3.12 Reconstituted Families: Step-Parenting and Blended Family Life: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. For two extended questions (the 8-mark and 12-mark) write in full sentences. Use sociological terms and, where asked, refer to the short Item provided.

1 Identify and explain two policy changes that could help reduce financial strain in reconstituted families, referring to UK social policy ideas.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 Discuss the everyday challenges faced by reconstituted families when step-parents move in, considering sociological perspectives and giving a supported judgement in relation to role negotiation and family conflict.

(Total for Question 2 is 8 marks)

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3 Define what sociologists mean by 'step-parent' in the study of reconstituted family life in the UK context.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 Identify and explain two ways sibling relationships may change in a household after two families blend, giving sociological reasoning.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Explain two reasons why step-parents and biological parents sometimes disagree over discipline in reconstituted families.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Item A: Laura and Marco form a new household. Laura has two children aged 8 and 12 who visit their father every other weekend. Marco has a 10-year-old daughter who lives mainly with her mother. Both adults plan to work full time.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 3.12 Reconstituted Families: Step-Parenting and Blended Family Life: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies first policy change, e.g. clearer rules on benefits and child maintenance when households include children from different parents	**B1**
develops first change, e.g. reducing gaps or conflicts in entitlements could ease budgeting and reduce disputes over resources	**B1**
identifies second policy change, e.g. increased support for affordable childcare for working blended families	**B1**
develops second change, e.g. subsidised childcare can allow both adults to work and reduce financial stress	**B1**

Answer: Two helpful policies are clearer rules on benefits and child maintenance when households include children from different parents, reducing entitlement gaps and easing budgeting, and increased support for affordable childcare so both adults can work, reducing financial strain in blended families.

Question 2

expects coverage of everyday challenges such as role ambiguity, discipline disputes, loyalty conflicts, resource sharing and scheduling	**B1**
expects application of at least one sociological perspective or concept, e.g. role negotiation, family systems, or feminist ideas about care and authority	**B1**
expects application of a second perspective or contrast, e.g. functionalist emphasis on stability through clear roles versus interactionist focus on negotiated meanings	**B1**
expects evaluation and development, e.g. noting that while role negotiation can be a source of conflict it can also lead to new family bonds over time	**B1**
expects use of an example or brief reference to research or a hypothetical scenario to support points	**B1**
expects a supported judgement or conclusion that weighs perspectives and evidence about whether difficulties are likely to be temporary or long-term	**B1**
expects clear organisation and sociological vocabulary appropriate to GCSE	**B1**
expects recognition of variation between families, e.g. class, age of children and contact with non-resident parents affect outcomes	**B1**

Answer: Indicative content: Candidates should discuss everyday challenges such as role ambiguity when step-parents move in, disagreements over discipline, loyalty conflicts with non-resident parents, and disputes over money, time and shared space. Apply sociological perspectives: a functionalist view might stress the need for clear roles for family stability and see role negotiation as a problem to be resolved; an interactionist approach emphasises how family members construct meanings and negotiate new identities, explaining why step-parents must build authority slowly; feminist perspectives note how gendered expectations about care and authority may shape who does housework and who disciplines children. Evaluate by noting role negotiation can both cause conflict and create new bonds, and that outcomes vary by age of children, economics and the ongoing involvement of previous partners. Conclude with a supported judgement about whether challenges tend to be transitional with appropriate support and negotiation, or long-term where structural pressures persist.

Question 3

identifies that a step-parent is a person who is married to or cohabiting with a child's parent but is not the child's biological parent	**B1**
development, e.g. may take on parenting responsibilities and role negotiations with the child and other adults	**B1**

Answer: A step-parent is a person who is married to or cohabiting with a child's parent but is not the child's biological parent; they may take on parenting responsibilities and negotiate roles with the child and other adults.

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Question 4

identifies first way, e.g. tensions between stepsiblings over shared space or resources	**B1**
develops the first way, e.g. competition for bedrooms, attention or allowances can create conflict	**B1**
identifies second way, e.g. development of new closeness or friendship between previously unrelated children	**B1**
develops the second way, e.g. joint activities and time together can build sibling bonds over time, creating new support networks	**B1**

Answer: Two changes are tensions between stepsiblings over shared space or resources, since competition for bedrooms, attention or allowances can create conflict, and the development of new closeness where previously unrelated children form friendships through joint activities, building new support networks.

Question 5

identifies first reason, e.g. different parenting styles and values between the partners	**B1**
develops first reason, e.g. one parent may favour stricter rules while the other prefers negotiation, causing conflict	**B1**
identifies second reason, e.g. questions of authority and legitimacy for the step-parent	**B1**
develops second reason, e.g. step-parents may be unsure how much discipline is appropriate without appearing overbearing or displacing the biological parent	**B1**

Answer: Disagreements arise from different parenting styles and values, for example one partner favouring stricter rules while the other prefers negotiation, and from questions of authority and legitimacy, since step-parents may be unsure how much discipline is appropriate without appearing overbearing or displacing the biological parent.

Question 6

identifies a first challenge from Item A, e.g. coordinating visiting schedules and shared time between different non-resident parents	**B1**
develops the first challenge, e.g. clashes over weekends and practical care arrangements create stress	**B1**
identifies a second challenge from Item A, e.g. negotiating parenting roles and authority while both adults work full time	**B1**
develops the second challenge, e.g. limited time for bonding with step-children and reliance on childcare may hinder relationship building	**B1**

Answer: Two challenges are coordinating visiting schedules with non-resident parents, since clashes over weekends and practical care create stress, and negotiating parenting roles and authority while both adults work full time, because limited time for bonding and reliance on childcare may hinder relationship building with step-children.

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