



## **All Party Parliamentary Group for Parents and Families The Family Test**

**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2016, 3.30 – 5:00**

**Committee Room 5**

### **Meeting Minutes**

#### **Attendees**

Abigail Gill	Sally Smith	Andrew Sharp
Jill McGinley	Martin Robb	Kulbir Randhawa
Breon Finch	Michelle Wildman	Simon Walsh
Mubeen Bhutta	Mary Criwket	Adam Butler
Elizabeth Duff	Mavis Maclean	Helen Undy
Kate Groucutt	Trevor Single	Gwen Hardy
Georgia Archer-Clowes	Baroness Tyler	Julia Margo
James Luton	Judith Longstreath	Michael Trend
Anooshah Farakish	Michael Lewkowicz	Chris Sherwood
The Earl of Listowel	Clare Deane	Angela Crawley
Abigail Wood	Kathleen Mezik	John Ashcroft
John Metcalfe	Debbie Cowley	Baroness Lister
Frank Young	Marini Thorne	

#### **Minutes**

Welcome and introductions from the chair, Angela Crawley MP

Julia Margo (Family and Childcare Trust) summarised the report findings and recommendations

- Welcomed the introduction of the Family Test and the government's commitment to considering how the work they do impacts families
- Presented findings from a review of the implementation of the Family Test across government departments conducted by Relate, Family and Childcare Trust and Relationships Foundation
- Recommended that: the Family Test be put on a statutory footing; departments be required to publish a record of Family Test assessments; government should publish an annual review reporting on performance; tools and resources should be developed to support departments in applying the Family Test; government should consider feasibility of a local Family test; devolved administrations should consider developing their own version of the Family Test

Chris Sherwood (Relate) spoke about developing the test

- Family test is critical to encouraging policy-makers to view issues through the lens of family and relationship, but to be effective it needs to be conducted early on in the process and be open to scrutiny.
- Described the role of Relate in informing development of the Family Test, ensuring a broad and inclusive definition of families and consideration of stability and quality of relationships
- Issues which arose in the roll out show that civil servants need clarity over proportionality and where test should be implemented, as well as a good evidence base to inform assessment.
- Having called for a Family Test, the challenge to the families sector now is to scrutinise, challenge and support.

Michael Trend (Relationship Foundation) discussed the future of the test

- The Family Test has the potential for bringing about a fundamental change and there is a clear window of opportunity, but will now need both encouragement and pressure to get things moving more quickly
- The challenge is to encourage departments to understand why the Family Test is important and why it would be beneficial to them.
- There is the potential for reluctance among departments to produce an assessment which could then be used against them, therefore need to discourage opportunistic behaviour and work towards constructive discussion

Further points were raised during Q&A and discussion:

- Question posed over the extent to which families are being considered in current policy-making and whether responses from departments in the report reflect this.
- Suggested that the word 'test' is unhelpful as suggests a pass/fail; an alternative would be to define as an impact assessment along the lines of existing equality assessments
- Danger that civil servants think they have to solve the issues raised in the Family Test rather than to present the rationale so that this can be scrutinised
- Feedback suggests a greater understanding among departments of where test should be implemented may be needed
- Support for the idea of a local test, recognising that the decisions that impact families are increasingly made at a local level

Thank you and conclusion