buying on their own, or with children, with a significant chunk of equity as contribution. Along with other pressures, this has been at least partially blamed for the fuelling of the private housing market in recent years.

There is an additional consideration that, once a family has been separated (on the assumption that both parents still wish to be involved with their children), housing should theoretically allow relationships to be maintained. It follows therefore that children should be able to stay with the non-resident parent and for the accommodation to facilitate that, with the additional bedroom capacity and garden space that one associates with a family home. Again this entails a less efficient use of housing stock, given the likeli-hood that significant parts of the accommodation will not be used for the majority of a typical week.

An additional, if less pervasive, issue also presents when separated and divorced parents move into new family units. To an extent, this movement may alleviate some of the pressure upon social housing, reducing the need for separate dwellings. However, there is also the consideration that "re-starter" families require larger accommodation in cases where larger family units are created by bringing together children from both previous marriages or partnerships. Similarly, there is the likelihood that large family homes, which are in such short supply for many local councils, are utilised by the same family for longer periods. Second families tend to have more children which extends the period over which there are minors in the dwelling.

C8   Impact on community cohesion

Summary: Community cohesion used to be underpinned by networks of extended families which offered an informal system of care. Geographic mobility and family breakdown have largely eroded this. Two parent families appear to be more engaged with neighbourly activities than single parents.

Over the last ten years or so, "community" has become something of a policy buzzword which has been attached to a diverse range of ideas and initiatives[194] and criticized on the grounds that the term is meaningless, and sometimes used in a lazy way. However, we would concur with Crawford[195] that far from being meaningless, "community" describes a form of social organisation which is treated as real by a great many people and exercises a strong emotional pull.

Communities are made up of associations or groups of people focused around certain interests, characteristics or identities – including lifestyle, culture, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, occupation, place of residence and so on – and are based on relationships of friendship and care (Wilmott, 1984;[196] Hoggett, 1998;[197] Crawford, 1999;[198] Rose, 1999).[199] The family has been recognized as being an essential part of community in such important documents as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Preamble, 1990 which states that it is "Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community…"

Recent research has identified community involvement as a good measure of social capital, a term which encompasses the many resources available to people through their social networks. Analysis of General Household Survey data shows that two-parent families are more likely to be involved with their local communities than lone-parent families. Even after controlling for education, socio-economic group and employment status, two-parent families are 25% more likely to be neighbourly, and 50% more likely to have people willing to help them if they are ill, need a lift or need to borrow money compared with lone-parent families. This relative lack of reciprocal care in lone-parent households occurs despite the finding that they actually are likely to have more friends and relatives living close by compared to two-parent families.[200]

The differing attitudes which exist towards the family can themselves hinder community cohesion. Research by Barlow and James has indicated that marriage, while still highly valued at least in the abstract, has lost its monopoly on sexual intimacy and childbearing in Britain, but this was not the case within the British Asian community.[201]

Dench et al's study of the New East End[202] looked in depth at the more individualized[203] lives which people are now leading in an area of London which used to be noted for its strong sense of community. This largely flowed from the norm of living near to one's extended family.[204] Soon after the Second World War, Michael Young drew attention to the important role of extended families saying that "The fact is ... that many working-class extended families operate continuously as agencies for mutual aid of all kinds.[205] However interviewees from Dench et al's

194   Shiner M. et al, 2004, Exploring Community Responses to Drugs, JR

195   Crawford, A., 1999, The Local Governance of Crime: Appeals to Community and Partnership Oxford, Oxford University Press

196   Wilmott, P., 1984, Community in Social Policy, Discussion Paper 9. London: Policy Studies Institute

197   Hoggett, P., 1998, Contested Communities, Bristol, Policy Press

198   *ibid*

199   Rose, N., 1999, 'Inventiveness in politics', Economy and Society, Vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 467-93

200   O'Neill R., 2002, Experiments in Living: The fatherless family, Civitas

201   Barlow A., & James G., 2004, Regulating Marriage and Cohabitation in 21st Century Britain The Modern Law Review, Vol. 67, No. 2, pp. 143-176

202   Dench G., Gavron K., & Young M., 2006, The New East End: Kinship, Race and Conflict, London, Young Foundation

203   Dench et al (*ibid*) state that "When the negative side of individualism is considered, it is conventionally (and conveniently) seen as a product of the Thatcher years. But much is traceable further back, to the libertarian policies of Roy Jenkins in the 1960s and beyond. For what has enabled individualistic behaviour and attitudes is the individualisation of citizenship and social support systems which started after the war. Tension between state services and the lives of private families was already emerging…the use of kinship to elicit support which could alternatively have been provided by the state was criticised as inimical to individual freedom and corrosive of universalistic social justice."

204   Brown and Dench (Brown B. & Dench G., 2004, Valuing Informal Care, Hera) state that "Extended family ties formed the essential heart of local communities. Older mothers looking after the interests of their offspring would strive to keep their children living and working locally. The overlapping lines of marriage and friendship which were subsequently forged between neighbouring descent groups ensured that most people had dense networks of ties with other local residents. This produced strong community spirit, and underpinned collective endeavours."

205   Young M., 1954, Family and Kinship in East London, Pelican, p.136

recent study considered that "the old strength has gone, of close-knit East End families. You don't have several members of the same families in one street very often. Children all move further away these days...." These days the combined effect of more casual relationships with physical dispersal of kinship groups is that many older women have little contact with grandchildren through sons, and may not even know of their existence.

This is in stark contrast with the central role in the family which these older females used to play and which enabled them to provide ongoing care for children, grandchildren, and other family members. They were often at the hub of families, keeping them together by encouraging and facilitating contact between relatives who would otherwise drift apart. Among other benefits this had the effect of increasing the amount of interested adults in each child's life. It also resulted in more integrated communities and a greater sense of rootedness for individuals. Clearly it is possibly to be myopically nostalgic about such periods in our recent history and for a selective amnesia to predominate. Dench et al's study has been criticised, for example, on the grounds that it does not acknowledge the domestic violence that characterised many of these post-War East End homes.[206] Similarly there can be oppressive aspects to being involved in a close-knit family. However, the point that must surely be brought out is that the pendulum has swung too far and many people no longer feel a sense of connect-

edness to their families or to the wider community which can mean that they are less cushioned against many forms of disadvantage.

The absence of fathers also has an impact on many low-income communities. Shaun Bailey, writing about a deprived area of London says "I see children - not the majority but too many for comfort - who are emotionally depressed, criminally inclined and whose behaviour has a disproportionate effect on other children. I see an alarming growth in bullying and a growth in the numbers of children as young as 12 and 13 years old who are joining gangs....Many of the young adults I know are the children of the first generation of single mothers to be housed here. Many of the first single mums were housed in my part of London, reassuring them that it was acceptable - even desirable - for mothers to have babies on their own."[207]

Ongoing female solidarity within these communities is not to be ignored. As Dench et al found, it is not now uncommon to have three generations of women living in one household. However in many of these households no one will be working and men will be absent, leading them to conclude that "the pattern of residence can be seen as tactically linked to safeguarding income from benefits." We shall return to this theme in section D when we look at the perverse incentives flowing from the present tax and benefits system.

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206   Point raised by Miriam David in ESRC Seminar "Learning from History in Contemporary Policy" at London South Bank University, 29th June 06
207   Article by Shaun Bailey "The reason our streets are so violent", The Telegrap,h 19 January 2006

C9   Impact on care for the elderly

Summary: There has been a fundamental shift in attitudes regarding responsibility for care for the elderly, away from the family and towards the state or wider society. This trend has been reinforced by the trend towards more complex family arrangements. The impact on older men and women has been an increase in poverty and a lowering of general wellbeing. Nonetheless, grandparents continue to play an important role particularly in the provision of informal childcare.

In 2005 there were 1.2 million people over the age of 85.[208] National statistics demonstrate an increasingly aging population. This has raised the issue of care for the elderly and their place in family life further up the political agenda.[209]

There are two main factors associated with the breakdown of the extended family network which has influenced care for the elderly. Firstly, the effect of increased mobility amongst the population and the rise of the welfare state have both allowed extended families to live separate and more independent lives and has changed expectations of extended family relations. Secondly, there have been changes in attitudes within, and the format of, the nuclear family unit itself. Both these factors are examined further here.

> "My children have all moved away. They are not local anymore. Kids don't stay around now. I see some of them maybe once every 6 months. Nobody talks to one another in our community any more like they used to. I suppose no body knows one another"
> *Divorced woman, aged 79 with 5 children. St Margaret's Drop In Centre, London*

Mobility in the UK has displaced extended family networks as Dench et al's study[210] of the dispersal of East End families illustrates. The creation of the welfare state relieved poverty amongst working class communities, allowing younger people to move out and live life independently from parents. Variables which have exacerbated this trend include building locations of council housing after World War Two and relocation for employment opportunities when work was not readily available in regional areas. This has separated elderly members from the family and affected community and kinship structures, thus physically affecting the community and family's ability to provide informal care for the elderly.

In other respects too, care for older family members cannot be as taken for granted as it was historically. Anthony Giddens[211] talks about how, in a high-divorce society like ours, with its implicit understanding that family relationships may in fact be impermanent, there has been a transition in the ethics of personal life. They are subject to far more negotiation than ever before.

Finch and Mason have described how people have to "work out" how to treat their relatives "in a two- (or more) way process of negotiation in which people are giving and receiving, balancing out one kind of assistance for another ... responsibilities are thus created rather than flowing automatically from specific relationships".[212]

> "'I've had a stroke and can't look after myself but I'm alright because my wife does everything for me - I'm happy enough"
> *74 year old - interviewed at St Margaret's Drop In Centre, London*

So in negotiating responsibilities for and commitments to older family members these develop (or wane) over time, through interactions between the individuals involved. Support increasingly depends on the quality of relationships forged, the forming of what Finch (1989)[213] termed cumulative commitments, where for example an element of mutual liking might be important. This helps explain why different siblings within a family might have very different ideas about how much care they should or should not provide for aging parents.

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208   ONS, 2006, http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?ID=949.

209   Dench G., Gavron K., & Young M., 2006, The New East End: Kinship, Race and Conflict, London, Young Foundation, chapter 7, "Then a little while ago the lid on the oubliette was lifted. Grandparents found themselves allowed onto the policy stage, and quickly moved up everyone's agenda. Now we see grandparents as supplementary teachers, binding schools into local communities, or as colonising and socialising influences on sink estates. Grandparents portrayed as Stakhanovites of childcare, and saviours of broken families. Grannies as mentors for (unrelated) single mothers. Broadsheet editors coming out as grandparents."

210   *ibid*

211   Giddens A., 1992, The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies, Cambridge, Polity Press

212   Finch, J and Mason, J., 1993, Negotiating family responsibilities, Tavistock/Routledge, London and New York

213   Finch J., 1989, Family Obligations and Social Change, Cambridge, Polity, pp.194 - 211

Today, family networks are more complex than before as step family members' responsibilities for aging "relatives" become increasingly unclear. Bren Neale writes: "These diverse and fluid patterns of partnering and parenting have implications for the way wider kin ties, for example, those between elderly parents and their adult children and grandchildren, are perceived and sustained, and for how familial responsibilities and relations of care are practiced across households and across the generations".[214]

In addition, divorce has left more older people living on their own which impacts on the psychological ability for self-sufficiency which marriage in old age has traditionally facilitated. Mancini and Bonanno,[215] in an American study of 1532 older married people showed that marital closeness moderated the negative psychological effects of a high level of functional disability on depression and self esteem. Another study[216] showed that marriage did protect people from distress, although the quality of the relationship influenced how effective that protection was. (In terms of physical health, research suggests that happily married retirees are more likely to fight off flu effectively, and the virus may be more difficult for those who are recently bereaved or divorced.)[217]

There is hard evidence of a change in families' willingness to provide practical informal care to aging relatives.[218] Certainly there is little expectation within UK culture now that aging relatives should be supported financially by younger members of the family since the welfare system was extended. Dench's study of the East End, which interviews older women in the community contains a variety of anecdotal evidence and comments which echo the sentiment that "when people were poor they stuck together".[219] This is a reference to the fact that poverty is no longer so absolute and people's basic needs are usually met.

Today, individuals are responsible for their own pension arrangement, which for many may mean surviving on state allowances. The Department of Work and Pensions recent report on understanding older people's experience of poverty and deprivation[220] revealed that whilst nearly half those interviewed received some help from family and friends this was rarely direct financial help, rather assistance was given as presents of useful or needed items. Decorating and assistance in the replacement of electrical items were the biggest forms of help. Those who did have help from friends and family also acknowledged the essential social support gained from these relationships in terms of outings, shopping trips and holidays. Reasons listed why family did not help more was because they lived too far way, were too busy or there were no immediate relatives. The report concluded that "family plays a pivotal role in many older peoples lives". The extent to which there was or was not family support greatly influenced practical and emotional provision for those participating in the survey.

"The drop in centre helps create community for these pensioners, many of whom live on their own and do not have friends and family near by. I estimate 85% of those that come here fall into this category"
David Simmonds, Daily Manager. St Margaret's drop in centre, London

The prevalence of isolation and exclusion amongst the elderly is influenced by separation, bereavement and the wider breakdown of family and community networks. As people get older they cannot rely on working environments for social interaction. The Pension and Social Exclusion Survey[221] found that 93% of it's participants were "labour market inactive" (though this may change over time with new legislation against ageism and incentives to extend working life). Whilst this percentage will be higher at the lower end of pensionable age range, it is a community and family interdependence where most will find purpose and social interaction. Wilcock notes the loss of role associated with retirement or cessation of work must be replaced with "meaningful activity and relationship". This is not helped by current trends in family break-

214 Neale. B , 2000, Theorising Family, Kinship and Social Change, Workshop paper, Leeds University

215 Mancini A.& Bonanno G., 2006, "Marital closeness, functional disability and adjustment in late life" Psychology and Aging, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 600-610

216 Hagedoorn M., van Yperen N, Coyne J., van Jaarsveld C., Ranchor A., van Sonderen E,, Sanderman R., 2006, "Does marriage protect older people from distress? The role of equity and recency of bereavement" Psychology and Aging, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 611-620

217 Phillips A., Carroll D., Burns V., Ring C., Macleod J., Drayson M., 2006, "Bereavement and marriage are associated with antibody response to influenza vaccination in the elderly", Brain, Behavior, and Immunity, Vol. 20, No. 3, pp. 279-289

218 Laing & Busson, 2006, Care for Elderly People UK Market Survey 2006

219 Dench G., Gavron K., & Young M., 2006, The New East End: Kinship, Race and Conflict London, Young Foundation, Chapter 5

220 Domoni, N., and Kempson, E. Understanding older peoples experience of poverty and deprivation, Department of Work and Pensions research report No 363, Corporate document services 2006

221 Pantazis, C., Gordon, D., Levitas, R, 2006, Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain: The Millennium Survey (Studies in Poverty, Inequality & Social Exclusion), Bristol, Policy Press, p. 443 28/02/2006

down and the loss of extended family through partnership separation.[222]

The resulting loneliness leads to depression and this causes many problems including potential homelessness according to Help the Aged.[223] Effects differ for men and women. Men particularly are found to be highly resistant to participation in organizations that cater primarily for the needs of older people where family fails to meet them.[224] They are less likely to cope on their own and are much more likely to become homeless than women.

Many older homeless people are more isolated, than their younger contempories.[225] Elderly homelessness should not be overlooked. St Mungo's homelessness charity recently carried out a survey of 1,534 homeless people on the streets and in emergency shelters. They found that 1 in 4 are over 50 years of age.[226] The older street population exhibits symptoms similar to those associated with all homelessness. A report commissioned by Crisis which interviewed 225 older homeless people found that more than half came from broken or disturbed childhood homes and issues of mental illness featured strongly amongst the participants. Obviously, the risk of homelessness is not only applicable for men, but they are more open to the threat of this extreme deprivation.

As has already been touched upon in C9, despite being more resilient in their own homes women have felt the loss of their place the community, which in the past has provided support and purpose in their senior years. Dench et al's study of London's East End[227] provides a vivid insight into this. In the past women exchanged help and advice for love, respect and practical support with family and friends living close by. The place for this matriarchal identity has been dwindling over time as people live increasingly as strangers in their communities.[228] Women have lost a role which gave them purpose and responsibility. This has contributed to their isolation and lack of confidence and has led to a reduction in family and peer support when faced with other gender-specific issues such as financial deprivation when male partners or spouses die and pension entitlement is reduced.[229]

The consequence of reduced family or community support is the need for earlier or increased state provision. This may be in the form of home help, sheltered housing, care/nursing homes, or extended hospital stays. The Local Government Association[230] has estimated that between 2002-3 and 2005-6, demographic changes alone will result in an increase of £146 million in the cost of providing services for what they term "adults and the elderly."

Whilst care for the elderly has been the major focus so far, the role of older members in the family today should not be ignored. In many instances, these people are required to take up more responsibility in transient family life, particularly in caring for grandchildren and inputting into their lives in their role as a grandparent. Whilst some are distanced from the family unit due to the changes described, (over one million grandchildren are denied contact with their grandparents), due to pressures for lone parents or both parents to work, elderly relatives living close by are assisting with childcare as is described elsewhere in the report.

The Grandparents Association[231] estimates that 60% of childcare provision is provided by grandparents, and one in every hundred children is living with a grandparent. Grandparents save the economy £3.9 billion per annum according to Age Concern.[232] 20% of grandparents under 60 are also step-grandparents today and it is estimated that there are over 13.5 million grandparents in the UK. There seems to be a polarizing of situations where there is often either no contact with grandchildren which may be painful and damaging for all parties, or a substantial burden of care being placed on the aging relative themselves.

In conclusion and looking forward to the final phase of this policy review process, this working group will look at all the costs associated with formal and informal elder care. We will acknowledge the significant hidden costs of the latter[233] but consider fully how support for families might be cost-effective and help them make preferred choices concerning care for elderly relatives. In addition, we will consider the likely effects, in economic and caring terms, which a reduction in family breakdown might have on this essential section of society.

222   Phone conversation 20/ 09/06 with Amy Swan, Policy Assistant for 'Social Inclusion' at Help the Aged.

223   Davidson K., Daly T. & Arber S., 2003, "Older men, Social integration and organisational activities," Social Policy and Society, Vol. 2, pp. 81-89

224   Crane and Warnes 1997,,'Homeless Truths Challenging the Myths about Older Homeless People.' Help the Aged / Crisis - February 1997

225   Other key statistics on older homelessness can be found at http://www.olderhomelessness.org.uk/?section=2&topic=3

226   Dench G., Gavron K., & Young M., 2006, The New East End: Kinship, Race and Conflict London, Young Foundation

227   Dench et al (ibid) state that "Up to the fifties and sixties working-class neighbourhoods were manifestly organized around overlapping extended families. Through having kin, one had a territorial base and many other ties too. But since then, increased (and often enforced) mobility has taken a heavy toll."

228   Men from the present elderly generation may have a pension from work or war which provides for spouses as women have traditionally not been in employment to the same extent.

229   LGA, 2002, "Expenditure Report 2003/4 - 2005/6", quoted in report compiled by a consortium of charities, including Age Concern and Help the Aged (The Social Policy on Ageing Information Network (SPAIN), 2005, What Price Care in Old Age?)

230   www.grandparents-association.org.uk The Grandparents' Association is the fastest growing membership organisation for grandparents in the country. It was launched in 1987 by a group of grandparents whose grandchildren had been put into care, adopted from care or were not allowed any contact with them

231   Meadows, P., and Volterra Consulting, 2004, The economic contribution of older people, Age Concern, January 2004,

232   Fast J., Williamson D., Keating N., 1999, "The Hidden Costs of Informal Elder Care" Journal of Family and Economic Issues, Vol. 20, pp. 301-32

233   Sergeant, H., 2006, Handle with care: An investigation into the care system

C10 The impact of care

Summary: The Care system is failing the children entrusted to it who almost universally leave it with substantially worse outcomes than those raised in other types of families including those headed by lone parents. The accountability of those making the decisions to move children into such a system needs to be reviewed.

Care is a whole subject in itself. Almost by definition, all children who enter care have experienced some form of family breakdown. Care costs the taxpayer £2.5 billion annually, according to a recent report by Harriet Sergeant for the Centre for Policy Studies. Children enter care mostly because of either abuse or neglect (62%), family dysfunction (10%) or absent parents (8%).[234]

Children in care or leaving care typically experience poor outcomes compared to other children or young adults. The 60,900 young people currently in care are far more likely to have mental health problems, few education qualifications, to take drugs, and end up with no job and no home. One third of prisoners and one half of young offenders have been through the care system.

A Department of Education and Skills study surveyed the 45,000 children who had been in continuous care for at least 12 months in England. Of those in year 11 (age 15), only 64% sat a GCSE exam. Of these 60% achieved one or more GCSE passes at grade A*-G, compared to 96% of all children; only 11% achieved 5 GCSE passes at grade A*-C, compared to 56% of all children. 27% of children held statements of special needs, compared to just under 3% of all children. Children in care over the age of ten were three times as likely to be cautioned or convicted for an offence. Care leavers were three times as likely to be unemployed.[235]

In a large scale Office of National Statistics study of the health of young people, 1,000 children were being looked after by local authorities. Amongst them, mental disorders were four to five times more prevalent compared to general population: 42% compared with 8% for 5-10 year olds and 49% compared with 11% for 11-15 year olds. The prevalence of conduct disorders was six to seven times higher: 36% compared with 5% for 5-10 year olds and 40% compared with 6% for 11-15 year olds.[236]

A Home Office study of 200 young people about to leave care found that levels of drug use were much higher than in the general population. Three quarters had used drugs at some time, over half within the previous month and one third smoked marijuana daily. The sharpest difference was in use of hard drugs: 13% of care leavers had used crack cocaine compared with 2% of the general population of 16-18 year olds; 9% had taken heroin compared with 0.6%.[237]

Another smaller study of 101 Scottish care leavers found that 54% had no qualifications and 44% were unemployed.[238] As Harriet Sergeant says: "This year approximately 6,000 young people will emerge from the care of the state. What is their future? Of these 6,000, 4,500 of them will leave with no educational qualifications whatsoever. Within two years of leaving care 3,000 will be unemployed, 2,100 will be mothers or pregnant and 1,200 will be homeless. Out of the 6,000 just 60 will make it to university. Care is failing on a scale that is catastrophic."

'My mother was very unstable and depended on alcohol and due to this my parents couldn't cope and I was taken into care at the age of 11. I have always felt I never belonged anywhere, and I find it very hard to trust people aslo to let anyone get close to me. Have had counseling but found this very difficult.'
Verbatim comment from polling

BEING IN THE CARE SYSTEM

Voluntary sector service provider ATD Fourth World shared the experience of some of their clients who had been in care. Breakdown of the family due to their own children being taken into care was a very real threat. They might need help from social services because of poor housing or other material needs but no services are provided unless their circumstances are seen as a risk to the children.

"It is usually only when a professional, such as a teacher, expresses concern that any action is taken and then it is child protection

234   Sergeant, H., 2006, Handle with care: An investigation into the care system, London, Centre for Policy Studies

235   Department for Education and Skills, 2006, Statistics of education: Outcome indicators for looked after children DfES: HMSO

236   Maughan, B., Brock, A., & Ladva, G., 2004, "Mental health", in Nessa N. (ed) The health of children and young people, Office of National Statistics: HMSO.

237   Ward, J., Henderson, Z., & Pearson, G., 2003, One problem among many: drug use among care leavers in transition to independent living, Home Office: HMSO

238   Dixon, J., Wade, J., Byford, S., Weatherley, H., & Lee, J., 2004, Young people leaving care: A study of outcomes and costs, University of York.

based, not family support. Parents who were themselves in care feel stigmatised and suspected from the start of any assessment process which might result in their receiving help. Children are often removed from non-abusive families due to accusations of neglect based on concerns about the parents' inability to meet the needs of their children without help and support. In fact, their problems are deeply rooted in poverty but this is not acknowledged."

SOCIAL SERVICES & FAMILY LAW COURTS

Prior to entering care, parents and children will invariably have encountered both social services and family law. The necessary scale of both of these services is a direct consequence of family breakdown. It is presently outside the capability of this group to make a serious and objective assessment of the quality and depth of service provided. However the group notes a steady stream of negative media stories that call aspects of these services and the methods employed into question. Injustices can only undermine the good work done by social workers and family judges.

In a recent case, parents were reunited with their three children after two years apart having been wrongly accused of child abuse. Camilla Cavendish, writing in the Times (19 Oct 2006) about this issue, says this:

"In a searing judgment, Judge Crispin Masterman has ruled that the children should never have been removed. He criticised social workers for failing to follow the most basic procedures. Yet the doctor and the social workers remain anonymous. The number of calls I receive from parents, some who have lost their children for ever and some who have got them back after dreadful battles, makes me increasingly concerned that social workers and experts are manufacturing evidence; that they are concentrated in certain parts of the country; and that they cover up for each other, because they are convinced that they are right. Anonymity clouds every attempt at justice."

Comments at our own group hearings, such as those from ATD 4th World and others, support these concerns regarding levels of proof, secrecy and accountability. In fairness however, we like many others, are keenly aware that social workers do an immeasurably difficult job, usually with insufficient resources given the scale of problems they face. This group therefore welcomes recent efforts by all parties to review the work of social services and the family courts such as the public consultation on opening the family courts, an early day motion on taking children into care; and a proposed commission on social workers.

C11 Economic cost to society

Summary: The cost to the taxpayer of family breakdown is currently around £20-£24 billion, or £680-820 for every taxpayer. The costs include not only the direct costs of supporting lone parents of £4,000 - £15,000 per family, but also the indirect impacts on employment, education, health, crime, police, prisons etc.

If parents separate or if they never form a partnership in the first place, there may be many extra costs for the exchequer, such as additional housing benefit for the absent partner, income support and childcare subsidies. Using official Tax and Benefit Model Tables, Kirby (2005) provides a variety of common examples in which the net cost of lone parenthood to the exchequer is between £4,000 and £12,000 per family per year.[239] These are not princely sums, but given the large number of lone parents the total cost of lone parenthood is clearly substantial. The amount is somewhat reduced if the absent parent pays child maintenance, but the effect is quite small. The current government puts a lot of emphasis on getting lone mothers back into work, but if they work part-time it is actually more expensive for the government than if they stay at home. It is only if lone parents work full-time that there is a reduction in the cost of supporting them. Even then the cost to taxpayer of supporting them is often very large.

> "I think money is worse for couples"
> *Comment by a lone parent*

According to the IFS, total spending on child-contingent support has risen from £10 billion in 1975 to £22 billion in 2003 at constant prices.[240] Around 36.5% of the 2003 total went to lone parent families which accounted for approximately 24% of all dependent children.[241] Changes to tax and benefit policies were responsible for only 40 per cent of the increase in spending per child between 1975 and 1999. Most of the increase was due to changes in family type, above all the rapid growth in the number of lone parent families. The large increases since 1999, however, are almost all due to policy. The proportion of disposable income derived from child-contingent support has been rising over the past 30 years. Such support now provides round 30% of the disposable income of the average lone parent family as compared to less than 10% for the average couple family with children.

The figures cited above refer only to child-related taxes and benefits. They take no account of the other costs to the tax payer. If there were less family breakdown and lone parenthood, there would be fewer children taken into care, less homelessness, less drug addiction, less crime, less demand on the health services, better average educational performance and less unemployment. All of these would save the taxpayer money and some would contribute to better economic performance in the country as a whole. It is difficult to quantify these benefits, but some examples will illustrate the scale of the potential savings.

> "It's sad but I have advised people not to claim as couples"
> *Community Education and Training Advisory worker-Birmingham*

Unemployment is very expensive for the Exchequer. Most people without a job get some form of financial aid from the government, whereas if they are employed they normally pay more in taxes than they get in welfare benefits. Using official tax and benefit model tables, the Charity CARE estimates that it may cost the government £10,000 a year, and possibly considerably more, to support an unemployed person.[242] In 2005, there were 850,000 individuals who were claiming unemployment-related benefits and over 2,150,000 people who were economically inactive because of long-term sickness. If we assume that one in ten of these individuals is jobless because of family breakdown at some time in their lives, this gives a figure of 300,000. At £10,000 per head this represents a total loss to the Exchequer of £3 billion a year.

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239   Kirby, J., 2005, The Price of Parenthood, CPS. These examples are based on the work of Don Draper and Leonard Beighton from CARE.

240   Brewer, M., and Adam, S., 2004, The financial costs and benefits of supporting children since 1975, IFS

241   The numbers in this sentence are taken from Adam, S., Brewer, M., and Reed, H., 2002, The Benefits of Parenting, IFS

242   This figure refers to a single, unemployed person with no children, living in private accommodation at a rent of £87 per week. CARE estimates that such an individual would receive £155 a week from the government in the form of income support/jobseekers allowance, housing benefit and council tax benefit. If employed in a low-paid job at £231 per week such a person would pay £42 a week to the government in the form of tax and national insurance, less housing benefit. Comparing the two situations, the Exchequer is £197 (155 + 42) a week better off in the second case. This is equivalent to more than £10,000 a year.

This figure is, of course, speculative, and is intended merely to indicate the orders of magnitude involved. It is in addition to the cost of supporting the very large number of lone parents who are not officially classified as unemployed.

Family breakdown may also be costly to the rest of society through its impact on crime. Quite apart from the damage and fear it causes, there is also the cost of running the police and criminal justice system to consider. In the fiscal year 2004/05 total expenditure on the police, courts and prisons in England and Wales was more than £13 billion.[243] A significant part of this must be the result of family breakdown as earlier parts of this report have indicated.

Although it is impossible to quantify with any accuracy the cost of family breakdown to the Exchequer, the above examples indicate that the total figure must be very large. The 1999 Hart Report for the then Lord Chancellor's Department estimated the costs of family breakdown at £5bn; over 80% of this cost comprised social security payments. A far more comprehensive and detailed research study by Lindsay (2000) estimated the direct costs of family breakdown at a conservative £15bn. The majority of this figure derives from the additional income support paid to single parents above and beyond the comparable figure for couple parents.[244] Lone parent family formation has risen by 8% between 1999 and 2004 according to the Labour Force Review. Income support overall rose by 19% between 1999 and 2003 while the lone parent premium rose by 41% during this period (according to the ONS). Factoring in a conservative combination of these increases, additional tax credits and inflation for the last two years, the current cost to the taxpayer of family breakdown is now likely to be £20-£24 billion. The average taxpayer (29.2m people currently pay tax, again according to the ONS) is therefore contributing between £680-820 every year towards picking up the pieces of family breakdown.

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243   The Annual Abstract of Statistics 2006 gives the following figures for England and Wales: operating costs of prisons £2.6 billion, revenue expenditure on police and courts £10.7 billion.

244   Lindsay D., 2000, The Cost of Family Breakdown, Family Matters

SECTION D
causes of family breakdown

D1 Introduction

Summary: The factors which affect family breakdown are well researched and can be divided into background and relational factors – both of which will be examined in detail throughout Section D. These factors, which may be further divided between static (eg family background) and dynamic (eg communication, problem-solving etc) offer a range of potential opportunities to intervene, both to increase stability (ie lower the risk of separation) and to increase satisfaction. The importance of family structure is reiterated and elucidated through commitment theory, which illustrates clear differences between the ways men and women commit to relationships.

MODELS/MECHANISMS OF BREAKDOWN

Tolstoy's Anna Karenina begins with the famous line, "All happy families are like one another; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."

If Tolstoy's dictum about unhappy families were true, there would seem to be little point in attempting to stem the tide of family breakdown. New policies could only ever hope to address a small minority of families and policy makers would be best advised to assume that family breakdown is inevitable and focus all their efforts on dealing with fallout. This would appear to be the present assumption. Some £20-24 billion is currently spent on picking up the pieces of family breakdown. In contrast just £4 million is spent supporting couples and helping them avoid family breakdown (Benson, 2006[245]). This could be expressed differently, such as that the average taxpayer contributes between £700 and £800 every year on the consequences of family breakdown yet just 15p on trying to stop things getting worse.

Yet Tolstoy was quite wrong about unhappy families. Both retrospective survey research and prospective prediction research reveal a very finite list of explanations for why things go wrong. Policies to reduce family breakdown are therefore plausible. Looking retrospectively, a 2005

YouGov survey of 3500 divorcees found that 40% had "grown apart". Divorcees also blamed unreasonable behaviour (39%), partner adultery (36%), "magic had gone" (18%), money arguments (16%), financial problems (13%), domestic violence (13%) and their own adultery (11%). By way of comparison, US studies suggest 80% of divorce is due to growing apart.[246]

Top reasons for divorce
(Source: YouGov survey 2005)
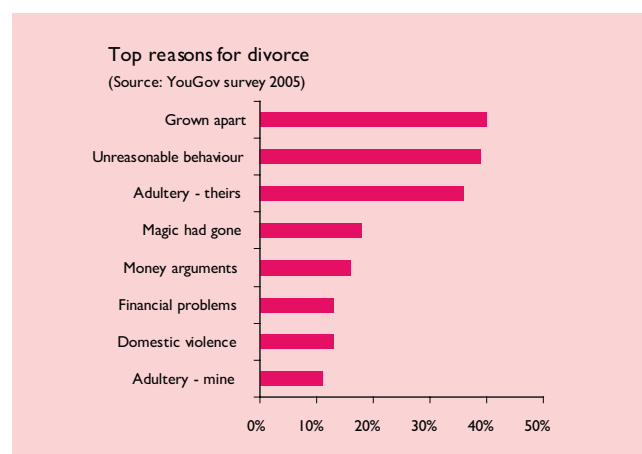
Looking prospectively, prediction research suggests that just two main categories explain a great deal. A number of studies have now shown that background factors and relational factors are strongly predictive of relationship success and failure up to 13 years later.[247]

> "My husband and I have separated a few times in the past but are happy now."
> *Verbatim quote from polling*

This section on causes of family breakdown attempts to review this rather more finite list of factors using an ecological approach, loosed based around a Bronfenbrenner-style systems model of human behaviour. Such an approach suggests that human behaviour is influenced at several levels: personal, family and relationships, social

245   Benson, H., 2006. The conflation of marriage and cohabitation in government statistics - a denial of difference rendered untenable by an analysis of outcomes. Bristol Community Family Trust.

246   Gottman, J. & Levenson, R. 2000, "The timing of divorce: Predicting when a couple will divorce over a 14 year period," Journal of Marriage & Family, Vol. 62, pp. 737-745.

247   Clements, M., Stanley, S., & Markman, H., 2004. "Before they said "I do": discriminating amongst marital outcomes over 13 years," Journal of Marriage & Family, Vol. 66, pp. 613-626

and environmental, social norms, life events and family background. Before covering these factors in more detail, it is worth highlighting some additional key research issues.

PREDISPOSITION AND TRIGGERS FOR BREAKDOWN

A large body of research suggests that both background and relational factors predispose couples towards family breakdown. Whilst it is important to point out that this doesn't condemn to failure or guarantee success for individual couples, it is also important to acknowledge these factors. It is expected that the "solutions phase" of the working group on family breakdown, to be reported in June 2007, will concentrate heavily on such factors.

Various review papers have summarized key background factors that raise the risk of subsequent divorce.[248,][249] Stanley divides these into background or static factors that are relatively difficult to change and relationship or dynamic factors that are relatively amenable to change. Static factors include: wives' employment and income, neuroticism and personality, premarital cohabitation, parental divorce, remarriage, religious dissimilarity, whirlwind romance preceding marriage, marrying young and premarital pregnancy. Dynamic factors include: communication, problem-solving, positivity versus negativity, hostility versus warmth, escalation, defensiveness, withdrawal, invalidation, separate finances and dissimilar attitudes.

STABILITY VS SATISFACTION

For many years, researchers tended to assume that marital satisfaction and marital stability amounted to the same thing. The assumption was that as couples who divorce are clearly not happy it is necessary to investigate what makes people happy in order to find out what makes them divorce. The flawed thinking behind this presumption was exposed in the 1990s when it was recognized that stability and satisfaction are separate domains that often differ more than they overlap.

What makes couples unhappy is not necessarily what makes them divorce and unhappy people often stay married. An obvious example is married parents with young children. The birth of a child typically accompanies a marked reduction in marital satisfaction alongside an increase in marital stability.

The distinction is found more generally amongst the dynamic factors that predict marital stability or satisfaction. Whereas negative behaviours or traits tend to be better predictors of stability, positive behaviours or traits tend to be better predictors of satisfaction. Two studies illustrate this apparent paradox well. Whereas[250] Gottman & Levenson (2000) find that negative affect predicts divorce in the early years of marriage, Bradbury & Karney (2004)[251] find that positive affect is the better predictor of satisfaction.

The above summaries may oversimplify the distinctions between stability versus satisfaction and negative versus positive. Nonetheless, they highlight the need to focus on both negative and positive behaviours when devising and assessing practical strategies for couple support.

COMMITMENT THEORY

While prediction research helps us understand the influence of background and relationship processes on family outcomes, commitment theory is a compelling new model to help us understand the influence of family structure[252] – i.e. why those who marry, cohabit or divorce do better or worse.

Commitment comprises two components – dedication and constraints. Dedication is the internal force that attracts people towards one another and provides the depth of friendship. Constraints are the external forces that provide stability for a couple – shared home, finances, children, family, friends, history, future and a lack of alternatives.

Dedication is what most people think of as commitment and is the key to its understanding. It comprises a couple's sense of identity, their willingness to sacrifice other choices in order to prioritise one another, and the extent to which they take a long-term view of their relationship.

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of commitment theory is the proposal that men and women view commitment differently. Very simply put, women appear to commit and sacrifice when they move in with a man, whereas men seem to commit when they make a decision to marry. Women's commitment is therefore based on attachment whilst men's commitment, in contrast, appears to be based more on a decision.

248   Amato, P. & Rogers, S., 1997, "A longitudinal study of marital problems and subsequent divorce," Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 59, pp. 612-624

249   Stanley, S.M., 2001, "Making a case for pre-marital education," Family Relations, Vol. 50, pp. 272-280.

250   Gottman, J. & Levenson, R., 2000, "The timing of divorce: Predicting when a couple will divorce over a 14 year period," Journal of Marriage & Family, Vol. 62, pp. 737-745.

251   Bradbury, T. & Karney, B., 2004, "Understanding and altering the longitudinal course of marriage," Journal of Marriage & Family, Vol. 66, pp. 862-879.

252   Stanley, S. Kline, G. & Markman, H., 2005, "The inertia hypothesis: Sliding vs deciding in the development of risk for couples in marriage". Paper presented at the Cohabitation: Advancing research and theory conference. Bowling Green , OH

This theory may help explain a number of gender-specific anomalies such as why men value marriage but also resist it more than women; why men's commitment is more associated with their willingness to sacrifice than for women; why cohabiting men are less committed than women; why men become responsible when they marry. The importance of this new theory for both policy makers and practitioners alike lies especially in its potential to increase understanding of the influence of gender and family structure on family stability.

D2   Individual factors

Summary: Individuals have varying capability to form stable families depending on a variety of background factors. Factors such as social class, poor education, poverty, and teenage pregnancy all play a part. Children from separated or dysfunctional parents are at higher risk, in part at least due to higher risks of mental health problems arising from poor attachment in childhood, and in part from a wider range of factors which appears to be linked to the role of fatherhood. Many of these factors repeat in successive generations of families.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

From the outset this report has looked at three aspects of family breakdown: breakdown due to dissolution, dysfunction and fatherlessness. When looking at causes of breakdown which are related to family background, it is important to be aware that we are considering all of these different aspects. However, with all three there is a strong sense of repeating cycles and the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage. Being on a low income can both contribute to and be a consequence of family breakdown. Women in low-income populations are half as likely to be married, twice as likely to divorce if married and several times more likely to bear children out of marriage.[253]

> "Parents do not know how to parent well and repeat the cycle. In Brighton we have the highest levels of sunburn and tooth decay"
> *Family Doctor in Brighton*

However, research on the 1958 UK birth cohort,[254] examining the impact of childhood poverty and age at first birth on adult outcomes, found that early motherhood was strongly associated with adverse outcomes in later life (after controlling for childhood poverty and a wide range of other background factors). According to the Social Exclusion Unit's report on teenage pregnancy,[255] poverty is a key risk factor. Research using the ONS Longitudinal Study has shown that the risk of becoming a teenage mother is almost ten times higher for a girl whose family is in social class V (unskilled manual), than those in social class I (professional).[256] Teenage girls who live in local authority or other social housing are three times more likely than their peers living in owner occupied housing to become a mother.[257]

Those who became mothers in their teens were likely to be on substantially lower incomes in their thirties than any other group, with nearly half in the bottom fifth of the income distribution.[258] Teenage mothers' usually disadvantaged backgrounds contribute to these effects but having a baby young has a worsening effect. Deprivation and social exclusion, and the resulting low expectations of young people[259] are undoubtedly contributing causes of high rates of teenage motherhood.[260] However, this explanation is, we feel, insufficient. Changing social norms have made it increasingly acceptable for women to raise children on their own (see section below on fatherlessness).

CAUSES OF FAMILY BREAKDOWN DUE TO DISSOLUTION

Section B9 highlighted the fact that, across a range of countries, children from separated families are more likely to form partnerships and become parents at a young age. This is of concern because cross-national studies[261] have shown that young mothers and their families in all of the countries analysed, experience disadvantage.

Early sexual intercourse, partnerships and parenthood may be an understandable response to the social, economic and emotional uncertainties that are a frequent

253   Karney B.R. & Bradbury T.N., 2005, "Contextual Influences on Marriage: Implications for Policy and Intervention," Current Directions in Psychological Science, Vol. 14, No. 4, pp.171-174

254   Hobcraft J., 1998, "Intergenerational and life-course transmission of social exclusion: Influences of childhood poverty, family disruption and contact with the police," CASE paper 15, LSE

255   SEU, 1999, Social Exclusion Unit Report on Teenage Pregnancy Cm 4342, HMSO

256   B Botting, M Rosato and R Wood, 1998 "Teenage mothers and the health of their children," Population Trends, Vol. 93, Autumn 1998

257   *ibid*

258   Department of Social Security (DSS) analysis of data from Households Below Average Income Series, 1996/7

259   Clarke, L. & Thomson, K., 2001, "Teenage mums" in Park, A. Curtice, J., Thomson, K., Jarvis, L., Bromley, C. and Stratford, N. (eds) British social attitudes: the 18th report - public policy, social ties, London: Sage

260   A teenager who has a financially and emotionally secure background; and sees a clear future for herself through education or work has something to lose from early parenthood. In contrast, a teenager who has grown up in poverty and possibly on benefits, has had difficult family relationships, is in care, or is under pressure to move out; and sees no prospect of a job and expects to be on benefit. For such a teenager, being a parent could well seem to be a better future than the alternatives.

261   Such as that carried out by Berthoud R. & Robson K., 2001, "The Outcomes of Teenage Motherhood in Europe," Innocenti Working Papers inwopa01/15, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre

Evidence from field trip to Brighton, 8th June 2006
When the Working Group visited Brighton we talked to a magistrate in the East Sussex area; he also grew up in a family affected by mental illness and therefore has insight into the problems facing many families today. "My sister was diagnosed as suffering from schizophrenia which was very difficult for us other siblings as attention was always focussed on the child with the problems." We heard from other sources that other brothers and sisters suffer a great deal of anger and resentment in silence, often disliking and blaming the family member with problems. Witnessing a person suffering from schizophrenia is extremely frightening especially if paranoid delusions are involved. Trying to cope with it within the family unit is particularly difficult; any solid foundation for the bringing up of other children within the family is destroyed. The dynamic of the family can be chaotic and highly disruptive to the extended family. Friction easily builds between family members as the patient becomes a virtual stranger to relatives, someone to be feared and disliked.

There is no one way of coping. Each child in the family has to find their own coping mechanism and the family has to become totally flexible. This magistrate believes that the more flexible, understanding and strong the family is, the better. He said "If the family is less judgmental and inclusive this helps hugely, however this is very rarely the case nowadays. Lack of support for the family and within the family can split relationships and cause the dissolution of family ties. Family breakdown is common in such families."

Like many magistrates our respondent is seeing many offenders from all ages from mental health backgrounds, many from broken families, split sometimes because of the pressure of trying to care for someone with mental illness. "Bringing such people into the criminal justice system is completely inappropriate - very often there is no clear treatment path and punishment is seen as the only solution in many cases. The mass closure of hospitals was a huge mistake, it exacerbates the problem. Mental health reports for offenders take at least four weeks, and there are no facilities to look after them other than them being on remand, again a completely inappropriate course of action. There is no rehabilitation and mental health has been criminalised. Many prisoners have mental health problems and/or drug and alcohol problems."

accompaniment to parental separation. However, half of all partnerships entered into in the teenage years had broken up by the age of 33 compared with 1 in 5 of those formed in the mid twenties.[262] Young people who have experienced these uncertainties may well have high hopes for their own family life but they tend for various reasons to have lower human, social and emotional capital for dealing with their own personal relationships and circumstances. The US Fragile[263] Families Study[264] has shown that high hopes and low capacities may be characteristic of fragile relationships and vulnerable families.

CAUSES OF FAMILY BREAKDOWN
DUE TO DYSFUNCTION
Another paper from the US Fragile Families Study[265] points out that many unwed, economically disadvantaged parents have "high hopes" for marriage and are therefore seeking to enhance the permanence of their relationships. However, some of these parents have problems with drugs, alcohol, and physical violence which indicates that these are homes in which children might be harmed.[266] Such partnerships, whether married or not, will be inherently unstable due to these dysfunctional behaviours but also, they are likely to be places in which children are less certain to receive the nurture they require to break free of the cycle that their parents were caught up in. Evidence from studies on the family histories of drug dependent men and women points to high levels of emotional, physical and sexual abuse as children.[267]

NURTURE, ATTACHMENT, DYSFUNCTION
Attachment behaviour (as explicated in attachment theory) is considered to characterise human beings from the cradle to the grave[268] and is concerned with the

262   Kiernan K. & Mueller G., 1998, The Divorced and Who Divorces, CASE paper 7, LSE

263   McLanahan, Garfinkel and the many other writers in this study use the term fragile families to underscore the fact that the unwed parents and their children which they studies are vulnerable, not just because of their marital status, but also because of their economic status.

264   McLanahan, S., Garfinkel, I., Reichman, N., & Teitler, J., 2001 "Unwed Parents or Fragile Families? Implications for welfare and child support policy", in Wu, L. & Wolfe, B. (eds.), Out of Wedlock: Causes and consequences of nonmarital fertility. New York: Russell Sage Foundation

265   Waller, M. 2001 "High hopes: unwed parents' expectations about marriage," Children and Youth Services Review, Vol. 23, pp. 441-460

266   Wilson, M., & Brooks-Gunn, J., 2001, "Health status and behaviors of unwed fathers," Children and Youth Services Review, Vol. 23, ppp. 377-401.

267   Barnard M., 2003, "Between a rock and a hard place: the role of relatives in protecting children from the effects of parental drug problems" Child and Family Social Work, Vol. 8, pp. 291-299

268   Bowlby J., 1969, Attachment and Loss, Hogarth Press

nature and maintenance of the proximity of a child to his or her main carer. It therefore has many implications for the both the formation and dissolution of the family unit. Once seen as a theoretical construct, it is now known to have a "biological substrate that is affected by experience at a bio-chemical and physiological level."[269] Biologically it is an inborn system in the brain that has evolved to influence and organise "motivational, emotional and memory processes with respect to significant care-giving figures."[270] It is linked directly with emotional regulation and social relatedness. However the concept differs greatly from that of dependence as it does not imply an enduring bond. Attachments are described as "secure" or "insecure" with various sub-divisions within these two categories. Essentially, strong attachment improves the chances of a baby's survival, physiologically and psychologically. Main et al make the following additional comments on the subject:[271]

• The earliest attachments are formed by 7 months;
• Nearly all infants become attached;
• Attachments are formed to only a few persons;
• Selective attachments are derived from social interactions with attachment figures which in turn lead to specific organisational changes in infants' behaviour and brain function.

In evolutionary terms, proximity-seeking ensures that a child should ultimately be protected from "harm, starvation, unfavourable temperature change, disaster and attacks from others,"[272] and neurological and psychological mechanisms underpinning proximity-seeking are highly responsive when any indication of adversity arises. Many of the most intense emotions surface during the formation, maintenance, disruption and renewal of attachment relationships. In terms of family breakdown, attachment theory establishes a strong causal link between an individual's experience of parental love and care and the capacity to make later affectional bonds. Deviations from strong attachment manifest as relationship problems of all types but especially those involving romantic partners and offspring. They also have a significant impact on the individual's future mental health.

The behaviour of the parent with the child is crucial to the formation of the optimal "secure" attachment rela-

tionship. What is necessary for the child's wellbeing is that they have a caregiver who is above all, responsive and available when needed and able to express sympathy and to act intuitively towards the child. The caregiver must also be able to respect a child's desire to explore other relationships with adults and peers and provide them with a secure base from which to do this.

On the other hand the various manifestations of "insecure" attachment create the risk factors for psychological and social dysfunction. Characteristics arising from the three types of insecure attachment ("insecure", "avoidant" and "disorganised/disorientated") relate directly to specific behaviours seen in children. However all produce vulnerabilities in terms of:[273]

• Levels of separation anxiety;
• Expectation of adults;
• Toleration of uncertainty;
• Confidence to explore the unknown;
• Communication skills and emotional literacy;
• Self-awareness and empathy for others;
• Self-esteem.

Although adverse experiences of attachment can be relieved by more positive relationships with others, the concept has become a "life-span construct"[274] and associated conditions are incredibly tenacious, maintaining similar characteristics in individuals over time. Insecure attachment is not equivalent to mental disorder but creates a significant risk factor for dysfunctionality.

Essentially "the dynamics of a child's family are the dynamics of that child's entire world".[275] Further vulnerability to dysfunction is created by stress and trauma resulting from the frustration of certain core needs in the child's interaction with the social environment. These include the need for:

• Secure attachment;
• Autonomy, competence and a sense of identity;
• Freedom to express valid needs and emotions;
• Spontaneity and play;
• Realistic limits and self-control;
• Protection from harm.

Frustration of these basic emotional needs severely compromises individuals' future mental health and interper-

269   deZulueta F., 2006, From Pain to Violence, the traumatic roots of destructiveness. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons

270   Siegal D., 1999, The Developing Brain, Guildford Press

271   Main M, et al, 1995, Attachment Overview with Implications for Clinical Work: Attachment Theory, Social Development and Clinical Perspectives, Analytic Press

272   Siegal D., 1999, The Developing Brain, Guildford Press

273   Heather Geddes, 2006, Attachment in the Classroom, Implications for Reading and Learning. Lecture

274   Smith P., Cowie H., Blades M., 2003, Understanding Children's Development, Blackwell

275   Young J, Klosko J, Weishaar M, 2003, Schema Therapy, Guildford Press

sonal relationships. Moreover, attachment behaviour in a child is a powerful predictor of their future relationship with their own offspring.

MENTAL HEALTH

An increasing number of adults with some form of mental ill health are also parenting dependent children. The Office of National Statistics produced a report in 2000 suggesting that as many as 1 in 4 adults will experience some kind of mental health problem in a given year:

- Post- natal depression: 10% of all new mothers;
- Phobias: 1.9%;
- Personality disorders: 5%;[276]
- Bi-polar disorder: 1%;
- Obsessive/ compulsive disorder: 3%;
- Schizophrenia: 1%;
- Depression and mixed anxiety: 9.2%.

Mental health problems present a formidable risk factor for family breakdown and dysfunction. Parents with such problems struggle to manage the demands of a family. Interaction with other family members can be severely limited and negatively impact on children, partners and extended family and surrounding communities.

Children from these families are also at a high risk of developing a mental health difficulty themselves. One of the main considerations in this regard is that of the potential for neglect of family members, especially children with the disruption of basic attachment needs (see earlier section on Nurture, Attachment and Dysfunction.) "Neglect" is an overarching term which covers a multitude of factors but there is a lack of consensus on what it actually entails. Professionals disagree over the importance of harm, its severity and chronicity, and the care-givers intentionality and level and degree of responsibility. Parents with mental ill health may be overwhelmed by their own affective needs and unable to respond to those of other family members. However, neglect can be divided into two broad categories:

- Physical neglect, which includes not meeting the child and family's need for food, clothing, shelter and safety;
- Emotional neglect, which involves the personal environment, positive regard, love, autonomy and psychological well-being.[277]

The involvement of statutory agencies in such families is mandated by child protection legislation, but may result in the dissolution of the family through hospitalisation or children being taken into care.

Mental ill health can lead to families characterised by chaos and disorganisation, where parents may experience reality differently, interpret its meaning differently, select different responses from different repertoires of responses, and implement these responses under different conditions.[278]

Such family dynamics can lead to families breaking down internally through children running away:[279]

- 11% of children run away from home or are forced to leave;
- 100,000 children run away each year;
- 80% cite problems at home;
- 12% cited the experience or threat of emotional abuse and neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse and domestic violence.

CAUSES OF FAMILY BREAKDOWN
DUE TO FATHERLESSNESS

Again, a cycle of fatherlessness has been identified, both in the media[280] and in research reviews.[281] The pattern for fathers to desert or be pushed out of their families, or for their influence to be reduced due to non-residence has, in some families, reproduced itself over several generations and has become the norm. Often these families also live in areas of economic deprivation, high crime rates and low expectations. Within this environment it has become easier and more acceptable to avoid integrating fathers into family life.

The informality of relationships (described in the Introduction to the overall report) which began to gain social legitimacy in the 1960s and is associated with feminism, has led to the acceptability of unpartnered childbearing but, as one piece of social commentary succinctly expressed it "The difference between a family and a broken family is generally the presence of the father."[282]

Ironically, anthropologist Geoff Dench's research yielded the following observation. "Of the women who threw off convention in the 1960s, few as grandmothers might want to restore the patterns of family life of the 1950s in their entirety. But most now believe in broadly conventional sexual partnerships – entailing long term mutual

276   Coid, J., Yang, M., Tyrer, P., Roberts, A., and Ulrich, S., 2006: Violence and Psychiatric Morbidity in the National Population of Britain, Brit J. of Psychiatry, Vol. 189, pp. 12-19

277   Zuravin S.J., 1991, "Definition of Child Physical Abuse and Neglect, Current Problems" Journal of Personality Disorders, Vol. 8, No. 3

278   Black M, 2000, The Roots of Child Neglect, Treatment of Child Abuse, John Hopkins Press

279   Rees and Lee, 2005, Still Running, National Survey Children's Society.

280   For example, see Alice Miles article on p20 of The Times, 15/11/06, "A sad tale of little boys lost"

281   O'Neill R., 2002, Experiments in Living: the Fatherless Family, Civitas

282   See Helena Cronin and Oliver Curry's article in The Guardian 5/2/00 "Pity Poor Men"

commitment and some sexual differentiation of roles – as the basis for the successful rearing of children.[283]

EDUCATION

Education is often regarded as an independent factor in its own right, and it receives extensive treatment in the companion report on Educational Failure which has been produced by a separate committee within the Social Justice Policy Group.[284] In section C7 we have highlighted the way family breakdown may be associated with poorer educational outcomes (some studies have found that children of separated parents are less likely to do well at school e.g. Cockett & Tripp, 1994[285] and Kiernan, 1997[286]). However it is important to realise the extent to which low educational attainment is implicated as a driver as well as a consequence of family breakdown.

Less well educated adults are more likely to experience family breakdown (Ermisch 2001,[287] Benson, 2006[288]). The latter study of 15,000 mothers with three year old children, taken from Millennium Cohort Study data, found that the risk of family breakdown was significantly higher amongst couples with less education, independent of age,
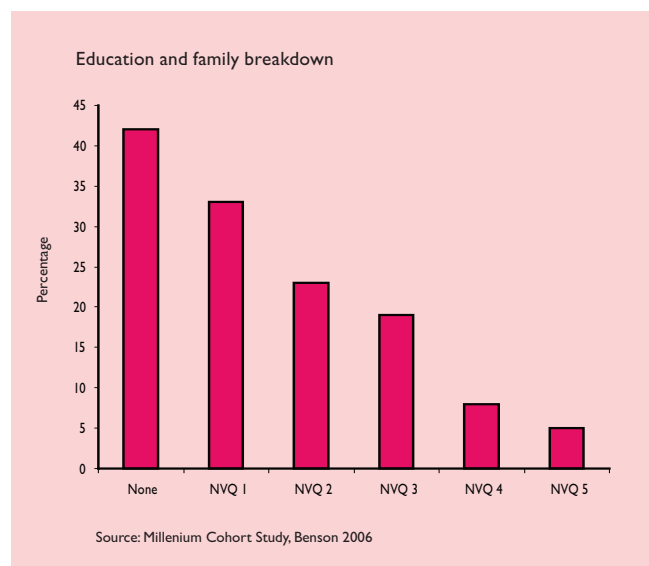
income, marital status, ethnic group and receipt of benefits. For example, the odds of splitting up were 82% higher for mothers with no qualifications compared to mothers with NVQ level 4. In terms of absolute risk, 42% of married or cohabiting mothers with no qualifications had split before their child's third birthday, compared to 5% of mothers with NVQ level 5. For couples with NVQ level 1 to 4 qualifications, the relationship with family breakdown risk was near enough linear.

When considering education it becomes obvious once again that there is a social class dimension to family breakdown. There is also the danger of reproducing disadvantage in the next generation and an increased risk of ongoing fatherlessness. This can be seen most vividly in studies of teenage pregnancy. Young people scoring below average on measures of educational achievement at ages 7 and 16 have been found to be at significantly higher risk of becoming teenage parents, especially those whose performance declined between these ages.[289] Natsal 2000[290] surveyed over 11,000 males and females aged 16–44 across Britain. It found that 29% of sexually active young women who left school at 16 without any qualifications had a child before the age of 18, compared with 14% of those who left at 16 with qualifications, and 1% of those who left at age 17 or over.[291] These young parents are far less likely subsequently to belong to, or provide for their children, a stable family home. Recent UK research[292] with the mothers of twins showed that by the time their children were 5, those who had been teenage mothers had experienced more socio-economic deprivation, more mental health difficulties and drug problems, had lower levels of educational attainment, and were more likely to be living in deprived neighbourhoods. Their partners were more antisocial and abusive. Their children showed reduced educational attainment, had more emotional and behavioural problems, were at increased risk of maltreatment or harm, and showed higher rates of illness, accidents and injuries.

Education and family breakdown

Source: Millenium Cohort Study, Benson 2006

283   Dench G., 2003, Rediscovering Family, Hera Trust p66

284   Available to download from http://www.povertydebate.com

285   Cockett, M. and Tripp, J., 1994, The Exeter Family Study: Family Breakdown and Its Impact on Children. Exeter, University of Exeter Press

286   Kiernan, K., 1997, "Becoming a young parent: a longitudinal study of associated factors," British Journal of Sociology, Vol. 48, pp. 406-428

287   Ermisch, J. , 2001, "Premarital cohabitation, childbearing and the creation of one-parent families", ESRC Research Centre on Micro-Social Change, Paper Number 95-17

288   Benson, H., 2006, The conflation of marriage and cohabitation in government statistics - a denial of difference rendered untenable by an analysis of outcomes. Bristol Community Family Trust.

289   Kiernan, K., 1995, Transition to parenthood: young mothers, young fathers - associated factors and later life experiences. LSE Discussion Paper WSP/113. London, London School of Economics.

290   National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles

291   Wellings, K., Nanchahal, K., Macdowall, W., McManus, S., Erens, R., et al., 2001, "Sexual behaviour in Britain: early heterosexual experience," Lancet, Vol, 358, pp. 1843-1850.

292   Moffitt, T. and the E-Risk Study team, 2002, "Teen-aged mothers in contemporary Britain", Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, Vol, 43, No. 6, pp. 727-742.

D3   Couple/family factors

Summary: Both family structure and family process are important in understanding the stability of families. Married families are about twice as likely to remain intact than any other form, even after accounting for age, income, education, ethnic group, benefits receipt, and birth order. The presence of an involved biological father who has fully taken on parental responsibility is a critical factor for successful outcomes for children. Whatever the structure, family processes also play an important part. In particular the ways in which the adults handle conflict strongly influences likely outcomes. Children's outcomes are strongly influenced by the levels of conflict – children do worst in high-conflict families which stay together, and in low-conflict families which split up (after what are termed "amicable divorces").

FAMILY STRUCTURE

An overwhelming body of research concludes that couples who marry are more likely to stay together than those who remain unmarried. Parts B and C of this report have detailed how marriage and its accompanying stability is good for the well-being of both adults and children alike. However as more couples choose to live together and public policy reinforces this trend by treating unmarried couples "as if married", some policy-makers and commentators have questioned whether marriage is an increasingly outdated and unnecessary social and legal construct. Research demonstrating the more positive outcomes accruing to married families is reinterpreted as accruing to couples in "long-term stable relationships". Even if it is undoubtedly true that some unmarried couples stay together for life and some married couples don't, the exceptions do not make the rule.
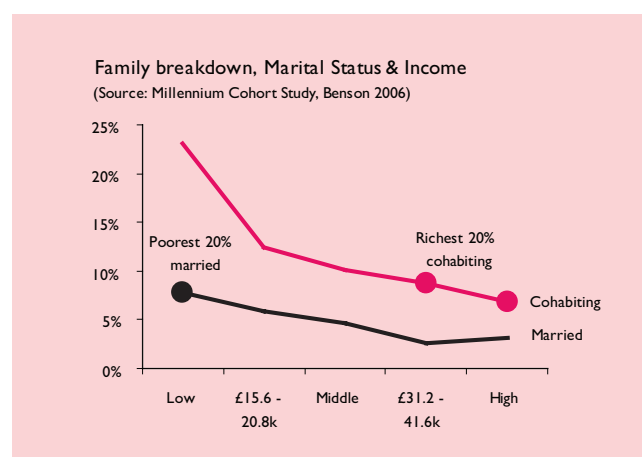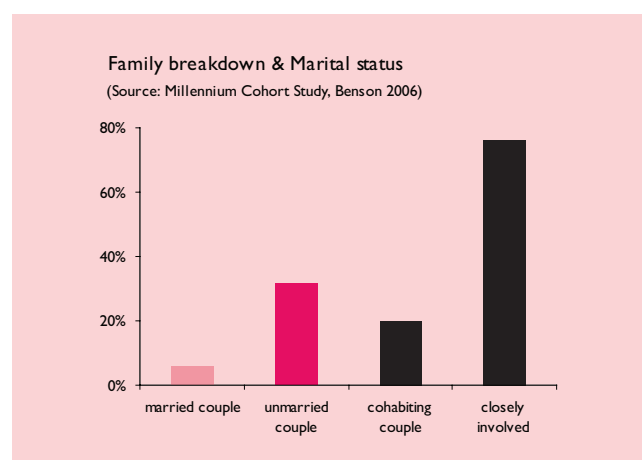

Increased break-up risk - unmarried vs married parents with 5 year olds
(Source: Kiernan 1999)
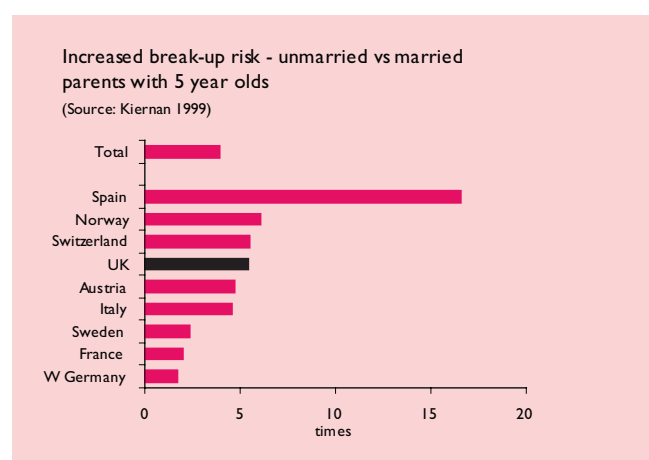
Studies of family breakdown in the UK are remarkably rare. However, using data from the British Household

Panel Survey, Kiernan (1999)[293] found that 8% of married parents and 43% of unmarried parents had split before their child's fifth birthday. Data from Europe and the US consistently suggests that cohabiting parents throughout the West are several times more likely to split up compared to married parents.

However many policy makers, and even family organizations, continue to discount family structure. They assume that differences in family breakdown risk are entirely due to other socio-economic factors, such as income or education. In other words, variation in family outcomes is assumed to be an artefact of selection effects, that is, people who are likely to do well get married.

Since the abolition of the term "marital status" in 2003, government policy and research talks only of "couple parent families". A clear example of this is the Families and Children Study (FACS), whose reports are commissioned by the Department of Work and Pensions. The 2003 FACS report[294] included a regression analysis of the unique risks faced by different types of family, regardless of background. Former lone parents and cohabitees were especially at risk of

Family breakdown & Marital status
(Source: Millennium Cohort Study, Benson 2006)

Family breakdown, Marital Status & Income
(Source: Millennium Cohort Study, Benson 2006)

293   Kiernan, K., 1999, "Childbearing outside marriage in Western Europe" Population Trends, Vol. 98, pp. 11-20.

294   Marsh, A. & Perry, J., 2003, "Family change 1999 to 2001," DWP research no 181. CDS, Leeds.

experiencing family breakdown. All subsequent FACS studies fail to distinguish couples by marital status.

An up-to-date large scale UK study of family breakdown – commissioned for this working group although written and funded independently – compared the risk of family breakdown faced by 15,000 married and cohabiting mothers with three year old children (Benson, 2006 – see Appendix 3). Before their child's third birthday, 6% of married mothers, 20% of "cohabiting" unmarried mothers and 74% of "closely involved" unmarried mothers had split up. One sixth of children at birth had mothers who were neither married nor cohabiting. Three quarters of children who had experienced family breakdown by age three had unmarried parents.

Overall, "cohabiting" unmarried couples were still more than twice as likely to have split up compared to married couple, even after accounting for age, income, education, ethnic group, benefits receipt, and birth order. This regression analysis excluded the highly unstable "closely involved" unmarried couples.

The study concluded that even the poorest married parents were more stable than all but the richest cohabiting parents and that family structure matters.

> "Relate is pro-marriage"
> *Relate's head of public policy*

FAMILY PROCESSES

The way in which couples relate is clearly a key determinant of both how happy couples are, marital satisfaction, and how long they stay together, marital stability. Until the 1990s, marriage researchers relied largely on subjective self-report questionnaires that gave only a crude measure of marital satisfaction. Changes in satisfaction were thus difficult to record. The emergence of observational techniques – where couple behaviours are recorded and coded by trained observers – allowed much more sensitive and objective recording. Observational research also allowed researchers to identify family processes that predicted subsequent family outcomes.

A great deal of new research, mostly from the US, has now shown how relational processes at an early stage of a relationship can distinguish couple outcomes up to 13 years later.[295]

This research engenders a noisy academic debate. The most prominent promoter is Professor John Gottman at Seattle University. He claims to be able to predict with more than 80% accuracy how a couple will fare, based on coded observation of a 15 minute video-taped discussion of a difficult issue.[296]

Gottman highlights certain tell-tale signs of future success and failure. For example, couples destined for happiness display at least five times as many positive traits as negative traits, a lower ratio than this is a recipe for disaster. Happy couples also use humour or "repair attempts" to defuse rows. Repair attempts are unexpected behaviours that can seem highly inappropriate to outsiders – a tongue stuck out or an animal noise made for no apparent reason in the midst of a row. A response in kind is good news but, again, failed repair attempts are bad news.

However other researchers dismiss the extravagance of Gottman's claims. Gottman is especially criticized for relying on samples that include too many of the happiest and unhappiest couples[297]. Prediction formulae that work for one sample do not appear to work for another without a big reduction in accuracy.[298] Furthermore, when experts and non-experts watched videos of couple interaction, none could predict subsequent couple outcomes at much better than chance levels.[299]

Nonetheless, observation research makes it clear that the seeds of a successful relationship tomorrow are present in the relationship today. This opens up the possibility that short interventions can be successful, on the basis that small adjustments now can lead to big changes later.

CONFLICT AND HAPPINESS

Effect of marital status & conflict on children
(Source Booth & Amato, 2001)

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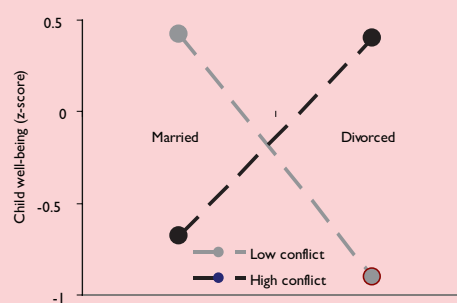
295   Clements, M., Stanley, S., & Markman, H. 2004, "Before they said "I do": discriminating amongst marital outcomes over 13 years," Journal of Marriage & Family, Vol. 66, pp. 613-626.

296   Gottman, J., Coan, J., Carrere, S., & Swanson, C., 1998, "Predicting marital happiness and stability from newly-wed interactions" Journal of Marriage & Family, Vol. 60, pp. 5-22.

297   Stanley, S., Bradbury, T., & Markman, H., 2000, "Structural flaws in the bridge from basic research on marriage to interventions for couples" Journal of Marriage & Family, Vol. 62, pp.256-264.

297   Clements, M., Stanley, S., & Markman, H., 2004 "Before they said "I do": discriminating amongst marital outcomes over 13 years" Journal of Marriage & Family, Vol. 66, pp. 613-626

299   Ebling, R. & Levenson., R.W., 2003, "Who are the marital experts?" Journal of Marriage & Family, Vol. 65, pp. 130-142.

The "Marital Instability Over the Life Course" study in the US has been interviewing 2,000 married people and their 700 children every four years or so since 1980.

Along the way, most couples stayed intact but some couples divorced. The strength of this study is that it can look at how families function both before and after the divorce. Of special note is one particular set of findings. Child well-being, peer and parental relationship quality are all heavily influenced by the level of conflict in the home.[300]

Children do best in low conflict marriages. They do worst when low conflict marriages end in divorce. The reverse is true for high conflict marriages, within which children do badly and outside of which children then do much better. This finding is important. Children do least well either within high conflict marriages that remain intact or within low conflict marriages that end in divorce.

It may seem counterintuitive that in general children do not share their parents desire to leave unhappy but low conflict marriages. However when parental conflict is low, the turmoil that is very obvious to the parents may be much less obvious to the children. They are therefore forced to internalize their own reasons for the breakdown either by blaming themselves "it's my fault" or by blaming the unexpected split as a characteristic of relationships "they just suddenly stop working." Booth & Amato conclude their study with the observation that low conflict divorce "may represent an unexpected, unwelcome and uncontrollable event, an event that children are likely to experience as stressful."

It is unsurprising that the way parents treat each other spills over to influence the way they treat their children. A review of 39 such studies found a moderate association between inter-parental conflict and parenting style.[301] Given the centrality of child outcomes, inter-parental conflict management between married, cohabiting or divorced couples is therefore a key consideration for public policy. Furthermore, it has already been stated that around half of UK couples separate on the grounds of growing apart, broadly similar to the US experience. Social commentators often suggest that unhappy couples are better off apart, for the sake of the kids. However

Booth & Amato's study suggests the reverse is true. The issue for child well-being is conflict, not happiness.

If most or all of these separating couples can be categorized as low conflict, such "amicable divorces" are leaving behind an unexpectedly devastating legacy for their children. This is an issue barely touched upon by UK social commentators, let alone public policy. The government's own chief social researcher, Sue Duncan, has stated that there is still no clear policy direction coming out of the well-researched conclusion that family breakdown has a negative impact on children, emotionally and economically.[302]

FATHER INVOLVEMENT

Much has been said already about the influence of family structure on adults and children. The most obvious explanation for this, leaving socio-economic factors aside, is likely to be found amongst the differing underlying attitudes and behaviours typically associated with family structure and relationship stability. Directly, attitudes towards marital permanence, divorce, commitment and gender roles are all significant predictors of relationship quality (Amato et al, 2003[303]). Indirectly, both negative and positive interactive behaviours that also predict relationship quality (Gottman et al, 1998,[304] Bradbury & Karney, 2004[305]) may be reflective of underlying attitudes. As well as focusing on family structure, public policy must therefore also focus on these underlying factors.

Various studies have shown that the parental resources of time and money are both linked to children's future outcomes. One explanation for why children tend to do worse in lone parent families relates to the absence of resources. Lone mothers have fewer resources. Non-resident fathers contribute fewer resources. Parenting style, also linked to child outcomes, is then less effective (Carlson, 2006[306]).

Father involvement is therefore bound to be an important issue. In some circumstances, it may even account for most or all of the differences in child outcomes otherwise attributed to family structure. A recent US study looked at behavioural problems amongst 2,700 ten to fourteen year olds.[307] At first glance family structure appears to have a big influence. Teenagers who live with their married biological

300   Booth, A. & Amato, P., 2001, "Parental Predivorce Relations and Offspring Postdivorce Well-Being" Journal of Marriage and Family, Vol. 63, pp. 197-212

301   Krishnakumar, A. & Buehler, C., 2000, "Interparental conflict and parenting behaviors: A meta-analytic review", Family Relations, Vol. 49, pp. 25-44.

302   Sue Duncan speaking in 2005 at CRSP's 21st Anniversary Conference at Loughborough University (unpublished transcript)

303   Amato, P., Johnson, D., Booth, A, & Rogers, S., 2003, "Continuity and Change in Marital Quality Between 1980 and 2000" Journal of Marriage and Family, Vol. 65, pp. 1-22

304   Gottman, J., Coan, J., Carrere, S., & Swanson, C., 1998, "Predicting marital happiness and stability from newly-wed interactions" Journal of Marriage & Family, Vol. 60, pp. 5-22

305   Bradbury, T. & Karney, B., 2004, "Understanding and altering the longitudinal course of marriage" Journal of Marriage & Family, Vol. 66 , pp. 862-879.

306   Amato, P., Johnson, D., Booth, A, & Rogers, S., 2003, "Continuity and Change in Marital Quality Between 1980 and 2000" Journal of Marriage and Family, Vol. 65, pp. 1-22

307   Carlson, M., 2006, "Family structure, father involvement, and adolescent behaviour outcomes", Journal of Marriage & Family, Vol. 68, pp. 137-154

parents show fewer behavioural problems and a stronger sense of well-being than teenagers in any other family type – whether cohabiting, stepfamily or single parent. However behind the scenes, the level of father involvement was found to account for much of these differences in externalised and internalised behaviours.

The study found no differences between the effect on boys or girls. However the same amount of father involvement had more effect on children who live with their fathers than with children who do not. Only a small minority (10-18%) of non-resident fathers show high levels of involvement. Part of the negative impact of divorce on children may therefore be explained by a reduced level of father involvement that is also less effective. This particular finding is important because other studies have shown that better behaved children are less likely to experience future educational or mental health problems.

A review of father involvement studies shows that authoritative parenting is associated with better child outcomes for both resident and non-resident fathers.[308] Authoritative parenting, comprising both warmth and boundaries, is generally recognized as the parenting style with most positive child outcomes. However there are provisos to these findings. Mother and father parenting styles tend to be highly correlated so it is not entirely surprising that a significant minority of studies find no effect of father involvement, once mother involvement has been taken into account. Carlson's cross-sectional study found associations with both mother and father involvement.

Due to the fact that the vast majority of studies tend to be cross-sectional, i.e. based on a one time survey, it is not always possible to conclude causal links. However longitudinal studies do exist, suggesting that fathers add a unique contribution to their children.[309]

MARRIAGE AND MEN

Marriage is an important rite of passage for men. It marks the transition when a male becomes an adult by taking on the responsibilities of supporting a family, as a breadwinner and as a parent. The extent to which these tasks are shared varies from family to family and has been changing gradually through time as the birth rate falls and more mothers work outside the home. However, it is still the case that when a man gets married he is entering a world in which his life is subject to a new set of social expectations. He commits himself in a formal ceremony before witnesses to behave in a certain way towards his wife and their future children, and he will be expected to honour these commitments (Nock 1998).[310] Some of these commitments will be enforced by law, others by the social pressure of friends and relatives, but above all, they will be internalised so they become his personal objectives.

The decline of marriage in certain sections of society and its replacement by cohabitation is more than just a shift from formality to informality. It reflects a growing reluctance of men to commit themselves and to shoulder the responsibilities involved in raising a family. Moreover, high divorce rates indicate a decline in the seriousness with which couples take marriage. The rise of cohabitation amongst young people and the loosening of divorce laws have some positive aspects, but they have also helped to undermine the most important institution through which young men can enter the adult world. The result is that there are now millions of young men who at one time would have been responsible and committed husbands, but are now at best fleeting partners. A boy does not become a man when he gains the right to watch "adult" movies, but when he takes on responsibility for others. By committing himself unreservedly to family life when he gets married, he limits his freedom of action but he also acquires a purpose in life. The obligations of family life are irksome at times, but for many men marriage provides the structure which gives meaning to their lives and through which they grow up. Without this structure many of them remain perpetual adolescents and engage in self-destructive and anti-social forms of behaviour. Divorce can have the same effect.

It is well-established that, on average, married men are happier, healthier, less likely to engage in anti-social behaviour, and earn more than unmarried men (Waite and Gallagher, 2000).[311] For example, a study by Prior and Hayes[312] showed that there has, over the last quarter century been a dramatic increase in institutional bed occupancy among men aged 25-44 and that they are showing signs of greater vulnerability to ill-health. Since 1981 the most vulnerable men are those who have never married and for whom social isolation is a key factor. Marriage provides a support system which is lacking now in new populations to the detriment of these cohorts' health.

308   Marsiglio, W., Amato, P., Day, R. & Lamb, M., 2000, "Scholarship on Fatherhood in the 1990s and Beyond" Journal of Marriage and Family, Vol. 62, pp. 1173-1191

309   Amato, P. R., & Booth, A., 1997, A generation at risk: Growing up in an era of family upheaval Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

310   Nock, S. L., 1998, Marriage in Men's Lives, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

311   Waite, L.J. and M. Gallagher, 2000, The Case for Marriage, New York, Doubleday

312   Prior P. & Hayes B., 2003, "The Relationship Between Marital Status and Health: An Empirical Investigation of Differences in Bed Occupancy Within Health and Social Care Facilities in Britain, 1921-1991," Journal of Family Issues, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 124-148

This is partly a selection effect because happy, healthy, well-behaved and well-paid men are more likely to find a wife and are more likely to stay married than men who do not possess these qualities. However, there is also evidence that marriage improves the behaviour and wellbeing of men.[313] This is beneficial both for the men concerned and for the rest of society. Contrary to modern folk myth, marriage is also good for women, but some investigators find that its impact on men is stronger. Men, it seems, need the benefit of a well-defined structure more than women.

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313   Wilson, C. & Oswald A., 2005, "How Does Marriage Affect Physical and Psychological Health? A Survey of the Longitudinal Evidence," Economics Department Working Paper, May, University of Warwick

D4   Social network and environmental factors

Summary: The social network and environment in which a family exists can play a vital role in its stability. Economic poverty and debt frequently act as a significant contributor to increased conflict in a relationship. Similarly poor or inadequate housing can place substantial stress on families, and provide an environment where disrespect and conflict thrive. Employment offers not only economic benefit, but also acts as a strong socialising factor particularly among men. Finally the attitudes of society play an important role in normalising behaviour, and in particular we have examined the role of the internet and pornography which is now frequently cited as a de-stabilising factor by separating couples.

1.   MONEY/DEBT

Elsewhere in this report we have detailed how financial factors are highly influential in determining whether or not a family will continue to live together and have acknowledged the significant challenges to family life which people on low and severely low income face on a daily basis. Theodora Ooms, who has written extensively on the problems facing low-income families succinctly summarises these pressures:

"Low-income families, especially those who reside in poverty neighbourhoods, are daily exposed to a variety of experiences that place extraordinary stress on the couple and family relationships. In addition to the constant stress of making ends meet financially, and of working in unstable, low paying jobs, they have the frustrations of living in sub-standard housing in poorly serviced neighbourhoods, without adequate transportation and they and their children are continually in fear of crime and violence. Members of their immediate or extended families may be struggling with depression, alcoholism or drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, or may be in and out of jail or some combination of those problems. Domestic violence is more prevalent in low-income households. In addition black and other minority individuals are constantly exposed in the workplace or on the streets to incidents of racism and discrimination. Service providers who work with these couples note how often these accumulated stresses spill over into home, and anger and frustration too often poison their relationships between parents and children."[314]

The rest of this section will focus on debt, which has an impact on family functioning across the socioeconomic spectrum (according to the Financial Services Authority, one in four households are struggling with debt) although its most profoundly adverse effects are usually felt at the bottom end.

Debt and financial worries are a common cause of relationship tension. Relate have found that money rates as the top cause of arguments among couples.[315] This tension can lead to relationship and family breakdown, which can make financial problems worse as money has to stretch further. Indeed when looking for a causal link between debt and family breakdown it becomes apparent that, as with much of this report the direction of causality is not easy to establish. Much of the academic and policy-focused literature treats debt as a consequence rather than a cause of marriage/relationship breakdown although it is occasionally stated that both can be the case. Certainly the role of debt as a significant risk factor for marital breakdown has not been the subject or conclusion of recent British research. Relationship breakdown as the trigger for indebtedness has received far more attention. Debt's contributive effect to marriage and relationship breakdown may be under-researched but is not necessarily insubstantial.

When thinking about marriage, several factors are worth bearing in mind. Firstly, the average age at which people are getting married is at its highest in recent decades – 28.4 years for women and 30.6 years for men.[316] An American study[317] found that as the period of singlehood lengthens, more people are acquiring credit ratings, debts and assets of their own. The study concludes that there is therefore more opportunity now to enter marriage with more debt, something which we would also expect to be true in the UK. The cost of weddings gives many young couples a disadvantageous financial start. During the first five years of marriage, the most common and intense source of conflict among couples under the age of 30 is debt brought into marriage, according to a large national study conducted in 1999 by the Centre for Marriage and Family at Creighton University in Omaha,

314   Ooms T., 2002, "Strengthening Couples and Marriage in Low-Income Communities" in Hawkins A. et al, 2002, *Revitalising the Institution of Marriage for the Twenty-First Century*, Praeger

315   Relate Arguments Survey, Consumer Research, 1998

316   Social Trends 34, 2004, ONS

317   State of the Unions, 2001 report, National Marriage Project at Rutgers University (New Jersey)

US. Among all of the nearly 800 spouses surveyed, (and regardless of age and length of marriage), it was the third-most-troubling issue, behind time management and sexual issues. American writers have described the strong relationship which exists between financial issues and marital satisfaction.[318]

Unsurprisingly debt is implicated in dysfunction in the form of domestic violence (however, as Refuge told the Working Group,[319] although debt can act as a trigger it is inaccurate to say that it is a cause). Research by Logan et al[320] found that couples in which domestic violence was perpetrated were more likely to have had marital debt than those in which it was not and qualitative research carried out among Citizens Advice Bureau clients found that a domestic violence and depression were common contributive factors to clients' debt problems.[321] Here again we see the complex interaction of cause and effect.

2. HOUSING

"Housing the human being means satisfying a long series of fundamental needs, both physiological and psychological and protecting him against accidents and contagion" (Olsen)

Most adults have the opportunity to shape the environment and spaces in which they choose to raise children. As a result, they also usually have the ability to change or adapt that accommodation if it no longer suits their requirements of themselves and those of their children. Living in a house without enough garden for the kids to play? Move. Two teenagers together in the same room? Build an extension. The flexibility to alter or, if necessary, change, the place in which families exist is crucial as children grow.

The real difficulty, however, lies with those families who, for whatever reason, are unable to positively change or amend their accommodation. These families, without the security and the flexibility that owner-occupation or financial independence offers, are forced to accept accommodation which can be fundamentally unsuited to the needs of their family. In some cases, such sub-standard housing can have a significantly deleterious effect on the health and well-being of individual family members and,

as a consequence, severely pressure the strength of the family unit.

Acquiring precise evidence and demonstrating definitive causal links between inadequate housing and family fracture has proven to be notoriously difficult. Anecdotal evidence suggests that poor housing is usually a contributory factor towards family breakdown, rather than necessarily being the sole cause.[322] Additionally, one must, regretfully, accept that the vulnerability of a particular family in housing may be replicated in other aspects of their life, and may indicate a wider weakness in the structure of that unit.

There are two main manifestations of sub-standard housing which may have a contributory effect to family breakdown:

Lack of housing (legally homeless/statutory homeless/hidden homeless)

The traditional definition of homeless – usually a solitary individual in an urban setting – obscures a very real problem that affects groups of people and family units. In 2002/2003, a total of 129,000 individuals were accepted by local councils as being in "priority need" of rehousing. The majority of households within this total consisted of families with dependent children.[323]

Despite statutorily-mandated additional resources,[324] the loss of a dwelling can have a devastating effect upon the functioning of a family unit. Fundamentally it is the lack of security which debilitates the health of a family structure: the constant moves, the bed-and-breakfast accommodation, the children forced to move school, families (and particularly children) unable to put down those crucial community roots. According to the charity Crisis, homelessness is "more than rooflessness." People are not just affected by the lack of a physical space; housing is also something that "provides "roots, identity, security, a sense of belonging and a place of emotional wellbeing".[325] According to Gullestad, the home is central to an individuals ability to "create meaning and coherence in a fragmented life".[326]

Homelessness and temporary accommodation can be responsible for a range of mental and physical health-related problems:

318   See for example Catalano R., 1991 "The Health Effects of Economic Insecurity," The American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 81, pp. 1148-1153

319   Oral evidence given at Portcullis House Hearings, 12th September 2006

320   Logan T., Walker R. & Jordan C., 2002, "Child Custody Evaluations and Domestic Violence: Case Comparisons" Violence and Victims, Vol. 17, No. 6, pp. 719-742

321   http://www.fsa.gov.uk/pubs/consumer-research/crpr26.pdf

322   The UK government accepts that inadequate housing is symptomatic of a wider problem, rather than a cause in itself. See Department for Communities and Local Government, "A Decent Home: Definition and Guidance for Implementation," DCLG Publications, 8, June 2006.

323   http://www.statistics.gov.uk/STATBASE/Expodata/Spreadsheets/D7331.xls

324   Households with children are generally accepted as in "priority need", as set out in the Homeless Act 1996. See http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts1996/96052-ac.htm#189.

325   Crisis, 2005, What is Homelessness? London, Crisis

326   Gram-Hanssen, Housing Problems, 3.

- depression[327] and mental breakdown[328] for adults;
- a lack of space for children to learn, play and develop;[329]
- a loss of aspiration, belief and ambition;
- a difficulty in being able to "manage" a family adequately, including personal hygiene;[330]
- an inability to embed "roots" in a community – this will particularly impact upon children in their formative years, particularly with regards to schools and forming social relationships.[331]

Additionally, a number of organisations have highlighted the continued plight of homeless families once placed in temporary accommodation. Limited by finite resources, local councils tend to house homeless families in any accommodation available, irrespective of whether that dwelling is suitable to needs.

Inadequate housing

The government has recognised that a significant proportion of housing, particularly that which was and is in the public sector, has suffered from under-investment and falls short of a relative standard. That recognition provoked the genesis of the "Decent Homes" standard, on target to be delivered to 3.6 million homes by 2010.[332]

Inadequate housing can often present an even greater (and more lingering) issue than the accommodation provided for statutorily homeless families, given the permanent, intractable issues often involved.

Poorly designed accommodation is a common concern for those working in the housing sector. Historically, housing has been erected according to the most basic of standards and even the stock which was built to higher standards has often not aged well. Only for a relatively short time, for example, between 1967 and 1980, were officially mandated standards in place for social housing (these were the Parker Morris Standards). The pressure upon land, and the increasing demand for housing, have seen these standards jettisoned. In seeking a solution to the slums of earlier generations, housing and town planners have often simply embedded new problems for families and communities. Inadequate housing impacts in a number of ways on families:

- depression and mental difficulties for adults;[333]
- general ill-health caused by sub-standard heating or lighting;[334]
- a lack of internal and external space for children to play and develop;[335]
- a draining away of aspiration, belief and purpose in parents for themselves and for their children – the poverty of low ambition;[336]
- failure to offer privacy both within[337] the family and between the family and others;[338]
- a lack of long-term security to allow families to plan ahead and develop
- inability to allow families to subsist;
- failure to protect against dirt, disease, vermin and harmful substances;[339]
- failure to protect against noise.[340]

Some sub-standard housing fails to allow a family (and individual members of it) the ability to subsist independently of external assistance.

Inadequate housing impacting upon the community and the family

A broader assessment must also be taken of the effects of housing upon family breakdown. It is not merely the physical or psychological effects of a particular house which can be deleterious. Fundamentally, the debate surrounding sub-standard housing and its effects is only one facet of a much larger discussion on the impact of housing in general on communities, individuals and social structures.

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327   http://england.shelter.org.uk/policy/policy-967.cfm

328   30 - 50% of all adults experiencing homelessness according to Crisis. See www.crisis.org.uk/downloads.php/140/HealthStrategieschecklist.pdf.

329   http://www.scotland.gov.uk/cru/documents/poor-housing-10.htm

330   http://www.scotland.gov.uk/cru/documents/poor-housing-10.htm

331   On average children lose 55 school days moving in and around temporary accommodation. See http://england.shelter.org.uk/policy/policy-967.cfm

332   Department for Communities and Local Government, "A Decent Home: Definition and Guidance for Implementation," DCLG Publications, 8, June 2006. p4.

333   http://england.shelter.org.uk/policy/policy-967.cfm

334   The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (England) Regulations, 2005, detail "excess cold" and "excess heat" as hazardous. See http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2005/20053208.htm

335   Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE)/Cordaid (Netherlands), 2006, Defending the Housing Rights of Children, Geneva, COHRE, p. 8

336   Overcrowding is a barrier to providing "positive opportunities for their children and a constant cause of anxiety and depression", Diaz R., Reynolds L., Robinson N., 2004, Crowded House: Cramped Living in England's Housing, London, Shelter, p. 3

337   Reynolds, L,. October 2005, Full house? How overcrowded housing affects families, London, Shelter, p. 13

338   Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. See http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html

339   Problems such as mould (see http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/1866586.stm) and radon (see Field R.W. et al, 2000, "Residential Radon Gas Exposure and Lung Cancer: The Iowa Radon Lung Cancer Study", American Journal of Epidemiology, Vol. 151, p. 1091)

340   The effects of noise are well documented: for example, http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2006/10/06120109

Family breakdown can be accelerated by a lack of support from extended relatives or a local network of relationships. The principle enshrined in housing allocation since 1977 – the principle of need – however laudable, may have accelerated the process whereby, particularly in urban areas (given the greater pressure they face), local communities structures are undermined. By failing to recognise the importance of wider networks in maintaining the strength of family units, families have become isolated in unfamiliar "social territories" which only serves to increase the pressure upon them. There is evidence, for example, in London of immigrant families choosing to stay in particular areas because of the social and community advantages from which they can benefit; given a choice between overcrowding and moving to a less friendly part of a borough, a proportion of families will choose the former.[341]

Crucially there is often a cumulative effect; a cycle of disadvantage which impacts disproportionately upon the individuals who live in inadequate housing, on unruly estates, concentrated in poor areas. These places becomes ghettos where conventional societal structures no longer apply and where individuals fall further into the cycle of deprivation with each passing generation. Similarly, if individuals come from deprived backgrounds, they are less likely to be equipped with the skills to manage households and families.

Separately, some commentators have questioned whether policy decisions taken in recent years may have created additional difficulties which place families under pressure. Has right-to-buy legislation – and its large-scale uptake in the 1980s – removed key parts of the social housing chain, and resulted in the number of homes actually suitable for families dwindling to woeful levels? As a result, the difficulty of gaining a foothold on the owner-occupation ladder has exposed some families to additional financial or psychological stress; as much as housing issues often force families apart, they also often force them together. Living for extended periods in a state of semi- or limited-independence, often with parents or older relatives, is usually stressful for starter families.

3. JOBS
Local labour market conditions influence family structure in various ways. A man with a stable and well-paid job is likely to be desirable partner for a woman because of the money he will bring into the family. He is also likely to have desirable personal characteristics such as self-discipline and reliability. This is partly because people with these characteristics are mostly likely to find and keep a good job. It is also because the experience of holding down a regular job builds character and fosters the development of qualities that make a man a good partner. For this reason, we should expect to see the lowest rates of marriage and the highest rates of lone parenthood in areas where there is a severe shortage of good jobs for men. The role of women's employment is more complicated. On the one hand, if good jobs are plentiful, a woman may decide that, with help from the welfare state, she can survive quite well as a lone mother. However, she may also decide that she would like a career and that raising a child on her own would interfere with this goal. Finally, if jobs for women are plentiful, a woman living in an intact couple can augment the family income and stave off the financial pressures that threaten it.

A number of studies find that employment opportunities play an important role in influencing the supply of "marriageable men" who would make suitable partners for would-be mothers. Brien (1997), for example, finds that the very high level of lone parenthood amongst black women in the USA is in part due to a severe shortage of suitable men because so many potential partners are either in jail or without a decent job.[342] A more recent article by Neal (2004) supports this view, but argues that labour market conditions act in combination with the welfare system.[343] A severe decline in the supply of marriageable, less educated black men in the USA from the 1960s onwards coincided with an expansion of welfare programs for never-married mothers. As the supply of suitable men dried up, these welfare programs made it feasible for women to raise children without a male partner. Thus, the trigger which set off the explosion in extra-marital childbearing was the collapse of male employment, but this explosion was made possible by the presence of an alternative form of support in the form of welfare benefits.

Del Bono (2004), using longitudinal data based on British Local Education Authorities (LEAs), finds that local male unemployment rates are positively related to extra-marital births and negatively related to formation of a cohabitation or marriage.[344] Using decennial census data,

341   Dench G., Gavron K., & Young M., 2006, The New East End: Kinship, Race and Conflict, London, Young Foundation, pp. 62 - 63

342   Brien, Michael J., 1997, "Racial differences in marriage and the role of marriage markets" Journal of Human Resources, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 741-778

343   Neal, D., 2004, "The Relationship Between Marriage Market Prospects and Never-Married Motherhood," Journal of Human Resources, Vol. 39, No. 4, pp. 938-9

344   Del Bono, E., 2004, "Pre-Marital Fertility and Labour Market Opportunities: Evidence from the 1970 British Cohort Study", Bonn, IZA Discussion Paper No.1320, September

Rowthorn and Webster (2006) find that lone parenthood is most prevalent in the old industrial areas of Britain, many of which still contain a very large pool of jobless men (see table below). These results are consistent with the study of Borooah (2002), which uses data from the Family Expenditure Survey for the UK to show that unemployed men are less likely to marry or cohabit than employed men.[345] Borooah concludes his study with the following words: "The results show that, for men, work and family are complements: men cannot have the latter without the former. If the view is accepted, for which there is considerable evidence, that the socialization of men takes place largely within the context of their assuming family responsibilities, then, in terms of its social consequences, the presence of a large group of men who are, per force, single must be viewed with some trepidation. If lone men do indeed present a social problem then this paper suggests that in order to relieve their loneness it is very important to get them into the kind of steady work that will provide them with the basis for acquiring a family"

Geographical Distribution of Lone Parenthood and Male Joblessness[346]

A: % Lone Parent Families 1971
B: % Lone Parent Families 2001
C: % Male Joblessness 1971
D: % Male Joblessness 2001

	A	B	C	D
Barking and Dagenham	8.5	35.4	5.0	19.4
Newham	10.2	39.6	6.0	27.0
Southwark	14.7	45.7	7.1	21.2
Birmingham	10.8	34.4	6.5	24.0
Liverpool	11.5	44.8	12.6	30.6
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	11.5	31.9	9.9	24.2
Strathclyde	9.1	32.4	9.8	21.9
Surrey	**7.0**	**16.1**	**3.9**	**7.5**

Other studies do not focus specifically on male joblessness, but look at unemployment in general. The most recent American study on this topic is by Curtis (2006). Controlling for the influence of many other factors, such as welfare and the availability of subsidised housing, she finds that marriage is much less frequent and lone parenthood more common, in areas where unemployment is high.[347] Using longitudinal data for British travel to work areas, Ermisch (2000) finds that poor employment opportunities encourage childbearing outside marriage and discourage the formation of cohabiting unions, which delays marriage.[348] These effects are quite large. Ermisch's estimates imply that a sustained 5 percentage point increase in the local unemployment rate increases the proportion of women having a pre-marital first birth before their 27th birthday by 10-15 percentage points. This finding suggests that poor employment opportunities may be an important reason why lone parenthood is so high in the old industrial areas of the country, many of which still have much higher than average unemployment.

4. SEXUALISATION OF SOCIETY

Sexual behaviour and norms have changed substantially over the past 50 years with impact on both family formation and stability. The subject is worthy of a complete report in its own right, so the treatment here must of necessity be brief.

In a survey on the state of Britain today[349] it's interesting to see that the things people are worried about are headed by issues around protecting young people from paedophiles on the net (64%), and internet pornography (60%). Further down the scale, but none the less significant were Underage sex (31%) and Too much casual sex between adults (17%).

Findings from a MORI survey of Sexual Attitudes carried out in Jan 2006[350]

Age of first sex

	All %	Males %	Females %
Under 16	19	19	19
16-18	42	36	47
19-20	15	14	15
21-24	9	11	7
25 and over	3	4	1
I've never had sex	3	4	3
Mean age	17.74	18.06	17.44

Number of sexual partners

	All % (1,618)	Males % (777)	Females % (823)
None	*	*	0
1	15	13	16
2- 5	37	38	37
6-10	20	21	20
11-15	7	6	8
16-20	4	4	4
Over 21	9	10	6
Mean number	9.55	11.13	8.06

345   Borooah, V. K. , 2002, "Does Unemployment Make Men less 'Marriageable'?" Applied Economics, Vol. 34, No. 12, pp. 1571-1582

346   Rowthorn, R & Webster,D., Male Worklessness and the Rise of Lone Parenthood in Britain, Oxford Centre for Population Research, Working Paper no. 31. "Male Joblessness" refers to the percentage of men aged 16-49 who were not full-time students and not in employment.

347   Curtis, M. H., 2006, Housing Policies and Unmarried Mothers' Living Arrangements,   Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, Working Paper no. 2006-17-FF, May

348   Ermisch, J., 2000, Employment Opportunities and Pre-marital Births in Britain, Working Paper 2000-26, University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research

349   The Paradoxical State of Britain, Ipsos MORI, Sept 2006 http://www.ipsos-mori.com/publications/bp/state-of-britain-2006.pdf

350   MORI survey of Sexual Attitudes for Observer Newspaper, January 2006; http://www.ipsos-mori.com/polls/2006/obs060110.shtml

These surveys confirm that society now accepts that commencement of sexual activity during late teen years and having multiple sexual partners are normal. The survey also found that 39% of respondents (44% of males and 35% of females) had had concurrent sexual relationships with different partners, and a similar proportion (40%) had "been unfaithful to a partner who they were in a relationship with".

The figures above are somewhat lower than is normally reported for sexual activity below age 16 which typically report that about a third of girls are sexually active by then, though most of them say that with hindsight they wish they had waited. Wellings et al[351] state that earlier first intercourse is less likely to be an autonomous and a consensual event, and more likely to be regretted and unprotected against pregnancy and infection.

The impression teenagers sometimes get is that everybody of their age is having sex. A tracking survey to inform the National Evaluation of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy[352] surveyed more than 750 young people aged 13–21 across England in June 2003. It showed that only around four in ten had fairly accurate perceptions of the proportion of young people who had sexual intercourse before the age of 16. 46% mistakenly believed that more than half of young people had sex before they were 16. The proportion of men reporting intercourse before age 16 is around 30% whilst the proportion of women reporting intercourse before age 16 is around 26% in their report.

CHANGE IN SEXUAL ATTITUDES IN PAST 50 YEARS
When analysing data from the 1990 and 2000 National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles for the ESRC, Professor Kaye Wellings observed a series of significant trends in sexual activity. The past half-century has seen distinct changes in our sexual behaviour, and these changes have been considerably more marked among women than men.

- There has been a progressive reduction in the age at which sexual intercourse first takes place and an increase in the proportion of young people who have had sexual intercourse before the age of consent. For men and women reaching sexual maturity in the 1950s, the average age at first intercourse was 20 and 21 respectively; by the mid-1990s, it was 16 for both sexes.

- In parallel with this trend, the proportion of young people who are sexually active before the age of 16 has increased. At the end of the twentieth century, a quarter of young women had intercourse before the age of consent compared with fewer than 1% of those becoming sexually active in the 1950s. Here too, the gap between the sexes has been narrowing over time, and by the 1990s it had closed.

- Despite the convergence of men and women's age at first intercourse, there remain gender differences in the experience of the event. Women are twice as likely as men to regret their first experience of intercourse and three times as likely to report being the less willing partner.

- Among women becoming sexually active in the 1950s, the majority lost their virginity to their husband or fiancé, though only a minority of men lost their virginity to their wife or fiancée. 39% of women and 14% of men born in the early 1930s married before having sexual intercourse and a further 14% of women and 6% of men were engaged to be married before doing so. By the 1990s, fewer than 1% of men and women had their first experience of sex with someone they were married or engaged to, and the gender differences had all but vanished.

- Men live up to their stereotype in being more likely to report large numbers of partners and less likely to report having been monogamous. Yet while one partner for life is still a more common pattern for women, the proportion who had had only one partner halved between 1990 and 2000. At the same time, the proportion of women reporting concurrent relationships has increased.

- There has undoubtedly been a relaxation in social attitudes towards sexual behaviour, particularly towards the sexual behaviour of the young. Attitudes towards homosexual behaviour, non-exclusive sexual relationships and sex outside of marriage have all softened over recent decades.

- The exception is monogamy. Whatever our practices and for all our interest in the peccadilloes of celebrities, in principle, the UK public are firmly in favour of sexual exclusivity. There is near universal condemnation of sexual relationships outside of regular ones, with the majority of people of both sexes - four out of five - strongly disapproving of sexual infidelity.

- There are a variety of drivers behind these changes which cannot be evaluated in depth in this report.

351   Wellings K. Nanchahal K., Macdowall W., McManus S., Erens R.,et al, 2001, "Sexual behaviour in Britain: early heterosexual experience," Lancet Vol. 358, pp. 1843-50
352   Evaluation of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy. Tracking survey: Report of results of nine waves of research, October 2003, BMRB International, London

These include the changing roles of women in society, the availability and effectiveness of contraception and the consequent ability to separate sexual activity from procreation, and the evolving approaches to sex education both in schools and in families. There is however one trend which has changed substantially in the past 10-20 years, the accessibility and prevalence of pornography which is both a sign of, and a driver to, changing attitudes to sexual activity. (See Appendix 5)

D5 Social policies and trends

Summary: All families are affected by the systems of state within which they operate, and in particular the poorest families. The Welfare state has developed to a point in which there are substantial financial advantages to single-parenthood which, it is shown, do influence behaviour. Successive changes to the legal framework around families, including further changes recently proposed by the Law Commission, have worked to reduce the stability of families. The government, through its focus on child-centric family support, actually reduced in recent times the funding available to support family stability.

1. HOW THE WELFARE STATE PENALISES INTACT COUPLES WITH CHILDREN

It is cheaper for a couple to live together than to live apart. The main saving is on housing costs, but they may also save money by sharing items such as heating, bedding and television. These are some of the economic gains traditionally associated with marriage, although they also apply to unmarried couples who cohabit. The extent to which these gains are actually realised in practice depends on the welfare system and the economic situation of the two partners. Prosperous, two-earner professional couples are largely insulated from the operation of the welfare system, and any welfare benefits that they gain or lose through their choice of living arrangements are small in comparison to their outgoings and their potential earnings. At the other end of the income scale, the financial impact of the welfare system may be enormous. Indeed, the present system penalises many poor intact families so heavily that most or all of the savings that they achieve by living together are taken away from them.

> "I never really questioned the fact that I would get income support. I always knew it was your entitlement. If I didn't have that cushion, I couldn't have left him. If benefits were less, I would have been a lot more reluctant to leave. I would have tried to source a job before leaving. Benefits have definitely influenced my decision to leave."
>
> *Newly separated single mother with three children under five, now receiving £19,535 in welfare - includes Housing benefit £7,800, Child tax credit £6,240, Income support £2,756, Child benefit £2,444 & School dinners £295 (excludes council tax benefit and free prescriptions)*

Since Labour came to power there have been many changes in the welfare system. There is now an array of payments to families, some of which are officially called "tax credits" but are really welfare benefits in disguise. Apart from Child Benefit, virtually all benefits are means-tested and it is this aspect of them that impinges on family structure. Currently, the main means-tested benefits are the Working Tax Credit (WT), Child Tax Credit (CTC), Income Support (IS), Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB). Housing benefit is for people living in rented accommodation, whereas help with mortgage payments is available under income support. Taken as a whole, these welfare benefits penalise the vast majority of intact couples because they get more money from the government if they separate, than if they live openly together. Moreover, the size of this "partnership penalty" was increased substantially for many couples when Labour revamped the tax credit system in 2003.[353]

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has shown that families on modest incomes may suffer a large financial penalty if the parents live openly together.[354] For example, consider a couple in which the main carer earns £5,000 a year and the other adult £15,000. If they openly live openly together they will be entitled to £2,316.86 in welfare benefits, but if they live apart, or pretend to live apart, the main carer will get £7,785.45 in benefits. Thus, by living openly together, the couple suffer a welfare penalty equal to £5,468.59. Such a penalty may be greater than all of the savings the couple make by sharing the same accommodation and other facilities, leaving them worse off than if they were to live apart. The penalty arises because tax credits are assessed against the joint income of the couple and make no allowance for the presence of a second adult.

Using the DWP Tax and Benefit Model Tables 2004, Donald Draper and Leonard Beighton from the charity CARE have examined how the welfare system affects 75 different kinds of family. Their figures show that, after subtracting housing costs, many couples are worse off by more than £50 per week if they stay together than if they separate. In seventeen cases, the intact couple is worse off by more than £100 per week. These examples confirm that, towards the lower end of the income scale, where families may be struggling to make ends meet, the

353   Anderberg, D., F. Kondylis and I. Walker, 2000, Partnership Penalties and Bonuses Created by Two Major UK Benefit Programs, mimeo, Fig. 8.

354   IFS (2006), Government paying tax credits and benefits to 200,000 more lone parents than live in the UK, Press Release 12 March.

welfare state provides only modest support for intact couples and may heavily penalise parents who choose to get married or openly cohabit. This penalty is, in effect, a tax on the savings that parents make by living together. It is a highly regressive tax which affects the poor, but not the rich, whose incomes are too high for them to be affected by welfare benefits.

The current treatment of intact couples is open to the following objections:

- *Poverty*. There are more children in poverty living in two-parent families than in lone parent families and, unlike those in the latter, the great majority of these children live in families where one or, sometimes, both parents are in paid work. A Joseph Rowntree Foundation report estimates that a couple with children where a man is low paid is nearly twice as likely to be poor as a family with a lone mother (Hirsch 2006:36[355]).

  The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates that, on present policies, after taking into account housing costs, there will be 3.5 million children in poverty in 2010/11. Of these, 2.1 million will be in two parent households (an increase of 200,000) of which 1.8 million (an increase of 400,000) will be in "in-work" households.[356]

  The extent of poverty amongst two parent families has been acknowledged by John Hutton, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, who said in a speech to the Fabian Society on 10 May, 2006:
  *"It is a striking fact that around half of the children living in poverty in Britain to-day live in a household where an adult is in work. These are **largely couple families** (our emphasis) who do not have enough hours or earn enough to escape poverty. Analysis has shown that at the minimum wage, typical couple families need a full time and a part-time worker to escape poverty."*[357]

- *Fraud*. The present system encourages fraud because couples can pretend to the authorities that one of them is a lone parent. The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates that the government is paying tax credits or out-of-work benefits to around 200,000 more lone parents than actually live in the UK. Some of this overpayment is due to genuine error, but some is the result of deliberate fraud. The fact that fraud is so profitable for low income couples discourages mar-

riage because couples who are married can be easily identified by the authorities. For the same reason, it discourages open cohabitation.

- *Injustice*. By clawing back many or all of the financial benefits of marriage or stable cohabitation, the welfare system penalises foresight and responsibility. In the name of children, it provides extra financial support for couples which break up and for parents who never lived with a partner in the first place. One can justify supporting lone parents on humanitarian grounds, but the fact that poor intact couples are so heavily penalised by the tax and benefit system is still an injustice.

- *Behaviour*. At the lower end of the income scale, where families are struggling to make ends meet, the welfare state provides only modest support for intact couples and penalises many parents who choose to get married or openly cohabit. Given the financial pressures on intact couples at this end of the scale, it is not surprising that so many of them break up, and given the penalties on marriage or overt cohabitation, it is not surprising that many women have children without a resident partner. Although disputed, there is now a body of evidence suggesting that the tax and benefit system has been a significant factor behind the dissolution of families and the growth of lone parenthood. Other factors are the child support regime and the local employment situation, both of which affect the financial circumstances of different family types and the choices facing actual or would-be parents.

Behavioural Effects

If the financial advantages of living together are reduced then, other things being equal, we should expect to see fewer people getting married or cohabiting. From a theoretical point of view, this is obvious, but how important is it in practice? It is an article of faith in official circles that financial incentives have virtually no impact on family structure. For example, a recent report by Sir David Henshaw recommends that the welfare system should disregard most of the maintenance that an estranged parent receives for child support.[358] The author recognises that such a reform might, in theory, encourage relationship breakdown, but it asserts that: "research shows little evidence of this. Increases in income improve the financial independence of parents with care, but this will only

355   Hirsch , D., 2006, What will it take to end child poverty?, York Joseph Rowntree Foundation

356   CARE Press Release, 15th September 2006.

357   http://www.dwp.gov.uk/aboutus/2006/10-05-06.asp

358   Henshaw, D., 2006, Recovering child support: routes to responsibility, report to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, July 2006.

affect incentives where the decision is already finely balanced". The last sentence is taken almost verbatim from a survey of research on family structure that was written some years ago for the Lord Chancellor's Department.[359]

> "The state financed my wife to leave me. I'm on £30,000. My marginal tax rate is now 69%. Why would I earn more? She now gets £41,000 without me. It's in her interests to leave and not work."
> *Divorced father*

The above survey can be criticised on several grounds. It was not correct to claim that the reported research showed little evidence that welfare benefits encourage family breakdown and lone parenthood. Some of this research had found large effects, whereas others had found virtually none. This does not mean that the true effects were small. It simply means that, using different approaches and different data sets, various researchers came to very different conclusions. Faced with such widespread disagreement amongst the specialists, the report should have said that the research evidence is conflicting and that until more evidence becomes available, official policy should err on the side of caution.

A more important limitation of the survey is that most of the reported research is by now at least ten or fifteen years old and the bulk of it refers to the United States. Over the past decade, more extensive data, with wider geographical coverage, have become available, and statistical methods have also improved. As a result, the balance of evidence is shifting towards the view that the welfare system and child support regulations do have a significant effect on family structure.

Review of the evidence

Before reviewing the evidence, a warning is in order. The relationship between welfare benefits and family structure is complex and it is often difficult to interpret the available information. For example, research may reveal that countries with high welfare benefits for lone parents have higher than average rates of lone parenthood. This is consistent with the view that welfare benefits encourage lone parenthood. On the other hand, there may be some third factor that is responsible for both high benefits and high rates of lone parenthood. For example, if social attitudes towards

separation and un-partnered childbearing are very liberal in a particular country, this will encourage more people to engage in such behaviour, thereby leading to more lone parenthood. Moreover, welfare policy towards lone parents is likely to be more generous where social attitudes are liberal. Conversely, suppose that research reveals that high rates of lone parenthood are associated with low welfare benefits. Does this imply that lone parenthood can be reduced by increasing benefits? Not at all. Welfare benefits may be low because there are so many lone parents. It is very costly to be generous to a lot of recipients and taxpayers may not be willing to foot the bill. Moreover, governments may reduce welfare benefits in response to concerns about family breakdown, so that area with high rates of lone parenthood may end up with lower than average benefits. These are just some of the complexities which explain why it is so difficult to find hard evidence of a causal link between welfare benefits and family structure, and why different researchers, using different approaches and different data sets, come to different conclusions. The diversity of results does not imply that the effect of welfare benefits on family structure is small.

Much of the research on the behavioural effects of welfare benefits refers to the United States. There are some problems in applying the findings of this research to the UK. Cultural differences may mean that welfare benefits may impinge differently on behaviour in the two countries. More important is the fact that benefits are typically much lower in the United States than here, so we should not expect them to exert such a large influence on behaviour. Nevertheless, in a wide-ranging review and meta-analysis, Moffitt (1997) concluded that welfare does have an impact on marriage and fertility, although findings differ widely about the scale of this effect, with a sizeable minority of studies finding no effect at all.[360] Subsequent research reveals continuing diversity of findings. However, in a recent paper, Curtis (2006) points out that American studies typically ignore housing costs and subsidies and hence they normally underestimate the scale and impact of welfare benefits.[361] Avoiding this pitfall, she finds strong evidence that housing subsidies and other welfare benefits encourage lone parenthood in preference to marriage or cohabitation. Moehling (2005) examines the history of American family structure over the entire twentieth century with the aim of disentangling the effects of social attitudes and welfare policy.[362] She finds

359   Mansfield, P., Reynolds J., & Arai L., 1999, "What Policy Developments Would be Most Likely to Secure and Improvement in Marital Stability" in Simons J. (Ed.) High Divorce Rates: The State of the Evidence on Reasons and Remedies, Vol.2, Research Series No. 2/99, Lord Chancellor's Department: London

360   Moffitt, R. A., 1997, "The Effect of Welfare on Marriage and Fertility: What Do We Know and What Do We Need to Know? " Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin, Discussion Paper, no. 1153-97.

361   Curtis, M. H., 2006, "Housing Policies and Unmarried Mothers' Living Arrangements, Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, Working Paper, no. 2006-17-FF, May362

362   Moehling, C. M., 2005, The American Welfare System and Family Structure: An Historical Perspective, Yale University, June, mimeo

that, for whites at least, welfare policy was a causal factor behind the growth of lone parenthood in the second half of the century. However, she also argues that other factors were more important, especially for the black population, of which she singles out the worsening of the male labour market and consequent decline in the returns to marriage.

There is not much systematic UK research on the impact of welfare benefits on family structure. This is mainly because the standard method for exploring this issue is to compare different geographical areas with different welfare regimes. Since welfare regimes are very similar throughout the UK, there is insufficient variation to allow inter-regional comparisons of the effect of welfare. However, there are some relevant studies that do use UK data. In a sophisticated econometric analysis, Walker and Zhu (2006) find that child support payments have a strong effect on the probability that a couple will separate.[363] The prospect, that a man will have to pay a substantial amount of child support if his partner throws him out, may make him behave better and reduce the chance of separation. Likewise, he is less likely to abandon his family if he knows that he will have to pay child support. This finding directly contradicts Henshaw's claim that child support has little effect on the risk of separation. Although not directed concerned with the tax and benefit system, the findings of Walker and Zhu support the idea that financial incentives matter, and by implication that welfare benefits matter.

Benson's (2006) study of family breakdown in the UK, see Appendix 3, provides further evidence. Amongst parents of three year old children, receipt of benefits raises the odds of family breakdown by 33%, above and beyond any additional effects of income, education, marital status, age or ethnic group.

This is also the conclusion of Gonzalez (2006). Comparing the countries of the European Union, she finds that welfare benefits have a significant effect on the prevalence of lone parenthood.[364] Lone parenthood is uncommon in the countries of Southern Europe, which have very low welfare benefits for lone parents, and is very common in North European countries, such as the UK and Denmark, where such benefits are much higher. Gonzalez points out that welfare benefits are not the only cause of international variations in the prevalence of lone parenthood. Social norms also play a role. Attitudes towards divorce, cohabitation and un-partnered childbearing are more tolerant in some countries than others, and such attitudes are correlated with welfare policy. The countries of Northern Europe are both more tolerant of lone parenthood and financially more generous towards lone parents than are the other European countries. Her analysis suggests that both factors play a role in explaining why there are such large international differences in rates if lone parenthood.

2. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK
The legal framework in the UK has undoubtedly been a contributing factor in family breakdown over the last 40 years. Some attribute this to laws and policy following the lead of an increasingly liberal society. Others argue that it is the result of a tacit anti-marriage agenda by abolitionists now controlling government research and policy units. The content of this report clearly shows how our legal framework has made splitting-up easier. It must be said, however, that some of the changes in our laws have also sought to crush the empty shell of broken marriage with minimum bitterness and maximum fairness.

Since the 1960's there has been a constant flow of primary and secondary legislation affecting divorce, sexual freedom, abortion rights, homosexual lifestyles, tax & benefits and more. In combination these laws have undermined the value of marriage as an institution, mainly by elevating the value of other relationship structures now generally considered to lack the longevity and strength that marriage brings to the family unit. Even the words "married / husband / wife" have been replaced by "partner" in much officialdom, further distancing the institution from society. As a result of these and other factors, the divorce rate rose significantly in the UK (and has remained at a high but stable rate for the last quarter century). In addition, many unmarried people view the high divorce rate as a reason not to embark on an apparently failing institution. Thus marriage rates have fallen and other family models such as cohabitation and lone parenting have proliferated. See Appendix 6 for a short paper on "How the legal framework has contributed to family breakdown in the United Kingdom".

3. THE EVOLUTION OF FAMILY SUPPORT POLICY
This section briefly traces the evolution of both government thinking and funding with regard to support for adult relationships, and in particular marriage, as a primary component of support to families and the prevention of family breakdown. There are of course a number of other areas of government support, notably the care of children removed from, or rejected by, parents and whilst clearly important,

363   Walker, I. and Y. Zhu, 2005, Do Fathers really matter? Or is it just their money that matters? Evidence from the British Household Panel Survey, 11 November, mimeo.

364   González L., 2006, The Effect of Benefits on Single Motherhood in Europe, Institute for the Study of Labor IZA DP No. 2026

they are usually a result of the breakdown of the adult relationship in one form or another and are therefore secondary to the central line of this section.

The paper examines two strands of government policy, the first concerned with marriage and adult relationships, and the second the more general "Family Support" which have now converged into a single stream. In the course of one decade the focus of adult relationship support has shifted from an expressed intent to support marriage, to one in which the well-being of children is at the heart of policy.

Marriage and Relationship Support (MARS)
In the mid 1990's, faced with an annual divorce rate reaching close to 14 per thousand married population, the government of the day introduced legislation (Family Law Act 1996) to enshrine in practice the principles:[365]

(a) that the institution of marriage is to be supported;

(b) that the parties to a marriage which may have broken down are to be encouraged to take all practicable steps, whether by marriage counselling or otherwise, to save the marriage;

(c) that a marriage which has irretrievably broken down and is being brought to an end should be brought to an end-

    (i) with minimum distress to the parties and to the children affected;

    (ii) with questions dealt with in a manner designed to promote as good a continuing relationship between the parties and any children affected as is possible in the circumstances; and

    (iii) without costs being unreasonably incurred in connection with the procedures to be followed in bringing the marriage to an end; and

(d) that any risk to one of the parties to a marriage, and to any children, of violence from the other party should, so far as reasonably practicable, be removed or diminished.

Amongst its provisions[366] the act included powers for The Lord Chancellor, with the approval of the Treasury, to make grants in connection with-

(a) the provision of marriage support services;
(b) research into the causes of marital breakdown;

(c) research into ways of preventing marital breakdown.

The Lord Chancellor was questioned during the debate in the House of Lords[367] as to his intention with regard to the scope of such grants and was explicit in his response;

"I should point out to the House that the Bill makes clear that it is marriage support services and marriage counselling that are in issue from the point of view of support. Therefore, in respect of the clauses we are discussing, there is no question of this Bill authorising counselling in relation to alternative lifestyles."

Based on the bill, in early 1997 the Lord Chancellor Dept sought bids for the first round of funding for 13 marriage support organisations and published the first "Directory of Marriage Support Organisations" listing 58 voluntary sector organisations whose primary focus was the support of marriage and married couples.

In 1997 five of the leading agencies working in the field produced a joint report entitled Marriage and the Secure Society[368] which clearly argued the basis and evidence that marriage as an institution provided the basis from which both individuals and society derived their fundamental security.

In 1999 Sir Graham Hart was commissioned by the Lord Chancellor to review the funding of Marriage Support Services[369]. His review concluded (*inter alia*):

• Marriage breakdown is costing the taxpayer about £5Bn per year. [The report "The cost of Family Breakdown", published in 2000[370] put this figure at £15Bn per annum]

• Marriage support can be effective in preventing breakdown, improving relationships, not only helping individuals, but saving the government and other agencies large amounts of money.

• The LCD should play a strategic leadership role and establish a group to do this.

• The amount of funding should be increased from £3M to £5M over two years with significant increases thereafter.

• That the focus of funding should be shifted towards preventative measures

In response to the Hart Review the Lord Chancellor established an Advisory Group on Marriage and Relationship

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365   Family Law Act 1996, Part 1

366   Family Law Act 1996, Clause 22

367   Hansard (Lords,) Vol 563, Col 1061 et seq

368   Marriage and the Secure Society, discussion paper prepared for Lord Chancellors Department by the principal marriage and relationship support organisations, 1997.

369   The Funding of Marriage Support, review by Sir Graham Hart, published March 1999 by the Lord Chancellors Department (now Department of Constitutional Affairs)

370   Lindsay, D , 2000, The Cost of Family Breakdown, Family Matters

Support (AGMARS) which drew up a strategy "Moving Forward Together"[371] for the years 2002 onwards. The inclusion of the words "and Relationship" is significant, marking a clear change of direction from the original "Marriage Support" which was the explicit focus of both the 1996 Act, and the Hart Review. The conclusions of the AGMARS strategy states

"There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating the health benefits, and benefits to children, of committed couple relationships. The adverse effects on society of relationship breakdown, and the positive effects of stable couple relationships, make a strong caser for action. A good deal is already being achieved, but it is too little, and much of it comes too late. The strategy sets out ten areas for action. Research and evaluation are key elements. We have no illusions about what can be done, but we recognise that even modest improvements are worthwhile, not least in raising the importance of supporting couples and improving relationships – of investing in the couple."

Family Support

In 1997 the Prime Minister established the Ministerial Group on the Family to develop a coherent Government strategy to increase the support and help available to families. Supporting Families[372] was published in November 1998. The paper stresses the importance of families and among other things proposes education programs for marriage, parenthood and also post divorce parenting. The government's family policy was to be based on three simple principles:

• Children must come first
• Children need stability and security
• Families raise children, not government

The report concentrates on five areas where the government believed it could make a difference:

• ensuring all families have access to the advice and support they need
• improving family prosperity and reducing child poverty through the tax and benefit system
• making it easier for families to balance work and home
• strengthening marriage and reducing the risks of family breakdown

• tackling the more serious problems of family life, such as domestic violence, truancy and school-age pregnancy.

In practical terms the consultation and subsequent response laid the foundations in particular for:

• the implementation of the National Family and Parenting Institute (NFPI) and the helpline ParentLine
• Sure Start – a £540m initiative to help children in their early years.

In addition the paper proposed, and the responses generally supported, the introduction of clear statement of Rights and Responsibilities for married and for cohabiting couples, making pre-nuptial agreements legally enforceable, increasing access to marriage preparation, enhancing the information provided by Registrars, and providing enhanced help for marriages in difficulty.

Every Child Matters

In 2003, the Government published a green paper called Every Child Matters.[373] The green paper built on existing plans to strengthen preventative services by focusing on four key themes:

• Increasing the focus on supporting families and carers - the most critical influence on children's lives;
• Ensuring necessary intervention takes place before children reach crisis point and protecting children from falling through the net;
• Addressing the underlying problems identified in the report into the death of Victoria Climbié - weak accountability and poor integration;
• Ensuring that the people working with children are valued, rewarded and trained.

The green paper prompted an unprecedented debate about services for children, young people and families. There was a wide consultation with people working in children's services, and with parents, children and young people. Following the consultation, the Government published Every Child Matters: the Next Steps,[374] and passed the Children Act 2004, providing the legislative spine for developing more effective and accessible services focused around the needs of children, young people and families.

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371   Moving forward together - A Proposed Strategy for Marriage and Relationship Support for 2002 and Beyond, published April 2002 by Lord Chancellor Department (now available from Department for Education and Skills).

372   Supporting Families - a consultation document produced by the Home Office, November 1998

373   Every Child Matters - a Green Paper presented to Parliament, September 2003, published by Department for Education and Skills

374   Every Child Matters, the next steps - a consultation paper issued by Department for Education and Skills, 2004

In 2003 the government also undertook a number of reforms to the structure of the support for families, moving the coordination of a number of grants, including the LCD MARS funding to the DfES. Here the grants were combined with those from the Home Office into a unified "Strengthening Families Grant" under the aegis of the Sure Start programme. Excluded from this strand of funding was the support for the NFPI, and the Parenting Fund [set up under the Every Child Matters framework to promote work with parenting], which specifically excluded work focussed solely on the adult relationship.

Although nominally unified, separate strands were maintained within the Strengthening Families Grants and the level of funding for MARS work was held at a constant monetary value of £4.9m (£100K of the £5m allocated by the LCD was retained to fund the education programme on the rights (or lack thereof) for cohabiting couples). The aim of the grant programme was stated to be to support and develop activities which enable families to get access to the information, help and advice they want at the time they need it. The primary objectives were to:[375]

- promote effective and appropriate support to families (couples and parents at key life stages) and in particular at times of change, challenge or crisis;
- encourage the effective development and dissemination of best practice in the field of family support;
- encourage and support innovation among family support organisations;
- focus primarily on supporting couple relationships and parents with their parenting role;
- promote diversity and address social exclusion through the provision of support;
- contribute to one or more of the children, young people and families five outcomes listed in Every Child Matters.

The application of the funding to an increasingly diverse range of organisations, many only loosely contributing to the core aims of the AGMARS strategy was highlighted and criticised in a 2003 report "Marriage on MARS" published by Civitas.[376]

For 2006 the various strands of funding were finally combined in the Children and Young People Grant. The grant programme was created to help the DfES make its funding to voluntary organisations more strategic and to make it easier for organisations to apply for funding for work that improves outcomes for children, young people and families. It aims to contribute to increasing stability in the voluntary and community sectors by offering longer term funding. The programme brings together five existing grant programmes managed by the DfES.[377] These are:

- Children and Young People's Consultation Fund;
- National Voluntary Youth Organisations Grant Scheme;
- Safeguarding Children and Supporting Families grants;
- Strengthening Families Grant;
- Sure Start VCS grants.

Whilst the total grant funding of £17m appears to be an increase, the level of funding now being provided for adult Marriage and Relationship support has decreased from around £5m to about £3.85m. Some of the major core funded organisations such as Relate have suffered a significant reduction in funding, and this in turn is reducing their ability to implement strategic programmes aimed at focussing resources on preventative work, directly contrary to the AGMARS strategy.

In conclusion, in 1996 the Family Law Act was founded upon a clear and expressed intent to support and strengthen marriage, with funding provided for this purpose; a purpose reinforced by Sir Graham Hart in his 1999 review which recommended substantial increases for the funding. Successive government changes both to the focus and to the structure of the funding have resulted in a shift to a child-centric policy and strategy, with at best static, and in all probability a reduced, level of funding aimed at adult relationship stability and success, most notably in its established and most successful form, marriage.

4. LAW COMMISSION CONSULTATION ON LEGAL RIGHTS FOR COHABITING COUPLES

Cohabiting couples who separate after years of living together do not currently share the same rights of financial protection as married couples. Mainly this affects unmarried mothers whose economic prospects have been reduced by time spent bringing up children and whose family assets are owned by the father. Unlike married mothers, separating unmarried mothers can be left destitute following separation.

375 Programme Objectives for Strengthening Families Grant, produced by Department for Education and Skills.
376 Marriage on MARS - How the government's MARS programme provides resources to organisations that do not support marriage - a report by Nadia Martin, Civitas, August 2003
377 Introduction to Children, Young People and Families Grant, published by Department for Education and Skills, October 2005.

A major consultation paper from the Law Commission proposes that new legal rights for cohabiting couples on separation or death be introduced where there is a clear injustice. They argue that a new system based on economic advantage and disadvantage could tidy up legal loose ends as well as right obvious wrongs. It is the opinion of this group that such a move would do more harm than good. The Law Commission proposals, due for publication in August 2007, will undoubtedly right some present-day wrongs, mainly involving unmarried mothers, but we are concerned that it will also lead to a great many more family breakdowns amongst future couples and their children.

Most people already mistakenly believe they have legal rights through some form of common law marriage. This well-intentioned proposal is highly likely to encourage yet more couples to cohabit and thus to embrace a family structure that is inherently unstable for the adults and destructive for their children. Promoters of new rights argue that these proposals will increase protection for children but it is not obvious that this is the case. There are undoubted differences in the way the children of married and unmarried couples are treated by the law. However these differences mostly involve emphasis.

For example, the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 specifically requires that child welfare be the "paramount consideration" for children of married couples. For children of unmarried couples, schedule 1 of the 1989 Children's Act requires the court to have regard for the welfare of the child. The reality is these potential inequities are largely dealt with by sensible and appropriate interpretation of the legislation by judges – particularly Schedule 1, e.g. Thorpe LJ – Re P (2003, 2 FLR865) and Hale J – J v C (1999, 1 FLR 152)

The new proposals are primarily aimed at adults. Arguably adequate legal protection is already easily available for £43.50 and two visits to the register office, in other words through marriage. As we have already stated, people who choose to cohabit often do so in the mistaken belief that it is a form of common law marriage which gives them the same rights and responsibilities as they would get from legal marriage. But it would appear that rigorous proposals to deal with this problem through public education are not being given sufficient attention. As a result of media advertising everyone now knows the irresponsibility of drink-driving and that cigarettes cause cancer. A similar campaign could be mounted to inform people of the legal differences between marriage and cohabitation. This could also become a central part of sex education in schools. After such a campaign there would be few people left who did not understand the legal differences between marriage and cohabitation.

If some fully-informed people still chose to cohabit rather than marry, their decision should be respected. To impose onerous rights and responsibilities on informed adults who have consciously chosen to cohabit is authoritarian and illiberal and represents a form of compulsory, low-grade marriage. People who consciously choose to cohabit rather than marry should be treated as adults and expected to live by the consequences of their actions. New legal rights for cohabiting couples are neither necessary nor the best way of dealing with the issue. In our second report in June 2007, this group will look at social policy proposals that provide more robust solutions both for reducing present day injustices and improving future family stability.

5. SOCIAL NORMS

As Ermisch (2006) points out, a remarkable feature of English demographic history is the explosion in childbearing outside marriage during the last quarter of the twentieth century, after 400 years of relative stability.[378] Over the period 1845-1960, the percentage of births outside marriage moved within a small range, averaging about 5%. Since then it has risen dramatically to reach 42% in 2004. This rise has been most spectacular amongst the working class, with the result that a wide gap has now emerged between working class and middle class behaviour. Many working class births take place within unstable cohabiting unions, although an increasing number of new mothers do not have a live-in partner. Such behaviour is comparatively rare in middle class circles, where marriage is still the norm and the main route to lone parenthood is divorce.

One factor behind the growth of working class lone parenthood is a shortage of marriageable men due to the collapse of industrial employment. However, this cannot be the whole story. There was a similar industrial collapse during the 1920s and 30s, and a similar shortage of marriageable men, yet this did not lead to a significant rise in non-marital childbearing. There are two reasons why not. Firstly, in pre-war Britain there was little welfare support for unmarried mothers so that a woman who had a child outside marriage would have to rely largely on her parents for support or else live in poverty. This was a severe financial disincentive. There were also strong social constraints on non-marital childbearing amongst working class women.[379] If a young man got a woman pregnant he was

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378   Ermisch, J., 2006, An Economic History of Bastardy in England and Wales, University of Essex, ISER Working Paper, No. 2006-15. A related argument can be found in Nechyba, T. J., 1991, "Social Approval, Values, and AFDC: A Re-examination of the Illegitimacy Debate," Journal of Political Economy, Vol 109, No. 3, pp. 637-672.

379   Cook H., 2005, The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex, and Contraception 1800-1975, Oxford, Oxford University Press

expected to marry her, and conversely, a young woman would only risk getting pregnant with a man who would marry her and whom she would wish to marry. Men and women who broke these rules would face severe disapproval from friends, neighbours and relatives. The combination of financial disincentive and social disapproval was sufficient to deter non-marital childbearing even in areas where economic conditions meant there was a severe shortage of marriageable men.

After the war the financial and social sanctions against lone parenthood were gradually weakened. The establishment of a comprehensive welfare state meant that government support was available for lone mothers, who could now more easily manage without the support of a husband, albeit with difficulty. There was also an eventual shift in social norms. This shift began in elite circles but eventually it spread to the rest of society. In the 1950s, there was still widespread working class disapproval of non-marital childbearing which is reflected in the words of a popular Frank Sinatra song from that period:

"Love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage. This I tell you brother, you can't have one without the other…Dad was told by mother you can't have one, you can't have none. You can't have one without the other".

At the time of this song, working class life was still organised around the values of respectability, foresight and personal responsibility. From the 1960s onwards, these values came under increasing attack from "enlightened" thinkers who rejected the "repressive" beliefs that held working class life together.[380] They rejected the idea that parents should stick together for the sake of their children, or that a man had a responsibility to marry a woman who was pregnant by him, even if he did not love her or she did not love him. Marriage and the two parent family were denounced by fashionable gurus as "toxic" institutions, and the idea that non-marital childbearing should be stigmatized was rejected because it hurt the children involved.

When the industrial collapse began in the late 1970s, many working class neighbourhoods suffered a dramatic reduction in the number of marriageable men with stable jobs. A similar collapse before the war had not led to a significant rise in non-marital childbearing because there were strong financial and social sanctions against having a child outside marriage. By the 1970s, these sanctions had been weakened, and there was less incentive for a woman to delay childbearing until she could find a suitable husband from amongst the greatly diminished pool of marriageable men. Given the existence of government support for lone mothers, there was also less reason for a man with poor economic prospects to stick by the mother, since his children might be as well off without him. Likewise, there was less reason for the mother to want such a man around.

The modern rise in working class lone parenthood was initially sparked off by a collapse of industrial employment. However, as Ermisch (2006)[381] has argued, once it had begun this process developed a life of its own. As non-marital childbearing became more common, it became more acceptable and this led even more men and women to follow this route. In many working class neighbourhoods, above all those with a large black population, most children are now born to women cohabiting in unstable unions or living without a resident partner. The result is a very high level of lone parenthood. This form of behaviour is now entrenched. Even in working class neighbourhoods where employment has recovered, rates of non-marital childbearing and lone parenthood are often many times higher than before the industrial collapse.
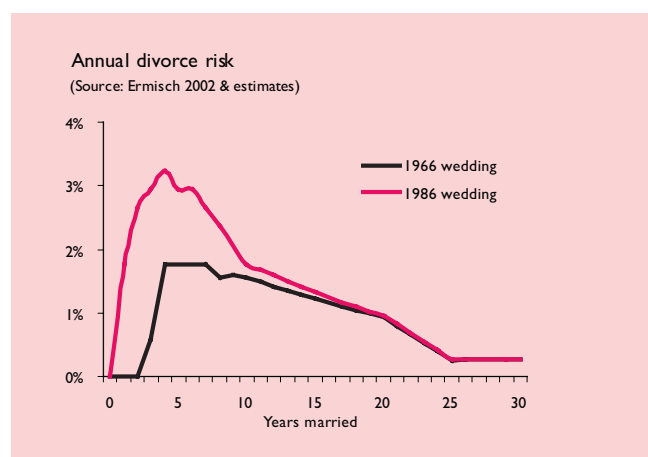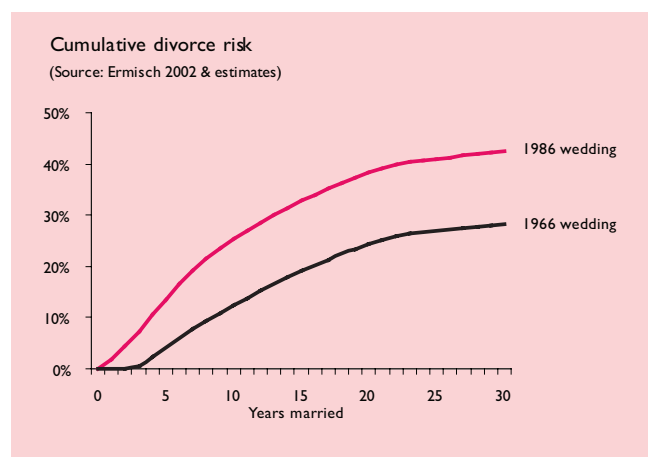
380   Magnet, M., 1994, The Dream and the Nightmare: The Sixties Legacy to the Underclass, Harper Collins
381   *ibid*

D6   Life events

Summary: Individual life events significantly influence family stability. Marriage remains a major stabilising factor, with the major risks of breakdown concentrated in the early years. Childbirth is one of the most stressful transitions for any couple, but whilst the arrival of children generally acts to stabilise married families, precisely the opposite is true in cohabiting couples. Bereavement produces heightened demands in a relationship and can, in some cases, lead to breakdown, though in strong relationships it may produce the opposite effect. Both unemployment and relocation can lead to family instability, and in many cases the loss of vital wider support at critical times.

1. MARRIAGE

Cumulative divorce risk
(Source: Ermisch 2002 & estimates)

Annual divorce risk
(Source: Ermisch 2002 & estimates)

As detailed in Section B3, divorce rates increased six or seven fold during the 1960s and 1970s. Although there have been increases in the age at which couples marry as well as the length of the average marriage that ends in divorce (11.3 years), divorce rates have remained virtually unchanged during the last two decades. The considerable media bias towards coverage of divorce, rather than the separation of unmarried couples, has undoubtedly fuelled scepticism and the trend away from marriage.

Based on data from British panel surveys,[382] it is possible to track the trajectory of divorce over time. For couples getting married in 1966, the cumulative risk of divorce stood at 4% after 5 years of marriage, 12% after 10 years, 19% after 15 years and 28% after 30 years. For couples marrying 20 years later in 1986, the cumulative risk of divorce stood at 14% after 5 years, 25% after 10 years and 33% after 15 years.

Extrapolating the trajectory forward in time, we estimate that the current lifetime divorce risk is around 42%. The surprising conclusion from this is that the majority of marriages last a lifetime – and not 11 years as is sometimes cited in error.

> "My husband left when our baby was 6 weeks old."
> *Verbatim quote from polling*

The highest risk faced by a couple today comes during years 3 to 6, during which the annual divorce risk peaks at around 3%. Far from there being a "seven year itch", a couple passing the seven year mark should celebrate. Their annual divorce risk now declines sharply for four years before eroding more gradually to 1% after 20 years and 0.3% after 25 years. The big increase in divorce risk is heavily concentrated in the early years of marriage. Almost half of the lifetime increase has occurred during the first 3 years of marriage alone. Two thirds has taken place within the first 5 years and over 90% within 10 years. Remarkably therefore, policies which strengthen marriage and reduce divorce risk during these early years of marriage hold the potential to reverse much of the increase in divorce risk since the 1960s. This is something which the group shall be considering very carefully in the third phase of our work

2. CHILDBIRTH

Many studies have indicated that becoming parents amounts to a stressful transition for many couples. Cowan and Cowan[383] cite several recent longitudinal stud-

382   Ermisch, J. ,2002, When forever is no more: Economic implications of changing family structure. ISER, University of Essex.

383   Cowan, C. P., & Cowan, P. A., 1997, "Working with couples during stressful transitions." In S. Dreman (Ed.), The family on the threshhold of the 21st. century. Hillsdale, NJ, Erlbaum. pp. 17-48

ies which have followed couples throughout the transition to parenthood and results show that at least 50% of partners becoming parents experience stressful changes, particularly in terms of increasing marital disenchantment, that is decreasing marital satisfaction. However, as already mentioned in Section D1, marital stability increases in the years following childbirth. But this is only true for married couples. The reverse is true for unmarried couples. Childbirth strengthens the bonds of married couples yet exposes the vulnerabilities of unmarried couples.

During the early years of marriage, annual divorce rates average 2.7% during the first five years and 2.5% during the first ten years.[384] During the early years of parenthood, annual divorce rates average 1.9% during the first three years and 1.6% during the first five years (Benson, 2006[385]; Kiernan, 1999[386]). Divorce rates therefore drop by at least one third when married couples have young children.

By contrast, annual separation rates during the first three years of parenthood average 6.7% amongst cohabiting couples and 10.6% amongst all unmarried couples (Benson, 2006). Up until five years, annual separation rates average 8.6% amongst cohabiting couples[387] – based on a slightly different definition of cohabitation. Much has been said about cohabitation not being a substitute for marriage but rather part of the process of getting married. However once people become parents whilst cohabiting they are subsequently less likely to convert their union into marriage and remain in an inherently less stable arrangement. Ermisch and Francesconi (2000),[388] found that being a mother is associated with a much lower probability of converting a cohabiting union into marriage than for childless women. As a consequence, those who become parents cohabit for longer, but 65% of these unions dissolve, compared with 40% of childless unions.[389]

When young women from lower socioeconomic groups become pregnant they are also more likely to cohabit than marry, which is implicated in the fragility of unions at this end of the socioeconomic spectrum. This group most

notably contributed to the increases in extramarital childbearing in the 1970s and 1980s.[390] So, on average, childbirth is associated with greater fragility when parents are cohabiting and greater stability when parents are married.

When looking at how childbirth contributes to dysfunction as a form of family breakdown, it is important to be aware that domestic violence often begins or increases in pregnancy and at childbirth.[391] In a time of generally heightened emotions there are often significantly higher levels of stress which can spill over into violence far more often than is commonly appreciated.[392] However, on a more positive note, researchers and practitioners are increasingly talking about the "magic moment" which childbirth represents in many disadvantaged communities. Mothers from a study of low income unmarried couples[393] in the US described a golden period in their relationship with the child's father after their child was born. Often the father came to the hospital during or after the birth and the couple expressed a strong desire to stay together and perhaps marry. However, this period was often short-lived because of the combination of high expectations and low capacities found in many fragile families. Such findings suggest that if targeted help were given to poor unmarried (or married) couples at these magic moments, some relationships could be stabilized and deterioration prevented. Again this working group will be examining likely policy recommendations which take this research into account.

3. BEREAVEMENT

There is no doubt that bereavement following the loss of a close family member, especially of a parent or child places enormous strains on a family. Breakdown in the form of dissolution might follow as a result of a strained partnering relationship or dysfunction from the destabilization of an already difficult parent-child relationship.

Looking at this latter type of breakdown, McCarthy and Jessop's recent review of the literature on the effect of bereavement on young people[394] stated that as "both

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384   Ermisch, J., 2002, When forever is no more: Economic implications of changing family structure. ISER, University of Essex

385   See Appendix 3

386   Kiernan, K., 1999, "Childbearing outside marriage in Western Europe." Population Trends, Vol. 98, pp. 11-20.

387   *ibid*

388   Ermisch, J. F. and M. Francesconi, 2000, "Cohabitation in Great Britain: Not for long, but here to stay," Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series A, Vol. 163, pp.153-171.

389   Ermisch J.F., September 2000, 'Personal Relationships and Marriage Expectations: evidence from the 1998 British Household Panel Study'. Working Paper of Institute for Social and Economic Research, paper 2000-27. Colchester, University of Essex

390   Ermisch, J. F. and M. Francesconi, 2000; and Berrington, A., 2001, Entry into parenthood and the outcome of cohabiting partnerships in Britain, Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 63, pp. 80-96, Issue 1; (citing Ermisch and Francesconi, 1998)

391   30% of domestic violence starts in pregnancy. Lewis, G., and Drife, J., 2005, Why Mothers Die 2000-2002 - Report on confidential enquiries into maternal deaths in the United Kingdom (CEMACH).

392   Domestic violence has been identified as a prime cause of maternal death during childbirth (http://www.womensaid.org.uk/landing_page.asp?section=00010001001000040002 see also http://www.refuge.org.uk

393   Edin K., 2000, "Few Good Men - Why Poor Mothers don't Marry or Remarry, The American Prospect

394   Ribbens McCarthy J. & Jessop J., 2005, Young people, bereavement and loss: Disruptive transitions? Joseph Rowntree Foundation/National Children's Bureau

bereavement and youth can be times of major transition and significant disruption to the general flow of social life and personal emotions . . . young people experiencing bereavement may therefore be doubly vulnerable." They found that some studies suggest that large numbers of bereaved young people never talk to anyone about their experiences; some evidence points to a risk of social isolation over time. Bereaved young people may have very different relationships with both peers and family members: they can be either key sources of support or of additional problems.

Professor Gill Jones' summary of a programme of research on youth transitions (which category includes bereavement) concluded that the influence of family beliefs – for example an education, work or family ethic - on the younger generation was very strong. Family beliefs are likely to affect not only the behaviour of young people, but also whether families provide emotional and economic support for education, work and domestic transitions, such as bereavement. Bereavement is more likely to take place where there are other aspects of disadvantage[395] (such as severe poverty, joblessness etc) and Jones therefore recommends that family and community contexts have to be taken into account when considering how best to support young people. As has been mentioned throughout this report, patterns of inter-generational inheritance of disadvantage are evident. Where emotional support is lacking for bereaved young people they can become even more estranged from their families. It is not necessarily bereavement per se which leads to dysfunction, but its interaction with other contextual factors.

Turning to bereavement as a cause of dissolution, Schwab's[396] review of the evidence which pointed to the heightened risk of divorce following the death of a child led her to conclude that this was in fact a myth requiring dispelling. Effectively, although a high incidence of marital breakdown following the death of an infant had been suggested by many researchers, she discovered that there is little empirical evidence to support this claim. (We were unable to find any research which looked specifically at the effect of bereavement on cohabiting relationships and whether or not the likelihood of dissolution was comparable to that among married couples suffering the same loss.)

Schwab found that although a number of clinicians and researchers in the past have found that parents experience a decline in marital satisfaction and/or strain in their marital relationship as a result of a child's serious illness and/or death, Klass (1987) spoke of the paradoxical effect

> "Undoubtedly bereavement puts strain on relationships and depending on the resilience of the relationship can sometimes break it. However parents react against the implication hat not only have they lost a child they were now also likely to lose their marriage!"
> *Bereaved parents practitioner*

which a child's death has on a marital relationship.[397] The paradox refers to the fact that couples have a new and profound bond created by the shared loss while at the same time experience an estrangement in their relationship resulting from the individual loss each spouse feels.

The intense grief that each parent experiences, coupled with differences in grieving and coping with loss, can hamper couples' communication, engender misunderstanding, and produce tension between marital partners. The strain may stem from both spouses' becoming too exhausted and emotionally drained to attend to each other's needs. However, she concluded that couples' marital relationships prior to the child's serious illness and/or death are likely to produce differential responses to a major family crises. Data obtained by Hamovitch,[398] who studied families with a child who was diagnosed to have cancer and later died, indicated that couples whose marital relationship was good prior to the child's death fared better in their bereavement. Klass[399] conducted a qualitative study on the dynamics of marriage and divorce and found that those who divorced after the child's death did not consider the death to be a central factor but that they seemed to feel that after their child's death, problems which existed before the death were no longer worth fighting. Relationships were thus ended and, to use Klass' expression, "marriages don't die with the death of a child, but often they receive an overdue burial."

Circumstances surrounding a child's death may also contribute to differential outcomes for marital relationships. For instance, when a child's death is precipitated by an acute marital strife resulting in temporary neglect and the accidental death of a child, as Nixon and Pearn (1977) found in their study, the likelihood of parental separation and divorce may be greater, compared with those cases that are not related to such antecedent events.[400]

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395   McCarthy and Jessop state that "Those living in disadvantaged circumstances are most likely to experience serious and multiple losses," *ibid*

396   Scwab R., 1998, "A Child's Death and Divorce: Dispelling the Myth," Death Studies, Vol. 22, pp. 445-468, 1998

397   Klass, D., 1987, Marriage and divorce among bereaved parents in a selfhelp group. Omega, Vol. 17, pp. 237-249

398   Hamovitch, M. B., 1964, The parent and the fatally ill child. Los Angeles, Delmar.

399   *ibid*

400   Nixon, J., & Pearn, J., 1977, "Emotional sequelae of parents and sibs following the drowning or near-drowning of a child". Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry , Vol. 11, pp. 265-268

Importantly however, Schwab's review found that if the parents' relationship is affected negatively at some point in time, that does not necessarily mean it will remain dissonant and eventually end in separation and divorce. On the contrary, evidence suggests that more couples remain married and may even strengthen their marriage despite the stress and strain they experience while their child is ill and when they are bereaved.[401] Schwab concluded that "With this sense of optimism, professionals can strive to help bereaved parents understand some of the effects of loss on their marital relationships, learn ways to cope with their difficulties, and promote bereavement outcomes that will foster healthy marital and family relationships."

4. UNEMPLOYMENT

Family breakdown is both a consequence and cause of unemployment and low pay.

Many of the old industrial areas are locked in a cycle of disadvantage. Industrial decline has eliminated most of the traditional forms of employment in these areas, and many men of working age are unemployed or are employed in low-paid jobs because they lack the education that is needed to obtain a good job. This contributes to the high rates of family breakdown and lone parenthood that are observed in these areas. Young men are often demoralised and the result is crime, drug addition and reckless sexual behaviour. Family breakdown and the wider social environment lead to poor performance of children at school, juvenile crime and teenage pregnancy. Few of these children go into higher education and if they do they leave the area. Those that remain are often unqualified and must compete for the few unskilled jobs that are available. The disadvantages of the previous generation are thereby reproduced.

The most extreme manifestation of this can be seen amongst children taken into care. As we have mentioned elsewhere in this report, according to Harriet Sergeant (2006), three-quarters of children in care have no educational qualifications at all when it ends.[402] Out of the 6,000 children who leave the care of the state each year, 60 make it to university. Within two years of leaving care 3,000 of these children will be unemployed, some 2,100 will be mothers or pregnant and 1,200 will be homeless. Children in care may be the most extreme example, but even where children are not taken into care, family breakdown often leads to the same result. Of course, many children who experience parental separation, or are brought up from the beginning by a lone mother, do well in later life. But a disproportionate number do badly in both personal and economic terms. No matter where they live, they are more likely to be unemployed than other children when they grow up.

The high rates of unemployment observed in some parts of the country are not simply the result of family breakdown. Many of the areas concerned have suffered severe economic decline over the past thirty years due to forces beyond their control. However, the high rate of family breakdown observed in these areas may inhibit their full economic recovery through its effects on educational performance and the motivation of both boys and girls, especially the former. These in turn may discourage business investment in the area and thereby inhibit the creation of new jobs. Any policy that seeks to address the cycle of deprivation in these areas must act on many different fronts. If the rate of family breakdown could be reduced this would contribute to economic regeneration which in turn would encourage the formation of stable families.

5. RELOCATION

"Relocation is not just about changing people's jobs, it also changes their lives."
Green A. & Canny A., 2003, Geographical mobility: family impacts, JRF

Census and survey sources reveal that each year about one in ten households in England moves house. Most moves are over short distances and are undertaken for housing- and family-related reasons. However, a small proportion of all moves is job-related. (There is a relative lack of data on the volume, nature, extent and characteristics of job-related relocation.) These tend to be over longer distances and as such may be more disruptive for the family involved. Those relocated are predominantly male, drawn from the younger and middle age ranges and working in higher level non-manual occupations. Relocation can lead to a reconfiguration of family living arrangements as it can lead to young people leaving the family home prematurely, parents moving away from children from previous relationships, an older parent moving out of the family home to form an independent household and formation of "dual location" households – with one partner commuting long dis-

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401   It has been suggested that many parents will in fact divorce during the prolonged illness of a child and will not therefore show up in the statistics of those divorcing as a result of bereavement. However Schwab also found that research outcomes on parents with children suffering from chronic illness do not seem to indicate that the divorce rate for bereaved parents is drastically reduced as a result of parents becoming divorced while their children are ill.

402   Sargeant, H., 2006, Handle with Care, London, Centre for Policy Studies.

tance. All of these carry the potential to strain relation-ships within a family and may, in a minority of cases, contribute to family breakdown. When one partner in a household has to relocate this can adversely affect the employment opportunities and career development of the other partner, access to childcare, the desire for geo-graphical stability for children's education, and provid-ing support for older relatives.

Childcare may not only be less easy to find in the formal sector, but, in addition, existing social networks including trusted family members will have been left behind. As many as 70% of working parents make use of informal networks including grandparents for all or part of their childcare, according to a recent study.[403] Grandparents who so often act as "glue" holding potentially fissive fam-ilies together may now be at too great a distance to per-form that function.

Dench and Gavron study[404] of the East End of London found a sense of loss among older women who could remember how things used to be regarding their place in the local community. Up to the fifties and sixties working-class neighbourhoods were manifestly organised around over-lapping extended families. Through having kin, one had a territorial base and many other ties too. But since then, increased (and often enforced) mobility has taken a heavy toll. Housing relocations have scattered family members and reduced ease and frequency of contact. In the latter part of the twentieth century younger family members have been obliged to move out, because of shortages in social housing. This has serious consequences for the operation of extend-ed families. People can and do still keep in touch with rela-tives – by phone and regular visits – but families are not so ineluctably bound up with community any more. Families, accordingly, have become much narrower and more private in their compass, and much less influential in neighbour-hood affairs, and this is arguably a great loss to local com-munities in terms of available experience and socialising influences on the young. Although Dench and Gavron's research was geographically bounded, other researchers have also observed that the decline in informal and com-munity-based forms of support to families, means that fam-ilies are increasingly reliant on themselves alone to bring up their children.[405]

Thus the greater pressures on the nuclear family result-ing from relocation, combined with decreased support from extended family and the wider community, may in some cases contribute to dissolution, dysfunction or some measure of fatherlessness (for children either left behind from previous relationships or relocated away from their birth fathers).

403 Cited by Lucy Ward, February 28, 2005, "Grandparents feel squeeze between work and nursery" The Guardian

404 Dench G., Gavron K., & Young M., 2006, The New East End: Kinship, Race and Conflict London, Young Foundation

405 Green H., & Parker S., 2006, The Other Glass Ceiling; The domestic politics of parenting; Demos

D7   Intergenerational transmission

Summary: Many of the factors cited as causes of family breakdown in the foregoing chapters of Section D are mirrored in Section C as consequences of the same social problem. This creates a complex system of self-reinforcing factors which makes it difficult to establish   causal relations. Moreover, as our diagram in the introduction makes clear, there is a further factor at work which is the intergenerational transmission of effects from parents to children. In general, once family breakdown starts to occur it is more likely to recur in subsequent generations, making the challenges deep-rooted, and more difficult to shift. The factors are shown to operate at both a sociological and psychological level.

INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION FROM A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Two simple scenarios, or "ideal types" in the sociological sense of the phrase, will help illustrate this point:

Cycle of advantage

First consider the children of a well-adjusted middle class set of parents living in a stable marriage with adequate housing and resources. They have reasonable access to education for their children and are likely to play an active part both in interacting with the schools and supplementing the education through home learning etc. The children are likely to absorb the values from their parents and will implicitly learn the relational skills for long-term relationships from watching their parents interact. These children will probably benefit from better than average health and are more likely to leave education relatively better qualified to move into economically progressive careers. They will, in all probability progress their careers, and be economically independent. By the time they reach their late 20's or early 30's they may well marry, start a family, and the cycle will repeat.

Cycle of disadvantage

Consider now the children of a disadvantaged teenage mother, possibly living in one of a series of sequential relationships with different men, probably with low income, little in the way of resources, and in poor housing. They will have limited access to education, and home-life is unlikely to be conducive to additional learning. These children will again absorb values from their parents, but these are less likely to involve the skills and values to sustain long-term relationships. These children will probably fare worse in educational terms and are likely to enter low paid jobs, or even unemployment continuing the economic poverty. There is a substantially greater chance that they will become teenage, or very young parents, and are unlikely to sustain a long term relationship with the co-parent.

An important demographic shift occurs as a result of these two cycles. Those involved in the cycle of advantage are likely to marry later, and have fewer children – indeed the birth-rate at about 1.8 is below the necessary rate to sustain this population. Those involved in the cycle of disadvantage however are likely to have children at a much younger age, and to produce larger families over a longer period, possibly with a variety of partners. This population tends to expand over time.

Furthermore, it is relatively easy for an "advantaged" child to step into the cycle of disadvantage – it merely requires the breakdown of their parents relationship undermining the learning of long-term relational values and skills, or the adoption of some more risky behaviours in response to social pressures, and they may follow the path above into serial relationships, etc. The transition from disadvantage to advantage however is substantially more difficult to sustain requiring the gaining of material resources, resistance to social norms, and the gaining of the values and skills associated with long-term relationships, each of which presents distinct barriers to be overcome.

Thus, both natural demographic trends, and the asymmetry of social mobility, work together to drive towards increasing populations involved in the cycle of disadvantage. The implications are not only the personal ones for the individuals so affected, but also for society at large as these factors tend to deplete the most economically productive strata of society, and increase the burdens of social support needed.

A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION

Parents' attachment styles can be transmitted to their children through parent-child and parent-parent interaction (further reinforcing our contention that the couple relationship can no longer be neglected in public policy). Increasing evidence indicates that parenting practices may also be passed from one generation to the next, indicating the intergenerational transmission of social behaviours. In Martin and Halveson's research a significant association was found between the ways in which adults and their children behaved as parents, in

both nurturing and restrictive parenting techniques[406] and the use of physical punishment and rewards. Continuities from one generation to another in terms of anti-social behaviours are also well documented.[407] Parental conflict and authoritarian parenting were found to be related to conduct problems in offspring's early childhood in two successive generations.

Problematic parenting develops through behaviour modelled by one's own parents and is also an extension of a child's early aggressive and dysfunctional social behaviour. Thus parents with such a background tend to have social, behavioural, psychological and health problems, as will their own offspring. Adolescents from such backgrounds, who engage in anti-social behaviour, are more likely to follow accelerated pathways to adulthood by becoming parents in their early teens.[408] Their children, in turn, are themselves exposed to a high risk of physical and emotional abuse, due to their parents' lack of emotional maturity. They are also exposed to a range of risk factors for the development for all the social, psychological and health problems experienced by their young parents.

In the same way, parents who experience interactions with responsive, accepting attachment figures and whose social environments continue to incorporate psychologically supportive elements, are better able to be nurturing parents than those who have no such developmental experience. Bowlby[409] speculated that "the inheritance of mental health and mental ill-health through the medium of family micro-culture….may well be by far more important than their inheritance through the medium of genes." Over the last two decades, neurological support for this viewpoint has gathered pace and it is now accepted that an individual's personality "is created from the continual interaction of genetically determined constitutional features and experiential exchanges with the environment, especially the social environment.'[410]

406   Olsen, S. F., Martin, P., & Halverson, C.F., 1999, "Personality, Marital Relationships and Parenting in two Generations of Mothers," International Journal of Behavioural Development, Vol. 23, pp. 457 - 476

407   Smith C., Farrington D., 2004, "Continuities in Anti-Social Behaviour across 3 Generations," Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, Vol. 45, No. 2, pp. 230-247

408   Fagot B, Pears, et al, 1998, "Becoming an Adolescent Father, Precursors and Parenting," Developmental Psychology, Vol. 34, pp. 1209-1219

409   Bowlby J., 1973, Attachment and Loss, vol. 2.

410   Siegal, D. J.,1999, The Developing Mind, Guilford Press

D8   Families with disabilities

Summary: Disability puts additional pressure on families, particularly when associated with children or when the onset has been sudden. As well as the psychological and financial pressures, access to the support systems which should assist is frequently a further source of huge pressure, further stressing the family unit.

Families caring for disabled members within the family should be of special consideration when looking at issues of social justice. Bert Massie, chair of the Disability Rights Commission has highlighted statistics which suggest a quarter of all children living in poverty have a disabled parent, and that over half of all families with disabled children live in or at the margins of poverty.[411] These families have extra issues to deal with which are in addition to those affecting the typical family unit and have already been described earlier in this report

Contact a Family "No Time for Us" Relationships survey between married couples with a disabled child, 2003

PROBLEMS FACING FAMILIES WITH DISABLED CHILDREN

Contact a Family asked parents of disabled children what effect they thought having a disabled child had had on their relationship. The views of over 2,000 parents with disabled children were collected through a postal survey, a web-based survey, conference and workshop during 2003.

Respondents
84% female, 12% male, 4% no answer; 85% White, 3% Asian, 2% Black African, 1% Black Caribbean, 5% other, 4% not given

Families
67% of children were being brought up by both parents, 17% by a single parent 10% in a stepfamily, 3% in another situation, 3% no response

  Census figures suggest that there is an overall rate of 23% of children being brought up in single parent families, 65% live with both parents and 10% in step families

EFFECTS OF DISABILITY ON RELATIONSHIPS

Contact a Family's survey into relationships (see below) shows the potential impact on relationships when caring for a disabled child. One separated mother interviewed in the survey commented that "a disabled child in the family strengthens a good marriage but shows up flaws in a way nothing else would in a bad marriage." Whilst this comment refers specifically to marriage, it is transferable to any relationship within a family unit; difficult situations will either enhance or strain relationships. However, the figures from the survey indicate that only 23% of couples consider that it has brought them closer together. There are significant levels of stress and depression (76%) that those in the survey linked to having a disabled child. 10% of women interviewed in a relationship admitted to experiencing domestic violence which they thought was caused by the pressures of caring for their child.

Current relationships
43% of parents described their relationship as very good, 16% as quite good, 17% as variable, 6% as not very good , Less than 0.5% said it was very poor, 14% had little or no contact with their child's other parent, 4% no response

The effect of having a disabled child on a relationship
23% thought that it had brought them closer together, 19% thought it had little effect, 31% felt that it had caused some problems, **13% felt that it had caused major problems, 9% felt that having a disabled child had led to separation,** 5% no response

Problems experienced since having a disabled child and % of those linking it to having a disabled child

Problem	%
76% stress or depression	88%
72% tiredness/lack of sleep	84%
51% financial difficulties	66%
32% problems at work	71%
22% housing problems	69%
10% domestic violence	55%
8% drug or alcohol problems	67%
8% none of the above	
4% no response	

411   Bert Massie "A Route out of Poverty? Disabled People, Work and Welfare Reform" Speech delivered to Child Poverty Action Group reception at the House of Commons, 26 June 2006

Evidence submitted at hearings of disability support organisations conducted by the Working Group in Birmingham (13th September 2006)

Testimonies of fathers who have a disabled child – submitted by Lancashire-based charity, Hurdles
"The majority of dads are seen as a secondary support role. This often produces a negative effect on the father/child relationship. Dads feel out of step with the sheer volume of appointments. This in turn leads to difficulties in keeping up with developments. Often they can't even attend the diagnosis."

"When you have got to leave for work at 7am and get back at 6pm, bathing the child at the end of the day is very nice - but you can't help feeling cut out of what has been going on during the day with hospital appointments, speech therapists and clinics etc. Plus you are tired, worried, pre-occupied with work issues. You know you are not giving your partner the support they need and deserve and you feel guilty and inadequate. You feel you are been punished for this by being frozen out."

"Time constraints with work have meant I have not been able to learn sign language to communicate with my daughter. I feel shut out of my family life."

In addition mothers see partners as escaping to the world of work and admit to us that they had threatened, "If you can't cope go. I can't carry you as well as a disabled child."

Hurdles also told us:
"Many more Hurdles families are single parents than would be expected. Family life brings stresses and strains, having a child with a disability adds to these in many ways. Life can be a real struggle just in terms of organization and sleep deprivation, let alone economic and social pressures, with little quality time for any and all family relationships."

The Special Abilities charity from Wakefield said,
"When the families have split up it has been the mum who has walked out because she can't cope with the stress. The father isn't usually running around going to all the hospital appointments."

FRS figures show some regional differences.[412] Every situation is different for each family. Stories from all kinds of perspectives within a family could be used to illustrate the extra strain of disability and the impact on relationships and it is not possible here to look at every one of these. For example (and drawing on both our working group's extensive experience of these issues and the large body of evidence we gathered at hearings) we could have included testimony from other siblings who may feel neglected, or other members of the extended family who do not understand and feel shut out. The anecdotal evidence we have incorporated illustrates the perspective of many fathers who are not necessarily the main carers of child. We also include a case study from the Spinal Injuries Association which demonstrates the potential impact of a "sudden disability" on a relationship.

Willowbrook and Gill make reference to the grief, guilt, fear and bewilderment families face when a member is diagnosed as having a disability or newly acquires one.[413] Families coping with disabilities are likely to encounter more pressure and trauma than those who are not. Whilst

some families may pull together to face the new challenges, many struggle to find ways to live sustainable lives and build healthy relationships (see case study below).

The causes of relationship breakdown associated with issues of disability are not entirely related to the disability itself. Evidence collected also suggests a correlation between relationship difficulties and the stress encountered in securing the extra care and support required to deal with the disability.

In caring for someone with a disability, the difficulties encountered in securing care and help are similar, regardless of the nature of the disability.[414] Whilst needs may be different, getting the appropriate diagnosis, health care, education, respite care, housing and provision are hurdles all families have to negotiate. Getting the right support is not straight forward. One carer we interviewed admitted "I have been working with social services and challenging them and I have to admit it has been a battle rather than a working partnership."[415] These battles may start with the birth, and continue throughout the life, of someone with a disability. Written evidence submitted by the Hurdles

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412   These figures come from the 2002/03 Family Resources Survey (FRS) for Great Britain. In the FRS a child is defined as someone aged under the age of 16, though the definition also includes 16 to 18 year olds who are in full-time non-advanced education and living at home.

413   Gill, C. J., 1991, "Treating families coping with disabilities," Western Journal of Medicine, Vol. 154, No. 5, pp. 624-625

414   'Hurdles'. Charity based in Bury. Evidence submitted hearing 13/09/2006

415   'Special abilities' local charity based in Wakefield. Evidence submitted hearing 13/09/2006

Case study submitted by Spinal Injuries Association

Mr B became disabled with a spinal injury following an accident at work. The injury left Mr B feeling angry about what had happened to him. Following discharge from hospital the relationship between him and his wife broke down. They were constantly arguing – mainly due to Mr B's frustration at the difficulty he faced in coping with the new situation. Mrs B understood the frustration and decided to give her husband time to come to terms with his new circumstances but their children were suffering and could not understand why their father had changed and was so angry all the time.

Mr B was then told that he would be entitled to substantial compensation which led the couple to hope that they would be able to get on with their lives, the money enabling them to make necessary changes. However, Mr B believed it was for him to decide how it should be spent, that he should be able to get the fast car he had always wanted. Mrs B wanted to get them out of rented accommodation into a place of their own.

The arguments started again but this time over money. Mr B decided to leave his wife as he now believed the only reason she was staying with him was because of the compensation and he wanted a divorce before the money became available. Mrs B felt that the compensation was not just something that concerned her husband. Her life and their children's lives had been affected forever. The divorce was rushed through and Mr B took up the life of a financially independent bachelor. Mrs B and their children are now without a significant wage earner and are reliant on the state for benefit. Mrs B did get a small amount of money from the Mr B's compensation claim but this did not go far.

disability charity stated that "Families not only have to manage their lives, look after their children, but they also have to become lobbyists and consultants."

It is not possible to cover comprehensively all causes of strain on families dealing with disability in the remit of this report. The key issues addressed here reflect only some of the major concerns of organisations and individuals consulted. Diagnosis, education, job prospects and issues of respite care and direct payment have been chosen to illustrate the difficulties encountered surrounding service provision. They are by no means more important than other concerns such as adequate health care or housing, or the problems caused because of the complexity of the benefits system.[416] Anecdotal evidence collected highlighted these different points of friction which are specific to those caring for those with disabilities and the impact this has on the quality of relationships and ability to cope within the family. Additionally, issues surrounding the support of carers themselves are outlined.

Research from the Joseph Rowntree foundation[417] indicates that families with disabled children are known to be more likely to be single parents; figures from the Family Fund Trust show that there is a higher proportion of single parents, particularly mothers who are separated or divorced and lone fathers, among families with more than one disabled child. This suggests a greater strain on marriage when parents are caring for two or more disabled children. Mothers are more likely to have a disability themselves and fathers are more likely not to be working because of illness or disability.

PROBLEMS CONCERNING DIAGNOSIS

The time surrounding diagnosis of a particular disability or the onset of sudden disability is likely to be stressful and will have a permanent impact on how a family lives their lives.[418] Each family member will come to terms with the situation in their own way and it is unusual for this to happen at the same time. This can cause conflict and misunderstandings.[419]

CARERS UK FIGURES – TOP TEN FACTS
1. One in eight (1 in 8) adults are carers... around six million people
2. Carers save the economy £57 billion per year, an average of £10,000 per carer
3. Over 3 million people juggle care with work
4. The main carer's benefit is £46.95 for a minimum of 35 hours, equivalent to £1.34 per hour
5. 1.25 million people provide over 50 hours of care per week
6. People providing high levels of care are twice as likely to be permanently sick or disabled
7. Over 1 million people care for more than one person
8. 58% of carers are women and 42% are men
9. By 2037 the number of carers could have increased to 9 million
10. Every year over 2 million people become carers

416   See David Cameron's speech, We all have a role in helping disabled people take their place in society, 16/10/2006.

417   Joseph Rowntree Foundation http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialcare/SCR218.asp

418   See submission from Spinal Injuries Association.

419   Birmingham hearing 13th September 2006. Spinal injuries association evidence.

Further testimony from Working Group hearings, Birmingham, 13th September 06

"Getting the right education for your child, whatever the disability is the biggest issue you face as a carer. Once you have got that right, things get a lot easier"
Mother in Newcastle, 10/2006.

"We ended up at an educational tribunal which was in itself a horrendous five hour experience. We lost the tribunal as technically L could be educated at a local school even though there was no epilepsy specific nurse available to care for L (she suffered from unpredictable seizures that could cause sudden death). This decision was eventually reversed and although obviously pleased by the outcome it has been an awful journey which has traumatized our family."
Mother of child with disability written evidence submission 08/2006

"A Special Needs school was closed and I had 43 families knocking on my door saying I have been informed in 3 weeks time this school for severely disabled children is going to close and these children would go into main stream settings. Their children were to travel a lot further to school in discomfort and pain."
Special Abilities charity, supporting 297 local families

FURTHER COVERED IN AN ARTICLE BY LIZ LIGHTFOOT, DAILY TELEGRAPH 6TH JULY 2006…
"Confused messages from ministers, the closure of special schools, a bureaucratic system for getting extra help, lack of training for teachers and the shortage of educational psychologists meant frustration and conflict for many families"

It is not uncommon, particularly in the instance of a child who has special needs, to have real difficulty in getting an appropriate diagnosis. The formal diagnosis has a critical influence on services available to the family and child. For example, if a child is "statemented" with a recognised syndrome, this entitles them to more support

(although not in all instances, as statemented children are less likely to have received formal childcare[420]) It is difficult to convey to educational psychologists, who are responsible for providing statements, the full extent of a child's issues in the short sessions of contact.[421]

It is thought that 1.9 million children in England and Wales have special educational needs (SEN), with 1 in 30 entitled to additional support through a statement (Payne 2004[422]). Even when a child is statemented, there is confusion within the local authority systems relating to what a child is entitled to. In Wakefield, for example, Aspergers syndrome, which some councils class as a mental illness, is classed as a disability. This classification greatly affects the support which is available.

Some organisations also commented on the damage diagnosis can cause if there is not appropriate support or explanation of what to do next. Some are simply told to come back for another appointment in three months time. One charity said that children get put into care too quickly because no one explains there are alternative services out there to support the family unit and keep everyone together. Getting a child out of care once they have been placed there is very difficult.

PROBLEMS CONCERNING EDUCATION

In a Special Educational Needs Enquiry published by a cross-party group of MP's in July 2006, the "inclusion" debate is clearly outlined. Policies developed to include more children with disabilities into main stream education have meant that this country has seen the closure of some special schools. The present Government told this inquiry that it does not hold a policy of inclusion that is resulting in the closure of special schools. However, some local authorities have interpreted it as such. Baroness Warnock has commented that possibly one of the most disastrous uses of terminology for children with disabilities has been that of the word "inclusion" because of the confusion its interpretation has generated.

"Inclusion" as an overarching policy will not necessarily meet children's individual needs. The perceived lack of flexibility in the system is putting many families under tremendous levels of strain whilst they are fighting for the most appropriate care and assistance for their child. The report summarizes by saying "it is equally important to highlight the difficulties most parents are facing for

420   Bryson, C. ,La Valle, I., O'Shea, R., & Barnes, M., 2005 , Use of Childcare Among Families with Children Who Have Special Educational Needs, National Centre for Social Research, published by Department for Education and Skills.

421   Downs Syndrome Association, Access to Education May 2004 Down syndrome is the most common single form of learning disability (p2) with 16000 school children with Downs across the UK. One in three parents found getting a statement difficult and nearly half were forced to make representations or go to tribunal to achieve an acceptable statement. Only the most vocal parents will challenge this by making representations or appealing to a tribunal. (p8) One set said, "When we received our proposed statement we were asked if it was acceptable to us. Never having seen a statement before we said yes. Now, three years on we have a 7 year old with severe speech problems and no provision within his statement for speech and language therapy."

422   Stanley, K., Bellamy K. & Cooke G., 2006, Equal Access? Appropriate and affordable childcare for every child ippr

whom the system is failing to meet the needs of their children."[423]

FURTHER TRAINING AND JOB PROSPECTS

Access to appropriate training and good job prospects for young adults over the age of 16 presents new challenges for a family.[424] Lack of opportunities may lengthen care burdens both practically and financially beyond childhood, extending strain on family relations. 24% of disabled people aged 16-24 have no qualifications whatsoever, compared to 13% of non-disabled people of the same age (an 11% gap). One in twenty disabled people are at a college of further or higher education or university, compared to one in ten of the rest of the population. Only 50% of disabled people of working age are in employment compared to 81% of non-disabled people.[425]

RESPITE CARE AND DIRECT PAYMENT

The Princess Royal Trust for Carers makes the point that all jobs include an entitlement to paid holiday and that people who are carers should also expect to be able to take a break. The provision of respite care by the government can be provided in different forms,[426] but the most flexible arrangement for facilitating a break for families is that of direct payment.[427] However, the latest comprehensive report into direct payments highlights the variation amongst local authorities in providing access to funding.[428] At one of our hearings we were told of a two-year battle with the local authority to grant direct payments. It had been established that the family carers were entitled to these payments, but the local authority had no money to pay for them. This case went through the legal system to the High Court of Justice and impacted on family health and relationships.

ISSUES SURROUNDING CARE

These figures stated by Carers UK include carers for the elderly who are concerned with the increasing level of disabilities associated with old age and an aging population. The reality is that as the population ages, the need for carers increases. Much debate surrounds the low level of carers benefit (£46.95)[429] and the financial strain and risk of sickness that carers within families themselves face when dealing with the experience of disability.

In summary, problems faced for families dealing with disability are multi-dimensional in nature. Many families will experience a range of these issues as one written submission to the group makes clear.[430] Family breakdown is high amongst families who are dealing with disability and this is associated with the effort involved in gaining support and the services needed to make a family unit and the relationships within it workable.

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423   House of Commons Education and Skills Committee Special Educational Needs, third session of report 2005-2006, volume 1, 21st June 2006

424   Difficulties experienced during the transition between child and adult services are not just specific to the area of education and work prospects.

425   Education and Skills Briefing - Queen's Speech Debates 2005, http://www.drc-gb.org/docs/edskills_briefing.doc

426   1. Residential respite: The Person you care for goes away to be looked after by someone else for a while - residential or nursing care or on holiday. 2. Domiciliary care: Someone comes into the home and takes over care duties. (a few hours or sometimes overnight) .

427   Money is paid directly to families to spend and will be used to provide care and entertainment suitable for the person with the disabilities needs at a time when the carer needs a break. This may be anything from a short holiday, to an activity hour once a week.

428   Riddell, S., Priestley, M., Pearson, C., Mercer, G., Barnes, C., Jolly, D., Williams, V., 2006, Disabled People and Direct Payments: A UK Comparative Study ESRC End of Award Report (RES-000-23-0263), August 2006

429   See www.carersuk.org for outline of debate.

430   Suzanne Coward, 'Challenges facing Parents / Carers of Disabled Children' - written submission to Social Justice Policy Group. Carer and disability practitioner providing anecdotal evidence looking at a journey through caring for a child with disability highlighting the varying nature of the obstacles faced, and suggesting further areas for research.

SECTION E
Conclusion and next steps

CONCLUSION

Family life in Britain is changing such that adults and children today are increasingly faced with the challenges of dysfunctional, fractured, or fatherless families. This is especially the case in the least advantaged sections of society. But these trends also profoundly affect people across the socioeconomic spectrum.

In this report we have sought to explore the current state of the family, and the extent, consequences and causes of family breakdown. The diagram below provides a rough working model that illustrates our findings in visual form.

In part A, we propose that relationships between adults have to be included as a key concern of family policy rather than of peripheral interest as is currently the case. We consider that current child-centred policies do not necessarily serve well the children they purport to serve, the wider family, or society at large.

In part B, we conclude that family breakdown, in all its forms, is occurring at a greater rate today than ever before, creating a cycle of dysfunction and instability. Family stability has been in continuous decline for four decades, driven by divorce in the 1960s/70s and cohabitation in the 1980s/90s.

In Part C, we show how family breakdown, whether by dissolution, dysfunction or 'dad-lessness', has many and varied effects, few of which are beneficial to the individuals, their wider family, or society at large. Family breakdown is both contributor to and consequence of poverty and most other social problems.

In Part D, we highlight how the factors which drive family breakdown may be varied and complex, but not so much as to make policy solutions an unrealistic goal. On the basis of the extensive evidence, we have concluded that both family structure and family process matter.

NEXT STEPS

This report establishes a baseline which sets the likely direction of travel of the policy recommendations we will be making in June 2007. It would be naïve to think that such recommendations could ever be a panacea. We are well aware that family policy is a highly contentious issue, often framed by sharply diverging personal experience

and ideology. We are also well aware that debates about cause and effect are unlikely to be resolved to the satisfaction of all. However, having identified the seriousness of a problem largely neglected in public policy, we believe new policies are essential in order to change the direction of trends that are destructive to families.

Figure 1. The systemic nature of family breakdown (ie. cause and effect interact)
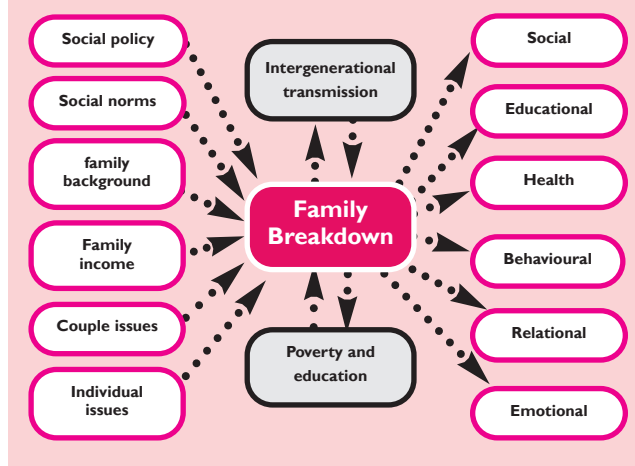
First, we plan to explore rigorously what family-centred policies, rather than child-centred policies might look like. We are concerned that current policies, such as those encouraging the highest possible labour market participation for mothers (in the interest of alleviating child poverty) have not adequately considered the deleterious impact on families and relationships. The vital role of parenting cannot be outsourced to external providers or squeezed into ever tighter time slots.

Second, we will emphasise prevention as well as cure. We will be looking at how to stabilise current families we well as how to re-establish stable family relationships and structures as a part of a socially responsible society. Marriage continues to offer the most stable and durable framework, but there is not a high level of awareness of these benefits.

Third, we want to look closely at how we empower individuals, rather than the state, to raise their families and how to align services in a way that offers families genuine choice. If we are implicating the welfare state in the rise of family breakdown, we need to consider workable adjust-

ments and indeed complements to it. The notion of the welfare society embraces a social responsibility agenda which begins to consider how to encourage people to make decisions based on the wider good of society and on deferred gratification rather than instant returns. It also draws in the wealth of talent and energy in this country's voluntary sector organizations.

We will therefore be looking at overall government policy towards marriage, cohabitation, and lone parenthood; the scope and limitations of both widely-applied and finely-grained policy initiatives; legal aspects of marriage, cohabitation & lone parenthood; tax and benefit incen-

tives and disincentives that influence family outcomes; other government policies and messages that influence family outcomes; the provision of preventive relationship and parenting education; the provision of other relationship and parenting interventions; the publication and use of relevant statistical data; the role of local government and the role of the voluntary sector.

By so doing we hope to establish a policy framework which will support the families of Britain achieve what almost universally they desire, a stable, nurturing and permanent environment to the benefit of its members, the wider family network, and society as a whole.

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http://www.scotland.gov.uk/cru/documents/poor-housing-10.htm

http://www.statistics.gov.uk

http://www.wavetrust.org

http://www.wordwebonline.com/en/MORALISING

Appendix 2: family breakdown sub-group

Dr Samantha Callan, *Chairman, Research Consultant*
Samantha Callan acts as a research consultant to major UK voluntary sector organisations which aim to strengthen family life. She is also an honorary research fellow at Edinburgh University and is engaged in primary research into long term marriage and committed relationships. Working from a background in Social Anthropology and Islamic Studies, she holds Masters degrees from the universities of Cambridge and Nottingham. Her PhD analysed cultural change in organizations implementing family-friendly policies and she acts as a consultant to firms which are addressing issues of work-life balance.

Harry Benson, *Deputy Chairman Founder of Bristol Community Family Trust*
Harry Benson is Director of Bristol Community Family Trust (http://www.bcft.co.uk) , a charity set up in 2001 to strengthen families and turn back the tide of family breakdown. The charity is a leading pioneer in running state-of-the-art relationship education courses for engaged couples, new parents and prison families in Bristol. Formerly, Harry served in the Falklands war as a commando helicopter pilot before becoming a partner with a successful small firm of stockbrokers in Asia. His book Mentoring marriages is essential reading for anyone interested in supporting marriages. Harry and his wife Kate went to the very brink of divorce twelve years ago. Now thriving with six young children, he reckons they must be doing something right.

Suzanne Coward, *Member of Disability Partnership Board of Birmingham County Council*
Suzanne is a full time carer of her daughter Sarah, who has Down's syndrome. For five years Suzanne sat on Birmingham City Council's 'Partnership board for Learning Difficulties' as a carer representative. Suzanne has also set up a number of projects aimed at single parent families, and more recently a social enterprise venture offering supportive work experience for people with learning difficulties, through the 'direct payment' scheme. Suzanne has six grown up children and five grandchildren.

Prof. Hilton Davis, *Professor of Child Health Psychology, South London & Maudsley NHS Trust*
Hilton Davis is a clinical psychologist. He has extensive experience in clinical work and in research with families of children with disabilities, chronic illness and emotional/behavioural problems. He has studied parent-child interaction, developed promotional/preventative services in the community and has worked on evaluating outcomes and processes.

Melanie Gill, *Child Forensic Psychologist*
Melanie Gill qualified in 1980 after working in special schools and an adolescent assessment centre in Middlesex. She worked extensively as an entrepreneur in the music business and the television industry before returning to psychology in 1999 when she began to specialise in cognition, and over the last 3 years, Child Psychology and the Law. Her approach is integrationist and she specialises in: Psychological assessment of individuals, families, children and adolescents. Assessment of emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties including risk assessment. Interviewing children and adolescents (forensic context).

Helen Grant, *Family Law Solicitor*
Helen Grant was admitted as a solicitor of the supreme court of England and Wales in January 1988, and in 1996 she established Grants Solicitors, specialising in all aspects of matrimonial breakdown. Helen is also a non-executive director Croydon NHS Primary Care Trust, and a member of the Department of Constitutional Affairs national advisory board for domestic violence, the senior management team at the Croydon Community Justice Centre, and the planning group for Croydon Integrated Domestic Violence Court.

David Percival, *Director, 2-in-2-1*
David Percival is a Chartered Director and qualified Mechanical Engineer. In parallel with running a number of successful mid-sized consultancy businesses, David, and his wife Liz, have been involved with marriage and relationship education in the UK for over 20 years. In 2000 they set up 2-in-2-1413 both to provide a common access point for the public to the wide range of relationship support and education organisations in the UK, and to draw these organisations together to enable the sector to act more strategically.

Prof. Bob Rowthorn, *Professor of Economics, Cambridge University*
Robert Rowthorn is Emeritus Professor of Economics at the University of Cambridge and Fellow of King's College. He is the author of a number of books (including The Law and Economics of Marriage and Divorce – with Antony Dnes) and academic articles on economic growth, structural change and employment. He has been a frequent consultant to the International Monetary Fund, the UN Commission on Trade and Development and the International Labour organisation, as well as to British government departments and a variety of private sector firms and organisations.

Research Assistants

Hazel Anderson, *CSJ Research Assistant*
Hazel Anderson, was educated at a state school in Derbyshire and went on to read History at Cambridge. Suffering from severe M.E she lived on incapacity benefit and dis-ability living allowance for 2 years before training part time as a primary school teacher in low income areas in inner-city schools. She is a resident in the local community in a pathfinder area of Gateshead. Hazel joined the Social Justice Policy Group after being inspired by its holistic approach in tackling the issues of poverty which she saw on her doorstep.

Lee Rowley, *Westminster City Councillor*
Lee Rowley is a Conservative member of Westminster City Council. He was elected in May 2006 to represent Maida Vale, a suburban, socially-diverse ward in northwest London with a large proportion of social housing. His interest areas are housing, local government finance and transport. He also serves on an Area Board for a local ALMO housing provider. Professionally, Lee is an Oxford-educated market analyst with experience of the education and transportation sectors.

Appendix 3:

The conflation of marriage and cohabitation in government statistics – a denial of difference rendered untenable by an analysis of outcomes

Harry Benson
Bristol Community Family Trust

September 2006

ABSTRACT

Despite a great deal of evidence that marriage benefits and protects adults and children, successive UK governments have eroded and dismantled policy mechanisms that distinguish married from unmarried cohabiting families. Following the abolition of the term "marital status" in 2003, recent government-sponsored family research refers only to "couple parent families". This combined category conceals significant differences between unmarried and married couple outcomes typically demonstrated by overseas and earlier UK research.

Analysis of data from the Millennium Cohort Study, the most up-to-date large scale UK panel survey of new parents, shows substantial differences in family stability between married and unmarried couples in the early years of parenthood, even after discounting socio-economic factors such as age, income, education and race. Most notably, the difference in family breakdown risk between married and cohabiting couples is sufficient that even the poorest 20% of married couples are more stable than all but the richest 20% of cohabiting couples.

Given the central importance accorded to ensuring optimal outcomes for children in public policy, these findings demonstrate that the lack of distinction between marriage and cohabitation in government policy and research is untenable. Moreover this conflation of terms is at odds with the increasing requirement incumbent upon modern states to be transparent in their functioning and accountable for clearly stated target delivery through the release of comprehensive statistics.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, it has become politically unacceptable to privilege marriage and to treat the institution as anything other than one of several equally acceptable lifestyle choices (e.g. Rowthorn, 2001). As more couples choose to cohabit prior to and, less commonly, as an alternative to getting married, government policy has also reflected this new social norm.

Fiscal policy has long ceased to distinguish married couples from unmarried couples who live together as if married, and more recently, the commissioning of government-sponsored family research has taken the same approach. Married couples have become just one of several couple types – married or unmarried, biological or step-parents – to be viewed as "couple families" or "couple parent families" (Barnes & al, 2004, 2005; Lyon et al, 2006).

Although overseas studies continue to suggest that married families consistently do better than unmarried families on important outcome measures (Carlson, 2006; Manning & Brown, 2006), equivalent UK studies are becoming hard or impossible to find, with notable exceptions (Kiernan & Pickett, 2006). Using data rebased from Manning & Brown (2006), the chart below illustrates the potential differences to be found when comparing the risk of poverty amongst US children by parent marital status. In this case, the relatively low risk faced by all children with "couple parents" would have concealed the relatively high risk faced by those children with either "cohabiting biological parents" or "cohabiting step-parents".
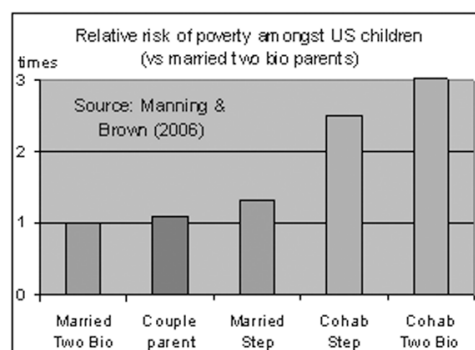
Some social commentators and researchers now either dismiss marriage out of hand – "what really matters, at least for the wellbeing of children, is not the matrimonial status of their parents but the ability of two adults to remain together in relative harmony for as long as possible" (Roberts, 2006) – or over-emphasise the rather obvious point that "marriage does not always enhance ones well-being" (Walker, 2000; Glenn & Sylvester, 2005). Others dismiss differences on the evidence of qualitative interviews rather than hard outcomes (Eekelaar & MacLean, 2004). It has to be appreciated however that although analysis of marriage and marital status has received little attention in recent UK outcome research, the distinctions are still present in the underlying data.

Family stability, and its converse, family breakdown, is a simple but compelling measure with which to investigate different outcomes between married and unmarried couples with young babies. The most recent UK analysis of this kind is seven years old and relies on a relatively small dataset (Kiernan, 1999). The aim of this study is to investigate differences in family stability amongst parents of young children, using the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS). The MCS is a robust source of up-to-date, large scale, and publicly available data with which to investigate any differences in outcomes based on family structure, whilst controlling for income and other potential confounds. Data covering the first three years of a child's life were released in May 2006.

FAMILY TRENDS

Three major family trends have taken place in the UK since 1970.

- Fewer people are marrying. The number of UK weddings reduced from a peak of 470,000 in 1970 to 306,000 in 2003. Marriage rates per year have declined from 70 to 26 weddings per 1,000 adults. Remarriages have increased from 17% to 40% of all weddings. Civil weddings have increased from 40% to 66% of all weddings. Men and women are also getting married five years older.
- More people are divorcing. The number of UK divorces increased from 63,000 in 1970 to 167,000 in 2004. Whilst divorce rates per year increased from 4 to 13 divorces per 1,000 marriages during the 1970s and early 1980s, divorce rates have barely changed in the subsequent two decades. Analysis based on ONS data estimates lifetime divorce risk at 45% (Benson, 2005). This figure is likely to be lower for first marriages and higher for remarriages, where annual divorce rates are around 80% higher than for first marriages.
- More people are cohabiting. The number of UK children born outside marriage increased from 8% of all births in 1970 to 41% in 2003 (Office of National Statistics). In some areas of the country, children born to married parents are now in the minority.

FAMILY POLICY

Government policy may be both consequence and contributing cause of these changes in family trends. One example is the 1969 Divorce Act. In the years preceding the Act, rising divorce rates increased social pressure on legislators to change the law. In the years immediately subsequent to the act, divorce rates temporarily peaked as pent up demand for divorce was released.

Another example is the Married Couples Allowance. During the Conservatives last period in office (1979-1997), the value of this tax break for married couples was eroded from the equivalent of over 4% of GDP in 1979 to 0.9% of GDP in 1997 (Lindsay et al, 2000). The incoming Labour administration abolished it altogether – except for older couples. Both tax and benefit systems now address couples as "married" or "living together as if married". In other words, there is no longer any fiscal distinction between married and unmarried couples. A neutral fiscal policy on marriage reflects what appears to be the political view that couples should not be distinguished by their marital status.

Although this policy is neutral in terms of immediate financial consequences, policy does continue to favour marriage in terms of longer term financial consequences. Inheritance tax, transferable allowances and pension rights still provide advantages to married couples. The introduction of civil partnerships has extended these advantages to same-sex couples.

RESEARCH POLICY

As a knock-on effect of the neutral fiscal policy towards married and unmarried couples, the government decided in 2003 the term "marital status" would no longer appear on government forms. This policy was announced in a government paper summarising responses to the consultation on pending civil partnership legislation (Smith, 2003).

This change in policy has influenced the commissioning of new research by government departments. For example, the Families and Children Study, commissioned by the Department of Work and Pensions, changed the way it looked at family outcomes. Prior to 2003, FACS research distinguished family outcomes according to a variety of family structures, including marriage (Marsh & Perry, 2003). After 2004, FACS research refers more narrowly only to "couple parent" families and "lone parent" families (Barnes et al, 2004, 2005; Lyon et al, 2006). The commissioning researcher at DWP has clarified that this

change was in line with tax and benefit policy, which does not distinguish between married and unmarried couples (personal email communication, Elizabeth Rayner, September 2005). Other government sponsored publications – e.g. Social Trends, Family Resources Survey, Labour Force Review – also refer extensively to 'couples' without differentiation. Where marriage is distinguished, it involves population data rather than an analysis of outcomes – e.g. Population Trends.

MARRIAGE BENEFITS AND PROTECTIONS

Nevertheless, it remains well known that being married is consistently associated with a range of better outcomes for both adults and children (Waite & Gallagher, 2000). Conversely, family breakdown is consistently associated with a range of poorer outcomes for both adults and children (Brown, 2004, McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Much of this latter evidence suggests that family breakdown causes these poorer outcomes. For example, family breakdown leads to increased risks of poverty, crime, health problems and family breakdown amongst both children and grandchildren (Amato, 2000).

The benefits and protections of marriage are often attributed to selection rather than cause – i.e. people who do better get married. This is undoubtedly true in part. For example, those less educated or on lower income are less likely to marry in the first place and more likely to divorce if they do marry (Bumpass & Sweet, 1989; Ermisch & Francesconi, 2000; Kiernan, 2003). Policy makers sometimes conclude from this that differences in family structure can be accounted for exclusively by selection.

However, a review by Wilson and Oswald (2005) lists 23 longitudinal studies that provide compelling evidence of a causal link between marriage and health, mental health and longevity. The authors conclude that "the size of the health gain is remarkable. It may be as much as the benefit from giving up smoking". Additional studies also illustrate how marriage – but not cohabitation – improves well-being (Lamb & al, 2003), relationship quality (Kamp Dush & al, 2003) and relationship stability (Marsh & Perry, 2003).

Although most of these longitudinal studies were conducted amongst US population samples, UK and other European studies do exist. Of particular relevance is an analysis in the FACS study (Marsh & Perry, 2003) showing how the risk of family breakdown amongst low-income families is increased significantly where couples were unmarried.

FAMILY BREAKDOWN AND PREVENTION

Family breakdown exacts emotional and financial costs on families and society. A report produced for the Lords and Commons Family and Child Protection Group

(Lindsay et al, 2000) calculated that the direct annual cost of family breakdown to the taxpayer exceeds £15 billion. The majority of this huge bill represents the excess of income support for single parent families that might reasonably be attributed to family breakdown.

Factoring in a conservative combination of inflation, an 8% increase in lone parent family formation, 19% rise in income support and 41% rise in lone parent premium (Office of National Statistics) the current cost to the taxpayer of family breakdown is now likely to be £20-£24 billion. This equates to an average contribution of £680-820 per taxpayer per year.

Given the centrality of child outcomes to government policy – "Every Child Matters" – it might be assumed that an appropriate focus for government would be to reduce and prevent family breakdown. This does not appear to be the case. The former £5m Marriage and Relationships Support (MARS) fund – now absorbed into the £17m Children, Young People and Families Fund (CYPF) – used to be the main government vehicle for funding couple support until 2003. In 2006-7, the MARS component was cut to under £4m (Percival, 2006), equivalent to 15p per taxpayer per year. Even if the entire CYPF fund could be described as support for voluntary sector programmes that prevent or reduce family breakdown, this still only equates to 58p per taxpayer per year.

Therefore not only does government appear to take no cognisance of the distinctiveness of marriage – the family structure category most associated with a wide range of positive family outcomes – it also contributes very little to support couples and prevent family breakdown. Compared with the billions of taxpayers' money spent on dealing with the effects of family breakdown, considerably less than 0.1% of this sum is spent on trying to prevent it from happening in the first place.

FAMILY STRUCTURE AND FAMILY BREAKDOWN

Government policy may now exclude comparisons of married and unmarried families in government-sponsored UK longitudinal studies. However is still possible to conduct such an analysis because the underlying data still exists. It is therefore possible to establish, using large scale up-to-date UK datasets such as FACS or the MCS, the validity or otherwise of the government's neutral fiscal policy towards marriage.

The most recent UK analysis of this kind was published seven years ago based on a relatively small dataset. This study found that 43% of unmarried parents and 8% of married parents had split up before their child's fifth birthday (Kiernan, 1999). The absence of subsequent research raises valid questions about the robustness and relevance of these findings today.

The aim of this study is to explore how family structure at birth influences subsequent family stability using a large scale up-to-date government-sponsored UK cohort study. Replicated findings based on more robust evidence would call into question the wisdom of ignoring marriage in both government policy and research.

METHOD

The Millennium Cohort Study is a large scale longitudinal birth cohort study conducted within the four countries of the United Kingdom. The survey contains a wide range of information about 18,819 babies and their parents in 18,553 families. Parents of babies born between September 2000 and January 2002 were interviewed for the first sweep when their babies were 9 months old and for the second sweep when their babies were 3 years old.

Data was obtained from 15,119 parents during the second sweep. Although response rates were a relatively high 81%, data was unweighted and thus did not take into account any differential rates of attrition.

The key independent variable in this study was family status at the birth of the child. Parents described their status as "married and living together", "cohabiting/living as married", "closely involved", just friends", "separated", "divorced" or "not in any relationship". This study looked at outcomes both for couples who were explicitly "cohabiting" as well as for couples who were "unmarried", which included couples who were either "cohabiting" or "closely involved". Independent socio-economic variables – such as parental income, employment status, and education levels – were taken either at 9 months or birth as the data allowed.

The key dependent variable was partner status when the child was 3 years old. Data was derived to show status as "same person is partner", "new partner" or "no partner". This study assumed that family breakdown had taken place in either of the latter two categories.

RESULTS

Frequency and regression analyses were conducted on the risk of family breakdown by marital status, by socio-economic group, and by each group independent of the others.

Table 1 shows the distribution of all families experiencing breakdown over the first 3 years of a child's life, based on parents' marital status at birth. Amongst the entire sample of 15,119 parents, 2,966 experienced family breakdown, an overall risk of 20%. However, the risk of family breakdown during the first 3 years of a child's life varies greatly depending on marital status.

- Married couples represent 63% of the sample at birth but only 18% of all family breakdown, an overall risk

of 6%.
- Unmarried couples – combining those "cohabiting" or "closely involved" – represent 33% of the sample at birth yet 50% of all family breakdown, an overall risk of 32%.
- Cohabiting couples on their own represent 24% of the sample at birth and 25% of all family breakdown, an overall risk of 20%.
- Closely involved couples represent 6% of the sample at birth yet 25% of all family breakdown, an overall risk of 76%.
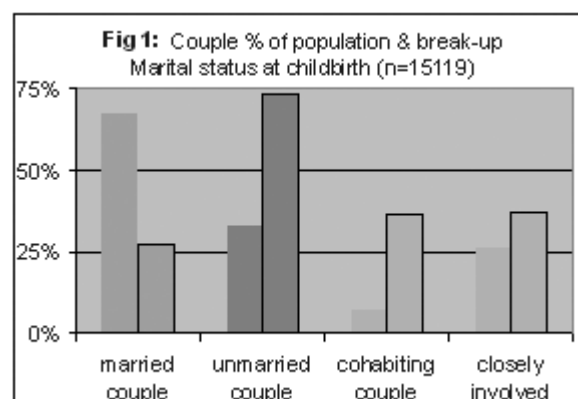- Amongst all other categories, family breakdown approaches 100%.

The overall risk of family breakdown is therefore substantially higher amongst all family types compared to married couples.
- The risk is 5.5 times greater for all unmarried couples, 3.5 times for cohabiting couples, and 13.3 times for closely involved couples.

Table 1	married couple	unmarried couple	cohabiting couple	closely involved	just friends	other	total
Parent status at birth	9487	4629	3672	957	300	703	15119
% of total	63%	33%	24%	6%	2%	5%	100%
Family breakdown	545	1471	742	729	288	662	2966
% of total	18%	50%	25%	25%	10%	22%	100%
Family breakdown risk	6%	32%	20%	76%	96%	94%	20%
Risk vs married couple	1.0	5.5	3.5	13.3	16.7	16.4	3.4

Figure 1 presents the same data in terms of those who were couples at the time of the child's birth – i.e. excluding parents who were "just friends", "separated", "divorced" or "not in a relationship" – comparing the percentage shares of the total sample and those who split up. "Unmarried couple" comprises couples whether "cohabiting" or "closely involved".
- In this case, married couples represent 67% of all couples but only 27% of family breakdown.
- In contrast, unmarried couples represent 33% of couples and yet 73% of family breakdown.

Fig 1: Couple % of population & break-up Marital status at childbirth (n=15119)

Fig 2: Couple break-up risk - All children
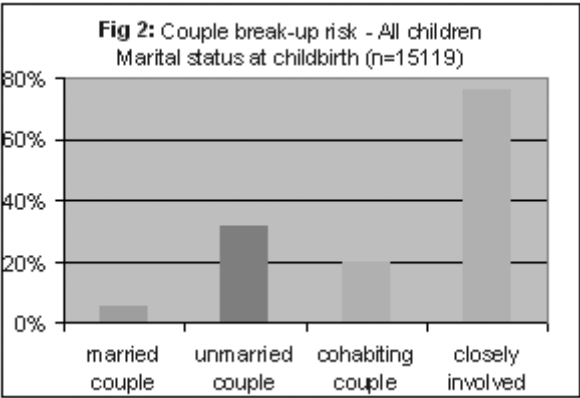**Marital status at childbirth (n=15119)**

Figure 2 illustrates the differences in family breakdown risk by couple type. Unmarried couples are more likely to split up than married couples.

Table 2 compares the distribution of population and family breakdown depending on whether the child is the first or subsequent child. Married parents represent a bigger proportion of parents having their second child compared to those having a first child – 68% vs. 55%. They also represent a bigger share of family breakdown – 25% vs. 11% of all family breakdown.

Despite this, family breakdown risks remain similar regardless of whether the baby is the first or subsequent child. For married parents, the risk is 5% for a first child and 6% for subsequent children. For unmarried parents, the risk is 33% for a first child and 31% for subsequent children. The relative risk of family breakdown for unmarried couples is therefore higher for those having a first child at 7.2 times vs. 4.8 times compared to married couples.

Table 2	married couple	unmarried couple	cohabiting couple	closely involved	just friends	other	total
% of population							
First child	55%	37%	29%	8%	2%	6%	6,320
Subsequent child	68%	26%	21%	5%	2%	4%	8,799
% of family breakdown							
First child	11%	54%	29%	25%	10%	25%	100%
Subsequent child	25%	45%	21%	24%	10%	20%	100%
Family breakdown risk							
First child	5%	33%	22%	74%	95%	96%	22%
Subsequent child	6%	31%	18%	78%	97%	94%	18%
Risk vs married couple							
First child	1.0	7.2	4.9	16.4	20.9	21.1	4.9
Subsequent child	1.0	4.8	2.8	12.1	15.0	14.6	2.7

Follow-up analysis of those "closely involved" (not shown) shows this group tend to be younger and less well-educated than other cohabitees. Around half were having their second or subsequent child, the same proportion found amongst cohabitees.

Figures 3 and 4 show the distribution of break-up and actual break-up risk over 3 years depending on whether the baby is the first or subsequent child. Unmarried couples account for 83% of family breakdown amongst couples having their first child but 65% of family breakdown amongst couples having a second or subsequent child. However the absolute risk of family breakdown remains similar for both married couples and unmarried couples, regardless of whether having their first or subsequent child. For married couples, the risk is 5% and 6% respectively. For unmarried couples, the risk is 33% and 31% respectively.
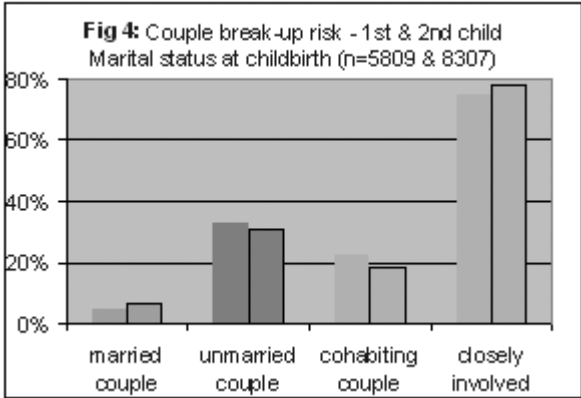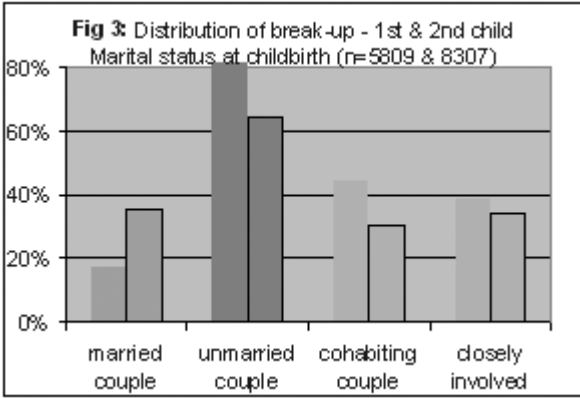
Fig 3: Distribution of break-up - 1st & 2nd child
Marital status at childbirth (n=5809 & 8307)

Fig 4: Couple break-up risk - 1st & 2nd child
Marital status at childbirth (n=5809 & 8307)

Table 3 shows family breakdown rates amongst couples who were either married or cohabiting when their baby was 9 months old, depending on income. "Income" in this case represents total family income from both work and benefits or tax credits divided into approximate quintiles.
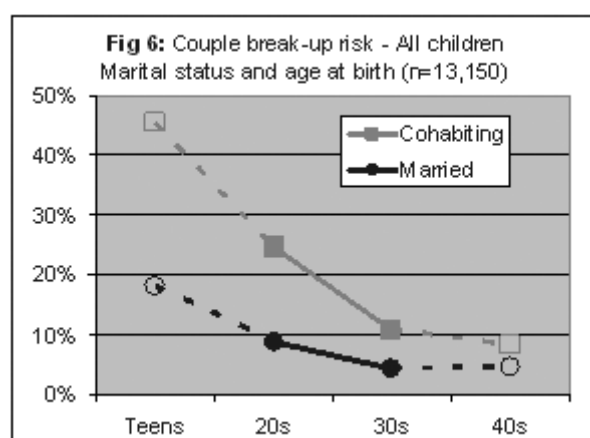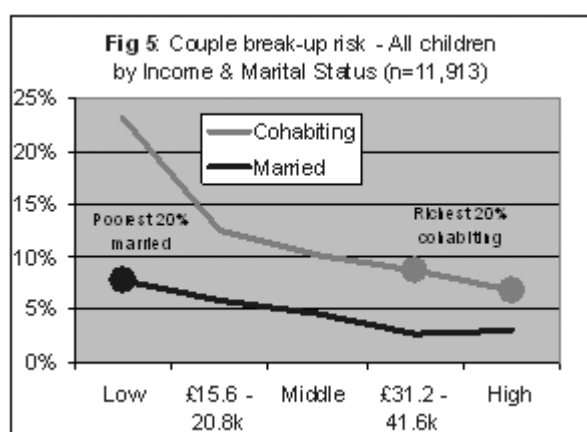
Family breakdown rates over this slightly shorter duration – around 2 years and 3 months – reduce as income increases for both married and cohabiting couples. For married couples, the risk reduces from 8% on low income to 3% on high income. For cohabiting couples, the risk reduces from 23% on low income to 7% on high income. Across every income group, cohabiting couples are at least twice as likely to split up compared to married couples.

Table 3	≤£15.6k	≤£20.8k	≤£31.2k	≤£41.6k	>£41.6k	Total
Status at 9 months						
Married	1,613	1,545	2,498	1,403	1,656	8,715
Cohabiting	1,129	667	754	356	292	3,198
Family breakdown						
Married	126	91	115	37	51	420
Cohabiting	260	83	76	31	20	470
Family breakdown risk						
Married	8%	6%	5%	3%	3%	5%
Cohabiting	23%	12%	10%	9%	7%	15%
Cohabiting vs married	2.9	2.1	2.2	3.3	2.2	3.0

Figure 5 illustrates this graphically, showing how both income and marital status independently influence family breakdown risk. The difference in family breakdown risk between married and cohabiting couples is sufficient that even the poorest 20% of married couples are more stable than all but the richest 20% of cohabiting couples.

Figure 6 illustrates a similar pattern for age (data not shown). 95% of married and 91% of cohabiting mothers give birth in their 20s and 30s. Although the risk of family breakdown reduces with age, risk also varies depending on marital status. Even younger married mothers are more stable than older cohabiting mothers.

Fig 5: Couple break-up risk - All children by Income & Marital Status (n=11,913)

Fig 6: Couple break-up risk - All children Marital status and age at birth (n=13,150)

Finally, a regression analysis was conducted to assess the relative importance of marital status and other socio-economic factors. Data for this analysis included married and cohabiting couples only, not those "closely involved" or in other categories.

Table 4 shows how marital status, age, income education, ethnic group and welfare each independently and significantly influence the risk of family breakdown. Wald numbers suggest marital status and age are more important than income, education, race or welfare.

Marital status. The odds of a cohabiting couple with a young child splitting up are more than twice that of a married couple of equivalent age, income, education, ethnic group and benefits.

- **Age**. The odds of a couple in their teens and 20s splitting up are twice that of a couple in their 30s, independent of other factors.
- **Education**. The odds of couples with less education splitting are higher than for those with more education, although the relationship between risk and education level is not entirely linear.
- **Income**. The odds of a couple with the lowest family income – less than £15,600 – splitting up are 44% more than that of couples. However rising income does not appear to be a protective factor above this level.
- **Ethnic group**. The odds of black mothers splitting up are twice those of white mothers, independent of other factors. Asian mothers are most likely to stay together.
- **Welfare**. The odds of splitting up are 33% higher for those on benefits.
- **Birth order**. Whether the child is the first or subsequent birth is not a factor.

Table 4: Variables		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Significance	Odds ratio
Marital status (vs married)	Cohabiting	0.78	0.08	101	1	0.000	2.17
Mother's age (vs. 30s)				94	3	0.000	
	Teens	1.30	0.18	52	1	0.000	3.68
	20s	0.68	0.08	72	1	0.000	1.98
	40s	-0.06	0.23	0	1	0.789	0.94
Education (vs. NVQ4)				30	6	0.000	
	No quals	0.60	0.14	19	1	0.000	1.82
	NVQ 1	0.25	0.15	3	1	0.092	1.28
	NVQ2	0.45	0.10	21	1	0.000	1.57
	NVQ3	0.31	0.12	7	1	0.008	1.36
	NVQ5	0.04	0.24	0	1	0.875	1.04
	Other quals	-0.09	0.30	0	1	0.777	0.92
Family income (vs. mid quintile)				24	6	0.001	
	Bottom 20%	0.37	0.11	11	1	0.001	1.44
	Next 20%	0.03	0.11	0	1	0.788	1.03
	Penultimate 20%	-0.26	0.15	3	1	0.082	0.77
	Top 20%	-0.13	0.15	1	1	0.398	0.88
	Don't know	0.19	0.17	1	1	0.261	1.21
	Refused	0.15	0.27	0	1	0.584	1.16
Ethnic group (vs. White)				22	6	0.001	
	Indian	-0.54	0.35	2	1	0.126	0.58
	Pakistani	-0.46	0.23	4	1	0.047	0.63
	Bangladeshi	-0.61	0.43	2	1	0.155	0.55
	Black	0.64	0.25	7	1	0.009	1.90
	Mixed / other	0.51	0.23	5	1	0.026	1.66
	Other / unknown	-1.06	1.00	1	1	0.289	0.35
Welfare (vs. not on benefits)	Receives	0.29	0.09	10	1	0.001	1.33
Birth order (vs subsequent child)	First birth	-0.10	0.08	2	1	0.181	0.90
	Constant	-3.56	0.11	1025	1	0.000	0.03

DISCUSSION

This study investigates whether government policy and research are right to dismiss or ignore marriage as a distinct social category with qualitatively different outcomes from other cohabiting family structures. Couples who "live together as if married" may appear to be comparable to couples who are legally married, in that they both live together and have children. But are they really comparable in terms of family outcomes?

Although research in other countries may show outcome differences between married and unmarried fami-

lies, the relative absence of recent UK research – reinforced by government policy to abolish the term "marital status" – make it unclear whether such findings still apply in the UK.

However our new analysis of Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) data on 15,000 British mothers who gave birth in 2000 or 2001 shows clearly that married families continue to provide significantly more stable homes for their children than do unmarried families.

This robust finding, using a large scale up-to-date dataset, questions the validity and wisdom of recent government policy to treat married and unmarried couples alike, and abolish marital status from government forms. Gliding over any distinction between couple types rules out analyses based on diverse family structures which could have important policy implications.

MCS data shows that during the first three years of a child's life, the risk of family breakdown faced by unmarried parents is 5.5 times greater than that faced by married parents. Amongst unmarried parents who describe themselves as "cohabiting", the risk is 3.5 times greater. Amongst those who describe themselves as "closely involved", the risk is 13 times greater. The differential risks associated with family status are broadly similar regardless of whether the child is the first or subsequent birth.

One in three unmarried couple parents – including one in five of those who describe themselves as "cohabiting" – will split up before their child's third birthday compared to one in seventeen married parents. These figures are similar to those found by Kiernan in 1999. Social trends such as the move towards the separation of marriage and childbearing (Kiernan et al, 1998) may have become more pronounced since that study, but despite its increasingly normative character, the instability associated with cohabitation remains high.

Importantly, this study also shows that income does not account for differences in stability between married and cohabiting couple parents. Whereas the ratio between unmarried and married parent break-up rates is 3:1, the ratio between couples on similar income is still at least 2:1.

Our regression analysis shows that family status and age are more important predictors of family breakdown than either income or education. Moreover, only those on low income are at significantly higher risk, independent of other factors. Government policy aimed at increasing income levels above a threshold of about £15,000 p.a. might reasonably be expected to reduce family breakdown to some extent. But it will not reduce the differential in breakdown risk faced by cohabiting couples compared to married couples. The odds of cohabiting couples splitting up are more than double those of married couples, even after taking age, education, income, ethnic group and benefits into account.

Using a robust dataset, this study therefore replicates the claim that three quarters of family breakdown affecting young children now involves unmarried parents (Benson, 2005). In terms of hard outcomes, these conclusions question the appropriateness of policy-makers and researchers considering marriage and cohabitation as equivalent or even perhaps describing cohabiting couples as "living together as if married".

Strengths and limitations of the study

The major strength of MCS is that it allows a clean analysis of a large up-to-date dataset of comparable families. The study is "clean" in being able to analyse data from mothers with children of the same age. There are therefore no potential confounds from changing social norms. It is also advantageous to be able to investigate outcomes amongst only those mothers who had their first child, thus discounting any potential sibling effects.

Further investigation is needed to find out why couples described themselves as "closely involved", implying being a couple, rather than "cohabiting". Family breakdown risk is especially high amongst the former category, part of which may be due to being younger and less well-educated. It is also possible that some mothers in this category may be "living apart together" (Haskey, 2005), potentially claiming additional lone parent benefits whilst not wishing to admit publicly to being a couple. Recent evidence suggests there appear to be more claimants of lone parent benefits than there are lone parents (Brewer & Shaw, 2006). Further research is needed to establish why those "closely involved" are so unstable and whether this self-description is influenced by welfare policy.

The most obvious limitation of this study is that it only covers outcomes over the first three years of a child's life. Future MCS sweeps will allow analysis of family outcomes over longer periods. Other datasets – ALSPAC, FACS – already have the potential for such analysis.

This study also concentrated only on change in family structure from birth. Subsequent changes make analysis more complex but may have important consequences. For example, Kiernan (1999) found that family breakdown risk was lower amongst cohabiting couples who subsequently married compared to those who stayed unmarried.

What is it about marriage?

Socio-economic selection effects undoubtedly account for part of the apparent benefits and protections afforded to married couples. But, as Wilson & Oswald (2005) demonstrate in their review of longitudinal studies, marriage

brings with it a causal component that is not accounted for by socio-economic background factors.

Although it is not the aim of this study to explain precisely why marriage makes such a difference, it is worth highlighting plausible explanations worthy of further UK research.

Commitment. The simplest explanation is that married couples have a higher level of commitment to one another compared to unmarried couples in the first place. This does not have to be true for all unmarried couples, amongst whom a continuum of commitment exists (Smart & Stevens, 1997). However the decision to move in together for an unspecified period of time generally represents a lower barrier-to-entry than the decision to get married for life. Having moved in together, the risk of pregnancy is similar for all couples, whether married or not (Ermisch, 2001). The increasing social norm to cohabit first and marry later also increases the likelihood of unmarried childbirth (Ermisch, 2006).

For married couples, the time involved in bringing up a child fits with the intention to spend a life together. For unmarried couples, the prospect of bringing up a child may set a time horizon beyond the expectation or intention of the relationship. Coming to terms with these long-term consequences may be too much for some couples to resolve.

A compelling new theory also suggests that men and women tend to see commitment in different ways. Whereas women view commitment in terms of attachment – moving in together – men view commitment in terms of a decision – getting married (Stanley & al, 2005). This gender difference in relationship intentions has the potential for considerable misunderstanding.

Communication skills. Resolving intentions may not be helped by the likelihood that couples who cohabit rather than marry may have poorer communication skills (Cohan & Kleinbaum, 2002). Whether or not couples who cohabit start off with this vulnerability, couples who are less committed to their relationship may put less effort into the development of the skills necessary to sustain a long-term relationship.

Father involvement. The willingness and ability of fathers to be involved in the lives of their families also plays a major role in family outcomes. Some studies have shown that the level of father involvement can explain much of the difference in outcomes between the children of married and unmarried families. For example, teenagers with involved fathers were less likely to behave badly regardless whether parents were married, unmarried or single (Carlson, 2006).

Interestingly, mother behaviours towards either parent-child or parent-parent relationship appear less predictive of both child and marital outcomes. Just as Carlson (2006) found that father – but not mother – involvement is a key predictor of teenage behavioural problems, Whitton & al (2002) found that father – but not mother – willingness to sacrifice predicts marital commitment.

Behaviour. There are behavioural differences displayed by married families compared to unmarried families, both before and after the birth of their child. For example, amongst MCS participants, the risk of adverse health behaviours and outcomes – smoking, non-breastfeeding and post-natal depression – increases depending whether mothers are married, cohabiting or solo (Kiernan & Pickett, 2006). Unmarried mothers are also less likely to attend ante-natal clinics. A preliminary analysis of MCS data for this study found that 82% of married mothers attended compared to only 64% of those "cohabiting" and 40% of those "closely involved".

Specialisation and personal autonomy According to Becker (1981), specialisation in household roles is a more efficient arrangement than simply sharing roles. Specialisation allows one spouse to master some skills or responsibilities – such as tax returns – and to relinquish others – such as children's clothing. Married couples are more likely to specialise household roles compared to unmarried couples, partly due to the length of relationship (Stratton, 2005).

Married couples, especially first time couples, are also more likely than unmarried couples to use joint rather than separate bank accounts (Heimdal & Houseknecht, 2003). For couples to specialise their household roles and to manage their finances in joint name require a focus on "us" rather than "you" and "me". Both of these findings fit with other research showing that cohabitors are more likely to value their personal autonomy and equity (Clarkberg & al, 1995).

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Appendix 4 Housing and family breakdown.

HOUSING AND FAMILY BREAKDOWN.
Most adults have the opportunity to shape the environment and spaces in which they choose to raise children. As families grow and change, most usually also have the opportunity to reflect these changes in their choice of housing. Living in a house without enough garden for the kids to play? Move. Two teenagers together in the same room? Build an extension. The flexibility to alter or, if necessary, change, the place in which families exist is crucial to allow families the space to live, and to allow children to grow.

The real difficulty, however, lies with those families who, for whatever reason, are unable to positively change or amend their accommodation. These families, without the security and the flexibility that owner-occupation or financial independence offers, are forced to accept accommodation which can be fundamentally unsuitable to the needs of their family (or, indeed, must fight to secure accommodation in the first instance). As a result, these families are faced with significant disadvantages which challenge the ability of individual members to live to a standard which most people assume is the norm. In some cases, the reality of static, unsuitable accommodation can be a huge challenge for families, and have a very serious effects upon health and psychological well-being, leading to severe strains in familial relationships.

Successive governments have grappled with the insurmountable task of providing liveable, adequate accommodation for every family unit who need one. This problem has been grasped by government in recent years, particularly through the Decent Homes programme. A significant emphasis has been placed upon improving the facilities within the housing stock upon where the government has direct or indirect influence.

Nonetheless, huge challenges remain. The impact of housing upon families is real, as is its contribution to the breakdown of the family unit in some cases. The effect of inadequate housing is grounded within a wider debate of the importance of place for people, underpinned by a 'sense of place' discussion regarding how roots, security and individual choice have the ability to empower (or exclude individuals from the community they are within).

The link between housing and family breakdown can be approached in two ways:
- the impact of sub-standard housing (or lack of a dwelling) upon family breakdown,
- or the consequences of family breakdown for the housing stock within the United Kingdom

Both issues are assessed within this appendix, drawing upon the body of evidence available in these policy areas, and highlighting the importance of strong, healthy, families for the wellbeing of both individuals and society.

Acquiring direct evidence
A number of studies have acknowledged the difficulty of identifying a direct link between housing and problems which may be said to contribute to family fracture (whether that fracture be separation, divorce, ill-health or, in the worst cases, premature death). A summary of research available for the Scottish Office in 1999 summarised the difficulty:

> *"[there] is a correlation between poor housing and ill health but attempts to prove that poor housing actually causes ill health have often failed, and the research field is characterised by weak, and sometimes contradictory, empirical findings".*[1]

Further, a study for the US National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences equally concluded that "elucidating the associations between the built environment and health disparities has proven to be an enormous challenge to the scientific community"[2]. The King's Fund has also emphasised the difficulties of acquiring direct evidence in studies[3]. Some studies have even refused to waste time searching for such a link: the Cost-Effectiveness in Housing study called the search for any "simple cause/effect relationship" in this area "futile".[4]

Within a societal context, controlled experiments usually prove an impossibility. Additionally, there has been little comparative research of, for example, the health of homeless people versus the health of other sections of society who suffer from 'social exclusion' (such as those on low incomes).[5] As a result, establishing a causal link between weak physical or mental health and inadequate housing has proved exceptionally challenging. As a result, analysis of the relationship between family breakdown and housing often relies on generalised evidence of a link, or anecdotal evidence.

Contextualising housing within wider family fracture difficulties
It should also be emphasised at the outset that this report does not seek to raise the problem of housing above other issues which may contribute to family breakdown.

As discussed, the acquisition of precise evidence and the demonstration of definitive causal links between inade-

quate housing and family fracture has proven notoriously difficult. Anecdotal evidence suggests that poor housing is usually a contributory factor towards family break-down, rather than necessarily being the sole cause. Nonetheless, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has high-lighted how parental separation is usually a long and drawn-out process,[6] which allows major problems – such as housing difficulties – to fester and contribute to this descent.

Additionally, it must also be, regretfully, accepted that the vulnerability of a particular family with reference to hous-ing may be replicated in other aspects of their life, and may indicate a wider weakness in the structure of that unit. A 1996 US study of homeless families in Florida has high-lighted the likelihood of such families being affected by a host of other stresses (single-parent family, drug or alcohol abuse, emotional disorders, financial strain, interfamily dif-ficulties, domestic violence, unemployment etc.[7]). Jim Bennett, head of social policy at the Institute for Public Policy Research concurs: "for the majority of people, home-lessness is the result of longer term disadvantage; a low income; an unstable relationship; health problems or a dis-ability. While homelessness may be temporary, other forms of disadvantage take longer to address …"[8]

Thus, it becomes very difficult to divorce the immediate stresses of housing difficulties from a wider structural malaise. Of course, this link works can work both ways – that the improvement in housing conditions has a signif-icant benefit to other areas of the lives of vulnerable indi-viduals and families.

A relative problem?

The purpose of this appendix is to highlight a number of the social- and health-related problems that the lack of a home, or inadequate accommodation, can contribute to. The evidence has been collated from a wide range of both UK-based and international sources and is intended as an evaluation of some of the existing work done in this pol-icy area – a broad 'state-of-the-problem' overview of fam-ily breakdown and housing.

In presenting some of the wealth of evidence available, however, it is important to note that much of the debate, at least regarding adequacy, is relative. That is not, in any way, to detract from the very challenging circumstances of the many individuals and families suffering deprivation and health inequality as a result of housing issues.

However, one must remember that it is only a genera-tion ago or so that the problem of slums was largely negated in deprived, urban areas. Housing improvements will, by definition, only be visible over the long-term, par-ticularly when dealing with a stock which is essentially static. There are real, obvious and tremendously worry-

ing problems with the nation's housing stock, which can cause significant social and health problems for some of the most vulnerable families in society. However, housing stock has been progressively improved over generations, despite commentators who strive for an unrealistic utopia in housing policy.

1 THE IMPACT OF HOUSING UPON THE BREAK-DOWN OF FAMILIES

1.1 Family fracture caused by the lack of a home

The lack of a dwelling creates a particularly acute pressure upon a family unit and the individuals within it. According to the charity Crisis, homelessness is "more than rooflessness", where people are not just affected by the lack of a physical space; housing is also something that "provides 'roots, identity, security, a sense of belonging and a place of emotional wellbeing'"[9]. The Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad suggests that the 'home' frames an individuals' interaction with life:

- as key to the practical organisation of the tasks and activities undertaken by families and individuals and,
- as crucial to understanding and contextualising the experiences and knowledge given by our engagement in everyday life.[10]

According to Gullestad, the home is central to an individ-uals' ability to "create meaning and coherence in a frag-mented life".[11] The lack of a property – or lack of control over the property allocated – runs contrary to this instinct.

1.1.1 Scale of the Problem: Expanding the traditional defi-nition of homelessness

The most obvious manifestation of homelessness tends to be visible in urban environments; the image of a solitary individual reduced begging or vagrancy to subsist. Whilst this is a valid representation of one aspect of homeless-ness, such one-dimensionality can also obscure a much wider problem. Lack of a property – whether real or threatened – is a problem which affects many families and groups of individuals.

Three broad types of homelessness can be identified:
- 'Actual and obvious': the traditional image of individu-als sleeping rough. For a proportion of this group, char-itable, familial or state intervention should eventually support them back into housing. However, for a signif-icant group of vulnerable people, often with intractable problems (particularly drug and alcohol abuse), home-lessness is a long-term difficulty (a survey for St. Mungo's indicated a majority of those questioned had been living rough for over one year).[12]

- 'Recognised and supported': individuals or families who are in short-term, immediate need; these have no accommodation and have been recognised as legally homeless by their local authority.
- 'Hidden homeless': representing a group of homeless people who are not immediately obvious to most sections of society. These people, whom the state has not recognised as being in immediate short-term need usually rely upon family members or friends to support them on a temporary basis. Hidden homeless includes (but is not limited to) legally homeless households who are not entitled to accommodation[13].

According to the government, there has been significant progress with individuals who are 'actually and obviously' homeless:

Rough sleepers identified by English local authorities

	Number	% of total representing London
1998	1,850	34%
1999	1,633	39%
2000	1,180	46%
2001	703	51%
2002	596	54%
2003	504	53%
2004	508	52%
2005	459	48%

Data refers to June of each year.

Source: DCLG


England: Rough Sleepers
Source: DCLG
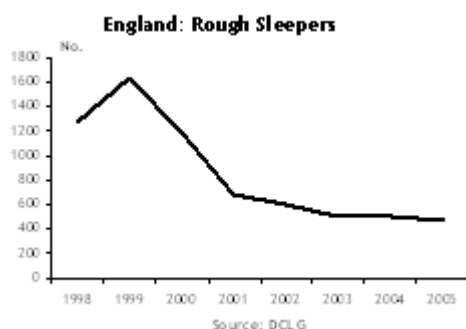
According to their March 2005 Sustainable Communities : Settled Homes ; Changing Lives, their strategy has produced "major breakthroughs in tackling the worst forms of homelessness and helping the most vulnerable" with rough sleeping at its lowest level ever[14]. Other commentators, while accepting that positive strides have been made, are conscious to highlight that significant problems remain. Crisis accept that rough sleeper numbers are down by almost 75% between 1998 and July 2006, but insist that there "remains a wider group of street homeless people who are proving more difficult to help".[15]

The reality is less positive for other homeless groups. Conventionally, households with children who are defined as homeless will usually also be defined as in "priority need", as set out in the Housing Act 1996[16] (along with pregnant women, person vulnerable due to old age, mental illness, handicap, physical disability or other special reason, those homeless due to an emergency such as fire or flood, care leavers, those aged 16 - 17). According to the Act, families or groups of people made homeless at the same time cannot be divided.[17] This places a statutory obligation upon local authorities to make suitable accommodation available. A proportion of these 'priority need' cases will be housed in temporary accommodation, the use of which has increased substantially in certain geographical areas in recent years.


Numbers living in temporary accommodation
Source: Department for Communities and Local Government
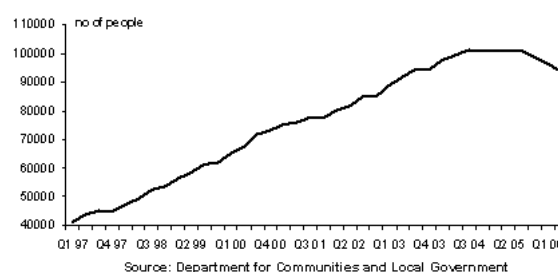
The number of individuals housed in temporary accommodation has more than doubled since the beginning of 1997 (up 127% from 41,250 in Q1 1997 to 93,910 in Q2 2006). Throughout the period over half of these individuals had dependent children (69,790 people out of 93,910 in Q2 2006).

Out of 101,700 applicants who were accepted as being in priority need in 2005, over half cited dependent children as the need for state support. A further 12% were households which contained one pregnant member. Individuals, particularly able-bodied adults, rarely fulfil one of the criteria outlined above and so do not receive the support accorded to "priority need" cases. Nonetheless, the number of people made homeless as a result of family breakdown is significant, despite not being reflected in official figures which avoid making estimates of such numbers.

Statutory Homeless: Reasons for Acceptance (2005 provisional estimates)
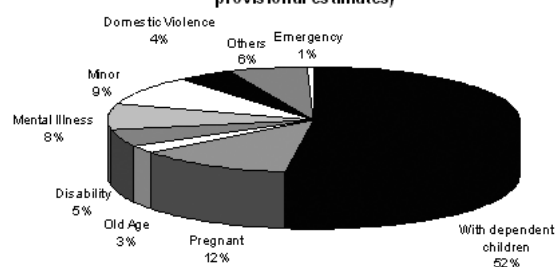
The last homeless 'group' are the hidden homeless; those without an abode, but who can organise just enough support to avoid having to call upon government support immediately (or who can subsist even if this aid is withheld). This may include residing with parents, friends or family – but often without any security of tenure, privacy or sufficient facilities.

The true number of hidden homeless is disputed and is probably larger than existing estimates. According to Department for Communities and Local Government statistics, the number of 'homeless at home' has increased by almost half since 1997, up 49% from 6,870 in Q1 1997 to 10,210 in Q2 2006 (having gone as high as 17,500 people in Q4 2003). Crisis, however, uses a much broader definition to estimate that around 400,000 people are hidden homeless.
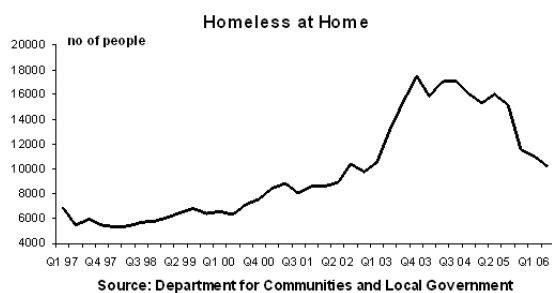
Note: definitional change in 2002(with immediate reduction of around 1,000 reported people)

1.1.2 Pressure upon family structures during periods of homelessness

The physical lack of a dwelling is perhaps one of the most stressful influences that can be applied to a family unit. The traditional definition of a 'successful parent' is being able to provide a secure, and relatively stable, home life in which children can develop and grow. The threat – realised or not – of homelessness fundamentally undermines this aspiration. Further, the type of dwelling which is usually made available for those families deemed 'legally homeless' are often practically unsuitable for the positive development of the family unit and the individuals within that family.

Homelessness and temporary accommodation has been linked with a range of mental and physical health-related problems[18]:

- depression[19] and mental breakdown433,434 for adults
- possible addiction problems[20]
- a shortened average lifespan[21]
- a lack of space for children to learn, play and develop[22]
- a loss of aspiration, belief and ambition
- a difficulty in being able to 'manage' a family adequately, including personal hygiene[23]

- an inability to embed 'roots' in a community – this will particularly impact upon children in their formative years, particularly with regards to schools and forming social relationships[24]

Additionally, a number of organisations have highlighted the continued plight of homeless families once placed in temporary accommodation. Limited by finite resources, local councils tend to house homeless families in any accommodation available, irrespective of whether that dwelling is suitable to needs. Shelter cautions on its website that "temporary accommodation does not have to be suitable [to needs]",[25] although the expectation is that the best quality available at the time will be provided.

While temporary accommodation averts an immediate and very real difficulty – that of actual homelessness – the difficulty lies when families are placed in fundamentally unsuitable accommodation. Given the immense pressure upon local councils and housing providers (and limited housing supply), some commentators have pointed to the development of a 'tick-box' mentality where, once accommodation – any accommodation – has been secured, the authorities tend to believe that problem, if not solved, then at least substantially mitigated. In doing so, the issue of homelessness is replaced by the issue of sub-standard accommodation, which can have a similarly negative effect upon the well-being of family units.

The Westminster Housing Commissions highlights this problem very effectively, drawing upon the experiences of one homeless family in Westminster. After a six week stay in a hostel, a single parent family with two teenage sons were moved into a third-floor housing association flat which was "our one offer" which they "had no choice but to take … however unsuitable." Despite being accommodated, the family continued to suffer exceptional hardship; a lack of choice over location, most of their furniture and personal effects put into storage (with no access), no incentive to work given that housing benefits is reduced as pay increases, the two teenagers (aged 17 and 19) forced to share a room, and position number 722 on the list for re-housing.[26] Further the report makes an estimate that this family costs the government over £100,000 over four years.

Despite the obvious difficulties and challenges attributed to homelessness, it is important to distinguish between homeless categories, which in both their general composition and the allocated resources are rather different. Given that families mostly fall under the 'priority need' category, they are almost always eligible for greater support and help than individual able-bodied adults. Some organisations, such as Centrepoint, have been set up specifically to argue the case for those

homeless groups who resources are diverted away from.[27]

1.2 Family fracture attributed to sub-standard housing

The housing of families in inadequate accommodation can place severe stress upon the ability of that unit to operate. A lack of facilities, an inappropriate geographical location, a failure to offer privacy, overcrowding, problems with maintaining and managing households all have the potential to cause difficulties for families who, in many cases, are already likely to be in vulnerable positions.

The distinction between 'being housed' and 'being housed adequately' has long been recognised. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights places emphasis upon the adequacy of housing, not merely the provision of it.[28] Charities such as Shelter were explicitly formed to campaign for the upgrade of sub-standard accommodation.[29] The UK government themselves has given variable attention to this policy area. Although the Decent Homes programme, set up in 2000, has sought to improve the 2.1 million estimated homes that fell below the standard set,[30] the recent green paper has accepted that improving bad conditions was a lower priority than dealing with rough sleepers and the use of temporary accommodation.[31]

The following pages detail some of the major challenges associated with sub-standard housing, and the areas where vulnerable families may become susceptible to fracture (in whatever form).

1.2.1 Failure to offer conditions of privacy

A major shortcoming of sub-standard housing is the failure to provide sufficient privacy for a family and for the individuals within that unit. This lack of privacy can place untold pressure upon family members, creating discord and harmony when 'personal space' is invaded.[32]

A lack of privacy within a household is usually attributed to a lack of space, a problem which has been long recognised within housing design and management. In 1961 the Parker Morris Committee determined that the quality of social housing in the United Kingdom required improvement and proposed numerous standards which were incorporated into legislation. In 1980, however, as a result of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act, the mandatory nature of these standards (which set minimum floor areas for certain properties) were removed by the government, citing cost. A proportion of historical housing stock (and new properties which are not bound by official space regulations) remain inadequate for the spatial and privacy needs of its inhabitants. Further,

the over-use of existing housing stock – through overcrowding – exacerbates the lack of privacy.

According to Privacy International, privacy "underpins human dignity" and is "one of the most important human rights of the modern age".[33] The right of a household to privacy within their home has long been considered a key fundamental human right.[34] Additionally, as the concept of human rights developed, the right to privacy has been endowed within legislation since the codification of rights began.[35] Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights indicates that "no-one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence … everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference …"[36] Similarly, Article 8 of Human Rights Act 1988 confirms the right "to respect for private and family life"[37] from the state, highlighting an implicit need for such privacy to be respected in general.

The effects of a lack of privacy are, obviously, immensely difficult to ascertain and vary according to the individual and the situation. On a general level, however, according to Hofstede's Workplace Cultural Dimension Index, the majority of British people have individualism as their most obvious personality trait which, according to Hofstede, is "indicative of a society … [which] relatively loose[ly] bonds with others … Privacy is considered the cultural norm".[48] While this is woefully insufficient to explain the effects of loss of privacy in households, it does provide generalised evidence of the relative need for privacy by the British populace.

According to Gavison, privacy is derived from three parts – security, anonymity and solitude.[39] Bloustein suggests privacy to be an interest of the human personality which protects personality, independence, dignity and integrity.[40] The lack of sufficient space to be able to exercise these rights will inevitably cause friction and difficulty, depending upon the severity, within a family unit and/or between the family unit and the shortcomings of its inadequate environment.

A lack of privacy within a family affects will affect all members of that unit. In a Shelter survey of 500 overcrowded families for its Full House? report of October 2005, "little privacy in our home" was cited by 92% of the families questioned as a problem of overcrowding; the highest score.[41] Some organisations, however, have pointed to various ways in which particular members can be placed under pressure by a lack of privacy:
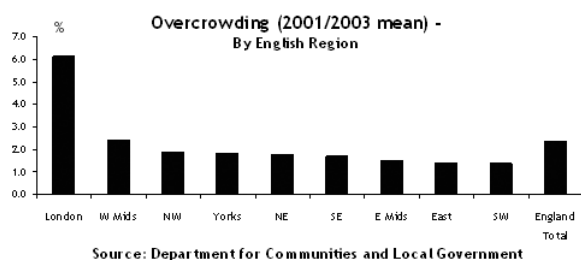
- Children: Shelter highlight how "children were sleeping in living rooms to avoid the lack of privacy and conflict that often resulted from sharing with a sibling of a different sex or age".[42] According to Shelter's Full House figures, 27% of households had children sleep-

ing in rooms that were not bedrooms and 10% of the households had teenagers of opposite sex sharing the same bedroom.[43] Shelter indicate that a lack of privacy amongst children may cause problems with "development, relationships and behaviour".[44]

- Adolescents: Shelter highlight a particular issue with adolescents, who value privacy during the formative years of their growth.[45]
- Parents: In Shelter's report one surveyed parent reported that "most of the time, I have to sleep in the living room, just to have some privacy with my partner".[46]

1.2.2 Too many individuals in one household

Overcrowding (2001/2003 mean) - By English Region

Source: Department for Communities and Local Government

One of the greatest pressures imposed upon a family is the placing of too many people in one property. Shelter describe overcrowding as significant because it "impacts on all aspects of people's lives".[47] The recent green paper released by the Department for Communities and Local Government is equally as clear: "overcrowding blights lives. And in particular it can make life intolerable for families".[48] Overcrowding is a particular problem for families, given that – according to Shelter – almost three-quarters of overcrowded households are families with children.[49] According to figures from the Department for Communities and Local Government, a total of 2.4% households in England were assessed as overcrowded (according to the bedroom standard) between 2001 and 2004. London, by far, has the highest rate of measured overcrowding (6.1% of total households), with rural areas such as the south-west and Eastern England with the smallest proportion of overcrowded households.

Many commentators argue that the measurement of overcrowded is heavily outdated. Statutory overcrowding is defined in two ways, both of which have remained unchanged since 1935 and which were restated in the Housing Act 1985. Either of which can be contravened for a dwelling to be determined as overcrowded:

- Room Standard: breached if two people of opposite sexes who are not living together as husband and wife are forced to sleep in the same room. Living rooms and kitchens, as well as bedrooms, can be treated as rooms available for sleeping; further, children under

10 do not count for the purpose of determining whether the standard has been contravened.

- Space Standard: indicates the total number of individuals how may sleep in one property according to the number of rooms available as sleeping accommodation and the floor area of each room. Children under 1 year do not count in this standard and children under ten count as half.[50]

Whilst a more stringent 'Bedroom Standard' is now usually used, technical loopholes still remain in the legislation to be exploited. Whilst placing a teenage son and daughter in the same bedroom would under statute be defined as "overcrowded", for example, ridiculous configurations can be found which do not technically breach the rules – a 4-person family can be placed in a one-bedroomed flat, for example, if a mother and daughter are placed in the bedroom and a father and son use the kitchen, bathroom or living room. Even the government accepts that this situation is unjustifiable.[51]

The government estimates that under statutory standards around 20,000 households can be defined as overcrowding. However, using the more rigorous Bedroom Standard, around 500,000 households can be said to be overcrowded – with particular problems in London and amongst lone parents, large households and BME groups.[52]

Numerous organisations have suggested how different aspects of the family unit are affected by overcrowding:

- Adults: the University of Hawai'i suggests that a "sandwich generation" between young and old may feel particularly prone to stress due to the care required by both young and old.[53]
- Children: Shelter highlights the social injustice in housing children in inadequate and overcrowded accommodation – which they assert affects one in ten children in the United Kingdom. They suggest that children are at increased risk of infections and often do worse at school.[54] In their Full House? report, they also suggest that overcrowded properties are a barrier for children to play and to complete homework and reading.[55] The UK government has suggested that overcrowding interrupts homework and can promote higher absentee rates at school.[56]
- Parents: Shelter also suggest that overcrowding is a barrier to providing "positive opportunities for their children and a constant cause of anxiety and depression".[57]

The government has accepted that overcrowding is a major problem requiring attention. In its July 2006 green paper, it states that highlights examples of "grotesquely

overcrowded conditions" where couples are forced to sleep separately, numerous children are forced into the same room and where the kitchen and bathroom is used as a bedroom. Further it states, "overcrowded living conditions are often associated with health problems such as stress and depression, with poor educational achievement by children, and with family breakdown".[58]

The debate surrounding overcrowding, however, should be viewed within a wider context. Overcrowding is a problem which has blighted housing provision since time immemorial and ultimately one must remember that the definition – however arbitrary – is relative.

Some commentators have forwarded the argument that the need to keep extended families within one dwelling has a cultural dimension which is somewhat incompatible with the traditional household structure of the United Kingdom. The key question that should be asked is whether this is deliberate – ie that the traditional structure of these families mean that overcrowding is preferred to breaking up extended families – or whether it is a function of the less than ideal conditions that these communities tended to find themselves living within. Michael Young highlights how the structure of families in their traditional Asian settings is of extended families living together in properties of varying sizes.

Certain types of families have – both currently and in the immediate past – chosen overcrowding as the 'lesser evil' in preference to addressing other more intractable difficulties. In their return to the East End 50 years after their first study, Michael Young's Institute of Community Studies highlights a preference among Bangladeshi families to remain within areas of community strength, rather than accept the offers from Tower Hamlet's Housing Department of larger properties in 'no-go' estates elsewhere in the borough. According to Young, "because of the safety factor, many families who had gained even a crowded perch in Spitalfields living with relatives refused more ample accommodation elsewhere";[59] Young's researchers assert that 90% of offers to Asians of council housing on 'white' estates in the mid-1980s were refused[60] (although they accept that this figure was possibly speculative).

Of course, there is no real suggestion here that certain communities prefer overcrowding when given an unbiased and full choice, but it should be noted that overcrowding is sometimes accepted as a necessary inconvenience in the short-, medium- and – in some cases – the long-term.

1.2.3 Failure to protect against extremes of temperature

A major shortcoming of sub-standard housing can be its inability to protect from heat, cold or intemperate weather. The housing of families in damp, draughty or inade-quately ventilated properties can prove a significant burden upon individual members, particularly the young or the elderly. Specifically, it has been suggested that such conditions do allow allergies to develop, particularly within children who grow up in such circumstances.

Given the greater likelihood that ill-health will affect poorer sections of the community, inadequate housing also has the compounding effect of exacerbating existing medical conditions.[61] After homelessness and threatened eviction, more people contact Shelter regarding the poor state of housing than any other problem.[62]

According to studies produced as early as 1940 (for the League of Nations), housing should be able to "permit a maintenance of the equilibrium between the production and the loss of heat from the human body".[63] The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (England) Regulations 2005, which came into force in April 2006, detail both "excess cold" and "excess heat" as two hazards which the act seeks to remove. Within these new regulations, weather-based ailments feature highly. Regular severe pneumonia is categorised as harm of magnitude class I; asthma, non-malignant respiratory diseases as Class II; sick building syndrome as Class III; and occasional mild pneumonia as Class IV.[64]

Numerous commentators have asserted that poor housing can have a detrimental effect upon the health of inhabitants:

Cold housing: Anecdotal evidence suggests cold housing often has a deleterious effect on the respiratory system, causing or exacerbating medical conditions such as asthma. Some commentators have also asserted a causal link between cold housing and heart disease, strokes and hypothermia.[65] Collins' 1993 study showed that increases in blood pressure caused by decreasing indoor temperatures could be dangerous for those individuals suffering from hypertension.[66] A 1990 study comparing centrally-heated and non centrally-heated flats, showed less dampness and condensation in households with central heating[67]. The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine produced a report highlighting an increase of 40,000 deaths during winter. According to a summary provided by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, "the magnitude of the winter excess was greater in people living in dwellings that appear to be poorly heated … People in local authority or housing association dwellings appeared to be especially likely to have low indoor temperatures during cold periods if their heating costs were high … The findings suggest that people in poorly heated homes are indeed more vulnerable to winter death than those living in well-heated homes".[68] The incidence between "lack of warmth" and "colds or coughs" was put at 99% by a

paper presented in 2002 to a conference in York on the costs of poor housing.[69]

Cold housing is most likely to affect vulnerable and elderly members of a household. Inadequately heated housing can also be associated with increasing death rates during the normal cold winters of a country in the northern hemisphere.[70]

Damp housing; The National Asthma Campaign asserts that people with asthma are two to three times more likely to live in damp conditions over the general population.[71] The York paper on the cost of poor housing asserts that "damp households … experienced over twice the rate of Illness Episodes than dry and warm households".[72]

Damp is a common affliction of many households around the country – both in the private and public sectors. It is caused when an excess of water in the atmosphere can no longer be held in the air, and so enters physical structures. Damp is also often caused by inadequate maintenance – rainwater entering the building or plumbing leaks – or by inadequate ventilation. Mould has been linked with respiratory ailments, allergic reactions and infections.[73]

Other studies have asserted how damp properties can be breeding grounds for house dust mites and fungal spores, which can have a significantly deleterious effect upon the respiratory systems of inhabitants. This is particularly an issue for younger children while their respiratory systems are developed. One study has indicated up to a 1.5 – 3.5 times greater chance of children coughing and wheezing in a damp household.[74]

Housing with inadequate ventilation: A 1984 World Health Organisation global report indicated that up to 30% of new and remodelled buildings could be the subject of excessive complaints related to indoor air quality (although they clarify that this will often be temporary).[75]

Poor ventilation has been associated with increased humidity within properties, increased condensation (leading to damp) and increased levels of house dust mite. Each of these in turn can affect lung function and increase respiratory problems across a family within such an inadequate dwelling.[76]

Often it is not the inability of sub-standard housing to protect inhabitants from the inclement weather in its entirety; rather that the property does not offer a level of protection sufficient to not cause problems for the family or the individuals within it. Families on lower incomes often spend a larger proportion of their daily lives within their dwelling, exposing these vulnerable families even further to the deficiencies of the houses in which they are housed.

It has been suggested that cold or draughty accommodation has a disproportionately large effect on more vulnerable inhabitants. A study for the Scottish Executive concluded in 1999 that, despite the patchy link between poor housing and ill health, the "strongest links appear to be between (reported) illness in children and dampness and mould". The study also suggested an increase in respiratory problems in children.[77]

Alternatively, the property might have the ability to protect its inhabitants from the cold or heat, but the cost of doing so proves prohibitively expensive. For families on low incomes – or indeed individuals (particularly the elderly) – the temptation to reduce the running costs of the household by lowering heating bills is often an easy decision to make. Lower income families can typically spend over 10% of their budget on fuel, while richer families spent a much lower proportion.[78] This debate gained particular salience in the early 1990s following the 1993 Budget by Norman Lamont which imposed VAT on domestic gas and electricity bills, and which was described as "shameful" by Leader of the Opposition John Smith[79]. It was estimated by Boardman that households living in "fuel poverty" increased from 5.5 million to 7 million in the 10 years to 1991.[80] The recent increase in the wholesale oil and gas prices, and the consequent announcements by leading energy providers of rising prices, is only likely to exacerbate this problem.

Historically, government appeared to adopt an ambivalent stance on the link between poor housing and poor health,[81] preferring instead to individualise health issues. In itself this has merit – the aim of associating good health with personal responsibility and choice is a laudable aim – however, it obscures the general link between poorer sections of the population and poor health.

1.2.4 Failure to protect against disease, dirt and harmful substances

Sub-standard housing often fails to protect its inhabitants from disease, dirt and harmful substances, exposure families to ill-health and stress. According to Olsen's 1940 report, satisfactory housing requires the "provision of an atmosphere of reasonable purity, … protection against vermin, ... and against other mechanical injuries and gas poisoning …".[82]

Of course, measurements of disease control remain relative. Hygiene expectations have progressed significantly in the last century. Curiously, some charities now even suggest that the sterilisation of the environment that some children grow up in may be similarly deleterious upon health, as it does not allow such children to build up a tolerance to germs and common ailments. Thus, a satisfactory median must be reached – the ability for the household to uphold a

general, consistent level of cleanliness, whilst not inoculating inhabitants from all exposure to the world.

However, there are a number of issues surrounding the presence of harmful substances in some sub-standard accommodation. If a dwelling fails to prevent harmful substances from entering – either as result of the materials it is constructed from or the ventilation system – then there could be significant safety issues. In recent years there has been a number of widely-reported problems with sub-standard housing:

- **Vermin or pests** (**ants, bees, wasps, bedbugs, cockroaches, dustmites, fleas, beetles, mice, rats, silverfish, squirrels etc.**): one of the most common problems faced by families living in inadequate accommodation is infestation by vermin. Left untreated, vermin can spread disease, damage belongings, bite or sting and aggravate respiratory-based ailments.[83]
- **Radon**: which seeps into accommodation from the ground below, and has been found to be a particular problem in certain geographical areas. A number of international studies- such as a four-year study in Iowa in the 1990s[84] - have linked radon with lung cancer.[85] The Iowa Study was particularly interested in women, given the higher likelihood of exposure because they tend to spend longer in the home.
- **Other gas**: often poor maintenance in substandard housing permits low-level over-exposure to gases such as carbon monoxide and nitrogen monoxide. Some studies have suggested that increased exposure may increase the likelihood of developing asthma.[86]

1.2.5 Lack of basic amenities and lack of ability to use the
Housing may also contribute to family breakdown if it fails to provide an environment where families and individuals can subsist independently. This failure to provide basic amenities could include:

- inadequate cooking facilities
- inadequate food storage areas
- provision of an adequate and safe water supply
- provision of sanitary facilities[87]

Most local councils appear committed to housing families in accommodation which usually does not mandate facility sharing, preferring to let such dwellings out to individuals who (presumably) can adapt better to the lack of privacy. However, council websites do emphasise that they cannot guarantee that families will not be housed in shared facility accommodation.[88]

Additionally, the need to share some basic amenities in temporary accommodation – such as a kitchen or bathroom – can be a severe pressure upon families, and a severe infringement of privacy. On some support websites, there remains warnings that individuals may be forced bedrooms to share with strangers, although no reference to families are made.[89]

Secondly, there remains a problem with the adult members of a family not having the requisite skills to be able to manage a household. In recent years, increasing attention has been given to the 'ability to subsist' as a crucial part of strong, independent family units. Family breakdown can be avoided by educating individuals and parents in how to manage households.

A number of RSLs developing new accommodation highlight the importance of close management of those blocks, and the need to teach vulnerable families how to administer their own household. Bromford Housing Group, for examples, builds accommodation specifically to house teenage parents. Given the likely vulnerable background of these people and the likelihood that no-one has ever taught the basic skills which equip individuals for adulthood, a support management office is placed in every block and the Group works with occupiers to develop their household management skills.[90]

1.2.6 Precluding the positive development of children
Inadequate housing may be a strain upon adults, but it is assumed to affect the growth and development of children in more profound ways. According to the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, a lack of/inadequate housing "threatens [a child's] right to personal security, their right to education, their right to the highest attainable standard of health, their right to freedom from exploitation, and – in far too many cases – even their right to life".[91] Although the report discusses more intractable global problems than are generally present in the United Kingdom, it nonetheless implores all governments to view the issue of housing through the eyes of a child, given them enormous affect that deleterious accommodation can have.

Lack of space is one of the key aspects of inadequate housing, with specific regard to the development of children. High density accommodation, particularly with limited surrounding space, is not generally conducive to the positive development of children, who benefit from open, secure space to play. Although this often proves impossible, particularly in urban areas, some councils have investigated ways of limiting the effects upon the development of children. Accepting the need to increase housing density to meet future demand, the Westminster Housing Commission has proposed low child density as a key to success.[92]

The need and the ability to study is another key element in adequate housing provision for families with children.

Further, there also remains the hidden, psychological effects that inadequate housing may have upon children,

particularly with regards to their relationship with their parents. In the 1980s, Jay Belsky put forward a model detailing the function of a parent and the effect that the discharge of these functions (or lack of it) could have on a child. Belsky highlights three areas of stress and support within such a relationship – the individual parent; the individual child; within the social context in which the parent-child relationship occurs.[93] Separately, a 1980 study by Lazarus highlights the psychological pressure placed upon a parent when the demands of that parent exceed the internal and external resources available to that individual.[94]

A number of psychiatrists have highlighted how the psychological pressure experienced by the parent is often – both intentionally and unintentionally – decanted on children. Gorzka highlights that the identification of "perceived sources of stress may be useful in planning interventions that empower the homeless to identify and modify parental variables that negatively influence their parenting outcomes".[95] This can encourage destructive cyclical behaviour – a mother is stressed because she cannot provide her child with the environment he/she needs to develop; this affects the child who begins to demonstrate a lower form of 'development' (in whatever area); this in turn increases the stress levels of the affected parent.[96]

Finally, housing must have the flexibility to be able to change and develop with the growing needs of children. Without financial security, this can be exceptionally difficult.

1.2.7 The effect of poor housing design and maintenance upon families

Neither is the simple provision of a non-dwelling with adequate bedroom and facility provision necessarily sufficient to support positive family life and individual development. Housing associations, housing managers and local councillors are all well versed in the general inadequacy of a proportion of social housing in being unable to support their inhabitants. This is the result of two issues; the poor design of such housing in general, and then the subsequent inadequate maintenance of the housing over several decades.

The poor design of a significant proportion of post-war social housing has been recognised in recent years. This can be seen in two ways:

Design of housing estates: Poor design of housing estates has been attributed to the incubation of crime and anti-social behaviour, poor health in residents and inadequate development of communities

Design of individual dwellings: a failure to create an environment which allows all members of the family to live and develop

Poor design: Poorly-designed housing can have a detrimental effect upon the development of children within a family unit and their successful education.

One of the most obvious types of accommodation unsuitable for children are high-rise tower blocks, which have a particularly notorious reputation in contemporary urban planning. According to research completed in 2000, there are over 4,000 tower blocks in the United Kingdom, with a population of around 800,000 people.[97]

According to that National Sustainable Tower Blocks Initiative, there is a long list of "core problems" associated with tower block living – inadequate heating systems; lack of safety for children; tenant isolation/depression; inadequate play facilities; asbestos; lack of community facilities; poor fire safety; racism/racial harassment; inadequate or unreliable lifts; dampness/condensation; building defects; lack of security; poor layout/environment of estates; cockroaches; other vermin, poor health; high unemployment and poor services.[98] Most – if not all – of these problems have the potential to significant impact upon the ability of families to operate. Indeed, the National Sustainable Tower Blocks Initiative state emphatically in their summary that "Tower Block accommodation is not suitable for families with children".[99] Many other commentators would, at least partially, agree – and a number have proposed compromises which, where possible, ensures that children are not placed in the most inappropriate accommodation.[100]

Further, poor housing design may preclude the prudence day-to-day management of a dwelling. Families living in inadequate accommodation are, by definition, doing so through necessity, usually due to challenging financial or personal circumstances. For low-income families or individuals, the excessive cost of lighting or heating will be a barrier to use. One of the most obvious and well-documented examples of a failure to subsist is old people prevented from heating their houses in winter due to excessive bills. Charities such as Age Concern continue to highlight their conviction that 'fuel poverty' continues to rise, despite high-profile support from central government in recent years.[101]

Poor maintenance: Poorly maintained accommodation is also a key problem for vulnerable families, and the challenge of convincing organisations to repair inadequate homes can be one of the greatest stresses for adults. The last major housebuilding programme in the United Kingdom – in the twenty or so years after the Second World War – now means that most social housing is a generation or more old, with all the practical difficulties associated with ageing housing stock. Further, the experimentation in housing design in the 1950s and 1960s has

produced a quantity of accommodation which may be particularly difficult to maintain.

For their part, ALMOs, housing associations and private landlords would all argue that their resources are finite and not every problem can be fixed immediately. There are also considerable practical challenges associated with repair; the ability to replace a set of ageing water pipelines sixteen stories above ground in a busy urban area poses a number of considerable logistical difficulties.

1.2.8 Anchoring families within the community

Discussions surrounding housing policy are inextricably linked to wider debates regarding the developing and functioning of 'community', even with a general discourse regarding future civil society. Progressive housing providers realise the benefits of anchoring families within a wider community and support network, which helps to address other social exclusion factors which such families may be suffering from:

- In discussing 'sustainability', the Westminster Housing Commission highlighted the need to bring together existing service providers (such as schools), the need for good on-site management and the need to engage residents in the management of their accommodation.[102]

Given that certain local authorities take charge of housing vulnerable and homeless families, it is often anticipated that any community links made by a family can be relatively easily maintained. This often proves woefully inaccurate; the transfer of a family even over a relative short distance can be a devastating 'pulling up of roots. Despite the generally compact nature of local authorities, families who turn to local councils for housing still can be placed in unfamiliar areas of the borough or, indeed, outside the borough (in the case of temporary accommodation). As already highlighted elsewhere in this appendix, certain immigrant families in Tower Hamlets preferred overcrowding to moving out of their immediate 'home area' of Spitalfields to other parts of the borough in the 1990s.[103] Further, given the likely vulnerability and low income of families requiring state-supported accommodation, little disposal income will be available for travel to maintain family and community relationships. Nonetheless despite all of these factors, wider consideration regarding the (often negative) effect of geographical location upon families is regularly superseded by the simple need to find a property in the first instance.

Further, an argument can be made that current housing policy inadvertently undermines the principle of anchoring families within a community. Since the 1970s, the assertion of 'need' in housing allocation has had the asso-

ciated problem of helping to undermine traditional familial and community bonds. The old 'ladder principle' of housing allocation stressed the importance of local association and community support, even if it did result in families being awarded houses because of who they were and the length of time they had been waiting. Following the change to the law, 'need' has surpassed any other consideration, and so contributed to the problem of isolated families housed on unfamiliar estates, with little or no community support networks to draw upon. Add in the ethnicity dimension which is present in many urban areas, and the problems of isolation and 'social exclusion' can be exacerbated and, very easily, entrenched.

Nonetheless, studies should be careful of mythologizing or advocating a return to a age past. Michael Young's study which returned to the East End in the mid- to late-1990s highlighted how the principle of need had undermined once tight-knit, local, supportive communities. However, housing was not the sold force for this loss of a sense of community. And Young highlights the difficulty of not seeing the fullest sense of the problem – highlighting a yearning by residents for the days of community past in Tower Hamlets, "even at the expense of higher densities and more crowded communities".[104]

Further, the idea that a 'sense of community' can be reconstructed by substituting an alternative method of housing distribution (including, potentially, a return to some form of 'ladder principle') is probably misplaced. The forces of change appear much wider – globalisation, increased mobility, the growth of 'individualism', the freeing of housing from the shackles of the state – which have all undermined the concept of 'community', particularly in urban areas. Many residents now live in a community, but are not "of it".[105]

Further, there is the importance of living in a balanced community. Vulnerable families are likely to feel even more isolated (along with likely associated practical difficulties) if placed in a block populated with older residents, for example. Similarly, the decline of cities as desirable places to live between the 1950s and 1990s caused a 'hollowing' out of population – with much evidence of family 'flight' to the suburbs and suburban estates, where possible. Families, given their likely greater reliance upon community services, and their likely willingness to engage to a greater extent with the community, are the lynchpin of developing and maintaining local communities. If vulnerable families are not placed in an area of similar population demographics, then the environment can be immensely challenging, and would be likely to increase the pressure upon that family.[106]

2 THE IMPACT OF FAMILY BREAKDOWN UPON HOUSING PROVISION

The breakdown of family units creates enormous challenges for housing provision in the United Kingdom. As the traditional 'nuclear family' no longer becomes representative of the long-term habitation of properties, there are acute pressures upon ensuring that dwellings are suitable for the groups of individuals who reside there.

The hegemony of marriage – through which families have traditionally been reared – has been broken in modern society. Two generations ago, marriage was seen as almost the only path to economic and social security (along with emotional intimacy and wellbeing). None of these assertions hold in contemporary society. Instead, the concept of the "negotiated family" has grown – where one adult enters into an alliance to exchange "emotionality" – an alliance which can be (at least superficially) cancelled with relative ease[107]. However, it is in policy areas such as housing where the residual effects of such contractual flexibility are in evidence; how to separate any family unit created, how to house each constituent part of that unit, and how to ensure that any separated individuals are able to maintain positive relationships over a wider distance than ideal.

The effects of family breakdown upon housing provision tend to be felt disproportionately by social housing stock[108, 109]. As assets are divided, even many of those who previously owned property, find themselves – at least temporarily – reliant upon the local authority or private landlords to provide shelter for them.

2.1 The result of changing social norms

The link between housing and marriage is therefore more profound that one, at first, may anticipate. For hundreds of years, the majority of dwellings have been built in an attempt to account for the needs of a traditional family. As society has changed – with the growth in divorce rates since the 1950s, the lack of marriage in the first instance,

Trends in Divorce Rates (per 100 marriages)

Country	1970	1980	1990
Denmark	25.1	39.3	44
England/Wales	16.2	39.3	41.7
France	12	22.2	31.5
Greece	5	10	12
Netherlands	11	25.7	28.1
Sweden	23.4	42.2	44.1
United States	42.3	58.9	54.8

Source: Castells (1997), 140

the emergence of a larger number of single-parent households and the combination of households later in life (when single parents remarry) – the challenges upon housing provision have multiplied.

Fundamentally, housing stock is limited and static in nature. In 2002/2003, the total number of new houses built was 184,000[110] (representing less than 1% of total dwellings in the United Kingdom[111]). According to the Office of National Statistics, in a generation (1971 – 2004), housing provision expanded by only a third. Thus, with rapid social changes able to sweep through society within a matter of only a few decades, the impact upon housing is huge.

2.2 Need for new housing

Family breakdown through divorce and separation increases the need for housing provision, broaden the overall 'units of individuals' who require separate dwellings.
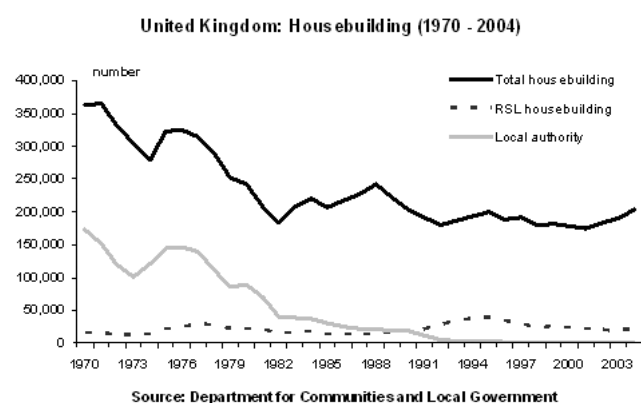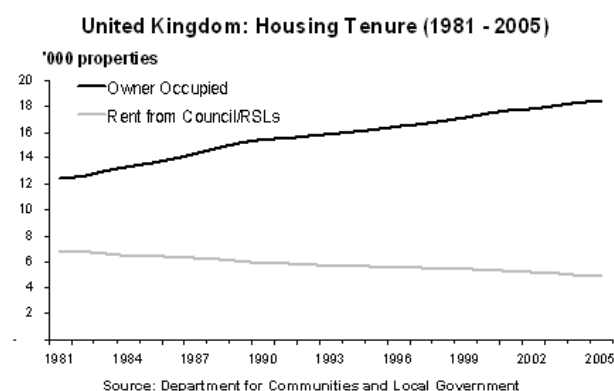
Within a wider context, the challenges for adequate housing provision are therefore huge. Along with the growing number of smaller family units who require housing, there are additional pressures as a result of growing immigration and the increasing concentration of population in limited geographical areas.

This increasing demand for housing, given the proliferation of smaller family units, comes against a background of severe supply difficulties, particularly in certain parts of the United Kingdom. Apart from a handful of southern Mediterranean countries and Ireland, the UK has the highest proportion of owner-occupation in the European Union.

Over the last thirty years, there has been a significant decrease in the number of new houses built each year, down from around 300,000 – 350,000 units per year in the early 1970s to around 200,000 units in recent years. Further, after the success of right-to-buy legislation in the 1980s and 1990s, and the increasing demand for housing for sale in many parts of the UK, the amount of newbuild social housing has failed to keep pace with demand in recent years. Local authorities now build a negligible amount of houses each year (2004 estimate of 133 hous-

United Kingdom: Numbers of divorces per year

Source: Office of National Statistics

es). RSL construction has increased in recent years, but continues to be inadequate to satisfy overall need. An independent analysis by Kate Barker suggests that 90,000 homes will need to be built every year to make a real difference to the market.[112]

The difficulties caused by family breakdown, therefore, are exacerbated by supply side difficulties, which have severely constricted the number of new houses (particularly direct or indirect state-supported accommodation) built in recent years.

United Kingdom: Housing Tenure (1981 - 2005)

Source: Department for Communities and Local Government

United Kingdom: Housebuilding (1970 - 2004)

Source: Department for Communities and Local Government

2.3 Inadequacy of existing housing design

Traditionally, in many societies marriage was almost a necessity for securing a dwelling in which to live:

- in Denmark in the 1950s marriage was a condition of acquiring an apartment;[113]
- a large proportion of couples marrying in urban townships in South Africa in the early part of the twentieth century were doing so in order to gain a property,[114] and;
- there remains residual evidence today of traditional marriage still being linked to housing provision.[115]

With this link now broken, the traditional design of properties may no longer reflect the realities of modern living.[116] If a minority of households have emerged which do not conform to the traditional family unit structure, a discord is created between housing provision and housing demand.

Key to the problem, is how to reconcile how society encourages both parents, once separated, to maintain strong relationships with their children without being able to provide houses which allow this to occur. After separation, the opportunity of contact between the leaving parent (usually the father) and the children is usually much reduced (a 2002 study from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation indicates a "dramatic" reduction in contact between a father and his children after separation).[117] Further, it will be a significant challenge – even for the leaving party with substantial financial resources – to secure a property which allows him to continue full links with his children – "providing sufficient space to allow both parents to offer reasonable comfort on overnight stays for the children requires considerable resources".[118] Further, analysed from a pure efficiency based angle, the effective duplication of property needs would be difficult to justify in areas of high housing demand.

2.4 Shut out of the family home

The previous discussion surrounding the need for the new accommodation of the adult leaving the family home to still have housing facilities which allow him full relations with his children presupposes that the adult will be able to secure accommodation in the first instance. One of the main problems for housing in the aftermath of family breakdown is how to accommodate the adult leaving the old matrimonial home. In the great majority of cases where the family has children, it is the male who is forced to leave (given that the mother will remain as full-time carer for the children, and thus qualifies as being in 'priority need').[119, 120]

This can create significant difficulties for adults leaving the family home who do not have independent financial resources. Usually, as able-bodied adults, there is little that the government can or will do to accommodate, and such people are forced into privately-rented accommodation or, if this is not feasible, may instead have to rely upon friends or family for short-term support.

The danger for this group of individuals is their wider vulnerability once removed from the structure in which they have lived their lives for many years. Life-changing emotional decisions, such as separation – along with being the parent forced out of the former marital home – can cause significant stress. Numerous pieces of anecdotal evidence highlight this difficulty:

- a mother is quoted as saying, in reference to her former partner, "I think it's tough for all fathers you know to suddenly lose their children and they may not have been the ones that started the whole process, it seems terribly hard …" (Joseph Rowntree Foundation)[121]

- "I'm finding it impossible to adjust. I had a big part of my life that I enjoyed – and lived for – just taken away. I feel a big gap in my life that I can't fill … The house is like a morgue – it's completely quiet, completely cold" (from a 1993 study discussing the wider post-divorce implications for fathers)[122]

As a result, it is all too typical for all parts of their lives to suffer – a low self-worth, difficulty securing new accommodation, a resentment at the resources probably available to their former partner, all create a sense of exclusion from society.

Further, the in a separate 2004 study the Joseph Rowntree Foundation highlights how parental instability after family separation may negatively impact upon the development and future prospects for children.[123]

2.5 'Re-starter' families

An additional consideration regarding family breakdown is the tendency for separated and divorced adults to create new family structures after the first unit breakdown. This can, in certain circumstances, be both an additional pressure upon housing stock or can act as a pressure relief as two previous separate units combine. Studies have indicated that 're-starter' families are brought together after a period of 5 – 6 years of the parents living alone after their initial separations.[124]

The main point, however, regarding 're-starter' families is the unconventionality of many of the reconstituted units. New family units may be brought together consisting of children with huge differences in age and with significantly different past experiences.[125] One example offered was of a family in social housing in Derbyshire; a father, mother, one step-daughter aged 18 (from the previous marriage of the mother), two children of the father and mother aged 7 and 1 and one child of the step-daughter aged 2. While a number of these family units all work, there are significantly enhanced challenges in managing such structures, and increased pressure is often placed upon accommodation to deal with vastly different needs (particularly when the ages of children are up to a generation apart).

Despite the concept of the 're-starter' family re-validating the contemporary relevance of marriage, a number of commentators have suggested that second or third marriages are more unstable than first ones.[126] The body of evidence is not convincing, however, and significant work needs to be carried out in this area. In terms of significant for the overall housing stock (and completely independently of the much more important effect upon individuals within that second or third family fracture), any semi-continuous change in unit size is not a welcome prospect.

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5   http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/kfsum.htm

6   http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/foundations/314.asp

7   Should read "Gorzka P.A., Homeless Parent's Perceptions of Parenting Stress in the Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing, Q1 1999"

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9   Crisis, What is Homelessness? (London: Crisis, October 2005), 1.

10   Kristen Gram-Hanssen, Housing Problems Related to Divorce (Copenhagen: Danish Building Research Institute/Department of Housing and Urban Renewal, June 2005), 2 - 3.

11   Gram-Hanssen, Housing Problems, 3.

12   NOP survey commissioned by St. Mungo's, questioning 137 rough sleepers. Question: how long had you first slept rough - 32% said under one year, 68% said in excess of one year. See http://www.mungos.org/facts/demo.html

13   Definitions are taken from Crisis' "Definitions of Homelessness". See http://www.crisis.org.uk/policywatch/pages/about_homelessness.html#doh.

14   Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives - A strategy for tackling homelessness (London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister/HMSO, March 2005), 7.

15   G. Randall and S. Brown, Steps Off The Street: Solutions to Street Homelessness (Eye: Crisis UK, July 2006), 1 and 3.

16   http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts1996/96052-ac.htm#189

17   Items 176 and 178. Housing Act 1996. http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts1996/96052-ab.htm#175.

18   Please note that the following health-related issues may draw upon studies which have assessed either homeless individuals and/or homeless families.

19   http://england.shelter.org.uk/policy/policy-967.cfm

20   30 - 50% of all adults experiencing homelessness according to Crisis. See www.crisis.org.uk/downloads.php/140/HealthStrategieschecklist.pdf.

21   The Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York estimates that 9 - 26% of homeless people suffer from serious mental health problems, compared to 0.5 - 2% of the general population. See http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/kfsum.htm.

22   Difficulties with both alcohol and drug dependencies. See http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/kfsum.htm. Crisis estimates that up to 80% of homeless people use drugs regularly. See http://society.guardian.co.uk/homelessness/story/0,,755079,00.html.

23   Estimates of the average lifespan for people living rough is around mid- to late forties. See http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/kfsum.htm.

24   http://www.scotland.gov.uk/cru/documents/poor-housing-10.htm

25   http://www.scotland.gov.uk/cru/documents/poor-housing-10.htm

26   On average children lose 55 moving in and around temporary accommodation. See http://england.shelter.org.uk/policy/policy-967.cfm

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31   http://england.shelter.org.uk/home/home-817.cfm

32   http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1152146

33   Department for Communities and Local Government, Tackling Overcrowding in England (London: DCLG, July 2006), 4.

34   University of Hawaii Center on the Family: http://uhfamily.hawaii.edu/Cof_Data/cfi/cfi_results.asp?indicator=047&selector=Location&value=m&label=Maui

35   http://www.privacyinternational.org/survey/phr2003/overview.htm

36   William Pitt wrote, "The poorest man may in his cottage bid defiance to all the force of the Crown. It may be frail; its roof may shake; the wind may blow through it; the storms may enter, the rain may enter - but the King of England cannot enter; all his forces dare not cross the threshold of the ruined tenement".

37   http://www.gilc.org/privacy/survey/intro.html

38 http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html

39 http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts1998/80042--d.htm

40 http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_united_kingdom.shtml

41 http://www.gilc.org/privacy/survey/intro.html#fnlnk0027 - Privacy and the Limits of the Law 1980 89 Yale Law Journal 421, at 428.

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Appendix 5   Pornography, sexual infidelity and family breakdown

A fundamental building block of most stable family relationships, and an explicit promise of marriage, is that of sexual exclusiveness and fidelity. When the assumption or promise of fidelity is breached, the subsequent loss of trust between individuals is highly damaging, and frequently terminal for the relationship. Whilst attitudes to sexual behaviour outside stable family life have changed, the fundamentals of stability within families have by-and-large not, resulting in tensions and increased pressures.

A major factor driving the increase in infidelity and relationship breakdown appears to be the rapidly increasing accessibility of pornography via the internet. In 2003 the online service Divorce Online reported that of the 500 divorce petitions it surveyed, half contained allegations concerning cybersex, inappropriate online relationships and pornography, findings which (it stated) appear to support earlier studies into the Net and marriage breakup.

A 2000 study found that cybersex addiction was a major contributing factor to separation and divorce for affected couples[1]. This study analyzed survey responses from 94 individuals (91 women, 3 men) who (a) ranged in age from 24 to 57, (b) had been in a relationship for an average of 12.6 years (range of 0.5 to 39 years), and (c) were seeking therapy to cope with a partner's Internet involvement. The sample was recruited through 20 therapists who were treating sex addicts and who were aware of individuals who would be interested in participating in this research. Although a range of online sexual activities were listed, viewing and/or downloading pornography accompanied by masturbation was present in 100 percent of the cases.

Although not a formal study, important survey data was collected at the November 2002 meeting of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers in Chicago, Illinois, regarding the impact of Internet usage on marriages[2]. This professional organization comprises the nation's top 1,600 divorce and matrimonial law attorneys who specialize in matrimonial law, including divorce and legal separation. At this meeting, 62 percent of the 350 attendees said the Internet had been a significant factor in divorces they had handled during the last year. Additionally, the following observations were made by the lawyers polled with regard to why the Internet had played a role in divorces that year:

- 68 percent of the divorce cases involved one party meeting a new love interest over the Internet.
- 56 percent of the divorce cases involved one party having an obsessive interest in pornographic websites.
- 47 percent of the divorce cases involved one party spending excessive time on the computer.
- 33 percent of the divorce cases cited excessive time communicating in chat rooms (a commonly sexualized forum).

In response to this survey data, J. Lindsey Short, Jr., then president of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, poignantly stated, "While I don't think you can say the Internet is causing more divorces, it does make it easier to engage in the sorts of behaviours that traditionally lead to divorce."

In the UK there is no formal legal definition of pornography. Pornographic material is considered legally 'obscene' if it is judged to have 'a tendency to deprave and corrupt' the intended audience[3]. This normally applies only to the most violent and degrading adult pornography. Possession of child pornography ('indecent' photographs of children under the age of 16) is a serious criminal offence under the Protection of Children Act 1978 and section 160 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

Stack, Wasserman, and Kern (2004) found individuals who had had an extramarital affair were 3.18 times more likely to have used Internet pornography than individuals who had not had an affair (N = 531)[4]. The same study also revealed that people who have engaged in paid sex (i.e., prostitution) were 3.7 more apt to use Internet pornography than those who had not used Internet pornography. What these statistics indicate is that Internet pornography is associated with activities that undermine marital exclusivity and fidelity. What cannot be determined, however, is what comes first. Does Internet pornography influence unfaithful behaviours or does unfaithful behaviours coincide with pre-existing traits that predispose someone to normalize Internet pornography viewing? Either way, this cluster of behaviours may be understood to validate and legitimize each another.

A discussion of the detailed linkage between exposure to pornography and erotica and the complex processes of maturation in young people is beyond the scope of this report. However according to research with first-year college students[5], the following effects and/or risks are associated with frequent exposure to erotica. These effects and/or risks are listed here because of the potential they have for shaping sexual development as well as future marital and familial relationships[6]:

- Normalization of adverse reactions to offensive material;
- Developing tolerance toward sexually explicit material, thereby requiring more novel or bizarre material to achieve the same level of arousal or interest;
- Misperceptions of exaggerated sexual activity in the general populace;
- Overestimating the prevalence of less common sexual practices (e.g., group sex, bestiality, and sadomasochistic activity);
- Diminished trust in intimate partners;
- Abandoning the goal of sexual exclusivity with a partner;
- Perceiving promiscuity as a normal state of interaction;
- Perceiving sexual inactivity as constituting a health risk;
- Developing cynical attitudes about love;
- Believing superior sexual satisfaction is attainable without having affection for one's partner;
- Believing marriage is sexually confining;
- Believing that raising children and having a family is as an unattractive prospect; and
- Developing a negative body image, especially for women.

PORNOGRAPHY AND SEXUAL ADDICTION

CARE has undertaken research into the effects of pornography, and the following sections are extracted from their publications[7].

The evidence certainly points to pornography being addictive for some people. Pornography stimulates the pleasure centre in the brain. But after a while more pornography is needed to produce the same effect. The addictive cycle is started. Then there is an increase in intensity in the addiction so that the individual needs harder material to get the same affect, moving on to the accepting of repulsive behaviour (desensitisation) and the ultimate acting out of images seen in pornography.

Pornography uses the strong visual senses of men to promote lust, but promises the unreal, promoting false expectations of relationship. It is attractive to many. This should not surprise us: pornography is taking something inherently good - the sexual relationship between men and women, and twisting it. Over-eating is a similar phenomenon: a short term enjoyable past-time of something that is meant to be beneficial to the human body, but in the long term, over-eating is destructive to an individual's health.

Pornography can seem especially attractive to those who are:
- Coping with stress and peer pressure
- Curious/exploring

- Depressed
- Fearful of intimacy
- Feeling low self-worth and believing no-one will love them
- Having unsatisfactory sexual experiences and think this will help them find stimulation or remove pressure from their spouse if used as a source of personal stimulation
- Feel they have a high sex drive
- Lonely
- Needing help in their marriage
- Needing to escape reality
- Single and celibate - pornography can seem a better option than having a sexual relationship

The accessibility of Internet pornography has increased the number of people who use pornography. Some may have got drawn into pornography on the Internet out of sheer curiosity. Indeed researchers have suggested that some individuals "may never have had difficulty with sexual compulsivity if it were not for the Internet." There are also an increasing number of women who are being drawn into Internet pornography and chat rooms.

Researchers suggest that there are three different types of online users of pornography: recreational users, sexual compulsives and at-risk users. They suggest that many people "who visit Internet sexual sites do so in a recreational way and do not experience negative consequences". We would not be encouraging anyone to use pornography "recreationally" for the reasons set out on this website. Sexually compulsive users are likely to have demonstrated patterns of "unconventional sexual practices" prior to any Internet use.

The at-risk users are the ones whose actions are likely to be influenced by the different nature of pornography on the Internet. At-risk users seem to fall into two categories: the Depressive Type, where the research evidence suggests that "greater Internet use was associated with decreased communication with family members with whom such individuals live, a reduction in the size of their social networks, and an increase in feelings of loneliness and depression. "The other category is referred to as the Stress Reactive Types, "characterised by a tendency to avail oneself of online sex primarily during times of high stress...use sex and the Internet as a temporary escape, distraction, or means of dealing with certain feelings that arise from stressful situations...When the stressful time has passed, they are likely to decrease their use of online sex of their own accord and resume the more typical coping strategies that are effective in their daily lives."

These researchers believe that the majority of people who visit online sex sites do so without any harm, but

they also believe that approximately 1% of the population "have a fully blown cybersex compulsion", which they described as "a hidden public health hazard exploding, in part because very few are recognising it as such or taking it seriously." They suggest that there are five hallmarks of sexual compulsion, all of which apply to "cybersex":

- Denial of any problem
- Unsuccessful repeated efforts to discontinue pornography use
- Excessive amounts of time dedicated to accessing pornography
- Negative impact of using pornography on family, work and social life
- Repeated use of pornography despite adverse consequences

Some of the problems pornography can lead to:

- Distorted view of women and sexual relationship, including normalising unusual and deviant sexual practices
- Secretive and addictive behaviour
- Marriage problems, including loss of trust and respect, and sometimes one partner being forced into acts they are not happy with
- Financial difficulties, including in extreme cases, loss of job. Increasingly employers are monitoring their employees' use of the Internet. If you are accessing pornography at work, your employer may bring disciplinary proceedings leading to dismissal
- Loss of attention towards family - spouse and children
- Children seeing pornography on the computer, which may develop unhealthy attitudes towards sex and women
- Other "cybersex" activities, including on and offline meetings with others
- Guilt and feelings of low self-esteem
- Crimes, including accessing child pornography

RISE IN ACCESSIBILITY OF PORNOGRAPHY

Internet Pornography statistics become outdated very quickly, especially in the Internet environment where numbers change daily. These statistics have been derived familysafemedia.com[8] from a number of different reputable sources including Google, WordTracker, PBS, MSNBC, NRC, and Alexa research:

- The worldwide pornography industry generates revenues of around $56bn, of which $12Bn is in the US. Child pornography generates about $3bn annually.
- There are around 4.2 million pornography websites (12% of total websites) offering about 372 million pages. About 100,000 sites offer child pornography.

- There are around 68 million requests to search engines daily for pornographic content (25% of total search engine requests).
- There are about 1.5 billion pornographic downloads each month (35% of all downloads).

A poll conducted for the Independent on Sunday[9] indicates that one in four adults downloaded images from adult websites in 2005 and one in four male respondents aged 25 to 49 visited an adult website in the past month. Around 1.4 million women in the UK looked at pornographic images on the internet in 2005, while more than nine million men (almost 40 per cent) are estimated to have used pornographic websites in 2005. The poll by analyst Nielsen NetRatings indicates that the number of men downloading pornography on the web has soared from two million in 2000 to nine million last year. Meanwhile, the number of women looking at pornography has risen by 30 per cent over the past year.

According to CARE it is estimated that 1 in 5 Internet users under 17 are logging onto sexually explicit sites.

CONCLUSION

In concluding a substantial review[10] of the impact of pornography on Marriage and Family life in the US the author Jill Manning writes "Internet pornography is altering the social and sexual landscape. While there is much more to learn about these shifts regarding their impact on marriages and families, the research currently available indicates many negative trends. Unfortunately, these trends are expected to continue for sometime unless drastic changes in social norms, public education, parenting approaches, Internet restructuring, and law enforcement occur."

1   Schneider, J. P. (2000). Effects of cybersex addiction on the family: Results of a survey. Sexual Addiction &Compulsivity, 7, 31-58.

2   Dedmon, J. (November 2002). Is the Internet bad for your marriage? Online affairs, pornographic sites playing greater role in divorces. Press Release from The Dilenschneider Group, Inc.

3   Obscene Publications Acts 1959 & 1964, as amended

4   Stack, S., Wasserman, I., & Kern, R. (2004). Adult social bonds and use of Internet pornography. Social Science Quarterly, 85(1), 75-88.

5   Siegel, S. (1997). Applying social comparison theory to women's body image and self-esteem: The effects of pornography. Dissertation, Pacific University, Palo Alto, CA.

6   Zillman, D. (2000). Influence of unrestrained access to erotica on adolescents' and young adults' dispositions toward sexuality. Journal of Adolescent Health, 27, 41-44.

7   http://www.care.org.uk/Group/Group.aspx?id=17168

8   http://www.familysafemedia.com/pornography_statistics.html

9   Independent on Sunday 28th May 2006

10   Testimony of Jill C. Manning M,S.. Hearing on pornography's impact on marriage & the family. Subcommittee on the constitution, civil rights and property rights Committee on judiciary United States Senate November 10, 2005

Appendix 6 How the legal framework has contributed to family breakdown in the United Kingdom

The legal framework in the UK has undoubtedly been a contributing factor in family breakdown over the last 40 years. Some attribute this to laws and policy following the lead of an increasingly liberal society. Others argue that it is the result of a tacit anti-marriage agenda by abolitionists now controlling government research and policy units. The content of this report clearly shows how our legal framework has made splitting-up easier. It must be said, however, that some of the changes in our laws have also sought to crush the empty shell of broken marriage with minimum bitterness and maximum fairness.

Since the 1960's there has been a constant flow of primary and secondary legislation affecting divorce, sexual freedom, abortion rights, homosexual lifestyles, tax & benefits and more. In combination these laws have undermined the value of marriage as an institution, mainly by elevating the value of other relationship structures now generally considered to lack the longevity and strength that marriage brings to the family unit. Even the words 'married / husband / wife' have been replaced by 'partner' in much officialdom, further distancing the institution from society. As a result of these and other factors, the divorce rate rose significantly in the UK (and has remained at a high but stable rate for the last quarter century). In addition, many unmarried people view the high divorce rate as a reason not to embark on an apparently failing institution. Thus marriage rates have fallen and other family models such as cohabitation and lone parenting have proliferated

THE EFFECT OF DIVORCE LAWS

In 1969 the Divorce Reform Act allowed divorce on the sole ground that the marriage had 'irretrievably broken down' i.e. a misfortune befalling both parties; no longer was one party to be regarded as guilty and the other party as innocent. Thus the Act introduced the concept of 'no fault' divorce. The case of Wachtel (1973)[1] was the first to illustrate the sea change in philosophy, confirming that the conduct of the parties was only a marginal issue and should not be equated with a party's share of responsibility for breakdown, unless obvious and gross (see also 'matrimonial finances & maintenance' below).

This Act specified 5 factors that would evidence irretrievable breakdown. Adultery and desertion were carried forward from the old legislation. The other 'old' ground of cruelty was replaced by a lower test of unreasonable behaviour. More profoundly, the 1969 Act also introduced divorce by consent following 2 years separation and

unilateral divorce following 5 years separation. Before the introduction of the two 'separation' facts, if there had been no 'conduct' basis for divorce, it was not uncommon for one party to fabricate an illicit affair just to provide grounds for divorce - an absurd pretence.

In the 1980's a special procedure was introduced to allow couples to divorce without ever having to attend court, with no intrusion from third parties, save for the checking of arrangements made for children (if any) by a district judge. Under Section 3 of the Act a petition could not be presented to the court before the expiration of 3 years from the date of marriage. Section 3(2) however, allowed for earlier presentation of a petition if there had been 'exceptional hardship' established by the petitioner, or 'exceptional depravity' on the part of the Respondent. In practice almost all applications for leave were granted. The Law Commission report No 116 entitled 'time restrictions on presentation of divorce and nullity petitions (1982)' recommended that the 3 year discretionary bar be replaced by a one year absolute bar. The Matrimonial & Family Proceedings Act 1984 s1 created the one year absolute bar by substituting a new Section 3 into the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973.

On an anecdotal level, over the past eighteen years in family law practice, it has been noticeable how much the courts' attitudes have relaxed toward petitions based upon unreasonable behaviour and separation. At one time a petition required somewhat extreme behaviour to succeed, whereas in some courts today the mildest of acts will probably suffice. This judicial approach may, however, be seen as practical recognition of the parties wish to separate without the need to raise the temperature by descending into vituperation. On the basis of separation, courts once strictly applied the criteria of living apart for the petition to succeed. After a series of cases in the seventies[2] parties can live in the same house provided that they can show the court that they are not 'living together' e.g. they do not; sleep together, share the same room, share household chores, cook for each other, and so on. One study[3] looking at the effects of law on the divorce rate finds that, across 18 European countries, the combined effect of all legal reforms conservatively amounts to 20% of the increase in divorce rates between 1960 and 2002. The UK divorce rate figures for that period are set out below. Whilst the study finds that unilateralism has only a temporary effect on divorce rates, it also finds that the 'no-fault' divorce has had a permanent effect. This supports and extends US data[4]

UK annual divorces per thousand married people (Source: ONS / Eurostat)				
	1960-69	**1970-79**	**1980-89**	**1990-2003**
Rate	1.47	4.37	6.08	6.68

RELAXATION OF SEXUAL MORALITY

The de-stigmatisation of abortion commenced with the Abortion Act 1967 which legalised abortion if the ongoing pregnancy would involve greater risk to the mother's physical or mental well being. The availability of contraceptives to unmarried people under the Family Planning Act 1967 further encouraged pre-marital and extra-marital sexual activity.

The Family Law Reform Act 1987 sought to 'equalise' children born out of wedlock. Whilst not abolishing the status of illegitimacy, it aimed as far as possible to remove 'any avoidable discrimination against, or stigma attaching to, children born out of wedlock'. In addition, the Act provided that in respect of deaths occurring after 4th April 1988 the distribution of assets on intestacy (and otherwise) should be determined without regard to whether or not the parents of a particular person were married to each other. (see also Policy: Hansard HL Vol 482 col 647).

Parental control over their children's sexual activity was diminished by two key cases; Under Gillick (1985)[5] a doctor may give contraceptive guidance to girls under 16 without parents' consent, and under Axon (2006)[6] health professionals were held to owe a duty of confidence to a young person and were entitled to provide medical advice and treatment on sexual matters without the knowledge or consent of the young person's parents. The result has been a dramatically higher number of births out of wedlock and an equally significant increase in the level of sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV Aids, affecting the sufferers' potential for future long term family relationships.

EQUALISATION OF NON-MARRIED RIGHTS

The Civil Partnership Act 2004 gave same sex couples equivalent rights with married heterosexual couples of inheritance, tax exemptions, tenancy, adoption and pensions. Now cohabitee rights are being similarly considered by the Law Commission. (This is considered at greater length in the main body of the report.)

TAX AND BENEFITS DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MARRIED COUPLES

Successive chancellors have used their statutory powers to amend tax and benefits rules, via their budgets, giving rise to the unemployed lone parent as the preferred family model in terms of state benefits. This removed the incentive to work whilst also incentivising people to remain unemployed and single, thus persisting the poverty cycle. The married man's (or couple's) tax allowance was reduced by Kenneth Clarke in 1995 and removed by Gordon Brown in 1999. Benefit levels for married families have declined in relative value through a multitude of micro and macro changes to date.

MATRIMONIAL FINANCES AND MAINTENANCE

Whilst the Divorce Reform Act 1969 replaced 'fault' with irretrievable breakdown, fault wasn't totally eliminated if obvious and gross, and could still affect the financial settlement. This was made explicit in the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 requiring courts to consider the conduct of the parties if it would, in the opinion of the court, be inequitable to disregard it. This tenet has recently been reconsidered in the House of Lords decision in Miller and McFarlane[7] when an earlier attempt in the Court of Appeal to take account of the parties' conduct was viewed as misplaced.

The Matrimonial Proceedings and Property Act 1970, s 5(1)(c) had initially sought to put the parties in the financial position in which they would have been if the marriage had not broken down and each had properly discharged his or her financial obligations and responsibilities towards the other, as was demonstrated in Wachtel(1973)[6]. This removed the financial incentive of trying to see the marriage through. It was, however, later abandoned as being impracticable.

The Matrimonial Proceedings Act 1984 added section 25A to the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 giving statutory backing to the long established principle of clean break settlements, i.e. to settle for once and for all the parties' financial responsibility towards each other and to end their financial interdependence, enabling them to leave their past behind and start anew (recently confirmed in Miller[7]) .

The state run Child Support Agency (CSA) was created under the Child Support Act 1991 and took charge of calculating minimum maintenance payments by absent parents. In doing so it substituted the parents' moral obligation toward maintenance and the court's ability to intervene. The CSA then failed to enforce the payments, leaving the affected lone parent families in a financial vacuum. Anecdotally the CSA's activities have

also been seen as a factor leading to the breakdown of 'second' families.

After the recent large financial settlements confirmed in Miller[8] and McFarlane[9] in 2006, wives now may be encouraged to petition for divorce in expectation of an outcome of greater provisions for themselves. Industrious / entrepreneurial men and women may be deterred from marriage as a result, thereby making the institution of marriage more unattractive.

PUBLIC V PRIVATE PROCEEDINGS

The Department for Constitutional Affairs is moving to change the court procedure rules opening up hitherto private family court proceedings so that the media, in their role as a proxy for the public, can attend all proceedings as a matter of right (subject to the court's power to exclude if appropriate). This may have a negative effect on the fostering of respect and confidence between the parties and merely provide entertainment for a gallery of strangers.

CRIMINALISATION OF FAMILY MATTERS

Under the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004 (awaiting implementation) the breach of a civil non-molestation injunction has been criminalised, whereas previously the perpetrator would be held in contempt of court. The subsequent effects of the resultant criminal record on employment and family income are yet to be seen, but must be of some concern.

An amendment to the Children Act 2004, implemented in January 2005, said that mild smacking of children was allowed, but removed the parental defence of 'reasonable chastisement' to smacking their children if: it causes bruises, scratches, reddening of the skin, mental harm, or if implement is used. Parents are now exposed to charges of assault occasioning actual bodily harm. A total ban on smacking is being considered when the legislation is reviewed in 2008.

THE LITIGATION CULTURE

The litigation culture and the impetus of holding individuals to account has not helped family cohesion. There is a lot of crime within the family unit and this in turn creates tension. For example; a mother was recently reported as wanting to prosecute her son for causing her psychological damage by his persistent refusal to do his homework!

IN CONCLUSION

The extent of this review has been strictly confined to the title 'How the legal framework has contributed to family breakdown in the United Kingdom'. Clearly an entire vol-

ume could be deposed on the subject, containing further references, evidence, multi-faceted argument and much more but this was not possible within the constraints of time and column inches available.

Note on author: Helen Grant was admitted as a solicitor of the supreme court of England and Wales in January 1988, and in 1996 she established Grants Solicitors, specialising in all aspects of matrimonial breakdown. Helen is also a non-executive director Croydon NHS Primary Care Trust, and a member of the Department of Constitutional Affairs national advisory board for domestic violence, the senior management team at the Croydon Community Justice Centre, and the planning group for Croydon Integrated Domestic Violence Court.

1   Wachtel v Wachtel - [1973] 1 All ER 829

2   Mouncer 1972 1AER 289: Hollens 1971 115 Solicitors Journal 327: Santos 1972 2AER 246.

3   The effect of Divorce Laws on Divorce Rates in Europe; A discussion paper by Libertad Gonzalez & Tarja . Viitanen, March 2006. Institute for the study of Labor (Institut zur Zukunft der Arbeit - IZA, Bonn, Germany)

4   Friedberg 1998 and Woolfers 2006

5   R (on the application of SUE AXON) (Claimant) v SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH (Defendant) & FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION (Intervener) (2006) [2006] EWHC 372 (Admin) QBD (Admin) (Silber J) 23/1/2006

6   Wachtel v Wachtel - [1973] 1 All ER 829

7   Miller v Miller; McFarlane v McFarlane [2006] UKHL 24 (HOUSE OF LORDS - LORD NICHOLLS OF BIRKENHEAD, LORD HOFFMANN, LORD HOPE OF CRAIGHEAD, BARONESS HALE OF RICHMOND AND LORD MANCE 30, 31 JANUARY, 1, 2 FEBRUARY, 24 MAY 2006)

8   Miller v Miller (2006) UKHL 24 , (2006) 2 WLR 1283. Husband failed in his challenge to a court order that he pay his ex-wife £5m, after being married for only 2 years and 9 months, with no children, because Mrs Miller married with a "reasonable expectation" of a future wealthy lifestyle.

9   McFarlane v McFarlane (2004) EWCA Civ 872 , (2004) 3 All ER 921 . Wife entitled to £250,000 a year for life from ex-husband because she gave up a high-earning career when she married 18 years earlier