

# Impact case guidelines

Each case study should include sufficiently clear and detailed information to enable the evaluation committee to make judgements based on the information it contains, without making inferences, gathering additional material, following up references or relying on members' prior knowledge. References to other sources of information will be used for verification purposes only, not as a means for the evaluation committee to gather further information to inform judgements.

In this evaluation, impact is defined as an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia.

## Timeframes

- The impact must have occurred between 2012 and 2022
- Some of the underpinning research should have been published in 2012 or later
- The administrative units are encouraged to prioritise recent cases

## Page limit

Each completed case study template will be limited to **five pages** in length. Within the annotated template below, indicative guidance is provided about the expected maximum length limit of each section, but institutions will have flexibility to exceed these so long as the case study as a whole remains no longer than **five pages** (font Calibri, font size 11). Please write the text into the framed template under the sections 1–5 below. The guiding text that stands there now, can be deleted.

## Maximum number of cases permitted per administrative unit

For up to 10 researchers: one case; for 10 to 30 researchers: two cases; for 30-50 researchers: three cases; for 50-100 researchers: four cases, and up to five cases for units exceeding 100 researchers.

## Naming and numbering of cases

Please use the standardised short name for the administrative unit, and the case number for the unit (1,2,3, etc) in the headline of the case. Each case should be stored as a separate PDF-document with the file name: [Name of the institution and name of the administrative unit] [case number]

## Publication of cases

RCN plans to publish all impact cases in a separate evaluation report. By submitting the case the head of the administrative units consents to the publication of the case. Please indicate below if a case may not be made public for reasons of confidentiality.

*If relevant, describe any reason to keep this case confidential:*

NA
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## [Norwegian Institute of Public Health and Division of Mental and Physical Health] [5]

<b>Institution: Norwegian Institute of Public Health</b>
<b>Administrative unit: Division of Mental and Physical Health</b>
<b>Title of case study: The Dynamics of Family Conflict Study (FAM-C) [FamilieForSK]</b>
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2016-</b>
<b>Period when staff involved in the underpinning research were employed by the submitting institution: 2016-</b>
<b>Period when the impact occurred: 2017-</b>

### 1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Dynamics of Family Conflict (FAM-C) findings have impact on different levels of society. Foremost, FAM-C provides evidence-based knowledge and validated measurements to the **Family counselling service** through close collaboration with the service's expert teams and through regular presentations at regional gatherings. This has strengthened the service provision for families seeking help. FAM-C findings have further provided **authorities** with knowledge about the welfare of children and families in vulnerable situations, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. Finally, through popular science summaries and media engagement, FAM-C has engaged in public debate and information sharing benefitting **the lay public**.

### 2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

The Dynamics of Family Conflict study (FAM-C) is a Norwegian ongoing longitudinal multi-informant survey study with an established cohort that enables investigations of child and parent wellbeing, family dynamics, and conflicts. Families (N = ~2800) were recruited through family counselling centers (Dec 2017 to July 2019). The FAM-C data source is unique and extensive covering many domains and has register linkages to several registers. FAM-C is the umbrella project for new projects covering related research foci, including family life during and after Covid-19, children's agency when parent separate, custody arrangements, and interparental conflict and parenting experiencing across living arrangements, gender, and social class. Several projects are ongoing. FAM-C insights and findings are considerable and have potential for impacts at different levels.

#### *Scale validation*

Findings from the validation and short form development of the Conflict Strategy Scale from the Conflicts and Problem-Solving Scales showed that the short form had better psychometric properties compared to the original scale (Helland et al., 2021). The validation of the Children's Perception of the Interparental Conflict Scale and the Interparental Subsystem (both child-reported measures) showed comparable validity of the short forms to the original full scales (Holt et al, 2020). The utility in these short forms lie in their brevity, and parent and child perspectives.

The validation of a short survey that parents complete over the phone with the family welfare service prior to attending divorce mediation showed that compared to when parents completed the same questions anonymously, parents under-reported to the service regarding substance abuse and violence (Dittmann et al., 2021). This finding questions the validity of the screening practice implemented by the service today.

#### *Interparental conflict*

Compared to parents living apart, parents living together (with or without children from former relationships) reported more frequent conflicts, but better conflict resolution and less destructive conflict behaviours. Among parents living apart, those in less complex family systems (i.e., where

neither parent has a new partner) showed better conflict resolution and less destructive conflict behaviours compared to those in complex family systems (Helland et al., 2020). When investigating children's reactions to interparental conflict, parents tend to underestimate these compared to children's self-report (Holt et al., 2021a).

#### *Covid-19*

Focusing on children's reactions to the new everyday life under the pandemic compared to before, findings showed that children had fewer emotional but more somatic and cognitive reactions. The strongest predictor of children's reactions was family stress and instability, and this was particularly true for older children (Larsen et al., 2021).

#### *Key researchers*

Espen Røysamb (Professor 2015-)  
 Maren Sand Helland (Researcher 2015-)  
 Tonje Holt (Researcher 2016-)  
 Linda Larsen (Post doctor 2019-2022, Researcher, 2022-)  
 Silje Kvam Bårdstu (Researcher 2021-)  
 Dina Sunde (Researcher short-term contract 2021)  
 Solveig Dittmann (Researcher short-term contract 2021)  
 Maria Morbech (PhD candidate 2020-)  
 Olav Bertin Tveit (PhD candidate 2020-)

### **3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

#### *Scale validation*

Helland, M. S., Holt, T., Gustavsson, K. & Røysamb, E. (2021) Validation and short-form development of Conflict and Problem-solving Strategy Scales. *Journal of Family Studies*, 29(2), 738-757. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2021.1981977>

Holt, T., Helland, M.S., Gustavson, K. *et al.* (2020). Assessing Children's Responses to Interparental Conflict: Validation and Short Scale Development of SIS and CPIC-Properties Scales. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 48, 177–196. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-019-00586-7>

Dittmann, S., Holt, T., & Larsen, L. (2021). Foreldre underrapporterer om konflikter og utfordringer i forkant av mekling. En evaluering av familievernets differensieringsverktøy [Parents underreport conflicts and difficulties before attending mediation]. *Tidsskrift for Norsk Psykologforening*, 9(58), 766-775. <https://doi.org/10.52734/3WfR437s>

#### *Interparental conflict*

Helland, M.S., Larsen, L., Lyngstad, T.H., Gähler, M. & Holt, T. (2020). Konflikt i familier: Mønstre innenfor og på tvers av familieform når familiesystemet utfordres [Interparental conflicts: Patterns across family constellations when the family system is under pressure]. *Norsk Sosiologisk Tidsskrift*, 4(3), 131-50. <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2535-2512-2020-03-02>

Holt, T., Helland, M. S., Morbech, M., Larsen, L., Gustavson, K., Ha, A., & Cummings, E. M. (2021a). Agreement between child and parent reports of children's reactions to interparental conflict. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 35(8), 1138–1148. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000861>

#### *Covid-19*

Larsen, L., Helland, M. S., & Holt, T. The impact of school closure and social isolation on children in vulnerable families during COVID-19: a focus on children's reactions. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 31, 1–11 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-021-01758-x>

### **4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

The insights and findings from FAM-C provide an important knowledge base for policy discourse and development, supporting health and welfare authorities in ensuring safe upbringing conditions and supportive family environments for children. Impacts extend to clinical practice through close and mutual collaborations with the family counselling service. This collaboration is maintained through financial support from the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) generating new research projects particularly relevant for the service. FAM-C researchers serve as advisors for health and welfare services, as well as governmental directorates and ministries, fulfilling the Norwegian Institute of Public Health's (NIPH) mandate as a producer of knowledge.

*Impact on **service level** (see sources 1-3 below)*

The need for validated screening instruments covering family conflicts provided the background for Bufdir to initiate and fund research to translate and further develop commonly used international questionnaires and validate them in a Norwegian context and evaluate the Family counselling service's divorce mediation screening tool. The work was carried out between 2016-2021. The results were published in three peer-review articles (Helland et al., 2021; Holt et al., 2020; Dittmann et al., 2021) and shared with Bufdir in an internal report, and to the service through the service's resource and development teams. Providing the service with validated and free-of-charge screening instruments ensures a high standard practice crucial for offering tailored interventions to families and children. Validated short scales enable therapists to conduct time-efficient assessments capturing both initial challenges as well as treatment progress, without imposing excessive burden on families.

FAM-C has generated a substantial body of knowledge relevant for the Family counselling service. The underpinning research started in 2016 when FAM-C was initiated and is ongoing. Certain findings have had impact by providing new knowledge to therapists in their daily practice. One example is the distinction between destructive and less destructive parental conflicts. Understanding that destructive conflicts most often occur in families where parents live apart provides important insight, suggesting that efforts should particularly be directed towards parental conflicts in these families (Helland et al., 2020). Another example is that children experience family conflicts differently to their parents. This has implications for the service and for families, emphasizing the importance of striving to understand children's perspective (Holt et al., 2021a). Finally, a study by Sunde et al. (2021) points to aspects that children find important when parents separate. These include continuity (e.g., participate in the same activities irrespective if at mum's or dad's place) and openness (i.e., can express emotions to both parents). This knowledge may guide therapists when working with parents in establishing post-separation family life and shows the importance of children's own perspective.

To integrate the empirical knowledge generated by FAM-C into the Family counselling service, FAM-C has had close collaboration and regular meetings with the service. Dissemination efforts have been a strategic priority through engaging with the service's national resource and development teams (i.e., Family violence and high conflict and Children and youth in Family counselling services), presenting findings at the service's regional gatherings, and being represented in relevant reference groups for service development.

*Impact on **policy level** (see sources 4-6)*

FAM-C had an active role in informing policy and the health and welfare authorities in Norway during the Covid-19 pandemic. Concerns were raised that the pandemic would disproportionately impact the most vulnerable families, and it was important to identify and provide help to at-risk families to mitigate the negative consequences of the societal lockdown. An interdisciplinary working group representing relevant authorities and institutions including NIPH was appointed by the Government with this mission. FAM-C findings were used by the working group, and relevant results are mentioned in some of the working group's reports. The results from the FAM-C Covid-

19 project were also published in a report to Bufdir as well as in three separate peer-review articles ([Helland et al., 2021](#); [Holt et al., 2021b](#); Larsen et al., 2022). FAM-C and the research generated by FAM-C has also been mentioned in other governmental documents, for example in the Government's new escalation plan for mental health (2023-2033).

*Impact on public level (see sources 7-10)*

FAM-C researchers have taken an active role in public debate concerning interparental conflict, parental separation, and children's agency in matters that concern them. Research findings have been made available through popular science summaries, newsletters, and the project website. Since the study inception there has been more than 23 500 clicks on the project website. Results summaries have also been shared with the public through news channels including ones specifically aimed at children and youth ([forskning.no](#), [ung.forskning.no](#)).

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of ten references)

The FAM-C research on family dynamics is particularly relevant to the Family counselling service. This relevance is reflected in documents describing The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs' (Bufdir) research strategy and research efforts:

1. [Bufdirs arbeid med forskning 2020](#) [Bufdir Research Strategy 2020]. Pages 16, 17, 67, 69, 79, 132.
2. [Bufdirs arbeid med forskning 2021](#) [Bufdir Research Strategy 2021]. Pages 22, 23, 24, 25, 59.

The FAM-C research is highlighted in governmental initiatives and efforts:

3. [Meld.St. 23](#) (2022-2023). Opptappingsplan for psykisk helse [Escalation Plan for Mental Health]. Page 25.

The FAM-C has provided insights and findings about the consequences of Covid-19 pandemic for vulnerable families that are relevant for health and welfare authorities:

4. [Statusrapport 10: Utsatte barn og unges tjenestetilbud under Covid-19 pandemien](#) [Status Report 10: Service offer to vulnerable children and youth during the Covid-19 Pandemic]. Bufdir. Pages 42-43, 46-47.
5. [Statusrapport 11: Økt bekymring under Covid-19 pandemien](#) [Status Report 11: Increased concern during the Covid-19 pandemic]. Bufdir. Page 41.

FAM-C regularly communicates findings to the lay public through popular science summaries and the media:

6. 23 557 clicks on the [FAM-C website](#) since 2016 (obtained from NIPH communications department).
7. Barn vil treffe vennene sine uansett om de bor hos mamma eller pappa [Children want to see their friends irrespective if they live with mum or dad]. [Ung.forskning.no](#)
8. Barn blir lei seg når foreldrene krangler, men det skjønner ikke alltid de voksne [Children get sad when parents argue, but adults don't always understand]. [Ung.forskning.no](#)
9. Få spør barna om hvordan skilsmissem opplevs for dem [Children are rarely asked how they experience parental separation]. [NRK.no](#)
10. [Psykisk oppvekst. Barn og unges psykiske helse \(2022\)](#) [Healthy upbringing conditions. Child mental health and wellbeing]. The Norwegian Council for Mental Health. Pages 215-222.