

FEBRUARY 2011

ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON FAMILY LAW AND THE COURT OF  
PROTECTION

SPEAKER MEETING

“SHARED PARENTING: PANACEA OR PLACEBO?”

All Party Parliamentary Group<sup>1</sup> to host a discussion on shared parenting with leading family groups and high profile think tank.

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Family Law and the Court of Protection<sup>2</sup> welcomes Dr. Craig Pickering<sup>3</sup>, John Baker<sup>4</sup>, Dr Samantha Callan<sup>5</sup> and David Hodson<sup>6</sup> as panel members for the Group’s Speaker Meeting, “Shared Parenting: Panacea or Placebo?” which will take place on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February in The Palace of Westminster.

Considered to be one of the most controversial issues in English family law today, shared parenting as a legal concept is a source of confusion and anger in Britain<sup>7</sup>, but varies widely in essence and meaning. The current government has made it clear that it values the input of both parents in a child’s life<sup>8</sup> but countries such as Australia have begun to perceive dangers of looking at child welfare from a parental rights perspective<sup>9</sup>. Whilst the value of having two capable and loving parents in a child’s life is not in dispute, “Shared Parenting: Panacea or Placebo?” will look at the shades of grey within the definition of shared parenting and whether the current law’s focus on the paramountcy principle<sup>10</sup> should be changed in favour of including the shared parenting principle as a legal presumption in its own right and what that might mean, in practice.

The speakers for this event are: Dr. Craig Pickering, CEO of Families Need Fathers; John Baker, Policy Officer of the Association of Shared Parenting; Dr Samantha Callan, Chairman-In-Residence at the Centre for Social Justice, an independent think tank and David Hodson, Chair of the Family Law Review Group for the Centre for Social Justice and a consultant for the International Family Law Group.

Craig Pickering says, “After three years of separation around 28% of children do not have any relationship with one parent, usually their father. A presumption of shared parenting would ensure that, where appropriate, children would have the benefit of both parents being significantly involved. The ‘theme park parent’ approach, which is the current status quo, does not provide children with two involved parents”.

Dr Callan explains, “An amended Children Act should include clear principles that children are most likely to benefit from the ‘substantial involvement’ of both parents in their lives<sup>11</sup>. Those with parental responsibility should be considered to have an equal status in their children’s lives following separation rather than one parent automatically having an artificial ‘head start’ in resolving the future best interests of the child. This is completely different to suggesting they should spend equal time with both parents.”

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### Notes to Editors:

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<sup>1</sup> The All Party Parliamentary Group on Family Law and The Court of Protection

<sup>2</sup> [Official website](#)

<sup>3</sup> Dr Craig Pickering is the CEO of [Families Need Fathers](#), an organisation that promotes the view that shared parenting should be a legal presumption in family cases.

<sup>4</sup> John Baker is the Policy Officer of [The Association for Shared Parenting](#), an organisation that promotes the view that shared parenting should be a legal presumption in family cases.

<sup>5</sup> Dr Samantha Callan is the Chairman-In-Residence for the [Centre for Social Justice](#), an organisation that promotes both parents in a child's life but does not support legal presumptions.

<sup>6</sup> David Hodson is Chair of the Family Law Review Group for the Centre for Social Justice, an organisation that promotes both parents in a child's life but does not support legal presumptions.

<sup>7</sup> [Children and Young People Now](#), September 2010

<sup>8</sup> [BBC News](#), June 2010

<sup>9</sup> [Australian Family Lawyer](#), Vol 20, No 1.

<sup>10</sup> [Children Act 1989, Part 1, Section 1.](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Every Family Matters](#), July 2009