**Item:** There has been a significant increase in the number of divorces since 1970. One important factor behind the increase has been the changes in the law relating to divorce. However, legal changes alone may not be enough to explain the trend and sociologists have suggested a number of possible causes of a higher divorce rate. One of these is a decline in the influence of traditional norms and values about marriage that used to stigmatise divorce.

**Outline and evaluate the view that legal changes are the main reason for the increase in divorce over the past 40 years in the contemporary UK (20 marks)**

**How could you use the item:**

**Plan:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Introduction (needs to define key words in the question and highlight areas to be discussed in the main body) | |
| Arguments for legal issues being the most significant  (Any arguments in this side should be argued against using the other side) | Arguments for other factors being more significant |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| Conclusion (should sum up the essay and come to a decision) | |

Notes:

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| --- | --- |
| Factors for the argument | Factors against the argument |
| Set the scene for why there were fewer divorces before e.g. why was it so hard to divorce.  Laws:   * Divorce Reform Act (1969)- what it does, what impact it has. * Matrimonial proceedings act (1984)   Extending on:   * Equal Pay Act (1970)- women’s rights * Child Support Act (1996)- these laws have helped to enable people to maintain their families after divorce.   You can’t have a divorce if you don’t have a legal right to have one. | Attitudes towards marriage have to change to allow people to get a divorce (evidence- increase in cohabitation, Giddens- confluent love). Differences in attitude toward marriage  Decline in religion (secularisation)  Impact of second wave feminism.  Views of divorced women have changed.  Women want to be more independent/career minded (Sue Sharpe)  Rise in individualism (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim) |