

For the record the communications copied below are a true account of the representative of the Public's treatment of those who have more experience and interest in raising the thorny and embarrassing questions openly and honestly and with candour than the invited organizations whose main interest seems to be empire building or misrepresenting their own collective responsibility for the farce called the Family Courts.

One has to try to engage so that the farcical system of State invasion of families can be truly shown to be what it is. Never since the era of the Stalinist Russia and Nazi regimes have the State so severely breached the family bedrock.

At the meeting the excuses given for not being able to be invited were irrelevant as many others had been invited and others attended who were not on the invite list. There were two representatives of other groups. No-one attended from fathers direct.

Refreshments were provided by Keith Vaz MP from 4.14pm to 5pm in the Public Café. Dialogue was next to impossible as the Public were also present, although it was noted there were clusters of people who knew each other from previous meetings or involvement.

At 5pm all shuffled into the Grand Committee room. Brief notes of the meeting are as follows:-

Baroness Howard gave the introductions – Mary McLeod, Judge Lesley Newton, Crichton, Sayers and Anthony Douglas and mentioned that it was difficult to know which voices to listen to. She also mentioned that LJ Thorpe had to go off pretty smartly.

LJ Thorpe gave the opening speech read from paper....My involvement in domestic family practice is twice per week in the Court of Appeal, I see some familiar faces and some unfamiliar faces. For us today is a listening day. The question for the Council is how best to engage with parents/ grandparents and other family members. Statute states the interests of the child is paramount. Children should be seen in the context of their families...Some commentators say fundamentally opposed i.e. pro-children or pro-parent trap....Almost all parents are capable of providing better care than the State. The sheer range of disparate groups claiming to represent the Public. Some half are personal //// others internet, others arrive with a fanfare and then disappear. Who can speak for Black, Asian or Muslim parents?

The elephant in this room is gender. Groups representing fathers on one side, and also mothers in an ideological battle (both claiming bias). Appalling stories of mothers preventing contact and fathers killing children during contact. Positions are entrenched and sterile. Can they both be right? Logic suggests not. Q delate char by such entrenched and polarised is anachronistic. This Council is not a creature of gender politics – it seeks to promote a balance between the warring factions.

Proposed means for Council to engage more effectively with parents:

1. users subcommittee, communication and feedback. Experience from LA indicates it can be effective. Much depends on local representatives and willingness to engage.
2. Commission opinion surveys and focus groups. Works best when issues are clearly defined. We invite you to share your experiences with us. An annual event in future.
3. Dedicating a slot to parents issues at one of the Council's quality meetings.
4. Should the Council establish a permanent email grouping for parents. Would you find this useful. The Council believes in the importance of evidence based policy. Nuffield asked last year and it's review will be shortly available.

May McCleodsince 2004 has been one of the most challenging positions on the Council and tried to be even-handed. Perhaps her successor is sitting in this room. I feel that the questions that attract a Judicial answer are better taken by Judges that deal day in and out.

Baroness Howarth introduced members of the Council; Stephen Cobb, Sheridan Greenland, Elaine laken, Khata Sarnara?

QUESTION TIME;

Father's Direct - First question was directed from Father's Direct who it was said are doing a wonderful job and have 29 organisations acting with a common voice. **Unfortunately no-one had bothered to attend or send apologies.**

JUMP Lisa Cohen – I don't believe it's a gender issue, as a mother I have no contact. Children are forced out of a parent's life and no justified. The urgent need is for transparency in the Family Courts. The adversarial approach fails parents and children.

HHJ Altman? – Residence orders have increased....false allegations....very hard to carry out a risk analysis. Need effective family support. Most parents move on.

DJ Chrichton - ..Courts do the best we can...we are horrified that media be aware of the problems of the families..

GRAND PARENTS ACCOSIATION –Brigid Harris on behalf of her husband –

Is there valid policy that grandparents make applications for contact and is it in the best interests of the children?

HHJ Newton - ..Only one occasion when I have refused – it's mainly procedural.

????? – The families are often extremely dysfunctional out side the ?. Often it's a lost cause.

CAFCASS Anthony Douglas – spoke on mediation.

DJ Chrichton – Differentiated shared parenting and shared residence. I have every sympathy where mostly fathers....[ref to DV]. How can outing the mother in jail be right? The mother can say 'I was put in prison because of your father.' Not in the interest of the child. A fine? Most are on income support. Ref to 2006 adoption act and new measures arising. Dilemma – maybe occasional need to encourage the other. My threats of bring your toothbrush to the next hearing has always worked.

FNF John Baker – FNF contacted Family justice Council on invitation of LJ Thorpe. Made reference to 'dialogue with the deaf' and Women's Aid – we have more in common than apart.

HHJ Altman as Chair for London Family Justice Council – spoke about a forum for family users.

Baroness Howarth – we do not exclude peoplebut they do so as part of the Family Justice agenda...

Litten Tree Group – Trevor Jones..Ref legal representatives helping parents...require project for children in care regarding system abuse. Grounds for review of decision..What steps the Council would take regarding the number of parents seeking help in Public Law What about legal representation for parents post Carter review?

HHJ Newton – advised to speak with MPs and Councillors.

Archbishop's Council – Sue Burrige I emailed the Bishops council regarding any issues and the main one is Family Assessment Centres [as a valuable resource even if the assessment is negative].

DJ Chrichton - In favour of Local Authorities providing 100% of family resource centres.

HHJ Newton – In favour especially where families had learning problems.

National Association of Contact centres – Yvonne Key – Concerned regarding the number of parents having to monitor their own referrals and not by Solicitors. Increasing financial concerns. Because of financial pressure tow centres Corms and ??? two centres in London face danger of closing down. A real worry.

Baroness Howarth – Any issues not touched on yet?

Equal Parenting Alliance – Paul Rubert – Guidelines ref contact, what type of contact and presumption of contact.

DJ Chrichton – Judge Newton mentioned meaningful contact. Reference to children witnessing violent and abusive behaviour very concerned that the pendulum has swung too far one way. When I have to make finding of serious domestic violence it is usually the father. There is usually a waiting list for DV perpetrator programmes. In the interim what to do with the father? One always falls back on making the right decision.

Baroness Howarth – Referred to good practice and that Local Authorities intervene on families having difficulties and intervene on their behalf.

Anthony Douglas or HHJ Altman? – Explained that for the Government the imperative is the paramountcy principle.... I defy anyone in the business...e.g. girl 15 seriously sexually abused by two family members (I am not saying if mother or father) an second girl..The testimony of the children failed and the children still have no adequate resource.

Donor conception Network – Olivia Montuschi...disturbing levels of ignorance and inconsistency with Judges and CAFCASS...Same question as Equal parenting.

[Up to now all who spoke had been selected by Baroness Howarth to ask questions. One may ask why bother raising the presumption of contact which will always be rebuttable and having Local Authorities run parenting assessments since they are party to the case and experience to date has shown a remarkable lack of rigour in any such assessments, a laughable science and gobbledey gook on the whole].

FLINT – My name is Shaun O'Connell and work voluntarily with FLINT and organise the Hampshire group. I had my own brush with CAFCASS a few years ago. I have helped parents in the Court. I sent in twenty one questions and will try to condense them into one question. Last year we had a well-known expert use an untested theory and under oath admitted he had been asked to come up with the theory by a High Court Judge and even requested fifty thousand pound funding to test his theory. The GMC so far have refused to take action and we may have to go for judicial review. It seems there is an institutional resistance to the recognition of parental Alienation Syndrome. Last year LJ wall admitted the report by Sturge and Glaser in re L, V, M and H was not an investigation into the psychology of PAS. The

biggest problem we have seen is the incestuous relationship between the Court reporters, the experts and the Judiciary. We need a Judiciary independent of the vested interest bodies. What are the panel's views?

Judge Newton – That is quite offensive to say incestuous relationship. CAFCASS officers know when I am unhappy with them. Your remarks are offensive.

FLINT – We have a study of nine cases in Public and private law where children have been abused under the noses of CAFCASS, social workers and the Judiciary. Can we show you this study?

Judge Newton – I'll read it with interest.

Baroness Howarth – I know things can go wrong. Judge /// spoke to CAFCASS officers. If you think you have a particular situation, then I'll be interested.

Families for Justice – John Hemmings MP I see false positives and negatives. The statistical information that I have is fully substantiated from the DFES. The issue is transparency. It's a bonkers idea to have media in the family court. The 1688 Bill of Rights is my only recourse to raising individual cases in Court. You cannot identify the legal problems if you don't have the evidence handled properly regarding perjury and perversion of the course of Justice by Local authority and CAFCASS. I am looking for a way forward.

Parent Sasha Watson. I am not a member of any organisation. There is no accountability the voice of the parent or children are never heard. Multi agency reports are subjective and misleading, and push to remove your child without any real reason and children want to be left alone. Accountability? Are Local Authority Officers qualified? I want accountability in the Local Authority to be thorough. There are often false allegations against children and parents.

Baroness Howarth pointed out that John Hemmings is also a Councillor and suggested she contacts him.

John Hemmings pointed out that he often writes to the LA regarding getting it badly wrong but they say nothing as it is in the Family Court.

FNF John Baker. I find this very useful. There is a consensus arriving if people get together.possibility of consensus.

18.53pm Baroness Howarth summed up. Question on usefulness of future meetings and an email group. Possibility meeting with Jack straw. Closed at 18.59pm. Good luck – we only

have the interests of children at heart.

Everyone then ran out of the room as quick as they could get out. A few stayed behind to talk and were then ushered out by the Police.

The full list of attendees and the invited;

Family Justice Council Members;

HHJ Altman

Baroness Howarth

HHJ Newton

LJ Thorpe

DJ Crichton

Beverley Sayers

Sheridan Greenland

Stephen Cobb QC

Mary Mcleod

Elaine Laken

Also attending:

Alex Clarke Sec to FJC

Julian Owen FJC

Joanna Wilkinson FJC

Catherine Boyd FPI

Sally Taylor FPI

Attendees;

David Stockdale development Manager Young Voice (and regional co-ordinator of anti-bullying alliance).

Adrienne Burgess, Fathers Direct

Nick Woodall, Development worker, The Centre for Separated Families

Hilary Chamberlain, Policy Manager, Parentline Plus

Dr Samantha Callan, Research Consultant, Care for the Family

Cheryl Dobson Centre for Social Justice

Harvey Gallagher, Director of Marketing & Communications, British Association for Adoption & Fostering

Sarah Rush, Head of Advice and Campaigns, Contact a Family

Olivia Montuschi, Donor Conception Network

Charles Kenyon, Families need Fathers

John Baker Chairman Families Need fathers

Lisa Cohen, JUMP (Jewish Unity for Multiple Parenting)

Claire Tyler, Chief Executive, Relate

Paul Rubert, Nominations Officer, Equal Parenting Alliance

Peter Harris, Chairman, Grandparents' Association

Lynn Bean/ Diana Whitworth Co-Directors Grandparents Plus

Lyn Bulgarski, Barnado's Adoption Agency

Trevor Jones, Litten Tree Group

Maggie Jones, CEO, National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations

Margaret Pendlebery, National Family mediation

Anthony Douglas, Chief Executive, CAFCASS

Christine Smart Director of Children's Rights CAFCASS

Yvonne Key, Chief Executive, National Association of Child Contact Centres

Rose De Paeztron, Organisation Head of Strategic Development, Working Together with Parents Network

Sue Burrige, Policy Adviser (Marriage and Family), The Archbishops' Council

Joan Hunt, Oxford Centre for Family Law and Policy, University of Oxford

John Bannon Environmental Law Centre Merseyside

Jan Fry, Deputy Chief Executive, Parentline Plus

Nicola Harwin CBE, Chief Executive, Women's Aid

Amandeep Hothi National Children and Young Person's Officer Women's Aid.

Nichole Sharp Policy Manager Refuge

Andrea Hopkins Legal advisor Family rights Group

Shaun O'Connell FLINT

Caroline Abrahams programme Director Local Government Association

Helen Munt Office manager National Association fo people abused in childhood

Chris Hawkins Child and parent Alliance

Matt Huggins Public relations consultant adolescent and Children's Trust

Kevin Lowe TSA

Renuka Jeyarajah-dent Director of Operations and Deputy CEO Corma Family.

Sasha Watson parent

Penny Mansfield Chief executive One Plus One

Katherine Gieve Bindman and Partner's solicitors

Howard Jones Director of services family Welfare Association

Jane Worsey Legal Services Commission

Delia Williams Legal secretary to LJ Thorpe.

The history of how FLINT became invited:----

Re ref 9th October 2007

I am afraid I am not able to accept responses from organisations that were not on the initial invite list. There are limited places and we have now filled these.

Sally Taylor
PA to Mary MacLeod, Chief Executive
Family and Parenting Institute

From: Shaun O'Connell [mailto:justjesting@gmail.com]
Sent: 10 September 2007 16:24
To: PAtCEO
Subject: Re: ref 9th October 2007

6, The Towers,
Forton rd,
Gosport.
Hampshire.
Po12 3HA

Dear Mrs Macleod,

I am at a loss to understand how as the representative of parents on the family justice council these decisions are made.

Accordingly, under the freedom of information act please provide me with the complete invite list and any other documents relating to how the decision was made to invite some selected organisations.

Please also provide with the list of the names of each organisation that have agreed prior to this email to attend and when they agreed to attend.

Yours,

Shaun O'Connell

As requested, I enclose a list of the organisations attending on 9th October.

This list reflects an attempt to invite a variety of groups representing the views of parents, and groups working with parents, with a range of different perspectives to offer. You will appreciate that given space constraints it is not possible to invite all groups that may wish to attend. You will also appreciate that there are a very large number of groups that claim to represent the views of parents. The groups on the list are considered by the Council to have the credentials in terms of size, membership, activity and track record over time to represent a range of parental views and experiences.

Sally Taylor
PA to Mary MacLeod, Chief Executive
Family and Parenting Institute

FAMILY JUSTICE COUNCIL EVENT

9th October 2007, 5.00 – 7.00pm

Grand Committee Room, House of Commons

REPLIES TO INITIAL EMAILS

✓ = replied to posted invitation as well

1. Helen Dent, Chief Executive, Family Welfare Association
2. Adrienne Katz, Chief Executive, Young Voice (and Regional Co-ordinator of Anti-Bullying Alliance)
3. Adrienne Burgess, Fathers Direct ✓
4. Karen Woodall, Director, The Centre for Separated Families
5. Hilary Chamberlain, Policy Manager, Parentline Plus
6. Dr Samantha Callan, Research Consultant, Care for the Family
7. Harvey Gallagher, Director of Marketing & Communications, British Association for Adoption & Fostering
8. Sarah Rush, Head of Advice and Campaigns, Contact a Family
9. Olivia Montuschi, Donor Conception Network
10. Charles Kenyon, Families need Fathers
11. Lisa Cohen, JUMP (Jewish Unity for Multiple Parenting)
12. Claire Tyler, Chief Executive, Relate
13. Paul Rubert, Nominations Officer, Equal Parenting Alliance
14. Peter Harris, Chairman, Grandparents' Association ✓
15. Grandparents Plus
16. Lyn Bulgarski, Barnado's Adoption Agency ✓
17. Trevor Jones, Litten Tree Group
18. Maggie Jones, CEO, National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations
19. Margaret Pendlebery, National Family mediation
20. Anthony Douglas, Chief Executive, CAFCASS ✓

21. Yvonne Key, Chief Executive, National Association of Child Contact Centres ✓
22. Rose De Paeztron, Organisation Head of Strategic Development, Working Together with Parents Network
23. Sue Burridge, Policy Adviser (Marriage and Family), The Archbishops' Council
24. Joan Hunt, Oxford Centre for Family Law and Policy, University of Oxford
25. Dr Kartar Badsha, Environmental Law Centre
26. Jan Fry, Deputy Chief Executive, Parentline Plus
27. Nicola Harwin CBE, Chief Executive, Women's Aid

From: Shaun O'Connell [mailto:justjesting@gmail.com]
Sent: 10 September 2007 20:51
To: PAtCEO
Subject: Re: FW: ref 9th October 2007 - FLINT

Please explain what the red ticks on the list are. Are these people that have been invited to attend but whom have not to date confirmed?

To put the record straight I am perplexed at the dishonesty existing in your statements.

For the record I made Dr. Badsha aware of the proposed meeting and it was prior to notifying him that I made my request.

Under the freedom of information Act I asked Dr. Badsha to state clearly whether he was aware of the meeting prior to my contacting him and further more if he was a member or group that had received an invitation and he informed in writing that until I made him aware he had no notification of one form or another of the proposed meeting taking place.

Yours,

Shaun O'Connell

I have spoken with colleagues, and we would like to extend an invitation to you to attend on 9th October on behalf of FLINT. I will post an invitation today.

The red ticks on my list indicate that people have received their postal invitation and have contacted me to confirm that they will definitely be attending (as requested in the letter).

Please bring the invite letter with you on the day. It would also be advisable to bring other official ID, in case security is heightened at the House of Commons.

If you have a question, could you please submit it (by email) before the close of Friday 5th October.

The questions that we sent are listed below;

www.familieslink.co.uk

October 3rd 2007

Questions on behalf of FLINT family Links International www.familieslink.co.uk.

We are a non-Governmental organisation interested in all areas which impact on families. We are non-gender biased and help and support men, women and children in society and in particular the Divorce Courts. The questions that we would wish to ask are outlined below;

1. We are seriously concerned at the decreasing resilience of children in the UK and the associated problems such as behaviour of children deteriorating along with increased teenage pregnancies, delinquent behaviour, drug and alcohol abuse, violence, worsening mental health that the Government's strategies are not only failing but causing these problems. Does the Family Court accept responsibility for the worsening outcomes for children bearing in mind that the DFES admitted in letter dated 9th July 2007 "we would like to see a reduction in a number of parents resorting to the courts, as this so often results in poorer outcomes for the children..."?
2. Do the Judiciary believe that their chosen experts are independent and impartial, when we have one expert who admitted using an untested theory at the request of a High Court Judge which shows an interference by the judge above and beyond his remit and that so-called independent experts are not independent?
3. The failure of the Judiciary to recognize parental Alienation Syndrome is lamentable. The fact is that where we have tried to use such expertise there is serious resistance from CAFCASS, NYAS and the Judiciary. As a teacher trained in special needs and anger management the resistance is contrary to the welfare of children and social cohesion. It also implies that the resistance is organized. What are others stance on the issue of PAS as a serious form of emotional abuse and with medium and long-term effects on the children's psychological welfare and it's lack of recognition?

4. The Public are clamouring for truly Open Family courts which have been promised since the year 2000. Is it not the case that the Judiciary, CAFCASS and social workers as well as Court chosen experts would not be able to cope with the truth being exposed?

5. The Judiciary and its agencies in the Family Courts have made a big issue of domestic violence as a gender issue and current strategies are promulgating intergenerational abuse. Almost anything can be found to be harassment or domestic abuse. When are the Courts going to start relying upon independent and impartial research to formulate procedure and strategy?

6. Perjury, perversion of the course of Justice by CAFCASS, social workers and parties even when brought to the attention of the Judge are ignored. When are the Judiciary going to start obeying their oath to do Justice by mercy and right when Judges used to call Directors of social service to Court to account for the actions of their Officers?

7. We are shamed that the recommendations from the laming enquiry into the tortured death of Victoria Climbié seem to have been used to set-up a powerless Children's Commissioner barred from investigating any matter that has approached a Court and the Children's database. The Police are still relying upon investigations by social workers which seem to have little if any methodology and forensic process of investigating allegations of child abuse. Do others share our serious concern that the recommendation that the Police should lead child protection investigations has been ignored?

8. Psychiatry has not yet come up with one single cause or cure for psychiatric disorders that are determined by psychiatrists posing as experts. Crystal ball gazing, psychological traits, or misuse of MMPI2 testing is enough to remove your child forever. MMPI2 should never be used in family proceedings as the stress of the proceedings result in invalid readings. When is the Family court going to have a procedure so that these abuses can be properly investigated independently and impartially?

9. We know of no psychiatric research on the link between parenting deficiencies and the psychiatric diagnoses made. No-one has been able to provide any to-date. Do the members not find this insulting to a parent's intelligence?

10. None of the State bodies or CAFCASS/ NYAS can provide any methodology or training on how to question children. All fall back on the Social work diploma which neither has any training on this. The research is easily available just try reading Lillie and Reed v Newcastle City Council and the Cleveland enquiry. Is this not lamentable when social workers and Guardian's regularly interview children yet can hardly ever provide detailed contemporaneous notes or video recordings?

11. One tool regularly used to disenfranchise families is the attachment theory. No bodies have any training, methodology or procedure to assess attachment. It is purely a subjective

measurement and an untested and unproven theory. Do members not agree attachment should be binned for the rubbish that it is?

12. We have serious evidence arising of a major problem of wrong diagnosis of abuse and we know of no agencies that are investigating children's behaviour holistically when one of the unrecognized but prevalent problems is the effect of food colourings, food additives such as Aspartame and Mono-sodium Glutamate and simple boyish energy. Diagnoses of ADHD and then drugging the child or removing the child into care is not the solution. We would suggest an independent enquiry into these matters should be set up urgently and free of pressure from the drug and vested interest industries. What is the members' stance on this if they genuinely care for child welfare?

13. Outcomes from children in care are so poor that had the children not been taken from the parent(s) the children should be removed from foster care. The research we have is alarming. Do bodies present really believe that the care system is working?

In one study of 60,900 young people currently in care showed they are far more likely to have mental health problems, poor qualifications, take drugs, and end up jobless or homeless. One third of prisoners and one half of young offenders have been through the care system. Care leavers were three times as likely to be unemployed. 1,000 children in care of local authorities were 4-5 times more likely to suffer from mental disorders compared to the general population. More than 75% of care leavers have no academic qualifications of any kind. 7% of young women leaving care are pregnant or already mothers

10% of 16-17 year old claimants of DSS hardship payments have been in care. 33% of adult prisoners and 38% of young prisoners have been in care

30% of young single homeless people have been in care. 2,490 under-fives in care were adopted in 2006, up from 1,010 in 1995. 4,160 under-fives were first taken into care in 2006, up from 2,870 in 1995.

1,300 babies aged younger than a month when they were taken into care were adopted in 2006, up from 540 in 1995. The average age at adoption in 2006 was four years and one month. 3,700 children were adopted from care in 2006, up from 2,700 in 2000.

14. Responsibility for child welfare was transferred from the dept of Health to the DFES in 2003. This was kept quiet at the time. We ask for the responsibility to be transferred back as the DFES have failed in their duties. What are the views of those present?

15. Independent and impartial research over long period of time shows that teenage

pregnancy is linked to fatherless. In particular the earlier that a girl loses contact with her father the greater the risk of teenage pregnancy regardless of culture, social status and finances. Should this not be considered in the manner in which the family Court system operates as it would solve the teenage pregnancy problem overnight?

16. Local Authority social workers seem to have as much power as M15. It is our experience that they are protected by the Local Authority from accountability, so-called independent investigators protect the LA and getting a court to order the directors of social services to disclose openly is all but impossible. The role of the Judiciary seems to have weakened such that it is now another arm of the state. We maintain that until the system is transparent and accountable children's welfare will continue to worsen and then be used as an excuse for more draconian invasion of families as is evidenced now with the latest plans to have a Health visitor from within six weeks of conception to monitor for anti-social behaviour, happiness testing at schools, ideas of putting a psychiatrist into every school, GPs seeing children alone from their parents when they get bonuses for contraception as part of the teenage pregnancy strategy and the mass increase in the subscribing of Ritalin and associated drugs and also Prozac for children. Do the bodies present agree that these actions are anti-family and examples of an over intrusive State and State control seeking to make weak families?

17. If the Family justice Council is not to be yet another toothless quango to justify the abuses of children and families should the Council not have greater transparency and open up to other organisations who genuinely will put the public concerns to assist the Council to improve family life in the UK?

18. We are greatly concerned at the involvement of Charities and other organizations seeking State funding and empire building when their interest is for the own ends rather than social cohesion and strong families. We find it very difficult to believe that many of the bodies that have been invited to the meeting can possibly have the Public's interest at heart. Indeed I was only invited by error. Would the sole representative of the Public agree to invite us to future meetings as we will act truly independently and openly regarding the abuses of children and their families?

19. 84% of parents involved in care proceedings are on income support. Statistically finance seems to be linked with care proceedings where legal aid is automatic and rich feeding ground for the lawyers, and experts and often parents unable to defend themselves even with legal assistance. Some 58 pence per taxpayer is spent on keeping families together and 7 to 8 hundred pounds per taxpayer is spent in destroying the family. Is not the funding the reverse of what it should be in a democratic and civilized country and would not the monies spent on the lawyers, CAF/CASS, experts etc be better spent on keeping families together especially given that many families earn less than foster carers then called in to look after their children?

20. The costs to the Nation where children are concerned is skyrocketing. The facts speak for

themselves. Any sane system would be monitoring closely the efficacy of its policies and procedures. Would the family justice Council accept an in-depth study from us on the mismanagement of the family and the abuses of children and families so that the system can be cleaned up?

The facts are;

II. In England and Wales alone, prescriptions for Ritalin, rocketed from just 4,000 in 1994 to 359,000 in 2004. Doctors in Britain wrote almost 7,500 prescriptions a week for Ritalin. The treatment costs about £200 a year per child and is likely to cost taxpayers £12.48 million this year. It has been estimated that the total annual cost of the therapy, including additional costs of assessment and follow-up, would escalate to £500 to £1,000 per child, according to figures from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). In 2006 to 2007 454,797 children were prescribed Ritalin and similar drugs as compared to only 86,247 in 1997/ 1998.

III. The cost to the country of family breakdown is now well over £20bn per annum, a significant proportion of which is paid in benefits to lone parents. The average cost of divorce is £13,000, with more expensive divorces exceeding well in excess of £30,000 or £50,000. Around one third of couples sell the family home to fund their divorce. The Legal Aid bill for child contact and residence disputes was £133 million in 2003-04.

IV. Housing stocks are under immense pressure having expanded by only one third since 1971. Over this same period dissolution and lone parenthood have sharply increased in frequency producing greater numbers of separate family units who require their own dwellings.

V. The UK has the highest teenage birth rate in Europe, and 90% of births to teenage girls take place outside marriage. In 2006 1316 girls under 18 had a second abortion and 90 their third. From the age of 18 to 24, 16, 474 had second abortions and 3000 third abortions.

VI. Care costs the taxpayer £2.5 billion annually, according to a recent report by Harriet Sergeant for the Centre for Policy Studies. The cost of teenage crime to the taxpayer is estimated to be over £10 billion per annum.

VII. There were approximately 376,000 Children in Need in England in 2001; 69,000 of them were Children Looked After and the

remaining 307,000 were other Children in Need. The average Child Looked After costs Social services £500 per week; and other Children in Need cost £120 per week. In 2007, 11, 000 children paid for to be educated in private or charitable institutions, residential school costs amount to more than 500 million pounds per year, average cost of 57 000 pounds per child. Council spending increased from 2.8 to 4.5 Billion pounds from 2001 to 2005. This included reform and 250 000 children with SEN, 1.5 m with special needs but no SEN statement.

VIII. In 2004-05, the Government made provision for £4,021 million to be spent on Children's social services. Care costs the taxpayer £2.5 billion annually, according to Centre for Policy Studies. The cost to the taxpayer of family breakdown is currently around £20-£24 billion, or £680-820 for every taxpayer. The costs include not only the direct costs of supporting lone parents of £4,000 - £15,000 per family, but also the indirect impacts on employment, education, health, crime, police, prisons etc.

21. In the light of the two quotes below and the statistics from the last available year which show 60 children were taken into care for being on low income, 790 for disability, 1500 for parental illness or disability and 1300 for socially unacceptable behaviour (in all cases the decision was contested by the parents) has the system not gone down the road of social engineering – a morally and ethically dangerous path to tread?

Re K D [1998] 1 AC p.812 letter B Lord Templeman stated; '**The best person to bring up a child is the natural parent. It matters not whether the parent is wise or foolish, rich or poor, educated or illiterate, provided the child's moral and physical health are not endangered. Public authorities cannot improve on nature.**' Public authorities exercise a supervisory role and interfere to rescue a child when the parental tie is broken by abuse or separation. In terms of the English rule the Court decides whether and to what extent the welfare of the child requires that the child shall be protected against harm caused by the parent, including harm which could be caused by the resumption of parental care after separation had broken the parental tie. In terms of the Convention rule the Court decides whether and to what extent the child's health or morals require protection from the parent, and whether and to what extent the family life of the parent and child has been supplanted by some other relationship which has become essential family life for the child.'

Re K [a minor] [wardship; adoption] [1991] 1 FLR Lady Butler-Schloss p.62 letter E; 'The mother must be shown to be entirely unsuitable before another family can be considered **otherwise we are in danger of slipping into social engineering.** The question is not would the child be better off with the plaintiffs but is the natural family so unsuitable that, as Lord Justice Fox said, the welfare of the child positively demanded the displacement of the parental right.'

