



# Equal Parenting Alliance News

April 2006

## Welcome

Welcome to the first newsletter for members and supporters of the Equal Parenting Alliance.

Though it's only a few weeks since we started as a political party, I must say how gratifying it has been to see the number of people who have joined us already.

Of course, we realise we are 'nobody' at the moment, naturally we intend to become 'somebody' in the shortest possible time and make a real difference.

Thanks to all for your support.

## So what have we been doing?

Well, most importantly we had our official party launch two weeks ago on the 31st of March. We held this outside the Queen Elizabeth II Courts in Liverpool, scene of much family injustice. The choice of venue was a symbolic gesture, more for our benefit than anyone else's.

Here we read out a [statement](#) explaining why we were starting a party. We are a pragmatic lot, and were not expecting a large crowd, and we weren't disappointed! Around twenty five members and supporters came to support us and listen, along with two reporters and a photographer.



Our Deputy Party Leader reads out a statement in front of the Queen Elizabeth II courts in Liverpool on our launch.

This was about as much as we could have expected, considering that the US Secretary of State also chose that day to visit town (a typical shabby Blair trick). We received some local press coverage and were satisfied the day went without a hitch.

Thanks to everyone who turned out.

## Other Projects

We are also tackling the local police on their policies towards Domestic Violence against men, and questioning the local education authority on how they treat non-resident parents having difficulties getting information about their children's education from schools.

We are giving a presentation to Glossop Methodist Church on the 26th April about how our activities fit into the father's rights movement.



Rogues Gallery - the committee outside the Liver Building on launch day.

(We thought we'd get the first album cover in the bag straight off. From left to right; Daryl Irwin, Phil Else, Tracey Wilkinson, Pete Molloy, Steve Gouldstone & Paul Rubert)

## Durham Union Debate

We have been asked by Durham Union Society to speak for the motion in a debate "This house supports the father's rights movement".

Apparently we will be speaking alongside Matt O'Connor (who some of you may have heard of).

They have asked Fathers Direct to see if they will speak for the opposition and the other speaker on the opposition will be Jonathan Ferstenberg, a politics and debating teacher and father.

Now I realise we don't have too much that's nice to say about [Fathers Direct](#), but even I would be surprised to see them having the gall to speak *against* Father's Rights. Perhaps they can get some extra government funding for doing this!

Should be an interesting evening, and the presence of Mr O'Connor will hopefully guarantee some publicity.

This debate will be held on Friday 28th April 2006 in Durham Union.

**MEDIA**

We issued this press release today 13/04/2006.

**PRESS RELEASE**

From: New UK Political Party "Equal Parenting Alliance"  
Date: 13 April 2006

Two 'father's rights' protestors from the group Real Fathers For Justice have today climbed up onto Westminster Abbey, carrying a crucifix. They say they want the church to do something to address the issue of equality in parenting.

So why do these protestors constantly do these stunts? Surely everyone has got the message by now?

This, of course, would be true if anything in family law had changed appreciably since the first protests of Spiderman in 2003.

Of course this is a publicity stunt - but these actions have been very effective at getting publicity and raising public awareness about the plight of children at the mercy of a dysfunctional family law system.

When parents have their children taken away - with no appeal, no legal recourse and no real consideration of what is best for the children - it is hardly surprising they adopt desperate measures to draw attention to their plight.

Nothing would give us greater pleasure than to never see another desperate father climbing up a crane, or for all the father's and children's rights groups to be disbanded because they are no longer needed.

Unfortunately, the only prospect we see of this is for all the different campaign groups to continue putting pressure on the Government and Judiciary until they get the message and change the way that family law is implemented to truly put children first.

ENDS

**NOTE TO EDITORS**

The Equal Parenting Alliance is a new UK political party that started in North West England in February 2006.

We believe our shambolic family law system is failing children, failing families, failing parents and putting at overall risk the future of our society it should be helping to secure.

No child should lose a parent, when parents separate, without very good reason.

We think the system should put the needs of children first and respect their right to normal parenting above the rights or wishes of either of their parents. The current system does not do this. For example, it allows one parent to eliminate the other parent from a child's life, if they wish.

We believe this is fundamentally wrong

It is about time the major political parties stood up and addressed this situation before more children and their families are damaged by current family law practice.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

www.equalparentingalliance.com  
Phone Steve Gouldstone  
0790 965 6735

Equal Parenting Alliance - Putting Children First

**BBC Radio 5 Live**

Our biggest media coup to-date was when two of our committee appeared (is that the right word for radio?) on Radio 5 Live's "Worricker on Sunday" on the 26th of March.

This was an hour long feature on where the father's rights movement was going after the demise of Fathers 4 Justice and included a mixture of interviews and people commenting live in the studio.

Our secretary, Tracey, spoke about the role that father's rights groups had in setting the agenda for equal parenting groups to follow, and our treasurer, Steve, got in a few sound-bites about our aims in setting up a political party too.

Of course, Matt O'Connor was in the studio doing a live interview, he actually spoke quite well this time and is definitely pushing the equal parenting line far more than he used too.

Kim Beetson from *Resolution* (formerly the Solicitors Family Law Association) was also in the studio. She had some useful things to say, Resolution effectively supports a presumption of contact being introduced into law.

Unfortunately, she also had to bring out the old chestnut about 90% of parents sorting things out for themselves, and it's only a small number (10%) of parents who need help from the courts, so *it's not really a big problem*.

Only 100,000 children a year then – that's nowhere near a problem is it?

Sorry Kim, that's one step forwards and two steps backwards in my book.

Jack O'Sullivan from Fathers Direct was also in the studio, being his usual self. Hopefully we'll be there in his place in two years time, making some better points!

OTHER NEWS

Equal Parenting Organisation Conference

One of our main aims in setting up the Equal Parenting Alliance was to co-operate with other compatible Equal Parenting Organisations (which we call EPOs).

We realise there are a multiplicity of groups that people can join and get involved with. We don't see ourselves as the alternative to any of these groups, and we don't want or aspire to be in competition with any of them. Our intention is to be complementary to them all.

Although these groups tend to have similar aims, they all, of course, approach the issues from a

slightly different perspective. We hope to be able to get input into our policies and strategy from all of them.

To achieve this we are organising an Equal Parenting Organisation conference on the 10th June 2006, where we are inviting all of them to send a representative to contribute and share ideas.

We may also consider combining this event with the United Equal Parenting conference on the following Saturday (see below).

Family Law Survey – Coming Soon

Another project we are working on is a survey of family law and its outcomes. We plan to get as many people who have been through the family law mill as possible, to try and build up some useful statistics on the outcomes of contact cases.

We are conducting this survey because this information is not available or collected elsewhere, and we believe it is essential that this information is collected. Otherwise, how can *anyone* assess the success of current policies, or sensibly formulate new ones?

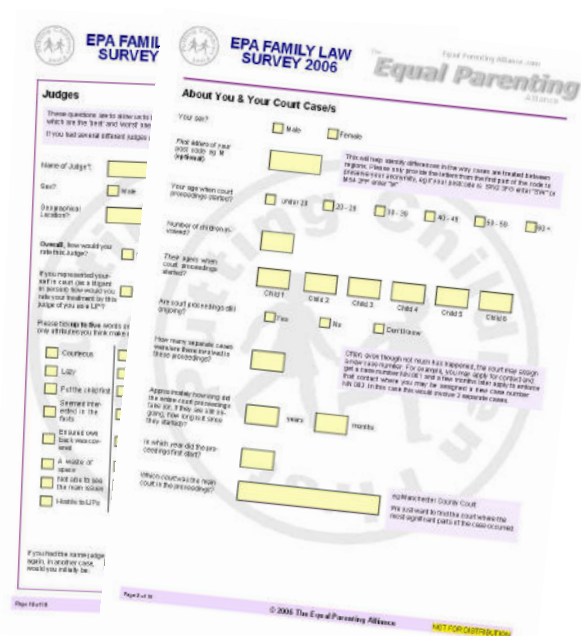
Of course, much better still would be the compulsory collection of the outcomes of cases with central collation. In this way, all cases could be covered, not just the self-selected sample we know we'll be getting.

This will allow us to answer questions such as "How many fathers say they have false allegations of child abuse made against them in contact disputes?"

No-one currently has *any* idea!

This is simply another example of the utter moral bankruptcy of the family courts and associated legal industry. They *prefer* not to know how they're doing, or how they've done in the past, so we have little choice but to do their work for them – as best we can.

We hope this survey will get us some good publicity and also be a good advertisement for us; cementing our position as something a little different in the campaign for reform of family law.



Even better, we hope this will also wrong-foot the government and judiciary – they just won't know what to do about it.

How can they possibly object to someone doing their best to collect data on the performance of the family law system? Something *they* should have been doing the past thirty years!

FATHER'S DAY EVENTS

On Friday 16th June there will be an all group [Dads United March](#) in London. The Equal Parenting Alliance will have a speaking slot after the march.

The following day, Saturday 17th June, a joint *United Equal Parenting conference* is to be held in Central Hall, Westminster opposite Houses of Parliament 10am - 5pm [Web site](#). All are welcome and entry is free. The Equal Parenting Alliance will also be at the conference.

## THE BACK PAGE

### Let us know what you think

This is our first newsletter and we'd be pleased to get your feedback to hear what you think of it.

Would you rather have it sent to you as an Acrobat file by email, or would you rather download it? We'll also make future newsletters available for browsing on our web site.

In future newsletters, we may also publish any comments or contributions you send us.

Please send any comments by email to:

[newsletter@EqualParentingAlliance.com](mailto:newsletter@EqualParentingAlliance.com)

### Q. How many family court judges does it take to change a light bulb?

A. The answer is not clear at the moment, this failed light bulb is a very serious issue which the court must consider most carefully. Of course, we cannot be sure *why* the light bulb failed so I shall ask CAFCASS to prepare an expert report for the court within 14 weeks asking for their comments. It is, of course, also possible that the light bulb failed due to some form of abuse, such as repeated turning on and off, and I understand that the social worker involved has also expressed her concerns that the bulb is never given sufficient time to 'recover' after it has been left on for a few hours.

The court has also heard some most worrying allegations that the bulb has sometimes been inappropriately left on *during the day*, frequently for hours at a time. This I find very concerning. In view of the fact that this court must be careful to consider only *the best interests of the light bulb* I shall instruct a guardian ad litem to represent the bulb and establish its wishes and degree of understanding regarding the length of time it should remain on.

In the meantime, though it is unfortunate, it will be best for the bulb if it remains *off* and unchanged while these studies are undertaken and all the issues considered most carefully. However, in the bulb's best interests we will – of course – ensure that it is inserted into a bulb holder under supervision once a fortnight for two hours, with no power applied and with the power switch left clearly *off* in a contact centre.

The court will review progress in this matter on the first available date in four months time.

### Where's my membership card?

Most people who've joined in the last few weeks will not have received their promised welcome packs and membership cards.

Please accept our apologies for this, we've been waiting for agreement on our new logo before we print and send these out.

So please bear with us.

### Will we be fighting local elections?

Several people have asked us if we are going to be putting up candidates in the upcoming local elections.

The short answer to this is: No, we won't.

There are a number of reasons for this.

Firstly, as we are just starting out, we are not in a position – either financially or in the number and geographical spread of our members – to fight any elections at all yet.

Secondly, we will only generally be fighting for seats in the House of Commons and the European parliament. This is mainly because these elections get more publicity, especially at a national level. Of course, these policies will always be under review.

We expect our first election will be an opportunistic by-election somewhere where we have a suitable candidate available and a degree of local support. Realistically, it will probably be at least a year before we are in a position to fight for a seat.

### Do we have local groups?

We've been asked if we have any local groups that members around the country can join. We don't yet. Remember we've only been in existence as a party about six weeks, and haven't got that many members yet.

Hopefully, our membership base will start to pick up and we'll get to a point where there's enough members in a region to warrant a local get-together. Please let us know if you're interested in getting in touch with other members in your area, and we'll see what we can do.

Watch this space!

Tip: On the web site, clicking on the yellow highlighted 'LATEST' link on the top menu bar, will always take you to the most recently changed or newest page.