

Written evidence from Dr Edmund Plummer [HAB0186]

I am a concerned individual.

I am opposed to this legislation. It will further discourage people from forming long term relationships. They will shy away from them if there are long term costs that they have no control over. Long term relationships are known to lead to better mental and physical health, and are proven to be the best environment for raising children. The best long term relationship is marriage, as is well known.

Turning now to the specific questions:

- Should there be a legal definition of cohabitation and, if so, what should it be?

As stated above, I am opposed to the legislation. If, nevertheless, it does proceed, a definition will be needed to give any degree of certainty. It should be “marriage or civil partnership, or an equivalent mutually recognised relationship”. The mutually recognised bit is vital.

- What legislative changes, if any, are needed to better protect the rights of cohabiting partners in the event of death or separation?

I do not believe that any are needed. If people choose not to marry or go into a civil partnership, they do so in order to avoid the consequences of these, and their choice should be recognised.

- What equalities issues are raised by the lack of legal protection for those in cohabiting relationships?

None

- Should legal changes be made to better provide for the children of cohabiting partners?

Both parents should have a financial and legal responsibility towards their children. If the existing law provides for this (and I think that it does) then no changes are needed

- Should cohabiting partners have the same rights as those who are married or in a civil partnership?

No. As noted above, they have chosen not to avail themselves of these rights, usually so as to avoid the equivalent responsibilities and costs.

- Are there examples of good practice in relation to the rights of cohabiting partners in the UK or internationally that the Government should seek emulate in England and Wales?

None that I am aware of.

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