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Protecting family life, church freedoms and much more...

We've had a busy few months and have lots of developments to tell you about.

One of our main concerns has been the state's interference in family life, especially as the Westminster Government considered proposals that could have criminalised Christian parents.

Thankfully Government Ministers backed away from these controversial plans. But in Scotland we're still fighting the Scottish National Party's sweeping 'state guardian' measures that are essentially a

'big brother' style invasion of family life.

We also have news of one county council which tried to force all churches to register to perform same-sex marriages.

According to an opinion poll we commissioned before the European election, a third of respondents think David Cameron has undermined Christianity.

For more information on the poll and many other stories, including the Government's liberalisation of abortion, just keep reading.

NO2NP: Campaign launched against intrusive 'Named Person' scheme

A major campaign against the Scottish Government's 'Named Person' plans has been launched by family groups including The Christian Institute, CARE and the Scottish Parent Teacher Council.

Over 200 people attended the launch of the No to Named Person campaign (NO2NP) in Edinburgh, which featured discussion from parents, doctors and academics on the SNP's widely criticised state guardian measures.

One parent from the Highlands, where the scheme is already in operation, told the NO2NP campaign that state officials held secret meetings about her son who suffers from complex physical illnesses and did not consult her to determine his treatment.



Christian Institute Director Colin Hart addressed the NO2NP launch.

The Institute is spearheading a judicial review against the plans, after a senior lawyer advised that the plans amounted to "unjustified interference" and "may be unlawful". Although the scheme will not be fully implemented until 2016, many parents believe the scheme has already undermined their role in the family.

During the conference Liz Smith MSP told delegates that the plans will redirect resources away from protecting the most vulnerable children.

Institute Director Colin Hart has spoken out strongly against the plans, saying: "Mums and dads should be very afraid of this kind of Big Brother invasion into their lives and their homes."

Biggest abortion liberalisation confirmed by latest guidance

The Department of Health has confirmed the biggest liberalisation of abortion practice since 1967, in updated guidance published in May.

The document for abortion providers, released the day after the local elections, says there is “no legal requirement” for doctors to see women seeking an abortion before approving it.

A recent poll commissioned by The Christian Institute found that close to 90 per cent of people surveyed think women wanting an abortion should be seen



New guidance says there is “no legal requirement” for a doctor to see a woman before approving her abortion.

in person by a doctor.

Under the Abortion Act, two registered medical practitioners must certify that they are of the opinion, formed in good faith, that at least

one of the legal grounds for abortion exists.

But the Government's new legal interpretation says doctors can reach an opinion by considering relevant paperwork from

nurses or by speaking with them.

Ann Furedi, chief executive of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, said: “This guidance endorses our practice at bpas.”

The guidance also suggests that the doctor could have a “discussion by phone or over a webcam” rather than physically seeing the woman.

A separate section deals with sex-selective abortions, making clear the Government's view that abortion based on sex alone is illegal.

Council tells churches they must register to conduct gay marriages

I am writing to advise you that with **immediate** effect your church must be licenced by the General Register Office to conduct **SAME** sex marriages.

Essex County Council came under fire in April, after it incorrectly demanded that churches be licensed to perform same-sex marriages.

The Council's letter to churches told them that with “immediate effect” they “must” be licensed to “conduct same sex marriages” – the words “immediate” and “same” were bold and underlined, with the latter also capitalised.

Various local church leaders spoke out against the letter, saying

it showed a complete lack of understanding of the law and called for steps to be taken to ensure it does not happen again.

The Council apologised a week later, but still does not seem to have treated the issue with the seriousness it deserves.

In the apology, a spokesman for the Council said that its guidance on registering a building for same-sex marriages “applies only to those institutions which want to conduct such ceremonies”.

▲ Extract from a letter sent by Essex County Council to local churches.

“A letter sent to churches in April may have created a different impression and we issued a clarification within a week explaining the correct procedure.”

The Christian Institute has produced a free legal guide which gives churches the reassurance that they are well within their rights to say ‘no’ to same-sex marriages.

Read the full text of the letters at christian.org.uk/essexcc-letters

NI rejects gay marriage for third time

The Northern Ireland Assembly has rejected same-sex marriage by an outright majority for the third time.

MLAs voted 51 to 43 against redefining marriage at Stormont on 29 April, in a repeat of two similar votes in recent years.

The private members' motion, calling on the Minister of Finance and Personnel to introduce gay marriage legislation, was tabled by six MLAs from Sinn Féin, Alliance and the Green Party.

Referring to popular support for traditional marriage in Northern Ireland, spokesman for The Christian Institute Callum Webster (pictured below) said: "Just because politicians in Westminster have ridden roughshod over the opinions of hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens and redefined marriage, doesn't mean Northern Ireland needs to follow suit".

He said the "political elite" that is "pushing for gay marriage should take the hint". MLAs rejected same-sex marriage last year by 53 votes to 42, and in 2012 by 50 to 45.



We don't know GM babies are safe, admit scientists

A scientific panel has said that controversial techniques to create three and four-parent babies are not "unsafe", but further tests need to be completed.

In the third review of its kind, experts said "critical" experiments should be carried out to test the techniques, which use IVF

to create an embryo with DNA from three people.

The scientific panel was assembled by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), which has already recommended the techniques to the Government.

Doctor Andy Greenfield, who chaired the panel, said safety was "not a straightforward issue".

He added: "Are these techniques safe in humans? We won't know that until it's actually done in humans".

Earlier this year, the Department of Health launched a consultation on draft regulations for the techniques, which closed in May. If Westminster approves the techniques, the UK will become the only country in the world to legalise the creation of three and four-parent children.



“Are these techniques safe in humans? We won't know that until it's actually done in humans.”

Dr Andy Greenfield,
Chair of HFEA panel



CI opposes compulsory primary sex ed in submission to inquiry

In June, The Christian Institute strongly opposed making sex education compulsory for primary schools in England in our response to a House of Commons Education Select Committee inquiry.

The Institute told the Committee that schools also need to inform parents about the content of sex education classes and respect their religious rights and beliefs.

Earlier this year, sex education groups released

'supplementary guidance', which recommended wholly inappropriate resources that fail to protect children from early sexualisation.

On the day the consultation closed, one of those groups – the Sex Education Forum – launched a new campaign pushing for the subject to be made mandatory for primary schools.

However, an amendment to make sex

education compulsory in all state-funded schools across England was rejected in January. Peers in the House of Lords voted against Labour's proposal by 209 votes to 142.



Northern Ireland: Homeschoolers' rights threatened



Parents who home school in Northern Ireland could be caught by "intrusive" proposals, the largest home education group in the Province has warned.

The Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland have consulted on a draft policy, which could give government officials sweeping powers to regulate home education.

Northern Ireland home education group HEDNI said the proposals "cut across the rights of parents to educate their children in the way they think is best".

Under the law in Northern Ireland, parents have a duty to provide their children with an education "suitable to his age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise".

The proposals are similar to controversial plans from Westminster in 2010, which faced strong criticism and were dropped before the last General Election.

Government U-turns on sweeping parenting law

The Government has backed off from a sweeping parenting law, which at one stage looked set to be included in the Queen's Speech.

In late March, Government sources briefed the national press on a proposal to criminalise deliberate harm to a child's "physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development". Ministers were being urged on principally by Action for Children and the NSPCC.

Critics of the plan were alarmed by the wide-ranging, imprecise and dangerous proposals being discussed, which seemed to demonstrate a complete misunderstanding of the current law.

However, the Government's new Serious Crime Bill simply modernises the existing child cruelty offence to use the term 'psychological



suffering' – without broadening its scope. Ministers say the change is a clarification.

Unlike the proposals which were originally suggested, this Bill does not risk affecting the right of parents to teach their children biblical principles.

The Institute is monitoring the Bill's progress closely for any amendments that could raise concerns.

PM set to reject introduction of heterosexual civil partnerships

The Prime Minister is set to reject plans to introduce civil partnerships for heterosexual couples, following a Government consultation earlier this year.

Responses are still being analysed, but a Government source told The Sunday Times: "Cameron sees it as undermining marriage and the party's objection is largely driven by fear of a rebellion."

Allowing heterosexual civil partnerships is



expected to cost the country at least £3 billion in public service pension rights alone.

The Coalition for Marriage warned that the plan would create a "two-tier system", offering couples the "option of 'marriage-lite' instead of the full responsibilities

and exclusive lifelong commitment of marriage".

The group also cautioned that "opening up a rival institution with a lower threshold of commitment will inevitably reduce the numbers of people marrying".

Large supermarket chains selling unlabelled halal meat in stores

In May, two national newspapers revealed that supermarkets and high street restaurants are selling meat killed in accordance with Islamic Sharia law without telling customers.

Tesco, Waitrose, Morrisons and Marks and Spencer are among those not labelling some of their halal meat, according to the Daily Mail and The Sun.

Pizza Express also came under fire as its menus fail to mention that all its chicken is halal.

Colin Hart was quoted in the media saying it is a "major public scandal".

"If Muslims want to eat halal, that's absolutely fine. But it should

be clearly labelled.

"There are concerns of people who don't want to buy into Sharia Law on their dinner plate", he said.

Halal means 'permitted', or 'lawful', and involves Islamic words being spoken over the animal as it is killed.

There are around a dozen abattoirs where animals are not stunned before slaughter, while hundreds reportedly carry out stunning before killing.

One Muslim academic, Dr Taj Hargey, said that selling halal meat without telling customers is "creeping Islamic fundamentalism making its way into Britain by the back door".



Well-known brands have sold unlabelled halal meat in stores.

Assisted suicide vote expected in the House of Lords

The House of Lords is expected to vote soon on a Bill which aims to legalise assisted suicide in England and Wales.

The Assisted Dying Bill, which has been described as a 'blank cheque' for assisted suicide, is being spearheaded by Labour Peer Lord Falconer (pictured) and is expected to be debated at Second Reading on 18 July.



PM 'undermined Christianity' say voters in marriage survey

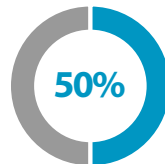
A poll commissioned by The Christian Institute ahead of the European and local elections in May showed that one in three voters think David Cameron has undermined Christianity in this country.

It also found that 50 per cent continue to believe that marriage should be defined as an exclusive commitment between a man and a woman.

The ComRes survey of over 2,000 people revealed that more than four in ten agree that the



voters think PM David Cameron has undermined Christianity in Britain



voters believe marriage should be an exclusive commitment between a man and a woman

Source: ComRes interviewed 2,056 British adults online between 9th and 11th May 2014. Data were weighted to be representative of all GB adults aged 18+. ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.



Church of England will eventually be forced to conduct same-sex marriages "irrespective" of the views of individual

church ministers.

Fewer than one in five believe the Prime Minister has improved religious freedom in this country.

The hypersensitivity of atheists

In April David Cameron said he was “proud of the fact that we are a Christian country”. But more than 50 atheists claimed his comments foster “alienation and division”.

“ The secularist’s dream – and our nightmare – is of a nation whose public life is emptied of all

Christian belief. But if people really want atheism, how is it that so few own up publicly to being an atheist?

The last Census found only 29,267 declared atheists. Even bulking up the figures by adding all humanists, agnostics and secularists gives a total of less than 78,000 people. It’s almost as though the Census confirms the truth of what Paul says in Romans 1:19 about God’s invisible qualities

being clearly seen.

What the atheists lack in numbers, they certainly make up for in terms of their influence and boldness. They understand that their beliefs are a worldview which they are determined to impose on everyone else.

But for all their determination, they seem to be highly sensitive to the extremely mild comments made by David Cameron.



Colin Hart, Director

Perhaps they’re not so confident in what they believe after all. It’s almost as though they are trying to suppress something.

Ex-drug addict warns of cannabis dangers amid calls for legalisation

An ex-drug addict has described cannabis as a “gateway drug” that exposes users to others who are involved in “harder substances” and should not be legalised.

Luke Wardle (pictured), who began selling drugs at the age of 15, told the Institute how smoking cannabis led him to deal



amphetamines and to develop a cocaine habit – while he was still a teenager.

Speaking of other addicts he knew, he described how

cannabis had left them in a “complete mess” with some even developing serious mental health problems including schizophrenia.

Luke, who later came to Christ and whose wife is now expecting their first child, also told the Institute of his astonishment

that instead of prison he only faced a £480 fine for importing a large amount of cannabis from Amsterdam.

Cannabis is a Class B drug – possession can result in up to five years in prison, although courts can issue lesser penalties.

To watch a three-minute video of Luke’s story, visit christian.org.uk/lukewardle