

Written evidence from Stanley Croucher [HAB0344]

I believe that Parliament has a moral and ethical duty to promote marriage as the exclusive commitment between a man and a woman and by definition and design forms the cornerstone of a balanced and stable society.

The drive to extend benefits hereto exclusively available to married couples is it effectively endorsing and encouraging a looser and more diluted 'family' structure where there is clear evidence that cohabiting rather than marrying has distinct disadvantages to both the individuals concerned and society at large.

To expand:

- Marriage is a formal public commitment where the couple involved have ideally considered the responsibilities involved and thereby enhance the prospect of the marriage working. To extend the financial rights of marriage to those who freely choose not to marry is inviting almost to the point of encouraging and facilitating a more fragile social structure.
- At present and rightly so, the existing legal protections for couples is integral to marriage and also available under the civil partnership legislation that does not include a lifelong commitment; why complicate and dilute the pursuit of a stable society by introducing a further alternative to marriage.
- There is a financial cost to the Exchequer of over £50bn each year in seeking to address the fallout of family breakdown within cohabiting couples; surely it is far better to spend this £50bn plus on more pressing and urgent and credible demands on the public purse.
- The instability of cohabitation is evident given that 53% of children from a cohabiting home will by the age of five have experienced parental separation compared to 15% of five-year-olds with married parents.
- Compared to cohabitantes there are health benefits that follow from being married with married men enjoying better cardiovascular health, lower risk of depression, better cancer survival rates and more satisfaction in retirement and with married women having much lower smoking and recreational drug use.

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