

Written evidence from Mr Chris Elston [HAB0203]

Cohabitation has been shown widely in many reports over the last decades to be detrimental to couples, children and society.

This is because the relationships of cohabiting couples are likely to be transitory and unstable, in contrast with those of married couples. The foundation of the relationship of a married couple is **promises of lifelong commitment** made to each other. Cohabiting couples lack this commitment to each other, meaning their relationships are far more likely to break up, as is seen in the fact that over 50% of five-year-old children of cohabiting parents have seen their parents separate, whereas this is the case for only 15% of the children of married parents.

Furthermore, the nature of the **public commitment of marriage** and the public declaration of marriage vows reinforces the relationship, thus granting greater stability and providing greater security for the upbringing of children.

Family breakdown already costs the public purse in excess of £50,000,000,000 (fifty billion) per year.

Married couples are shown to enjoy better physical, mental and emotional health.

The fact of the promise of lifelong commitment is the basis and reason upon which the law has made provision for the bereaved partner upon the death of the spouse.

If people choose not to marry, the law should not give them the same benefits as those who choose to marry.

Cohabitees are free to make their own inheritance arrangement via wills so are not at a disadvantage.

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