

Letting Children be Children

Reg Bailey's report shows a welcome respect for parents that needs to be extended to other areas, including the school curriculum.

Following his six-month review of the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood, Mothers' Union chief executive Reg Bailey reported that children were surrounded by a 'wallpaper' of sexual images and that parents felt there was 'no escape and no clear space where children can be children'.

A survey of 1,000 parents of children aged 5-16 carried out as part of the Bailey review found that:

- 88 per cent think that children are under pressure to grow up too quickly.
- 40 per cent had seen material in shop window displays or on advertising hoardings that they felt were inappropriate for children to see because of their sexual content.
- 41 per cent had seen programmes or adverts on television before 9.00pm that they felt were unsuitable for children due to their sexual content.
- Of those who had felt the need to complain about these issues but hadn't, over 60 per cent said they had not done so, either because they didn't think anything would be done or because they didn't know who to complain to.¹

The Bailey report makes 14 recommendations with a view to reducing the pressures of the commercial world on children and of premature sexualisation to a minimum (see page 2). The government has accepted the report's recommendations in full and has undertaken to take stock of progress in 18 months time and consider what further measures may need to be taken to achieve the recommended outcomes.

Respect for parents

One particularly welcome aspect of the Bailey report is the respect it shows for the views and concerns of parents. For example, the report states:

'Parents are the principal guardians of their children's happiness and healthy development, and we believe that their views have a special status beyond that of other groups...' [p.7]

'The conclusion of this Review is that parents are the experts in deciding whether something is appropriate for their child... The most effective way to ensure that broadcasting, advertising, goods and services are appropriate for children is to pay closer attention to parents' views rather than develop complicated, and contested, definitions of commercialisation and sexualisation.' [p.8]

'For us to let children be children, we need parents to be parents. Parents are clear that they have the main responsibility to raise their children, and to help them deal with the pressures of growing up... [We] want it to be more socially acceptable for parents and others to say that they are not happy about aspects of sexualisation and commercialisation, without fearing ridicule or appearing out

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Report of an Independent Review of the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood by Reg Bailey



of touch. Because of the responsibilities that parents have for their children, we believe that their views need to be given extra consideration in this regard, more than perhaps any other section of society.' [p.11]

We cannot remember the last time a government-commissioned report showed so much evidence of taking parents' concerns seriously or that had such a high regard for parental authority and responsibility.

Making the problem worse

In a joint response to the Bailey report, Brook and the *fpa* argued that sex education in schools is needed to equip young people to deal with a highly sexualised society and urged the government to consider making sex and relationships education a statutory part of the curriculum.

Family Education Trust director, Norman Wells, commented:

'The truth is that sex education as it is taught in many schools is part of the problem of sexualisation, not the solution. Adding more sex education to the school curriculum at an ever earlier age will only exacerbate the problem.'

'The very principles that underpin Reg Bailey's report need to be applied to

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what children are taught in school, namely, that parents are the experts in deciding whether something is appropriate for their child, and parents should have a much larger say in what is appropriate or desirable for their children to see and hear.

'Important as it is for businesses and broadcasters to be responsive to parental concerns without dismissing them as out of touch, it is equally necessary for schools and local authorities to be held to account for the highly sexualised materials children are increasingly being exposed to in the name of sex education and to show proper respect for parents.'

Notes:

1. Department for Education news release, 'Almost nine in ten parents think children are being forced to grow up too quickly', 11 April 2011.

• **Letting Children be Children: Report of an Independent Review of the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood, Department for Education, June 2011.**

<https://www.education.gov.uk>



Reg Bailey

Sex and Relationships Education Council

Family Education Trust has teamed up with the Challenge Team UK, Evaluate, LIFE, Lovewise, Right to Life, and the Silver Ring Thing to form the Sex and Relationships Education Council.

One of the reasons why pro-marriage and pro-life organisations have found it so difficult to make their voices heard and to have an impact on sex education policy is that the Sex Education Forum is widely regarded as having the final word on sex education. The Sex Education Forum states on its website: 'We identify ourselves as the leader, authority and trusted voice' on sex and relationships education and this boast is widely believed by policymakers and local authorities.

Purpose

The overriding purpose of the new Sex and Relationships Education Council is to make the government aware of the fact that there are other groups involved in giving presentations or producing materials for use in sex education lessons in schools who take a completely different position from the Sex Education Forum on a number of important issues. Although members of the Sex Education Council differ from each other in their approach to sex and relationships education in some respects, they have united around several key principles, including:

- Sex and relationships education should remain free from the constraints of the National Curriculum, and primary schools should have discretion with regard to determining whether or not it is taught.
- Schools should remain free to determine their own policy and approach to sex education at the local level.
- Schools should remain accountable to parents and take account of parents' views and concerns with regard to the formulation of sex education policy and curriculum content.
- Parents should remain free to withdraw their children from sex education lessons for as long as they bear the legal responsibility for the education of their children.
- Sex education providers should be free to teach that sexual intimacy belongs exclusively in the context of marriage between a man and a woman.

Each of these points stands diametrically opposed to the aims of the Sex Education Forum.

Launch

The Sex and Relationship Education Council was launched in Parliament on 16 May at a meeting hosted by David Burrowes MP and attended by several Members of Parliament, including David Evenett, the Parliamentary Private Secretary to Michael Gove in the Department for Education. The Secretary of State was not present at the launch himself, but sent a message of greeting in which he stated:

'[I]f we're to ensure that our schools do the best possible job in preparing children for adult life then parents have to be given a bigger voice and clearer say in our education system.'

'We will continue to work with parents to ensure their rights and wishes are respected. I look forward to working with you all in ensuring that the interests of families are put at the heart of our policies.'

The Bailey Report Recommendations

1. Publishers, distributors and retailers to ensure that magazines and newspapers with sexualised images on their covers are not in easy sight of children.
2. Advertisers, advertising industry bodies and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) to reduce the amount of on-street advertising containing sexualised imagery in locations where children are likely to see it.
3. Ofcom and broadcasters to ensure the content of pre-watershed television programming better meets parents' expectations.
4. Government to introduce Age Rating for Music Videos.
5. Internet industry to make it easier for parents to block adult and age-restricted material from the internet.
6. Retailers and retail associations to develop a retail code of good practice on retailing to children.
7. ASA to ensure that the regulation of advertising reflects more closely parents' and children's views.
8. Committee of Advertising Practice, the Advertising Association and relevant regulators to prohibit the employment of children as brand ambassadors and in peer-to-peer marketing.
9. ASA to define a child as under the age of 16 in all types of advertising regulation.
10. Advertising and marketing industry, with ASA and Advertising Association, to raise parental awareness of marketing and advertising techniques.
11. Media and commercial literacy providers, with Ofcom and the BBC, to provide quality assurance for media and commercial literacy resources and education for children.
12. Regulators to ensure greater transparency in the regulatory framework by creating a single website for regulators.
13. Businesses, supported by trade associations, to make it easier for parents to express their views to businesses about goods and services.
14. Government to ensure that businesses and others take action on these recommendations.

Conference report

Saturday 25 June 2011, RAF Club,
Piccadilly, London W1

Family Education Trust's annual conference once again offered an opportunity for supporters to spend a day with others of like mind, to hear informative and inspiring reports of activities from different parts of the UK and to return to the battle refreshed and armed with fresh courage and ammunition.

'Autonomy without responsibility'

In his chairman's report, **Arthur Cornell** noted that Ofsted had concluded that one in three secondary schools is failing to provide good quality personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, and that while schools are strong on teaching the biology of sex, there is frequently less emphasis on the importance of marriage and relationships within the family. The education watchdog had also referred to the use of inappropriate resources and noted that few schools make a concerted effort to involve parents in planning the PSHE curriculum. It had gone on to state that more needs to be done to consult with parents regarding the content and timing of sex and relationships education.¹

A report published by the Department for Education suggested that 83 per cent of girls were sexually active by the age of 18 and that one in five had been pregnant at least once. Of these, just under half (46 per cent) chose to keep their babies, 35 per cent had an abortion, and 19 per cent had a miscarriage. The same study testified to the protective influence of stable family life. Girls were significantly less likely to become sexually active if they lived with both parents as well as if they remained in full-time education and had well-qualified parents.²

Mr Cornell observed that what is delivered through education, the media and family life has consequences for the attitudes and behaviour of young people and for the social conscience and economic welfare of the nation. It is vital to teach young people the importance of taking responsibility as part of their educational experience.

Drawing on his own experience as a school governor, Mr Cornell cited the case of an excluded pupil who had been monitored for four years by 14 different agencies, but with no effect. The agencies said they were unable to help the boy



Books available from Family Education Trust

The following titles, all reviewed in recent issues of the Bulletin, are available from the Family Education Trust office, at the reduced price of £10.00 each. (UK postage £2.00 per book for the first three books - additional books post-free.)

- **Hooked: New science on how casual sex is affecting our children**, by Joe S McIlhaney and Freda McKissic Bush.
- **Questions Kids Ask About Sex: Honest answers for every age**, edited by Melissa Cox.
- **The Spoilt Generation: Why restoring authority will make our children and society happier**, by Aric Sigman.
- **Unplanned: The dramatic true story of a former Planned Parenthood leader's eye-opening journey across the life line**, by Abby Johnson.
- **Wasted: Why education isn't educating**, by Frank Furedi.

because he was not willing to engage with them. Mr Cornell commented that the offer of 'autonomy without responsibility' was placing a huge burden on the public purse.

Encouragements and challenges

In his director's report, **Norman Wells** highlighted several positive developments that had occurred over the course of the previous year:

- The contribution of the Family Education Trust report *Broken Homes and Battered Children* to the inclusion of evidence showing that marriage is the safest environment in which to bring up children in a legally mandated report to the US Congress (see Bulletin 142).
- The sale of tens of thousands of copies of the Family Education Trust leaflet *What is Love?* to UK secondary schools.
- The impact of meetings addressed by the American child and adolescent psychiatrist, Dr Miriam Grossman, jointly sponsored by Anglican Mainstream and Family Education Trust.
- The formation of the Sex and Relationships Education Council, consisting of Family Education Trust and other pro-marriage and pro-life organisations.
- The appointment of the pro-life organisation LIFE to the Department of Health's sexual health advisory group.
- The high regard for parental authority and responsibility reflected in Reg Bailey's report on the Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood.

Mr Wells also drew attention to two challenges that lay ahead: (i) the Department for Education internal review of Personal, Social, Health and Economic education, including sex and relationships education, and (ii) the government's intention to initiate a discussion on how legislation might move forward in the direction of equality between marriage and same-sex civil partnerships.³

Notes

1. Ofsted, *Personal, social, health and economic education in schools*, July 2010.
2. Department for Education, *Youth Cohort Study & Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: The Activities and Experiences of 18 year olds: England 2009*, July 2010.
3. Many of the issues covered in Norman Wells' report are featured as news items elsewhere in this bulletin.

Reports on local activities

The local reports session is always one of the most eagerly-anticipated parts of the conference, and this year's contributors certainly did not disappoint. The range of topics covered and the passion and enthusiasm with which the speakers relate their experiences are doubtless a major contributory factor to the marked rise in the numbers attending the morning meeting in recent years.



Julie Maxwell

Julie Maxwell spoke as a community paediatrician, a school governor and the mother of three primary-aged children. As a professional she regularly saw the results

of family breakdown in her clinic and noted that many children were being diagnosed with medical disorders when the source of their problems lay within the family. She was concerned that sex education was itself leading to further family fragmentation.

In her capacity as a school governor, Dr Maxwell had put sex and relationships education back on the agenda, but had been disappointed that only 10 parents had attended a meeting organised for the parents of Key Stage 2 pupils. She was concerned that the Channel 4 *Living and Growing* series equated 'relationships' with sex and had discussed the issue with her local authority's sex and relationships education advisor.

Dr Maxwell had met with another local headteacher to discuss the possibility of using Lovewise materials. The head had appeared open to it, but was not happy about teaching that marriage was between a man and a woman.



Mandy Pilz

Mandy Pilz spoke of her involvement with a group of parents seeking to develop a new website under the banner of 'Parents Together on Sex Education'. The website was

designed to provide a forum for parents with an interest in sex and relationships education (SRE) against a background in which parents were being overlooked by schools and the type and timing of sex education being provided was giving rise to concern. It was hoped that the website would:

- Encourage parents to take back their rights and responsibilities in relation to SRE;
- Raise awareness of the issues surrounding SRE;
- Provide parents with accurate information on the law and guidance;
- Contain reviews of SRE materials;
- Advise parents on how to effect change;
- Provide a parent voice to the government.

When she had first raised her concerns about SRE with her own local school in

2009, Mrs Pilz had been advised that the issue had been considered by the Parent Council and that there would be no further consultation with parents. More recently, she had obtained a copy of the school's sex and relationships policy which, in addition to disturbing sections in relation to curriculum content, contained factual inaccuracies. Mrs Pilz had written to the headteacher with her concerns and had secured a meeting with him, at which she planned to ask for a full consultation of parents.



Yusuf Patel

Conscious of the lack of research demonstrating the character of sex education lessons in primary schools, Mr Patel spoke about a research project he had initiated. Under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, he had written to over 1,700 schools in the London area and asked a series of questions, including how they consult parents on sex education, what resources they use, how many parents have withdrawn their children from sex education lessons, and whether the sex education programme offered by the school is affected by the religious background of pupils.

Mr Patel noted that the Department for Education sex and relationship education guidance requires schools to actively consult parents, but all too often parents are merely being told what materials the school has decided to use and not being properly consulted at all. While the guidance places a strong emphasis on consultation with parents, it does not make any reference to the local authority having any role in determining how sex education should be taught and what materials should be used. Yet in many areas the local authority is having a disproportionate influence on schools.

Responses received to date show widespread misuse of the sex and relationships education guidance by schools, with consultation with parents frequently taking place after decisions have been made. Many schools had attempted to withhold the information requested and some had referred Mr Patel to the local authority, when in reality decisions about sex education were not a matter for the local authority at all. There was evidence of excessive interference on the part of local authorities who were frequently going

beyond their powers. For example, one local authority had responded 'on behalf of all schools' in its area, while another had written to say that none of its schools would be responding. Mr Patel was continuing to analyse responses and planned to disseminate his findings in due course.



Julie Barnes

From Northamptonshire, Julie Barnes gave a personal account of discussions she had engaged in with her child's primary school regarding its sex education policy.

In 2009, she attended a meeting for parents to discuss the development of the school's policy. The small number of parents who were present made it clear that they did not want the school to provide teaching on masturbation or sexually transmitted infections, and neither did they want the school to show a film of a live childbirth. The headteacher had appeared to accept this and assured parents that the school would not be using the Channel 4 *Living and Growing* material.

At a subsequent meeting, the school revealed that it was planning to use the BBC Whiteboard Active resources. Mrs Barnes considered this material, with its close-up detail of penetration, even worse than the Channel 4 programme in some respects, but did not have the confidence to stand up to the head and deputy and raise any objection at the meeting. However, she subsequently went to see the headteacher and expressed her concerns face to face.

Even though only seven parents out of a school population of 210 had seen the controversial materials, the head refused to hold another parents' meeting. After Mrs Barnes had talked to other parents about the sex education programme being used by the school, 20 per cent of parents with children in Year 6 exercised their right of withdrawal, but still the school pressed ahead.

Mrs Barnes had also raised her concerns with the school governors and discovered that the entire programme had been designed by one member of the teaching staff and that the governing body had never discussed the materials being used in sex education lessons. The school took the view that a specialist teacher was in a better position to judge what children needed to learn than the children's own parents.

Mrs Barnes had organised a public meeting in Northampton to raise awareness of what was being taught in local primary schools and she had formed a small local group to campaign on the issue. Her own MP, Andrea Leadsom, had been very supportive and had raised the issue in the House of Commons.



Christine Hudson

From Devon, Christine Hudson reported on her longstanding campaign to persuade her local grammar school to inform parents of the services

that their daughters could access in the school nurse's confidential clinic. Over a five year period, she had written many letters to the Chair of Governors, governors and headmistress – and, in 2010, to the local authority, the Department for Education and her MP, but all without success.

The school's sex and relationship education policy stated that: 'The school nurse runs a confidential drop-in clinic on an occasional basis... The school can provide further details of the service provided by the clinic if requested.' However, when Mrs Hudson had requested further details, she had been referred to the School Nurse Team at NHS Plymouth, but they had failed to provide a response.

Mrs Hudson quoted from letters and emails she had received from the school's governing body and headteacher and from the local authority and the Department of Education to illustrate what she described as a 'patent example of bureaucracy working against the individual to deliberately muddle and misinform'.

In the course of her voluntary work for the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC), Mrs Hudson had made use of the Family Education Trust leaflet, *Dispelling the Myths – Sex Education in Primary Schools*, sending out at least 100 copies during the previous six months. She had also met with her local MP to discuss the inadequacy of the contraceptive- and abortion-based approach to reducing teenage pregnancies, had written several letters to the local press, and promoted the Challenge Team in Plymouth schools.



Armorel Carlyon

Mrs Carlyon referred to several issues that had received the attention of Cornwall's Community Standards Association over the previous year:

- The case of Mr and Mrs Bull, Christian guest house owners from Penzance, who had been taken to court for their refusal to grant a double room to a same-sex couple, in line with their policy of only offering double rooms to married couples.
- Concerns from parents in relation to inappropriate sex and relationship education programmes in schools.
- An application to open a sex shop in Truro. In spite of a large petition presented to the vice-chairman of Cornwall Council, 99 letters from members of the public, objections from the Mayor and three local councillors, and a unanimous vote in the Truro City Council against the shop being allowed to open next door to a children's

school uniform shop, the Miscellaneous Licensing Committee of Cornwall Council had granted the licence. The shop had opened in November 2010, but Mrs Carlyon had been granted leave to apply for Judicial Review.

Mrs Carlyon concluded by urging Family Education Trust members to get to know their local councillors and exert an influence on local government, through asking questions and attending Council meetings. She noted that there were seldom many members of the public present and councillors were always curious to know who was present in the public gallery and why.



Sue Relf

Sue Relf reported that since 2004, the Challenge Team UK had recruited and trained 42 young volunteers to give a presentation on the benefits of saving sex

for marriage in schools throughout UK. Each year, a team of volunteers visited 60-70 schools and around 10 youth groups during the autumn and spring terms. To date, presentations had been seen by a total of 99,500 pupils.

Over the previous two years, feedback forms had been received from 1,320 pupils:

- 81 per cent stated they hoped to be married one day, with only 3.5 per cent saying they had no wish to marry;
- 32 per cent considered that the presentation would make a difference to the choices they made in the future, and 57 per cent said that saving sex for marriage was an option they would consider.
- 80 per cent said they thought all schools should see a presentation, with only 2.5 per cent dissenting, and 17.5 per cent unsure.

Louise Kirk

From Cheshire, Louise Kirk spoke about the character development programme *Alive to the World*, which used stories to teach abiding virtues.

Mrs Kirk expressed concern about the inaccurate messages that were being given to children about human biology in standard school textbooks. She had therefore written a series of conversations between a mother and daughter, and father and son, as a way of providing accurate biological information to help prepare children for puberty.

It was planned that the conversations would be available for download from the *Alive to the World* website in due course and that they would be used by parents with their children.



Mary Russell

From Northern Ireland, Mary Russell referred to a radio debate in which she had participated concerning a mother



who had permitted her 12 year-old daughter to go on the pill and subsequently allowed the girl and her boyfriend to share a bed under the family roof. Her opponent, Mary Crawford from Brook, had surprised her by saying that this was not a situation that should be supported. Mrs Russell was able to point out that this assessment was in direct conflict with Brook's policy never to attempt to coax a young person out of having sex.

In October 2010 a primary school dinner lady had been reprimanded for giving a biscuit to a boy on the basis that it could be seen as 'grooming a child'. After two two-hour sessions with the principal, the lady left in a distressed state and the parish priest was told that the woman had left because of 'serious child protection issues'. This, in turn, had led to gossip and rumour in the community. Eventually the Labour Relations Agency had examined the case, the school had been forced to apologise, and the dinner lady had been reinstated and awarded an undisclosed sum. Mrs Russell could not help wondering if that same school, like so many others, embraced a programme where the children are in far greater danger from explicit and graphic sex education than they would ever be from being given a custard cream.

During a BBC radio debate with a gay rights activist on the case of Elton John and David Furnish orchestrating the birth of a baby boy, the presenter had taken exception to Mrs Russell referring to this birth as being 'engineered'. However, since an egg from a donor had been impregnated with sperm from one or other of the men via IVF and the embryo had been introduced into the womb of a surrogate, there was no other word that could be used. Mrs Russell had observed that John and Furnish had wilfully brought into existence a child who had no mother and yet had two mothers.

Mrs Russell welcomed the fact that Northern Ireland now had a pro-life health minister in Edwin Poots. During 2007, Mr Poots had called upon the then minister 'to abandon any attempt to make abortion more widely available in Northern Ireland'. He had also stated that, 'given that almost seven million children have been aborted since the 1967 Act was passed and that almost two million have been terminated since the House last debated the issue – future generations will look back on this period in the way we now look back on the period when children were used to clean chimneys and people were kept as slaves.'

Ethical dilemmas in modern medicine

Agneta Sutton

Dr Agneta Sutton provided an overview of current controversial medical practices, at both the beginning and the end of life and highlighted some of the philosophical and ethical issues they raised.

In vitro fertilisation (IVF)

IVF has been in use for over 30 years, but involves treating the embryo as a disposable commodity rather than a human life in its early stages. Increasingly, only one embryo is being implanted and the remaining embryos are either being frozen for future use, donated to other women or to research — or simply discarded.

While some hold that human life does not begin at conception, Dr Sutton argued that it is dualistic to dissociate the body from the person. From conception, there is unified, goal-directed development; the embryo is a living organism — a person, not just a potential person. She stated: 'When your bodily existence began, your personal life began! You cannot dissociate yourself from your body.'

Abortion

Pro-abortionists argue that abortion is a legitimate act since: (i) The foetus does not possess consciousness and is therefore only a potential person, and a potential person has no rights; and (ii) A pregnant woman has rights over her own body. However, Dr Sutton argued that there is no such thing as a 'potential person', only embryonic persons with potential. She also rejected the notion that a pregnant woman has an unlimited right over the life and body of her foetus.

In some countries, high abortion rates are having serious demographic consequences. In Russia, for example, abortion is widely used as a form of contraception, with 1,022 abortions for every 1,000 births. This had prompted Prime Minister Putin in June 2010 to propose an investment of 1.5 trillion roubles in 'demographic policies' to improve life expectancy and boost birth rates by 25-30 per cent.

Prenatal diagnosis, pre-implantation genetic diagnosis and eugenic abortion

Advocates of these procedures argue that they are justified on the basis that it is irresponsible to bring a disabled child into the world. Parents sometimes say that they want to spare the child a life of suffering, or that they fear a disabled child will be a burden time-wise, financially and emotionally. When prenatal diagnosis tests reveal some form of disability, health professionals have been known to encourage the mother to abort the foetus and try for a healthy child instead. Such sentiments presuppose that the child has no inherent value or worth. Dr Sutton asked:

- Who can tell whether another person would prefer not to be born?
- Should we not welcome the child unconditionally?
- If not, how perfect does it need to be before it is welcome?
- Can disabled people feel comfortable in a society that advocates abortion on grounds of foetal disability?

While nobody is forced to have prenatal diagnosis tests or to have an abortion where a disability is detected, there is a social pressure to avoid the birth of children with disabilities, which Dr Sutton described as a 'soft' form of eugenics.

'Saviour siblings'

Since 2004, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority has allowed IVF embryos to be tested to select a child who could be a tissue match for a seriously ill sibling, but the procedure raises serious ethical questions surrounding whether children are being treated as commodities and brought into the world as 'spare-part siblings'.

Dr Sutton cited the case of Imogen Graham, who had been conceived as a 'saviour sibling' to donate bone marrow to save the life of her sister, Saskia. According to a newspaper report, 'For the girls' parents..., the decision to use Imogen's bone marrow was an agonising one. She was only 19 months old and would struggle to survive such an invasive procedure... Their mother said: "The decision to operate was the most heart-wrenching one we have ever had to make."'

Dr Sutton expressed concern that the 'saviour sibling' is not wanted for himself or herself, but as a means to an end. He or she is conditionally selected out of a number of embryos and not given an unconditional welcome. She questioned whether the creation of saviour siblings respects the dignity of the child and its implications for the parent-child relationship.

Egg donation

During the 1980s, the London Women's Clinic pioneered the practice of egg-sharing, whereby qualifying women can receive free infertility treatment in return for anonymously donating an agreed proportion of their excess eggs to paying recipients. But Dr Sutton noted that donating an egg is not like donating blood or a kidney, and that the donor alienates herself from her child.

The same principle applies to sperm donation, and Dr Sutton cited a newspaper



interview with Caroline Halstead, who had been fathered by an anonymous sperm donor. She stated that she felt she was the product of a scientific process rather than a loving union: 'I was conceived in a Petri dish by artificial insemination at a Harley Street Clinic in London. In my view, it is a horrible, clinical way to be conceived. All my life I've felt as if I'm only half a person.'

Euthanasia/Assisted suicide

Dr Sutton referred to the case of an Australian woman who had been declared 'brain dead' regaining consciousness after her husband had spent several weeks fighting the recommendations of doctors to switch off her ventilator. There is always the danger of removing medical help from those fighting to stay alive.

The term 'assisted dying' sounds more palatable than euthanasia, but as Baroness Finlay and Lord Carlile of Living and Dying Well have argued, no such law can be made absolutely safe, and the example of the Netherlands is not reassuring. There is always a risk that patients may say they want to die because they are depressed, because they feel they are a burden on others, or because they are being pressurised by relatives or friends.

Dr Sutton expressed concern that an ageing population would lead to dangerous social and financial arguments being advanced for legalising euthanasia.

The future: genetic enhancement

While education promotes a child's innate abilities, enhancement alters or adds certain qualities and abilities by genetic means. Dr Sutton cited the book, *Enhancing Evolution*, in which the bioethicist, John Harris, writes, 'The moral end of both therapy and enhancement is to confer benefit and prevent harm.' And, 'In a democratic society parents should have the option to genetically enhance their unborn children [when this becomes possible].'

Dr Sutton pointed out that this, too, amounts to a 'soft' form of eugenics, whereby children are treated as commodities and products, and not accorded the dignity that belongs to human persons.

• *Agneta Sutton lectures on bioethics and sexual and medical ethics at Heythrop College, at the University of London.*

Sexual health group welcomes LIFE

The appointment of the pro-life organisation LIFE to the Department of Health's sexual health advisory group is a welcome development. As far as we are aware, this is the first time that a pro-life organisation has been represented on a government advisory group, and the fact that the British Pregnancy Advisory Service has not got a seat around the table this time around, has added salt to the wound of the pro-abortion lobby. Even though LIFE is the only pro-life organisation on the advisory body and is heavily outnumbered by groups such as Brook, the *fpa*, the Sex Education Forum and the Terrence Higgins Trust, its inclusion is seen as a serious threat by a number of prominent figures.

'Chilling'

The Shadow Health Minister, Diane Abbot, described the appointment as 'chilling'. She stated:

*'[W]e must not underestimate the chilling news that the government has appointed anti-abortion group LIFE to their expert advisory group on sexual health. This appointment, coupled with the retraction of an invite to the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, one of the UK's leading abortion providers, signals a dangerous move.'*¹

The former Liberal Democrat MP, Evan Harris, warned that LIFE's very presence on the group could prevent the panel functioning properly. He said:

*'When you have an organisation campaigning against the law and against current policy on sexual health, which is pro-contraception and about ensuring that abortion is a choice, then the risk is that you prevent the panel being given access to confidential information. It can prevent the advisory panel having frank and open discussions because you have a group there that is committed to opposing current policy.'*²

Support

However, a pro-abortion *Guardian* columnist who has had two abortions herself has come out in support of LIFE's inclusion on the advisory body. She writes:

*'[Y]ou simply cannot call yourself "pro-choice" and then bar people who do not agree with you from expressing their opposing view. It's an oxymoronic position. People who defend such regressive behaviour, simply mirror that of the dictatorial hardliners they supposedly stand against.'*³

Time alone will tell whether or not LIFE's inclusion on the sexual health advisory group represents a significant shift in government thinking and an openness to look again at some of the sacred cows of the liberal establishment, but it is certainly a welcome move and an opportunity for probing questions to be asked about the sexual health strategy which is currently serving the nation, and particularly its youth, so badly. It presents an opportunity, too, to point out that there is a better way.

Notes

1. Diane Abbott website, 'Government leaning dangerously towards anti-abortion groups', 25 May 2011,
2. Ben Quinn, 'Anti-abortion group drafted in as sexual health adviser to government', *Guardian*, 24 May 2011.
3. Deborah Orr, 'Feminists shouldn't try to stifle debate about abortion', *Guardian*, 24 May 2011.

Breaking the cycle of welfare dependency

Shaun Bailey



Speaking in a forthright manner, Shaun Bailey argued that supporters of the family have wasted too much time on the liberal intelligentsia when their time would have been better spent serving on school governing bodies, seeking election as local councillors and engaging in letter-writing campaigns to MPs.

Because of his media profile, during the 2010 election campaign, Mr Bailey had possibly received more letters than any other parliamentary candidate – up to 1,500 letters per week. When he received 50-60 letters on a single topic, he found himself devoting time to issues that he had not previously taken an interest in. He therefore urged supporters of the traditional family to 'pick an MP and bully them'. 'You are fighting for nothing less than the future of the British family.'

From safety net to noose

There are now too many people within the welfare arena and the current welfare bill is unsustainable. There is clearly something wrong when people can earn £9,000 per annum above the average income by staying at home. Mr Bailey suggested that the welfare system had been formed as a safety net, evolved into a hammock and had now become a noose. It had become a system where victims generated victims.

The public needs to wake up to the fact that there is no such thing as 'government spending'. The government has no money of its own – only what it receives from the public. It does not make sense for taxpayers to pay for things we cannot afford.

Pressure groups need to be asked what they are doing to run out of clients. Mr Bailey stated that he wants the young people he works with at MyGeneration to take responsibility for their own lives and to move on; he does not want them to remain dependent on him. He suggested that the furore over the government's proposal to cease paying child benefit to higher-rate taxpayers revealed a climate in which even higher earners see it as their 'right' to receive state handouts.

It is 'wicked' to condemn people to live on welfare, yet there is no shortage of teenage girls who become pregnant in order to receive housing – they refer to it as 'the career'.

Don't give in!

Mr Bailey was quite sure that if parents knew what their children were being taught in sex education lessons they would be appalled, but it took courage to complain. Parents who take the lead in challenging schools over sex education policies and materials need to find ways of making it easier for other parents to support them. There is a very real problem with lazy parenting. Parents have been educated to leave everything to the state.

It is imperative that campaigners for the family do not give in. The liberal intelligentsia consists of a relatively small group of people. The results of their ideas are not impressive; they are not even meeting their own targets. Family campaigners need to talk to the opinion formers, and Mr Bailey suggested a particular focus on the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail*, the two most widely-read newspapers.

Politicians are not brave enough to stand up for what many of them already know is right in the family arena. We cannot rely on Parliament to take the lead. The public mood needs to change before Parliament will respond.

• **Shaun Bailey is managing director and co-founder of MyGeneration and the Prime Minister's ambassador for the Big Society.**

The future of sex and relationships education

The Department for Education will shortly be conducting an internal review of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education. Among other things, the review will determine the direction of the coalition government's policy on sex and relationships education in schools. However, following the previous Labour government's failure to make sex education a statutory part of the national curriculum, the Department has assured Family Education Trust that the present government has 'no plans to change the current legislative position regarding sex and relationships education'.

The Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, has also written to the Trust offering assurances that: 'We have no plans to legislate to increase the level of central prescription in this area of the curriculum.' In a separate letter, the Minister stressed the importance of schools consulting with parents on the choice of materials used in sex education lessons:

'[T]he government agrees that it is important that schools consult parents on the content of their sex and relationships education, including the resources they will use to support their teaching.'

Mr Gibb has confirmed that his department considers Family Education Trust a key stakeholder and that our views will be sought throughout the review.

All this is very welcome, but we cannot afford to be complacent. The sex education lobby remains aggrieved that the Labour government failed in its attempt to put sex and relationships education on the national curriculum and will be redoubling its efforts to use the internal review to advance its agenda.

• **With the internal review of PSHE pending, now would be a good time to write to your MP with your concerns about sex and relationships education in your local school, whether in relation to inappropriate content or a lack of consultation with parents. Please write to him/her at The House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.**

Same-sex partnerships: Equal to marriage or fundamentally different?

The coalition government has signalled that it is prepared to consider removing any distinction between same-sex civil partnerships and heterosexual marriage. On 5 May, the homosexual MP Stephen Gilbert asked the Minister for Equalities, Lynne Featherstone, whether she agreed that 'when it comes to equality before the law, there can be no such thing as "almost equal"' and what steps the government would take 'to end the inequality in marriage and civil partnership rights between straight and homosexual couples'. The Minister responded:

'Yes, I agree that "equal rights" means "equal rights", not "similar rights" or "nearly but not quite as good" rights. Having listened to stakeholders, it is clear that there is a genuine desire among many of them to move forward to equality between marriage and civil partnerships. Over the summer we shall start a discussion with all those with an interest in the matter on how legislation can develop.'

Family Education Trust director, Norman Wells, commented:

'It is all very well to grant equal rights to things that are equal, but to call a same-sex relationship a "marriage" is to treat as equal something that is fundamentally different. For generations, marriage has been defined as "the voluntary union for life of one man and one woman, to the exclusion of all others", and we must do all we can to ensure it remains that way.'

Miriam Grossman meetings

During the first week of May, in association with Anglican Mainstream, Family Education Trust jointly sponsored a series of meetings addressed by the American child and adolescent psychiatrist, Dr Miriam Grossman. In addition to two public meetings in central London, Dr Grossman addressed a well-attended meeting in the House of Lords, chaired by Lord Dannatt, at which several peers were present.

Over three days, Dr Grossman addressed a broad range of issues, including:

- How neuroscience shows that the teenage brain is not completely mature until young people reach their mid-20s, with the part of the brain that plans and makes rational decisions being the last area to mature.
- The limitations of condoms to prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted infections.
- The biological factors that make younger women particularly vulnerable to human papillomavirus (HPV), and how use of the contraceptive pill delays maturation of the cervix, leading to additional risks.
- The particular health risks associated with homosexual activity.
- The way language is being manipulated and changed to blur the distinction between male and female.

Quotable quotes from Dr Miriam Grossman

- 'The biggest problem we face is not dangerous diseases but dangerous ideas.'
- 'The priority of the sex education lobby is not sexual health but sexual licence. But if sexual licence reigns, sexual health suffers.'
- [In the context of talking about marital faithfulness] 'Sexually transmitted infections are 100 per cent avoidable without lifelong celibacy.'

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