
Family breakdown damaging children, say Tories

Family breakdown and the devaluation of marriage has led to a generation of children with no concept of right and wrong, the Tories have warned.

By [Tom Whitehead](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/tom-whitehead/) (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/tom-whitehead/), Home Affairs Editor

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Youngsters have no “vestige of stability” in their lives and are exposed to drugs and alcohol at a “ludicrously young age”.

The lack of a family-focused upbringing means many young children are growing up as the “antithesis of model citizens”, Chris Grayling, the shadow home secretary, said.

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His attack on the breakdown of traditional values under Labour followed his warning that the drugs and gang world depicted in cult television series The Wire has been imported to Britain.

It is part of a week of Conservative speeches and campaigns on “Broken Britain” and to target Labour’s record in tackling poverty and crime.

In a speech in Westminster, Mr Grayling said a “perverse sense of political correctness” has devalued marriage and stable relationships which has left us effectively paying couples to “break up, not stay together”.

He said: “Family breakdown has reached a scale where many young people grow up with no vestige of stability in their lives, and no concept of a family-focused upbringing.”

He said some children do not have a proper home, are not given proper meals or

“They have no one to tell them right from wrong. So it’s hardly surprising that all too often they grow up as the antithesis of model citizens,” he said.

Earlier Mr Grayling had warned the UK now suffers from the same culture of gangs and violence found in the US with drug offences increasing in all the most deprived corners of the country .

He likened it to The Wire, a cult US crime drama which portrays unremittingly the battle between police and gangs on the streets of Baltimore, Maryland, on the east coast of the USA.

But Alan Johnson, the Home Secretary, hit back accused his Tory shadow of trying to sound “cool” with “glib references” to TV shows.

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"Chris Grayling should be praising the police for continued reduction in gun-related offences, rather than talking Britain down," he said.

"The connection between The Wire and Chris Grayling's grasp on the problems of modern Britain is that they're both fictional."

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