



Home Office

Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP
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Sarah Champion MP
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Dear Sarah

14 December 2015

Use of word "illegitimacy" on Government's Passport website

I am writing to you following the Westminster Hall debate on Marriage Registration Certificates on 8 December 2015. During that debate you mentioned that the word "illegitimacy" is used in describing lack of father's details on a marriage certificate on the HM Passport Office website. The Minister for Syrian Refugees, Richard Harrington MP, promised to look into this and respond.

My officials have identified the document to which I believe you referred, which was one of a set contained on the certificate ordering website of the General Register Office (part of HM Passport Office).

I completely agree with you that the use of the word "illegitimate" or "illegitimacy" in the context of birth or families is inappropriate. I understand that the documents concerned were commissioned in 2012 but that the use of this inappropriate terminology was not identified at the time.

The General Register Office have referred for many years to circumstances such as the lack of a father's information on a certificate in terms such as these: "the absence of a name may indicate that the parents were not married to each other at the time of the birth", and their current guidance document on the Gov.uk website reflects this. Upon investigating your concerns they have immediately removed the relevant specimen documents from their certificate ordering site and published appropriate replacements.

I am grateful to you for raising this issue, and I am sorry that this error occurred.

Rt Hon James Brokenshire