3.13 Social Policy and the Law: Civil Partnerships and Same-Sex Marriage: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Write full sentences in extended answers Q16.

1 Explain two ways local institutions, such as schools or workplaces, may have to change their policies after the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 and related adoption law changes.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 Identify two sociological perspectives and explain briefly how each would interpret the impact of legal changes for same-sex couples, for example civil partnerships and same-sex marriage.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

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3 Discuss how far sociologists would agree that legal changes such as the Civil Partnership Act 2004, the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013, and adoption rights for same-sex couples have increased family diversity and equality in the UK. In your answer, refer to relevant sociological perspectives and give a supported conclusion. Write in full sentences.

(Total for Question 3 is 12 marks)

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4 Define what is meant by a 'civil partnership' in UK family law as introduced by the Civil Partnership Act 2004.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

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5 State one way adoption law in the UK changed to include same-sex couples, naming the legal context and a relevant year if you can.

(Total for Question 5 is 2 marks)

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Mark scheme · 3.13 Social Policy and the Law: Civil Partnerships and Same-Sex Marriage: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies one change, e.g. schools may update forms and language to be inclusive of same-sex parents	**B1**
development, e.g. this ensures same-sex parents are recognised on admission forms and in parent communications	**B1**
identifies a second change, e.g. workplaces may update parental leave and benefits policies to cover same-sex parents equally	**B1**
development, e.g. this provides equal access to time off, paternity or shared parental leave and benefits for children of same-sex couples	**B1**

Answer: Schools may update forms and language to include same-sex parents so they are recognised on admission forms and in communications, and workplaces may update parental leave and benefits policies to cover same-sex parents equally, giving equal access to time off and family-related benefits.

Question 2

identifies one perspective, e.g. functionalism	**B1**
explains functionalist interpretation, e.g. sees legal recognition as promoting social stability and family integration by recognising stable relationships	**B1**
identifies a second perspective, e.g. the New Right or liberalism	**B1**
explains that perspective's interpretation, e.g. liberals welcome equality and individual choice, while the New Right may criticise the extension of marriage from a traditionalist viewpoint	**B1**

Answer: Functionalists would interpret legal recognition as promoting social stability and integrating diverse family forms by recognising committed relationships; liberals welcome the changes as advancing equality and individual choice; the New Right may criticise extension of marriage from a traditionalist viewpoint, arguing it weakens the special status of heterosexual marriage.

Question 3

Level 1 Simple statements about legal changes with little linkage to sociological perspectives or conclusions.	**1-3**
Level 2 Some developed points linking legal changes to increased recognition of same-sex families or equality, with limited use of sociological perspectives and limited weighing of alternative views.	**4-6**
Level 3 Clear explanations using at least two sociological perspectives to show how legal changes increased recognition and equality for same-sex families, and consideration of limits such as persistent social attitudes or uneven implementation.	**7-9**
Level 4 A well-balanced discussion drawing on several perspectives, for example liberals and functionalists highlighting legal recognition and social inclusion, feminists noting improved parental rights, and the New Right offering a critical reaction; evaluation of evidence about social attitudes, policy implementation and remaining inequalities, and a supported conclusion that weighs the evidence.	**10-12**

Indicative content:

- Liberal perspective: legal changes promote equality, remove discrimination and expand individual choice, supporting same-sex couples to form legal families.
- Functionalist perspective: recognising stable relationships, including same-sex unions, can support social cohesion and the welfare of children by providing legal stability.
- Feminist perspective: legal recognition and adoption rights improve material and parental rights for same-sex parents, reducing gendered inequalities and supporting child wellbeing.
- New Right reaction: some argue extending marriage weakens the special status of traditional heterosexual marriage and may have negative consequences for social norms; this is a minority reaction in this topic and should be treated as one perspective among several.
- Limits: legal change does not guarantee immediate social acceptance; prejudice and discrimination can persist and implementation can vary between local services and institutions.
- Evidence: use of survey data on public attitudes, statistics on numbers of civil partnerships converted to marriage, adoption rates, and examples of policy changes in schools or workplaces to support arguments.
- Conclusion: balanced judgement weighing rights and recognition gains against remaining social and practical limits, stating how far sociologists would agree overall.

Question 4

identifies that a civil partnership is a legally recognised union between two people of the same sex registered with the state	**B1**
development, e.g. it gives many legal rights and responsibilities similar to marriage, such as inheritance and pension rights (oe)	**B1**

Answer: A civil partnership is a legally recognised union between two people of the same sex registered with the state; it gives many legal rights and responsibilities similar to marriage, such as inheritance and pension rights.

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Question 5

identifies a correct change, e.g. same-sex couples were allowed to adopt jointly in England and Wales from 2005 **B1**

brief development, e.g. this meant same-sex couples gained the same adoption rights as different-sex couples in many parts of the UK **B1**

Answer: Same-sex couples were allowed to adopt jointly in England and Wales from 2005, meaning they gained adoption rights similar to different-sex couples.

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