The Network on Family, Regulation and Society

Shared parenting: what works for children?

Wednesday 25th May 2011 from 1.00pm to 5.00pm

Nuffield Foundation, 28 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3JS

1.00-1:30: Lunch

1.30-1:40: Introductions/House keeping

1:40-2:40 Shared time parenting post separation: ideology and evidence (Dr Jenn McIntosh) This session is based on McIntosh’s work with her colleagues, Richard Chisholm and Bruce Smyth, and features current work with Smyth, to be published in K. Kuehnle & L. Drozd (Eds.), Parenting plan evaluations: Applied research for the Family Court. New York: Oxford University Press.

Response: Liz Trinder, Exeter University

2:50-3:45 The developmental perspective: observing the infant and hearing the child (Dr Jenn McIntosh) This session takes a fine lens to the question of child development within various post separation parenting arrangements. It draws on forthcoming works to be featured in a special issue of the Family Court Review (July, 2011) on attachment and family law matters. It also features DVD footage, and narrative analysis (with colleague, Christina Sadowski), of school aged children discussing their experiences of shared parenting. The implications for understanding both the developmental and literal voice of the child are discussed.

Response: Keith Towler, Children’s Commissioner for Wales

3:45-4:15 Tea

4:15-5:00 Case studies and discussion (Dr Jenn McIntosh) Here McIntosh gives some vivid and candid illustrations of cases from her own clinic in which shared time parenting has been brought to life by different families, in differing circumstances. Discussion will involve all participants identifying readiness for shared time parenting, and what interventions may assist families for ‘preparing to share’.

5:00 Close
The Seminar

Shared parenting after divorce or separation is a very high profile issue at present, generating a lot of heated debate. The Interim Report of the Family Justice Review decided recently not to recommend that the law be changed to include a shared care presumption after parental separation. In contrast, a Shared Parenting Bill currently before parliament would enshrine such a presumption. Until now the debate on shared parenting has been dominated by adult concerns. The purpose of this seminar is to introduce children’s perspectives into the debate, based on the highest quality research evidence available internationally. We will be focusing on what the research evidence shows about what children want and what children need after parents separate.

Our keynote speaker is Dr Jennifer McIntosh, the very highly regarded Australian child psychologist and empirical researcher. She is widely acknowledged as the leading international expert on the effects on children of shared care and has recently completed two important studies for the Australian government. This is the first time that this research will have been presented fully in the UK. Dr McIntosh’s profile and publications are available at: http://www.familytransitions.com.au/Family_Transitions/Publications.html

Our two other speakers are Keith Towler and Professor Liz Trinder. Keith Towler is the Children’s Commissioner for Wales and a member of the Family Justice Review team. Liz Trinder is Professor of Socio-Legal Studies at Exeter University and is a British expert on the research on shared care and contact.

The seminar is being organized by the Network on Family, Regulation and Society, with the support of the Nuffield Foundation. The Network is a grouping of family law and policy researchers committed to facilitating exchange between researchers, media and policy and practice communities in key areas of family law and policy. Current members of the Network are Professor Anne Barlow (Exeter), Professor Ian Butler (Bath), Professor Gillian Douglas (Cardiff), Dr Emma Hitchings (Bristol), Professor Judith Masson (Bristol), Professor Janet Reibstein (Exeter), Dr Tess Ridge (Bath), Dr Leanne Smith (Cardiff) and Professor Liz Trinder (Exeter). The Network also has collaborative relationships with Family Law Bar Association, One Plus One and Resolution. Website: http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/law/research/frs/