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New Legislation to Provide for Different Family Forms

The General Scheme for a Children and Family Relationships Bill was published today by the Minister for Justice and Equality, Alan Shatter TD. The Bill aims to recognise the diversity of family life in Ireland and create a legal structure to underpin the different parenting situations of families living in Ireland.

“We welcome the publication of the General Scheme of the Bill. The commitment of the Government and of Minister Shatter to update parenting legislation to recognise the different family forms in Ireland is of critical importance to a wide range of families, including lesbian and gay families” said Kieran Rose, GLEN Chair.

Ireland now has many different types of families into which children are born and raised, including step-parent families, families headed by cohabiting couples, lesbian and gay headed families and families headed by members of the extended family. **“The Bill aims to ensure that children within all family forms enjoy the same duties of care from those parenting them and can form a legal relationship with those parents”** said Rose.

The **Children’s Rights Alliance** said today that the proposals put **‘children at the heart of family law reform** and introduces a clear legal framework to respond to the everyday realities of family life.’

“We particularly welcome that the **key principle of the best interests of the child** will underpin all the proposed reforms. Extending the range of people who can take on the duties and responsibilities of care to a child through guardianship can ensure that the best interests of a child are fulfilled” said GLEN’s Kieran Rose.

The Heads of Bill proposes a range of changes in the areas of guardianship, custody and access, in maintenance provisions, in adoption and in the area of parenting for children born through assisted human reproduction. **“GLEN will study these proposals carefully. We look forward to engaging with the Oireachtas Committee, the Government and members of the Oireachtas on the Bill”** concluded Rose.

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Editors Note:

The General Scheme of the Bill is available at the Department of Justice website [here](#) and an accompanying Rationale document is [here](#).