

## The ‘effective abolition of the marriage vow’. No-fault divorce finally becomes law

In early June, while the nation remained under lockdown, the British government saw fit to rush through legislation that makes the ending of marriage a quicker process than ending a mobile phone contract.

On 8 June the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill had its second reading in the House of Commons and was passed by 231 votes to 16. While the coronavirus situation kept many pro-marriage MPs away from parliament for this crucial vote, a handful of valiant members did their best to warn of the dangers of this radical legislation.

In opening the debate on behalf of the government the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, Robert Buckland stated:

*We believe that the family is a vital component of what it takes to be a civilised society. It is the source of stability, safety, love and all those things that we should be cherishing as a society.*

Fine words, but how ironic given that the legislation he was proposing to the House amounted to, in the words of Conservative MP, Danny Kruger, ‘the effective abolition of the marriage vow.’

Mr Kruger’s speech was one of the highlights of the debate as it summarised exactly what was at stake if the legislation passed:

*What is the difference between marriage and any other romantic relationship? It is this: people promise... in a legally binding commitment, not to walk out...the wedding service has these portentous words: marriage is “a solemn, public and life-long covenant.”...This Bill proposes to abolish all of that...to say instead that the vows do not have to be kept; that it is not solemn, public and lifelong, but trivial, private and as long or short as people want it.*

Mr Kruger continued:

*The reliance on objective facts is now being abolished in favour of a subjective declaration that one party wants out of the marriage, and that effectively means that the vows made at the beginning have no legal force and no moral value.*

Other MPs also made fine contributions to the debate. Sir Desmond Swayne highlighted what is obvious to many, but apparently not to the present government, that if you make something easier you get more of it, while also highlighting how marital and family breakdown contributes to other social problems:

*...by making divorce more straightforward and easier, it becomes the first resort, rather than the last...We should remember that divorce is the swiftest route to poverty. Of the people who might come through the door during one of my morning surgeries, if you scratch the surface of their problem—whether the problem presents as debt, housing, education or access to children—nine times out of 10, divorce and family breakdown are the root cause. And the easier we make divorce, the more we shall have of it.*

Sir Edward Leigh indicted the government for ignoring the results of its own consultation which showed the public to be less than enthusiastic about no-fault divorce:



**Danny Kruger**

*We know that 80% of the people who were consulted opposed this measure. In another poll, 72% said that if we were to bring in compulsory no-fault divorce, people would get more blasé about divorce.*

Leigh also highlighted the cruel and extreme nature of the bill in creating divorce without any need for a reason:

*...many...would like to be given a reason why they are being divorced. Many people feel that marriage is a most important thing in their life...the Secretary of State is ploughing ahead with the most extreme and most radical measure he could dream of. This is one of the most radical and most extreme divorce laws in the whole of the European continent...Why are we not prepared to compromise? Why are we not prepared to give an unequivocal message that we believe in marriage and will support it to the hilt?*

Fiona Bruce underlined the fact that the new legislation allows a person to treat their spouse in a way that an employer could never get away with in treating an employee:

**continued overleaf...**

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## The 'effective abolition of the marriage vow'.

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Fiona Bruce



*...there is no one to answer the young woman with a baby in her arms and a toddler at her feet, who has just received a notice in the post—a notice that says, "... I*

*am divorcing you in a few short weeks, and I do not have to give you a reason..." Of course, he could not do this to an employee...That would be called unfair dismissal.*

Sir John Hayes highlighted why it is so important that divorce should not be a quick and easy process:

*About one in 10 divorces that are started are never actually completed, and that is because of the time available for counselling, for reconciliation...for trying again. The Bill removes that opportunity. It removes protections for individuals whose spouses seek to terminate their marriage in times of hardship or illness.*

*For many, the changes could mean that faithful, committed husbands lose access to their children, while women cruelly abandoned by errant husbands will have no way of marking that betrayal and no reason offered for why their marriage has ended.*

Sadly, the warnings of these MPs fell on deaf ears. The bill was passed by a massive majority and obtained Royal Assent on 25 June 2020.

The passing of this bill makes it all the more essential that we continue to promote the institution of marriage as the basis for a stable and fruitful society.

•Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill, Second Reading debate, House of Commons, 8 June 2020.

## Schools can postpone implementation of Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education...Plus a new resource that you should know about

**Mandatory Relationships Education (Reled) in primary schools and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in secondary schools officially came into force as of 1 September 2020.**

However, owing to the covid crisis, schools have been given a temporary reprieve. In early June the Department for Education issued a 'Communication to schools on the implementation of Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex and Health Education'. Taking into account school closures due to coronavirus, schools are now not required to start teaching the new subjects until the summer term of 2021.

The Dfe's 'communication' states:

*The subjects will still become compulsory from 1 September 2020. However, schools have flexibility to decide how they discharge their duties effectively. If a school is unable to begin teaching until summer term 2021 they will need to decide how much of the content they will be able to cover and should still be able to demonstrate how they will cover the entirety of the curriculum in the future. Furthermore, as the subjects will be compulsory from 1 September 2020 the new parental right to withdraw provision will apply.*

This new 'parental right to withdraw provision', which we have discussed in previous bulletins, allows parents to withdraw their children from RSE following discussions with the head teacher, who is encouraged to honour the parents' wishes. However, this right of withdrawal ends three terms before the child's 16th birthday. There is no right to withdraw from primary school Relationships Education.

Given the new limitation on parental rights with regard to Relationships Education, it is essential that teachers have access to decent, wholesome and family-friendly material for this subject.

### Relationships Matter

Teachers Resource for Primary Relationships Education

Key Stage 1

Key Stage 2

**Resource includes**

- Fulfills the Government Statutory Guidance for Relationships Education 2020
- 45 units covering: Families & people who care for me, Caring friendships, Respectful relationships, Online relationships, Being safe
- 425 lesson plans divided appropriately to KS1 and KS2
- Access to browser based slideshow presentations, (no PowerPoint software required to view)
- Worksheet activities available for download



The new *Relationships Matter* online resource produced by Lovewise qualifies in this respect. This is a resource for primary schools aimed at key stages 1 and 2. It fulfills the government's statutory guidance and the five required units: Families and people who care for me, Caring friendships, Respectful

relationships, Online relationships and Being safe. It is free for teachers to use. The great thing about this resource is that it fulfills all the legal requirements for Relationships Education while containing age-appropriate, morally suitable material for children.

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Marriage and the family are covered in substantial detail. Children learn that marriage is a legally recognised and formal commitment which is intended to be lifelong. They learn the characteristics of a healthy family life, how families love and care for each other and the importance of families spending time together. The importance of parents and the nature of the marriage vow are examined and a particular emphasis is given to the role of marriage in creating an atmosphere of love, security and stability for children and in teaching children values like consideration and gratitude. Children are encouraged to learn the wedding vows from both the religious and civil ceremonies. The section dealing with marriage illustrates that marriage is so much more than just romantic love and that couples must work daily to strengthen their relationship. Children learn words of wisdom such as *'The best way to be a good parent is to be a good husband to their mother or a good wife to their father'*.

In the section on 'Caring Relationships' children are taught the nature and characteristics of friendship including trustworthiness, loyalty, kindness and mutual respect. The golden rule on how to treat others is inculcated. Children learn how positive friendships are good for wellbeing and how to discern when a friendship has become unhealthy.

The resource also teaches the conventions of courtesy and manners, respect for parents, teachers and those in authority, the importance of laws and rules and of self-respect. In the age of the internet, children are taught how to stay safe online, rules for safe online relationships, the importance of parental controls and how to detect harmful online content. Additionally, children learn useful skills in computer literacy and safe use of the internet. Other parts of the resource deal with such things as road safety, avoiding strangers, discerning bullying and taking care of physical and mental health.

Each course unit instils key concepts and encourages the learning of a specific vocabulary of words related to the topic in hand. The resource is attractively presented with slideshows featuring vivid pictures and useful work exercises which help children to memorise the most important values.

This resource would be ideal material for any teacher, whether in a state or independent, religious or non-religious school, wanting to promote decent values among pupils from a wide variety of social, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

**Relationships Matter can be accessed for free on request from Lovewise at the following link:**  
<https://lovewise.org.uk/relationships-matter.html>

## Patriots: The Untold Story of Ireland's Pro-Life Movement

Jonathon Van Maren, Life Cycle Books, 237pp, £11.45  
ISBN 9780919225602

Reviewed by Eric Hester

**I wish that in, say, 1960 I had placed a bet with a fair amount of money, that the first country in Europe to introduce abortion by voting in a referendum would be Ireland.** How rich I would be! On the 25 May 2018 the Irish voted in a referendum to repeal the Eighth Amendment to their Constitution thus allowing legislation for the legalization of abortion. This was passed by 66%. The Eighth Amendment had itself been passed in a referendum on 7 September 1983, also with 66% of the vote. The amendment had stated:

*The State acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right.*

This short, clear, most informative but very sad book shows how this radical reversal of values came about.

Ireland's constitution, written in 1937, was built on pro-family values. It defended the family as "the natural primary and fundamental unit" of society. The Irish state dedicated itself to defending marriage and declared it indissoluble. Abortion was not mentioned in the original constitution because in 1930s Ireland it was unthinkable. But the establishment of the Irish Family Planning Association in 1969 and subsequent pro-abortion activism warned the Irish as to what was coming. In 1983 a pro-life amendment to the Irish constitution was passed by a large majority of the Irish people. Much of the credit for this should go to the Irish Family League which actively worked to oppose abortion for most of the previous decade.

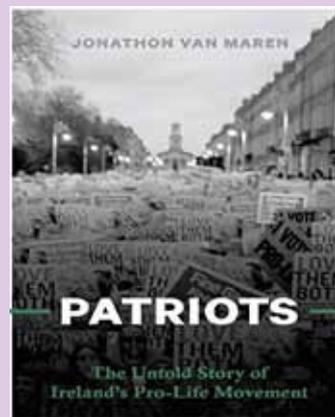
What happened? Were the people betrayed? Yes, they were - just as the English people have been betrayed by their politicians of all the main parties in the past year. One irony for those of us reading this book in England today is that in the last twelve months Northern Ireland has had abortion forced upon it, despite opposition to abortion being one of the few things that united both communities in the province.

This book goes into some detail and shows how every single one of the main political parties in Ireland finished up supporting abortion, along with the entire Irish media.

The book sometimes goes into too much detail, with the names of the members of various committees, for instance. But the book aims to give the authentic details and such information is important.

What does this book teach us about future campaigns? Firstly, it tells us that we cannot necessarily rely on the churches to take a strong stance: during the 2018 referendum campaign they were notably lacking in commitment. Secondly, it demonstrates that politicians cannot be trusted to tell the truth or keep their promises. In Ireland, when the politicians lost a referendum, they simply called another one until the people voted "the right way".

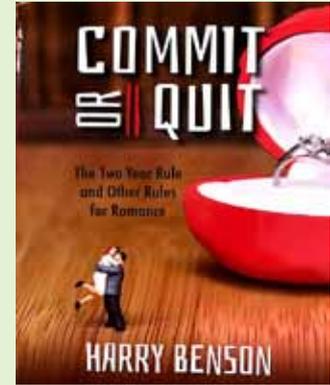
For us in Britain, the times ahead look bleak and we all need to get behind organisations such as the Family Education Trust. Politicians do not like losing votes. Now in Britain, seems a time for action.



# Commit or Quit: The 'Two Year Rule' and other Rules for Romance

Harry Benson, Lion Hudson, 130pp, £8.99, ISBN 978-0745980812

**This latest work of Harry Benson of the Marriage Foundation is a short, easy to read and easy to understand guide to modern relationships. Aimed at young couples, the book marshals the best research available in defence of marriage as the basis for a stable union and to illustrate the dangers of cohabitation.**



Benson begins by setting the scene in which the epidemic of cohabitation has arisen. Prior to the 1970s, sex outside marriage was rare and living together even rarer. The rate of cohabitation was 1% in the 1950s, 3% in the 60s rising to 9% in the 70s. Only 5% of births were outside of marriage. All this changed with the sexual revolution instigated by the easy availability of the Pill. Today, by contrast, only half of parents are married at the time of their child's birth and only two-thirds will have married by the time their child leaves school. An increasing number of young couples choose to cohabit as a kind of trial marriage or relationship test.

However, these new relationship patterns do not have good outcomes for children. While seven out of ten married couples with children stay together this is true for only three out of ten cohabiting couples. A third of 16-year olds are not living with their natural parents and family breakdown has become the number one driver of mental health difficulties among teenagers with the absence of a father being the crucial factor. Surveying these realities, Benson states:

*I won't beat about the bush in my conclusion: get married before you have children.*

## Sliding Versus Deciding

Benson shows that contrary to popular myth, longer cohabitations do not make for more stable relationships. The longer a couple cohabit the less likely they will be to eventually marry. A study by Benson's Marriage Foundation of 25,000 unmarried cohabiting couples who had taken part in the British Household Panel Survey found in, Benson's words, that:

*...there doesn't appear to be any advantage...of living together for longer in order to improve your odds of success. Couples who have lived together for a year have the same chance of splitting up as couples who have lived together for five or ten years.*

Frequently, such couples do not have a common vision for their relationship. While women often see marriage in the future, men are less likely to see marriage as an end goal. Benson calls this the 'gender gap in commitment'.

Modern relationships, says Benson, often go through a process of what he calls 'sliding versus deciding'. People enter relationships without any idea of where the relationship is going, the relationship drags on for years with marriage nowhere in sight and ultimately ends painfully many years later.

In order for any relationship to be successful, says Benson, it needs dedication and constraints. Dedication '*reflects the extent to which two people want to be together...see themselves as a couple, and...see a future for themselves together.*' Constraints are the '*external bonds which make it harder for them to leave...and they favour relationship stability by making termination of a relationship more economically, socially, personally, or psychologically costly.*'

Yet how men and women show dedication and commitment often differs. For women moving in together is often seen as a sign of commitment but for men it is the act of getting married. For example, a study from the University of Denver found that while married men were more satisfied and dedicated than the unmarried, for women it made no difference.

## The Two-Year Rule

As a way to encourage young couples to 'decide' rather than 'slide', Benson proposes what he calls the 'two-year rule'. This is the cutting point when couples really need to decide what they will do with the rest of their lives. Will they 'commit or quit'?

Benson outlines a number of 'rules for romance' the first and foremost of which is '*Is he or she marriageable*'. Benson writes:

*"A marriageable man treats women well, doesn't walk away from difficult arguments, is able to forgive, and can be a friend."*  
*"A marriageable" woman deals well with conflict, without degenerating into bad behaviour.*

He describes a number of bad habits that can destroy relationships drawing on his own experience of nearly 35 years of marriage which he candidly admits has had its ups and downs.

The great strength and interest of this book is its assembly of a variety of research showing the advantages of marriage as against the instability of cohabitation and other unmarried relationships. For example, a survey by the counselling organization Relate found that 15% of those in unmarried relationships worried that their partner was not as committed as they were. Only 6% of those in married relationships were similarly worried.

In addition to this solid research, this is very much a practical work, peppered with real-life examples. It could serve as a useful guide for young couples in the early stages of a relationship.

# Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters

Abigail Shrier, Regnery Publishing, 227pp, £28.99, ISBN 978-1684510313

**This harrowing book deals with the effects of transgenderism on adolescent girls. In researching for the book, the author conducted nearly 200 hundred interviews and spoke to nearly 50 families of adolescents.** The result is a thorough and comprehensive study of the transgender phenomenon covering multiple areas including the teenage mental health crisis, the effect on parents, the role of social media, transgenderism in education and health care and the damaging effects of puberty blockers, testosterone and the surgery associated with transition.

One of the most striking features highlighted by Shrier is how recently and suddenly the transgender phenomenon has taken root among girls. Until 2012 gender dysphoria overwhelmingly affected males and no scientific literature existed on dysphoria among adolescent girls. Today however it is primarily these girls who are seeking treatment for dysphoria. Shrier writes:

*Between 2016 and 2017 the number of gender surgeries for natal females in the United States quadrupled, with biological women suddenly accounting for 70% of all gender surgeries. In 2018, the UK reported a 4,400 percent rise over the previous decade in teenage girls seeking gender treatments.*

Shrier links this with a general teenage mental health crisis. Today's teens are lonelier than any previous generation, spending more time online and less with friends. They have record levels of anxiety and depression. Says Shrier:

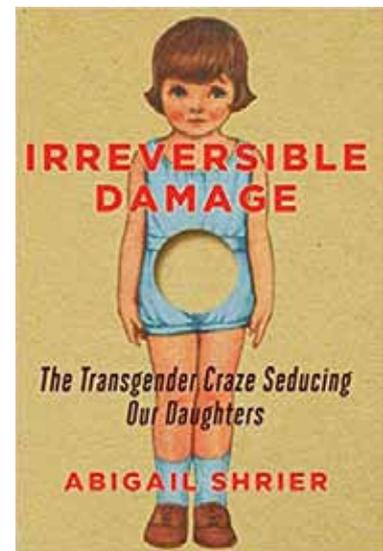
*Between 2009 and 2017, the number of high schoolers who contemplated suicide increased 25 percent. The number of teens diagnosed with clinical depression grew 37 percent between 2005 and 2014. And the worst hit—experiencing depression at a rate three times that of boys—were teenage girls.*

95% of today's teenagers possess an

iPhone which for many is a substitute friend. Many effectively live on their iPhones and maintain a social media persona that is highly susceptible to peer pressure. Transgenderism has become a craze with 2% of American high school students identifying as transgender according to a 2017 survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Shrier draws on the research of Dr Lisa Littman of Brown University to paint a revealing picture of trans-identifying young people. Dr Littman collected data from 256 parents whose children had never experienced gender dysphoria in childhood, but suddenly identified as transgender in adolescence. Her survey discovered that:

- Over 80% of the adolescents were natal females with a mean age of 16.
- Almost a third of the adolescents did not seem at all gender dysphoric, according to parents, prior to the adolescents' announcement of being trans.
- A majority had one or more psychiatric diagnosis and almost half were engaging in self-harm prior to the onset of the gender dysphoria.
- Nearly 70% of the teenagers belonged to a peer group in which at least one friend had also come out as transgender. In some groups, the majority of the friends had done so.
- Over 65% of teens increased their social media use and time spent online immediately prior to their announcement of transgender identity.
- Over 60% of parents said the trans announcement brought their child a popularity boost.
- Over 88% of parents surveyed reported being supportive of transgender rights.
- Fewer than 13% of parents believed that their adolescents' mental health had improved after transgender identification.



- Over 47% reported that mental health had worsened.

## The Influencers

Shrier stresses the harmful impact of the internet in influencing young people's choices. She chronicles the work of online trans 'influencers' who encourage young girls on their transitional journey.

One of the foremost influencers is the YouTuber, Chase Ross, a female-to-male trans guru whose channel has had over 10 million views and has more than 166,000 subscribers. Ross has taken testosterone for more than a decade and has developed a beard though she is still struggling with her period. Her basic message is that being trans is innate and permanent. Ross encourages girls to experiment. Girls are encouraged to wear breast binders. Ross will send young girls breast binders at a friend's address if their parents disapprove. The trans influencers are not above telling children to cut off their parents if they are insufficiently supportive of the new identity.

The influencers diagnose vague symptoms which they claim may be indications of a person being trans. These include 'feeling different, not really fitting in...not feeling feminine or masculine enough...feeling uncomfortable in your body.'

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## Irreversible damage

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Most disturbing is the influencers' willingness to encourage experimentation with hormones and testosterone. One influencer states: *You don't need to be a hundred percent sure you're trans to try hormones...You can try hormones for three months. After three months there starts to be permanent effects, but until around then you can just try hormones and see how you feel. It's great, it's that easy.*

Shrier writes of the influencers:

*Many of them peddle misinformation, outright medical falsehoods, and just bad advice. They extol the glories of testosterone as if it were a protein shake, not a Schedule III controlled substance. They enthuse over double mastectomies as if they were of no more significance than a haircut...They coach you to lie to doctors by inventing a history of childhood dysphoria or omitting your own mental health history.*



**Abigail Shrier**

### The Damage

One of the most troubling parts of this book describes the damage done to girls' bodies by puberty blockers and testosterone. She writes:

*Suppression of normal bone density development and greater risk of osteoporosis, loss of sexual function, interference with brain development, and possibly suppressing peak IQ are all risks puberty blockers carry...these risks increase dramatically if an adolescent moves straight from puberty blockers to cross-sex hormones...infertility is almost guaranteed.*

Shrier continues:

*If a biological girl regrets her decision and stops taking testosterone, her extra body and facial hair will likely remain, as will her...deepened voice, and possibly even the masculinization of her facial features...eliminating testosterone doesn't whisk an adolescent back to where she started ...The long-term effects include heightened rates of diabetes, stroke, blood clots, cancer, and...heart disease...mortality risk rises.*

Shrier also describes some of the horrors that can result from gender surgery. Reading this requires a strong stomach.

This is a well-researched, often moving and deeply disturbing book full of heart-rending personal stories that effectively illustrate the damage done to individuals, families and society by the transgender agenda. If you are a parent this book will make you want to put strong limits on your child's internet use and exercise extra-caution over what your child may be being exposed to by teachers, doctors, counsellors etc. It also contains useful advice for parents on how to protect their daughters from exposure to the transgender nightmare.

## What is behind the fall in teenage pregnancy?

**On 12 August 2020 an article by Professor David Paton of Nottingham University Business School was published on the website of *The Spectator* magazine titled 'The mysterious fall of the teenage pregnancy'. Professor Paton, with whose work many FET supporters will be familiar, is one of the leading experts on teenage pregnancy and sex education programmes.**

Paton's article examines the significant decline in the rate of teenage pregnancy over the past decade or so. In 2008 39,000 girls under 18 became pregnant, a rate of 40 per 1,000. By 2018 this had been reduced by nearly 60% to 17 per 1,000. This reduction has been paralleled in many other western countries.

While there is no definitive explanation for this dramatic fall, research has found that it is unlikely to be a result of mandatory Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) programmes, long hailed as the panacea for the problem of teenage pregnancy. Research conducted earlier this year by Paton, alongside professor Stephen Bullivant of St Mary's University and Juan Soto of the Madrid-based think tank Fundación Civismo, looked at 45 countries, specifically examining the role of SRE but also parental involvement and access to contraception, exploring whether these bring about significant reductions in rates of teenage pregnancy, birth and abortion.

As Paton notes in *The Spectator*:

*The results suggest none of the interventions were particularly effective in reducing teenage pregnancy rates. Indeed, countries introducing mandatory SRE laws, if anything, experienced increases in rates relative to other countries, though allowing parental opt-outs did seem to minimise some of that adverse effect. Such a result may seem surprising, but it is consistent with other evidence...Other researchers have come to the same conclusion that there is little evidence that sex education effectively reduces teenage pregnancy.<sup>1</sup>*

The study of Paton et al. put forward one reason for this failure of SRE in the following terms:

*...information on SRE programmes may lead to unintended consequences. For example, a programme that helps sexually active young people to avoid pregnancy may create incentives for other young people to become sexually active.<sup>2</sup>*

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Furthermore, the widely hailed policy of giving young people greater access to contraception, while it may lead to greater contraceptive use may also lead to an increase in sexual activity among the young. Says Paton:

*Given the high rates of contraceptive failure among adolescents, it is possible that a measure intended to reduce early pregnancy may have no effect overall or even make things worse.*

In fact, a study of contraceptive failure found that condoms, for example, have a failure rate as high as 13%.<sup>3</sup>

Paton et al's study produced some other interesting results which are worth noting. For example, it found the following in relation to rates of abortion:

*Parental consent for abortion is generally associated with lower teenage fertility (and especially abortion) rates...Countries with only limited legal restrictions on abortion tend to have higher abortion rates.*

The study also notes the role of divorce and family breakdown as a facilitator of teenage pregnancy:

*...higher divorce rates are associated with significantly higher rates of pregnancies, births and abortions for both age groups, a result that is consistent with previous evidence that family breakup is a predictor for adolescent pregnancy.*

The study concludes:

*The evidence we have presented suggests that laws mandating school-level sex education are*



**David Paton**

*unlikely to be successful in tackling high rates of teenage pregnancy. The same is true for laws mandating SRE for early years' education. Policymakers would be unwise to promote such mandates on the basis of their effects on adolescent fertility.*

So, having determined that mandatory SRE and easy access to contraception are unlikely to achieve their goal of reducing teenage pregnancy what could be behind the significant cutback in teenage pregnancies over the past decade?

Paton et al's study states:

*Under-standing the reasons behind the post-2007 reduction in adolescent pregnancy remains a significant challenge. In order to make significant progress in this direction, researchers will need to identify other relevant, socio-economic trends that might have driven changes in teenage behaviour over this time period.*

Paton, in his *Spectator* article, suggests that increased use of the internet and social media may be a significant factor. Many young people today

virtually live online and their online presence is a significant part of their life. But Paton also suggests another 'potential explanation' which is more unusual but supported by some research:

*Over the past 40 years, many countries have phased out lead in petrol, partly on the grounds that lead has significant adverse effects on children's brain development. A somewhat-neglected US study examined the timing of laws eliminating lead in petrol in US states and found it correlated strongly with falls in a range of risk-taking behaviour by teens, including early pregnancy.*

An interesting explanation and if true one that illustrates that behaviour can be changed by seemingly unrelated factors rather than as a result of promoting particular ideological programmes.

### Notes

1. David Paton, The mysterious fall of the teenage pregnancy, *The Spectator*, 12 August 2020.

2. David Paton, Stephen Bullivant & Juan Soto. The impact of sex education mandates on teenage pregnancy: International evidence. *Health Economics*, 2020; 29:790-807.

3. Aparna Sundaram et al., Contraceptive Failure in the United States: Estimates from the 2006–2010 National Survey of Family Growth, *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, Volume 49, Issue 1, March 2017, 7-16.

## Meet our Senior Researcher

Since the tragic death of our Director, Norman Wells on the 1st April, the day-to-day management of the Family Education Trust has been in the hands of our Senior Researcher, Piers Shepherd.

Piers has worked with FET for 11 years, initially serving as Research and Administrative Assistant. During these years, Piers worked alongside our Director keeping him updated on a daily basis on the latest news at home and abroad as well as the latest developments in parliament. Piers has carried out much of the research behind a number of FET's major leaflets and publications. Among the publications in whose development Piers played a key role were *Unhealthy Confusion*, *The Sober Truth*, *Drug Alert* and *A Brief History of Marriage*.

Piers has also written many of FET's consultation responses defending the Trust's positions on a wide variety of issues including marriage, divorce, cohabitation, abortion, transgenderism, pornography and much more. In the last few years Piers has also provided comment to the media on FET's behalf. He has represented FET at meetings in parliament and elsewhere. He has been involved in many long-term research projects on behalf of the Trust.

In his new role as Senior Researcher, Piers not only carries out all his previous tasks but additionally is now the principal person running our national office and maintaining contact with our supporters. He is responsible for the production and publication of our Bulletins and Annual Review as well as the organisation of our Annual Conference and AGM and much else.



**Piers Shepherd**

*'As Senior Researcher I am honoured and committed to continue building on FET's work and mission and the magnificent legacy of Norman Wells. I am very grateful to all our trustees and supporters for all their invaluable support and help'* says Piers.

Piers obtained a Bachelor's degree from the University of Kent. It was while a student that Piers first became passionate about life and family issues. He became involved with groups like Life, SPUC and Family Life International. He founded the University of Kent Pro-Life Society which he ran for two years, often facing intense opposition.

Following his undergraduate studies, Piers did missionary work with a religious order in the United States. He subsequently obtained a Master's degree in Theology from the Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio. Piers became involved with FET soon after his return to the UK and began work with us in January 2009. Piers is married to Viviana, a psychologist and clinical researcher. They live in Twickenham.

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