

GENERAL SYNOD

LOVE MATTERS: Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households

1. The Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households was the third commission established to follow up on themes from Archbishop Justin's book, Reimagining Britain. It follows the Housing Commission and the Care Commission. In its final conclusions it seeks to draw the threads of those 3 Commissions together as they closely interweave.
2. The Aims of the Commission are clearly laid out in [Appendix 2 of the Summary Report](#). The way that the Commission worked in 4 work streams is also laid out there.
3. From the outset the Commissioners (Appendix 1 of Summary Report) were clear that they began their work together with no assumptions about the outcomes but a determination to explore the evidence for what is happening in England today, and what is being done by churches, and in wider society around families and households. So the major first phase of work was focussed on evidence gathering. This was done through a Call for Evidence, engaging with written research, and talking with experts across disciplines. Young people were engaged through facilitated conversations.
4. Eight dioceses, from all regions, responded in depth to their situation and work. Visits were made by Commissioners together around the country (Newham, Oxford, York, Birmingham, Bradford, Slough). Other visits were made by Commissioners in their own areas (Blackburn, Sheffield, Rotherham, Doncaster, Newcastle, Yeovil, Portsmouth). Online consultations were undertaken with most of the leading organisations engaging in families work across the nation, church based, other faith based and 'secular'. Examples of impressive local based work were found in abundance.
5. The Commission was privileged also to be given full access to all the research undertaken by the Children's Commissioner for England in her own work on Families.
6. From the outset the Commissioners knew that they would not be able to cover every single aspect of family and household life in England. There were areas that could have been covered but time and resource meant limits had to be set. An example would be the child care system where there was given to the commission more than enough evidence to conclude that rather than going over the same ground that Josh McAllister had already done the best route was simply to endorse his findings. Nothing emerged to suggest the Commission would reach any different conclusions from him. The Commission also did not explore Safeguarding, nor go into detailed study about the changing dynamics of family size in relation to parental choice on how many children they choose to have.
7. Everywhere the Commission went there was huge support for the work being undertaken. Other faith leaders made it clear that they were encouraged by the work

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and supportive of the Commission exploring the reality of family and household life across people of all faiths and none.

8. The final report is based on the evidence gathered and shaped by the theological work undertaken, building on that done by the Housing Commission. The core values identified in the Housing work resonated well with what was discovered about what people living in the houses wanted for themselves and their families and communities.
9. The Commission concluded that it needed to highlight Key Messages that had emerged from their work
 - Value Families in all their diversity
 - Support relationships throughout life
 - Honour singleness and single person households
 - Empower children and young people
 - Build a kinder, fairer, more forgiving society
10. Many specific recommendations flow from these key messages. These are recommendations to Government and to the Church of England. The latter also, the Commission believes, apply to the wider church and other faith communities, but it is not their role to recommend specifics to them. It is hoped though that taking forward the recommendations will be done both ecumenically and with other faith communities where appropriate.
11. There are 4 Key Priorities for Action
 - Maximise the protective effect of family.
 - Ensure that all loving relationships matter and are valued in everything we do.
 - Give every child the best possible start in life.
 - Tackle the societal issues which limit people's ability to flourish.
12. The motion presented to Synod deliberately keeps the parameters broad. It welcomes the Report (the full one not simply the summary) and asks for serious work to be undertaken as to how recommendations to Church and Government can be developed and worked out in practice. The Commission itself clearly saw that most of the best work being done with families and households is delivered creatively and powerfully at the local level. Where it is done in partnership with other local agents it is done to the very best. Yet there are national policies and actions that matter, and can enable that local delivery to be ever more effective. This is true both in Church and Society.

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