



Family Test: Children Not In School consultation proposals

This test examines the proposals in the context of the five Questions used for the Family Test.

1. What kinds of impact might the policy have on family formation?

None of significance. If a single parent educates a child at home or arranges education outside mainstream schools then forming a dual-parent family might help that to continue, in economic terms at least. But the converse is probably not true. If the proposals make it harder for some parents to educate children at home or make arrangements outside mainstream schools it is unlikely that this will have any effect on the likelihood of a family being formed.

2. What kind of impact will the policy have on families going through key transitions such as becoming parents, getting married, fostering or adopting, bereavement, redundancy, new caring responsibilities or the onset of a long-term health condition?

Educating a child at home, and doing it well, is a considerable burden on a family in terms of time and opportunity cost unless resources are available to delegate most tuition to paid tutors; and even then the financial burden would be high. These points also apply to other arrangements made by parents for education outside mainstream schools. If the proposals lead to fewer children being educated at home or under alternative arrangements outside mainstream schools, these burdens, and impact they have on transitions which add to stress, would be lessened for some families. Although there would be a small compliance cost for families with registration, this would not be significant. Some families who benefit from the proposed duty on local authorities to provide support to home educators would find that this reduces the burden imposed by home education through enabling them to carry it out more easily.

3. What impacts will the policy have on all family members' ability to play a full role in family life, including with respect to parenting and other caring responsibilities?

If the proposals lead to fewer children being educated at home or under alternative arrangements outside mainstream schools this might reduce the financial burden on the families if such provision ceases, and lessen the likelihood that one parent will need to work excessive hours to meet that financial burden. This could improve that parent's access to the children.

Some children who are home educated are in reality also carers for parents or other siblings. If the proposals make it more difficult for them to remain home educated, because their education is not suitable, then it will affect those caring responsibilities – but they should not be missing education to discharge them anyway.

Depending on information requirements the registration requirement could lead to parents involved in certain life changes, eg bereavement, marriage having to update registration details

4. How does the policy impact on families before, during and after couple separation?

Some families suffer financial strain because of undertaking home education; if the proposals result in fewer children being educated at home, the incidence of this will be reduced and that might lessen the likelihood of separation.

Sometimes separated parents disagree as to whether a child should be educated at home or at school, usually because one parent thinks the home education provided by the other parent is inadequate; and sometimes these cases are only resolved by a court. If the proposals lead to fewer children receiving unsuitable education at home, then that would reduce the likelihood of such disputes occurring.

The obligations of separated parents in relation to the register is a matter which will need to be resolved as the detail of proposals is worked up into legislation.

5. How does the policy impact on those families most at risk of deterioration of relationship quality and breakdown?

It is not clear how those families most at risk map onto the total cohort of children most likely to be educated at home or in alternative arrangements outside mainstream schools; there is no reliable data to underpin analysis. At present there is no reason to think it is likely to be of any measurable additional significance.

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