

Written evidence from Mrs Gurtler [HAB0321]

I write regarding the call for evidence from the Women and Equalities Committee regarding their proposal that cohabiting couples should be given parallel legal rights to married couples.

I disagree with this proposal. It is well known that marriage benefits society in many ways but especially in terms of keeping families together and the inherent health benefits associated with this. Cohabitation, with compared with marriage, is a more unstable arrangement and is more often associated with parental separation (>50% of the children of cohabiting parents will experience their parents' separation by 5 yrs old, compared to 15% for children of married parents) and family breakdown, which doesn't just affect individual families but society as a whole.

Cohabiting couples have the option of getting married, and could access the current financial benefits and legal protections associated with marriage if they decide to get married, but it their choice to not get married and make that lifelong commitment to their spouse.

The value of marriage seems to have been eroded in recent years, and the proposal from the Women and Equalities Committee appears to erode this even further. Rather than extending the rights of married couples to cohabiting couples the government should instead be promoting marriage and raising the awareness of the legal ramifications of cohabitation when compared to marriage.

July 2021