

PE1513/R

Petitioner Letter of 16 February 2015

Dear Committee Members

I write regarding the Public Petition Committee meeting on November 25th 2014, and the decision to defer until the Court Reform Act becomes law. As I'm sure you will have also, I have read the changes the Court Reform Act will make, and while it will consolidate the Family Law procedure and provide dedicated sheriffs that will consider cases solely about Family Law (from my understanding), there appears to be no actual changes proposed to the law governing Family and/or Child Law which have caused so many problems. The legal loopholes which leave unmarried fathers in the grey area that currently exists and that we have been discussing in the committee over the past 12 months or so are still going to exist after the reform. Procedure will change but the law itself that by this point most of us agree is unfit for a 21st century society in that it differentiates between certain subtypes of parents (married, unmarried, separated, divorced etc.) and determines which rights, responsibilities and punishments each subtype should be given. I maintain that all parents, until proven unfit or unworthy, should have equal rights, responsibilities and should face equal punishment for failing to uphold their responsibilities to the best interests of their child - much in the same way that in criminal law every person is considered innocent until proven guilty. We must make the changes in this area of the law that then create every parent, men and women, as equals until such time as they lose their right to be considered equal.

I would also like to draw your attention to a report made by the Daily Mail regarding proposed changes by Children's Minister in Westminster, Tim Loughton MP, that calls for tougher laws to be implemented and more protection given to separated men who are denied the right to see their children even after court orders. Mr Loughton's proposals on tougher punishments are in line with my suggestion for the same thing, although Mr Loughton appears to focus solely on women who disregard a courts order whereas I would like to emphasise that all parents should face punishment regardless of gender should they fail to uphold the best interests of the child. These proposals show, however, that there is a changing attitude in the wider UK in that men are not always to blame, that men shouldn't be looked upon in a darker light in these situations and that men should be considered equal to women in every way - just as women should be considered equal to men in every way. In a 21st century Scotland, this shouldn't be too much to expect.

I have asked written to Mr Loughton to ask him to voice his support for changes North of

the border, although I realise he has no actual power to affect change, and to add his support to The Scottish Law Society and Families Need Fathers Scotland et al. While I fully agree with The Committee's decision to defer for consideration of the Court Reform Act, it is clear to me that this act does nothing to remedy the deeper issue and that changes must be endorsed to amend this broken area of legislation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and I welcome any questions you may have or indeed any feedback you would care to give.

My Kindest Regards

Ron Park