

The Commission on Families and Households continues to engage with a number of people and organisations on influencing positive change.



The report of the Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households, '[Love Matters](#)', was launched by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on 26th April at Coram's conference centre in London. This was a very appropriate venue in which to emphasise the importance of supporting children and families.

Over 120 people came to hear about the Commission's messages and recommendations. It was a joyous occasion, rendered particularly special by the presence and contributions of pupils from four schools representing different faiths and members of the Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB). These schools and the FJYPB had previously taken part in the Commission's evidence-gathering activities. Their personal stories and reflections demonstrated the enormous value of listening to and learning from young people. Their contributions at the launch can be heard on the [Commission's YouTube channel](#).

We are enormously grateful to all those who attended the launch and to those who wrote an endorsement of '*Love Matters*'. We have continued to receive many appreciative messages from a wide range of stakeholders and members of the Church of England. We are delighted that individuals and organisations are already reflecting on the messages in our report and considering how our recommendations to the Church of England and government might be taken forward. We recognise that a few people have expressed disappointment that the Commission did not cover specific issues that they regard as important, and some others that we did not see our remit as an opportunity to promote a specific way of living in our diverse society.

The Commission's remit was extremely broad and, at the start of our work, Commissioners made three important decisions. First, that every aspect of family life today could not be investigated by one Commission within a limited time frame. Second, that as an independent Commission with 12 Commissioners from a range of different backgrounds and cultures, we should not be the ones deciding which issues to explore. Had we attempted to do that, we would have simply reflected our personal views and priorities. We would have been in danger of missing out on rich dialogue with people from a range of faiths and cultures and of biasing our inquiries towards our own specific agendas. Third, we were determined to be guided by an exploration of and learning from Christian theology and scripture, and by the relevant research evidence shared with us by experts in different disciplines.

These decisions meant that we had no set agenda beyond our Terms of Reference; we did not impose our own ideas; and we did not seek to promote a specific way of living or make judgments about different living arrangements. Instead, we approached our task with open minds, focusing on the issues which individuals and families told us about in our Calls for Evidence and during our visits around the country, meeting children, young people and families, talking about many sensitive issues, and respecting a range of strongly held beliefs and convictions about matters such as abuse, LGBTQI+ issues, and marriage and divorce.

Our report '*Love Matters*' considers the issues raised with us over two years and the steps suggested to enable everyone to flourish in a variety of

family structures in a multicultural society. The Commission concluded that family and loving relationships are central to everyone's life: without those and the basics of food, shelter and clothing, it is a struggle to thrive. Moreover, children need loving, secure and stable homes in which to grow. So it became very clear to all of us that committed, loving relationships are critical to our wellbeing. Hence our statement that families matter, relationships matter, and love matters.

Since the launch, Commissioners have been engaging with a number of people and organisations who are telling us how they can see the report being able to influence positive change. We are talking with government departments, preparing a short summary leaflet with a number of discussion questions for use across the Church of England, designing a poster to advertise *'Love Matters'*, and will be launching a young person's version of our report in the autumn to be used in schools and churches across the country. We have made a presentation at the *Relationships All-Party Parliamentary Group*, responded to the Ministry of Justice private law consultation, and will be running a fringe event at General Synod in July.

Members of the Commission will continue to meet with groups and organisations keen to implement our recommendations both within the church, the government and the public square. We welcome feedback on all these activities as we monitor how together the work of three Archbishops' Commissions can support families and households to flourish.

The full report, the summary, theology, briefing and practice papers are all available on the [Commission's dedicated web pages](#).

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