



Published by TSO (The Stationery Office) and available from:

Online
www.tsoshop.co.uk

Mail, Telephone Fax & E-Mail
TSO
PO Box 29, Norwich, NR3 1GN
Telephone orders/General enquiries 0870 600 5522
Order through the Parliamentary Hotline Lo-Call 0845 7 023474
Fax orders: 0870 600 5533
E-mail: customer.services@tso.co.uk
Textphone: 0870 240 3701

The Parliamentary Bookshop
12 Bridge Street, Parliament Square,
London SW1A 2JX
Telephone orders/General enquiries: 020 7219 3890
Fax orders: 020 7219 3866
Email: bookshop@parliament.uk
Internet: <http://www.bookshop.parliament.uk>

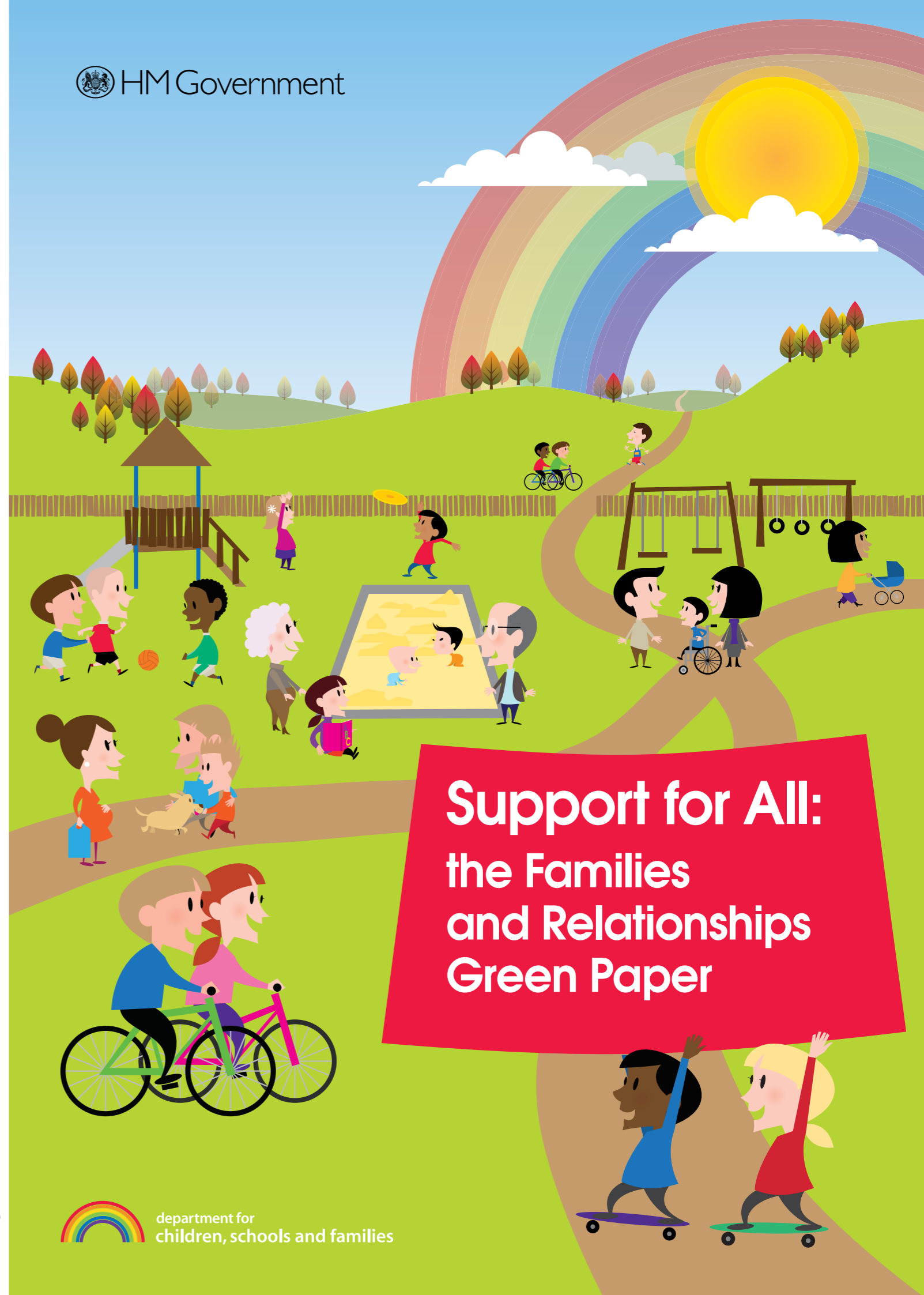
TSO@Blackwell and other Accredited Agents

Customers can also order publications from
TSO Ireland
16 Arthur Street, Belfast BT1 4GD
028 9023 8451 Fax 028 9023 5401



 HM Government

Support for All: the Families and Relationships Green Paper



 department for
children, schools and families



Department for Children, Schools and Families

Support for All

Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families
by Command of Her Majesty

January 2010

© Crown Copyright 2010

The text in this document (excluding the Royal Arms and other departmental or agency logos) may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium providing it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the document specified.

Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

For any other use of this material please contact the Office of Public Sector Information, Information Policy Team, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU or e-mail: licensing@opsi.gsi.gov.uk.

ISBN: 9780101778725

Printed in the UK for The Stationery Office Limited
on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office

ID P002344851 01/10
Printed on paper containing 75% recycled fibre content minimum.

Contents

Foreword	2
Executive summary	4
Introduction	15
Chapter 1: Families today	25
Chapter 2: What government is already doing to support families and family relationships	39
Chapter 3: Bringing up children	55
Chapter 4: Building strong family relationships and dealing with relationship pressures and breakdown	77
Chapter 5: Family relationships and employment	90
Chapter 6: The role of public services	111
Chapter 7: Consultation questions and conclusions	134
Annex: How to get involved	137

Ministerial Foreword



Strong, stable families are the bedrock of our society. Families give children the love and security they need to grow up and explore the world, and the moral guidance and aspiration to make the most of their talents and be good citizens. And families are where most of us find the support and care necessary for a happy and fulfilling life — as children and adults, parents and grandparents too.

Over the past twelve years this government has done a great deal to support children and families and make our country stronger and fairer. These major improvements in the practical support for families — more than 3,000 Sure Start Children’s Centres, the expansion of affordable, high-quality childcare, enhanced maternity and paternity leave — have not happened by chance: they have come about only because we were determined they should, and because we were prepared to back them with billions of pounds of investment.

I meet many parents and families every week, in schools and children’s centres across the country, as well as in my own constituency in West Yorkshire. I have witnessed many examples of mothers and fathers and sometimes others in families too, especially grandparents, making huge efforts to organise their lives so their children get the best - and sometimes making considerable sacrifices.

So it is quite wrong to conclude that families are in decline. This is not my experience and authoritative, independent evidence, some of which is presented in this Paper, shows what I believe most people know for themselves: that all families have their ups and downs, but most people do the best they can to sustain family life for the benefit of their children, sometimes in the face of adversity.

The literally thousands of such conversations I have had over the last two and a half years have left me in no doubt about two things: first that it is families who do the crucial job of bringing up children, not governments or teachers or GPs; but second, that families want and need support in juggling the responsibilities of bringing up

children, running a home, holding down employment to make ends meet or caring for an elderly relative.

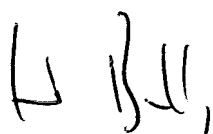
This Government's conviction is that it is both possible and necessary to develop policies to support all families without intruding into the privacy of family life. This means supporting families to help themselves, ensuring that all public services play their part in supporting strong and resilient family relationships, but also recognising that sometimes relationships fail and that some families need extra help.

Marriage is an important and well-established institution that plays a fundamental role in family life in our society. However, marriage is a personal and private decision for responsible adults, with which politicians should not interfere. The Government supports couples who choose to get married: for many families marriage offers the best environment in which to raise children, and remains the choice of the majority of people in Britain.

But families come in all shapes and sizes these days and the evidence is clear that stable and loving relationships between parents and with their children are vital for their progress and well-being. This was confirmed in the *Families in Britain Evidence Paper*.¹ The Government is therefore strongly committed to supporting all parents, grandparents and carers in sustaining strong and resilient relationships.

This Green Paper sets out a wide range of measures to support all families as they bring up their children and to help families cope with times of stress and difficulty. They recognise that while all families need some help, there are families in our society with complex needs and others who require additional — and sometimes non-negotiable — support. Some of the policy proposals can be implemented straight away; others are for consultation or will take longer to put into place.

We have sought the advice of parents, grandparents, young people and many experts and voluntary agencies in developing our proposals. I would like to offer my special thanks to all the members of the Kids in the Middle coalition, including the nation's Agony Aunts. The coalition's combination of good research and practice expertise, together with their insights about the big issues we face, has been hugely helpful and positive for the future of children and families in our country.



Ed Balls,
Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families

¹ Cabinet Office and the Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008. *Families in Britain, an evidence paper*.

Executive summary

Introduction

Strong families give children love, identity, a personal history and a secure base from which to explore and enjoy life as they grow up. Strong families also help build strong communities, so they are crucial for a successful society.

The demographic and social changes of the last 30 or 40 years have been profound and have led to much greater diversity in family patterns.

The evidence is clear that it is strong, stable relationships between adults in the home — parents, grandparents and other caring adults — and among all these adults and the children in a family, that have the biggest impact on children's happiness and healthy development.

Marriage is an important and well-established institution that plays a fundamental role in family life in our society. However, marriage is a personal and private decision for responsible adults with which politicians should not interfere. The Government supports couples who choose to get married: for many families it offers the best environment in which to raise children, and remains the choice of the majority of people in Britain.

But families come in all shapes and sizes these days and the evidence is clear that stable and loving relationships between parents and with their children are vital for their progress and wellbeing. This was confirmed in the *Families in Britain* evidence paper.² The Government is therefore strongly committed to supporting all parents, grandparents and carers in sustaining strong and resilient relationships.

This Green Paper sets out a wide range of measures to support all families as they bring up their children and to help families cope with times of stress and difficulty.

The Government believes it is also important this is pursued in ways that are evidence-based and that fit with the reality of family life today. This means, for

² Cabinet Office and the Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008. *Families in Britain, an evidence paper.*

example, the greater roles many fathers and other family members, including grandparents, play in caring for children must be recognised.

Rapid social and technological changes are putting all families under pressure, and the tough financial times mean some families are under acute economic stress, undermining strong, stable family relationships.

So there will never be a more important time for the Government to support families and family relationships. However, family life is essentially private. Therefore, this Green Paper focuses mostly on supporting family relationships by enabling families to help themselves. The Paper's proposals also aim to influence positively factors that can strengthen or weaken family life, such as the choices available about balancing employment with bringing up children; and how welcoming and accessible public services are to families of all kinds.

Parents' responsibility must go hand-in-hand with the privacy of family life. But, where behaviour or relationships are so irresponsible or damaging that people are being harmed in the family, or — as in the case of anti-social families — beyond it, it is right for firm action to be taken, whether it is invited and welcomed by the family or not.

Chapter 1: Families today

The very significant economic, social and demographic changes seen in recent decades have had a pronounced effect on family forms, family life and public attitudes. For example:

- in 2008 64 per cent of children were living in families with married couples, 13 per cent with co-habiting couples and 23 per cent with a lone parent;
- most children still live in a married family and marriage remains the most common form of partnership in Britain today. However, marriage rates show an overall decline since their peak in the 1970s;
- divorce rates increased considerably between the 1950s and the mid-1980s but then levelled off. In recent years they have started to fall and in 2007 the divorce rate reached its lowest level since 1981;
- the numbers of step-families are growing;
- in general, women are having fewer children and doing so later in life;
- since the Second World War the proportion of children born outside marriage has increased very significantly, right across Europe;

- about ten per cent of the adult population in England and Wales was cohabiting in 2007; co-habitation covers a wide range of relationships, including a precursor to marriage and an alternative to it;
- there is greater acceptance and recognition of same sex relationships and this is reflected in the introduction of civil partnerships; and
- people are healthier than ever and living longer which means that many more grandparents now see their grandchildren grow up.

Overall, inequality is an important theme running through these family trends. For example, there is a marked contrast between the new opportunities being enjoyed by many young women from families on middle and higher incomes and the very limited horizons that teenage mothers, living in deprived areas, often describe. This emphasises the importance of ensuring modern family policy is progressively universal: making sure support is available for everyone, but directing more of this at those children and families who need help the most.

Relationships have become more fluid and families more complex, so it is necessary for family policy to seek to support wider family relationships, not only those between parents and between parents and their children.

The sheer diversity of family life now rules out 'one size fits all' approaches. Giving families access to information, advice and support of various kinds that they can use as and when they think best is much more likely to be effective.

Chapter 2: What government is already doing to support families and family relationships

Over the last 12 years, the Government has introduced new legislation, developed ground-breaking new policies for children and families, and has invested very significant public funds in improving support for them.

For example, leave entitlements for parents around the birth of a child have been brought in for the first time in some respects and significantly enhanced in others; many more families can now access high-quality childcare; and the Every Child Matters programme has been embraced and developed in every area in the country.

Many services have been transformed, particularly for children in their early years and their parents, who are now much better served than ever before. We are on track to designate 3,500 Sure Start Children's Centres and, taken together with the extended schools programme, this means the local service infrastructure for

children and families is now much stronger than 12 years ago. The result is that there are now unprecedented opportunities to co-locate services for families and communities alongside support for children of all ages.

Looking ahead, during these tough financial times it will be important to maximise the positive impact of investment in policy and services by paying careful attention both to what families say they want and need, and to what the evidence shows is most effective in helping them and their children. Among other things this suggests that extra help should be directed towards families at times when there is additional pressure on family relationships, such as around the time of the birth of a child.

The pace and scale of the social and demographic trends that this Paper sets out, and the family changes that have accompanied them, pose big challenges for policy and services. The rest of this Paper explains what the Government will do to help families of all kinds to build and sustain good relationships, for the benefit of their children.

Chapter 3: Bringing up children

Good parenting is crucial for children and can help them to overcome disadvantage and other problems in their lives. Services and policies need to respond sensitively to the needs of all kinds of families — and all members within families — and be framed in ways which support them in raising their children. They should help families to sustain good relationships, with extra support being directed to the children and families in greatest need.

A wide range of support is already available to families to help them raise their children, from pre-birth, through childhood and adolescence and beyond.

To strengthen this the Government will:

- set out what families can expect from services at crucial stages in life — during pregnancy and birth of a child, in the period up to a child's fifth birthday, and from the age of 5–19;
- support plans by the Royal College of Midwives to produce professional guidance for their members on how best to engage fathers around the birth of their child which also highlights the benefits for child and mother in doing so; and
- ensure the free Bounty Packs given to women will also now include a guide specifically designed for fathers;

- extend the offer of key worker support to families with disabled children aged 0–19, starting with an initial period in 2010–11 to test out how best to provide this support, with a view to rolling this out more widely through a national programme;
- commission a free parenting support booklet for parents of young people, written by independent experts and parents; and bring together online information available for families of teenagers on a range of adolescent concerns so it can be easily displayed on websites (including school sites) and on mobile phones;
- commission free materials to help parents guide their children and help them deal with commercial messages transmitted via both old and new media; and
- strengthen support for family and friends carers by: publishing for consultation a new statutory guidance framework; consulting on revised national minimum standards for fostering service providers; producing a support pack for relatives who are caring for children because of a parent’s drug or alcohol misuse; and exploring with stakeholders the difficulties experienced by family and friends carers and how to help them to access the support they need.

Chapter 4: Building strong family relationships and dealing with relationship pressures and breakdown

The Government’s aims are to help young people to understand why strong, respectful relationships are important, and to support them in acquiring the skills necessary to build them; to help families of all kinds, particularly those facing additional adversity, to sustain strong relationships; and, where families can’t stay together, to help them and their children through the process of breakdown and family transition as well as is possible in circumstances which are always difficult and distressing.

New national independent research, funded by the Government, has cast important new light on what families believe would be most helpful. Informed by its findings, the Government will:

- publish for consultation new Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) guidance for schools, based on best practice, including on how to consult and involve parents;
- produce information for parents about the benefits of SRE and what is taught at different ages, together with material commissioned from independent

experts that parents can make use of if they wish, in talking to their children about these issues at home;

- fund specialist relationship counselling services for families with disabled children and increase support for the Contact A Family helpline;
- commission independent experts to produce materials, to supplement those already available free online, for couples to make use of, as they see fit, if they are worried their relationship is beginning to come under strain and want to know what they can do to restore it;
- establish a high level steering group of experts to work with the Government to take the key messages from research and help shape the delivery of the relationship support proposals set out in this paper;
- work with the Kids in the Middle coalition to produce a guide specifically for children and young people whose parents are separating and divorcing, building on the success of the existing guide for adults;
- ensure that investment in the Targeted Mental Health in Schools programme strengthens the evidence-base about what works in providing counselling support to children in schools;
- pilot Parenting Together Apart sessions earlier in the process for couples who have decided to separate;
- launch a comprehensive review of the family justice system, which will report jointly to the Secretaries of State for Justice and Children, Schools and Families and the Welsh Assembly Government during 2011. The principle that 'the interests of the child should be paramount' will be at the heart of this review, which will focus on the management and leadership of the family justice system and what can be done to promote informed settlement and agreement of family law cases outside of the court system.
- promote mediation online and explore other means of reaching families with mediation information earlier;
- work with the Family Mediation Council to build on accreditation for mediators;
- improve the information available for grandparents about the legal and other options available to them in seeking to maintain their relationships with their grandchildren post-parental separation and divorce; and

- remove the requirement for grandparents to obtain the leave of the court before making an application for a contact order.

Chapter 5: Family relationships and employment

Employment is essential for a decent family income. For working parents and carers a trade-off has to be made between employment and spending time with their family, and the household tasks that still need doing too. For many families there are more options available now than even a decade ago and as a result there is now a wide variety of working and caring patterns. High quality childcare helps these arrangements to work well for many families and in ways that also support children's healthy development and early learning effectively.

However, particularly for working mothers, 'having it all' can sometimes still feel like 'doing it all', and the choices can be highly constrained for many lone parents; for parents who care both for children and elderly relatives; for those with atypical work patterns such as Service families; or for parents in low paid employment, which is often inflexible.

It is not the Government's role to prescribe what a good work-life balance is. Each family is different and is best placed to decide what is right for them. However, the Government has an enabling role — helping to extend the choices that families are able to make. This is good for families and family relationships and therefore good for children too. It also benefits our economy: helping employees to organise how they work in ways that fit with their family responsibilities has been shown to help raise productivity and improve both recruitment and retention.

The Government will therefore:

- review the notice period for the two week paternity leave period and will consult on this later this year;
- explore the barriers to taking paternity leave faced by fathers not eligible for statutory paternity pay, and examine the merits of introducing a paternity allowance;
- look at whether parents should be able to take parental leave when their children are older than five years of age, as part of the forthcoming consultation by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills on extending parental leave from three months to four;

- launch an online eligibility checker to give parents a much clearer picture of the types of financial assistance they may be entitled to for their childcare;
- encourage all Children's Centres to offer a walking bus service; and where they are co-located with schools, encourage them to take a more proactive role in helping schools manage before and after school clubs for their pupils;
- take steps to help providers of out of school and holiday childcare for the over-8s to register on a voluntary basis with Ofsted, thus enabling families to reclaim costs through Tax Credits;
- ask the Standing Commission for Carers, the Government's Expert Advisory Group, to explore the challenges facing inter-generational and distance carers during 2010;
- improve the information and advice available to parents and carers, including through a new guide to family friendly employment, available through Direct.gov and through other channels, aimed at parents, carers and families, setting out existing entitlements;
- join up information and advice to parents and carers on employment and flexible working, with other kinds of family information and advice, for example, through the new Family Information Service;
- publish in the spring, in partnership with BT, a Think Fathers practice guide, to promote father-friendly working practices to both employers and employees;
- use Businesslink.gov, the one-stop-shop for business, to provide practical advice to help employers introduce family friendly practices to their workplaces; and
- consider how Tax Credits supports Service families and explore what more could be done.

Chapter 6: The role of public services

Services have an important role in supporting families and good family relationships. Key to this is making sure these are friendly and welcoming — not just to parents (including fathers, who can feel marginalised) but also to grandparents and other family members who may play a significant role in a child's life. Overall, practice in making services more accessible for families has been improving and very often Children's Centres are leading the way.

Consultations with families are unanimous in showing that they want services to be respectful, effective and accessible. How skilful professionals are in building and maintaining good relationships with all family members is a big factor in this, reinforcing the importance of high-quality training.

For a wide variety of reasons, some children, young people and families need more help than others and it is important that the right kind of support is made available to them at the right time, and that it meets their needs. This can help strengthen good family relationships that may otherwise buckle under the pressures they face.

It is crucial that professionals in adult services, for example drug or mental health services, or prisons and probation services, are alert to the implications of their clients' problems for other family members, especially the children. It is also important that information is shared intelligently between the services that work with adults and children. This is the aim of the Government's Think Family programme.

The Government will therefore:

- take steps to ensure Children's Centres are exemplars for other local services in how to make services accessible and welcoming to all family members;
- work with the Family and Parenting Institute to design a process, materials and training that services can use, on a voluntary basis, to make their provision more family friendly;
- support the consultation with families launched by Kids in Museums to identify how well family tickets meet the needs of families who go to museums and galleries;
- continue to broaden the remit of Parent Know How so it provides more help and information to other family members too, renaming it Family Information Direct;
- launch www.BeGrand.net to provide information specifically for grandparents;
- improve training for professionals so that it builds in development of the skills necessary for working with families, including the skills needed to support parents who are reluctant or feel unable to seek help – in particular, through the current review of the common core of skills and knowledge for the children's workforce; explore the involvement of parents in training with a view to piloting it in 2011-12 and rolling it out thereafter; examine ways of

mainstreaming more effective training on relationship support into the professional development of frontline staff;

- commit the necessary funding for the only pilot Family Drug and Alcohol Court in England to continue until March 2012 so the lessons from its innovative approach can be learned and applied;
- ensure every local authority will be able to offer an intensive family intervention service for families with the most complex needs;
- establish a national training programme for family intervention key workers and invite the most experienced workers to join a national expert team to help local authorities to develop new services; and
- publish in 2010 refreshed guidance for local authorities on the commissioning and delivery of effective parents and family support services.

Chapter 7: Consultation questions

The Government would like to seek views on how best to shape the next phase of family policy to meet the needs of families today and support strong family relationships. It would therefore welcome responses to the following questions:

- Question one: What more can we do to help create a culture in which seeking help for relationship or parenting problems, or other family difficulties, is considered socially acceptable?
- Question two: Which issues should be prioritised by Government in seeking to strengthen families and support family relationships in this country?
- Question three: Which services need the most urgent development to make them truly family-friendly?

The paper also includes three specific proposals for consultation:

- Question four: Do you consider that compulsory mediation assessment would improve the take-up of mediation in family law cases, and what more could be done to improve the take-up of family mediation as an alternative to court action?
- Question five: How far does the need to seek leave of court act as a barrier to prevent extended family members applying for contact with a child? Is there a need to remove this requirement for some other family members, beyond grandparents? (Note: Parents are already exempt.)

- Question six: Would a comprehensive advice service on family issues based on the successful models like NHS Direct and the NHS Carers Direct service make it easier for families to find the help they need? This could consist of a national online service coupled with a single telephone number.

Introduction

The reasons for producing the Green Paper now

1. It is a little over 11 years since the last Government Green Paper about families was published. The overall aim of that Paper was to strengthen families and family life, thus strengthening our communities and this remains equally important today, although over this period a great deal else has changed.
2. Demographic and social changes over the last 30 or 40 years have been profound and these have led to greater diversity in family patterns. These have been succinctly summarised by one commentator as follows:

*“We have fewer marriages and more divorce, separation, cohabitation, and childbirth outside marriage; with a pattern of partnering and parenting similar to Nordic countries; children stay at home longer; marriage and childbearing happen on average later; families now run to four and five generations; and, happily, more people live longer. Economic circumstances, differing attitudes to sexual morality and new approaches to infertility, all stretch our definition of family...”*³
3. It is heartening however that, as this Green Paper goes on to show, while family forms have diversified, families have not changed in terms of the special meaning most people attach to them, the huge significance they play in many millions of lives, or in the love and security that are their greatest gifts to those of us fortunate to live in happy families.
4. The 1998 Green Paper anticipated many improvements in policy and services that are now either in place or well on the way to being implemented. For example, leave entitlements for parents around the birth of a child have been brought in, for the first time in some respects and significantly enhanced in others; many more families are able to access

³ MacLeod, M., 2009. Families and their Discontents. In: D. UTTING, ed. *Contemporary Social Evils*, Policy Press.

- high quality childcare; and the Every Child Matters (ECM) programme has been embraced and developed in every area in the country.
5. As a result of the creation of Sure Start Children's Centres and extended services attached to schools, the infrastructure for children's services is now much more developed than 11 years ago, and this opens up exciting new opportunities to co-locate services for families and communities alongside support for children of all ages.
 6. Meanwhile, families' needs and aspirations have not stood still as technological and social change have accelerated around them and, more recently, as economic pressures at a time of recession have intensified. Against this shifting context it is not surprising that the evidence is that families want more information, help and support. Crucially though, they want to help themselves. We must ensure public services respond.
 7. These are therefore the reasons for producing this Green Paper now:
 - to reflect on the changes that have happened and what they mean for policy and services;
 - to consolidate what has already been achieved; and
 - to look further ahead, to identify new and emerging challenges and to propose ways of successfully overcoming them — not just for some families, but for all.

Why family policy needs to focus on supporting family relationships

8. Strong families give children love, identity, a personal history and a secure base from which to explore and enjoy life as they grow up. They also help to build understanding and mutual respect across the generations, thus helping to strengthen communities. Every family has a set of values and beliefs that are immensely significant in how children see the world and their place in it.
9. Family is of life-long importance but for children its significance cannot be overstated: what happens within the family has more impact on children's wellbeing and development than any other single factor. This is most obviously true for babies who are entirely dependent on others — their

parents especially — but family influence also remains a potent influence through childhood and adolescence, and indeed beyond.

10. The advances in understanding about what matters most for families have resulted from the significant increase in independent, family-focused research over the last decade. Most significantly of all, this research increasingly demonstrates that it is the quality of relationships in families that makes the difference for children and, indeed, for adults, rather than the family structure itself.
11. It is widely accepted now that the relationships parents have with their children are strongly associated with the children's outcomes. This is borne out by innumerable empirical studies.⁴ For example, positive and consistent discipline and ongoing parental involvement and support are associated with better behavioural and educational outcomes in children.⁵ Research also shows that children with highly involved fathers develop better friendships and more empathy and have higher levels of educational achievement and self esteem.⁶
12. An extensive literature shows that the quality of the relationship between parents is linked to positive parenting and better outcomes for children too.⁷ The association between the parents' relationship and family outcomes is so strong that it has been described by one researcher as "*the conductor of the family orchestra*".⁸
13. Parents in a happy relationship have been found to interact more positively with their infant, pre-school child and with their school age child.⁹ Research also shows that happy relationships between couples lead to better mental and physical health for all involved.¹⁰

4 O'Connor, T. and Scott, S., 2007. *Parenting and outcomes for children*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

5 London Economics, 2007. *Cost Benefit Analysis of Interventions with Parents*, London: DCSF-RW008 <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/programmeofresearch/projectinformation.cfm?projectId=14874&keyword=Cost%20benefit%20analysis%20of%20interventions%20with%20parents&keywordlist1=0&keywordlist2=0&keywordlist3=0&and/or&type=5&resultspage=1>

6 Flouri, E., 2005. *Fathering and Child Outcomes*. West Sussex: John Wiley & Son.

7 Coleman, L. and Glenn, G., 2009. *When Couples part: understanding the consequences for adults and children*. London: One Plus One.

8 Harold, G., 2001. What matters about conflict? In: Reynolds, J., *Not in front of the children? How conflict between parents affects children*. London: One Plus One.

9 Simons, J. et al, 1993. Childhood experiences, conceptions of parenting and attitudes of spouse as determinants of parental behaviour. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 55 (1) 9. Levy-Schiff, R., 1994. Individual and contextual correlates of marital change across the transition to parenthood. *Developmental Psychology*, 30 (4), 591-601. McLanahan, S. and Carlson, M., Welfare reform, fertility and father involvement. *The Future of our Children*, 12 (1) 147-165.

10 Coleman, L. and Glenn, G., 2009. *When Couples part: understanding the consequences for adults and children*. London: One Plus One.

14. This explains why a recent research paper prepared for the Department for Children, Schools and Families by the Thomas Coram Research Institute states:

“It is clear from the evidence that how the family functions, rather than family type, is more relevant to understanding the impacts associated with family breakdown.”¹¹

For example, the differences between children within family types can be greater than the differences across family types, suggesting that what families do is more important than family structure.¹²

15. Experiencing parental conflict, though, is undeniably bad for children. Seeing their parents argue, whether this is before, during or after separation is stressful for children, who, studies have shown, may become anxious, aggressive or withdrawn.¹³ It is clearly desirable that families avoid reaching a stage where conflict is affecting children, but for children in high-conflict families the best outcome can be that their parents separate, if this reduces the conflict between them.¹⁴
16. Among children whose parents separate, the probability of experiencing long-term adverse outcomes is about twice that of children in families that stay together, but such outcomes affect only a minority of children whose parents separate.¹⁵ Studies of children’s adjustment to divorce and remarriage have also shown that relatively few children and adolescents experience enduring problems.¹⁶ However, even if only relatively few are affected very badly in the longer term, it is still important that they and their families receive the help they need to get through these difficult experiences as well as is possible, and measures designed to achieve this are set out later in this Paper.

11 DCSF, 2009. *Impact of Family Breakdown on Children’s Well-being Evidence Review*, Research Report DCSF-RR113.

12 Mackay, R., 2005. The impact of family structure and family change on child outcomes: A personal reading of the research literature. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 24, 111-133.

13 Harold, G.T. and Murch, M.A., 2005. Inter-parental Conflict and Children’s Adaptation to Separation and Divorce: Theory, Research and Implications for Family Law, Practice and Policy. *Child and Family Law Quarterly*, 17 (2).

14 Baker, M. et al, 2003. Lone Parenthood and Outcomes for Children, A Review of the Literature Prepared for the Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand; Golombok, S., 2000. *Parenting - What really counts?* cited in http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/111945/families_in_britain.pdf

15 Pryor, J. and Rodgers, B., 2001. *Children in Changing Families*. Oxford: Blackwell.

16 Hetherington, E.M. and Stanley-Hagan, M., 1999. The adjustment of children with divorced parents: a risk and resiliency perspective. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 40, 129-140, cited in Wise, S., 2003. Family Structure, Child Outcomes and Environmental Mediators: an Overview of the Development in Diverse Families Study. Research Paper No. 30. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

17. When children have positive relationships with their siblings this can help them cope with difficult experiences, including the breakdown of their parents' relationship.¹⁷ Similarly, emotional closeness to their grandparents has been found to help children get through family stress.¹⁸ If communication breaks down between parents and children, more distant relatives and friends, as well as grandparents, can be important sources of support.¹⁹
18. When a couple manages to maintain a co-operative working partnership as parents following separation, children have been shown to adjust better.²⁰ Longitudinal research also shows that good quality parent-child relationships and flexible arrangements can reduce many of the potentially negative effects of separation on children's wellbeing.²¹
19. Children who are the subject of protracted conflict between their parents following separation, or who feel themselves to blame for it, are, however, particularly at risk of negative outcomes.²² Generally, children want to retain a relationship with both parents and the quality of their relationships with significant adults in their lives is of major importance to them.²³
20. The evidence in relation to children's outcomes points to the nature and quality of parenting they receive while they are with a non-resident parent being more important than the frequency of that contact.²⁴ Children with good relationships are generally also more likely to have regular and more frequent contact with their non-resident fathers.²⁵ In other words, good relationships are likely to result in more frequent contact.²⁶
21. After families have separated, good quality contact with the parent not living with the child is good for children and can help to protect them against problems — provided, of course, that it is safe.²⁷

17 See for example Gass, K. et al, 2007. Are sibling relationships protective? A longitudinal study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 48 (2), 167-175.

18 Wade, A. and Smart, C., 2002. *Facing Family Change: Children's Circumstances, Strategies and Resources*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

19 Dunn, J. and Deater-Deckard, K. 2001. *Children's views of their changing families*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

20 Rodgers, B. and Pryor, J., 1998. *Divorce and separation: the outcomes for children*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

21 Mooney, A., Oliver, C., and Smith, M., 2009. Impact of Family Breakdown on Children's Wellbeing: Evidence Review. London. DCSF.

22 Mooney, A., Oliver, C., and Smith, M., 2009, supra

23 Mooney, A., Oliver, C., and Smith, M., 2009, supra

24 Gilmore, S., 2006. Contact/Shared Residence and Child Well-Being: Research Evidence and its Implications for Legal Decision-Making. *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, 20, 344-365; Hunt, J. and Roberts, C., 2004. *Child contact with nonresident parents*. Family Policy Briefing 3, University of Oxford Department of Social Policy and Social Work.

25 Smith, M., 2004. Relationships of children in stepfamilies with their non-resident fathers. *Family Matters*, 67, 28-35.

26 Dunn, J. et al, 2004. Children's perspectives on their relationships with their non-resident fathers: influences, outcomes and implications. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 45 (3), 553-566; Smith, M. 2004, supra

27 Rodgers, B. and Pryor, J., 1998. supra

What children gain from strong family relationships

22. The idea that what matters most is the quality of family relationships resonates strongly with many of us, including it seems with many children and young people. For example, in evidence to The Children's Society's Good Childhood Inquiry, these were some of the comments children made:

[A happy family is] *"just a family that loves each other, and as long as they do that's a happy family."*

*"A good parent is someone who loves us, respects us, helps us and cares for us. It doesn't have to be a natural mother or father, anyone can make you feel loved and special."*²⁸

23. Members of the Children and Youth Board, aged between eight and 18, who advise the Department for Children, Schools and Families on a wide range of policies affecting children and young people, said this:

"Children need to have other people to talk to, not just their parents."

*"Family is very important to me. Because if I find I can't talk to my Mum or Dad I always have my aunts and uncles, and Nan and Granddad to talk to."*²⁹

24. When family relationships are poor, children feel the effects of this keenly. As one young man said to the Good Childhood Inquiry:

*"I think all kids should have the right to live in a happy place where they feel safe and loved. I haven't felt like that in some time but I know my parents don't mean it. It's just they argue and take it out on me."*³⁰

25. Children's own personalities and attributes strongly influence how they behave and respond to situations. However, families — particularly parents — model for their children how to relate to others. It is these crucial lessons for life which begin to be absorbed by children when they are very young, like learning to share, to be kind, to say sorry and to deal with conflict in a positive way, that determine to a great extent how well they get on when they go to school and make friends.

26. These skills that children first acquire at home about the give and take required to live happily are of great value to them later on, because

28 Pople, L., 2008. *Family: a summary of themes emerging from children and young people's evidence to the Good Childhood Inquiry*. The Children's Society.

29 DCSF Children and Youth Board 2009. Surveys carried out by children and young people during Summer 2009

30 Pople, L., 2008. *supra*.

the capacity to form and sustain good relationships of all kinds is a fundamental life skill. Other experiences children have, and the education they receive, can help them to develop this capacity too, but the process of socialisation that children experience in strong families undoubtedly contributes to a cohesive and successful society.

What this means for family policy and for the Green Paper

27. The powerful influence of families on their children; the security, love and care that strong families provide for all their members, and the fact that strong families help to build strong communities, make family policy an important and legitimate concern for government.
28. And since it is the quality of relationships that is of most significance for children and families, it follows that government has a real interest in all the relationships within families being strong.
29. Therefore, the Government believes that a family policy that is fit for the 21st century is one that, above all:
 - supports families to build and sustain strong relationships; and
 - is framed in ways that respects and responds to the diversity of forms that families take today.
30. All the proposals set out in this Paper have been developed with a view to giving active expression to these simple but absolutely fundamental ideas.
31. A modern and effective family policy must also be based on the understanding that family means more than just parents and their children. As a nine year-old living with his mother replied in answer to a question posed by a researcher about 'who's in your family?':

*"Well, family is who you really care about, I reckon, not just who shares the same house. I suppose there'd be Uncle Brian, Grandad, Mum, Miss Pickton, even though I don't ever see her, Oliver, me, Christopher, Ben and Shirley. Gosh, there are a lot of them!"*³¹
32. An effective family policy must also be clear that parents means fathers as well as mothers. As is discussed later in this Paper, there is strong accumulating evidence about the positive impact of fathers on their

31 Dunn, J., 2008. *Monograph from Edith Dominian Memorial Lecture 2008: Family Relationships, Children's Perspectives*. London: One Plus One

children's outcomes, as well as research showing that, overall, fathers are becoming more involved in their children's lives. Yet, until relatively recently the role of fathers in their children's development has often been overlooked.

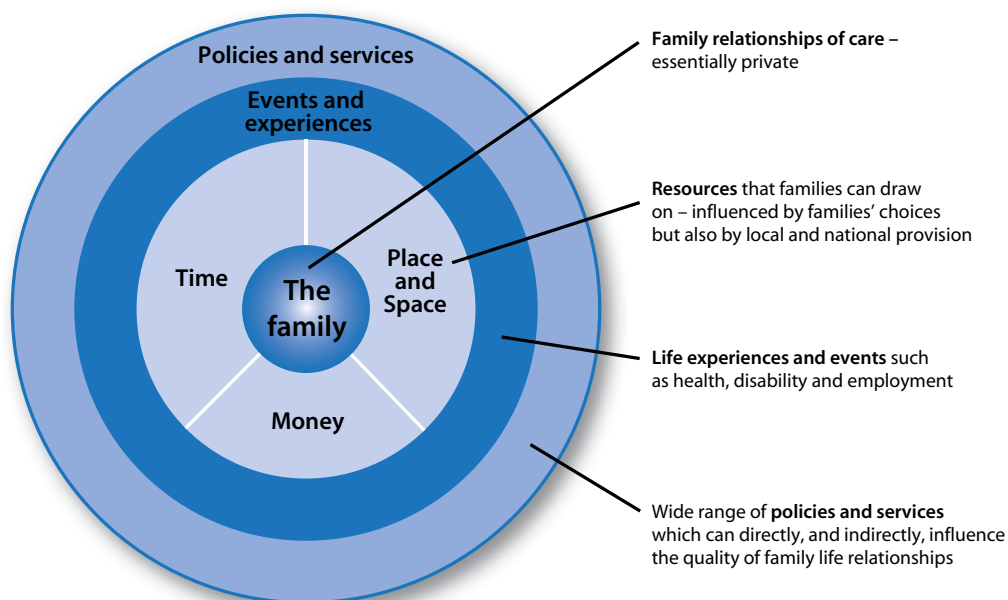
33. Recognition of the important role of fathers in children's lives does not in any way diminish the significance of mothers. The evidence is that greater involvement by fathers in family life benefits mothers as well as their children.
34. For the Government, family relationships are personal and private, as are the choices adults make about the form their family should take. Thus, the relationship-oriented family policy set out in this Paper focuses on supporting family relationships indirectly, by giving families access to resources that enable them to help themselves — not on intervening directly in private family life.
35. Drawing on the available evidence and informed by an understanding of family trends, the proposals in this Paper aim to progress two objectives:
 - moving towards a position in which all families have access to high quality independent information, advice and support when and how they want it; and
 - seeking to create the kind of broader environment which encourages family relationships to flourish, by focusing on areas government can influence, for example, by taking action to make public services as family-friendly as possible, and enabling families to exercise more choice over how they balance caring and working. This is not only good for families but can improve productivity and recruitment and retention too.
36. It is the everyday realities that make most practical difference to families and to family relationships. As has been suggested:

“Having a job, a stable income, a solid education, a decent home and good health are the fundamental foundations on which all thriving families are built.”³²

These are all areas for which much responsibility rests with government, as well as with families themselves and with public services.

32 Stanley, K. and Cooke, G., Dec 2007 – Feb 2008. Something Old, Something New. *Public Policy Research*, 14(4), 211-217.

Influences on family relationships³³



37. The idea that some families — such as those caring for a disabled child or with one or more disabled adults — need more help than others has informed the proposals in this Paper. So too has awareness that poverty and low income can undermine family relationships and constrain options; and that extra help may be needed by families at personal crunch times, such as when a baby is born, especially to first-time parents, or when a parent loses their employment or when parents become ill.
38. The general principle that family relationships are private and should not be subject to compulsory intervention carries an important exception; where these relationships are so irresponsible or damaging that people are being harmed or are at serious risk of harm in the family, or — as in the case of neighbour nuisance caused by anti-social families — beyond it. In these circumstances it is right for firm and effective action to be taken by the relevant agencies, whether it is invited and welcomed by the family or not.
39. The Paper also considers the position of children and other family members when family relationships have broken down, given that in our free society it is open to a couple to decide not to stay together. However, if they are parents, their responsibilities to their children endure after parting and need to continue to be fulfilled by both of them.

³³ DCSF Analysis.

40. It is important to be clear that this Paper focuses on policies for families with children. This means it does not go into detail about the needs of older people or vulnerable adults or the role of carers. However, many families bringing up children also have other caring responsibilities too and, more generally, caring is a defining feature of family life and something all of us can expect to do — and increasingly so, as the population ages. This Paper therefore seeks to factor this into its thinking.
41. Children in care comprise a small but important group in our society for whom important issues arise in terms of families and family policy. This Paper does not aim to examine systematically the issues for children in care as this has been done elsewhere.³⁴ It does, however, look at the role of some others who care for children when parents cannot, which is of major significance to children in care and on the edge of care.

³⁴ DCSF, 2007. *Care Matters: Time for Change*.

Chapter 1: Families today

Summary

- The very significant economic, social and demographic changes seen in recent decades have had a pronounced effect on family forms, family life and public attitudes.
- When examined overall, inequality can be seen as an important theme running through these family trends. For example, there is a marked contrast between the new opportunities being enjoyed by many young women from families on middle and higher incomes and the very limited horizons that teenage mothers, living in deprived areas, often describe.
- This emphasises the importance of ensuring modern family policy is progressively universal: making available some help for everyone, with more directed at supporting those children and families who need help the most.
- Relationships have become more fluid and families more complex, so it is necessary for family policy to seek to support wider family relationships, not only those between parents and between parents and their children.
- The sheer diversity of family life now means that one size fits all approaches are unlikely to be successful and that instead, giving families access to information, advice and support of various kinds that they can make use as and when they think best, is much more likely to be effective.

Introduction

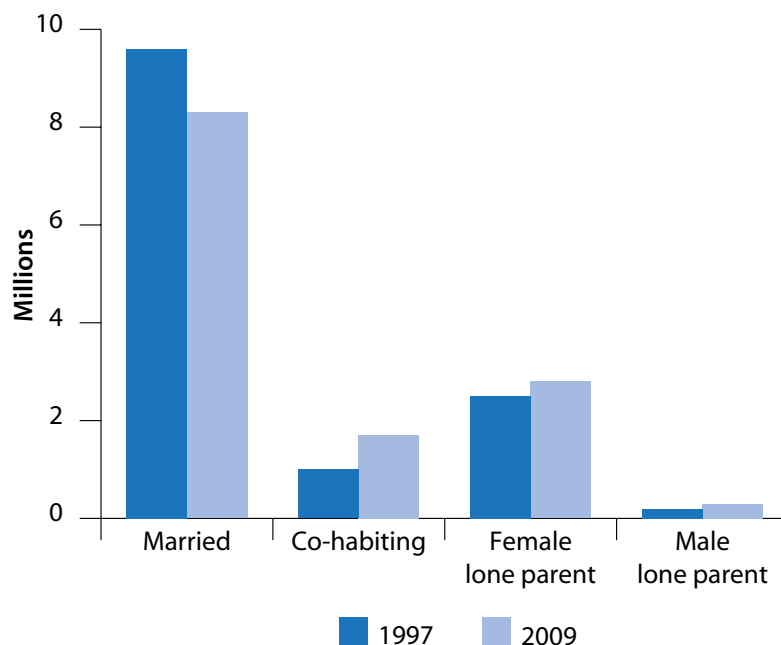
- 1.1 To understand the changes in family structure and form and the implications for policy, it is important to take into full account the key social, economic and demographic changes in recent decades. These are

set out in detail below. This Chapter sets out a summary of evidence in this area and is informed by *Families in Britain, an evidence paper*, produced by the Cabinet Office and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in 2008.³⁵

Changes in family form

1.2 By 2009, 63 per cent of dependent children were living in families with married couples, 13 per cent with co-habiting couples and 24 per cent with a lone parent.³⁶

Number of dependent children: by family type, UK



Children in married families

1.3 Marriage remains the most common form of marital status in Britain with 51 per cent of men and 48 per cent of women married.³⁷ In 2009, almost two thirds of families with dependent children were headed by a married couple.³⁸ However, marriage rates show an overall decline since their peak in the 1970s. For example, first marriages dropped by almost 10 per cent between 1976 and 2005.

³⁵ Cabinet Office and the Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008. *Families in Britain, an evidence paper*.

³⁶ Office for National Statistics, 2009. *Social Trends No. 40, Households and families*, Table 2.5 http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_social/Social-Trends40/ST40_Ch02.pdf.

³⁷ Office for National Statistics, 2009. *2006-based marital status projections*. www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/Marr-proj06/legalsummaryPRINCIPAL.xls.

³⁸ Office for National Statistics, 2009. *Social Trends No. 40, Households and families*, Table 2.5. http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_social/Social-Trends40/ST40_Ch02.pdf.

- 1.4** Divorce rates increased considerably in the early 1970s but since 1985 they have remained relatively stable.³⁹ In recent years they have started to fall and in 2007 the divorce rate reached its lowest level since 1981.⁴⁰
- 1.5** Econometric analysis has identified a number of predictors of divorce, including:
- a relatively young age of the individual at first marriage;⁴¹
 - unexpected (adverse) changes in financial circumstances;⁴² and
 - previous partnership breakdown or parental divorce.⁴³

Children in lone parent families

- 1.6** Lone parenthood as a family type increased rapidly during the late 1970s and 1980s, but in Great Britain there has been a less than one percentage point increase in the proportion of households headed by a lone parent in the last ten years.⁴⁴
- 1.7** This trend for a larger proportion of families to be brought up by one parent living alone has been happening across the developed world, with the highest proportion of families headed by a lone parent now found in the USA.⁴⁵ It should be noted that living in a lone parent family does not mean that the other parent is not involved in the child's life. Around seven out of ten children have direct contact with the non-resident parent (according to the resident parent).⁴⁶
- 1.8** Half of lone parents are either separated or divorced and nearly five per cent are widows. Divorce remains the main route into lone parenthood.⁴⁷

³⁹ Office for National Statistics, 2008. Marriage Statistics 2006.

⁴⁰ Office for National Statistics, 2008. *Divorces: England and Wales rate at 26 year low.*
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=170&Pos=1&ColRank=2&Rank=1000>

⁴¹ Coleman, L., and Glenn, G., 2009. *When Couples part: understanding the consequences for adults and children*, London: One Plus One.

⁴² Becker G.S. et al, 1977. *An economic analysis of economic instability*, Journal of Political Economy, 85 (6) 1141-1187; Weiss Y. and Willis R.J., 2007. *Match quality, new information and marital dissolution*, Journal of Labour Economics, 15 (1) S293-S329.

⁴³ Coleman, L., and Glenn, G., 2009. *When Couples part: understanding the consequences for adults and children*. London: One Plus One.

⁴⁴ Office for National Statistics, 2009. *Social Trends No. 39*
http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_social/Social_Trends39/Social_Trends_39.pdf

⁴⁵ OECD Family Database. *Table SF2.1: Distribution of children aged 0-14 by household type, most recent year.*
www.oecd.org/dataoecd/51/3/42293865.xls

⁴⁶ Joan Hunt and Vicky Peacey, 2009. *I'm not saying it was easy: contact problems in separated families*, Gingerbread.

⁴⁷ ESRC, 2006. *Changing Household and Family Structures and Complex Living Arrangements*, ESRC Seminar Series Mapping the Public Policy Landscape. Swindon: ESRC.

- 1.9** About ten per cent of lone parent families are led by fathers; there is no evidence to suggest this family form is increasing.⁴⁸ Lone fathers are more likely than lone mothers to have been married or widowed.⁴⁹
- 1.10** The median age for a lone mother is 36, with less than one quarter (24 per cent) of lone mothers aged under 30 and just 13 per cent under 25. Only two per cent of lone mothers are teenage mothers (aged under 20).⁵⁰
- 1.11** Lone parent families compared with two-parent families on average tend to be more disadvantaged in terms of poverty and health.⁵¹

Children in step-families

- 1.12** Step-families have been described as “*the fastest growing family form in the UK*”.⁵² In 2001, ten per cent of families with dependent children in the UK were step-families,⁵³ meaning that many families include step-relations. Most families with step-parents consist of a biological mother and a step-father because the majority of children live with their mother after a separation.
- 1.13** The probability of a child or parent spending some time in a step-family has increased markedly and it has been estimated that about 30 per cent of mothers will spend some time in a step-family before they are 45.⁵⁴
- 1.14** Children living in step-families formed as a result of parental separation are more likely to experience another transition because parental separation and divorce rates are higher in step-families than in families that stay together.⁵⁵

Children in families where couples are co-habiting

- 1.15** There has been a significant increase in the number of people co-habiting, though there are difficulties in obtaining precise figures. It has been

48 McConnell, H. and Wilson, B., 2007. Families. In: Smallwood, S. and Wilson, B. eds. *Focus on Families*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

49 Marsh, A. and Perry, T., 2003. *Family change 1999 to 2001*. DWP Research Report No. 181.

50 Derived from Families and Children Study data for 2005 and cited in *Single Parents, Equal Families*, Gingerbread, 2009

51 Barnes, M. et al, 2006. *Families with Children in Britain: Findings from the 2004 Families and Children Study (FACS)*. DWP Research Report Series No. 340. London: DWP

52 Ferri, E. and Smith, K., 2003. Partnerships and parenthood. E. Ferri, J. Bynner and M. Wadsworth (eds), *Changing Britain, Changing Lives*. London: Institute of Education.

53 Office for National Statistics, 2005. *Focus on Families*.

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_compendia/fof2005/families.pdf

54 Ermisch, J. and Francesconi, M., 2000. The increasing complexity of family relationships: lifetime experience of lone motherhood and stepfamilies in Great Britain. *European Journal of Population*, 16, 235-249, discussed in Mooney et al, 2009

55 Dunn, J., 2002. The adjustment of children in stepfamilies: lessons from community studies. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 7, 154-161.

estimated that in 1992 six per cent of the population of England and Wales aged 16 or older were co-habiting, with the number rising to ten per cent by 2007.⁵⁶

- 1.16** The decline in marriage rates is partly due to the rise in the number of couples who co-habit,⁵⁷ but co-habitation covers a wide range of relationships, including a prelude to marriage. Co-habitation as a precursor to marriage has become very well established — for example, 77 per cent of people co-habited before marriage in 1996, up from less than two per cent in the 1950s. The figures for co-habiting prior to second marriage are thought to be higher.⁵⁸

Other family forms

- 1.17** The 2001 census found that less than 0.3 per cent of couples living together identified themselves as of the same sex, though this is likely to be an underestimate because it relies on self-reporting.
- 1.18** Civil partnerships were introduced in 2005. By the end of 2008, it is estimated that there had been a total of 33,956.⁵⁹
- 1.19** A family form that has recently been identified is where people view themselves as being in a couple-relationship but do not live together — a choice described as living apart together. Estimates suggest that three in ten men and women aged 16–59 who are not currently married or living together have a partner living elsewhere: of those, half — about 2 million — might be said to be living apart together.⁶⁰

Trends in child birth

The age of childbearing and family size

- 1.20** In general, women are having fewer children and doing so later in life. The total fertility rate in England and Wales has declined from a peak of 2.93 per woman in 1964 to 1.97 per woman in 2008. This is the highest level since

⁵⁶ Wilson, B., 2009. Estimating the cohabiting population. *Population Trends No 136*, 21-27.

⁵⁷ Kiernan, K., 2003. *Cohabitation and Divorce across Nations and Generations*. Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) Paper 65. London: London School of Economics.

⁵⁸ Haskey J., 2001. Cohabitation in Great Britain: past, present and future trends and attitudes. *Population Trends No 103*, 4-25.

⁵⁹ Office for National Statistics, 2009. *Civil Partnerships in the UK 2008*. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/cpuk0809.pdf>

⁶⁰ Haskey, J., 2005. Living arrangements in contemporary Britain: having a partner who usually lives elsewhere and living apart together. *Population Trends No 122*, 35-45.

1973, when the figure was 2.00. Between 1964 and 2001, the trend was downward, with the fertility rate reaching a low of 1.63 in 2001.⁶¹

1.21 Over the last 25 years, fertility rates for women of younger ages have been decreasing and for women in their thirties and forties increasing.⁶² About one in seven couples in the UK are affected by infertility and the number of babies born following infertility treatments more than quadrupled between 1992 and 2006.⁶³

1.22 The average age for women in England and Wales to have their first child increased from 23.7 years in 1971 to 27.5 years in 2008.⁶⁴ The three factors generally cited as responsible for this significant change are the availability of the contraceptive pill; the increased numbers of women going into higher education; and the increased numbers taking up full-time employment.⁶⁵

1.23 There has been a trend towards smaller families in Great Britain since 1971. Compared to then the proportion of couples with three or more children had more than halved by 2008.⁶⁶ However, family size varies by ethnicity. Bangladeshi and Pakistani families with dependent children tend to be larger than those of all other ethnic groups. Of these families in Great Britain, 40 per cent had three or more dependent children in 2001. This was the case for only 28 per cent of Black African families, 20 per cent of Indian families and 17 per cent of White families in Britain.⁶⁷

Births outside marriage

1.24 Since the Second World War, the proportion of children born outside marriage has increased very significantly. The change in the proportion for

61 Office for National Statistics, 2009. *Live births: fertility highest for 35 years*. www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=369&Pos=1&Col/Row=1&Rank=176.

62 Rendall, M.S. and Smallwood, S., 2003. Higher qualifications, first birth timing and further childbearing in England and Wales. *Population Trends No 111*, 19-26.

63 HFEA, 2007. *A long term analysis of the HFEA register data 1991-2006*. www.hfea.gov.uk/docs/Latest_long_term_data_analysis_report_91-06.pdf

64 Office for National Statistics, 2008. *Birth statistics 2008*. http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/FM1-37/FM1_37_2008.pdf

65 Office for National Statistics, 2009. *Social Trends No. 40, Households and families*, Table 2.2. http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_social/Social-Trends40/ST40_Ch02.pdf

66 Office for National Statistics, 2009. *Social Trends No. 40, Households and families*, Table 2.1. http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_social/Social-Trends40/ST40_Ch02.pdf.

67 Office for National Statistics, 2005. *Focus on Families*. http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_compendia/fof2005/families.pdf

England and Wales rose from under ten per cent in 1971 to approximately 45 per cent by 2008. This trend can be seen right across Europe.⁶⁸

- 1.25** Only around seven per cent of births are now registered only to the mother.⁶⁹ This is a significant decrease from the position in 1964 when 60 per cent of all births outside marriage were registered to a lone parent. New Joint Birth Registration processes are explained later in this Paper.

Teenage pregnancy

- 1.26** Levels of teenage pregnancy have fallen significantly in the last ten years, reversing the previous upward trend. Between 1998 and 2007, there was a 10.5 per cent reduction in under-18 conceptions and a 23.3 per cent decline in teenage births to the lowest levels in 15 years. In 2007, 41.7 per 1,000 girls aged under-18 conceived, with just over half of these conceptions leading to an abortion.⁷⁰ The birth rate to women under 20 in England and Wales was at its highest in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1971, it stood at more than 50 births per 1,000 women compared to 26 per 1,000 women in 2008.⁷¹
- 1.27** Factors that are linked with teenage pregnancy include living in an area of high unemployment; having a low family income at age 16; disengagement from school; living in care; low self esteem; engaging in risky behaviour such as alcohol or substance misuse; poor contraceptive use;⁷² and low parental aspirations for their daughter's education.⁷³

Changing roles

The role of grandparents

- 1.28** The evidence now available demonstrates the very important roles that grandparents play in many families, as well as suggesting that popular images of grandparents as mostly elderly and infirm are seriously outdated. Better knowledge about health and better health care, combined with

68 Office for National Statistics, 2009. *Social Trends No. 40, Households and families*, Table 2.1. http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_social/Social-Trends40/ST40_Ch02.pdf.

69 Graham, J. et al, 2007. *Sole and joint birth registration: Exploring the circumstances, choices and motivations of unmarried parents*. DWP Research Report No. 463.

70 DCSF, 2009. *Teenage Conception Statistics for England, 1998-2007*. <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/IG00200>.

71 Office for National Statistics, 2009. *Population Trends No 138*, Table 3.1.

72 DFES, 2004. *Long term consequences of teenage births for parents and their children*. <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/RS00034>; YWCA, 2004. *Too much too young? Understanding teenage pregnancy in England and Wales*. www.ywca.org.uk/downloads/resources/policy/toomuchtooyoung.pdf

73 DFES, 2006. *Teenage Pregnancy: Accelerating the Strategy to 2010*.

greater prosperity has meant that people now live longer. One consequence is that it has been estimated that between 1981 and 2001 the chances of a young child having a maternal grandmother increased from 46 per cent to 56 per cent. This is due to increased life expectancy and the youthful age at which current grandparents became first-time mothers in the 1970s — some four years or so younger than they typically do today.⁷⁴

- 1.29** There are 14 million grandparents in the UK, of whom 1.5 million are aged under 50 and seven million under 65.⁷⁵ It follows that a significant proportion of grandparents are working. Overall, grandparents are getting older, in line with our ageing population, but it has been suggested that there are two very different experiences of grandparenting in Britain today, as a result of differences in socio-economic circumstances. Compared to middle class women, working class women are four times more likely to become a grandparent before their 50th birthday (21.5 per cent compared to 5.3 per cent) and more than twice as likely to do so before their 60th birthday (56 per cent compared to 26.4 per cent). Working class grandparents are also more likely than middle class grandparents to belong to four generation families.⁷⁶
- 1.30** In 2001, more than 60 per cent of grandparents saw their grandchildren at least once a week; ten per cent saw them less than once in every three months; and two per cent did not see them at all.⁷⁷
- 1.31** It has been estimated that about 60 per cent of adults aged between 30 and 50 years with a living mother lived within half an hour of them, with proximity varying with age and education. The same nationally representative survey found that grandparents with lower levels of education and those who had manual jobs were more likely to live nearer their grandchildren and had frequent contact with them.⁷⁸
- 1.32** One in four families has been found to receive some kind of childcare support from grandparents, and almost all families have been found to

74 Gray, A., 2005. The changing availability of grandparents as carers and its implications for childcare policy in the UK. *Journal of Social Policy*, 34 (4), pp.557-577.

75 Broad, B., 2007. *Being a Grandparent: research evidence, key themes and policy recommendations*. The Grandparents Association.

76 Griggs, J., 2009. *The Poor Relation? Grandparental care: where older people's poverty and child poverty meet*. Grandparents Plus.

77 Office for National Statistics, 2003. Households and families, in C. Summerfield and P. Babb (eds), *Social Trends No. 33* pp41-53, London.

78 Clarke, L., 2004. Grandparenthood in Britain. www.aifs.gov.au/institute/afrc8/clarke2.pdf.

receive some kind of financial support from them.⁷⁹ Usually, childcare has been found to be provided by the maternal grandmother.⁸⁰

The role of carers

1.33 More generally, the effect of the ageing population, combined with diminishing family size, is to increase the prevalence of families with several generations living at the same time, but with fewer aunts and uncles, thus creating so-called beanpole families. This, in turn, has led to the phrase the ‘sandwich generation’, to describe adults who find themselves raising children at the same time as caring for frail elderly parents or other relatives.

1.34 The trend towards an ageing population is not uniform across the population. For example, in the White population in 2002, 16 per cent of people were aged 65 or over — a higher proportion than for any other ethnic group. In the population of people of Bangladeshi origin, 38 per cent were children under 16 years of age. Immigrant populations tend to be composed of those of working age and their children, which explains the relatively high proportion of people aged 65 and over among people of Caribbean origin, who first began to arrive in Britain in significant number during the 1950s.⁸¹

Employment and caring responsibilities

1.35 The employment rate has increased for all women over the last sixty years but for mothers it has increased particularly rapidly — more than tripling between 1951 and 2008. In 1951, about one in every six mothers was in employment; by 2008 this had risen to four in six.⁸²

1.36 71 per cent of mothers in couple relationships were working in 2009 compared to 57 per cent of lone mothers. However, there have also been significant increases in the numbers of lone mothers working since the late

79 Hawkes, D. and Joshi, H., 2008. The grandparents: what is their role in the family? In: K. Hansen and H. Joshi (eds) *Millennium Cohort Study second survey*. London Institute of Education, 48-51.

80 Koslowski, A.S. 2009. Grandparents and the care of their grandchildren. In: J. Stillwell et al (eds). *Fertility, Living arrangements, Care and Mobility*. Springer, 177-190.

81 Office for National Statistics, 2002. *Social focus in brief: ethnicity 2002*. London, The Stationary Office. Discussed in S.A. Hunt, ed. *Family Trends*. Family and Parenting Institute, 2009.

82 Hansen K. et al, 2006. Childcare and mothers' employment: approaching the millennium. *National Institute Economic Review*, 195(1), 84-102.

- 1990s, leading to a narrowing of this gap from 23 percentage points in 1997 to 14 percentage points in 2009.⁸³
- 1.37** As a result of these trends, the male working full-time and the female working part-time is now the family arrangement found most frequently in the UK.⁸⁴ Mothers in a couple relationship are most likely to work part-time, whereas lone mothers are split fairly equally between full-time and part-time.
- 1.38** Contrary to what might be assumed, working mothers are spending more time with their children now than before — from less than 40 minutes a day in 1974–75 to more than 90 minutes in 1999.⁸⁵ More generally, parents report spending three times as much time with their children per day in 2002 compared to 1972.⁸⁶
- 1.39** Mothers still devote more time to childcare than fathers, but more fathers are involved in childcare now and are spending more time on it than they used to — by as much as 200 per cent between 1974 and 2000, according to one study.⁸⁷ The greatest increases have occurred among fathers with very young children.⁸⁸ Research suggests though that in most households mothers are still responsible for most household activities, such as washing, cleaning and cooking, even when they are working full-time.⁸⁹
- 1.40** There are a range of reasons for these changing patterns. For example, technological advances and greater opportunities for varied and flexible working patterns have given many families more choice about how they want to work. People are also much more likely to change jobs a number of times in their working life. The introduction of more labour-saving devices has influenced lifestyles⁹⁰ and, in addition, many parents are prioritising the time they spend with their children over personal leisure activities.⁹¹

83 Office for National Statistics, 2009. *Work and worklessness among households, 2009* Table 4. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/work0809.pdf>

84 Lewis, J. et al, 2008. Patterns of paid and unpaid work in Western Europe: gender, commodification, preferences and the implications for policy. *Journal of European and Social Policy*, 18(1), 21-37.

85 Gershuny, J., 2000. *Changing times: work and leisure in postindustrial society*. Oxford University Press.

86 Williams, F., 2005. *Rethinking Families*. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

87 Gray, A., 2006. The time economy of parenting. *Sociological Research*, 11(3). www.socresonline.org.uk/11/3/gray.html.

88 O'Brien, M., 2005. *Sharing caring: bringing fathers into the frame*. Equal Opportunities Commission.

89 Kodz, J., 2003. *Working long hours: a review of the evidence*. Employment Relations Research series. The Department of Trade and Industry.

90 Thomson, R. et al, 2008. *The making of modern motherhood: memories, representations, practice*. Open University Press.

91 Gauthier, A.H. et al, 2004. Do we invest less time in children? Trends in parental time in selected industrialised countries since the 1960s. *Population and Development Review*, 30 (4), 647-671.

Parenting and the influence of parents

- 1.41** A major study published last year found “no evidence for declining standards of parenting overall”.⁹² However, it did find trends in parenting; mothers and fathers are spending more quality time with their teenage children. It also found that the challenges parents face have changed and parenting may be becoming more stressful, particularly for lone parents and families on low incomes. The new challenges identified were the fact that young people are reliant on their families for longer; concerns about new technology; and perceived risks to children and young people.⁹³
- 1.42** There is evidence that parental beliefs about the perceived safety of their children have changed over time, with parents overall becoming more concerned, and thus less willing to allow children to do things on their own, like travelling, away from adult supervision. However, it has been shown that parents’ perceptions of risk are not strongly related to the likelihood of the risk actually happening. Their responses are influenced by the feelings associated with a risk, the severity of its consequences and the attention it has received.⁹⁴ So, for example, in one study parents were found to be most worried about rare events, such as abduction, but less worried about more likely events such as home accidents.⁹⁵
- 1.43** This is consistent with the very recent 2009 *Staying Safe Survey* in which strangers/paedophiles were the biggest unprompted concern for parents (50 per cent) compared to accidents in the home (six per cent).⁹⁶ These feelings are understandable because the idea of child abduction (however rare) is horrific and deeply traumatising compared to accidents in the home. While accidents in the home are more prevalent and potentially fatal, they may feel less frightening.

Growing up and leaving home

- 1.44** Young people’s transitions to adulthood and independence have changed significantly in recent decades. Many young people stay at home for longer

92 Nuffield Foundation, 2009. *Time trends in parenting and outcomes for young people*. Nuffield Foundation.

93 Nuffield Foundation, 2009. *Time trends in parenting and outcomes for young people*. Nuffield Foundation.

94 Slovic, P. et al, 2002. Risk as analysis and risk as feelings. *Risk Analysis*, 24 (2), 259-266.

95 Murrin, K. and Martin, P., 2004. *What worries parents: the 50 most common concerns of parents explored and explained*. Vermillion.

96 DCSF, 2009. *Staying Safe Survey 2009 - Children and Parents’ Attitudes around Internet Safety*. <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/programmeofresearch/projectinformation.cfm?projectId=15897&type=5&resultspage=1>

than their parents did, prolonging their financial and physical dependence on their families.⁹⁷

- 1.45** A number of factors have been identified as likely to be responsible for this trend, including changes in the labour market as a result of which young people are starting work later than before, and difficulties for young people in accessing affordable independent housing.
- 1.46** It has also been suggested that transitions to adulthood are becoming increasingly polarised in terms of income and class, between young people from families on low incomes who leave education and the family home in their teens, sometimes starting their own families early; and those from more affluent families who are more likely to go to university and so delay entering the labour market full-time until much later on. By leaving education early with few, if any, skills and qualifications, disadvantaged young people put themselves in a position where they tend to stay at the bottom of the labour market and at risk of long-term poverty and exclusion.⁹⁸ It is to help reduce this risk and to up-skill the workforce that the government has acted to raise the age of participation in learning.

Public attitudes to changing family patterns

- 1.47** *The British Social Attitudes Survey* has been tracking attitudes towards marriage, relationships and related social and sexual behaviour over several decades. The results show growing tolerance of premarital sex and of cohabitation over a long period across all ages, especially among younger groups. For example, in the 2006 Survey, when this issue was most recently considered, almost half of the population — 48 per cent — agreed with the notion that *“living with a partner shows just as much commitment as getting married”*.⁹⁹
- 1.48** The 2006 Survey also explored attitudes to divorce. It found that 63 per cent agreed that *“divorce can be a positive first step towards a new life”* and 78 per cent agreed that *“it is not divorce that harms children, but conflict between parents”*.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Jones, G., 2002. *The youth divide: diverging paths to adulthood*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

⁹⁸ Jones, G., 2002, *supra*

⁹⁹ Duncan, S. and Phillips, M., 2008. New families? In: A. Park et al (eds), *British Social Attitudes: the 24th report*. Sage, 1-28.

¹⁰⁰ Barlow, A. et al, 2008. Cohabitation and the law: myths, money and the media. In: A. Park et al (eds) *British Social Attitudes: the 24th report*, Sage, 29-51.

1.49 Only 42 per cent of people in the 2006 Survey thought that lone parents were as good as two parents at bringing up children, but far more people — 78 per cent — said they believed that a family containing a step-father could bring up children under 12 just as well as families with both biological parents.¹⁰¹

1.50 Against this context it is not surprising that recent work carried out by the polling organisation MORI for Policy Exchange has led them to draw the conclusion that:

“Public attitudes towards the family have changed to reflect the changes in society. Different forms of family are increasingly accepted as equivalent to the traditional family [...] The public have a strong sense that there are many different kinds of families these days, and that the term ‘family’ no longer fits with traditional perceptions of a married couple with children.”¹⁰²

The policy implications of these family trends

1.51 The changes in family patterns presented here are significant and, as demonstrated, many of these family trends first became evident in the 1960s and 1970s — some 40 to 50 years ago. They are therefore not a transitory phenomenon and most are not confined to this country alone.

1.52 Compared to recent generations, most adults today enjoy unprecedented freedom of choice over how to live and with whom. This freedom also brings personal challenges in terms of the need for responsibility and restraint, especially when children are involved. In addition, when it comes to working and caring for children, family choice may well be highly constrained by financial considerations, among others.

1.53 Inequality is clearly evident in some family trends. For example, there is a marked contrast between the new opportunities being enjoyed by many young women from families on middle and higher incomes and the very limited horizons that teenage mothers and young fathers, living in deprived areas, often describe. This emphasises the importance of ensuring that modern family policy is progressively universal: that is, while some help is made available to everyone, more resources are directed at supporting those children and families who need help the most.

¹⁰¹ Barlow, A. et al, 2008 supra

¹⁰² Jenkins, S. et al, 2009. *Families in Britain: The impact of changing family structures and what the public think*. IPSOS MORI/Policy Exchange.

- 1.54** Relationships have become more fluid and families more complex. This means more children are experiencing family changes and are acquiring half-siblings and step-relations of various kinds. In this respect, it is important to remember that research shows that while the process of family change may be destabilising, especially in the short term, the eventual outcome can be better than what has come before; that most children adapt quite quickly; and, crucially, that children are most likely to do so when they are prepared and supported by the people around them, their parents especially but also by other relatives and friends too. This is just one of many reasons why it is necessary for family policy to seek to support wider family relationships, not only those between parents and between parents and their children.
- 1.55** Above all, the greater fluidity and complexity of family relationships today, coupled with the impact of demographic trends, emphasises the sheer diversity of family life now: families certainly do come in all shapes and forms.
- 1.56** The implication of this is that one size fits all approaches are unlikely to be successful and that instead, giving families access to information, advice and support of various kinds as and when they think best, and which they can use to help manage their own lives, is much more likely to be effective.

Chapter 2: What the Government is already doing to support families and family relationships

Summary

- Over the last 12 years, the Government has introduced new legislation, developed groundbreaking new policies for children and families, and has invested very significant public funds in improving support for them.
- Looking ahead, during these tough financial times it will be important to maximise the positive impact of investment in policy and services by paying careful attention both to what families say they want and need, and to what the evidence shows is most effective in helping them and their children. Among other things, this suggests that extra help should be directed towards families at times when there is additional pressure on family relationships, such as around the birth of a child.

- 2.1** Supporting children means supporting families. Strong families are also the bedrock of the community as a whole. This is why for the first time we now have a Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), with the needs of children and their families central to the proposals in the *Children's Plan* published in December 2007 and in the regular progress reports since. The Government has also put in place substantial reforms to health services, childcare and early years provision, employment rights and family support services. This Chapter highlights some of the key advances in support for children and families.
- 2.2** Over the last twelve years, the Government has introduced new legislation, developed many innovative policies for children and families, and

prioritised investment to strengthen support for them. The 2003 Green Paper *Every Child Matters* (ECM) was central to this and set out a new approach for children's services to give every child the best possible start in life. Local areas have embraced this approach and are now well into the process of joining services together to support children in being happy and healthy, living free from poverty, being safe and secure, receiving an excellent education and developing the skills and resilience necessary for fulfilment in adult life.

Health and maternity services

- 2.3** The NHS has made major changes in the way it offers advice and support. The highly successful NHS Direct and the information and tools on the NHS Choices website make it much easier for families to get quick advice on health and care issues and options. There has been significant investment to improve choice and quality in maternity services, supported by an extra £330 million in local health services over three years from 2008–11. Both midwives and health visitors provide families with advice and support. Action is in hand to recruit more midwives and the Action on Health Visiting Programme is boosting the role and capacity of health visitors.
- 2.4** The Government's 2009 strategy for children and young people's health, *Healthy lives, brighter futures*, made a series of commitments in response to feedback from parents and children. The key actions taken include the re-launch of the 0–5 Healthy Child Programme offering a universal preventative service for all young children, with extra support for the most vulnerable babies, children and families, and the recent extension of the Programme to the 5–19 age range. Local areas are asked to review their services against the best practice guidelines set out in the programme and to make clear to families the range of services, advice and support available to meet local needs.
- 2.5** It is important for families that all children and family services work with the NHS to promote children's health and wellbeing from early pregnancy onwards. Almost everyone is registered with a GP practice, and over 8,000 general practices in England provide nearly 300 million consultations a year. Health professionals are integral to the new network of Sure Start Children's Centres that can help bring advice and support to the heart of

local communities. Schools are now legally required to support children's physical and emotional health and almost all are now engaged in the voluntary Healthy Schools programme.

- 2.6** The recent progress on children with a healthy weight shows how important this sort of joined-up approach is for families. The most recent data shows the historic rise in levels of child obesity has levelled off, with the prevalence rate among children aged 2–10 years in 2008 lower than in any year since 2001.¹⁰³ Whilst this is still too high, it suggests families are now getting practical help with children's weight. The Start4Life campaign, aimed at families from pregnancy until their baby is two, provides support and advice to help families establish healthy behaviours from the start. The Change4Life campaign has raised parents' awareness, offering simple tips for healthy eating and active play. This has been supported by the revolution in the quality of school food, more PE and sport, compulsory cooking in schools, and upgrading public playgrounds, alongside work with the food industry to improve the composition and labelling of food and work with local areas to improve planning and facilities.

Childcare and early years provision

- 2.7** Since 1997, the Government has given unprecedented priority to developing early years and childcare services. Investment has increased seven-fold, the number of childcare places has doubled and all three and four year olds are now entitled to a free offer of early learning and childcare. This new infrastructure of services is underpinned by the Childcare Act 2006, which places new duties on local authorities to secure enough childcare to meet the needs of local families and for all young children, as well as to narrow the inequality gap.
- 2.8** The 10-Year Childcare Strategy, *Choice for parents, the best start for children*, published in 2004 set out three aims for this ambitious programme of reform:¹⁰⁴
- ensuring every child has the best possible start in life;
 - enabling parents to make choices about how to balance work and family life; and
 - supporting employment in order to help families stay out of poverty.

¹⁰³ NHS, 2009. *Health Survey for England 2008*. London: NHS.

¹⁰⁴ DCSF, 2004. *10-Year Childcare Strategy*.

- 2.9** Children's Centres address all three of the objectives above and are at the heart of the new early years infrastructure. They provide a range of integrated services for children and families, including advice and information, family and parenting support, and access to health services and childcare. They also provide outreach so that the most disadvantaged are aware of and can benefit from what is on offer. More than 3,300 are now up and running and we are on track to meet our 2010 target of 3,500 centres. This means there will soon be one for every community. Evidence from the national evaluation of Sure Start shows improvements in outcomes for children and families, including in children's behaviour and parents' support for their children's learning at home.
- 2.10** The free offer for three and four year olds is being extended to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks a year, with more flexibility in how parents can use the offer. Ten hours of free childcare is also now being offered for two year olds for families living in disadvantaged communities. By 2015, this will be extended to reach more families on low or modest incomes.
- 2.11** Research shows the importance of high-quality provision in improving children's outcomes, with a particularly strong impact on children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Government has made investing in improving quality a high priority. The Early Years Foundation Stage, introduced in September 2008, provides a play-based framework for learning, development and care, covering all providers looking after children from birth to five. We are also committed to improving the skills and qualifications of the workforce at all levels so we attract and keep the best people, and have more graduates with specialist early years professional qualifications leading settings.

Schools and extended services

- 2.12** Every parent wants their child to enjoy and succeed at school and to get help immediately, if they begin to fall behind. To this end, a huge shift has taken place to personalise education. This means that parents can now be confident that:
- catch-up help is available for every child not on course to meet expectations in the basics by age seven;

- one-to-one tuition is available for every child who is behind and still struggling to catch up in Maths and English between the ages of seven and 11, and more in secondary school if they have not reached the expected level;
- there is a personal tutor for every secondary age child — someone who knows them and their parents well and can organise extra help when needed;
- teachers are better trained in everyday assessment, with some specially trained for pupils who are dyslexic, or uncertain in their speech, writing, reading or number work;
- there are more choices of study in secondary schools for students who want to follow practical, creative and vocational options; and
- in every school, a range of after-school activities is available to broaden horizons and deepen learning, provide a sympathetic ear, help with homework, clubs and classes, and provide lots of fun too, as well as support for families.

2.13 The *10-Year Childcare Strategy* included a commitment that all parents with children aged 5–11 will be offered affordable school-based childcare between 8 am and 6 pm Monday to Friday; and all secondary schools will offer a varied menu of activities to young people from 8 am to 6 pm weekdays and (with greater flexibility) during the holiday period where there is demand, providing young people with a safe place to be. The Government wants all schools to be providing access to a core offer of extended services this year, and over 20,000 schools are already doing this. From 2008 to 2011, more than £1 billion has been made available for schools to support the delivery of high-quality, sustainable extended school services. The Government supported the development of extended services with start-up funding of £840 million over 2003–08.

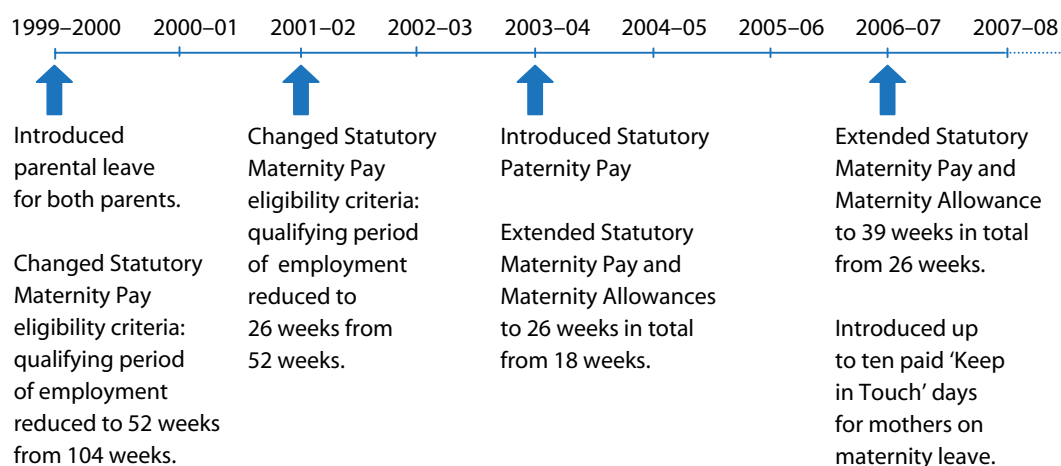
2.14 Around 3,500 Parent Support Advisers (PSAs) work with parents, as part of the extended service offer, to help improve behaviour and attendance; overcome barriers to learning; and increase the numbers of parents actively involved in their child's education — both at school and at home. Following a pilot, the Department funded the expansion of PSAs, committing £102.5 million to all local authorities over 2008–11.

Family-friendly employment

2.15 The Government has also taken action to help families balance employment with caring by bringing in some entitlements for the first time and extending others:

- statutory maternity pay (SMP) and maternity allowance (MA) have been extended from 18 weeks to 26 weeks in 2003, and to 39 weeks in 2006. Maternity leave has also been extended so that employed mothers are now able to choose to take a year's leave around the birth of their child;
- statutory paternity leave and pay was introduced for the first time, in 2003 and over 90 per cent of fathers now take time off work at the birth of their child;
- parents with children aged 16 years or under (or children under 18 with a disability) and carers now have the right to request flexible working. Around ten million employees currently have the right to request flexible working and evidence suggests over two thirds of requests are granted by employers. 91 per cent of workplaces who received requests approved them all; and
- 13 weeks' parental leave, per parent per child, has been established for parents, up until a child's fifth birthday, or 18 weeks up until the 18th birthday of a disabled child, as well as leave to deal with emergencies.

UK parental leave policy: key changes



Places for enjoying leisure, culture and sport

2.16 The Government has announced the biggest ever investment in play of £235 million, and from 2009 all local authorities have been receiving capital funding that will allow 3,500 public outdoor play areas to be rebuilt or renewed and made accessible to children with disabilities. 30 staffed adventure playgrounds will also be built, providing indoor as well as outdoor facilities overseen by skilled play workers. All of these facilities will be free of charge, and local investment has been targeted towards areas where children have most need for better play opportunities. A clear condition of funding for local areas is that parents, children and communities are involved in full consultation about the local plans. We are on track to meet our targets, with over 850 playgrounds already built or refurbished.

2.17 The Government's 2008 *Play Strategy* vision is for public space to be more child and family friendly, so that families can safely spend time together and with other families outdoors in social, community settings. We are providing staff training and support to every local authority through the Play Shaper programme to help professionals like town planners and highways officers work with play services to deliver this. Well-designed public space in local communities where families feel safe, comfortable and welcome is already a key aim of planning policy. Through *World Class Spaces* (2009), the Government has set out its vision to deliver access to make our cities, towns and neighbourhoods more welcoming and enjoyable for everyone. The Department for Communities and Local

Government's planning guidance stresses the important role of urban green spaces, sports and recreational facilities in promoting healthy living, and in improving people's sense of wellbeing in the place they live.

- 2.18** The Government has also put in place reforms to encourage families to access sport, cultural and leisure services, including introducing universal free access to museums from December 2001; encouraging their parents or carers to enrol their baby at the local library and offering every baby in England free Bookstart packs at 6–9 months, 18 months and three years. Most libraries run highly popular interactive rhyme time sessions for families with very young children. With a broad range of books and audiovisual material as well as broadband internet access, libraries offer a free and accessible source of up-to-date information and advice to support families. Over 2008–11, the Government is investing £140 million to offer free swimming to those aged under-16 and over 60, and is undertaking a range of activities to ensure families have access to sport.
- 2.19** Surveys have often found that families, communities and young people themselves want there to be more places to go and things to do for young people. That is why the Government is investing over £900 million through our *Aiming High* Strategy. The Government's aim is that there should be new and improved places for young people to go in every part of the country over the next ten years. To kick start this process we are investing over £270 million through Myplace in 2008–11. £22.6 million has also been invested in 50 local authorities to develop new or refurbished youth facilities in areas where they are needed most, through the Youth Capital Fund Plus.

Transport

- 2.20** The Government has introduced accessibility planning into the local transport planning process to encourage local authorities and other agencies to assess whether families and their members can access education, healthcare, employment and other key services. Solutions to problems of access can be made either by improving local transport links or by changes to the location of services or to the ways they are delivered. More physically accessible public transport vehicles and improvements to infrastructure have also increased the travel options, particularly for those family members with mobility difficulties.

2.21 In December 2004, the Government launched Transport Direct. This provides all the information people need for any journey by any mode or mixture of modes of transport within Great Britain.

Information and advice for families

2.22 Significant additional investment has been made to enable families to access support and information about the issues that matter most to them, and to find out about local services so they are better able to take advantage of the support that is available to them nearby.

2.23 The Government's Parent Know How programme funds a number of services which offer independent, expert information and advice when and where parents and families want it, and in the form that suits them best: via a telephone helpline; online; through joining a social network; by watching online videos; or through reading articles in newspapers and magazines.¹⁰⁵ Since its launch in April 2008, Parent Know How has supported over 2.5 million parents through the telephone helpline and on-line services; and all parents have access to parenting support in print and on video.

2.24 As a result of Government investment, each local authority now also has a Families Information Service providing comprehensive information about locally available childcare, health and other services. We are also providing local areas with materials to help them to communicate their offer for child and adolescent mental health services to families more effectively. The development of a Parent Know How Directory means parents can access this information in the places they already go to for parenting information, including Direct.gov as well as local information sources.

2.25 In addition, local authorities now each have two parenting experts able to deliver evidence-based, structured parenting programmes, supported by the National Academy for Parenting Practitioners. The Academy helps those working with children and families to get the training they need to work well with parents and, where appropriate, to help mothers and fathers strengthen their parenting skills. The Academy's role in supporting the workforce will pass to the Children's Workforce Development Council from April 2010.

¹⁰⁵ See Chapter 6 for plans to re-name Parent Know How.

- 2.26** The Government's *Staying Safe Action Plan*, which was informed by consultation with parents and young people, sets out measures to help families protect their children. In 2009, we launched Safe at Home, a national home safety equipment scheme, which will provide free home safety equipment to 100,000 of the most disadvantaged families in areas with the highest accident rates.
- 2.27** Bullying can have a devastating effect on children and families, preventing them from succeeding in education, and living happy and fulfilled lives. To help parents who are concerned about bullying in their child's life, we fund the ParentLine Plus and their Be Someone to Tell programme that provide information and a professional advisory service.
- 2.28** As part of the *Teenage Pregnancy Strategy*, we have provided a range of information booklets for parents, available through pharmacies and Families Information Services. We are also supporting the roll-out of the successful Family Planning Association (fpa) Speakeasy programme. This is accredited with the Open College Network and offers parents the opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills to talk more openly with their children about sex and relationships.

Additional support for those who need it the most

Help for families on low incomes

- 2.29** Subject to Parliamentary approval, legislation will be passed this year to enshrine in law the goal of ending child poverty. Altogether, between 1998 and 2007–08, half a million children were lifted out of poverty and half a million lone parents have been helped into work. In 2010–11, families with children in the poorest fifth of the population will be on average £5,000 better off in real terms than in 1997. And decisions taken in Budget 2007 and subsequent Budgets and Pre-Budget Reports will lift around a further 550,000 children out of poverty.
- 2.30** Specifically designed programmes of support have helped parents into employment through adult skills programmes, for example through the New Deal, New Deal for Lone Parents, and New Deal for Partners and by requiring benefit recipients to take advantage of the help available to them in order to support themselves and their families. The Government has taken action to make work pay and has significantly raised the income

levels of poorer families through changes to personal tax and benefits, Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. Financial pressures around the birth of a child have been relieved with Sure Start Maternity Grants and the Child Trust Fund.

2.31 The Government has been particularly concerned to help families and young people during the recession. For families, we have brought forward increases in Child Tax Credit and Child Benefit, giving 7.5 million families three extra months at the new, higher rate. Eligibility for Free School Meals is being extended to low income working families from this September, meaning that they will become available to an additional 500,000 primary school children by September 2011. This will help children and ensure that parents are not deterred from taking up employment by the loss of free school meals.

2.32 We are determined that young people should not be lost from the labour market. Funding has been committed for over 300,000 additional youth training and job opportunities, and increased numbers of further and higher education places and apprenticeships, to help families with young people.

Teenage parents

2.33 Since the start of the *Teenage Pregnancy Strategy* in 1999, we have reversed the previous upward trend and reduced the under-18 conception rate by 10.5 per cent. Within this reduction, births to teenage mothers have declined by 23.3 per cent, and are at their lowest level for 15 years. Whilst outcomes for teenage parents and their children in terms of health and economic wellbeing are still disproportionately poor, this is not inevitable if early and sustained support is provided. Working with local authorities and primary care trusts we are providing assistance, including tailored maternity services to improve uptake of antenatal care; intensive support for teenage mothers and young fathers; supported accommodation for all parents aged under-18 who cannot live at home; and Care to Learn funding for childcare. Since 1998, the proportion of teenage mothers in education, training or employment has increased from 22 per cent to almost 33 per cent and 98 per cent of young parents said that Care to Learn helped them to go on their first choice course.

2.34 The Family Nurse Partnership programme is a proven model of intensive nurse-led home visiting for vulnerable, first time young mothers and fathers. It begins in early pregnancy, helping young parents to form positive relationships with their babies and provide the care that children need to flourish and become more confident in bringing up their children. It is being tested in 50 local areas with over 3,000 families already benefiting. The intention is to give 70 areas the opportunity to test the programme locally, reaching around 7,000 families by 2011. Subject to successful evaluation, the Government has committed to making the programme available nationally over the coming years.

Families with children with special educational needs or disabled children

2.35 Families with disabled children face particular challenges and are often heavily reliant on public services to meet the needs of their child.¹⁰⁶ The Government is investing over £750 million to transform local services for disabled children and their families. The Aiming High for Disabled Children programme is significantly increasing short breaks for families, with positive activities for disabled children and a break from caring for parents and siblings. In the first year of the programme there were an additional 13,000 overnight breaks and 376,000 more hours of short-break provision during the day, compared to the previous year. Aiming High is also improving access to childcare to increase opportunities for parents to work; tackling the problems which disabled young people face in the transition into adulthood; and giving parents a greater say in shaping local services through parent forums in all areas. In 2009, there was a two percentage point increase in parental satisfaction with local services for their disabled child.

2.36 *The Lamb Inquiry* looked at parental confidence in the special educational needs (SEN) system and the Government is taking forward its recommendations.¹⁰⁷ This includes a £31 million, Achievement for All, pilot in ten areas to improve outcomes for children with SEN and disabilities and raise parental engagement. There will also be better information for parents about how well schools are meeting their child's needs, and better redress when things go wrong.

¹⁰⁶ Glenn, F., 2007. *Growing together or drifting apart? Children with disabilities and their parents' relationships*. London: One Plus One.

¹⁰⁷ Lamb Inquiry — *Special Educational Needs and Parental Confidence*, 2009.

Armed Forces families

- 2.37** The nation has an important commitment to our Armed Forces and their families and veterans. *The Nation's Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans* published in July 2008, commits the Government to ending any disadvantage that service life imposes on families. It specifically seeks to counter the difficulties that follow from being required to move around the country or the world, and identifies areas where special treatment is needed. The Government continues to take this work forward to ensure that it delivers consistent and enduring support.
- 2.38** One example of the Government's work in this area is through the Service Families Employment Taskforce. Established at the end of last year, this group is looking at what more can be done to tackle the barriers Service families face when looking for work. It will report later this year on what practical steps can be taken to ensure Service families have the same work, education and training opportunities as the wider community. A second example is the draft childcare sufficiency guidance which the Government has recently published for consultation. This asks local authorities to take account of the particular childcare needs of Service families in their assessments. A third is the Government's review of the guidance given to local authorities on school allocations policy, to ensure this also reflects the needs of Service families.

Targeted help for families with complex needs

- 2.39** In April 2009 every local authority received funding to employ parenting practitioners and experts to provide advice to parents and run parenting courses. These include Parenting Early Intervention Programmes which help mothers and fathers tackle behaviour problems in 8–13 year old children before they become entrenched. Evaluations found the number of parents who classified their children as having significant behavioural difficulties dropped by a half after attending the programme.¹⁰⁸
- 2.40** The Government has funded and led the development of a programme of Family Intervention Projects in every local authority. Family Intervention Projects have been shown to be highly successful in helping families with

¹⁰⁸ Lindsay, G. et al, 2008. *Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder evaluation*. Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research, University Of Warwick.

complex needs, whose behaviour or the behaviour of their children is causing serious distress to themselves and nuisance to others around them. Plans are in place to expand the programme so that 50,000–60,000 families can be helped by 2015 and this is set out in more detail in Chapter 6.

Ensuring national policy is informed by parents and families

2.41 Parents' and families' views have informed and guided many of these reforms through consultation and research. The Government further strengthened this approach through the new Annual Parental Opinion Survey and the mechanism of a Parents' Panel, comprising 40 parents from a wide range of backgrounds, established in January 2009. The Panel advises the Government, commenting on its policies at an early stage of their development as well as giving their views about how policies are being implemented. The Government also consults with children through the Children and Youth Board who regularly feed into policy debates and the Children's Commissioner provides an independent voice for children and young people. This Green Paper will help us to continue to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, by promoting children's wellbeing through improved support to families. In addition, in November 2009 a Grandparents' Summit was convened, with grandparents from a range of backgrounds and their representative organisations.

2.42 DCSF has played an important role in encouraging practitioners and policy makers to Think Family and to promote the importance of working with the whole family when children experience problems; and the national Think Fathers' campaign, to encourage greater recognition of the role fathers play in family life among employers, public services and the population as a whole. The Fatherhood Institute will carry out an annual review of progress against the aims of the campaign. The first progress report is due in autumn 2010.

Supporting delivery in local areas

2.43 Better outcomes for children and young people depend on services being child and family centred and working together effectively. That is why the Government has required each area to establish a Children's Trust — the local partnership which brings together all the key organisations responsible for services for children, young people and families in a shared

commitment to improving children's lives. Children and young people rely on a range of services, not all of which are focused directly on their needs. That is why, following the passage of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learners Act 2009, Jobcentre Plus is a relevant partner in Children's Trusts. Children's Trust Boards will also be required to consult families, as well as children and young people, in drawing up the local Children and Young People's Plan.

- 2.44** The Department also supports Children's Trusts in working with families through funding the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children's and Young People's Services (C4EO), which has a remit to bring together evidence-based practice on particular themes about what really does work to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. One of C4EO's themes is Families, Parents and Carers.

Looking to the future

- 2.45** The legislation, new policy measures, very significant increases in funding and improvements in provision described only briefly here mean there is now much more comprehensive support available for children and families compared to a generation ago. Many services for families have been utterly transformed, particularly for children in their early years and their parents, who are now much better served than ever before in this country.
- 2.46** This provides a strong foundation for moving forward. It will be important to maximise the positive impact of investment in policy and services to support families, paying careful attention both to what families say they want and need and to what the evidence shows is likely to be most effective in helping them and their children. Among other things this suggests that extra help should to be directed in particular towards families at times when there is additional pressure on family relationships, such as the birth of a child.
- 2.47** In line with the progressive universal approach that has underpinned all the Government's action to help children and families, it will also be important to ensure that good universal provision for all families is accompanied by more targeted and specialist help for the children and their families who need it the most.

2.48 The pace and scale of the social and demographic trends described earlier in this Paper, and the family changes that have accompanied them, pose big challenges for policy and services. The following chapters set out what government will do to ensure that family policy is fit for the 21st century and can help families of all kinds to build and sustain good relationships, above all for the benefit of their children.

Chapter 3:

Bringing up children

Summary

Good parenting is crucial for children and can help them to overcome disadvantages. Good parenting happens in all sorts of families and policy needs to reflect this diversity, helping all children to have the best. Policies and services also need to respond sensitively to the needs of all family members as it's not only parents who are important for children. They should be based on the principles of helping families to sustain good relationships and directing extra support to the children and families in greatest need.

A wide range of support is already available to help families raise their children, from pre-birth, through childhood and adolescence, and beyond.

Measures include:

- setting out what families can expect from key services at crucial stages in life — during pregnancy and birth of a child, in the period up to a child's fifth birthday, and from the age of 5–19 years;
- supporting plans by the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) to produce professional guidance for their members on how best to engage fathers around the birth of their child;
- ensuring the free Bounty Packs given to newly pregnant women will also now include materials specifically designed for fathers;
- extending the offer of key worker support to families with disabled children across the 0–19 age range;
- commissioning a free parenting support booklet for parents of young people, written by independent experts and parents; and making advice available for families of teenagers on a range of adolescent concerns more accessible online and via mobile phones;

- commissioning free materials to help parents guide their children and help them deal with commercial messages transmitted via both old and new media; and
- strengthening support for family and friends carers by: consulting on a new statutory guidance framework and revised National Minimum Standards for fostering service providers; producing a support pack for relatives caring for children because of a parent's drug or alcohol misuse; and exploring with stakeholders the difficulties experienced by family and friends carers and how to help them to access the support they need.

- 3.1** Becoming a parent is among the most wonderful things that can ever happen to anyone, but bringing up children is also challenging. The challenges change over time with the different stages of children's development and also vary quite significantly in nature and degree between families.
- 3.2** Parents are the most profoundly important people in the world for babies and younger children and remain hugely significant to children as they grow up. Good parenting is crucial for children's outcomes and can protect them against other disadvantages.
- 3.3** Policy and services need to respond intelligently and sensitively and be framed in ways that support parents and families in their task of raising their children: it is important to restate the guiding principle in *The Children's Plan* that parents and families bring up children, not governments.
- 3.4** It follows from the analyses in earlier chapters that particular attention should be paid to ensuring that policy and services can respond to families of all kinds, helping families to sustain good relationships and directing additional support to the children and families in greatest need.

Pregnancy and the birth of a child

- 3.5** Becoming a parent is life-changing. Major adjustments are needed in all areas of family life, including in the relationships parents have with each other as they care for a new baby. Research suggests that only a minority of parents find that having a child actually improves their relationship with

their partner in the short term,¹⁰⁹ often because of practical issues.¹¹⁰ The extra help that grandparents, other relatives and family friends are able to give can be really important in supporting parents at this critical time.

- 3.6** Pregnancy, birth and the post-natal period are periods of great change for family relationships. Factors like smoking and maternal stress and mental health all have an influence on the baby's development, and are shaped by the relationships between mother and father, and the family environment. For parents, pregnancy is also an important time for adapting to physical, social and psychological changes and building relationships with friends, family and professionals. This is why the quality and continuity of joined-up support new parents receive from services is crucial. Not only is it a time when parents may feel vulnerable and overwhelmed, it is also a time when they are often particularly receptive to advice and support.
- 3.7** Naturally, the most important thing for parents is safe, high-quality care during pregnancy and childbirth, and this is a key priority for the Government. We have increased capacity for maternity and neonatal services with additional investment and staff. 1,000 extra midwives have already been recruited and this is expected to increase to 4,000 by 2012, subject to the birth rate.
- 3.8** Health visitors also play a critical role in supporting families. Through the Action on Health Visiting programme, the Government has committed to reinvigorating the profession and strengthening the capacity and capability of the workforce and its focus on vulnerable children and families. All families now receive a review in pregnancy by the health visiting team, with more emphasis than before on the emotional and behavioural aspects of caring for children. The proposed new Preparing for Pregnancy, Birth and Beyond programme will provide high-quality antenatal support that helps mothers and fathers prepare not only for the birth but also the wider context of parenthood and family relationships.
- 3.9** Developments in neuroscience are increasingly showing that experiences and interactions that take place during pregnancy and in the early years of a child's life are vital to the child's later wellbeing and to its healthy development. In keeping with our commitment in *Building Britain's Future*,

¹⁰⁹ Belsky, J. and Kelly, L., 1994. *The transition to parenthood: how a first child changes a marriage*. Vermillion.

¹¹⁰ Cowan, P. and Cowan, C., 2003. Normative family transitions. F Walsh, ed. *Normal Family Processes: Growing diversity and complexity*. 3rd ed. NY: The Guilford Press.

we are carrying out a review which focuses specifically on this period in a child's life.¹¹¹ The review will describe our vision for maternity and early years support, with a particular emphasis on helping all members of a family to support their child's wellbeing at this crucial time. It will also set out in detail what support and help is available to families during this period, how we intend to make families more aware of this, and what more we might do. We are especially keen to make sure that Sure Start Children's Centres play a full role, working together with GPs, maternity teams, health visitors and other health professionals, in supporting children and families during this period and in helping every child to thrive. The review will be published in spring 2010.

- 3.10** Research shows that when fathers are highly involved with their babies they are more likely to remain involved as their children grow up.¹¹² This in turn has a significant benefit on children's outcomes.¹¹³ Services that have traditionally focused on child and maternal health and wellbeing therefore need to take steps to become more inclusive of fathers. We will be hosting a summit in January 2010 with health professionals, fathers and third sector organisations to build a consensus on the importance of maternity services actively engaging fathers around the birth of their child, and to share best practice and practical examples in how to achieve it.
- 3.11 The Government will support plans by the Royal College of Midwives to produce professional guidance for their members on how best to engage fathers around the birth of their child and highlighting the benefits for child and mother of doing so.**
- 3.12 To support new fathers the Bounty Packs given to newly pregnant women will also now include materials specifically designed for fathers.**

Birth registration and parental responsibility

- 3.13** Where a child's parents are married to each other, both automatically have parental responsibility for the child. The majority of unmarried

111 HM Government, 2009. *Building Britain's Future*, page 72.

112 Flouri, E., 2005. *Fathering & Child Outcomes*. Wiley.; Pleck, J. H., and Masciadrelli, B. P., 2004. Paternal Involvement by US residential fathers: levels, sources and consequences. M.E. Lamb, ed. *The Role of the Father in Child Development*. 4th ed. Wiley, 222-271.

113 Flouri, E. and Buchanan, A., 2002. Father involvement in childhood and trouble with the police in adolescence; findings. Findings from the 1958 British Cohort, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 17 (6), 689-701; Feinstein, L. and Symons, J., 1990. Attainment in secondary school. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 51 (2), 300-321.

fathers already obtain parental responsibility by registering their child's birth jointly with the child's mother (usually by going with her to the registry office). We want to make the system easier for all parents to be jointly registered and so legal provisions have been made for a new approach to birth registration for unmarried parents. This will mean that more children will have both parents' names on their birth certificate and more fathers will be able to have parental responsibility for their children.

- 3.14** These changes will come into effect from January 2011 and we will start to communicate information about the new arrangements from summer 2010. We will aim to encourage unmarried parents to register the birth together, but if they are unable to do so then there will be alternative routes to joint birth registration available. We will highlight the importance of both parents being involved in a child's life right from the outset, even if they are not living together or in a continuing relationship. Jointly registering a child's birth is an important first step in taking on parental responsibility.
- 3.15** Whilst parents have the legal responsibility for children, many other adults, including those in the wider family and family friends, will play important roles in their lives, and they often feel some responsibility for their wellbeing. Some families choose to celebrate the arrival of a new baby through a naming ceremony. For some this is a religious event, involving godparents or spiritual guardians for the child, whilst for others it is a way of welcoming their new child into their wider circle of family and friends. Other families use these events to reaffirm their responsibilities and values as parents, in the same way that the marriage ceremony affirms the responsibilities and a commitment of a couple to each other.
- 3.16** Most parents instinctively understand what it means to take on the responsibility of parenthood, and are strongly motivated to do the best for their children. However, there are undoubtedly some parents who do not fully embrace this responsibility, or perhaps do not understand how to act on it. A minority of parents do not provide financially for their children, for example. The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission is working to address this through a programme to change attitudes and behaviour. Some parents may be fully involved in their children's lives, and well motivated to support them, but because of problems in their own lives, face challenges in parenting. The end of this chapter sets out what the

Government is doing to help, particularly for groups such as teenage parents, who may face additional challenges.

Support for families as children grow up

Support for families with children under five

3.17 The love, care and attention that a child receives in the early months and years is crucial. As highlighted in the recent report, *Mental Capital and Wellbeing: making the most of ourselves in the 21st century*, parents and the home environment play a crucial role in the development of a child's literacy and numeracy skills.¹¹⁴ Provision for children in their early years and their families has been completely transformed over the last decade. It now encompasses a wide range of services that are available to support many different aspects of children's wellbeing and development during the first critical five years, with help of various kinds on offer for families.

3.18 **These services are now sufficiently well developed to make it possible to explain what every family can expect to be available to them and their children up to the age of five, in every area of England.** This will be communicated to all families with children under five, and those expecting a baby, through websites like Direct.Gov and others; and through putting leaflets in places where families with young children go — like Children's Centres, schools or libraries.

Support for families with children under five

This support is available, wherever appropriate, to mothers and fathers, whether resident with their child or not, and to guardians and carers.

During pregnancy:

- a maternity health professional will make a full assessment of your health and wider needs when you are around 12 weeks pregnant;
- you will be given information and offered guidance on subjects such as nutrition, smoking, alcohol and breastfeeding;
- you will be entitled to receive a one-off health in pregnancy grant worth £190;

¹¹⁴ The Government Office of Science, 2008. *Mental Capital and Wellbeing: making the most of ourselves in the 21st century*.

- you will have the chance to discuss becoming a parent and what support is available if you need it. You will be offered the opportunity to access web-based resources and join a local group to learn about becoming a parent and to prepare for the birth;
- you will meet someone from the Healthy Child team before you have your baby. The Healthy Child team is led by a health visitor, who works closely with your Primary Care services, such as your local GP, and local Sure Start Children's Centre; and
- around the time of your child's birth, you will be given your child's health record (the Red Book) which will tell you what services you are entitled to and will record your child's health and development.

In the early days and weeks:

- you will receive support from your midwifery and health visiting teams on breastfeeding, caring for your new baby and adjusting to life as a parent;
- your baby will be examined and receive a number of tests, including a hearing test;
- you will be offered immunisations for your baby when he or she is eight weeks, three months, four months, 12 months and 13 months old;
- mothers can take 52 weeks of maternity leave, 39 weeks of it paid;
- fathers can take two weeks of paid paternity leave when the child is born;
- from April 2011, fathers will be able to take up to six months of additional paternity leave if the mother returns to work with maternity leave outstanding. Up to three months of it may be paid if taken during the mother's maternity pay period; and
- you can access your local Sure Start Children's Centre — one of over 3,500 that will be open in 2010. All Sure Start Children's Centres are designed to meet the needs of their local communities, but all provide a core offer of services to young children and their families, including access to childcare, health services, training and employment support outreach and family support.

Early learning and childcare:

- you can continue to access your local Sure Start Children's Centre;
- you can use your entitlement to free childcare provision for your three or four year old child — this is being extended to 15 hours per week from September 2010 with more flexibility in how the offer can be used. Ten hours of free childcare is also now being offered for two year olds for families living in disadvantaged communities and by 2015 this will be extended to families on low or modest incomes;
- you can apply for financial support for childcare through the childcare element of Working Tax Credits or other schemes that are supporting parents who are training to work;
- you will receive free Bookstart book packs when your baby is 6–9 months, 18 months and three years plus, to improve your child's communication skills and encourage their enjoyment of books;
- you will be offered access to a variety of early years settings such as childminders or nurseries, who will work in partnership with you to support your child to learn and develop. This includes providing you with information about the activities provided for your child, policies and procedures (including safeguarding) and how you can access your child's development records;
- you can be confident that the quality of formal childcare settings is monitored very closely: every setting is registered and inspected by Ofsted, all provide a minimum adult-child ratio; more staff are qualified in child development; and all settings are required to work in partnership with parents and carers through the Early Years Foundation Stage; and
- from 2011, you will be able to access full-time early learning and care for your child from the September after his or her fourth birthday.

Information for families:

- You can access, through local Family Information Services and the Family Information Directory,¹¹⁵ information and advice on:
 - high quality relationship and parenting support
 - the quality and availability of childcare and early learning
 - the availability of home visiting for more vulnerable families

Balancing work and home life:

- you can request flexible working from your employer if you have been working for them for 26 weeks or more;
- you can take 13 weeks of unpaid parental leave. This is available per parent per child, and can currently be used before the child's fifth birthday; and
- you can take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off to deal with certain family emergencies.

Helping your child to stay healthy throughout early childhood:

- you will be involved in three full reviews of your baby's health: at 14 days, at one year, and at between two and 2.5 years. These will support you to provide the best care for your child, protect your baby from serious infectious diseases, and check whether he or she is developing normally;
- you will also be offered immunisation for diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio and measles, mumps and rubella when your child is three years and four months or soon after; and
- when your child starts school, their health will be reviewed, including sight and hearing tests and measurement of height and weight.

Support for children with additional needs:

- you can access non-statutory early education special educational needs (SEN) settings and have rights to request a statutory assessment of special educational needs; and
- you can access Early Support if you have a young disabled child.

¹¹⁵ See Chapter 6 for more information on the Family Information Directory.

Support for families with children aged between 5–19 years old

Families, schools and colleges

- 3.19** Schools have an important part to play in supporting families — in particular, by working in partnership with children and parents to support learning and development. To support this vital role and improve outcomes for children, the White Paper, *Your child, your schools, our future*, set out new Pupil and Parent Guarantees. These are reciprocal commitments between schools and parents concerning their child’s education.
- 3.20** These Guarantees describe the partnership agreement between children, parents and schools, with schools undertaking to deliver clear standards of service, delivery and accountability to parents on behalf of their child, and parents in return, through Home School Agreements, committing to back the school and support their child’s learning. These commitments will become law, subject to Parliamentary approval, through the Children, Schools and Families Bill which is currently going through Parliament.

Pupil and Parent Guarantees

The guarantee to the **pupil** is a school where there is:

- good behaviour, strong discipline, order and safety;
- a broad, balanced and flexible curriculum including skills for learning and life;
- teaching that meets the child’s needs, where progress is regularly checked, and additional needs are spotted early and quickly addressed;
- sport and cultural activities; and
- children’s welfare and wellbeing are promoted.

The **parent** is guaranteed:

- opportunities, information and support to exercise choice;
- a Home School Agreement outlining parents’ rights and responsibilities for the child’s schooling;
- support for involvement and engagement in their child’s learning and development; and
- access to extended services including support and advice on parenting.

- 3.21** We are also improving the handling of parents' complaints about individual school issues by enabling the Local Government Ombudsman to investigate complaints about individual school issues, and working to clarify the processes at school level.
- 3.22** Given how critical the home environment is to children's attainment and achievement, the government will be developing information and advice to help parents understand what more they can do to support their child's learning.¹¹⁶ The Government will also develop best practice guidance for schools, professionals and other organisations on working with parents and families. This will be informed by the research we are currently undertaking to highlight those approaches which have proved most successful in helping schools to target their resources more effectively.
- 3.23** Surveys show that the relationships between parents and their children's secondary school and/or college are usually far less developed than between parents and early years settings and primary schools.¹¹⁷ There are lots of reasons for this, including the fact that by the time children are at secondary school both parents are more likely to be working, as well as the greater independence of young people as they move through adolescence and beyond.
- 3.24** From September 2010 every secondary school pupil will receive personal tutoring from a named member of staff. To support parents to have closer links with their child's secondary school, as set out in our strategy, *Quality, Choice and Aspiration*, the staff providing personal tutoring will be the main point of contact between a parent and the school. They will be expected to know the pupils they are tutoring well, and to help them to achieve their potential.
- 3.25** Building on this, the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) will **investigate the nature of the links that currently exist between parents, schools, colleges and training providers and identify existing particularly effective approaches to engaging with parents and families that could be disseminated more widely.**

¹¹⁶ DCSF, 2008. *The Children's Plan One Year On: a progress report*.

¹¹⁷ Parental Involvement in Children's Education (PICE), 2007.

The Healthy Child Programme for 5–19 year olds

- 3.26** The Healthy Child Programme (HCP) complements the support available through the Pupil and Parent Guarantee. It offers every family access to high quality health services to give every child the best start in life, and recognises how vital parent-child relationships are to children’s development, achievement and wider wellbeing. However, its offer only constitutes part of the HCP set out in the guidance, and the ambition is for all the best practice set out in this guidance to become common practice across the country.
- 3.27** To make this happen, the Government has said it will take a number of steps. For example, from 2010 we will begin to develop an online resource to showcase good practice in HCP delivery and provide additional support for local areas. Pilots will also be carried out to test different ways of providing support, such as a health review of transition to secondary school. **In addition, later this year parents will be informed about the health-focused information, advice and guidance made available through the-programme.**

Healthy Child Programme 5–19

Families of children aged 5–11

When your child starts school:

- you should be offered screening for your child for visual and hearing impairment and referrals made if there is cause for concern;
- you will be offered to have your child’s height and weight measured, and will be informed of the results in a confidential letter. This is repeated when they are in Year 6 (aged 10–11 years); and
- a health review at school entry will also provide the opportunity to check additional areas, such as whether under fives immunisations have been completed, as recommended.

Throughout your child’s primary school years:

- you can be confident that your child will have access to a range of support and advice promoting healthy lifestyles (e.g. through the Healthy Schools programme);

- your child will have access to two hours of PE in the curriculum plus an additional three hours of sport per week within and beyond the school; and
- your child will be provided with good quality, healthy school meals which comply with statutory nutritional standards.

Families of children and young people aged 11–19

- you can be confident that your child will have access to Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE), including Sex and Relationship Education (SRE);
- your child will have access to two hours of PE in the curriculum plus an additional three hours of sport per week within and beyond the school;
- your children will be provided with good quality, healthy school meals which comply with statutory nutritional standards;
- you can be confident that your children will have access to a range of support and advice promoting healthy lifestyles (e.g. through the Healthy Schools and Healthy FE programmes; and for teenagers who are considering becoming or who are sexually active — access to contraceptive and sexual health services and chlamydia screening);
- your children will be offered an immunisation booster which protects against tetanus, diphtheria and polio; and
- girls aged 12–13 and those in the catch-up programme will be offered the HPV vaccine which protects against cervical cancer.

Helping families to help their children make decisions about qualifications and careers

3.28 Surveys of young people suggest they are highly likely to approach their parents for guidance when choosing courses, qualifications, training and jobs.¹¹⁸ As parents usually know their children best of all they are uniquely placed to offer the insightful advice that young people often need, as well as encouragement and support.

¹¹⁸ Ofsted, 2008. *TellUs3* National Report.

- 3.29** Studies are also clear that many parents worry about their ability to give their children really well informed up-to-date advice given the changes to both the range of qualifications on offer and the job market. The Government committed, in *Quality, Choice and Aspiration*, to make significant improvements to information for parents on learning and work opportunities for young people, and provide new resources to meet parents' and families' needs.¹¹⁹ To ensure young people and their parents are able to make informed choices, they will also be able to draw on expert advice to choose the route that suits them best. Alongside this, we are strengthening and clarifying the choice of learning and qualifications on offer for 14–19 year olds. This will support all young people to stay in education and training until 17 by 2013 and until 18 by 2015.
- 3.30** In 2010–11, the Government will also fund projects through the Youth Sector Development Fund that deliver new approaches to raising the aspirations of young people in disadvantaged communities. Helping parents to support their children's choices will be an integral element of these projects.

Supporting good parenting

- 3.31** The most significant influence on children and young people's wellbeing and personal development is the nurturing and support provided by their parents or carers. Parents typically draw on their own experience, and on the advice of other family members, friends and professionals such as health visitors, as well as leaflets, websites and TV programmes. Transition points — such as the birth of a baby or when children start or move up in school — are times when parents have been found to want more information and advice.
- 3.32** Parents also want information to be available on demand at a time and place of their choosing and from a trusted source. Sure Start Children's Centres and extended schools all provide access to parenting support in local communities. This is complemented by Parent Know How services; these allow parents to find out about support at any time, and offer more specialist advice that may not be available in individual Centres. Plans for further development of Parent Know How services are set out in Chapter 6.

¹¹⁹ DCSF, 2009. *Quality, Choice and Aspiration - A strategy for young people's information, advice and guidance.*

- 3.33** Where parents are struggling to manage their children’s behaviour, structured, evidence-based parenting programmes can make a real difference. Every local authority area has a parenting strategy. The Government has funded the creation of an online tool to help commissioners in local authorities, schools and Children’s Centres to choose parenting programmes which have been demonstrated to work — the Commissioners’ Toolkit.¹²⁰ The Government is also funding trials of parenting programmes to meet the needs of specific groups such as the parents of young offenders and foster parents.
- 3.34** Parents often turn to grandparents for help, advice and support. They particularly rely on them at times of crisis. The DCSF has therefore funded Grandparents Plus to work with others in the sector to produce a guide to help grandparents help their families through difficult times, especially during the recession. The guide will point grandparents to advice and information that caters for them and their families.

Young and teenage parents

- 3.35** Although teenage births are at their lowest level for 15 years, teenage parents are particularly vulnerable and the Government is doing a great deal to support this group, as set out in Chapter 2. Young fathers and mothers tend to live in deprived areas and have often not succeeded at school. Young people from care are over-represented within this group.
- 3.36** Research with young fathers shows that the vast majority want to be involved with their children, and 78 per cent of births to teenage mothers are jointly-registered. However, many young fathers report exclusion from the maternal family and do not feel welcomed by support services. The Government’s guidance *Teenage Parents Next Steps* sets out what local authorities and primary care trusts should do to change this in maternity services, Targeted Youth Support and Children’s Centres. Services need to identify and support young fathers to be actively involved with their child and to continue or re-engage with education and training.
- 3.37** In addition, we have supported the Fatherhood Institute to publish a resource pack for local areas, *Invisible Fathers: Working with Young Dads*, and we have funded Young People in Focus to host a website for practitioners

¹²⁰ www.commissioningtoolkit.org

to share effective practice on working with young fathers. Like young mothers, young fathers respond well to services and programmes that make sense to them and that value their contribution. The Family Nurse Partnership programme has a high level of involvement by young fathers, and even though 87 per cent of young mothers are not living with the baby's father more than half of the fathers are present for at least one visit in pregnancy and infancy.

"There is a difference between a father and a dad. A dad comes every now and then to give the mother money if the child needs anything. A father is there for his child whenever, he speaks to his child, advises his child, makes the child see the world. I see myself as a father, because my dad was a dad."

Richard, 19, father of a one year old daughter.

Services for families with disabled children

3.38 All families face pressures, but families with disabled children (including those who have long term or complex medical conditions, profound and multiple learning disabilities and mental health needs) often face additional difficulties. Although some parents of disabled children find the pressures bring them together, others struggle to manage and can find themselves being driven apart.¹²¹

3.39 In recent years, the Government has significantly improved the support on offer to these families, in particular through *Aiming High for Disabled Children*, but there is more to be done if disabled children are to enjoy the same life chances as other children. Many families are already supported by a professional who helps them co-ordinate the care needed for their child, and this benefits the whole family, including siblings, parents and grandparents. We want to ensure that more families benefit from this approach. The Early Support programme for children under five includes key working and the Transition Support Programme is improving co-ordination of support for disabled 14–19 year olds. There is currently a gap for 6–13 year olds who need to access multiple services. **The Government will build on the learning from these existing programmes and will extend the offer of key worker support to families with disabled children across the 0–19 range, starting with an initial period in 2010–11 to test out how best to**

¹²¹ Glenn, F., 2007. *Growing together or drifting apart? Children with disabilities and their parents' relationships*. London: One Plus One.

provide this support, with a view to rolling this out more widely through a national programme. Chapter 4 sets out additional relationship support that the Government will now be introducing for these families.

Parenting teenagers

3.40 Most teenagers grow up happy, healthy and safe, enjoy their teenage years and make a successful transition to adult life. But adolescence is a time when young people test their boundaries, bringing significant new worries for many parents and families, as well as, of course, sometimes for young people themselves.

3.41 In the past, parents have often reported that it is hard to access specialist help and advice about parenting problems with teenagers. The Government has responded to this by making more available. New services are being delivered by the voluntary agency Parentline Plus and are accessible online at www.gotateenager.org.uk, and via their telephone helpline on 0808 800 2222.

3.42 To build on this, the Government will commission the publication of a free parenting support booklet for parents of older children and young people. This will be written by independent experts and parents, in recognition of the fact that different strategies are required to parent teenagers successfully, compared to those that are most effective with young children.

3.43 The Government recognises that some issues are of particular concern to parents and that further advice is needed. Government is already providing support to parents to talk to their children about sex and relationships through the new teenage pregnancy and sexual health communications campaign *Sex. Worth Talking About*. The Government will also be taking steps, as part of its wider work to tackle domestic violence, to address violence in teenage relationships. This will include the launch of a marketing campaign targeting teenagers and their parents in February 2010, encouraging parents to discuss this issue with their children.

3.44 The Government is helping parents of young people on other issues too: for example, on alcohol issues through the DCSF's *Why Let Drink Decide?* campaign, and on drug misuse through the FRANK website and helpline.

3.45 The Government intends to make advice more accessible for parents and families of teenagers on a range of adolescent concerns. **It will therefore bring together online information so that it can be easily displayed on websites that parents already use (including school sites) and on mobile phones. It will also review the information on offer to families about teenage problems to ensure it is of sufficient breadth, as well as of consistently excellent quality.**

21st century parenting challenges

3.46 Some of the challenges parents face today are the same as they have always been, but others are new, such as adapting to technological change. Children's and young people's skill in exploiting the new forms of media, communication and social networking often outstrip their parents' capacity. There is no doubt that these developments offer children and young people amazing new opportunities to learn, socialise and have fun. However, they also carry some risks. Parents and families want access to information and guidance about what good parenting means in this context — how they can support their children to take full advantage of the opportunities while taking reasonable steps to protect them from risks.

3.47 The Byron Review, published in March 2008, emphasised the importance of giving parents the skills and confidence to manage their families' use of new technology. In December 2009, the UK Council for Child Internet Safety, established in response to the review, launched the first UK Child Internet Safety Strategy outlining how government, industry and charities will work together to help families keep children and young people safe online. The Click Clever, Click Safe campaign will highlight the new online green cross code — *Zip it, Block it, Flag it*. The new code will help children and young people to understand the simple behaviours that will enable them to enjoy the internet safely.

3.48 In his independent assessment of the impact of the commercial world on children, carried out for DCSF, Professor David Buckingham made it clear that parental mediation in the form of shared viewing and discussion can play an important role in helping children to understand and evaluate commercial messages, encouraging discrimination in their choice of media products.¹²² Professor Buckingham found evidence to suggest that many

¹²² DCSF, 2009. *The impact of the commercial world on children's wellbeing; report of an independent assessment.*

parents do not play as great a role in this respect as they would like, and that this is particularly difficult in relation to new media, as families' use of media becomes more individualised. In its response to Professor Buckingham's review, the Government announced its **intention to commission materials to help parents guide their children and help them deal with commercial messages transmitted via both old and new media.**

- 3.49** In December 2009, the Secretaries of State for Children, Schools and Families and for Culture, Media and Sport announced the appointment of Sarah Thane, a former chair of the Royal Television Society, to carry out an exploratory review about the regulation of children's participation in performances of all kinds, ranging from local drama productions to television and films. Sarah Thane will report before the end of February 2010. Among other issues, she has been asked to consider information and advice that parents might need when deciding whether to allow their child to take part in a performance, particularly on television or in a film, and to make recommendations for improvement.

Strengthening support for foster carers and family and friend carers

- 3.50** Birth parents are not always the primary carers for children. A small but significant minority of children and young people — fewer than one per cent of the population — are taken into care because the courts decide their parents are unable to look after them. Others enter care on a voluntary basis, perhaps in response to a temporary family crisis of some kind. Some children who enter care go on to be adopted. Most children who continue to be looked after in the care system live in foster families and, through our Care Matters programme, we are improving the support given to them.
- 3.51** Foster carers need to be able to take advantage of the mainstream services available to all parents and carers, as well as specialist provision targeted especially at them. Similarly, the children they are looking after have much to gain from universal children's services, and the needs of the whole family, including the foster carers' own children, must be considered in deciding the support foster carers require.

- 3.52** When deciding where to place a child who cannot be returned to their parents, local authorities should consider first whether a placement with a relative or member of the child's social network is possible, in which case the relative or friend should be approved and supported by the local authority as a foster carer. In some cases, the relative, friend or foster carer might apply for a residence or special guardianship order.
- 3.53** But there are some children who are cared for by relatives or friends (often grandparents) outside of the care system. It is estimated that between 200,000 and 300,000 children are currently living with relatives and friends, although precise figures are not available because in the case of close relatives caring for a child the local authorities may not be aware of private family caring arrangements.
- 3.54** However, where these children are cared for by adults who are not their parents or a close relative this is known as private fostering when it is for a period of 28 days or more. Local authorities have a duty to satisfy themselves about the welfare of children who are privately fostered, but they cannot carry this duty out unless they are aware who these children are and where they live. An Advisory Group, chaired by Mary McLeod, is to advise Ministers at the end of March 2010 on how best to increase the numbers of privately fostered children known, or notified, to local authorities.
- 3.55** Children who are cared for by family and friends are therefore in arrangements of varying degrees of formality and visibility to local authorities. These differences matter because they help to determine the degree of legal security to the arrangements and what support, if any, family and friends carers may be entitled to in law. Organisations representing these carers have expressed concerns that some people are not receiving the support they are due because they do not know what is available, because the support is patchy or because it is not provided consistently. Many of the services to relative carers are provided by local authorities and some provide excellent services to this group. However, relative carers have alleged local authorities sometimes seek to minimise their financial and other responsibilities in these situations.
- 3.56** The Government is already responding to these issues through the grant it has given to an expert voluntary organisation, the Family Rights Group

(FRG), to support their advice line. Alongside valuable work by other voluntary organisations like the Grandparents Association, the advice line offers family and friends carers clear advice and information about their entitlements. We also fund FRG to help develop local support groups. Grandparents caring for children will also be able to access all the information and advice for grandparents on www.BeGrand.net as described in Chapter 6.

3.57 In addition, the Government will now also:

- **publish for consultation, in March 2010, a new statutory guidance framework** that sets out how local authorities should approach their responsibilities to this group of children and young people living with family and friends carers;
- **consult on revised National Minimum Standards for Fostering Service Providers** to make clearer expectations of fostering services regarding the recognition and support for family and friends who are approved as foster carers;
- **produce a support pack for relatives who are caring for children because of a parent's drug or alcohol misuse;** and
- **commission a study of evidence on family and friends care** which will build on the work undertaken by Professor Joan Hunt in 2003. This should help to establish a firmer picture of the evidence base for these arrangements, the difficulties carers face and what more can be done to help them.

3.58 In addition, the Government is funding the roll-out of a toolkit to equip local authorities to develop and sustain a family group conference service, in partnership with voluntary organisations. Family group conferences bring whole families together to make decisions about how best to support the children where important decisions need to be made. Also, from 2010 local authorities will have greater flexibility to make payments to family carers under section 17(6) of the Children Act 1989, as a result of a provision in the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 that is due to be commenced in 2010.

3.59 Concerns have been expressed about the difficulties experienced by some family and friends carers if they have to go to court to secure their care of a

child, and about the complexity of the support available for them. We are concerned that some grandparent families in particular are not getting the support to which they are entitled and want to understand more about the barriers to this. **The Government will explore with stakeholders how best to identify these families and help them to access the support they need.**

Chapter 4: Building strong family relationships and dealing with relationship pressures and breakdown

Summary

The Government's aims are to help young people to understand why strong, respectful relationships are important, and to support them in acquiring the skills necessary to build them; to help families of all kinds to sustain strong relationships, particularly those facing additional adversity; and, where families cannot stay together, to help them and their children through the process of breakdown and family transition.

The Government will therefore:

- publish for consultation new Sex and Relationship Education guidance for schools with information for parents about what is taught;
- fund specialist relationship counselling services for families with disabled children;
- commission independent experts to produce additional free materials online for couples who are worried about their relationship and want to know what they can do to restore it;
- establish a high level steering group of experts to work with the Government to take the key messages from research and help shape the delivery of the relationship support proposals set out in this paper;
- produce free materials to help children experiencing family breakdown;
- pilot Parenting Together Apart sessions for separating parents;

- launch a comprehensive review into the future of the family justice system, to report jointly to the Secretaries of State for Justice and for Children, Schools and Families and the Welsh Assembly Government during 2011;
- promote mediation online and explore other means of reaching families with mediation information easier;
- improve the information for grandparents in seeking to maintain their relationships with their grandchildren after parental separation and divorce; and
- remove the requirement for grandparents to obtain the leave of the court before making an application for a contact order and consulting on how far this acts as a barrier for other family members.

- 4.1** Strong and stable relationships are at the heart of family life. The quality of relationships at home makes a big difference to the whole family, but they particularly affect children in their formative years. The Introduction to this paper set out the key research findings relating to the importance of family relationships.
- 4.2** Families and couples rightly see their own relationships as private, and they need to make their own choices. Yet given the importance relationships play in life, and the potential impact on children when couples separate, there is a role for government in providing practical support and advice, which people can draw on if and when they need it.
- 4.3** We all have a role in supporting children and young people to develop the life and relationship skills they will need in the future. And schools in particular can play a role through Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education. Indeed, it is important to look at all family policy through the prism of what will support strong and positive relationships.

Better relationship education for children and young people and better information for parents

- 4.4** In recent years, the Government has introduced new programmes to enhance children's and young people's development of social and emotional skills. In the early years, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) focuses on the importance of respecting others, caring for one another and

developing positive relationships and guidance is available for early years practitioners on the Social and Emotional Aspects of Development (SEAD). One of the key principles in EYFS is positive relationships, where children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents.

- 4.5** Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) is a comprehensive programme to help primary and secondary schools to develop the social and emotional skills of all their pupils, through a whole-school approach that applies across the curriculum. These skills include self-awareness, managing feelings, empathy and motivation. SEAL helps create a safe and healthy school environment where pupils can learn effectively.
- 4.6** The Government's view is that high-quality education on sex and relationships has an important part to play in helping to equip children and young people with the skills and knowledge they need to appreciate the importance of strong, mutually respectful relationships and to make good, informed decisions. The vast majority of parents and families support Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) in schools, and schools have a crucial role in this sensitive area. The Government is clear that schools need to work in close partnership with parents and families. Many schools are already doing this, as illustrated by the case study below.

Case study: SRE book list for parents

- North Lincolnshire Teenage Pregnancy Partnership working together with BigTalk Education has produced a recommended book list for parents and carers, children and teenagers covering topics to do with body science, sex and relationships. The book titles for younger children such as *Let's Talk* and *Body Science* are suitable for parents to read with their children. All the titles are available to borrow for free from local libraries and are stocked by local bookshops.
- Primary schools have promoted the book list to parents and carers as part of an evening session about SRE, which explains what the school will teach and how parents can support learning. Sessions run by BigTalk Education are also offered to parents at Community and Sure Start Children's Centres on keeping your children safe. The sessions cover how to talk to your children about body science, relationships and sex, stressing the importance of starting early to keep them safe.

- 4.7 Legislation is being taken through Parliament that will make PSHE education compulsory. An important part of this curriculum is SRE. In autumn 2009, the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families announced that in future, and subject to Parliamentary approval, parents will be able to withdraw their children from SRE only up to the age of 15, should they wish to do so. In practice, to date, very few parents have chosen to exercise this right.
- 4.8 It is important that children start to build their confidence to talk openly and positively about emotions, relationships and their bodies. School provides a safe place for children and young people to make sense of information they may have picked up from media or their surroundings. SRE also helps children to prepare for the physical and emotional changes of puberty and the changing nature of their relationships with parents, carers and their peers.
- 4.9 Much of the public interest about SRE has focused on the sex element. Of course, this is extremely important, but the Government's view is that it is just as crucial that children and young people receive high-quality relationship education too. We know that many children and young people would prefer the focus to be on relationships too.
- 4.10 An important element of high-quality relationship education is helping both boys and girls to understand the importance of respect and consent within relationships of all kinds, including within intimate relationships. In the *Violence against Women and Girls Strategy*, published in late 2009, the Government made it clear that schools will be required to include strong messages about the unacceptability of violence in personal relationships within their PSHE education offer to pupils.
- 4.11 The Government will take steps to improve the quality of SRE that children receive by shortly publishing for consultation **new guidance for schools, based on best practice, on raising standards overall and how to consult and involve parents.**
- 4.12 **Information will also be produced for parents about the benefits of SRE and what is taught at different ages, together with material commissioned from independent experts that parents can make use of if they wish, in talking to their children about these issues at home.**

Supporting couple relationships

- 4.13** The Government is supporting couple relationships with grants of over £7 million in the years 2009–2011. These grants support organisations such as Marriage Care, Relate, the Asian Family Counselling Service and the Tavistock Centre for Couple Relationships, which all provide frontline relationship support services to families. The Couple Connection, a service within Parent Know How provided by OnePlusOne, is a web-based personal tool offering relationship advice and support to help couples to work through their problems in private.
- 4.14** In December 2008, the Government sponsored a Relationships Summit with agony aunts and family organisations, to discuss what more could be done to help families to sustain strong relationships. At the Summit, the Government announced:
- more support for new parents, through the new Preparing for Pregnancy, Birth and Beyond programme, further details of which were subsequently published in the *Child Health Strategy* in February 2009;
 - more support for children experiencing family breakdown, through the Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) pilot programme, worth £60 million in 2008–11, which is providing support such as counselling and peer mentoring for over 200,000 children and young people in an estimated 1,500 schools; and
 - pilot projects to test how different kinds of local support for separating parents can best be delivered, including counselling and mediation, practical support and legal advice. £4.75 million has been made available in England for this.
- 4.15** At the Summit, a booklet called *Kids in the Middle: An Agony Aunt's guide for parting parents and their children*, written by Deidre Sanders of the Sun newspaper was also published. Around 300,000 copies of the booklet have been distributed and it is also available online.
- 4.16** In recognition of the additional strains placed on family relationships during the recession, the Government has provided an extra £3.1 million to voluntary organisations to enhance their services. This includes £1 million to Relate for additional face-to-face and telephone counselling for nearly 40,000 people who would otherwise be unable to receive their help. This

funding will continue into 2010–11, bringing Relate’s grant to over £1.6m for that year.

- 4.17** As set out in Chapter 3, families with disabled children often face additional difficulties. Caring for a disabled child can be stressful for families and research shows that these couples are at greater risk of relationship or marital problems and divorce.¹²³ **The Government will therefore fund specialist relationship counselling services for families with disabled children and will increase support for the Contact a Family helpline.**
- 4.18** Forthcoming research from Newcastle University, commissioned by the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF), provides further useful insights into how couples deal with relationship issues and the type of support they would find useful. The Government will use the detailed findings of this research to inform future policy and will act immediately on the main policy conclusions.
- 4.19** In response to this research **the Government will take immediate steps to commission independent experts to produce materials, to supplement those already available free online, for couples to make use of as they see fit, if they are worried their relationship is beginning to come under strain and want to know what they can do to restore it.**

¹²³ Glenn, F., 2007. Growing together or drifting apart? Children with disabilities and their parents’ relationships. London: One Plus One.

Conclusions from the Relationships Matters research report¹²⁴

The full research will be published in spring 2010; however, the main policy conclusions are:

- people want relationships to last for life but all relationships are demanding and require work;
- having a baby, a miscarriage, juggling the demands of work and childcare, ill health and money worries can put extreme pressure on relationships;
- couples whose relationship had broken down had tended to put their relationship 'on the back burner', rather than making time to be together, talk with each other and foster the relationship;
- over half of those who had separated believed they could have spotted problems earlier and dealt with them better;
- there is still stigma attached to seeking help with troubled relationships;
- most people thought that learning about and preparing for relationships should start as early as possible — in primary schools — and continue throughout life; and
- many people agreed that government should: provide more support for new parents; provide more support for children whose parents split up; train professionals to spot relationship problems, ensure services such as counselling and parenting support are available, and involve men as well as women; and do more to help couples build stronger and lasting relationships.

4.20 Voluntary sector providers like Relate are key to providing relationship support which families trust. The Government is keen to build on and learn from their experience and **will establish a high level steering group of experts to work with the Government to take the key messages from research and help shape the delivery of the relationship support proposals set out in this paper.**

¹²⁴ Walker, J. et al., 2010. Research Brief — *Relationships Matter: Understanding the Needs of Adults, Particularly Parents, Regarding Relationship Support*, London.

Supporting children and families in dealing with relationship pressures and breakdown

- 4.21** The evidence is also clear that co-operative parenting post-separation makes a big difference for children, with good communication being crucial. Although children respond to family separation in different ways, studies are consistent in suggesting what children find helpful. They show that children want their parents to talk to them about what is happening and they want to be consulted about the big decisions that affect them, such as where and with whom they will be living.¹²⁵
- 4.22** Research suggests that the types of services and help that children and their parents need, both at the time of family breakdown and in the longer term, are services which promote communication between parents and children, help children to develop coping strategies for managing transitions, and reduce conflict between parents. Families also find services which facilitate continuing contact with non-resident parents and support networks for children whose parents have separated beneficial.¹²⁶ However, it has also been observed that practice in some of these areas is relatively undeveloped and that few of these approaches have been thoroughly evaluated.¹²⁷
- 4.23** Taking these findings into account the Government believes it is important to do more to help children, so it will work with the Kids in the Middle (KITM) Campaign to **produce a guide specifically for children and young people** whose parents are separating or divorcing, building on the success of the existing guide for adults. The Government will work closely with the KITM partner organisations on publicity and dissemination of the guide, and will also make it available through schools, Cafcass, Children's Centres, libraries and other family services.
- 4.24** Schools are the key universal service which may be first to pick up any emotional problems which children start to display. Recent policy developments, including the SEAL programme, are strengthening support for children and young people's emotional health and improving schools' pastoral role. Through the Targeted Mental Health in Schools programme,

¹²⁵ Hawthorne, J., et al, 2003. *Supporting Children through Family Change: A Review of Interventions and Services for Children of Divorcing and Separating Parents*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

¹²⁶ Hawthorne, J., et al, 2003. *Supporting Children through Family Change: A Review of Interventions and Services for Children of Divorcing and Separating Parents*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

¹²⁷ Mooney, A., Oliver, C., and Smith, M., 2009. *Impact of Family Breakdown on Children's Well-being: Evidence Review*. London: DCSF.

the Government is evaluating evidence-based approaches to support children and young people at risk of developing mental health problems.

The Government will ensure that this investment strengthens the evidence base about ‘what works’ in providing counselling support to children in schools.

- 4.25** Money is a key concern — and can be a major source of conflict — when couples separate. As well as providing *A Parent’s Guide to Money* to all new and expectant parents, the Financial Services Authority (FSA) provides advice and guidance on money for parents who are separating or divorcing.¹²⁸ High-quality PSHE education, which now includes a focus on financial matters, will also help relationships in later life by teaching children the importance of money and how to handle it.
- 4.26** The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission has been established to maximise the number of effective child maintenance arrangements. The Commission runs a statutory scheme to arrange payments when parents are unable to agree to an arrangement privately. The Commission can also help parents select the maintenance arrangements that best suit them through its Child Maintenance Options service which provides free impartial information and tools, including a maintenance calculator.

¹²⁸ http://www.moneymadeclear.fsa.gov.uk/guides/family/separation_and_divorce.html

Case study: Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission

- A separated father from Glasgow who was using the Child Support Agency (CSA) to pay child maintenance to his ex-wife says his relationship with her has “*improved tenfold*” since they worked out a private arrangement using guidance he received from Child Maintenance Options.
- His ex-wife agreed to waive the fixed cash payments she would have received via the Agency in exchange for a more flexible, collaborative arrangement. Now, he pays for clothes, school trips, takes the children on holiday, pays for music and dance lessons and contributes to essentials such as food, heating and mortgage.
- He said: “*I printed the private contract form off the Options website and we sat down over coffee and worked it out. The kids are happier as they get to see me more and we aren’t arguing all the time. Before I used to sit in the car and wait for the kids. Now I go in for coffee and I talk to my ex every day. And I’ve saved a fortune in legal fees.*”

4.27 In December 2008, the Government introduced court ordered contact activities to help establish and maintain safe, beneficial contact between non-resident parents and their children. As part of this, parents who take their cases to court can currently be ordered to attend Parenting Information Programmes. These sessions help separating or divorcing parents to provide the best support for their children by advising on how to cope with the practical and emotional difficulties that often arise. Although the full impact of these parenting sessions has not yet been evaluated, initial feedback is very positive and participants have suggested offering the support earlier in the separation process to maximise the benefits to parents and their children. A new academic study commissioned by Gingerbread, a voluntary organisation that represents single parents, shows that it is not just those who go to court who experience difficulties in managing the process of family transition and parenting after separation.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Peacey, V. and Hunt, J., 2009. *I’m not saying it was easy’: contact problems in separated families*. London: Gingerbread.

4.28 The Government therefore proposes to **pilot Parenting Together Apart sessions for separating couples. These pilots will look at how to make Parenting Together Apart sessions available to couples who have made the decision to separate.**

Improving the family justice system

4.29 The vast majority of separating parents make their own private arrangements for contact with their children, but between five and ten per cent seek help from the courts with this. These families tend to be experiencing very high levels of conflict.¹³⁰

4.30 The court process aims to help parents establish and maintain a co-operative approach to parenting during and after their separation. The Government funds the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) to support children's interests where parents separate through the family courts or where children are involved in other family court proceedings. Judges, Cafcass officers and the many other professionals working in the family justice system are committed to doing their utmost to help parents to establish and maintain a co-operative approach for the benefit of their children.

4.31 But the adversarial nature of the private law system is sometimes perceived to inflame rather than reduce parental conflict. The process can be emotionally and financially draining for parents and distressing for children. Research conducted on the longer-term outcomes of families using the courts highlighted that many parents consider the court experience, or legal route, ineffective in dealing with the issues that concerned them.¹³¹ These criticisms have been drawn into sharp focus by the increasing demands being placed on the system by the rising numbers of both public and private law cases in recent months.

4.32 **The Government has therefore decided to launch a comprehensive review of the family justice system**, which will report jointly to the Secretaries of State for Justice and Children, Schools and Families and the Welsh Assembly Government. The principle that 'the interests of the child should be paramount' will be at the heart of this review. The review will

¹³⁰ DCA, DfES and DTI, 2004. *Parental Separation: Children's Needs and Parents' Responsibilities: Next Steps*; Trinder, L. et al, 2006. *Making Contact happen or making contact work?* DCA Research Series 3/06.

¹³¹ Trinder, L. and Kellett, J, 2007. *The longer term outcomes of in-court conciliation*. Ministry of Justice Research Series 15/07.

focus on the management and leadership of the family justice system and what can be done to promote informed settlement and agreement of family law cases outside of the court system. It will seek to learn from the experience of other jurisdictions and from research and will be supported by the appointment of an expert, external advisory group. The review will report to both Secretaries of State during 2011.

- 4.33** The Government believes that there are a number of practical steps that can be taken more immediately to improve outcomes for families involved in the family justice system, focused on the promotion of mediation. Mediation in family cases can improve outcomes for children by reducing hostility and conflict between parents and delivering faster resolution of issues. When successful, mediation can be less acrimonious, cheaper and quicker than pursuing a court case.
- 4.34** Since 1997, the Legal Services Commission has provided publicly-funded family mediation to individuals entitled to legal aid for their family law case. However, few separating couples participate in mediation. Although 50,000 couples are referred to mediation services annually, just 13,500 actually mediate. When parents in the Gingerbread study were asked what they thought would have been helpful to them and their children many mentioned mediation or a mediation-type service, with most unaware that such services already existed. A common misconception, for example, is that mediation is only for couples who want to reconcile, rather than reach a mutually-agreed separation arrangement.
- 4.35** The Government wants to ensure that everyone involved in family proceedings is aware of the benefits of mediation as an alternative means of resolving disputes. To that end, **the Government will promote mediation online and we will explore other means of reaching families with mediation information earlier.**
- 4.36** To ensure separating couples have fully considered the suitability of mediation in their circumstances, **the Government would also be interested in views about whether mediation assessment should be made compulsory for parents who go to court to seek to resolve residence or contact disputes,** where it is safe to do so.
- 4.37** Couples who attend mediation need to feel confident in the quality and professionalism of the mediator in whom they are placing their trust. To

this end, **the Government will work with the Family Mediation Council to build on accreditation schemes for mediators.**

- 4.38** This Paper has also presented evidence on the benefits for children when they are able to maintain their relationships with their grandparents after their parents part. Organisations representing grandparents have expressed concerns about the difficulties some grandparents experience in keeping in touch with their grandchildren. **The Government will improve the information available for grandparents about the legal and other options available to them in seeking to maintain their relationships with their grandchildren**, working in partnership with expert organisations and making this information widely available online.
- 4.39** At present, grandparents who wish to obtain a contact order in respect of their grandchildren have to seek the leave of the court before doing so. **The Government intends to remove the requirement for grandparents to obtain the leave of the court before making an application for a contact order and would be interested in views** as to how far this acts as a barrier for other family members, particularly step family members.

Chapter 5: Family relationships and employment

Summary

Employment is essential for a decent family income. For working parents and carers a trade-off is needed between employment and spending time with their family. High quality childcare, services and flexible working opportunities for parents and carers can help to square this circle.

It is not the Government's role to prescribe what a good work-life balance is; each family is different and best placed to decide what is right for them. However, Government does have an enabling role — helping to extend the choices that families are able to make. This supports family relationships as well as benefiting our economy.

The Government will therefore:

- consult, later this year, on the notice period for the two-week paternity leave period;
- explore the barriers to taking paternity leave faced by fathers not eligible for paternity pay, and examining the merits of introducing a paternity allowance;
- consult on whether parents should be able to take parental leave when their children are older than five years old;
- launch an online eligibility checker to give parents a much clearer picture of the types of financial assistance they may be entitled to for their childcare;
- encourage all Sure Start Children's Centres to offer a 'walking bus service' to help families with children in different settings operating to different timescales, thereby increasing the hours when parents can potentially work;

- help families to reclaim more childcare costs for children over eight through tax credits, by supporting providers to register voluntarily with Ofsted;
- ask the Standing Commission for Carers, the Government's Expert Advisory Group, to explore the challenges facing inter-generational and distance carers during 2010;
- promote awareness among employers and employees of family friendly employment rights and good practice;
- publish in the spring, in partnership with BT, a 'Think Fathers' business case; and later, make available through Business Links a comprehensive business case for family-friendly employment generally; and
- consider how Tax Credits support Service families and explore what more could be done.

5.1 Employment is essential for a decent family income. For working parents and carers in particular, a trade-off has to be made between employment spending time with their family; and the household tasks that need doing too. For many families there are far more options available now than even a decade ago and, as a result, there is now a variety of arrangements in families, depending on what they want and can afford to do:

"I look after my son at home, and work part-time. My daughter started school this year and my wife works full-time. I was previously working full-time but my wife and I swapped roles last year. We now have less money but get to spend every evening and weekend together and all eat together every evening."

(Father, young family)

"I have just gone back to work 20 hours a week over two days so I get to spend lots of time with my daughter which I love. But my partner works long hours so he comes home at lunch time just to spend some time with us."

(Mother, parent of a child under one)

5.2 As these quotations show, achieving a good 'work-life balance' — a term that only entered the language in the 1990s¹³² — is partly about perception and values, as well as financial necessity and perspectives on the optimum use of time.

¹³² Lewis, S. et al, 2007. The constraints of a 'work life balance' approach: an international perspective. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 18 (3), 360-373.

- 5.3** Recent research about parents' attitudes to work and family life found that fathers wanted to spend more time with their children and both fathers and mothers wanted to share work and childcare. 44 per cent of fathers in this major study thought they spent too little time with their children and half thought they spent too much time at work.¹³³ Only 39 per cent of parents who took part in the study felt that their arrangements were informed by how they themselves were brought up, because life had changed so much since they were children.¹³⁴
- 5.4** It is not the Government's role to prescribe what a good work-life balance is; each family is different and best placed to decide what is right for them. However, work, income and spending time together are important for family wellbeing, relationships and for child development. The Government has an enabling role — helping to extend the choices that families are able to make. It is right that government sets minimum standards for employment practices, supports increased flexibility and helps families to make informed decisions.
- 5.5** Clearly, employers are crucial in this equation. Many employers increasingly recognise that it makes good business sense to seek to respond to employees' needs to organise how they work in ways that fit with their family responsibilities.¹³⁵ However, it is easier for some employers to be flexible about working patterns than others; some sectors are more culturally inclined to be sympathetic; and at present there is greater acceptance of the needs of women to be able to work flexibly than of men. Similarly, there can be greater acceptance of the needs of parents than of other members of the family or carers with caring responsibilities.
- 5.6** The result is that while balancing home and work is challenging for every family, for some families it is significantly harder than others and in some circumstances the lack of available flexible work may mean having to drop out of the labour market altogether.
- 5.7** These pressures can put strain on parents' relationships; work stress and lack of work-life balance is, for example, the third most common reason why couples seek Relate counselling.¹³⁶ Similarly, financial pressures on

¹³³ Ellison, G. et al, 2009. *Work and care: a study of modern parents*. Equality and Human Rights Commission Research report: 15.

¹³⁴ Ellison, G. et al, 2009. Equality and Human Rights Commission Research. *supra*

¹³⁵ *Flexible working: impact and implementation*, Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, Survey Report 2005

¹³⁶ Relate, 2008. *Relate at 70*. Relate

families on low incomes can impact on their relationships, principally because of the adverse effects on parents' mental health.

"[Arrangements are...] hectic, my husband and I don't see as much of each other as we would like as I have just gone back to work after being on maternity leave with my youngest daughter. I have fortunately managed to use my annual leave hours so that I only work a three or four day week until April, which is helping. The problems we have are negotiating time for ourselves, time for me to spend with the children (I don't want to miss anything) and time to work."

(Mother, young family)¹³⁷

"I had to change my job when I became a single mum as it was not practical to work the hours I did before."

(Mother, lone parent)¹³⁸

5.8 Parents in already challenging circumstances because they are caring for a child who is sick or disabled, for example, or because they are struggling on a very low income, are more vulnerable to additional problems such as those to do with work stress or lack of work-life balance.¹³⁹ That's why it is all the more important that opportunities to work flexibly are made as widely available and accessible to families as possible.

5.9 As set out in Chapter 2, the Government has already put in place significant reforms to extend employment rights, increase the accessibility of formal childcare and provide more personalised support to families affected by unemployment. Changes in employer and wider cultural attitudes have also been substantial. Women's employment has continued to increase and more people are able to work flexibly, in part because of advances in technology.

Time off paid employment to have a baby

5.10 Substantial progress has been made in recent years to support mothers and fathers to take time off employment around the birth of a new baby. This time is essential for mothers' health and to support breastfeeding, and it also enables mothers and fathers to bond with their baby and begin to parent together and establish a routine.

¹³⁷ Ellison, G. et al, 2009. Equality and Human Rights Commission Research. supra

¹³⁸ All quotes are taken from Ellison G. et al, 2009. Equality and Human Rights Commission Research. supra

¹³⁹ Karney, B. et al, 2003. Marriages in context: interactions between chronic and acute stress among newlyweds.

In: J. Reynolds, ed., 2009. *Supporting Couple Relationships*. One Plus One.

- 5.11** As set out in Chapter 2, the Government has made a number of improvements to maternity leave. Extending the length of paid maternity leave has had a real impact on the numbers of mothers able to stay at home with their baby for a longer period. When maternity leave and pay were extended from 18 to 26 weeks in 2003, the percentage of women taking over 18 weeks increased from around 68 per cent to 90 per cent.¹⁴⁰ The latest published research conducted in 2008 shows that the vast majority of women take 26 weeks or more of maternity leave.¹⁴¹
- 5.12** Fathers want — and increasingly are — becoming more involved in caring for their children. A father’s involvement is important in contributing to attachment and child development. It is also good for mothers if fathers are able to support them and take a share of caring for the baby, as well as possibly for older children in the family. To support this, the Government has introduced statutory paternity leave and pay. A survey carried out in 2005 found that around two-thirds of fathers took paternity leave and over 90 per cent took some form of leave around the birth, such as annual leave, with significant numbers taking a mixture of the two.¹⁴² Research suggests that where fathers do take leave it has led to them being more involved in the care of their children and has improved family life.¹⁴³
- 5.13** Fathers planning to take paternity leave currently need to let their employers know at least 15 weeks before the baby is due. This reflects the notice period which women have to give for maternity leave — which can be up to a year in length. There are good arguments for having the two schemes aligned and we recognise that employers need sufficient notice to ensure they can cover paternity leave. However, there is also an argument that 15 weeks’ notice is disproportionate for a two-week leave period and a risk that fathers could lose out on their paternity leave because they give their notice late. The Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) will **review the notice period for the two-week paternity leave period and consult on this later this year.**
- 5.14** We know there are a minority of fathers who are not eligible for statutory paternity pay because they have not been with their employer long enough,

140 Ellison, G. et al, 2009. Equality and Human Rights Commission Research. *supra*. Some women with longer service with their employer were already able to take more than 26 weeks leave before this change.

141 DWP, 2008. *Maternity Rights Survey*.

142 Thompson, M., Vinter, L. and Young, V, 2005. *Dads and their babies: leave arrangements in the first year*. Equal Opportunities Commission Working Paper Series No. 37.

143 Ellison, G. et al, 2009. Equality and Human Rights Commission Research. *supra*.

or do not earn above the minimum level needed to qualify. Those who have not been employed long enough will also not be eligible for leave.

The Government will explore the barriers to taking paid paternity leave faced by this group of fathers later this year. This will include examining the merits of introducing a paternity allowance, similar to the current entitlement to maternity allowance, in particular assessing the cost-effectiveness of any allowance.

5.15 Evidence suggests that fathers are currently less likely to take additional time off if there is a choice to be made as to which partner does so.¹⁴⁴ This is often due to financial reasons, and fathers from lower income families are less likely to take their full entitlement of paternity leave around the birth. Other factors also sometimes come into play, such as concerns that they are too busy or that their employer would not allow them to take a longer period of leave. That said, however, we also know that increasingly fathers want to be more involved and significant numbers of parents say they would like fathers to be able to take a longer period of leave.¹⁴⁵ To support families who would like to make this choice the Government has announced plans to introduce ‘additional paternity leave’. This will give families increased flexibility by enabling fathers to take up to six months extra leave if their partner has returned to work before the end of their maternity period.¹⁴⁶

5.16 The Government has introduced statutory adoption leave and pay for couples and individuals. When a couple adopts, they can decide who will take up this entitlement, and the other adopter can take paternity leave if they meet the relevant conditions. Civil partners are also eligible for maternity, paternity and adoption leave.

Returning to employment after the birth of a child

5.17 Returning to work after the birth of a child is an important transition for families, particularly mothers who are likely to have had a significantly longer period away. It is still the case that significant numbers of women who return to work after having a baby go into a job below their skill level,

¹⁴⁴ Discussed in Hunt, S.A. ed, 2009. *Family Trends*, p68, Family and Parenting institute, 2009.

¹⁴⁵ Ellison, G. et al, 2009. Equality and Human Rights Commission Research. *supra*.

¹⁴⁶ Subject to secondary legislation additional paternity leave is expected to be available for parents with babies due on or after 3 April 2011.

often because they need to work on a part-time basis.¹⁴⁷ This is a key contributor to the continuing gender pay gap, which remains particularly entrenched for part-time women workers.¹⁴⁸ This in turn has knock on impacts for economic productivity.¹⁴⁹ The longer a mother is out of the labour market, the more likely she is to experience a drop in income on her return.¹⁵⁰ This may be because she has decided to prioritise spending more time with her children or possibly because suitable job opportunities for her skills are unavailable.

5.18 Rights to return to the same job after maternity leave and to request flexible working have made a real difference. As maternity leave has been extended the numbers of women returning to the same employer have increased. Evidence shows that the proportion of mothers changing employers when returning to work has dropped from 41 per cent in 2002 to 14 per cent in 2007.¹⁵¹ Returning to the workplace after maternity leave can be easier to manage if links have been maintained during the leave period. Both employer and employee have an interest and a role to play in making this transition as smooth as possible. To support this, the Government introduced ‘Keeping in Touch’ days in 2007 to enable employees to work or train for up to ten days during the leave period without bringing the entitlement to an end or foregoing payment of statutory maternity pay (or statutory adoption pay) in any relevant week. This change can also help keep skills up-to-date and maintain contact and friendships with work colleagues, thus easing the return to work. ‘Keeping in touch’ days have been widely welcomed.

5.19 Some mothers will want to — and do — continue breastfeeding after they have returned to work, depending on the practicalities of childcare and travel arrangements. Others will want to express milk at work and to continue breastfeeding at other times. Employers can help to create an environment where women feel supported in breastfeeding, if they so choose, by providing private facilities for breastfeeding, facilities for storing milk and allowing appropriate breaks from work.¹⁵²

147 Dex, S., et al, 2008. Changes in women’s occupations and occupational mobility over 25 years. In: Scott et al., 2008.

Women and employment: changing lives and new challenges.

148 Discussed in Hunt, S.A. ed, 2009. *Family Trends*, p98-99, Family and Parenting institute, 2009.

149 Ellison, G. et al, 2009. Equality and Human Rights Commission Research. *supra*.

150 DWP, 2008. *Maternity Rights and Mothers Employment decisions*. Research Report No 496.

151 DWP, 2008. *Maternity Rights and Mothers Employment decisions*. Research Report No 496.

152 Recommended by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE 122)

5.20 Children’s Centres can be well placed to help by providing information and support to families. Particularly where they are located close to workplaces, employers can make links with nearby nurseries or Children’s Centres to help support a continuation of breastfeeding. Mothers are also welcome to visit Centres to breastfeed.

Parental leave

5.21 Mothers and fathers are currently each entitled to 13 weeks’ parental leave per child, which can be taken up until the child’s fifth birthday. Parents of disabled children are entitled to 18 weeks, which can be taken by the day and up until the child’s 18th birthday. Parental leave offers greater flexibility for families in a range of different circumstances. However, awareness and take-up of this entitlement is low, with research suggesting only around eight per cent of fathers and 11 per cent of mothers made use of it.¹⁵³

5.22 At present, parental leave is only available to parents with children under five. However, as set out in Chapter 3, we know there are can be pressure points at other ages too, for example, around school transitions. In November 2009, a new Parental Leave Directive was agreed by Europe, which will increase the minimum period of parental leave from three months to four months. As part of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills’ consultation on this extension, the Government **will also look at whether parents should be able to take parental leave when their children are older than five years of age.**

Helping families to access early learning and childcare

5.23 Childcare plays a crucial role in supporting many aspects of family life — helping children’s early learning and social development, enabling parents to make choices about how to balance work and family life, and supporting employment in order to help families stay out of poverty.

5.24 Formal childcare provision has been transformed over the past decade. The Government has invested over £25 billion and doubled the number of childcare places available. 95 per cent of families now take advantage of free entitlements for three and four year olds, while the introduction of the

¹⁵³ Smeaton and Marsh (2009) found that, in 2005, 11 per cent of mothers had taken some parental leave (of which two-thirds had taken a week or less) and just eight per cent of fathers had taken any parental leave within 17 months of their child’s birth.

Early Years Foundation Stage has improved standards and reassured parents that their children are learning through purposeful play.

- 5.25** The new entitlements have proved popular with parents and we are committed to doing more. The three and four year old free entitlement will be extended from September this year to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year, with more flexible delivery to better meet families' needs. The new Code of Practice for local authorities will set out for the first time a clear offer of flexibility to parents, and a national framework for local authorities on securing sufficient flexible free provision. New sufficiency guidance to local authorities will make clear that considering demand for flexible provision should form part of their sufficiency assessments and action planning. We have also announced our intention to extend the free entitlement to the most disadvantaged of two year olds — trebling the number who currently benefit by 2014.
- 5.26** Despite this progress, some children, particularly those with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds, are still less likely to take advantage of childcare opportunities.
- 5.27** We are determined that cost should not be a barrier, and considerable support is already available to families to help pay for childcare. HMRC snapshot data from December 2009 shows that the amount spent per day helping parents pay for childcare through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit alone is now £4.8 million. We realise, however, that some families find it difficult to navigate the system of financial assistance or are daunted by the prospect of applying.
- 5.28** We plan a number of improvements to help parents access the support to which they are entitled. We will encourage closer liaison between Children's Centres, Families Information Services and Jobcentre Plus. There are already good examples of where this is happening well, with information officers being located for part of the time in Children's Centres and schools and providing on the spot help for parents. Later this year **we will launch an online eligibility checker to give parents a much clearer picture of the types of financial assistance they may be entitled to for their childcare.**
- 5.29** We are also trialing a number of possible improvements to the way in which families can access the childcare element of Working Tax Credit.

And we recently announced £12.5 million to help local authorities introduce improvements to their childcare for disabled children.

- 5.30** We recognise the importance of continuing to monitor closely how well childcare provision is meeting the needs of families, especially as those are likely to change as the economic recovery becomes more firmly established and new jobs are created. We will use the information collected from the current childcare affordability pilots and the next round of local authorities' childcare sufficiency assessments (due by April 2011) to assess the effectiveness of these approaches, capacity within the sector and whether further improvements are needed to address any barriers parents may face in taking up work or childcare.
- 5.31** Schools are increasingly providing wrap-around care as a result of the extended services initiative pioneered by the Government. This new flexibility is, surveys show, highly valued by parents.¹⁵⁴ The Government is committed to ensuring that all schools offer access to the full core offer of extended services. For primary schools, the full core offer includes access to childcare from 8 am to 6 pm, 38 weeks a year, or in response to demand — either on the school site, or through other local providers. Where there is demand, secondary schools should offer a varied menu of activities from 8 am to 6 pm weekdays and during the holiday period.
- 5.32** Many families draw on a wide range of childcare options and mix and match them to suit their particular needs at different times. This mix of provision can bring its own challenges — in seeking to identify suitable childcare provision around school opening times, and getting children from one setting to the other.
- 5.33** Children's Centres have a central role to play in joining-up provision for children and families and there are many examples of individual Centres providing care for older children through their operation of out of school clubs. As illustrated by the example below, others offer walking bus services, which escort children to and from out of school clubs. In recent years this provision in schools has been supported by the Government's Travelling to School project, which aims at reducing car journeys to school. Childminder networks are also playing an important role in joining up provision in some areas.

¹⁵⁴ Ellison, G. et al, 2009. Equality and Human Rights Commission Research. *supra*.

Case study: Millmead Sure Start Children's Centre, Margate, Kent

Millmead Children's Centre in Margate, Kent, runs the Riverbank Out of School Club providing quality care for children between the age of five and 14. The out of school club is open after school until 6 pm during term time, and all day during school holidays, 51 weeks a year. The club runs a walking bus scheme from three local schools. There are two members of staff with each walking bus who are equipped with reflective jackets. The children are picked up from their school and walked back to the Centre where they receive healthy meals and take part in fun activities in a safe environment.

- 5.34** We will build on this work **by encouraging all Sure Start Children's Centres to offer a walking bus service where their locations make this feasible. Where Centres are co-located with schools the government will encourage them to take a more proactive role in helping schools manage before and after school clubs for their pupils.** About half of all Centres share a school campus. While 70 per cent of local authorities already have childminder networks, we will encourage all to follow suit.
- 5.35** Childcare is just as important for older children and their parents. Despite all the progress we have made, some families still have difficulty finding high quality and affordable childcare for children over eight, both after school and during the school holidays. **The Government will therefore also take steps to encourage providers of out-of-school and holiday childcare for the over-8s to register on a voluntary basis with Ofsted, thus enabling families to reclaim costs through tax credits. More information will also be made available to parents about local out of school and holiday provision for older children.** This will complement a £5 million pilot programme, exploring ways of strengthening childcare provision during the school holidays.
- 5.36** As highlighted earlier in this section, grandparents and other family members often play an important role in caring for children and, in particular, in providing wrap-around-care. For example, research carried out by Age Concern in 2005 found that 11 per cent of grandparents of children

under 13 with mothers working full-time walk them to and from school.¹⁵⁵ For most families this help is given as part of the usual relationships of care that exist in most families and it would be wrong for the Government to formalise these situations. As well as being unaffordable, there would be enormous practical problems in paying grandparents for caring for their grandchildren. The Government's approach is to take steps to ensure sufficient, high quality formal childcare is made available for working families. However, as set out in Chapter 6, where grandparents are offering childcare to their grandchildren it is important that they are able to access the same services and support as parents.

Recognising families' wider caring responsibilities

- 5.37** Both family members and public services have wider caring responsibilities like caring for disabled adults and caring for older generations at the same time as caring for children. *Shaping the Future of Care Together* sets out the Government's vision to build the first National Care Service in England. It is one that is fair, simple and affordable for everyone, underpinned by national rights and entitlements and personalised to individual needs. The consultation on this paper recently came to an end in November 2009 and a White Paper will be published this year detailing how the vision of the National Care Service will be delivered.
- 5.38** Families are often proud of their caring and happy to do it. Some caring, however, can put strains on families. In setting out the vision for caring in the 21st century, the Government's *National Carers Strategy*, seeks to provide carers with more control and choice as to how they can best support the person they are caring for. The implementation of the strategy is leading to increased support to remain in or re-enter the job market; more breaks from caring tailored to individual needs and preferences; better information and advice for example through Carers Direct and more training for a range of workers to improve their awareness and understanding of how to support carers effectively.
- 5.39** As we live longer, families are increasingly covering four generations, meaning that alongside the great benefits of intergenerational experience there are more and more people in multiple caring roles, often referred to as sandwich carers. Increasingly families are also trying to provide support

¹⁵⁵ Gray, A., 2005. *The Changing Availability of Grandparents as Carers and Implications for UK policy*. Age Concern Report

to relatives who live at a distance from them which can be both demanding on the families and challenging to local services in providing support to both carers and the people they are caring for. **The Government will ask the Standing Commission for Carers, the Government's Expert Advisory Group, to explore the challenges facing inter-generational and distance carers during 2010.**

- 5.40 In addition, *Building Britain's Recovery: Achieving Full Employment* set out plans to carry out a broad consultation on how we can help individuals meet their caring responsibilities while remaining in employment.

Flexible working

- 5.41 The right to request flexible working was introduced for carers and working parents with children aged up to six in 2003 and was extended to cover parents of children up to 16 in 2009. An estimated 10.5 million people can now make a request.¹⁵⁶ New research from the Government Equalities Office found that three in ten working parents had made a request to work flexibly and four in five of these requests had been granted.¹⁵⁷ It also found that one in three working parents were likely to make a request within the next six months.
- 5.42 Flexible working can include part-time work, job sharing, flexible hours, compressed hours, term-time working and working from home or just varying start and finish times to fit in the school run. Many arrangements are made through informal negotiation or by applying for a job where the right flexible working pattern already exists. In some organisations a range of possible working patterns has become business as usual, and many organisations offer this more widely than just to parents and carers. Employers in these organisations have recognised that flexibility works both ways — it can benefit both the employer and the employee. For the employer, offering flexibility can improve recruitment, absenteeism and productivity, with employers offering flexible working reporting a positive impact on employee commitment and motivation.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Women and Work Commission, 2009. *Shaping a fairer future: a review of the recommendations of the Women and Work Commission three years on*

¹⁵⁷ GEO online survey, reported in: DWP, 2009. *Building Britain's Recovery: Achieving Full Employment*. 96.

¹⁵⁸ BIS, 200. *The second work-life balance study: results from the employees' survey*. Employment Relations Research Series No. 27.

Case study: Flexible working at Halcrow

Halcrow, an international building consultancy firm whose civil engineering projects include the second Severn crossing and the Channel Tunnel rail link, has a flexible working policy that enables a large number of its male, as well as female, staff to work in a way that better supports them and their family.

Flexible working opportunities available at Halcrow include: annualised hours, job shares, part-time work and compressed hours. Mandy Clarke, group HR director at the Swindon-based company outlines how the ethos of flexible working has benefited Halcrow in a number of ways.

“It improves employee engagement and although we don’t always provide the highest salaries, because we offer quality of life that enables us to attract the best people. It also means the company can work more flexibly around clients’ demands.”

Halcrow employs 8,500 staff in around 50 offices in the UK and 30 worldwide. Its long history of encouraging flexible working led to the company recently being named as a top employer by the voluntary organisation Working Families.

5.43 Whilst there are many examples of good practice, for some people in some jobs, opportunities to work flexibly are much more limited. Research suggests that parents who are employed in micro-businesses, large businesses and the public and voluntary sectors, are more likely to be able to work flexibly than those who work for small and medium-sized enterprises, the private sector more generally, and traditionally male-dominated industries like construction and manufacturing. Opportunities can be particularly limited where shift work or anti-social hours are the usual working pattern.¹⁵⁹ The responsiveness of an employer to offering flexible working depends, in large part, on the value placed on retaining skilled labour in particular sectors and workplaces.

5.44 The flexible working reforms introduced by this Government have brought benefits to employees and their families, businesses and the wider economy. They have fostered a culture of dialogue at the workplace about flexibility,

¹⁵⁹ Ellison, G. et al, 2009. Equality and Human Rights Commission Research. supra.

along with an awareness of rights and responsibilities. Some workplaces have developed their own policies for flexibility — a development we welcome. We want to continue to build on this to ensure that as many parents and carers as possible can benefit from greater choice and flexibility. For the future we will ensure the relevant legislation continues to be fit for purpose for both employers and fits with the reality of modern family life.

Raising awareness of family-friendly employment rights and practices

- 5.45** Parents' understanding and awareness of the right to request flexible working and other employment rights can be patchy. For example, only two thirds of working parents were aware of the right to request to work flexibly, and only one in eight realised this right had been extended to parents of children up to the age of 16.¹⁶⁰ In addition, the recent *Fair Treatment at Work* survey found that maternity and paternity rights were the least well understood of all employment rights.¹⁶¹ Research suggests maternity breaks could be managed more smoothly for both employee and employer if both were better informed about their rights and responsibilities.
- 5.46** The Government already publicises employment rights and benefits through existing channels including Businesslink.gov, Directgov and the NHS Choices website. Building on this, the Government will continue to take steps to raise awareness amongst employers and families. This new action will be particularly targeted at sectors, groups and areas in which awareness is lower and will include:
- **improving the information and advice available to parents and carers**, including a **new guide to family-friendly employment**, available through Direct.gov and other channels, aimed at parents, carers and families, setting out their existing entitlements; and
 - **joining up information and advice to parents and carers on employment and flexible working, with other kinds of family information and advice**, for example, through the new Family Information Direct service set out in chapter six.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ GEO online survey, reported in: DWP, 2009. *Building Britain's Recovery: Achieving Full Employment*. 96.

¹⁶¹ BIS, 2008. *Fair Treatment at Work Survey*.

¹⁶² See Chapter 6 for more details.

5.47 A new communications and awareness campaign will be aimed at supporting both fathers and mothers. We know there are particular barriers for fathers: fewer fathers than mothers make requests to work flexibly; fewer have their requests granted and fewer who take their cases to tribunals are successful.¹⁶³ While managers may often be sympathetic to men working flexibly in principle, practical approaches in the workplace to encourage them actually to take leave can be lacking.¹⁶⁴ The campaign will be supported jointly by the Departments for Children, Schools and Families; Business, Innovation and Skills; Work and Pensions; and the Government Equalities Office.

5.48 The Government will also include employment rights as part of the new integrated offer of support for families with children aged 0–5 set out earlier in this document; and will ensure that advice and information on employment options is included within the new material for fathers to be added to Bounty Packs. This builds on existing practice, whereby all pregnant women are given a leaflet Pregnancy and work, which sets out what they need to know about working during pregnancy, as well as their entitlements to leave and flexible working.

Supporting employers in making part-time and flexible jobs available

5.49 The Government's long-term ambition is to ensure that flexible working practices are embedded in all workplaces across the UK, and that there is a better supply of high quality part-time and flexible jobs to suit employees with caring responsibilities. Further cultural change in the workplace is needed to make progress towards this long-term aim.

5.50 *Building Britain's Recovery: Achieving Full Employment* announced actions designed to highlight best practice and support employers to make flexible working more widely available. They included plans to offer job brokering services to help people to find the right job, including job-share arrangements; this is likely to be of particular benefit to parents who are looking for employment that fits around their family responsibilities.

5.51 *Building Britain's Recovery* also announced the creation of a Taskforce on family-friendly working hours, to report in the spring. The taskforce brings

¹⁶³ Working Families, 2006. *Working Families policy paper on flexible working*.

¹⁶⁴ Lewis, J. et al, 2007. *supra*

together a range of employers, organisations that act on behalf of businesses and employees and key government departments. Although the taskforce is still finalising its conclusions, one of the areas it is exploring is how best to communicate the business benefits of family friendly employment to employers. **The Government plans to use Businesslink.gov, the 'one stop shop' for business, to provide practical advice to help employers introduce family-friendly practices to their workplaces.** As part of its recommendations the taskforce is considering how best to do this, building on the Government's existing plans for enhancing the reach and content of this existing portal. The *Government Equalities Office* are also developing in conjunction with Equality and Human Rights Commission, a National Equality Framework for the Private and Third Sector. It will be a three-stage benchmarking framework against which organisations can assess themselves for legal compliance, and measure their progress towards "good" and "exemplary" practice.

5.52 In addition, the Government plans to build on the Taskforce's emerging thinking and **publish a strong and compelling business case for family-friendly and flexible employment**, again to be made available on Business link. We will also, **in partnership with BT, publish a Think Fathers best practice guide, to promote father-friendly working practices to both employers and employees.**

5.53 For some employers, designing jobs and managing part-time and flexible working can be a major challenge. The forthcoming strategy on women's employment will explore how government can support employers in this area.

Helping parents to move into work

5.54 The Government is committed to ensuring parents are given the opportunity to improve prospects for themselves and their families. When parents are in employment this improves their health, wellbeing and self esteem, and the future prospects for their families. Paid employment is also the best route out of poverty and is a key element of the Government's child poverty strategy.¹⁶⁵ Our policies for parents are about balancing the right to benefits to support the family, with our wider responsibilities to help parents lift their children out of poverty and improve their life chances

¹⁶⁵ DCSF, DWP and HM Treasury, 2009. *Ending Child Poverty: Making it Happen*.

by entering paid work. That is why we are offering more support to help prepare for and enter work. For example we have made available personalised and financial support based on parents' individual needs, including for childcare, together with other arrangements that allow them to balance caring and working. This supports the expectation that, in the long term, almost all parents on benefits will be expected to take active steps towards work, as long as this is appropriate to their circumstances.

5.55 To ensure work pays for families we have made significant changes to the tax credit system and introduced the National Minimum Wage. A lone parent with two children who has been out of work for over a year is now likely to have at least £119 a week (including £40 In-Work Credit) more income when working at least 16 hours compared to not working. Jobcentre Plus also uses other measures to help manage the transition into and the sustainability of work, such as the In Work Emergency Discretionary Fund (IWEDF), In Work Advisory Support (IWAS) and Childcare Assist. This has contributed to significant progress in tackling persistent worklessness, with the proportion of children in workless households falling from 18.7 per cent in 1997 to 16.8 per cent in 2009. To support families on low incomes and to improve incentives to enter employment, the Government has already announced it will extend eligibility to Free School Meals to primary school pupils in working families on low incomes, who would previously have had to pay for school meals.

5.56 Parents moving into work can experience a range of difficulties, particularly those bringing up children alone. That is why the Government has taken action to make welfare to work programmes more family-friendly and has made the second key guiding principle of the child poverty strategy "*to support families and family life*".¹⁶⁶ The Government has also:

- ensured that all lone parents with older children see a New Deal Lone Parent adviser within the first two weeks of moving onto the Job Seekers Allowance regime, because flexible, personalised support has been proven to help lone parents move into work;
- made regulations so that lone parents with a youngest child of 12 and under may restrict their availability for work to normal school hours; and
- ensured that all Action Plans and Jobseeker's Agreements are made with regard to the wellbeing of the child.

¹⁶⁶ HM Treasury, 2009. *Pre Budget Report*

5.57 This is in addition to the provisions of the Welfare Reform Act 2009 that:

- lone parents with children under one will no longer be required to attend work-focused interviews;
- work-related activity will not be required of lone parents with children under three, and also that the obligations would be limited to within the available hours of free nursery education or school;
- lone parents with children under seven will not be required to seek work; and
- parents will not be sanctioned for failing to undertake an obligation if their good cause was the lack of suitable childcare.

5.58 The Progression to Work Pathfinders, currently under development, will be used to assess how best to provide incentives to lone parents with a youngest child aged below seven to work for a limited number of hours, so they are better prepared to re-enter the labour market when their child is older. New legislation will be introduced in order to help lone parents with older children who are studying or training full-time to improve their employment prospects, by allowing those lone parents whose youngest child is under 16 to claim Income Support in the long summer holiday, instead of Job Seekers Allowance.

5.59 From April 2010 there will be a full child maintenance disregard in all income related benefits, in combination with existing reforms to the child maintenance system introduced at the end of October 2008, which will lift around 100,000 more children out of poverty than would otherwise have been the case.

5.60 In addition, **the Government will simplify the funding schemes for parents who need help with their childcare costs while undertaking learning or re-skilling to improve their employment prospects.** We will begin initially by integrating the Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work scheme, Sixth Form College Childcare scheme, and the Discretionary Support funds for adults in further education so there is a single application process and assessment criteria; and we will explore the possibility of incorporating other programmes of funding into this approach in the longer term.

- 5.61** Later this year the Service Family Employment Task Force will report on its review of what extra help could be offered to Service families searching for work. Their a-typical lifestyle, with partners regularly deployed away from home and often located on remote bases, means they face barriers which prevent them from taking advantage of the opportunities available to others. We are committed to removing any disadvantage military personnel and their families face because of their service, as we set out in the Command Paper *The Nation's Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans*.
- 5.62** A network of Armed Forces Advocates is now in place across key Departments to ensure that those in the Services and their families are able to access the range of services and benefits available to them. **We will be building on that work to consider how Tax Credits support Service families, and explore what more could be done.**

Financial inclusion and financial capability

- 5.63** It is important for all families, but especially those on a low income, that they are able to manage their own finances and have trusted sources of support for advice on financial matters. Low income families are clearly at heightened risk of, for example, getting into unmanageable debt if they turn to poor value sources of credit.
- 5.64** The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone has access to appropriate financial services to help them manage their money, plan for the future, and deal with financial distress. Since 2004, our financial inclusion programme has supported thousands of vulnerable individuals and families by enabling them to access banking services, affordable credit and debt advice.
- 5.65** We also want everyone to have the knowledge, skills and confidence to make informed and responsible financial decisions. This should start young, and that is why the Government is putting in place a programme, in schools, to ensure that every child will have the benefit of personal finance education. To give every family access to helpful and impartial support and guidance on money matters, the Government is setting up a new national Money Guidance service, available online, over the phone and face-to-face. The Money Guidance service will be rolled out from this spring with a commitment, together with the Financial Services Authority, to help one

million people by March 2011. In addition, there are already some excellent examples of good practice in schools and Children's Centres in helping families to develop their financial management skills.

Case study: Ebor Gardens primary school, Leeds

At Ebor Gardens primary school in Leeds the Parent Support Adviser worked with parents to create a course in understanding money. This has helped parents get to grips with their financial circumstances. One mother said *"It's helped me cope with what happens when you become a parent and your income changes"*; another said *"I feel I've got back to being the person I was, I'm Cindy again, not just Mum"*. The school is now rolling out the programme to others in its cluster.

Chapter 6:

The role of public services

Summary

Services have an important role in supporting families and good family relationships. Key to this is making sure they are welcoming — not just to mothers and fathers but also to grandparents and all family members who may play a significant role in a child's life.

For a wide variety of reasons some children, young people and families need more help than others and it is important they get the right kind of support at the right time.

Professionals in adult services need to be alert to the implications of their clients' problems for other family members, especially the children. This is the aim of the Government's Think Family initiative.

The Government will therefore:

- take steps to ensure Children's Centres are exemplars for other local services in how to make services accessible and welcoming to all family members;
- work with the Family and Parenting Institute to develop an approach to help providers become more family-friendly;
- support the consultation launched by Kids in Museums to identify how well family tickets meet the needs of families attending museums and galleries;
- significantly enhance the Parent Know How service to provide more help and information to other family members renaming it Family Information Direct;

- upgrade the training on engaging with families for people working with children; explore the principle of involving parents in training; examine ways of mainstreaming training on relationship support into the professional development of frontline staff, particularly those who work with parents before and after the birth of a child;
- commit funding to March 2012 so the lessons from England's only Family Drug and Alcohol Court can be fully drawn out and shared;
- ensure every local authority will be able to offer an intensive family intervention service for families with the most complex needs;
- establish a national training programme for family intervention key workers; and
- soon consult on the measures that need to be in place so that families receive an assessment for family and parenting support in some defined situations when they may need help.

- 6.1** Public services have an important role in supporting families and good family relationships. How accessible families feel the services are, and how skilful professionals are in building and maintaining good relationships with all family members, are key factors in this.
- 6.2** Consultations with families are unanimous in showing that they want services to be respectful, effective and accessible. They want practical help on their own terms — not services that take over. They want support which recognises their strengths and to be treated as part of the solution. They feel strongly that services should not judge them for the choices they have made or their family structures and they want to influence how services are designed and run.
- 6.3** Services for children and their families have tended to operate on the assumption that families or parents means mothers. However, the diversity of caring arrangements and of families more generally today means this assumption needs to be replaced by an approach which continues to value mothers but which is more inclusive of other family members too.
- 6.4** In addition, services also need to continue to balance the provision of some support for all with the principle of directing more resources to those

families who need it most — for example, families with a disabled child or where a member is serving in the Armed Forces.

Making services more welcoming and accessible to the whole family

- 6.5** As in every other walk of life, the customer experience families get from services is crucial in determining how they feel about them, and whether they are willing to return. This is particularly important with services that potentially carry some stigma. It is important for all provision to be welcoming for families, and much more can be done at an everyday, practical level to achieve this.
- 6.6** Part of the task of making services more welcoming is to make them feel relevant and accessible to the whole family. This means making sure services recognise the needs of fathers in particular, who can feel marginalised, and grandparents who often play a key role in helping raise children. Mothers are still most often the children’s primary care-givers in our society and it is extremely important for them and their families, that high-quality services are available for them. Encouraging services to open up more to fathers and grandparents must therefore be as well as, not instead of, being sensitive and responsive to mothers.

Additional support for fathers

Policies focused on children and families have tended in the past to operate on the assumption that families are synonymous with mothers. Mothers were, and still are, the main carer in most cases and they play a vital role. However, fathers are becoming increasingly involved and their involvement with their children is important in contributing to child development; as well as being good for mothers.

The Government wants to support and encourage fathers’ involvement. We have therefore set out in this paper a range of proposals to make more support available:

- **extra support for fathers around pregnancy and birth** — for example, through professional guidance for the midwives, specifically developed by the Royal College of Midwives to help them engage with fathers;

- **information specifically for new fathers** — information on being a father is to be included in the 'Bounty Packs' that are given to women;
- **an awareness campaign targeted specifically at fathers** — to raise awareness of existing employment rights;
- **a forthcoming consultation on decreasing the notice period for paternity leave** — at present fathers have to give notice in the 15th week before birth, in line with maternity leave; and exploration of the barriers to taking paternity leave facing fathers not eligible for statutory paternity pay;
- **a new 'Think Fathers' best practice guide**, published in partnership with British Telecom to raise awareness amongst employers of the benefits of family friendly working; and
- **more support from Children's Centres** — by making sure services recognise the needs of fathers, with activities designed for them, at times which suit them.

Additional support for grandparents

Grandparents play an important role in many families' lives — helping out with childcare, providing emotional and financial support, being there when times are hard — either for their children or for their grandchildren. The vast majority do it because they want to, because that's what families do. However, this important role is not always recognised by services and support that is available to parents is not always available to grandparents. This is particularly true for grandparents who look after children full-time because the children's parents are not alive or are not able to themselves.

The Government wants to recognise the valuable role grandparents play. We have therefore set out across this Paper proposals to make sure more support is available:

For all grandparents:

- **a new service designed specifically for grandparents** — BeGrand.net will provide information and advice on everything from cooking with grandchildren to legal rights to issues around friends and family care;

- **more support from children's centres** — for example, involving grandparents in activities like stay and play sessions, bringing them together to develop social networks, using their experience to support parents and (other) children;
- **improve the information available about the legal and other options after parents separate** — grandparents don't always know what options are available to maintain relationships with their grandchildren after the parents separate; and
- where cases go to court, **remove the requirement for grandparents to obtain the leave of the court before making an application for a contact order.**

For grandparents and other family and friends carers who take on full-time responsibility for children:

- **publish for consultation, in March 2010, a new statutory guidance framework** that sets out how local authorities should approach their responsibilities to children and young people living with family and friends carers;
- **consult on revised National Minimum Standards for Fostering Service Providers** to make clearer how fostering services should recognise and support family and friends who are approved as foster carers;
- **produce a support pack for relatives who are caring for children because of a parent's drug or alcohol misuse;**
- **commission a study of evidence on family and friends care** — this will build on the work undertaken by Professor Joan Hunt in 2003; and
- **explore with stakeholders the difficulties experienced by family and friends carers and how to help them to access the support they need.**

6.7 As Chapter 2 demonstrates, much has been done in recent years both nationally and locally to build services around children, particularly through the Every Child Matters reforms. Children's services have become more integrated at all levels as a result, although more still needs to be done. Progress is also being made in securing a greater say for children, young

people and parents in both the design and, increasingly, the delivery of services. Many Government programmes now require consultation with, and engagement of, the public, as a condition of receiving a grant.

- 6.8** However, at the level of the local authority and the Children's Trust it has been found that while there is usually an ethos of involving parents in planning local services, this is often under-developed in practice. Families from Black and Minority Ethnic communities are particularly unlikely to be effectively involved, especially in areas where they comprise only a very small proportion of the overall population.¹⁶⁷ Similarly, teenage mothers and young fathers also report that they are often not involved in the design and reshaping of local services that are designed to help them.
- 6.9** Public service planners, commissioners and providers need to continue to work together to make sure they deliver better services that reflect and respond to their users' needs. To support this at a strategic level the Government recently launched the Total Place and Putting the Frontline First initiatives, which look at how services can be delivered more effectively and at less cost, including through stronger local collaboration.
- 6.10** Key factors influencing how well a service is used and regarded include the word of mouth recommendations about it from friends and others in a local area. Voluntary organisations often work very effectively with families and their services are often felt to be less stigmatising and more friendly and accessible than those run by local authorities or other statutory agencies. The National Programme for Third Sector Commissioning is aimed at improving commissioners' understanding of the potential of the third sector in designing, delivering and improving public services.

Sure Start Children's Centres

- 6.11** Children's Centres are leading the way in delivering family-friendly services, actively seeking the views of families in designing and delivering their services. As a result the activities they offer are generally highly valued by the local community and well used.
- 6.12** Many Children's Centres run activities flexibly, including at weekends or during the evenings to help families to take part at times which suit them. A significant number now organise sessions specifically for fathers and some

¹⁶⁷ Virgo, S., 2009. *Delivering parenting support services*. Family and Parenting Institute.

are beginning to recognise a need to extend their welcome to grandparents of young children — for example, the best Children’s Centres are already engaging grandparents of young children in flexible ways through stay and play sessions, supporting them to develop social networks, and helping them use their experience to support parents and children. **The Government will encourage all Children’s Centres to offer more of their services specifically to both groups and, indeed, to other family members with young children and carers too, and we will help by sharing best practice.**

Case study: Involving dads

- Princeville Children’s Centre, Bradford, offers a dads group over the weekend in an area where 98 per cent of the population is of Pakistani origin. Fathers tend to have relatively limited time to spend with their children and very few children experience outdoor activities. The centre therefore organises outdoor activities for children and their fathers and the take up is excellent. People now attend from the wider Bradford area and a family parenting group has now also been established.
- Pen Green Children’s Centre in Corby, Northamptonshire, is open some evenings and for groups on Saturdays and Sundays (for example Fathers’ Baby Massage and Dads’ Saturday Play) in response to a need identified by staff and parents. The Dads’ Saturday session started as a contact opportunity for dads but other dads found out about the session and wanted to join. The take up has been good. Dads have been proactive in fundraising and the centre has bid for some local grants.

6.13 Based on the work of Children’s Centres, there is growing information now available about what local or frontline services can do to be more welcoming to families. Proven strategies include:

- varied methods of consulting families — going beyond questionnaires to run drop-in sessions and going out to talk to local families;
- involving families in planning and designing provision;
- liaison officers working between primary and secondary schools to help maintain families’ involvement through their child’s transition to secondary school;

- providing transport to family events and services, especially in secondary schools which are typically further from where children live;
- having an open door policy so that families do not need a special reason to come into schools and Children's Centres;¹⁶⁸ and
- providing access for disabled family members and information in braille or community languages.

Case study: Actively engaging families

Ridge Hill Children's Centre in Stalybridge, Tameside, has developed a range of both simple and innovative techniques to engage with local families and make their activities and services accessible.

The Centre has developed good links with the local school and, as a result, the learning mentor from the school brings new parents along and introduces them to Centre staff. This has encouraged the parents to attend sessions and enable staff to build up a relationship with them. Another successful idea is to place leaflets and flyers in local shops, asking staff there to hand out copies to parents and families.

A particularly simple but effective way is to seek families out. The Centre staff go to school gates, playgrounds and community events to chat to families and let them know about what's on offer. A member of staff works out of the community shop alongside volunteers to meet family members and get a feel for the whole community. Whenever possible, staff try to walk around the area. Shopping at local shops and using other local services has been a great way to meet key people in the community.

By far the best method is word of mouth — parents who feel they have benefited from taking part are proving the best advocates and some often bring a friend along to a session or group. But for this to happen, you need to get parents involved in the first place!

6.14 The Government wants to make sure that the lessons learned by Children's Centres are made more widely available. **The Government will therefore take steps to ensure they are exemplars for other local services in their**

¹⁶⁸ Apps, J., 2009. *Strategies for Engaging Parents: Messages from Research with Extended Schools and Children's Centres*, Presentation given at an FPI seminar on educational support on 01/05/2009, at: http://www.familyandparenting.org/Filestore/Documents/SpeechesPresentations/Flemish/Session_4_-_Joanna_Apps.pdf

responsiveness to the needs of local families and in their outreach activities.

- 6.15** Forthcoming guidance will place expectations on Children’s Centres to identify evening and weekend provision at other local locations and publicise and signpost these to interested families. The guidance will stress that Children’s Centres should involve families and the wider community in identifying need and designing services, both through formal and informal mechanisms. This should include families who may not always access services readily, including some Gypsy, Roma and traveller families, and prisoners’ families. It will also set out the need to involve the whole family — particularly drawing attention to the need to involve fathers, as well as grandparents and other members who might play an important role in the lives of young children.

Family learning

- 6.16** Family learning can be extremely helpful in opening up services to more family members. All local authorities in England deliver family learning, usually prioritised to help the most disadvantaged communities.

Case study: Spanning the generations

At one school three generations of one family were active in family learning and significantly improved their lives. The grandmother had been a young mother herself and left school early with no qualifications. Her older children had not been regular school attendees. However, when her youngest children started school she became involved in family learning and encouraged her older daughters, now young mothers themselves, to attend too. They achieved qualifications and the youngest children now go to school regularly and learn well. The school believes that through these activities an inter-generational cycle of underachievement has been broken.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ Ofsted, 2009. *Family learning: an evaluation of the benefits of family learning for participants, their families and the wider community*. London: Ofsted.

Case study: Targeted family learning

In another area a provider targeted the parents of children who were deaf or hearing impaired and supported them to learn sign language, helping them to improve their communication with their children. Good links with the international new arrivals team in another city-based provider helped to target newly arriving families who were speakers of English as an additional language, directing them to well-established family language provision. This helped the families to receive language support at an early stage following their arrival, potentially reducing their isolation.¹⁷⁰

- 6.17** When delivered effectively family learning can make a significant impact on local communities: in one disadvantaged area, for example, the family learning team is closely linked to local regeneration efforts. Over a three-year period, 15 per cent of the adults who took part in family learning found work. This helped household incomes in the area to rise by eight per cent.
- 6.18** The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) invests £37 million in family learning annually through the Learning and Skills Council which supports around 128,000 parents and carers and up to 100,000 children each year. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)-funded Family Learning Impact Fund, which targets families at risk, comprises an additional £10 million each year across 2008–11. This is expected to benefit 30,000 adults and their children over the three year period.¹⁷¹
- 6.19 DCSF and BIS will work together to ensure guidance to local authorities on family learning programmes builds on this success, sharing best practice and achieving the best possible value for money.**

Intergenerational practice

- 6.20** Intergenerational practice covers a wide range of activities. What these activities have in common is that they bring together older and young people — who are usually not part of the same family — for mutual gain and for the broader benefit of communities. Some typical examples of intergenerational projects are where older and younger people come

¹⁷⁰ Ofsted, (2009) supra

¹⁷¹ Learning and Skills Council national office data, September 2008.

together to learn the nutritional value of different foods, and cook and grow their own produce; create visual art through shared use of art rooms in schools and activity rooms in older people's day and residential care centres, and make trips out to art galleries; and projects to develop their understanding and use of computers.

- 6.21** DCSF's Generations Together programme is supporting local areas to develop demonstrator sites of intergenerational practice, with £5.5 million funding over the two years 2009–10 and 2010–11. Encouragingly, more than nine in ten of all local authorities in England applied to take part in the programme, showing the enthusiasm for developing an intergenerational approach. The twelve winning bids ranged from plans to use Portsmouth's nautical and maritime heritage to bring together older and young people in a series of programmes and events, to projects addressing widening gaps in tolerance between young and older people in Wakefield.
- 6.22** The first purpose-built intergenerational centre in England will be opening in Merton, south London, early in 2010. It is jointly funded by DCSF, the London Development Agency and Merton council and will provide an excellent opportunity to showcase the effectiveness of intergenerational work with families, extended families and all age groups, as they come together to learn, play and simply interact.

Mainstreaming good practice

- 6.23** For many services specifically designed for children and families the arrangements in place for inspection and performance assessment already take into account how well they work with families. For example, within the school inspection framework there is a discrete judgement on the effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers. This considers the extent to which their views are taken into account and contribute to decision making, as well as how the school enables parents and carers to support and make decisions about their children's learning, development and wellbeing. In addition, as set out below we are building a focus on working with families into the core skills and knowledge for people who work with children.
- 6.24** However, beyond the core children's services, there is a wide range of services — like transport, museums, culture, and leisure, as well as adult health and social services — that are also important for families. There is

some outstanding practice in terms of family-friendliness, but this is not by any means universal.

- 6.25** The Department of Health (DH) has developed a set of quality criteria, called *You're Welcome*, to help health services become young people friendly. Similarly, as part of the Think Fathers campaign to bring about a change in culture and attitudes, the Department for Children, Schools and Families developed the Dad's Test. This guide is aimed at helping service providers identify how they can engage more effectively with fathers through a simple self-assessed test for dad-friendliness, which includes ideas for small changes they can make to meet the needs of both parents more effectively.
- 6.26** The Government wants to build on these standards and existing good practice to encourage a stronger family focus throughout all the services that families use. **We will work with the Family and Parenting Institute to design a process, materials and training that services can use, on a voluntary basis, to make their provision more family friendly.**
- 6.27** One strand of this work will be to recognise families as they are today. Traditionally, family tickets for services such as leisure and transport have assumed two adults and two children, for example, but, of course, family structures are far more diverse than that. **The Government is therefore supporting the consultation launched by Kids in Museums with families to identify how well family tickets meet the needs of families attending museums and galleries. This is due to report in March 2010.**

Making high-quality information for families more accessible

- 6.28** As a result of the Government's Parent Know How initiative the information and support on offer for mothers and fathers and others about children and family issues via the internet and telephone is increasingly comprehensive. Because parents and families want access to high quality information and support that they know they can trust — but without being told what to do by government — Parent Know How offers a mechanism through which government provides financial support to expert voluntary agencies, so that they can offer excellent services independently. It sits behind many voluntary organisations' individual services, helping to join services up, but has no public presence.

- 6.29** People with ready access to the internet are becoming increasingly accustomed to it as a first port of call for information, so the fact that internet-based services in this area appear to be popular is not surprising. Indeed, many of the existing family support services were started by parents themselves who saw a need and a gap in provision, and have grown over time as the services helped more families.
- 6.30** Websites and associated services offered by organisations like www.mumsnet.com, www.dadtalk.co.uk and www.netmums.com that offer peer support as well as information, are growing in terms both of their membership and popularity. For example, sites like Netmums report receiving over one million visits from parents each month. The attraction is that websites enable people to access information at times that suit them and in the privacy of their own home. For example, an organisation that is expert in relationship issues reports that its website receives many hits between midnight and 2a.m.
- 6.31** The Government believes that the full implications of changing preferences in accessing help and information have not yet been fully factored into how they are delivered. To bring current provision more into line with shifting patterns of demand, **the Government will continue to broaden the remit of Parent Know How so that it provides more information for other family members, particularly grandparents.** As a start, in January 2010, a new online service, funded through Parent Know How, will be launched for grandparents. BeGrand.net will include online information, advice and support for all grandparents, as well as giving them the opportunity to join an online grandparent community if they wish. **Reflecting this shift to a more inclusive family approach Parent Know How will be renamed Family Information Direct.**
- 6.32** **Looking further ahead, the Government would be interested in views about whether a comprehensive advice service based on successful models like NHS Direct and the NHS Carers Direct service would make it easier for families to find the help they need.** This could consist of a national service both online and with a single telephone number. It is important to stress, however, that the Government remains strongly committed to working with and through independent experts and voluntary organisations, including parent-to-parent agencies. These

organisations are clearly best placed to understand what families need, to gain families' trust and to respond effectively.

Training professionals to work well with families

- 6.33** Professionals are crucial in making families feel welcome. Getting this right is hard but is also all the more important when they are working with the families in greatest need. In child protection, for example, professionals have to be able to work successfully with the adults in a family, who themselves often have profound difficulties, while never losing their focus on what's best for the children. Equally, when working with families in the context of anti-social behaviour, professionals have to find the right balance between challenging and supporting them. It goes without saying that such work is highly demanding, so priority must be placed on good quality training, supervision and support. More generally, ensuring services that help adults work well with those that help children is crucial for the welfare of families and all their members.
- 6.34** Different occupations require different levels of knowledge and expertise. However, every professional who works with children needs to know how to build and sustain an appropriate relationship with parents and other family members, and understand why this is important. The Government is taking four steps to help to achieve this:
- **first, we will ensure that the Common Core of skills and knowledge for the children's workforce, which is currently being reviewed, is configured to deliver this;**
 - **second, we will explore during 2010–11 the principle of involving parents in the training of staff who work with families, with a view to piloting this approach in 2011–12 and rolling it out from 2012; and**
 - **third, we will also examine ways of embedding more effective training on relationship support into the practice and training of key frontline staff working with parents before and after the birth of a child.** One such example is Brief Encounters, an evidence-based approach to identifying relationship problems early and appropriately signposting parents to help; and

- **fourth, the skills involved in encouraging parents who are reluctant or feel unable to seek help will form a part of the training of a wide range of professionals who work with parents.**

6.35 When services better reflect the families they exist to support they are more likely to feel welcoming and to meet their needs. The Government will therefore continue to take steps to support the children's workforce in becoming more diverse and more culturally sensitive, and thus better able to reflect the needs of the families who use services. This will be pursued, for example, by ensuring that recruitment campaigns — for example, for Early Years Professionals — are appropriately designed and targeted. There will be a focus on recruiting more men, and more men and women from Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

6.36 The recent report of the Social Work Task Force has emphasised the importance of social workers for families with high levels of need. Social workers form the backbone of local child protection and safeguarding services, and offer essential support to children in care and disabled children. They also have important roles to play in working with and advising others in the children's workforce, including through Family Intervention Projects. In December 2009, the Government accepted the recommendations of the Social Work Task Force for comprehensive reform of the social work profession. We have established a reform board to enable us to work with the profession, employers, educators and those who use social work services in designing this reform programme and will publish an implementation plan early this year.

Keeping children safe

6.37 An absolutely essential part of making sure services respond to families' needs is ensuring they help to keep children safe. This is every family's highest priority and there is wide agreement, which the Government shares, about the need to achieve this in ways that do not wrap children in cotton wool.

6.38 When parents make their own arrangements for their children, the Government is clear the responsibility for ensuring they are safe lies with them. That is why, for example, when questions were raised about whether

reciprocal child care arrangements between parents should come under Ofsted's regulatory regime, the Government acted swiftly to clarify beyond any doubt that they should not. This had always been the Government's intention.¹⁷²

- 6.39** Similarly, the new Vetting and Barring scheme for people who work or volunteer with children and vulnerable adults, does not impact on parents' own arrangements. This approach was strongly endorsed by the Government's Chief Adviser on the Safety of Children, Sir Roger Singleton, in his report on the scheme in December 2009.¹⁷³
- 6.40** So where, for example, the children have joined the junior team of the local football club and one parent agrees with another to pick up both their children from football practice every Thursday evening there is no question of the Vetting and Barring scheme coming into play. However, if the club has organised someone to ferry the children home every week then that person will need to register when this element of the scheme begins in November 2010. This is because in this situation the parents have given the responsibility for keeping their children safe to an organisation. It would be reasonable in these circumstances for families to assume the club has made sure the people who work with their children are suitable, and that no conviction for a relevant offence or other incident in the person's past has come to light to call this seriously into question. The Vetting and Barring scheme will support this in happening.
- 6.41** The vast majority of people in our society have only the best interests of children at heart. Unfortunately, a small but significant minority do not and we need to take effective steps to protect children from them. The role of agencies and professionals in this is critical. Lord Laming concluded last year that robust legislative, structural and policy foundations were in place, but challenged us all to go further to deliver a step change in the arrangements to protect children from harm. The Government has accepted all of his recommendations, including the creation of a new cross-government National Safeguarding Delivery Unit to give strong, co-ordinated national leadership across the safeguarding system and to support and challenge local authorities and their partners in driving up the quality of frontline practice. But the everyday common sense and low key

¹⁷² DCSF, 2009. *Children's Secretary: No regulation for reciprocal childcare between friends*. DCSF press notice 12 October 2009.
¹⁷³ Singleton, R., 2009. *Drawing the Line — a report on the Government's Vetting and Barring scheme*. London: DCSF.

vigilance of parents and other family members are probably even more important, helping to ensure that children can enjoy their childhoods without having them spoiled by undue concerns for their personal security.

More help for families who need it most

6.42 For a wide variety of reasons some children, young people and families require more help than others, and they need the right support at the right time. This can help to strengthen good family relationships that may otherwise buckle under the pressures they face. Outreach is a good way of taking services to these children and families who may otherwise miss out.

Targeted youth support

6.43 Targeted Youth Support (TYS) arrangements are designed to ensure that vulnerable young people are supported by agencies working effectively together. In order to ensure that the right support is put in place, the young person's family context should also be taken into account. The Government will promote this approach with local authorities; for example, by working through the YYS consultancy support and the work of specialist YYS champions being recruited to help disseminate best practice. **We will also set the expectation that Think Family approaches must be part of any local YYS activity supported by DCSF funding.**

Young Carers

6.44 The 2001 Census found that there were approximately 139,000 young people caring for another family member and around 22,000 of these provided at least 20–50 hours care a week. This could be for a younger brother or sister or a parent or grandparent with health problems. Inappropriate or excessive levels of care can put children and young people's education, training or health at risk and prevent them from enjoying their childhood in the same way as other children do.

6.45 There is a range of initiatives that the Government, alongside the voluntary sector, is funding to prevent young carers from having to undertake harmful levels of caring. Support has traditionally been in the form of short breaks, activities, counselling and a place where they can share experiences

with those in the same situation. Building on this the Government, through its Think Family programme, is encouraging adults' and children's services and young carer voluntary sector projects to identify, assess and provide support to the whole family, so that both young carers and those for whom they are caring receive the help they need.

Services thinking family

- 6.46** When families have complex needs such as domestic violence, chaotic lifestyles, drug and alcohol misuse and mental illness, these risk undermining the parenting capacity of the adults and the safety, wellbeing and healthy development of children. Family relationships can be put under huge strain or can become destructive.¹⁷⁴ When this happens it is important it is tackled quickly to prevent problems becoming deep-seated and children being placed at risk.
- 6.47** It is crucial that professionals in adult services, for example drug or mental health services, prisons and probation services, are alert to the implications of their clients' problems for other family members, especially the children, and that information is shared intelligently. The police have a key role to play both as part of their day to day work on patrol and in responding to incidents and also as part of their targeted youth activity. In their work they often refer individuals and their families onto further support from both universal and specialist services. For example, Safer School Partnerships allocate an officer to a school to engage with young people and in Operation Staysafe police and social services work together to take at risk young people off the streets at night and return them to a place of safety.
- 6.48** The Government is consulting on revised regulations governing Children's Trusts. These set clearer expectations about how adults' and children's services will work more closely together to promote the wellbeing of children. These are due to come into force in April 2010. Last November guidance was published setting out how children's and families' services will work with adult drug and alcohol treatment services, and offender management services guidance on other adult services is currently under development. 15 Family Pathfinders set up to test innovative ways of

¹⁷⁴ Cleaver, H., Unell, I. and Aldgate, A., 2010. *Children's needs — Parenting Capacity: the impact of parental mental illness, learning disability, problem alcohol and drug use, and domestic violence on children's development*. 2nd ed. London: The Stationery Office.

putting these reforms into practice are already operating across the country and interim findings from these will be published shortly.

- 6.49** The children of offenders are a particularly vulnerable group and are a priority for the Think Family approach — for example, 65 per cent of boys with a convicted parent go on to offend themselves.¹⁷⁵ Prisoners' children also have three times the risk for mental health problems or delinquent behaviour compared to their peers and their families face serious practical difficulties. We know that maintaining contact between children and their parent in prison can help children cope. It also provides a real incentive for the parent to reform.
- 6.50** That is why the Government has published a framework with which sets out how prison and probation services and children's and family services should work together to support families of offenders. The DCSF is working with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) to develop minimum standards for the work that prisons and probation services undertake with the families of offenders. MOJ is funding Prison Advice and Care Trust to pilot a family support worker role in prisons. This supports families at visitor centres and makes contact with children's and family services where appropriate. The Government is also making available funding of over £1 million to pilot a new project in England from April 2010 to explore the benefits of early intervention for women who have multiple and complex needs from their first point of contact with the criminal justice system.

Families facing violence

- 6.51** Domestic violence affects both adults and children in families and an estimated 200,000 children (1.8 per cent) in England live in a household where there is a known risk of domestic violence or other forms of violence or abuse¹⁷⁶ in the family.¹⁷⁷ The impact on children of experiencing and witnessing domestic violence can include a range of issues such as physical damage, behavioural problems, mental health problems, and lower educational attainment. Children who experience violence and abuse may also be at risk of being victims of violence in their future life.

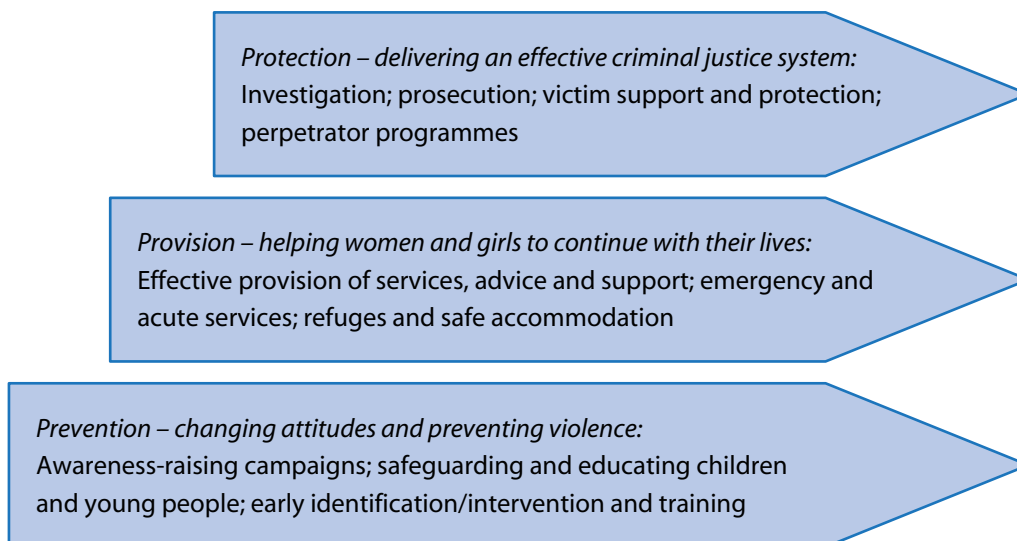
¹⁷⁵ Social Exclusion Task Force Review of Families at risk: background evidence paper, 2008, Cabinet Office.
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/families_at_risk/review_analysis.aspx

¹⁷⁶ This includes forced marriage, female genital mutilation and honour based violence.

¹⁷⁷ Lord Laming, 2009. *The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report*, London: The Stationery Office.

- 6.52** Because of this correlation between these serious parental problems and risks for children, as well as the damage to adults and to families, it is important to understand their implications for policy and practice, as a necessary step for enhancing the capacity of services to intervene effectively to support families and protect children.
- 6.53** This is why the remit of the newly established National Safeguarding Delivery Unit includes work on improving referrals to children's social care of children in families where there is domestic violence; and why the revised draft child protection guidance for practitioners, *Working Together*, that has recently been issued for consultation, contains more information about chronic parental problems. The Government has also recently published a strategy to help combat violence in all its forms against women and girls.¹⁷⁸ In addition, the Department of Health has established a Taskforce on the health aspects of violence against women and children. This is looking at the role of the NHS in responding to victims, and what more is needed to improve the response. The Taskforce will be reporting in early 2010.

The Principles of the Together We Can End Violence Against Women and Girls: A Strategy



¹⁷⁸ Home Office, 2009. *Together We Can End Violence against Women and Girls: a Strategy*.
www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/vawg-strategy-2009

Intensive support for families

- 6.54** The latest evaluation of Family Intervention Projects (FIPs) working with the most challenging families, demonstrates major success in turning around the lives of families with the most complex needs, including families whose anti-social behaviour affects others in their local community.
- 6.55** Among 700 families who completed an intensive FIP intervention, usually over the course of a year, two thirds (66 per cent) had stopped behaving anti-socially by the end of the FIP intervention; there was a 68 per cent reduction in the numbers facing housing enforcement actions; and concerns about children behaving badly at school or truanting were halved (falling by 55 per cent). Chronic problems of alcohol, drug abuse and domestic violence in these families were being systematically addressed, alongside risks to children, thus significantly improving their safety, wellbeing and life chances, and strengthening families and family relationships.¹⁷⁹ At the same time, the demands made by these families on other services fell.¹⁸⁰ Indicative evidence illustrates the potential value for money of FIPs.¹⁸¹
- 6.56** This new evidence confirms the importance and necessity of rolling out FIPs progressively across the country, in line with the plans announced by the Government in 2008 and 2009. There are now over 220 Family Intervention Projects with plans to more than double the number of FIP workers employed by local authorities over the next 12 months. Although the first projects worked only with families involved in anti-social behaviour new projects now target a much wider range of problems.
- 6.57 In future, every local authority will be able to offer an intensive family intervention service for families with the most complex needs.** A national task group, led by Kim Bromley-Derry, Director of Children's Services in Newham and current president of Association of Directors of Children's Services, was set up in December 2009 to advise on the national roll-out of family intervention. The group will be making sure the case for

179 National Centre for Social Research, 2009. *Anti-social behaviour family intervention projects; monitoring and evaluation*. London: DCSF.

180 Communities and Local Government, 2006. *Anti-social Behaviour Intensive Family Support Projects: An evaluation of six pioneering projects*. London: CLG.

181 DCSF, 2009. *Evidence for Think Family*. Guidance Note 03: Think Family Toolkit <http://publications.everychildmatters.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00685-2009>

family intervention is well understood and that the right lessons are drawn from the FIPs already in operation.

- 6.58** DCSF with the Children’s Workforce Development Council will develop **a national training programme, to develop core knowledge and skills for family intervention key workers; and the most experienced family intervention practitioners will be invited to join a national team of experts responsible for helping local authorities to develop the new services.**
- 6.59** The FIP programme is not the only initiative now underway to respond to young people and families with complex and challenging needs: DCSF and DH, in partnership with the Youth Justice Board, have established ten pilot sites of multi-systemic therapy (MST), which is an evidence-based, community intervention for children and young people aged 11–17 years and their families, where young people are at risk of entering either care or custody and families have not engaged with other services. Help is provided on a 24/7 basis over a 3–5 month period and positive outcomes are being reported in terms of reduced family conflict, reduced offending, re-engagement of young people in education and training, preventing young people coming into care or custody, and reducing the period of time young people remain in care.
- 6.60** A significant proportion of children who enter care on a care order are from families where there is serious domestic violence, mental illness and/or substance misuse. Through a ground-breaking initiative a Family Drug and Alcohol Court — which is a specialist court with a drug and alcohol team attached — has been working on a pilot basis since March 2008. The Court is available to all families whose children are in care proceedings from the three London boroughs which are part of the programme. Parents are offered the choice of joining the pilot or remaining in normal care proceedings. The Court aims to help parents to stop misusing drugs and alcohol or at least to stabilise their use to enable them to retain or regain the care of their children.
- 6.61** The Court is based on a model from the United States where specialist drug and alcohol courts are widely used. Findings from evaluations in the United States suggest they have been successful in enabling more children to return home because their parents have successfully engaged with

substance misuse services, and so far the two year pilot in London is encouraging. **The Government will commit the funding necessary for this first pilot Family Drug and Alcohol Court in England to continue until March 2012, so that the lessons from its innovative approach can be learned and applied more widely.**

Getting help to families earlier

- 6.62** The latest evidence from the FIPs, MST and the early promise of the Family Drugs and Alcohol Court are reasons for optimism: they show that it is possible for services to work effectively with families whose needs are profound, by using proven approaches, delivered by skilled and committed staff.
- 6.63** But the chances of success in helping these families are greatly increased if the right help gets to them earlier, before problems become entrenched. Clearly, this is of benefit to children and families and — especially when anti-social behaviour is present — communities too.
- 6.64** **The Government will soon consult on the measures that need to be in place so families receive an assessment for family and parenting support whenever the situation is such as to suggest they may need help;** for example, when a child or young person is permanently excluded from school or is made subject to an Anti-Social Behaviour Order. The Government will also shortly be publishing a paper on early intervention, which will contain more details.
- 6.65** The Government recognises that the commitments made and aspirations in this Green Paper will require, in some cases changes, to the planning and delivery of local services for families. **To support local areas we will publish in 2010 refreshed guidance for local authorities on the commissioning and delivery of effective parent and family support services. This guidance will encourage practitioners who deliver parenting and family support, including Family Intervention Projects, to consider signposting and referring to relationship support services.**

Chapter 7:

Consultation questions and conclusions

7.1 The Government would like to seek views on how best to shape the next phase of family policy to meet the needs of families today and support strong family relationships. We would therefore welcome responses to the following questions:

- **Question one:** What more can we do to help create a culture in which seeking help for relationship or parenting problems, or other family difficulties, is considered socially acceptable?
- **Question two:** Which issues should be prioritised by Government in seeking to strengthen families and support family relationships?
- **Question three:** Which services need the most urgent development to make them truly family-friendly?

7.2 The paper also includes three specific proposals for consultation:

- **Question four:** Do you consider that compulsory mediation assessment would improve the take-up of mediation in family law cases, and what more could be done to improve the take up of family mediation as an alternative to court action? Further information on and background to this question is available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/supportforall
- **Question five:** How far does the need to seek leave of court act as a barrier to preventing family members applying for contact with a child? Is there a need to remove this requirement for some other family members, beyond grandparents? (Note: Parents are already exempt.)
- **Question six:** Would a comprehensive advice service on family issues based on successful models like NHS Direct and the NHS Carers Direct service make it easier for families to find the help they need? This could consist of a national online service coupled with a single telephone number.

- 7.3** Central government has a responsibility and the capacity to do a great deal to help create the conditions which support families in building and sustaining strong relationships. However, there are many others who have important parts to play in this too, including local government, voluntary organisations, housing providers, planners, arts, culture and sports organisations and, of course, employers. How sensitive and responsive all these organisations are to the needs of families can make a great deal of practical difference.
- 7.4** The culture within public services and the attitudes of professionals who work with families also determine to a significant degree how family-friendly provision is felt to be and how effective it is in practice in meeting the needs of children, parents and whole families.
- 7.5** Looking ahead, we need services to focus more on helping families to help themselves, rather than providing rigid and siloed approaches. Families increasingly expect and need to be in control, shaping what they receive from services. This kind of approach also needs to be central to all the efforts to strengthen communities and improve the quality of life for everyone in localities.
- 7.6** The family trends set out in this Paper demonstrate the extent of family change and show that many more children are experiencing family transitions now than in previous decades. However, these trends don't legitimately lead to a conclusion that families and family life are in drastic decline. While families often look different today than in previous years, this doesn't make them any less important for their members or any less significant for our society.
- 7.7** The fact that there is more freedom now to end family relationships that are violent and abusive, or even just profoundly and permanently unhappy, without fear of acute social disapproval or discrimination, is a welcome development. Women and children especially have benefited from more enlightened social attitudes.
- 7.8** The pace of change in the world is extraordinarily rapid — socially, technologically, economically, environmentally and demographically. Against such a shifting context, families have the capacity to be a precious source of stability for both children and for adults, yet these global forces impact on families too. This means there will never be a more important

time to seek to support families and the committed relationships of love and care that define them.

- 7.9** If we can achieve this, the outcome will be stronger, more resilient families, with more flexible support, shaped and controlled by families themselves. Helping families to help themselves will create stronger and safer communities and an environment in which *all* can thrive.

Annex: How to get involved

- 1 This is an open consultation and we want to hear your views. A summary version of this consultation is available on our website www.dcsf.gov.uk/supportforall. We welcome your views on what can be done to support families and look forward to hearing from you.
- 2 Here is a reminder of the questions we are consulting on:
 - **Question one:** What more can we do to help create a culture in which seeking help for relationship or parenting problems, or other family difficulties, is considered socially acceptable?
 - **Question two:** Which issues should be prioritised by Government in seeking to strengthen families and support family relationships?
 - **Question three:** Which services need the most urgent development to make them truly family-friendly?
 - **Question four:** Do you consider that compulsory mediation assessment would improve the take-up of mediation in family law cases, and what more could be done to improve the take-up of family mediation as an alternative to court action? Further information on and background to this question is available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/supportforall
 - **Question five:** How far does the need to seek leave of court act as a barrier to prevent family members applying for contact with a child? Is there a need to remove this requirement for some other family members, beyond grandparents? (Note: Parents are already exempt.)
 - **Question six:** Would a comprehensive advice service on family issues based on successful models like NHS Direct and the NHS Carers Direct service make it easier for families to find the help they need? This could consist of a national online service coupled with a single telephone number.

- 3 We will be running a series of events during the consultation period to discuss these issues, including hearing from families themselves. Details of these events will be posted on our consultation website. To submit your response to the consultation in email or writing, please send to: supportforall.consultation@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk, or write to

Support for All: The Families and Relationships Green Paper consultation team
Department for Children, Schools and Families
Ground Floor B, Castle View House
East Lane
Runcorn
WA7 2GJ

- 4 This consultation will run for 13 weeks between 20 January and 21 April 2010, complying with the Government's Code of Practice on Consultation which recommends a minimum period of 12 weeks. Following consideration of consultation responses we will publish the Government's response on the DCSF e-consultation website later this year, which will set out our next steps in taking this work forward.