

Press release: Child maintenance consultation launched

The government is asking for views on options to give the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) stronger compliance, collection and enforcement methods to make sure parents are meeting their responsibilities towards their children.

The Child Maintenance Service was established in 2012 to replace the old Child Support Agency (CSA). Steps have already been taken to strengthen the action taken against parents who don't pay the child maintenance they owe, including consulting on [seizing unpaid maintenance from joint bank accounts](#).

The consultation proposals today include:

- removing passports – parents who persistently do not pay the child maintenance they owe could face being banned from holding or obtaining a UK passport for up to 2 years
- improved calculations – income from capital, foreign income, notional income from assets and unearned income could all be taken into account when the CMS works out how much maintenance a parent owes
- deductions from business accounts – the CMS could seize funds from sole trader and partnership accounts to pay off a parent's unpaid maintenance bill.

The consultation also outlines proposals to address historic unpaid child maintenance built up under the old CSA, and options for writing it off. New analysis shows that it would cost the government £1.5 billion to collect the debt, most of which is owed on CSA cases where the children are now adults.

Minister for Family Support, Housing and Child Maintenance Caroline Dinenage said:

Our priority is to make sure parents meet their responsibilities to their children so we have been replacing the old CSA – which failed children over the decades – with a new system that is already working better for families. But we need to go further to ensure children get the support they need. That's why we are consulting on a range of options, including tougher powers against parents who do not pay the child maintenance they owe.

The consultation opened on 14 December 2017 and closes on 8 February 2018.

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