



13 December 2013

## **Family Stability Review Invitation to contribute to the review of evidence**

As you may be aware, on 6 December 2013 the Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions announced a cross-government review of Family Stability. The review will assess the evidence around family formation, stability and breakdown in order to inform future policy development.

In particular, the review is focused on positively influencing the Social Justice Indicator of family stability.<sup>1</sup> The indicator measures the percentage of children who are not living with both birth parents, by age of child and by income group. The indicator also looks at the quality of parental relationships.

The first strand of the review will focus on gathering and understanding the evidence around family stability, and identifying gaps in both the evidence and current policy interventions.

The analytical strand will consider 6 key themes:

- Understanding the trends in family stability; what do families look like today and how has this changed over time?
- Why do some families stay together while others do not?
- Who is most at risk of family breakdown?
- When are families most at risk of family breakdown?
- Who should the government target to provide support?
- How might government best support families to: (a) stay together; (b) improve the quality of their relationships; or in the case of separation, (c) form a stable parental relationship apart? (what works?)

As part of the evidence review we are writing out to organisations involved in family-related research who are interested in the areas of family formation, stability and breakdown, so that we can ensure that we have conducted a thorough review of the available evidence.

### **How you can get involved**

We would like to invite you to respond to us on the themes highlighted above, to bring to our attention robust, clearly-sourced key evidence that you think would be of value to consider as part of the review. This might include key references, previous literature reviews or summaries of relevant evidence.

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<sup>1</sup> Social Justice Outcomes Framework (April 2013) 'Supporting families'. Figures indicate that by the age of 16, nearly half (47%) of all children do not live with both parents and this is more likely for children from low income families (55%) than for children from middle-high income families (27%)

We would be grateful for responses by **17 January 2014**, so that we can feed the evidence into the review. You are welcome to pass this invitation on to colleagues who might also have knowledge and interest in these areas.

More detail about the themes is included at Annex A.

Please send your response to <mailto:family.stabilityreview@dwp.gsi.gov.uk> by 17 January 2014.

We appreciate that the deadline for responses is short but unfortunately this is unavoidable, given the timescales for the review. If you would like to respond but are unable to do so by the deadline please get in touch with us (contact details below). There will be further opportunities to contribute to the review, including an analytical roundtable to gather peer views on the evidence, and another more policy-focused round table. We will send details of these events in the new year.

If you have any queries about the consultation please send an email to <mailto:family.stabilityreview@dwp.gsi.gov.uk> or call the analytical review team on 0114 293 4866.

### **Data Protection and Freedom of Information issues**

Information provided in response to this invitation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential, using the form at Annex B, and send this back to us by e-mail along with your suggested evidence.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

## **Annex A**

This Annex summarises some of the issues that will be the focus of each theme.

### *1. Understanding the trends in family stability; what do families look like today and how has this changed over time?*

This theme will include an exploration of current and future trends in family structures; trends in divorce/separation, lone parent families; how social attitudes have changed over time; impacts and consequences of transitions, including multiple transitions and economic impacts.

### *2. Why do some families stay together while others do not?*

This theme will include: the main causes of breakdown and stability; trends in the causes of breakdown (including known risk factors, and attitudes to and expectations of relationships); predictive characteristics of sustained relationships; relationship quality (including looking at healthy vs. unhealthy relationships and the wider family environment).

### *3. Who is most at risk of family breakdown?*

This theme will include: characteristics of families who separate; types of families with high/low relationship quality (including healthy vs. unhealthy relationships and the wider family environment); families disengaged post-separation – drivers and impacts.

### *4. When are families most at risk of family breakdown?*

E.g. When do families separate? Are different types of families more likely to separate at certain points? Impacts of societal or economic events?

### *5. Who should the government target to provide support?*

This theme will tie together the evidence on 'why', 'who' and 'when', to examine whether we can identify key groups/times for intervention

### *6. How might government best support families to: (a) stay together; (b) improve the quality of their relationships; or in the case of separation, (c) form a stable parental relationship apart? (what works?)*

This theme will include an exploration of what works in relationship/parenting interventions; the content and delivery of most effective interventions; collaborative parenting and positive parental involvement.