
Implementing the Family Test

A review of progress one year on



Introduction

Families are central to our society, providing care and support and shaping our individual opportunities and wellbeing.¹ Until recently, however, there has been no formal process to make sure that government properly considers the impact of policy on families. As a result, policy has often affected families without any systematic attempt to understand and analyse that impact beforehand and to mitigate any unintended negative consequences.

The Family Test was announced by the Prime Minister in a speech in August 2014 and is a welcome attempt to rectify this situation.² The Test built on earlier commitments such as a speech in 2011 announcing that “from here on I want a family test applied to all domestic policy. If it hurts families, if it undermines commitment, if it tramples over the values that keeps people together, or stops families from being together, then we shouldn’t do it.”³ Announcing the Test, the Prime Minister set out the importance of family relationships to society and framed the test as a way to make sure that families are central to the way that Government thinks. The importance of families for Government policy in many areas was highlighted by the Prime Minister’s statement that “whatever the social issue we want to grasp - the answer should always begin with family.”

The Prime Minister made the commitment that every domestic policy that Government introduces will be examined for its impact on the family. This approach was intended to strengthen accountability in this area with David Cameron saying “I want every government department to be held to account for the impact of their policies on the family.” The Prime Minister has subsequently reiterated the importance of family relationships for the Government’s life chances strategy, seeing, for example, families as “the best anti-poverty measure ever invented” and “a welfare, education and counselling system all wrapped up into one.”⁴

The Family Test was formally introduced in October 2014 and implemented through guidance co-produced by the Department for Work and Pensions with the relationship support sector, which sets out when and how government departments should apply the Test (the Test does not apply to the devolved administrations). The guidance includes a very broad definition of family, encompassing kinship carers, foster children and grandparents.⁵ The stated objective of the Test is to introduce a family perspective into the policy making process and make sure that potential impacts on family relationships and functioning are made explicit and recognised. The guidance encourages departments to think about the Test as an integral part of the policy making

¹ Relate (2016) All together now; stronger relationships for a stronger society

http://www.relate.org.uk/files/relate/publication-all_together_now-2025_vision_report.pdf

² Speech by David Cameron on families, 18 August 2014,

www.gov.uk/government/speeches/david-cameron-on-families

³ Speech by David Cameron on 15 August 2011, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-on-the-fightback-after-the-riots>

⁴ Speech by David Cameron, 11 January 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-speech-on-life-chances>

⁵ Department for Work and Pensions (2014) *The Family Test: Guidance for Government Departments*, www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-test-assessing-the-impact-of-policies-on-families

process rather than a ‘tick box’ exercise and highlights the Public Sector Equality Duty where departments are asked to consider impacts at each stage of the policy making process.⁶ The guidance also highlights the freedom of policy makers to make their own judgements about how the test is applied. The Test is not intended to be a pass/fail exercise but to allow departments to consider the impact of policy on families and to respond appropriately. Neither the test nor the guidance have a statutory basis.

The guidance sets out five questions that all policy or legislation across government should to address:

1. What kind of impact might the policy have on family formation?
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?
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?
4. How does the policy impact families before, during and after couple separation?
5. How does the policy impact those families most at risk of deterioration of relationship quality and breakdown?

This approach makes clear that all departments need to fully understand how Government policies support strong family relationships and also seeks to encourage departments to identify any policies that could undermine them. Departments are not expected to produce formal impact assessments for every policy (though may do so) but where a detailed assessment is carried out, the guidance states that ‘departments should consider a standalone document to bring together their analysis’ and ‘departments should consider publishing assessments where they are carried out’.

Our organisations warmly welcomed the Family Test as a tool to introduce an explicit family perspective into the policy making process. The Test’s introduction is an important step towards making government policy more family-friendly and the significance of introducing such a measure across the whole of the civil service, cutting across policy silos, should not be underestimated. If the Test is implemented meaningfully, consistently, early on in the development of policy and in ways which are open to scrutiny, it will be a powerful tool to achieve a cross-Government focus on family wellbeing and the quality of family relationships.

Implementation of the Family Test is at an early stage but we are keen to build on progress already made. This report seeks to identify how successfully the Family Test has been implemented to date and what can be learnt to ensure the Test becomes an integral and effective part of the policy making process.

⁶ *ibid*

Approach

To understand how the Family Test has been implemented across government, we wrote in October 2015 to each relevant department (departments such as the Scotland Office which deal with devolved matters where the Family Test does not apply were excluded). The letter set out four questions:

- 1 What guidance or tools has your department developed to support implementation of the Family Test, in addition to the generic guidance from the Department of Work and Pensions?
- 2 How has your department gone about incorporating the Family Test into the policy making process?
- 3 How many policy assessments has your department carried out under the Family Test guidance to date, and what has been the outcome of these assessments?
- 4 Are there any examples of Family Test assessments which you would be willing to allow us to publish as part of the review?

Of the 14 departments to which we wrote, we received 10 responses. The responses are provided in an appendix to this report. We contacted the departments from which we did not receive a response twice by phone, once in December 2015 and again in January 2016. We received complete responses from:

- Attorney General's Office
- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
- Department for Communities and Local Government
- Department for Education
- Department of Energy and Climate Change
- Department for Transport
- Department for Work and Pensions
- HM Treasury
- Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Justice

For those departments from which we did not receive a meaningful response, we have referred instead to the most recent Parliamentary question response addressing implementation of the Family Test.⁷

We have also drawn on background provided by ministers in Parliament during the second reading of Caroline Ansell MP's Private Members Bill, the 'Assessment of Government Policies (Impact on Families) Bill', and in response to an oral question asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett in the House of Lords on 26 January 2016.⁸

The Department for Work and Pensions, as departmental lead for the Family Test, provided information on its work to implement the test across government in addition to implementation of the Test within the department.

⁷ Home Office: Families: Written question – 16013; Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Families: Written question – 15404; Department of Health: Families: Written question – 15848; Cabinet Office: Families: Written question – 15328.

⁸ HC 4 December 2015, vol 603, cols 673-679; HL 26 January 2016, vol 678, cols 1145-1146

Summary of responses

- Only three departments – the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Education and the Ministry of Defence – referred to specific instances in which the Family Test has been applied. (The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has since published a Family Test assessment.) This does not mean that the Test has not been used by other departments, as there is no requirement for departments to record when the Test has been applied. However, without this information it is impossible to know whether the Test is being applied or not.
- Five departments have told us that they have produced tailored guidance or tools to apply the Family Test, including the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Education, HM Treasury, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department of Energy and Climate Change. This provides some encouragement that the Family Test is being implemented proactively by a group of departments.
- Four departments – the Home Office, the Cabinet Office, the Department for Health and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – did not provide a meaningful response about how, or whether, the department is implementing the Family Test.
- Several departments provided good examples of proactive implementation of the Family Test. For example, the Ministry of Defence is developing an armed forces family strategy using the principles set out in the Test, suggesting that the Test has helped to galvanise work in the department to address what ministers describe as the ‘inconsistencies’ of Ministry of Defence policies in supporting the families of service members and veterans. This is encouraging and suggests the Test can be successfully rolled out across diverse government departments.
- The Department for Work and Pensions is supporting implementation of the Test across government, for example by producing an evidence pack, running a series of Family Test seminars and providing tools to support policy officials to understand when the test should be applied. Several of these steps have been taken relatively recently and should have an impact on successful implementation of the Test across government over time.

Discussion and recommendations

The response of government departments to the Family Test has been patchy. There has been a positive response to the Test among several of the departments where policy most clearly directly affects families, such as the Department for Education. Those departments whose work has less obvious impacts on families have in most cases been less proactive. The exceptions show, however, that this trend is far from inevitable. The Department of Health in particular produces policy that has a significant, and well evidenced, impact on families - and yet has provided very little information about its use of the Test.⁹ The Department for Business Innovation and Skills, on the other hand, has published tailored guidance and tools for the application of the Test, as well as being one of few departments to publish a Family Test impact assessment (Devolving Sunday Trading Rules).¹⁰

The majority of departments have shown limited commitment to implementing the Family Test. This may be a natural part of the process of implementing a new and innovative policy across government, which inevitably will take time. The variation in departments' responses to the Test is, however, a concern.

The responses we received give rise to some specific concerns about implementation of the Family Test. The absence of a transparent mechanism to record when the Test has been applied means that it is impossible to accurately assess how successfully the Test is being incorporated into the policy making process. There is little information available to the public about a process and little accountability for implementation of the Test. Whilst the Government rightly wishes to ensure that the Test does not become a 'tick box' exercise, this does not preclude recording and monitoring of its use.

It is also apparent that only a small proportion of departments have produced a tailored strategy, guidance and tools to support implementation of the Family Test. None of the departments that have not produced tailored guidance referred to plans to do so. The work of the Department for Work and Pensions to support cross-government implementation of the Test is valuable, but is not a substitute for a tailored implementation strategy within each department.

Bearing in mind the Family Test has been implemented relatively recently and during the period of political and policy uncertainty that accompany a general election, these findings should not be interpreted to indicate that the Family Test is failing. It is clear that the Government is taking proactive steps to implement the Family Test. There will be an inevitable period of bedding in as the Test is applied to a large and diverse set of departmental responsibilities.

This noted, it is clear that the Family Test is not, as yet, meeting the Prime Minister's commitment that it should be applied to all domestic policy. There is a real risk that the Government's aspiration to put families at the centre of policy making will not be met. Reflecting on the first year of implementation of the Test is a natural time to evaluate progress and reflect on where improvements might be made. There are several proportionate steps the Government should take to support the Family Test to achieve its objectives:

⁹ Relate (2015) *The Best Medicine, the importance of relationships for health and wellbeing*

¹⁰ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2016) *Devolving Sunday Trading Rules, Impact Assessment*

- **The Government should put the Family Test on a statutory footing.**

The Family Test is unlikely to achieve meaningful traction on policy unless it is given real teeth. The Family Test should be given a clear statutory footing so that policy makers must always apply it when appropriate. A statutory basis for the Test would also provide the opportunity to set a clear expectation that each department must incorporate the Test into its strategy and processes.

- **Departments should be required to publish a record of their Family Test assessments.**

Transparency is essential in order to maximise the effect of the Family Test, particularly given the Prime Minister's stated desire that the Family Test should increase the accountability of departments. At the moment, it is impossible to know whether the Test is being applied in an appropriate way and what influence it is having on policy. Publishing a record of Family Test assessments is possible without turning the process into a bureaucratic exercise. For example, departments can confirm that the Test has been applied and provide a summary of the assessment.

- **The Government should publish an annual review reporting on its performance.**

It is important that there is a process through which the Government's record on supporting family relationships and wellbeing can be assessed. This would be an opportunity not only to scrutinise progress but to highlight successes. The review should involve an annual summary of the application of the Family Test over the previous year and an evaluation of its impact, which should be debated in Parliament to allow for effective public scrutiny.

- **The Government should develop and publish tools and resources to support departments in applying the Family Test.**

The evidence pack produced by the Department for Work and Pensions in partnership with the relationship support sector is welcome. However, while there is plenty of evidence about the impact of various factors on family relationships, there is currently a disconnect between the UK evidence base and the Family Test process as adequate tools and guidance are currently not available for all departments to use the evidence to apply the test.

The Government should develop tailored tools and resources for departments to bridge this gap, as well as sharing evidence with departments demonstrating how supporting strong and stable families can help them to achieve their own policy objectives. The Government should also commission research to address gaps in the evidence available to policy makers and support implementation of the Family Test. Once policy makers better understand how and to what extent Government policy depends on families, they will be able to respond more effectively to the Family Test.

■ **The Government should examine the feasibility of a local Family Test.**

Decision-making is increasingly devolved to a local level and key outcomes frameworks are implemented locally by local authorities and health bodies. Given that the Family Test is relatively new and remains in development, we suggest that the Government assess the costs and benefits of supporting local authorities and NHS bodies to carry out equivalent tests on policies. A first step would be to work with local areas to develop and test a local Family Test through a pilot programme as part of the Department of Work and Pensions' Local Family Offer programme for relationship support.

■ **Devolved administrations should consider developing their own Family Tests.**

The Family Test is an English initiative by the Government in Westminster. Social policy varies significantly across the UK and devolved policy makers are likely to wish to pursue locally tailored approaches to supporting family relationships and wellbeing. However, the rationale for ensuring that policy makers understand and consider the impact of policy on families remains just as strong for the devolved administrations. We recommend that the devolved governments learn from the experience of the Westminster administration and develop the evidence, tools and effective statutory processes to ensure policy supports family relationships and wellbeing.

About

The Family and Childcare Trust

The Family and Childcare Trust is the leading national charity in the field of policy, research and advocacy on childcare and family issues, working closely with government, local

authorities, businesses and charities to achieve positive and long lasting change for families across the UK. Our vision is a society where all families are well-supported and have genuine choices about their lives.



The Family and Childcare Trust's annual childcare costs survey is the definitive report on childcare costs and sufficiency in the UK and its data are used by the Department for Education and OECD. For further information, go to www.familyandchildcaretrust.org

Relate

Relate is the UK's leading relationship support organisation, serving more than one million people through information, support and counselling every year. Our vision is a future in which healthy relationships are actively promoted as the basis of a thriving society.



We aim to develop and support healthy relationships by:

- delivering inclusive, high-quality services that are relevant at every stage of life
- helping couples, families and individuals to make relationships work better
- helping both the public and policy makers improve their understanding of relationships and what makes them flourish.

www.relate.org.uk

The Relationships Foundation

The Relationships Foundation is the think tank for a better connected society. It was set up in 1993 to develop relational thinking and engage with policy makers. We believe that a good society is built on good relationships, from family and community to public service and business. We study the effect that culture, business and government have on relationships – eg, in terms of time, finance, etc. We create new ideas for strengthening social connections and campaign on issues where relationships are being undermined. And we train and equip people to think relationally for themselves.



www.relationshipsfoundation.org

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Asian Family Counselling Service



National Children's Bureau



Appendix: Parliamentary question responses

Home Office

Asked by Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) on 10 November 2015 (16013):

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to implement the family test.

Answered by James Brokenshire on 18 November 2015:

The Family Test was announced by the Prime Minister in August 2014 and introduced in October 2014. The DWP published guidance for Departments and officials on how the test should be applied when formulating policy and my Department follows that guidance.

The guidance can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/368894/family-test-guidance.pdf

The Family Test is also being integrated within the Department's impact assessment process to ensure it is consistently addressed. Recognising that all Government policies will impact on families in some way, the Government's guidance on the Family Test is clear that policies should pass a threshold of proportionality before the Family Test is applied in full. New Home Office policies in the current Parliament have not met the threshold for applying the Family Test. The Family Test, when applied, will be published as part of the relevant impact assessment.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Asked by Caroline Ansell (Eastbourne) on 9 November 2015 (15404):

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the effect of the family test on her Department's policies; and if she will make a statement.

Answered by George Eustice on 17 November 2015:

The Family Test was announced by the Prime Minister in August 2014 and introduced in October 2014. DWP published guidance for Departments and officials on how the test should be applied when formulating policy and my Department follows that guidance:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/368894/family-test-guidance.pdf.

The Family Test is an integral part of the policy making process and is applied in a proportionate way in the development of all new policy in line with the Family Test guidance.

Where the test identifies impacts on the family, this will be evidenced as part of the formal published Impact Assessment, but at present no such impacts have been identified in Defra.

Department of Health

Asked by Caroline Ansell(Eastbourne) on 10 November 2015 (15848):

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps his Department has taken to implement the family test; and if he will make a statement.

Answered by Jane Ellison on 17 November 2015:

The Department of Health has liaised with the Department for Work and Pensions as the lead Department for the Family Test to embed it and encourage routine use of the Test. This has included training officials on applying the Test, disseminating relevant evidence, learning materials and best practice.

The Family Test was announced by the Prime Minister in August 2014 and introduced in October 2014 through the publication of guidance for officials - Family Test Guidance.

The objective of the Test is to introduce a family perspective to the policy making process, specifically to make the potential impacts on family functioning and relationships explicit.

The Department of Health is working to raise awareness of the Family Test amongst its policy staff, so that the impact of policy on the family is considered as a matter of course. We have highlighted the Family Test through the Policy Kit, an online resource for Department of Health policy officials. The Family Test is also highlighted in policy induction training, which is available to staff who are new to policy roles in Department of Health.

Cabinet Office

Asked by Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) on 6 November 2015 (15328):

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many of his Department's policies have been assessed against the family test; what steps he has taken to publish the outcome of such assessments that have been carried out; and if he will make a statement.

Answered by Matthew Hancock on 13 November 2015:

The Family Test was announced by the Prime Minister in August 2014 and introduced in October 2014. Department for Work and Pensions published guidance for Departments and officials on how the test should be applied when formulating policy and my Department follows that guidance available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/368894/family-test-guidance.pdf

The Family Test is an integral part of the policy making process and is applied in a proportionate way in the development of all new policy in line with the Family Test guidance. While the guidance states that departments should consider publishing assessments carried out under the Test, there is no requirement to do so.



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7 February 2016

Thank you for your letter of 27 October - we very much welcome your continued interest in the Family Test. I apologise for such a delayed reply but I understand there was confusion about the nature of the response required.

We have worked closely with your organisation and other organisations in the sector; most recently this involved updating the Family Test evidence pack for policymakers. You helped us to incorporate the latest evidence and we remain supportive of your interest and grateful for your contributions.

We look forward to continuing and building upon this collaborative approach in the future. We believe this approach can only yield positive impacts for strong and stable family relationships – something I am personally committed to, now and in the future.

In your letter, you asked four specific questions regarding the implementation of the Family Test, a response to these follows.

1) What guidance or tools has your Department developed to support the implementation of the Family Test in addition to the generic DWP guidance?

- DWP has developed and is developing a number of tools to support the implementation of the Family Test (FT). These include:
 - Information exchange sessions for policy teams in DWP and other government departments.
 - A Policy Profession course with the practical knowledge of FT policy implementation conducted internally across Whitehall.
 - A comprehensive evidence pack adding new information from the sector and guiding principles to support the implementation of the FT.

- A FT template and aide-memoire to highlight to officials the policy areas where the Test should apply.
- Training and templates delivered with the HM Treasury to other government departments ahead of the Spending Review.
- An internal FT intranet page, providing easily accessible guidance, case studies and support for implementation of the FT.

2) How has your Department gone about incorporating the Family Test into the policy making process?

- Officials have undertaken a number of activities in DWP to better embed the FT into the policy making process. These include:
 - Conducting information exchange sessions for policy teams.
 - Engaging directly with policy teams (both internally and across government when applying the FT to provide support, give feedback and help with implementation.
 - Incorporating an FT reminder into the guidance referred to by analysts, lawyers and the Social Security Advisory Committee during policy development, and providing upskilling to all three groups.
 - Delivering cross-government FT training in collaboration with HMTreasury ahead of the Spending Review.
 - Hosting a series of stakeholder seminars with officials from other government departments to encourage to engage directly with representatives from the sector to gain a clearer understanding of the evidence base and key issues.
 - Incorporating an FT example into the Department's induction material for policymakers. This will make sure that all new DWP policy officials are aware of the integral part the FT plays in early policy development.
 - Monitoring all Government clearances of new policies to assess whether the policy requires an FT and not giving final clearance until policy teams have confirmed completion of one.

3) How many policy assessments has your Department carried out under the Family Test guidance to date and what has been the outcome of these assessments?

- DWP has made approximately 50 assessments. We expect this number to increase as we begin to collect data on assessments for policies in the early stages of development and those not progressed beyond the design stage.
- DWP is beginning to see an impact in early policy development.

4) Are there any examples of Family Test assessments which you would be willing to allow us to publish as part of the review?

- We will liaise with policy teams to determine whether there are any FT assessments that would be appropriate to be published.

I look forward to reading your review of implementation to date of the Family Test.



The Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WORK AND PENSIONS



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Our Ref: 1588267

19.11.15

Dear Julia

Thank you for your letter of 27 October to the Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, regarding the Family Test. I am replying as this falls within my Ministerial responsibilities. I welcome your support for this initiative and your ongoing desire to ensure that momentum is maintained in applying the family test to policy work.

Since the Family Test was announced by the Prime Minister in August 2014 and introduced in October 2014, DWP has published guidance for Departments and officials on how the test should be applied when formulating policy and the requirements apply to all of my Department's policy work.

The Family Test is an integral part of the policy making process and is applied in a proportionate way in the development of all new policy in line with the Family Test guidance. We intend to continue promoting and embedding the test as part of DCLG's policy-making processes over the course of the coming Parliament.

Once again many thanks for your support and interest in ensuring that momentum is maintained in this important matter.

BARONESS WILLIAMS OF TRAFFORD



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20 November 2015

D - Ms. Margo.

Thank you for your letter of 27 October, and email of 16 November, about the implementation of the Family Test (FT) within the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding.

BIS is committed to the FT and welcomes your review. Since its launch, our officials have adopted the Department for Work and Pension (DWP) guidance to ensure the FT is incorporated into the policy making process.

Please see below answers to the questions raised in your letter:

1. What guidance or tools has your Department developed to support the implementation of the Family Test in addition to the DWP generic guidance?

Although the FT is administered for Government by DWP, BIS has taken steps to embed the FT by building it into its work to comply with the Department's Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) commitments. This includes:

- An internal intranet page providing details of what the FT entails and where to access guidance.
- A dedicated section explaining the application of the FT, within appropriate PSED training events.
- A Policy Profession course with FT learning being conducted internally.

2. How has your Department gone about incorporating The Family Test into the policy making process?

BIS Policy makers are required to follow the internal guidance, to ensure appropriate consideration is given to the FT, as part of standard policy development. In addition, officials from within our internal Equality & Diversity Team provide further support to colleagues by dealing with FT related enquiries and sign-posting to guidance as needed.

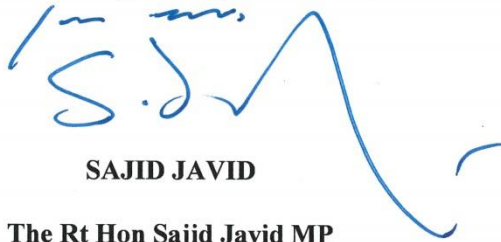
3. How many policy assessments has your Department carried out under The Family Test guidance to date and what has been the outcome?

BIS is not required to keep a record of how many tests have been carried out. However, all FT assessments are documented and included within relevant Equality Analysis reviews, which includes assessments for policies that are in the early stages of development. In accordance with guidance, separate publication of FT assessments will be considered where significant impact is identified.

4. Are there any examples of Family Test assessments which you would be willing to allow us to publish as part of the review?

We are not aware of any standalone Family Tests that have been undertaken, as to date they have all been included within individual Equality Analysis reviews that are yet to be published. As a result, we are unable to provide examples.

I hope that this information has been useful in contributing to your review. I am copying this letter electronically to your fellow signatories, listed below.



SAJID JAVID

The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP

Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills and President of the Board of Trade

CC Chris Sherwood, Relate
Michael Trend, Relationships Foundation
David Holmes, Family Action
Elizabeth Coe, National Association of Child Contact Centres
Mark Molden, Marriage Care
Gary Fereday, British Psychoanalytic Council

Dave Percival, 2-in-2-1
Susanna Abse, Tavistock Centre for Couple Relationships
Heather Stewart, Association of Child and Adult Psychotherapists
Heléna Herklots, Carers UK
Kulbir Randhawa, Asian Family Counselling Service
Nick Haisman-Smith, Family Links
Kathy Evans, Children England
Alison Garnham, Child Poverty Action Group
Penny Mansfield, OnePlusOne
Sarah Jackson, Working Families
Katharine Hill, Care for the Family
Nick Wilkie, NCT
Amanda Batten, Contact a Family
Imelda Redmond, 4Children
Anna Feuchtwang, NCB
Rob Parkinson, Home-Start UK
Liz Bayram, PACEY
Russell Hobby, NAHT
Fiona Weir, Gingerbread



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Our Ref: 147727
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Dear Julia Margo

Family Test

Thank you for your letter of 27th October to the Secretary of State for Transport.

The Family Test was announced by the Prime Minister in August 2014 and introduced in October 2014. The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) published guidance for Departments on how the Test should be applied when formulating policy and the Department for Transport (DfT) follows that guidance.

While DfT has not produced supplementary guidance to the DWP guidance, we have included the Family Test in our training staff, promoting the importance of identifying where families may be directly or indirectly affected.

DfT is committed to a transport system that enables families to stay connected, and to making those journeys simple, faster and more reliable. In the development of new and existing transport policy, the Family Test is applied in a proportionate way, consistent with the guidance. Consideration of the potential impacts on family relationships in their many forms are an integral part of policy considerations. While a full test has not been carried out to date, consideration of the need to carry out the test is reflected in the impact assessments that the department produces and publishes on legislation.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

Chris Simon



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24 November 2015

Dear All,

Thank you for your letter dated 27th October 2015 to the Attorney General's Office, containing questions about the implementation of the Family Test.

As you will know, the Family Test was announced by the Prime Minister in August 2014 and introduced in October 2014. DWP published guidance for Departments and officials on how the test should be applied when formulating policy and this guidance can be found at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/368894/family-test-guidance.pdf

Whenever appropriate, the Law Officers' Departments would follow that guidance.

The Family Test is an integral part of the government policy making process and is applied in a proportionate way in the development of all new policy in line with the Family Test guidance. While the guidance states that departments should consider publishing assessments carried out under the Test, there is no requirement to do so.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) is the Law Officers' Department whose work would be likely to impact most directly on families. Accordingly, in developing all new policies, the CPS will engage and consult with key stakeholders and experts to consider the impact and wider implications of the policy on communities. This would include, where relevant, impact on family members.

The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) meets regularly with the Children's Commissioner and the Victim's Commissioner to discuss the impact of policies and operational issues. The CPS focus is on protecting and reducing the impact of crime on families, particularly evident in the recent work on child sexual exploitation.

As part of the wider CPS victim and witness policy, victims are encouraged to prepare a victim personal statement (VPS) which provides an opportunity to describe the wider effects of the crime upon them and their family. The CPS also has an enhanced service under the bereaved family scheme.

Where applicable, the Law Officers' Departments would work with the DWP to embed the Test in policymaking processes.

I hope this response is of assistance to you in the preparation of your review.

Yours sincerely,

Massimo Magee
Correspondence Unit
Correspondence@attorneygeneral.gsi.gov.uk



Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

C/o Julia Margo
Chief Executive
Family and Childcare Trust
The Bridge
81 Southwark Bridge Road
London, SE1 0NQ

The Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP
Secretary of State

Department of Energy & Climate Change
3 Whitehall Place
London
SW1A 2AW

www.gov.uk/decc

Our ref: PO2015/13226/SJ

30th November 2015

Dear All,

Thank you for your letter dated 27 October, about the introduction of the Family Test. I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

I'd like to thank you for the information you provided in your letter which I read with keen interest and have circulated within my Department. As I set out in my speech on 18 November, we need an energy system that delivers for families so it is essential that we understand how our policies impact on families and how this varies across different types of households.

Responding to each of your questions in turn:

1. What guidance or tools has your department developed to support implementation of the Family Test, in addition to the generic DWP guidance?

My Department is focused on understanding consumers when developing policies and has implemented an internal DECC project which has delivered a number of consumer-focused tools which will enhance our understanding of consumers, including a Consumer Panel. In addition, analytical tools have been developed to analyse the impacts of policies on household energy bills for different types of households and also the implications for fuel poverty.

To augment these tools and the DWP guidance, my Department is preparing specific guidance on how to apply the Family Test within DECC, which will form part of the Department's refresh of our approach to collecting and using evidence on the impacts of policies.

2. How has your department gone about incorporating the Family Test into the policy making process?

As noted above, my Department is focused on putting consumers at the heart of policy making. This includes building references to the Family Test into our open policy making course for DECC's senior civil servants to ensure that that the Test is incorporated into the Department's open policy making process.

3. How many policy assessments has your department carried out under the Family Test guidance to date, and what has been the outcome of these assessments?

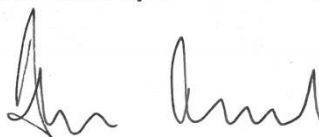
The objective of the Test is to introduce a family perspective to the policy making process, specifically to make the potential impacts on family functioning and relationships explicit. Given the objective of the Test and the nature of DECC's policies, DECC has not explicitly applied the Test to date. However, where relevant, DECC already publishes in Impact Assessments analysis of the impact of policies on energy bills across different types of households and as noted above we are working to more fully integrate the test into the policy making process.

4. Are there any examples of Family Test assessments which you would be willing to allow us to publish as part of the review?

As noted above the Test has not explicitly been applied to date but for information on how DECC's policies impact different types of households please refer to Section 4.3 of DECC's 2014 report 'Impact of energy and climate change policies on energy prices and bills'.¹

Thank you again for writing to me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amber Rudd', written in a cursive style.

AMBER RUDD

¹ DECC (2014) 'Impact of energy and climate change policies on energy price and bills'. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/estimated-impacts-of-energy-and-climate-change-policies-on-energy-prices-and-bills-2014>



Ministry of Defence

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Ref: TO20151110

Ms Julia Margo
Family and Childcare Trust
The Bridge
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7 December 2015

Dear Ms Margo,

Thank you for your letter dated 27 October to Michael Fallon MP, Secretary of State for Defence, in reference to the Family Test. As you will appreciate Mr Fallon receives a great deal of correspondence and it is not always possible for him to respond personally. Therefore your letter has been passed to this branch of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) as the area with responsibility for Service personnel issues and I have been asked to reply. Please accept my apologies for the late reply.

As you know, the Family Test was announced by the Prime Minister in August 2014 and introduced in October 2014. The Department for Work and Pensions published guidance for Departments and officials on how the test should be applied when formulating policy and the MOD follows that guidance.

Please let me start by saying that the MOD actively engages with a wide range of internal and external agencies (including single Service policy staffs, Families Federations, Widows Associations, Armed Forces Charities, and the Covenant Reference Group) to enhance support for our Armed Forces families and reviews any new policy against the principles of the Family Test as part of this work. The MOD also routinely reports progress against the Government's Manifesto Commitments, including the commitment to continue to support the unsung heroes of the Armed Forces community: the partners and families of those who serve. We also work with Other Government Departments as we strive to remove disadvantage as a result of Service life.

The MOD has implemented a range of initiatives in line with the principles of the Family Test. These include taking forward work on the offer to Service personnel assigned overseas; Assisted Conception Services; spousal employment; and the UK Armed Forces Credit Union scheme. The Family Test guidance has enabled the MOD to develop policies that help give families, partners and Service children the support they need and help them make the best decisions for their loved ones.

On 30 September we announced plans for the first UK Armed Forces Families Strategy, the aim of which is to provide a clearer focus for our efforts to understand, value and empower the families of our Armed Forces personnel and improve communications to our Armed Forces families to better link the range of support available. Our aim is to publish the Strategy by the end of this year and then develop an action plan to deliver against the Strategy. We will review any new domestic policy against the Family Test as part of this work and would be willing to share our thinking on the development of a Families Strategy, or on spousal employment initiatives.

Armed Forces families are an integral and valued part of the Armed Forces community. We ask a great deal of our Service personnel and, in return, they deserve to have confidence that their families are appropriately supported.

I hope this information is helpful, and thank you for taking the time to write.

Kind Regards

Defence Personnel Secretariat



HM Treasury, 1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2HQ

Julia Margo
Chief Executive
Family and Childcare Trust
The Bridge
81 Southwark Bridge Road
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14 DEC 2015

Dear Ms Margo and signatories of the letter on The Family Test,

Thank you for your letter of 27 October to the Chancellor on the Family Test (FT). I am replying as Minister responsible for this policy area and applaud your continued interest in the FT.

I know that your organisation and others in the sector have worked hard and very closely with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to update the FT evidence pack for policy makers. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and contributions to Government.

The Treasury believes that it has been a positive step to introduce a family perspective into the policy making process, which can help to yield positive impacts for family stability and relationship quality, now and in the future.

In my current role as Exchequer Secretary, I have witnessed first-hand that potential impacts on family relationships and functioning have been considered in the process of developing new domestic policy, as a result of the FT.

Here are some key examples of actions and tools that have been carried out to support the implementation of the Test across the Treasury;

- Policymakers capture impacts on families from relevant policies as part of the internal formal decision making process;
- In addition to the extremely useful cross-government guidance and comprehensive evidence pack produced and distributed by the Department for Work and Pensions, further internal guidance has been made available to HMT Treasury staff;
- We have been spreading awareness of the Test across the Treasury, through team meetings, and information about the Test made available on our staff intranet; and
- In August, officials organised a cross-government meeting to provide guidance for how to consider the Family Test in relation to departments Spending Review bids.

Thank you to the wide range of organisations who have taken the trouble to get in touch on this matter. We look forward to building on these actions and continuing to embed the Family Test into the policy making process for the future.

Sincerely
Damian Hinds

Damian Hinds
Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury

c/o Julia Margo
Family and Childcare Trust
The Bridge
81 Southwark Bridge Road
London
SE1 0NQ

MoJ ref: 27857

17 December 2015

Dear Julia,

FAMILY TEST

Thank you for your letter of 27 October 2015 regarding the work being done in the Ministry of Justice to support the application of the Family Test in policy making. I note that the letter is written jointly with other charities concerned with the welfare of children and families.

Firstly, I would like to thank you for your proposed review of the Family Test. I and my ministerial colleagues in the Ministry of Justice recognise that the Test is a useful tool for identifying the potential impacts on family relationships and functioning when developing new Government policies.

I note that you have asked our Department to respond to 4 key questions regarding the Family Test:

1. What guidance or tools has your department developed to support the implementation of the Family Test, in addition to the generic DWP guidance?
2. How has your department gone about incorporating the Family Test into the policy making process?
3. How many policy assessments has your department carried out under the Family Test guidance to date, and what has been the outcome of these assessments?
4. Are there any examples of Family Test assessments which you would be willing to allow us to publish as part of the review?

The Government is committed to building strong and stable families and policy professionals in our Department recognise how they can contribute to achieving this through effective policy making.

To support the introduction of the Test, policy leads in the Department were encouraged to attend seminars organised by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) which was responsible for producing and publishing guidance for government departments. These seminars raised awareness of the issues policy makers should consider when applying the Family Test and on ways to develop and disseminate relevant evidence-based learning materials and best practice. Additionally, all policy teams within the department were given internal guidance on the Family Test in terms of processes to be followed.

As part of the policy making process in my Department, the Test is applied in a proportionate way in the development of new policy in line with the DWP's guidance. Any potential impacts of policy on family

functioning and relationships should be identified and brought to the attention of Ministers where appropriate as part of the normal process of agreeing policy.

The Department does not collate figures on the number of full Family Test assessments which have been completed nor does it collect such assessments centrally. In accordance with the DWP guidance, individual policy teams are encouraged to make informed judgements about how they apply the Test in a proportionate and effective way during policy development.

Assessments can change during the policy making process and assessments that are made at one stage of the process can change over time. It has not been possible in the time available to identify examples of Family Test assessments that are regarded as finalised to publish as part of your review. However, I will ask policy teams to bear this point in mind and to identify suitable examples that could be published in the future as examples of best practice.

Again, I wish to thank you for your support of the Family Test.

yours


CAROLINE DINENGE



2015-0049485ETPO

Edward Timpson MP
Minister of State for Children and Families

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Julia Margo
Chief Executive, Family and Childcare Trust
The Bridge
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Dear Julia,

18 November 2015

Thank you for your letter of 27 October, addressed to the Secretary of State, about the Family Test. I am replying as the minister responsible for this policy area.

The Department for Education has developed comprehensive internal guidance on the Family Test and its application. We expect staff to follow this guidance and ensure that the Family Test is used to examine every new policy for its impact on the family. The Department for Work and Pensions shared our guidance across wider government as an example of best practice, and used it to develop their own resources.

The Family Test is an integral part of the policy-making process. It is applied in a proportionate way in the development of all new policy in line with the Family Test guidance. As a result, potential impacts of policy on family functioning and relationships have been identified and brought to the attention of ministers where appropriate, and as part of the normal process of agreeing policy.

We do not collect data on the number of occasions on which new policies are assessed against the questions of the Family Test or the outcomes of each assessment. Every assessment is different as it needs to be proportionate and appropriate to the change being made.

As stated in the guidance, there is no requirement to publish Family Test assessments. The department, however, has published the outcome of such assessments on a number of occasions. For example, the outcome of the impact assessments of the Childcare Bill are available at: <http://tinyurl.com/pw5uvr3>. In addition, we have published the outcome of the Education and Adoption Bill, which is available at: <http://tinyurl.com/o5el7hy>.

*Yours sincerely,
Edward*

Edward Timpson MP
Minister of State for Children and Families