

Family Relationships (Impact Assessment and Targets) Bill [HL]

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Require public bodies to accompany any proposal for a change in public expenditure, administration or policy with a family impact assessment; and to require the Secretary of State to report on the costs and benefits of extending family impact assessments to local authorities and to establish and evaluate progress towards objectives and targets for family stability.

BE IT ENACTED by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

1 Family impact assessments

- (1) When publishing a proposal for a change in public expenditure, administration or policy, including but not limited to legislative proposals, an authority to which this Act applies must—
- (a) publish an assessment of the likely impact of the proposals on families and family relationships in accordance with this section, or 5
 - (b) publish a statement setting out its reasons for concluding that it does not need to carry out a family impact assessment.
- (2) In applying the family impact assessment, authorities shall have regard to the likely impact of proposals on— 10
- (a) a person's ability to play a full part of in their family's life, in particular their ability and capacity to discharge caring responsibilities for a child or other dependent family member;
 - (b) family formation processes (including parenthood, marriage, cohabitation and re-partnering); 15
 - (c) families undergoing transition such as the birth, adoption or fostering of children, marriage, bereavement, redundancy and the on-set of long term ill-health;
 - (d) couples who separate and their families while preparing to separate, during and after separation; 20
 - (e) couples whose relationships are fragile and at risk of breaking down and separating;

- (f) families wherein relationships are fragile and at risk of breaking down not covered under paragraph (e).
- (3) A family impact assessment must conclude whether or not overall the proposed policy or legislation would have either a positive or negative impact on families and specify differential impacts on different types of families where these exist. 5
- (4) Where a family impact assessment finds that a policy would have a negative impact, the authority concerned must publish a statement on the reason or reasons for continuing with the proposed policy or legislation and how it intends to mitigate the negative impact identified. 10
- (5) For the purposes of this Act, “family” and “families” shall include but not be limited to the relationships between the following whether or not they live together in the same household –
- (a) spouses, civil partners or partners;
 - (b) children and parents, step-parents, guardians and any other adults with parental responsibility or whom a child would consider to be their parent; 15
 - (c) children and their foster parents or prospective adopters caring for them where they are authorised to be placed for adoption;
 - (d) children and any other relatives caring for them; 20
 - (e) children and their siblings (including relationships of the full blood or half blood);
 - (f) children and their grandparents;
 - (g) extended family members, in particular where family members act as carers for other adults within the family. 25
- (6) The authorities to which this section applies are –
- (a) central government departments; and
 - (b) any other public body designated by the Secretary of State by regulations made by statutory instrument.
- 2 Extending family impact assessments to local authorities: costs and benefits 30**
- (1) The Secretary of State must carry out an assessment and publish a report setting out the details of the costs and benefits of extending the application of the requirement to undertake a family impact assessment under section 1 to local authorities in England and Wales.
- (2) The report under subsection (1) must be laid before Parliament no later than six months after the day on which this Act comes into force. 35
- 3 Targets for family stability**
- (1) The Secretary of State must, by the end of the period of nine months beginning with the day on which this Act comes into force, publish a report setting out –
- (a) the Government’s objectives and targets for promoting strong and stable families (“family stability objectives and targets”); 40
 - (b) the Government’s proposals and policies for meeting those objectives and targets;

- (c) the indicators (“family stability indicators”) that must be measured for the purposes of assessing the Government’s progress towards family stability objectives and targets; and
 - (d) the data upon which family stability objectives, targets and indicators are to be based. 5
- (2) The Secretary of State must in each subsequent year publish a report on the progress made towards the achievement of family stability objectives and targets by reference to family stability indicators.
- (3) Before the end of the period of three years beginning with the date on which the report under subsection (1) is first published and before the end of every subsequent three year period, the Secretary of State must review the family stability objectives and targets and their fitness for purpose. 10
- (4) The Secretary of State may amend the family stability objectives, targets and indicators following publication of the report under subsection (2) but must publish a supplementary statement explaining his or her decisions in so far as the report under subsection (2) does not do so. 15
- (5) The Secretary of State must lay reports and supplementary statements published under this section before each House of Parliament.

4 Interpretation

- In this Act – 20
- “carer” has the same meaning as in Part 1 of the Care Act 2014;
- “child” means a person under the age of 18 and “children” shall be construed accordingly;
- “couple” means –
- (a) a married couple or civil partners, or 25
 - (b) two people living as partners in what the parties assume will be an enduring relationship;
- “extended family members” means a person and their great-grandparent, uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership), the child of such an uncle or aunt, or the child of a brother or sister (whether of the half blood or full blood or by marriage or civil partnership); 30
- “foster parent” means a local authority foster parent or a private foster parent (within the meaning of the section 66 of the Children Act 1989);
- “guardian” has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989 and includes a special guardian within the meaning of that Act; 35
- “legislation” includes an Act of Parliament to the extent that it extends to England and Wales and subordinate legislation made under an Act of Parliament;
- “prospective adopter” means a person who proposes to adopt a child; 40
- “relative” has the same meaning as under section 105 of the Children Act 1989;
- “step-parent” means a person who is married to or a civil partner of a child’s parent but is not the child’s parent;
- “strong and stable families” means families which have relationship qualities that contribute to the emotional health and well-being of the family, including that the parents or guardians with whom a child lives remain consistent over time. 45

5 Extent, commencement and short title

- (1) This Act extends to England and Wales only.
- (2) This Act comes into force three months from the day on which it is passed.
- (3) This Act may be cited as the Family Relationships (Impact Assessment and Targets) Act 2017.
- (4) Nothing in this Act shall impose any charge on the people or on public funds, or vary the amount or incidence of or otherwise alter any such charge in any manner, or affect the assessment, levying, administration or application of any money raised by any such charge.

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