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PRESS RELEASE

Family Reform Bill

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A spokesman for the Indigo Group, chaired by Bill Etheridge MEP, has praised Conservative MP Suella Fernandes for her move to propose a Family Reform Bill which would bring family law into the 21st century.

Miss Fernandes told the House of Commons yesterday (Tuesday 28th March) that shared parenting should be a key principle when determining the contact and residence of the children.

She went on to say that shared parenting should, as a minimum, mean that a child had a right to a meaningful relationship with both parents.

Miss Fernandes added “We can’t keep telling fathers that they have equal responsibilities and then not give them equal opportunities to carry them out.”

Said Fathers4Justice founder Matt O’Connor, “What Suella Fenandez has said is something F4J have been saying for 16 years - and campaigned relentlessly for. The Conservative led coalition of 2010 broke its election promise to Fathers4Justice to introduce these very commitments.

“As far back as 2004 – in the middle of high profile Fathers4Justice protests - then Conservative family spokeswoman Theresa May* said that within the ‘first month of a Tory government a bill would be drawn up giving a presumption of co-parenting and a right for both parents to be involved in bringing up their children where couples separate.

“Since then, the system has degenerated into legalised cage fighting where a de facto presumption of ‘no contact’ exists between fathers and their children.”

“The judiciary have the power to enforce their own court orders and transfer residence when faced with a recalcitrant parent. They choose not to. It makes a mockery of the law and our idea of justice.”

“Courts will send mothers to jail for not sending their children to school, but won’t act when mothers don’t send their children to see their dads.”

“We hope more MPs will support the efforts of Suella Fernandes and ensure shared parenting is adopted as the norm, as it is in many US states.”

“Not only is it responsible parenting, but it will lead to better outcomes for our children, our families and our country and lift the burden on the taxpayer by removing the majority of cases from

the family justice system and cutting the £48 billion a year cost of family breakdown.”

Indigo Policy advisor Martin Day, said, "Though there are differences in approach, Miss Fernandes has grasped the essential principle of Indigo’s Family law policy in that breaches need to be made a criminal, rather than civil offence.

“Where non-resident parents (usually fathers) are refused access, the offence must be punishable or there is no incentive to comply.

“The Indigo Group are thinking through policies of common sense that the average working man or woman can relate to. We welcome contact from politicians of all persuasions regarding any of our proposals.

“Please get in touch with us at info@theindigogroup.org.”

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For further information please call Martin Day, Accredited Parliamentary Aide to Bill Etheridge MEP, on 07913 599697 or +32 22 84 74 53.

*Theresa May’s comments from 2004 can be read here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2004/oct/05/childrenservices.conservatives2004>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/3912311.stm