

## Child Maintenance Payments, Voluntary Arrangements and the Significance of Parental Relationships

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Britain's leading independent social research institute

### Background and Aims

Child Support Agency (CSA) /  
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Qualitative stage carried out last year, published in March

#### Payment methods

- awareness of different methods
- the influences that shape use of payment methods
- what factors facilitate or hinder use of payment methods

### Research overview

#### CSA Payment methods

- The Collection Service (CS)



- Maintenance Direct (MD)



#### Also explored...

- family relationships; contact arrangements
- financial arrangements before and after CSA
- experiences of CSA service

### Methodology

#### Qualitative methodology:

- ⇒ Parents with care and Non-resident parents
- ⇒ Collection Service and Maintenance Direct cases
- ⇒ Matched pair approach
- ⇒ Purposive sample
- ⇒ 60 interviews

#### Quantitative methodology:

- ⇒ Approx. 2000 interviews

### Findings

### Families' Circumstances

- Acrimony of Break-up
- Ongoing disputes and hostility over:
  - Contact
  - Mortgage and bills
  - Maintenance
- Diversity of family relationships

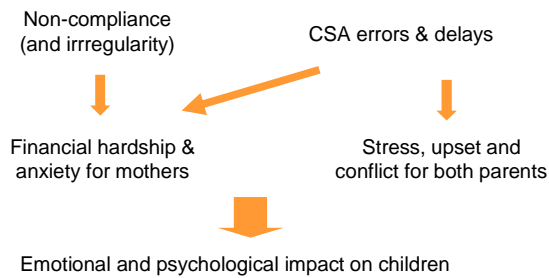
### Successful arrangements

- CSA enforcement powers
- Third party presence
- Efficient and fair service
- Commitment to shared parenthood

### Unsuccessful arrangements

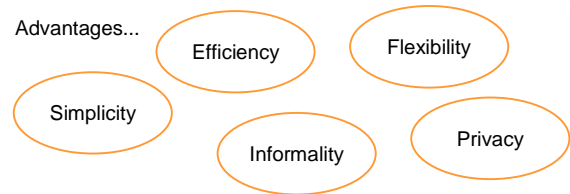
- Disputes over contact
- Reactions to re-partnering
- Poor relationship with CSA

### Implications for parents & children



### Maintenance Direct

Advantages...



Unsuitable if...

- Low likelihood of paying
- Insufficient trust

### Conclusions

Take into account families' circumstances

- Nature of parental relationship
- Pre-CSA financial arrangements

Improve service

- More personalised and friendly contact
- Tailor communications and suggested payment method

Support parents

- Sign-posting towards range of family support services

### More information

Summaries

- Department for Work and Pensions focusing on Maintenance Direct
- NatCen wider focus

Report

- **An investigation of CSA Maintenance Direct Payments: Qualitative Study**  
by Alice Bell, Anne Kazimirski and Ivana La Valle  
DWP Research Report 327 ([www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/))

