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Norgrove Report fails children by not giving fathers access rights, says Centre for Social Justice

The final report from the Norgrove Review published today fails to address the bias in the family law system against fathers and grandparents and will fuel the epidemic of fatherlessness in the UK.

In the wake of the riots, YouGov polling for the Centre for Social Justice showed three quarters of the British public think fatherlessness is a serious problem, made worse by a law that puts the rights of the mother over those of a child to have meaningful contact with both parents.

Norgrove has missed a golden opportunity to acknowledge the importance of fathers and the extended family when parents split and correct the mistake in the Children's Act 1989.

Urgent changes are required in this legislation to reflect the vital role non-resident parents play, usually fathers, for their child's wellbeing.

As the CSJ said in its family law review, *Every Family Matters* (2009) "...legislation should acknowledge that children are most likely to benefit from the 'substantial involvement' of both parents in their lives."

Norgrove also fails to address the unnecessarily costly and cumbersome legislation which prevents all but the wealthiest grandparents from seeing their grandchildren.

The Interim Report from David Norgrove's Review of Family Law proposed enshrining in law the principle (not presumption) that children benefit from each parent having a meaningful involvement in their lives, but his final report has dropped this proposal.

The CSJ has long championed the rights of children to have contact with non-resident parents and grandparents. Its work with the poorest communities - and the summer's rioting - shows time and again how fatherlessness is implicated in youth crime, educational failure, addictions and worklessness.

CSJ Executive Director Gavin Poole said: “Norgrove’s refusal to acknowledge the importance of fathers and recommend a change to the law ignores the vast majority of public opinion and evidence about the [devastating](#) effect absent dads has on children.

“We urge the Government to take the lead themselves in enshrining in law the importance that fathers and grandparents play in a child’s upbringing and update the Children’s Act in this highly significant way.”

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.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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.