

### **Written evidence from Mr Leigh Belcham [HAB0322]**

Parental separation is far higher with cohabitation than with marriage. Over 50% of children whose parents cohabit rather than marry will suffer their parents' divorce or separation before they are 5 years old. This is over three times as many who are children of married parents. Marriage involves a commitment that unmarried couples are unwilling to give. Children need as much stability as possible if they are to grow up to be stable individuals themselves. The government should promote marriage rather than undermine or devalue it.

I read that family breakdown costs the exchequer over £50bn each year. This will obviously increase if more and more people are given the all the benefits of marriage without the commitment for life that it involves. The stability inherent in marriage is proven to benefit mental and physical health; that is something we can ill-afford to undermine.

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