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**PRESS RELEASE FROM THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**  
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# One in two children will see parents split by the age of 16, warns new study

Nearly one in two children born today will suffer family breakdown by the age of 16, according to a new analysis of official figures.

The new figure of 48 per cent is markedly higher than the 40 per cent chance of a split recorded a decade ago and has prompted new calls for measures to strengthen relationships.

The study, carried out jointly by the Bristol Community Family Trust (BCFT) and the Centre for Social Justice, also concludes that divorce is not the main driver of family breakdown.

The collapse of cohabiting relationships lies behind the surge in lone parenthood, according to the new analysis.

This finding is reflected in a calculation of the costs of family breakdown.

“Of every £7 spent on family breakdown among young families (by the taxpayer), £1 is spent on divorce, £4 is spent on unmarried dual registered parents who separate and £2 is spent on sole registered parents,” the report says.

“In other words, the problem is not divorce. While marriage accounts for 54 per cent of births, the failure of marriages – ie divorce – accounts for only 20 per cent of break-ups and 14 per cent of the costs of family breakdown, among all families with children under five.”

Harry Benson, director of the BCFT and the report's author, said that the new findings lent urgency to the need for policy solutions focused primarily on improving stability among unmarried new parents.

These include re-establishing the need for and importance of marriage and prioritising a national programme of relationship education.

Mr Benson's report is entitled "Family breakdown in the UK – It's NOT about divorce". He said that his organisation, the Bristol Community Family Trust, was running a relationship programme locally, "Let's stick together", that was succeeding in helping 30 per cent of all new parents.

Gavin Poole, the executive director of the CSJ, said: "These new figures underline the alarming and growing level of family breakdown in the UK. This imposes huge costs on society – both in terms of human unhappiness and financial burdens.

"It is well known that children from broken homes do less well at school and are more likely to turn to drugs, alcohol and crime. As for the financial penalties, the taxpayer is spending at least £20 billion a year trying to repair the damage done by family breakdown.

"New steps, such as tax breaks for marriage and far better relationship education, should be taken by Ministers and society at large to reverse these worrying social trends."

For media inquiries, please contact Nick Wood of Media Intelligence Partners Ltd on 07889 617003 or 0203 008 8146 or Alistair Thompson on 07970 162225 or 0203 008 8145.

**ENDS**

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

Bristol Community Family Trust is a non-profit charity focused on the prevention of family breakdown. They are a leading relationship education charity that runs 120 courses a year for over 1,200 people. Courses cost just £60, or free if you're on benefits. The courses are on parenting, relationships and mentoring.

It was founded in 2002 and is run by Harry Benson. Harry's ground-breaking research studies on family breakdown have twice made front-page news and he has also acted as deputy chairman of a group submitting family policy proposals for the Centre for Social Justice. Harry's work experience includes careers as a Navy pilot, in business and a psychology degree. But his personal experience of bringing his marriage back from the brink of divorce is what really counts. Harry & Kate have now been married for 24 years and have six children.

The Centre for Social Justice is an independent think tank established, by Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP in 2004, to seek effective solutions to the poverty that blights parts of Britain.

In July 2007 the group published *Breakthrough Britain. Ending the Costs of Social Breakdown*. The paper presented over 190 policy proposals aimed at ending the growing social divide in Britain.

Subsequent reports have put forward proposals for reform of the police, prisons, social housing, the asylum system and family law. Other reports have dealt with street gangs and early intervention to help families with young children.

The Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP stood down as Chairman of the Centre on his appointment as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in May 2010 and is now the Founder and Patron.

Copies of the report are available for download from [www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk](http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk)