

CHMC - Memorial to Conference

Most of you will know of the work that Christine Dugdale has done over the last two years concerning the financial difficulties of parents in separated families. You will recall that the Circuit Meeting which met at Caversham Heights on 21 February voted unanimously to 'Put a Memorial to the Conference' on the matter.

The Conference Agenda is now available. The memorial and Methodist Church response is on page 32 at:

<http://www.methodistconference.org.uk/media/182136/conf-2013-memorials.pdf> . We give here the appropriate extract:

Memorial M30 Child support payments

The Reading and Silchester (26/13) Circuit Meeting (Present: 48; Voting: 47 for, 0 against) supports the Government belief that children in separated families do better if both parents continue to be involved in their lives; it acknowledges and welcomes the important steps the government is taking to encourage this. However, the Circuit Meeting records its concern that some aspects of government legislation are causing severe financial difficulties for non-resident parents, especially those on a low income. The Circuit request that the Methodist Church passes on this concern and asks the government:

- to rectify the errors in the child support maintenance calculation regulations to ensure that the statutory maintenance liabilities are fair and affordable; and
- to ensure that welfare provision for both parents after separation is appropriate, in accordance with Article 34.3 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Turn over

Reply

The Conference thanks the Reading and Silchester Circuit Meeting for its memorial.

Under current arrangements, parents who are separated can arrange, or be required to arrange, financial contributions, often through the Child Support Agency (CSA). The CSA calculates the amounts to be paid by the non-resident parent to support their children. As this memorial highlights, the interaction between the benefits system and maintenance payments often leaves low-income non-resident parents with insufficient money to subsist.

Non-resident parents should contribute financially to their children's upbringing, but it is clear that deductions which leave a parent with too little to live on are not in the interests of the children. Such circumstances damage children's ongoing relationship with their parents as well as the parent themselves. The Conference has previously supported the concept of minimum income standards, a calculation of what a person or family needs to live, which should be the basis of decisions made about benefits or the level of income needed after deductions (including child support payments).

The Conference therefore directs that appropriate representation be made to write to the government raising the concerns outlined in the memorial, and reaffirms its commitment to promoting the concept of minimum income standards.

It is hoped that the sending of the memorial and this constructive response will produce a wider awareness throughout the Methodist Church community of these serious problems and that the letters to Government lead to action to put things right. The Conference will be held from 4 - 11 July at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster. Please support it with your prayers.

24 June 2013