

The Family Room Manifesto 2015

What is the Family Room?

The Family Room is a collaboration of 18 leading not for profit organisations working with children and families across the UK. Between us, we support millions of families each year - through practice, advocacy and campaigning.

Families in the 21st century come in many different shapes and sizes. And they are not static - they change over time. The Family Room recognises and celebrates the diversity of families in Britain and we want all political parties to do the same.

Why a Family Manifesto?

Families are the cornerstone of our society: adults and children alike say that family is the most important thing for them – where they seek and get support and love. Most families do a great job raising children, taking care of elderly relatives, paying taxes and contributing to the economy and volunteering in their local communities – they are strong and resilient and cope well with difficulty.

But some families are under strain as a result of squeezed incomes, unequal access to services and increased work pressures and insecurities. Some families are also struggling with physical and mental health issues, parenting challenges, family conflict and domestic abuse and other challenges. At certain points in their lives, a number of families need extra support to help them cope with the pressures they face. As a society, we need to make sure that our families get the support they need.

We want to see all incoming parties commit to helping all families thrive by:

- Developing a cross-departmental Family Strategy to improve family income, stability and wellbeing. The Secretary of State for Education, Secretary of State for Health and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions should jointly report to Parliament on progress made against the Strategy annually.

As part of this, we want to see:

- All families supported to better balance work and family life. All parents and carers should be able to access flexible, affordable and high-quality childcare.
- All families able to have decent living standards. Action is needed to tackle low pay and address financial pressures on families, including more employers paying the Living Wage over time and improved support for mums and dads on parental leave.
- All families supported in times of particular stress and change. All families should be supported to tackle their problems before those problems become crises. All kinship carers, foster carers and adoptive parents should be supported, including with leave entitlements, to enable the children they are raising to thrive. All families need to be able to access relationship support, regardless of their income.

The members of the Family Room are: 4Children, BAAF, CPAG, Contact a Family, Coram, Family Action, Family and Childcare Trust, Family Lives, Family Rights Group, Gingerbread, Grandparents Plus, Home Start, Marriage Care, National Children's Bureau, National Childbirth Trust, One Plus One, Relate, Tavistock Centre for Couple Relationships, The Children's Society and Working Families.