

# Press release: Clampdown on child maintenance cheats

New powers to stop parents avoiding paying child maintenance that they owe have been announced.

If a parent owes child maintenance, deductions to recover that debt can currently only be made from a bank or building society account held solely by them. So a small minority of parents are cheating their way out of supporting their children by putting their money into a joint account with a partner.

New laws will be brought in to allow deductions to be made from joint accounts in order to recover child maintenance arrears.

It is believed closing this loophole could stop a number of parents getting away with not paying their child maintenance each year – leading to more than £390,000 additional child maintenance being collected.

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

Our priority is for children to get the support they need. Only a small minority of parents try to cheat their way out of paying towards their children and this new power will be another tool to tackle those who do.

The government's response to a public consultation on joint account deductions has been published today. This sets out how deduction orders against joint accounts will work and the safeguards that will be in place to protect the other holder of the joint account.

These include:

- a deduction order only being imposed on a joint account when the paying parent does not have their own account, or there is not enough money in their own account
- only funds belonging to the paying parent being targeted, as before a deduction order is made on a joint account, data on that bank account will be collected and bank statements examined to establish which money in the account belongs to the paying parent
- existing safeguards already in place for deduction orders for child maintenance will apply to this new power, including the maximum deduction rate on regular orders being set at 40% of the paying parent's weekly income
- both account holders will be given the right to make their case before a deduction order is made

The new power will come into effect early next year.

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