



# A Family Revolution

The National Association of Family  
Information Services Autumn  
Conference

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# The Family Commission is *Starting a Family Revolution*

10,000 families throughout Britain: 18 months inquiry:  
Chaired by Esther Rantzen CBE: Asking the big questions:

- What is family life like today?
- How important is the family to you?
- What holds you back?
- What would help you get on?

# Families are changing

- In shape, structure and lifestyle
- More beanpole families
- More sandwich generations
- Multi generation
- 50% of families say they see their extended family twice a year or less

# But family life is still important to people

- The top three 'favourite things about your family' were unconditional love 75%, fun 72% and support 70%
- 69% of young people are happy or happy with their family life, with only 8% of people being unhappy or very unhappy
- 64% of people turn to family when they have a serious problem
- 50% of Britons feel that family life is harder today than it was 20 years ago

# Families told us about the challenges

- **69%** of people say financial hardship is the biggest strain on family relationships
- **47%** say families need more advice and information when things go wrong
- **24%** say their children's future is a concern that keeps them awake at night
- **55%** say more flexibility from employers would help them balance work and family life
- **61%** say that families with elder relatives do not get enough help from the government

# **Families are resilient and optimistic but often feel held back**

- Families often feel ignored, left to it and distanced from decision making
- Are resilient and able but feel held back by bureaucratic systems and processes
- Are assets - Have solutions but are not asked
- Want to do more – to take more of a lead in shaping decisions but need others to help
- Want professionals to work “with” them

# It calls for a new dynamic between families and the state

- Recognise and work with the potential in all families, including those in crisis, to develop their own sustainable solutions
- Recognise the untapped value of extended families as assets
- Requires professionals to work *with*, not 'for', families – at an early enough point to make a genuine difference
- Recognise that families often initially prefer help from their peers, friends and relatives

Empowers and engages families

# A system which recognises....

- Many solutions lie within the family – from day to day support to long term caring
- Most families can function better if they get the right help
- We have to stop designing our system in response to the 2% of families who are not able to function
- That families are helped most if they are helped early
- Non stigmatised support that does not feel like force



# Keeping families united

- Help for families when parents' relationships breakdown
- A new online portal for families across the generations to provide peer support, information, advice and communication
- Family united programmes when families are apart

# Helping families to work and be economically independent

- A family friendly kitemark
- Flexible leave
- Families into work support
- Flexible childcare

# Helping families to get on

- Children and Family Centres
- Parenting classes including support as children grow up
- Peer to peer support and mentoring in every community
- Family Outreach Workers in schools

# Supporting when things go wrong

- Family Support Teams
- Family Intervention Projects
- A legal entitlement for a Family Group Conference
- Support for kinship care

# Building great neighbourhoods for families

- A Family Test for all local authority services and developments

**We want to put everyone to the Family Test**

# But there are big challenges for all those that can make it happen...

- All government departments, nationally and locally
- For lawyers and the courts
- For schools and health professionals
- For social services
- For family professionals
- For all of us as individuals...

“The danger is that we have forgotten that families are a huge resource. If ‘Every Child Matters’, and of course they do, we at the Family Commission believe it is time to adopt a new approach, to ask a deeper, more searching question. “What matters to every child?” And the answer is: the family.”

**Esther Rantzen CBE**