

Marriage Foundation

2017 Election Manifesto



Family breakdown lies at the heart of most of the social problems in society and costs the nation £48bn a year. It is a scourge on our national life and a human tragedy for those involved **particularly the children**. Over the next five years government needs to implement unambiguous policies aimed at achieving more secure stable nurturing relationships.

- **Children** need them for their healthy development and life chances
- **Parents and families** need them to flourish and thrive
- **We all** need them as a society if we are to reduce the ever increasing costs of failure

To that end Marriage Foundation sets out **FIVE** urgent policies

All parties should unequivocally support marriage and families and pledge:

1. **A Cabinet level Minister for Families and Family Breakdown**
Most government departments depend on the contribution of families and are adversely impacted by the consequences of weak and broken relationships. A clear cross-government strategy with a responsible cabinet minister is urgently needed.
2. **A tax and benefits system that supports marriage and sustained relationships**
Britain is almost alone in failing significantly to reward couples that stay together. Support for marriage via the tax system should be substantially increased. The so-called "couple penalty", where parents with children, especially those on low to modest incomes, are paid thousands of pounds a year to live apart (or pretend to do so), should be reconsidered.
3. **Fund and promote relationships education for both children and adults**
Relationships education for adults is one of the key tools for combating family breakdown. Children also need sensitive relationships education at school to help them better understand and achieve fulfilling long-term relationships.
4. **Modernise family law**
Divorce law has not been comprehensively overhauled for half a century. The next government should grasp the nettle with a complete overhaul of laws relating to divorce and financial arrangements.
5. **Unashamedly champion marriage as the gold standard for all and eradicate entrenched myths**
And so reduce the marriage gap between the haves and the have nots – a serious and growing cause of real social inequality. At the same time, myths and misperceptions – "the myth of common law marriage", "marriage is just a piece of paper", "cohabitation is as stable a state as marriage" – should be eradicated by clear public statements and education.

Governments cannot legislate directly for stronger families but they can foster the right environment and so make a real difference. In the end stronger families are down to us all and our own behaviour but skills can be learned, support provided, ignorance dispelled and responsibility encouraged. We would all be winners!