

## Written evidence from Brian Clarke [HAB0356]

### **Cohabiting couples to get the same legal rights as Married couples?**

The Centre for Social Justice has repeatedly stated that the best environment for the best future for children is Marriage. Partly on account of this, the institution of Marriage has been central to the policies of the Conservative Government.

However, the institution of Marriage is undermined if the same legal rights are given to those who have freely chosen not to be committed to one another. This is a case of treating dissimilar people similarly: if people willingly chose not to be married, why should the law treat them as they were married. This is a choice that the couple has expressly rejected. If couples want the legal protections of marriage, they can get married. Civil Partnerships are also available. It is quite unnecessary to have another alternative to marriage.

They have been many studies that show that unmarried couples have a far less stable relationship than married ones – and the children are those that most often take the brunt of an all-too-often separation of the cohabiting couple. The statistics speak for themselves: by the age of five 53% of children of unmarried couples will have experienced parental separation against 15% for married couples.

If legal rights were to be given to unmarried couples, it would be likely to lead to greater numbers of broken relationships - see the statistics above – and those that suffer would be the children.

Stability, good health, less drug addiction, less crime – all are associated with marriage; the reverse is associated with cohabiting couples. The public commitment of marriage is a serious undertaking to benefit both the couple and the children. That is why it has particular legal status.. Cohabiting couples have been shown to think of their relationship as something of far less consequence – but the consequences for the children are often very bad.

In the face of all the evidence that marriage is best for society and for children, it would be folly to undermine the institution further in the way that is proposed.

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