

## Unhealthy Confusion

*The impact of the Healthy Schools Programme on sexual health messages in our children's education*

**A new report from the Family Education Trust reveals that the Healthy Schools Programme is being used as a vehicle to impose a liberal and permissive type of sex education on pupils in many parts of the country.**

The National Healthy Schools Programme was launched in 1999 as a joint initiative of the then Department for Education and Employment and the Department of Health 'to support children and young people in developing healthy behaviours, to help to raise pupil achievement, to help to reduce health inequalities, and to help promote social inclusion'. From 2006/2007 to 2010/2011, the Department of Health and the Department for Children, Schools and Families jointly invested over £100 million in the scheme, and in early 2010, the Schools Minister, Diana Johnson, reported that 99 per cent of schools were taking part.

In view of the prevalence of the programme, Family Education Trust was concerned to hear anecdotal reports that some local authorities were advising primary schools that they must provide sex and relationships education (SRE) beyond the requirements of the science curriculum as a condition of qualifying for the Healthy Schools Award. There were also reports that secondary schools in some areas were being warned that if they used external agencies which stressed the positive benefits of saving sex for marriage or if they had a policy of not referring pupils to contraceptive and sexual health clinics, they would fail to meet the national criteria for the award.

### Inconsistency

Responses to the Trust's survey of all 152 local authorities in England reveal considerable levels of inconsistency across the country with regard to the manner in which the Healthy Schools criteria and guidance are being interpreted and applied in relation to the delivery of sexual health messages in schools.

Although the majority of local authorities recognise that schools are entitled to decide for themselves which external agencies they invite to contribute to their SRE programme in theory, there are significant differences in the level of local authority prescription in practice.

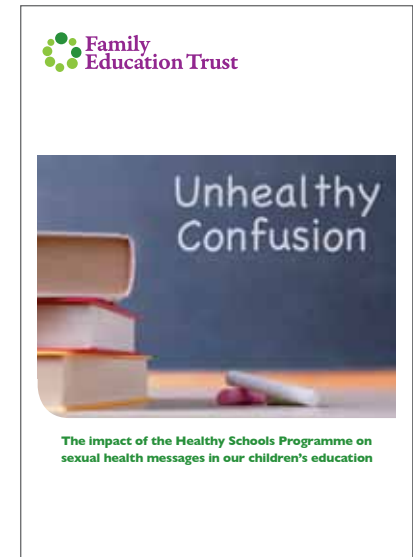
### Over-prescriptive

According to the report, *Unhealthy Confusion*, some authorities are taking an overly prescriptive approach and insisting on policies and practices that are not required by law or by the Healthy Schools criteria.

For example, 18 per cent of local authorities stated that a primary school which had adopted a policy of not teaching SRE beyond the requirements of national curriculum science would not be eligible for Healthy School status.

Family Education Trust director, Norman Wells remarked:

*It is very concerning to find some local authorities insisting that primary schools teach sex and relationships education as a condition of receiving the Healthy*



*Schools award, when primary school governing bodies are free to decide whether or not to teach sex education after consultation with parents. Primary schools that make a principled decision not to teach sex education should not be stigmatised and denied a sought-after award for that reason. There is nothing inherently "unhealthy" about a primary school that decides not to teach sex education.*

### Caution

The contribution of external agencies that provide instruction on the use of condoms in secondary schools was welcomed without qualification by local authorities. However, several authorities expressed caution regarding agencies that emphasised the benefits of saving sex for marriage and addressed the limitations of condoms as a means of protection against sexually transmitted infections.

A significant minority of local authorities stated that external agencies that presented a 'saved sex' message could be used in a Healthy School only if they were 'balanced' by other options or viewpoints.

For example, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council expressed the view that it would be permissible for a school to use an agency that emphasises the benefits of saving sex for marriage and talks about the limitations of condoms as

### In this issue...

- Unhealthy Confusion • Why marriage matters • Statistics: Do we know what they mean? • Cohabitation – an alternative to marriage? • Reflections on the August riots • Government plans to redefine marriage • Clueless or clued up? • Children's minister supports contraception for 'boys and girls' • A salutary lesson • What Britain thinks about parenting • PSHE review

continued over...

## Unhealthy Confusion

continued from front page...

a means of protection against sexually transmitted infections, 'only if [it] is done as part of a programme that [covers] a full range of options or viewpoints available so that pupils get a balanced view of these issues and are then able to make their own informed choices'.

However, no local authority expressed any such reservation or qualification in connection with the contribution of external agencies teaching about condom use. Norman Wells commented:

*It is deeply disturbing to find so much confusion and ignorance among local authorities about the extent to which condoms provide protection against sexually transmitted infections. Although some local authorities readily acknowledge that condoms have significant limitations and accept that this fact should not be concealed from pupils, others consider it inappropriate to inform pupils of the limitations of condom effectiveness. Such a policy runs the risk of placing some pupils at increased risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection where they decide to embark on a sexual relationship on the basis of a false understanding that they will be safe provided they use a condom.*

*It is ironic that in some local authority areas, the Healthy Schools Programme is undermining the healthiest messages of all and depriving young people of learning about the physical, emotional and social benefits of keeping sex within a lifelong, mutually faithful marriage.*

As the coalition government considers its policy on sex and relationships education as part of its review of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education in schools, the Family Education Trust report calls on local authorities to be less prescriptive and to recognise that schools are responsible for determining their policy on sex and relationships education on a local basis, in consultation with parents. Local authorities should therefore respect the position of schools which, after consultation with parents, decide that they would like to use external agencies that emphasise the benefits of saving sex for marriage.

• **Unhealthy Confusion: The impact of the Healthy Schools Programme on sexual health messages in our children's education is available from the Family Education Trust office priced at £5.00 inc p&p and may be downloaded free of charge from our website at [www.famoyouth.org.uk](http://www.famoyouth.org.uk)**

## Why marriage matters

**Based on a survey of over 250 peer-reviewed journal articles on marriage and family life from around the world, a team of 18 leading American family scholars chaired by Professor W Bradford Wilcox of the University of Virginia has drawn 30 conclusions about the positive benefits associated with marriage under five headings.**



Each of the conclusions is substantiated in the report and 20 pages of supporting references can be downloaded from the website of the Institute of American Values.

Here is a snapshot of the conclusions:

### Family

1. Marriage increases the likelihood that fathers and mothers have good relationships with their children.
2. Children are most likely to enjoy family stability when they are born into a married family.
3. Children are less likely to thrive in complex households.
4. Cohabitation is not the functional equivalent of marriage.
5. Growing up outside an intact marriage increases the likelihood that children will themselves divorce or become unwed parents.
6. Marriage is a virtually universal human institution.
7. Marriage, and a normative commitment to marriage, foster high-quality relationships between adults, as well as between parents and children.
8. Marriage has important biosocial consequences for adults and children.

### Economics

9. Divorce and unmarried childbearing increase poverty for both children and mothers, cohabitation is less likely to alleviate poverty than is marriage.
10. Married couples seem to build more wealth on average than singles or cohabiting couples.
11. Marriage reduces poverty and material hardship for disadvantaged women and their children.
12. Minorities benefit economically from marriage also.
13. Married men earn more money than do single men with similar education and job histories.
14. Parental divorce (or failure to marry) appears to increase children's risk of school failure.
15. Parental divorce reduces the likelihood that children will graduate from college and achieve high-status jobs.

### Physical Health and Longevity

16. Children who live with their own two married parents enjoy better physical health, on average, than do children in other family forms.
17. Parental marriage is associated with a sharply lower risk of infant mortality.
18. Marriage is associated with reduced rates of alcohol and substance abuse for both adults and teens.
19. Married people, especially married men, have longer life expectancies than do otherwise similar singles.
20. Marriage is associated with better health and lower rates of injury, illness, and disability for both men and women.
21. Marriage seems to be associated with better health among minorities and the poor.

### Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being

22. Children whose parents divorce have higher rates of psychological distress and mental illness.
23. Cohabitation is associated with higher levels of psychological problems among children.
24. Family breakdown appears to increase significantly the risk of suicide.
25. Married mothers have lower rates of depression than do single or cohabiting.

### Crime and Domestic Violence

26. Boys raised in non-intact families are more likely to engage in delinquent and criminal behaviour.
27. Marriage appears to reduce the risk that adults will be either perpetrators or victims of crime.
28. Married women appear to have a lower risk of experiencing domestic violence than do cohabiting or dating women.
29. A child who is not living with his or her own two married parents is at greater risk of child abuse.
30. There is a growing marriage gap between college-educated Americans and less-educated Americans.

• **Why Marriage Matters: Thirty conclusions from the social sciences, Institute for American Values and National Marriage Project, 2011, <http://www.americanvalues.org/wmm/>**

## Statistics: Do we know what they mean?

The way in which figures for the age of first sexual experience are frequently presented can be misleading and give the impression that sexual activity at an early age is more common than is really the case, according to a recent study published in the *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*.

In the article, Dr Jokin de Irala and his team from the University of Navarre review the different ways in which mean and median ages of first sexual experience are calculated and consider the potential for misunderstanding and misreporting the data. They write:

*Average ages at first sexual intercourse lack precision in describing the extent of sexual experience at different ages. They are sensitive to extreme values and sensitive to the ranges of ages of the persons included in the survey. For example, a plausible wrong interpretation of the statement that 'the mean Age of sexual initiation is 15 years' is that 'most youth' aged 15 are having sex when, in fact, the contrary may be true.*

The article points out that there is a difference between asking *sexually active young people* at what age they had their first sexual experience on the one hand, and asking *all young people of a particular age* whether they are sexually active.

Using data on 7,011 young people from El Salvador, Peru and Spain, the researchers found that the actual proportion of sexually active young people at any given age was much lower than 'average' figures might suggest (see table).

In El Salvador, for example, both the mean and median age of first intercourse among sexually active young people is



Dr Jokin de Irala

around 15 years, yet only 20.9 per cent of 15 year-olds are sexually active. Similarly, in Peru, the median age of first intercourse is 15 and the mean age is variously calculated at just below the age of 15, but less than a fifth of 15 year-olds are sexually active. The mean and median age of first sexual experience in Spain are a year older at around 16, but again only 21.7 per cent of Spanish 16 year-olds are sexually active.

Age	Percentage of sexually active young people in each country at the ages specified		
	El Salvador	Peru	Spain
13	6.7	4.4	-
14	13.8	9.6	-
15	20.9	17.0	-
16	26.6	21.4	21.7
17	32.0	29.4	34.8
18	38.0	40.0	62.9
19	45.5	-	78.0

Dr de Irala and his colleagues express concern that attempts to encourage young people to delay sexual activity among young people will not be helped if they are given the impression that more of their peers are sexually active than is really the case. They conclude:

*A more precise depiction of trends and displaying percentages to target audiences provides the clearest picture and can be of crucial help to health policy makers and health education managers who are trying to convey the importance of delaying sexual initiation among youth. We therefore encourage the use of the percentage of youth, at different ages, who have already initiated sexual relationships instead of the use of averages. This will reduce confusion, help avoid erroneous interpretations, and provide a much needed additional source of support to young people, all of which in turn gives such public health policies a better chance of succeeding.*

• J de Irala, A Osorio, S Carlos, M Ruiz-Canela, C López-del Burgo (2011). 'Mean age of first sex. Do they know what we mean?' *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*, 40, 853-855 <http://www.springerlink.com/content/836m6l7w654llrp1/>

## Cohabitation – an alternative to marriage?

**A careful analysis of cohabitation trends over the past 50 years has concluded that not only are cohabiting relationships significantly more unstable than marriages, but married couples who have cohabited before getting married are far more likely to divorce than those who did not live together prior to marriage.**

Using data from the United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Study data set covering 14,103 households and 22,265 adults, researchers from the Jubilee Centre reported that: '[M]arriages that start with a period of prior cohabitation are significantly more prone to divorce than those that do not. Where there has been a previous cohabitation with a separate person by one or both partners, the likelihood of divorce soars.'

Couples who have lived with each other prior to marriage are 15 per cent more likely to divorce, while those who

previously lived with a different partner are around 45 per cent more likely to divorce.

Around 55 per cent of cohabitations lead to marriage, while 45 percent end in separation. Although the median duration of cohabiting relationships rose from 2½ years to 3½ years between the 1980s and early 2000s, fewer than one in four couples cohabit for more than 6½ years and even fewer couples now cohabit for very long periods of time before they separate or get married.

### Especially fragile with children

The report also notes that cohabiting relationships tend to be particularly fragile where children are involved: '[C]ouples who are cohabiting at the birth of their first child [are] six times more likely to split up than married couples by the time the child is five and four times more likely by the time the child is 16.'

Family Education Trust director, Norman Wells, commented:

*This is precisely the kind of information that young people need to learn in sex and relationships education lessons. Cohabitation is not a good preparation for marriage and should not be regarded as a 'trial marriage'. When a couple marry, they make a lifelong commitment to each other in the presence of witnesses. The idea of a 'trial lifelong commitment' is a contradiction in terms.*

• John Hayward and Guy Brandon, *Cohabitation – an alternative to marriage?* Jubilee Centre, June 2011. <http://www.jubilee-centre.org>



# The erosion of authority

Norman Wells reflects on the August riots and what they tell us about the importance of parental responsibility

The jury is still out with regard to identifying the root causes of the outbreak of violence in several major cities in August, but there was widespread agreement among many parliamentarians and commentators that it had at least something to do with the failure of parents to exercise proper authority and control over their children.



In the words of the Prime Minister:

*The question people asked over and over again last week was 'where are the parents? Why aren't they keeping the rioting kids indoors?' Tragically that's been followed in some cases by judges rightly lamenting: 'why don't the parents even turn up when their children are in court?' Well, join the dots and you have a clear idea about why some of these young people were behaving so terribly. Either there was no one at home, they didn't much care or they'd lost control. Families matter.*

*I don't doubt that many of the rioters out last week have no father at home. Perhaps they come from one of the neighbourhoods where it's standard for children to have a mum and not a dad... where it's normal for young men to grow up without a male role model, looking to the streets for their father figures, filled up with rage and anger. So if we want to have any hope of mending our broken society, family and parenting is where*

*we've got to start... So: from here on I want a family test applied to all domestic policy. If it hurts families, if it undermines commitment, if it tramples over the values that keeps people together, or stops families from being together, then we shouldn't do it.<sup>1</sup>*

## The importance of the family

In an article published in the *Sunday Express*, David Cameron again stressed the importance of the family. It was in the home, he said, that children and young people learn the values of 'decency, discipline and sense of duty that make good citizens':

*That is why I make no apology for talking about the importance of family and marriage. Every government policy must pass what I call the family test: does this make life better for families or worse? Does this make it easier to bring up well-behaved children or harder? Family is back at the top of the agenda.<sup>2</sup>*

Although the Labour leader, Ed Miliband, was keen to distance himself from those who, like the Prime Minister, cited family breakdown as a factor behind the

riots, he was quite clear that parents needed to take more responsibility for the behaviour of their children:

*'[W]e need to ask deeper questions about what causes this irresponsibility,' he stated. 'About why some parents are not teaching their children the difference between right and wrong.'<sup>3</sup>*

## Overburdening schools

The Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, expressed concern that too many parents were neglecting their responsibilities and placing burdens on teachers that schools were not equipped to bear:

*The fact is: if you don't take an interest in your child's education, teachers cannot make up the shortfall...[T]hey cannot do everything.*

*We already expect our teachers to be social workers; child psychologists; nutritionists; child protection officers. We expect them to police the classroom, take care of our children's health; counsel our sons and daughters. Guide them, worry about them. And, on top of that, educate them too. When you consider that list, it is phenomenal that so many rise to the challenge. But it is too much to ask. Teachers are not surrogate mothers and fathers; they cannot do it all.<sup>4</sup>*



However, none of the leaders of the three major parties appear to have considered

## The crisis in parental authority – three views from Tottenham

### THE PARENT

"Responsibility has been taken away from parents. People here will call social services if they hear you disciplining your children. Children hear about Childline at school. It's all very well trying to be liberal, but parents need to be given back their right to parent."

**Chris, Mother of a six year-old son**

### THE YOUTH WORKER

"Parents are fearful about how they chastise their children. There's been an erosion of authority for a long time. Parents move very gingerly not to upset their own kids – that's the reality... Bad behaviour and criminality has been glamorised on the streets. Teachers are scared to punish children. The modern child isn't frightened of their parents. They don't care if the police lock them up."

**Clasford Stirling, Veteran youth worker**

### THE MP

"In areas like mine, we know that 59 per cent of black Caribbean children are looked after by a lone parent. There is none of the basic starting presumption of two adults who want to start a family, raise children together, love them, nourish them and lead them to full independence. The parents are not married and the child has come, frankly, out of casual sex; the father isn't present, and isn't expected to be. There aren't the networks of extended families to make up for it..."

"How do you find your masculinity in the absence of role models? Through hip-hop, through gang culture, through peer groups. It is hugely problematic. Teenagers are in school until 3.30, and then MTV, Facebook, the internet, kicks in with a set of values that comes with it.

"It is not clear to me that parents are equipped to deal with that. There's an inability to delay gratification, alcohol, sex, drugs – this is presenting real challenges."

**David Lammy, Labour MP for Tottenham**

• Amelia Gentleman, 'UK riots: Being liberal is fine, but we need to be given the right to parent', *Guardian*, 11 August 2011.

the possibility that some of their own policies have militated against stable family life and responsible parenting. While the coalition government, like the Labour administration before it, trumpets the importance of parents, it continues to pursue policies that undermine and marginalise them. On the one hand parents are held responsible for their children's behaviour at school and in the community, while on the other their role is being undermined by growing pressure on mothers to work outside the home, official disapproval of effective methods of discipline, and the confidential provision of contraception and abortions without the knowledge or consent of parents.

### Authority and responsibility go together

Yet the more the state undermines the authority of parents, the less responsibility parents will be inclined to take for their children. Authority and responsibility go hand in hand. The politicians can't have it both ways: they can't pursue policies that disempower parents and at the same time reserve the right to blame them for society's ills. If they want parents to take proper responsibility for their children, they must first of all respect their authority.

The *Guardian* columnist, Alexander Chancellor correctly identified the central problem as 'an erosion of authority: children are no longer respectful of it, and parents and teachers are fearful of imposing it', but his proposed solution was nothing but a counsel of despair. He wrote:

*It is no fun for any parent, good or bad, to impose discipline on a rebellious child, and it's not surprising that many parents give up trying. So what's to be done? With so many families in a mess, the best hope must be for schools to take the lead in imposing discipline on children, and for parents to be somehow coerced into siding with the schools.*<sup>5</sup>

But this topsy-turvy idea would further undermine parents and remove from them the remaining vestiges of their authority. It is parents, and not schools, who bear the primary responsibility for the care, education and nurture of their children. Schools exist to serve parents and assist them in the discharge of their responsibilities and not the other way around.

As Sam Gyimah, Conservative MP for East Surrey put it: 'Parenting cannot be outsourced to the state. Character development has to start in the family.'<sup>6</sup>

It is vital that parents are allowed – and expected – to take the lead in discipline and that they have the respect and support of the school and the wider community as they do so.



### Notes

1. David Cameron speech delivered in Witney, 15 August 2011.
2. David Cameron, 'Human rights in my sights', *Sunday Express*, 21 August 2011.
3. Ed Miliband speech delivered at Haverstock School, 15 August 2011.
4. Nick Clegg speech at Southfields Community College, Wandsworth, 5 September 2011.
5. Alexander Chancellor, 'There is no model for parenting – schools must take the lead on discipline', *Guardian*, 11 August 2011.
6. Sam Gyimah, 'Where were all the parents?' *Huffington Post*, 12 August 2011.

## Wise words from the commentators



**Shaun Bailey...** For me, the deepest issue at play here is one of responsibility. Who is responsible for law and order in our nation? Who is responsible for the behaviour of our young people? Can we blame the state when parents have been allowed to abdicate responsibility for the behaviour of their children?

The biggest problem our country has faced over the last two decades is that everyone thinks the government should do everything. Personal responsibility and community responsibility have been replaced by state responsibility. If the riots have shown us anything, it is that this approach does not work...

In a way, we are all responsible for the riots, whether directly or indirectly. We watched the previous government talk up rights for young people but with no mention of responsibilities. We have allowed our welfare system to prop up immoral lifestyles. We have not taught all our young people that an entitlement culture is morally wrong. And we have paid the price for this liberalism. Now we need to collectively grow up and take responsibility for responsibility.<sup>1</sup>



**Stephen Pollard...** The wonder is not that the riots have happened; it is that they have not happened before. For over a generation we have conducted an experiment – to see whether the norms on which our society was built can be unravelled and replaced with an entirely new set of values. The evidence has been clear for years that the breakdown of the traditional family – of respect for elders, of discipline, of

responsibility, of reward for work and of making one's way – was having a terrible impact. Yet anyone pointing that out was dismissed as reactionary. In the wake of recent events, no one can deny that we have bred feckless, lawless males who pass on to their own children the same mistakes and multiply them with each new cycle of parenting. Ignore the hand-wringing excuses about jobs and poverty and young people's disconnection from the rest of society... There was far worse unemployment in the Thirties and genuine grinding poverty, not the faux poverty of today, yet rioting was nowhere to be seen.

What is different now? Certainly a lack of discipline and the absence of the moral compass which for many generations was embedded across society – the difference between right and wrong. But what lies at the top of the pyramid of causes is the destruction which has been wrought to the family, for so long the mainstay of society and the means by which successive generations were civilised and socialised.<sup>2</sup>



**Jonathan Sacks...** For some time our culture has been sending out a tacit message that morality is passé, conscience is for wimps and that the sole command is: 'Thou shalt not be found out'...

Too much of contemporary society has been a vacation from responsibility. Children have been the victims of our self-serving beliefs that you can have partnerships without the responsibility of marriage, children without the responsibility of parenthood, social order without the responsibility of citizenship, liberty without the responsibility of morality, and self-esteem without the responsibility of hard work and achievement.<sup>3</sup>

### Notes

1. 'Riots without responsibility', *Guardian*, 11 August 2011.
2. 'The breakdown of family life has led to today's anarchy', *Daily Express*, 11 August 2011
3. 'We've been here before. And there is a way back', *The Times*, 12 August 2011.

# Coalition government plans to change the definition of marriage

In a speech delivered at the Liberal Democrat conference in September, the minister for equalities, Lynne Featherstone, announced that the government will begin a formal consultation in March 2012 on 'how to implement equal civil marriage for same-sex couples'. She added that this would allow the government to make the necessary legislative changes before the next General Election.

Speaking as a Liberal Democrat, she continued:

*Civil partnerships were a welcome first step – but as our constitution states, this party rejects prejudice and discrimination in all its forms. And I believe that to deny one group of people the same opportunities offered to another is not only discrimination, but is not fair.<sup>1</sup>*

A little over two weeks later, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, added his personal support for changing the definition of marriage. He stated:

*I once stood before a Conservative conference and said it shouldn't matter whether commitment was between a man and a woman, a woman and a woman, or a man and another man. You applauded me for that. Five years on, we're consulting on legalising gay marriage.*

*And to anyone who has reservations, I say: Yes, it's about equality, but it's also about something else: commitment. Conservatives believe in the ties that bind us; that society is stronger when we make vows to each other and support each other. So I don't support gay marriage despite being a Conservative. I support gay marriage because I'm a Conservative.<sup>2</sup>*

The announcement that the government will be consulting on 'how' (not 'whether') to introduce same-sex marriage was made despite the fact that no such proposal featured in the election manifesto of either of the coalition parties. Responding to the proposal, Conservative MEP Roger Helmer remarked:

*[I]t is not the business of government to legislate to change the meaning of a common and well-established word, and least of all a word that describes such a key institution in society... [Y]es, marriage is a right, but marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman. Everyone should have the right to marry, and no one seeks to deny that right to anyone else... The question is whether a vocal lobby group can change the meaning of the word to suit an entirely different relationship.*

Mr Helmer went on to argue that same-sex relationships should not be treated in the same way as marriage because they did not offer the same broad benefits to society in terms of promoting stability in society, replenishing the population, and providing the ideal circumstances in which children can be raised and socialised. He concluded:

*[A]ny attempt to broaden the definition of marriage to include other relationships can only be seen as a deliberate device to dilute, demean and diminish the institution of marriage as it is generally understood. If marriage becomes broader, it becomes shallower, and the vital importance of marriage in our society will be further eroded.<sup>3</sup>*

## Public opinion

According to figures published by the Office for National Statistics, the majority of the British public does not support same-sex marriage. Only a third (35 per cent) of men aged 30-49 agreed that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry. Although a higher proportion of women in the same age bracket registered their support for same-sex marriage, they

were still in a minority.<sup>4</sup>

Family Education Trust has written to both Lynne Featherstone and David Cameron and pointed out that it is not possible to change the definition of marriage without at the same time changing the meaning that a society attaches to it. The legal definition of marriage as 'the voluntary union for life of one man and one woman, to the exclusion of all others' contains three key elements: (i) it is heterosexual (between a man and a woman); (ii) it is exclusive (a union of one man and one woman); (iii) it is lifelong (for life). We have reasoned that:

*To broaden the definition of marriage, whether it be to permit the marriage of homosexual couples, to permit an individual to marry more than one person, or to vary the duration for which those marrying signify their commitment would inevitably change the character and public perception of the institution and pose a serious threat to the public benefits associated with it.*

## Notes

1. Lynne Featherstone, Speech at Liberal Democrat Party conference, 17 September 2011.
2. David Cameron, Speech at Conservative Party conference, 5 October 2011.
3. Roger Helmer, 'Why the government is wrong on same-sex marriage', Conservative Home, 17 September 2011
4. ONS, Civil partnerships five years on, *Population Trends 145*, Autumn 2011.

## Scotland consults on same-sex marriage

**Six months before the Westminster government is due to publish its consultation on same-sex marriage for England and Wales, the Scottish government launched its own consultation paper on the possible introduction of same sex marriage and the possibility of allowing religious ceremonies for civil partnerships.**

Although the document insists that 'no final views have been reached and no decisions have been taken', the Scottish government has revealed that it tends towards the view that 'religious ceremonies for civil partnerships should no longer be prohibited and that same sex marriage should be introduced so that same sex couples have the option of getting married if that is how they wish to demonstrate their commitment to each other.' The consultation paper states:

*The Government's initial view is that marriage should be open to both same sex couples and opposite sex couples. This view is grounded in our commitment to equality, and our support for stable and committed relationships. Same sex couples, like opposite sex couples, can and do establish loving relationships which they wish to formalise in a manner recognised by the state, and in some cases by the religious body to which they belong.*

*While civil partnerships are available for same sex couples, and provide similar responsibilities, rights and status to marriage, the two are not identical. It is clear that some same sex couples would prefer marriage to a civil partnership, as the appropriate way to declare and formalise their commitment to each other.*

We would encourage our supporters in Scotland to respond to this consultation before the closing date of 9 December 2011.

• The Scottish Government, *The Registration of Civil Partnerships Same Sex Marriage: A Consultation*, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/357255/0120684.pdf>

## Clueless or Clued Up?

A study published by Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals for World Contraception Day on 26 September reported that 43 per cent of sexually active 16-19 year-olds in Great Britain had engaged in sex with a new partner without using contraception, compared with 36 per cent in 2009, and 42 per cent said that a close friend or family member had experienced an unplanned pregnancy, up from 29 per cent in 2009.

Notwithstanding the fact that the findings were based on a small sample of just 201 British young people, giving plenty scope for wide differences between the statistics collected for different years, the sex education lobby predictably seized on the figures to lend weight to their demand for more sex education and easier access to contraception.

### The sex educators' argument

Jennifer Woodside of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, said,

*What the results show is that too many young people either lack good knowledge about sexual health, do not feel empowered enough to ask for contraception or have not learned the skills to negotiate contraceptive use with their partners to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies or STIs.*

*What young people are telling us is that they are not receiving enough sex education or the wrong type of information about sex and sexuality. It should not come as a surprise then that the result is many young people having unprotected sex and that harmful myths continue to flourish in place of accurate information.*

*How can young people make decisions that are right for them and protect them from unwanted pregnancy and STIs, if we do not empower them and enable them to acquire the skills they need to make those choices?*

### The reality

However, the evidence suggests that ignorance is not the problem that it is

frequently claimed to be. The Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals report itself notes that:

*Young people in Great Britain appear to be particularly well informed about which methods of contraception are effective at preventing an unplanned pregnancy, with 98 per cent indicating that condoms are an effective method and 94 per cent stating that taking the pill is effective... However, Great Britain still has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in Western Europe, which indicates that although young people are able to easily access accurate information, they are not necessarily acting on it.*

While contraceptive-based sex education may have provided young people with information on the range of available contraceptive options, the evidence indicates that it has evidently failed to make any real impact on their behaviour.



• Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals, *Clueless or Clued Up: Your right to be informed about contraception*, September 2011.

## Young adults support marital faithfulness

The vast majority of the British public considers it wrong for a married man or woman to have sexual relations with a third party, and none more so than young adults. According to a YouGov survey conducted for the Sunday Times Magazine in August, 91 per cent of 18-24 year-olds considered adultery 'always wrong' or 'mostly wrong', compared with 86 per cent of 25-39 year-olds, 85 per cent of 40-59 year-olds and 83 per cent of over 60s.

These findings suggest that young people in Britain have higher ideals than many sex educators, who resolutely refuse to promote lifelong faithfulness and whose relativism disinclines them from saying that anything is 'wrong'.

• YouGov, *Infidelity + sex life (Sunday Times)*, September 2011  
<http://today.yougov.co.uk/>

## Children's minister supports contraception for 'boys and girls'

In response to a question from the *fpa* and Brook about the coalition government's approach to reducing teenage pregnancy rates, children's minister, Sarah Teather, asserted that 'comprehensive sex and relationships education (SRE), combined with easy access to effective contraception are the two essential ingredients for reducing teenage pregnancy'.

Miss Teather went on to speak about 'boys and girls' embarking on sexual relationships as if it were a normal part of adolescence. Without any reference to the law on the age of consent, she stated:

*When young people choose to begin a sexual relationship I want them – boys and girls – to feel that asking for contraception and sexual health advice is the right and responsible thing to do. I want them to find an effective method of contraception that they are happy with, to minimise the risk taking that results in repeated visits for emergency contraception. That means including accurate information in SRE, and providing friendly services which are in the right locations, open at the right times, confidential and well publicised (emphasis added).<sup>1</sup>*

Miss Teather added that further details on the coalition government's teenage pregnancy policy would be included in her department's youth policy statement and the Department of Health's sexual health document, both of which were due to be published in the autumn.

Reflecting on the Labour government's teenage pregnancy strategy, which ended in 2010, Rebecca Findlay, the *fpa*'s press and campaigns manager, viewed the rise in the percentage of under-18 pregnancies ending in abortion as an outcome of the strategy. She commented:

*Almost half (49.1 per cent) of girls under 18 end their pregnancy with an abortion. This figure has gone up from 42 per cent in 1998. While the aim is to reduce conceptions themselves, we are seeing young women making different choices about pregnancy – another indicator of the strategy at work.<sup>2</sup>*

### Notes

1. Sarah Teather, Ministerial message about teenage pregnancy rates, August 2011.
2. Rebecca Findlay, 'Skills for the Job: Teenage pregnancy', *Children and Young People Now*, Tuesday, 26 July 2011.

## A salutary lesson

Jo Simpson relates her daughter's experience of obtaining contraception from the school nurse at the age of 14.



One of my daughters obtained contraception from the school nurse when she was only 14 after being heavily pressured by her then boyfriend.

I knew nothing about this for over three years until she told me about it a few months ago. We have had numerous conversations this year, and my daughter (now 18) is convinced that making contraception available to pupils on school premises puts pressure on them to have sex.

If contraception had not been available at school, she feels there is no way she would have gone to the doctors or to the chemist to get contraception and therefore would not have given into the pressure that she was under. She subsequently ended the relationship with her boyfriend and has carried the regret of not waiting ever since.

### Deeply concerned

I am deeply concerned that people who are strangers to our children are able to give them contraception without the consent of their parents and without our children being able to fully understand the possible consequences of what they

are doing. Sex is a life-changing act and a life-bringing act. There is no condom on earth that will protect a child from a bad reputation or a broken heart, or prevent regret. I wonder what would happen if a 14 year old went to a neighbour and obtained the same 'advice' and 'treatment'. What would happen to that neighbour?

Sex education in schools needs to be looked at in conjunction with the sexualisation of children. It amazes me how the government makes decisions that are only serving to fragment the family further and further, and destroying society's foundations.

## PSHE Review

The Department for Education is currently conducting a review of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education, including sex and relationships education.

Although the government has stated that it has no plans to change the law on sex education or parents' right to withdraw their child from sex education, it is under pressure from members of both houses of parliament to make sex education compulsory from the beginning of primary school and to limit or remove the right of parents to withdraw their children from sex education lessons.

It is therefore important to respond to this consultation and give your reasons why sex education should not be made a compulsory subject in primary schools and why all schools should remain free to decide how sex education is provided in consultation with parents at the local level.

• Department for Education, Review of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education <http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/> Responses must be received by Wednesday 30 November.

## What Britain thinks about parenting

A recent poll of a representative sample of 2,000 adults revealed 'a yearning for traditional family values and an appetite for a tax system that rewards parents who stay together'.

The survey, conducted by the polling organisation BritainThinks on behalf of the Labour Party, found that 81 per cent of the British public agrees that 'In an ideal world one parent should stay home with the children'. Both mothers and fathers stated that ideally the mother would stay at home in the early years of their child's life, and mothers who had to return to work to make ends meet expressed regret.

The vast majority of respondents rejected soft and permissive approaches to parenting, with 92 per cent agreeing that 'Being a good parent is mostly about setting boundaries and discipline'. There was also a firm rejection of over-intrusive health and safety regulations, with 85 per cent agreeing that 'Children are wrapped up in cotton wool these days.'

### Full-time mothers ignored

However, launching the research at the Labour Party Conference on 14 September, Tessa Jowell made no reference to these headline findings, choosing to focus on the financial pressures being experienced by families. Miss Jowell, who has responsibility for Labour's family life policy review, ignored the strong public support for full-time motherhood and instead boasted that, 'As a result of Labour's investment in childcare and in work credits, more women who want to work have been able to.'

• BritainThinks, *The Modern British Family: Research for the Labour Party*, 2011 <http://britainthinks.com/>

## Family Bulletin

## Annual Subscription

£10.00 (UK) £20.00 (Overseas)

## Published Quarterly

**Trustees**  
Arthur Cornell MEd F.Coll.P  
(Chairman)  
Betty, Lady Grantchester  
Eric Hester BA (Vice Chairman)  
Dr John Guly MB BS DMJ  
Dr Joseph Lim BPharm  
MRPharmS PhD  
Simon J Ling MA FCA  
(Secretary & Hon Treasurer)  
Mrs Valerie Riches  
(Founder President)

Dr Trevor Stammers MA BSc  
FRCGP DRCOG  
**Executive Committee Members**  
Mrs Ann Allen  
Mrs Sarah Carter  
Mrs Anna Lines  
Mrs Gillian White  
Mrs Fiona Wyatt  
**Director**  
Norman Wells FRSA

**Sponsors**  
Professor Brenda Almond BA  
MPhil doc.hc (Utrecht)  
Professor John Bonnar MA MD  
FRCOG  
The Viscountess Brentford OBE  
Peter Dawson OBE BSc FRSA  
Michael McKenzie CB QC  
The Duke of Montrose  
The Baroness O'Cathain OBE  
Professor Dennis O'Keeffe

**Family Education Trust**  
Jubilee House  
19-21 High Street  
Whitton  
Twickenham  
Middlesex TW2 7LB  
Tel no: 020 8894 2525  
Fax no: 020 8894 3535  
Email: [info@famyouth.org.uk](mailto:info@famyouth.org.uk)  
Website: [www.famyouth.org.uk](http://www.famyouth.org.uk)  
Registered Charity No: 1070500  
A Company Limited by  
Guarantee No: 3503533