

# Christian Charity Accuses Government of Ignoring Need for Fathers

**Christian social concern charity CARE has released research which it says shows the Government is ignoring the public's views on the need for fathers.**

by Daniel Blake

Posted: Thursday, July 5, 2007, 9:27 (BST)

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Christian social concern charity CARE has released research which it says shows the Government is ignoring the public's views on the need for fathers.

Of the 505 published responses to the Department of Health's consultation on the current requirement that those involved in the IVF process must have regard for the need of any resulting children for a father, only 103 backed removing the provision.

CARE has brought to light these findings after it examined the published submissions to the 2005 Review of the Human Fertility and Embryology Act which consulted on the fathers provision.

Dan Boucher, Director of Parliamentary Affairs at CARE, said, "These findings are the source of real concern given that Government has clearly ignored the balance of consultation responses and gone out on a limb, developing a Draft Bill (the Draft Human Tissues and Embryos Bill) which, if implemented, will remove the father's provision."

Parliamentarians have also expressed disquiet. Labour MP, Claire Curtis Thomas MP, the Vice Chair of the All Party Pro Life Group, stated, "It is a matter of great concern that the Government has not listened properly to the people of the UK.

"Whilst there is no question that consultations are plebiscites, there is also no question that if Government ignores consultation responses in this cavalier manner, people will have good reason not to bother with consultations and our politics will become very much the poorer.

"The overwhelming evidence demonstrating the importance of fathers affirms the wisdom of the balance of consultation responses."

Philippa Taylor, CARE Family and Bioethics consultant concurred, saying that academic research had clearly demonstrated the importance of fathers for their children, especially boys.

"Indeed, as a society we have been increasingly confronted by the problems of fatherlessness resulting from death or family breakdown," she said.

She said the proposal "to deliberately create children who will be denied their father throughout childhood demonstrates a failure of judgement on the part of the Government in relation to the best interests of the child".

"If there is any question about the effective working of the current arrangements then we must improve the delivery mechanisms associated with the fathers clause, not remove it," she said.

Mr Boucher accused the Government of being "so very out of step with other aspects of Government policy" in light of its position on fathers in the draft bill.

He pointed to the green paper on joint birth certificates published by the Work and Pensions Department just last week, which stressed the importance of fathers and of engaging them fully in the parenting process.

CARE is urging new British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and the new Cabinet to revisit the approach to fathers they have inherited in the draft bill, and to maintain the current obligation in the 1990 Human Fertility and Embryology Act to have regard for the child's need for a father.

## **Parents are Key to Preventing Teenage Burn-Out**

**Teenagers are getting more and more stressed out and parents need to do more to help them cope, says Rob Parsons, head of Care for the Family.**

Posted: Friday, June 15, 2007, 17:41 (BST)

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Following recent reports that show British teens to be among some of the most stressed-out in the world, family author Rob Parsons believes educational pressure is a huge factor in teenage unhappiness and self-destructive tendencies.

Mr Parsons, who is also founder and Executive Director of charity Care for the Family, is now urging parents to look after the emotional well-being of their children.

"The most important A-star is emotional health," he says.

Mr Parsons, who's most recent book *Teenagers! What Every Parent Has to Know* hit the bestseller lists last week. In it, he tells parents not to add to the stress their teen children are already finding themselves under.

His comments follow a call earlier in the month from the General Teaching Council to ban all school exams for under-16s.

Parents play a huge role in reducing the pressure teenagers find themselves under, says Mr Parsons.

One study by Patrick West and Helen Sweeting of Glasgow University showed a huge leap in emotional disturbance among high-achieving girls. Their study discovered that the levels of anxiety and depression among 15-year-old girls from the top social class had risen from 24 per cent in 1987 to 38 per cent in 1999. They also found that the number of girls in the middle-class bracket suffering from serious mental illness had risen threefold.

Anthony Seldon, Master of Wellington College, recently warned of a deterioration in the emotional health among teenage girls.

"They are suffering from depression, anorexia and a sense of worthlessness," he said in a report in The

Times. "The obsession with exams is wrong."

Mr Parsons warned: "The pressure with regard to examination results is at such a pitch that some teens will find the stress too much and attempt to kill themselves."

He outlined three vital ways parents can support their stressed out teenager children:

- 1) Remember the most important A-star is emotional health – some children want to please you too much.
- 2) Don't read their school reports as if they are a prophecy of their future lives. Exams don't measure your child's personality traits such as empathy, kindness, self-awareness, a sense of humour and a sense of perspective on life.
- 3) Keep the lines of communication open, so they can be honest if life is getting too tough.

His book, *Teenagers! What Every Parent Has to Know*, is out now.

## **Marriage Takes Two, says Care for the Family**

**“Marriage isn’t always a fairy tale - but you can live happily ever after”, said Care for the Family.**

Posted: Friday, May 11, 2007, 9:30 (BST)

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“Marriage isn’t always a fairy tale - but you can live happily ever after”, said Care for the Family, which will hold two support events this summer to help married couples get the most from their marriage.

“Most couples begin married life with a rose-tinted view that they’ll live happily ever after, but making that dream a reality takes time, effort and commitment,” says Katharine Hill, presenter of Care for the Family’s Marriage Project and host of the charity’s special evening for married couples, It Takes Two.

It Takes Two is for all married couples, whether they are just starting out or have celebrated several decades together.

Hill will present the event together with Richard Hardy, also from Care for the Family.

“Good marriages are built on choice. In life the ‘urgent’ often wins out over the ‘important’,” said Ms Hill.

“Good marriages are built on choosing to connect together, even when that’s the last thing you feel like doing!”

It Takes Two will help married couples put the theory into practice when it comes to married life, with practical examples of the simple things each partner can do to enliven the relationship and build the best marriage possible.

Mr Hardy said: “This event is a must for men. Husbands can often bury their heads in the sand and think ‘I don’t need to work at this. We’re alright.’ But every marriage needs time and effort to make it the best it can possibly be.”

During It Takes Two, couples can perform a health check on their marriage, discover a vision for their marriage and explore the four pieces of the 'marriage puzzle' – commitment, making connections, handling conflict, enlisting support. They will also learn how to put their marriage in the context of society.

It Takes Two will take place in Colwyn Bay at Prince's Drive Baptist Church, Prince's Drive, Colwyn Bay, on Wednesday 6 June 2007, and Liverpool Lighthouse, Oakfield Road, Liverpool on Thursday 7 June 2007.

Both events last from 7.30-10.00pm. Tickets cost £6.00 and can be ordered from Care for the Family, Garth House, Leon Avenue, Cardiff CF15 7RG, by phone on (029) 2081 0800, or online at [www.careforthefamily.org.uk/marriage](http://www.careforthefamily.org.uk/marriage)

## Government ignores public on need for a father

Of the 505 published responses to the Department of Health's consultation regarding the current requirement that those involved in the IVF process must have regard for the need of any resulting children for a father, only 103 backed removing the provision.



These findings are the result of research by CARE which has examined the published submissions to the 2005 Review of the Human Fertility and Embryology Act which consulted on the fathers provision.

Dan Boucher, director of parliamentary affairs said, 'These findings are the source of real concern given that government has clearly ignored the balance of consultation responses and gone out on a limb, developing a Draft Bill (the Draft Human Tissues and Embryos Bill) which, if implemented, will remove the father's provision.'

Parliamentarians have also expressed disquiet. Claire Curtis Thomas MP stated, 'It is a matter of great concern that the government has not listened properly to the people of the UK. Whilst there is no question that consultations are plebiscites, there is also no question that if government ignores consultation responses in this cavalier manner, people will have good reason not to bother with consultations and our politics will become very much the poorer. The overwhelming evidence demonstrating the importance of fathers affirms the wisdom of the balance of consultation responses.'

Philippa Taylor, CARE Family and Bioethics consultant concurred, 'Academic research clearly demonstrates the importance of fathers for their children, especially boys. Indeed, as a society we have been increasingly confronted by the problems of fatherlessness resulting from death or family breakdown. The proposal, therefore, to deliberately create children who will be denied their father throughout childhood demonstrates a failure of judgement on the part of the government in relation to the best interests of the child. If there is any question about the

effective working of the current arrangements then we must improve the delivery mechanisms associated with the fathers clause, not remove it.'

Notes

1. The relevant part of the 1990 Act is (HFE Act 13(5)). It states that one may not proceed 'unless account has been taken of the welfare of any child who may be born ... (including the need of that child for a father)...' (HFE Act 13(5)).
2. The responses to the 2005 consultation can be read by visiting [http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Responsestoconsultations/DH\\_4132358](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Responsestoconsultations/DH_4132358) The web site states that there were 535 submissions but only has links to 505 submissions. CARE did not analyse the 30 submissions that are not on the web.
3. The precise breakdown of responses to the 2005 consultation can be seen in the table below.
4. The Draft Human Tissues and Embryos Bill, which if implemented will abolish the fathers provision, is currently being considered by a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament which will report to Parliament on July 25<sup>th</sup>. The committee has been taking oral evidence throughout June and is expected tomorrow (Wednesday) to have a particular focus on the father's question given that it is taking evidence from Prof Brenda Almond and Prof Susan Golombok whose specialism is the fathers question. For more information see: [http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary\\_committees/jchumantissue.cfm](http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/jchumantissue.cfm)
5. CARE is a registered Christian charity which seeks to combine practical caring initiatives with public policy on social and ethical issues. CARE campaigns, provides resources, undertakes caring work and brings Christian insight and experience to matters of family, education, media, citizenship and bioethics. For further information please visit [www.care.org.uk](http://www.care.org.uk)

		Responses				
		Make no changes to the requirement.	Replace with "the need... for a father and a mother."	Remove the requirement of "the need... for a father".*	No specific response given to question. #	Total number of respondents
Number of respondents		21	208	103	173	505