



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

Minister for Family Support, Housing  
and Child Maintenance  
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**14 MAY 2019**

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to update you on the ongoing work my department is undertaking in relation to the Child Maintenance Compliance and Arrears Strategy.

The reformed child maintenance system which has been in place since December 2012 provides strong incentives for parents to work together following separation and, where possible, make family-based arrangements for child maintenance. This is because of the clear evidence that children in separated families benefit from good quality relationships between their parents.

We know that most separated parents want to take financial responsibility for their children, and many families are able to make their own arrangements for this. The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) is there for those unable to make a private arrangement. Following careful, staged implementation the CMS is working well for many parents, avoiding the delays and backlogs which characterised the predecessor schemes. The CMS continues to pursue paying parents who refuse to meet their obligations. I am determined to ensure that this service continues to work well for families.

The legislation to support the Compliance and Arrears Strategy consists of two packages of regulations. The first package – which was voted through the House and came into force in December 2018 – introduced provisions to improve compliance, including a new power to make deductions from jointly held bank accounts, and to address the £3.7 billion of arrears accrued on the old Child Support Agency (CSA) schemes. We have provided parents with a final opportunity to have their debt collected where it is cost-effective to do so. I am pleased to say that the early implementation of these measures is going well.

The second package of regulations builds upon the first by introducing further measures to improve compliance and make the CMS more effective. It includes balanced provisions which benefit parents, businesses, and children.

The proposals include measures to:

- Ensure equality in how we deduct child maintenance payments from benefits, making our policy fairer and helping to reduce the build-up of arrears.
- Add a safeguard to our power of entry process to protect businesses.
- Require information from mortgage lenders and occupational pension providers without our inspectors needing to visit them.

Our consultation on the Child Maintenance Compliance and Arrears Strategy, which ran between 14 December 2017 and 8 February 2018, detailed our proposed changes to deductions from benefits. These changes were well received with both stakeholders and individuals who welcomed our proposals.

A separate consultation was conducted on our changes to the powers of entry and information regulations. As these changes are largely beneficial, there were few responses, and most comments were outside the scope of the consultation. The government response to the consultation was published on 26 March 2019.

I laid the Child Support (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2019 in Parliament on 9 May.

If you have any queries about these changes, you would be very welcome to join an information session at 1 Parliament Street on either 12 June (16:00 to 17:30) or 18 June (15:00 to 16:30) to give you an overview of the changes. Please contact Emily Ryans at [EMILY.RYANS@DWP.GOV.UK](mailto:EMILY.RYANS@DWP.GOV.UK) or 0207 867 3239 if you would like to attend.

Kind regards,



**Will Quince MP**

**Minister for Family Support, Housing and Child Maintenance**