

PRESS RELEASE – MONDAY 12 MAY 2003

CHILDREN’S COMMISSIONER WOULD NOT SERVE THE BEST INTERESTS OF ENGLAND’S CHILDREN, SAYS FAMILY GROUP

As the Joint Committee on Human Rights publishes its ‘Case for a Children’s Commissioner for England’ later today, Family Education Trust registers its concern that the establishment of such a statutory office would not serve the best interests of children, but would rather operate as a vehicle to advance a radical ‘children’s rights’ agenda, undermining parents and threatening the autonomy of the family unit.

The Trust’s Director, Robert Whelan, said, ‘In the vast majority of cases, children have parents who are well able to represent their interests, and we find it disturbing that the assumption is being made that a commissioner would fulfil this advocacy role more adequately than parents. Most parents do far more to promote and protect the rights and interests of their children than any statutory office will ever do. Parents are far better placed and equipped to represent the interests of their children than any impersonal mechanism or bureaucratic machine.’

‘We are particularly concerned that the appointment of a children’s commissioner in England would lead to a transfer of authority and responsibility for children's upbringing away from parents to the state, affecting sensitive areas such as child discipline and sexual conduct. In the course of its inquiry, the Joint Committee on Human Rights received evidence from the President of the Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health which gave grounds for fears that a children's commissioner could exacerbate the tendency to promote the “sexual rights” of the child to the detriment of parental authority. Yet, where adults gain access to children without the knowledge and consent of their parents, there is always considerable risk of exploitation.’

As an independent research organisation, Family Education Trust does not receive government funding and is financed entirely by members' subscriptions and donations. It has no religious or political affiliations.

Further background information will be found in the Trust's submission to the Joint Committee on Human Rights at:

<http://www.famyouth.org.uk/JCHRsubmission.pdf>