



# Family Justice Council

## NEWS RELEASE

28 March 2007

### IMPACT OF LEGAL AID REFORMS ON THE DELIVERY OF FAMILY JUSTICE

At the annual joint meeting of the Family Justice Council, together with representatives of the local Family Justice Councils, deep concern was expressed across all disciplines, and all regions nationally, about the impact of the Legal Services Commission's proposals (under its legal aid reform programme) on the delivery of family justice.

The Family Justice Council believes that the proposed structure for, and levels of remuneration of, public funding are likely to lead to a significant exodus of dedicated, experienced and specialist practitioners from publicly funded work in family cases.

This is likely to have a grave impact on the availability and quality of advice, legal representation and advocacy for those who seek access to the Family courts. The proposed reforms may well have a significant impact on referrals to, and the use of, mediation; a further inevitable consequence is likely to be a decline in effective and efficient case management, leading to an increase in the delay in resolving cases.

The Family Justice Council fears that the interests of children and other parties will be prejudiced by a diminution in the level and quality of the specialist services currently available.

#### **Notes to editors**

1. The Family Justice Council is an independent, interdisciplinary body. It has representatives of all the key professions involved in the family justice system, including: judges, lawyers, doctors, social workers, academics and police.
2. The Council was set up in 2004 to advise the Government on all aspects of family law, policy, practice and procedure. The Council responds to all Government consultation papers affecting the family justice system and makes its own proposals for reform and improvement.
3. The Council's objectives include improving the way that the different professional groups involved in the family justice system work together and promoting better understanding between them.
4. The Council is chaired by Sir Mark Potter, President of the Family Division and senior family judge in England and Wales, but the majority of its members are not judges or lawyers.
5. The FJC's website can be found at : <http://www.family-justice-council.org.uk/index.htm>

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