

Children to benefit from changes to Child Maintenance Service

Press release

Children of separated parents are set to benefit from changes to the Child Maintenance Service announced today (14 March 2022) as new powers are revealed.



The new powers being introduced will expand the list of companies and organisations required to provide information to the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) which will help the service trace the paying parent, calculate maintenance and enforce arrears more effectively.

To make it easier for companies to respond quickly and securely, the process is now being simplified so information can be passed on by secure digital means instead of compulsory in-person visits from CMS inspectors.

The government is also bringing forward proposals to allow all communications to be digital, which will speed up the service and make sure information is passed on to parents quickly.

Following responses from children's charities, parents and interested organisations, the government has published the details of the new powers in its response to the [consultation on the Child Maintenance Service](#).

DWP Lords Minister Baroness Stedman-Scott said:

At the heart of these changes is our commitment to making sure children get the financial support they need to have the best start in life.

We're bringing the service into the modern age, removing barriers that can slow down cases and prevent money reaching children.

The Child Maintenance Service collected or arranged £1 billion for children over the last 12 months, improving the lives of hundreds of thousands of children across the UK.

The CMS is set up for parents who have not been able to make a private arrangement about how their child's living costs will be paid. Child maintenance payments help lift around 120,000 children across the UK out of poverty each year.

Plans for future changes when the legislation timetable allows will:

- include unearned income in child maintenance calculations
- extinguish small volumes of very low value debt (£6.99 and under) where the maintenance calculation has ended but there remains an outstanding debt, and the value of the debt is substantially less than the cost of collecting it
- extinguish arrears where child maintenance has been deducted from a parent's earnings and their employer has gone into administration, and the outstanding arrears can no longer be recovered.

Further information: – The Child Maintenance Service was established in 2012 to replace the old Child Support Agency, to increase levels of cooperation between separated parents and encourage parents to meet their responsibilities to provide their children with the financial support they need to secure better outcomes in life. – The full consultation response can be found [here](#). – Regulation for digital notifications and expanded information regulations will be laid and come into force as soon as parliamentary time allows. – Postal communications will still be available for all communications where parents prefer this.

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[‘Homes for Ukraine’ scheme launches](#)

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove, has today (14 March 2022) launched a webpage for sponsors to record their interest, ahead of Phase One of the scheme opening for applications this Friday.

The Homes for Ukraine scheme will allow individuals, charities, community groups and businesses in the UK to bring Ukrainians to safety – including those with no family ties to the UK.

Phase One of the scheme will allow sponsors in the UK to nominate a named Ukrainian or a named Ukrainian family to stay with them in their home or in a separate property.

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Michael Gove said:

The courage shown by the Ukrainian people in the face of devastation caused by the invasion of their great country is nothing short of remarkable.

The United Kingdom has a long and proud history of helping others in their hour of need and our new Homes for Ukraine scheme offers a lifeline to those who have been forced to flee.

I'm asking people across our country who can provide a home for Ukrainians to consider being sponsors.

Local Government Association Chairman, Cllr James Jamieson said:

The humanitarian crisis caused by the Ukraine invasion is heart-breaking. Councils are ready to help new arrivals from Ukraine settle in the UK and to support communities who wish to offer assistance to those fleeing the devastating conflict.

Councils will be central in helping families settle into their communities and access public services, including schools, public health and other support, including access to trauma counselling.

Sanctuary Foundation Director, Dr Krish Kandiah said:

In 1939 the people of the UK opened their hearts and homes to children fleeing from the Nazis and we look back on that 'Kinder Transport' as an act of culture-defining hospitality. With the invasion of Ukraine the largest refugee crisis in Europe since the second world war is unfolding.

I welcome with great enthusiasm the UK government's 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme. Sanctuary Foundation has already had over 7,000 pledges of sponsorship and I stand ready both personally and professionally to be part of this extraordinary welcome of Ukrainian refugees.

Co-Director of Reset Communities and Refugees, Kate Brown said:

We warmly welcome the introduction of a way in which communities in the UK can open their doors to welcome those who so urgently need

help. We have seen that, when communities come together to welcome those seeking sanctuary, they can make a huge impact, transforming the lives of so many whilst offering safety to those who need it.

Individual sponsors will be asked to provide homes or a spare room rent-free for as long as they are able, with a minimum stay of 6 months. In return, they will receive £350 per month.

Those who have a named Ukrainian they wish to sponsor should contact them directly and prepare to fill in a visa application, with the application launching on Friday 18 March.

Charities, faith groups and local community organisations are also helping to facilitate connections between individuals, for potential sponsors who do not have a named contact.

Ukrainians arriving in the UK under this scheme will be granted 3 years leave to remain, with entitlement to work, and access benefits and public services.

Applicants will be vetted and will undergo security checks.

For more information or to record interest visit the [Homes for Ukraine webpage](#). Sponsors will be kept updated on the scheme.

[Call for evidence to support people with acquired brain injuries](#)

- New government ambition to prevent and limit the impact of acquired brain injuries
- A call for evidence will be launched to identify ways to improve services and support
- Those with experience of working with patients with injuries are invited to help collaborate

People whose lives have been affected by acquired brain injuries (ABI) are being invited to share their experiences and give ideas on how to improve the care and support available.

The government is asking people to come forward with their views on how to ensure a better quality of life for those who have experienced brain damage after birth.

Acquired brain injuries can be caused by traumas such as road traffic accidents, assaults and falls, or by medical issues like tumours or diseases, such as meningitis.

More support is needed to find ways to improve services and also increase rates of prevention and recognising symptoms.

The request for engagement is going out to those with ABI, their families, healthcare professionals and charities over the next 12 weeks.

It will provide an opportunity to hear first-hand from the people most affected to help find out what services are needed, where there may be gaps, and how the government can support services to help fill these.

Minister for Care and Mental Health Gillian Keegan said:

It is absolutely essential people living with acquired brain injury get the best possible care and treatment and that we take steps to prevent these injuries wherever possible.

Together the cross-government programme board and the call for evidence will allow us to deliver a strategy to address issues that matter most to those with acquired brain injuries and other neurological conditions.

A new programme board, jointly chaired by Minister for Care and Mental Health Gillian Keegan and Labour MP Chris Bryant MP, will look to publish a new strategy to reduce the amount of injuries sustained whilst also improving the experiences of those with acquired brain injuries.

Views are also being sought on extending the strategy to include other neurological conditions.

MP for Rhondda, and joint chair of the programme board, Chris Bryant, said:

I'm delighted that the government is starting to pull together a cross government strategy on acquired brain injury.

We need people to come forward with ideas and suggestions based on their experience of brain injury as practitioners, patients or family members so we can get this strategy right.

I urge everyone to take part if they think they have an insight to offer.

Chloe Hayward, executive director of the UK Acquired Brain Injury Forum, said:

We are very pleased the government is giving acquired brain injury the attention it deserves with the ABI Strategy.

The call for evidence will help the panel to focus and prioritise their efforts, so we need people with lived experience of brain

injury – whether, survivors, carers or professionals – to participate. This will ensure the panel has the best available information to develop their strategy.

The ABI strategy will be the latest step forward in improving responses to brain injuries. It comes after the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport published its action plan for tackling concussion in sport to help reduce the risks of head injuries.

In that plan new protocols will be put in place and steps taken to improve the understanding, awareness, prevention and treatment of concussion in sport at all levels.

Those leading on the concussion protocols will also support this strategy and call for evidence as the government does all it can to reduce risks, better understand symptoms and improve treatment and services.

Readout of Prime Minister's roundtable of UK oil and gas industry leaders: 14 March 2022

Prime Minister Boris Johnson hosted a roundtable of leaders in the UK's offshore oil and gas industry today to discuss domestic energy security.

This is part of a series of engagement by the Government across the UK's energy sectors, including with renewable and nuclear companies in the coming days and weeks.

The Prime Minister reaffirmed his steadfast commitment to the North Sea oil and gas industry as a key asset in the UK's plans for achieving greater energy independence, in ensuring the country's smooth transition to net zero and in being part of the solutions needed for a cleaner future – which are ever more crucial as we move away from Russian hydrocarbons following Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine. This was welcomed and echoed by industry leaders, who made clear that the oil and gas industry are fully behind the UK's energy transition.

The Prime Minister and CEOs discussed increasing investment in the North Sea oil and gas industry and boosting supply of domestic gas. This included how the UK can remove barriers facing investors and developers, and help projects come online more quickly. They agreed to work together going forwards to help accelerate this further.

They also spoke about how the oil and gas industry plays a vital role in

providing the solutions for our net zero future, including in the production of low-carbon hydrogen and roll out of new carbon capture projects, which the sector is well-positioned to take forward thanks to its skills and expertise.

The roundtable comes ahead of the publication of the UK's plans for greater energy security this month, with renewable energy, nuclear and domestic gas all a crucial part of achieving its aims. It also follows the UK's recent decision to end imports of Russian oil over the course of this year.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Steve Barclay, Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng, Energy Minister Greg Hands, and Chief Secretary to the Treasury Simon Clarke also joined the meeting at Downing Street.

Those represented from the oil and gas industry included: the Oil and Gas Authority, Blackstone Energy Partners, Bluewater Energy, BP, Carlyle International Energy Partners, Equinor, Esso, Greenergy, Harbour Energy, Neptune Energy, Offshore Energies UK, Prax Group, TotalEnergies and Shell.

BHC Honiara marks Commonwealth Day 2022 with Points of Light Award

World news story

The British High Commission in Solomon Islands and Nauru celebrates Commonwealth Day with a Points of Light Award to Joe Billy Oge for his outstanding service.



Head of State in Solomon Islands His Excellency Sir David Vunagi and Joe Billy Oge after the awarding ceremony.

The British High Commission in Solomon Islands and Nauru yesterday celebrated Commonwealth Day by presenting Joe Billy Oge with a Points of Light Award for his outstanding service to young people in Solomon Islands.

Mr Oge, 45, received the 208th Commonwealth Points of Light Awards from Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II for his work as Chief Commissioner of the Solomon Islands Scouting Association. The Points of Light Award recognises outstanding individual volunteers – people who are making a change in their community.

The award was presented on behalf of the Queen by His Excellency the Governor General of Solomon Islands. Sir David Vunagi thanked Mr Oge for his work with the Solomon Scouts Association underlining the importance of the movement and in investing in our youth.

British High Commissioner to Solomon Islands and Nauru, Thomas Coward said:

Commonwealth Day is an annual celebration of the deep ties across the 54 countries of the Commonwealth and our shared values of prosperity, democracy and peace. Given that 2022 is Her Majesty the Queen's Jubilee Year, there is a special focus on the role service plays in the lives of people and communities across the Commonwealth. Which makes this a perfect opportunity to thank Billy Joe Oge for his service to the young people of Solomon Islands.

Commonwealth Day is annually celebrated on 14 March with a message from Her Majesty The Queen and a Commonwealth Service was held at Westminster Abbey. This service was made even more special with former Points of Light winner and current Chevening scholar Gladys Habu acting as Solomon Islands flag bearer for the service.

Gladys Habu said:

I am pleased to say that I have been successfully nominated to be flag bearer for my home country on the Commonwealth Day Service at West Minster Abbey this year on her Majesty's platinum jubilee. A once in a life time opportunity I will carry our flag with the highest honour and respect.

Previous Points of Light Awardees in the Solomon Islands include:

- Jacob Sibia, a village chief who has enabled over one hundred children to gain primary education by leading the construction and funding of a school built from scratch.
- Judah Suimae, Coordinator of voluntary clean-ups across Honiara city who also raises awareness of plastic pollution and promoting a safe, green local environment.
- Marilyn Gedi, Champion for community conservation who created 'Kawaki', a women's group dedicated to conservation and rare turtle protection for

the Arnavon Islands.

- Gladys Habu, Environmental activist and UNICEF Pacific Supporter who has campaigned for many years on a local and international level to advocate for increased awareness of the impact of climate change.

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