



Work and Pensions Committee

1 February 2023

Viscount Younger of Leckie, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Department for Work and Pensions

(By e-mail only)

Dear Lord Younger,

I am grateful to you, Arlene Sugden and Hilda Massey for appearing before the Committee on 18 January.

During the evidence session there were some points you undertook to write on and there are also some additional points that we wish to raise. We would be grateful if you could answer the questions set out below by Wednesday 15 February. Question numbers refer to the [transcript of the evidence you gave to the Committee on 18 January](#).

Implementation of recommendations from the Callan review

At the start of the session we discussed the implementation of the recommendations from the Callan Review. We would be grateful if you could keep the Committee informed on the timeline of those actions as work to scope them has been completed. (Qq 168–169)

Movement towards a named case manager

We have heard concerns about parents having to explain their circumstances repeatedly to different members of staff in the CMS.

One of the recommendations from the Callan Review that was accepted was to pilot “single named caseworkers within a dedicated team for complex domestic abuse cases”. This was discussed at Q171 but Arlene Sugden indicated in response to Q200 that:

“...All customers over the next 12 to 24 months, as our timeline, will start to have a dedicated – not just a one to one, a colleague will have a number of different cases – name case manager who will be their case manager in the future.”

Please could you provide further information on how the process works currently when people contact the CMS and how these changes are expected to alter that process.

Deductions for child maintenance

During the session Hilda Massey explained that, for the purposes of deductions from Universal Credit, it was not possible to take partial deductions for child maintenance. This was partly IT (for child maintenance payments) and partly legislation (for child maintenance arrears). The NAO Report also raised the matter of automating deductions for paying parents in receipt of Universal Credit who have earnings. It would be helpful to have an estimate in terms of cost and resources (people and cost) to make IT changes to facilitate these changes and what the current competing priorities are for the Universal Credit IT system. (Q191)

Customer Service

There was a discussion about customer feedback and Arlene Sugden offered to write to us with more information on the recent customer service scores. We would be grateful to have this information and also information on what the Department plans to publish in future on customer satisfaction scores with the Child Maintenance Service. (Q213)

Impact on child poverty

Debbie Abrahams asked Hilda Massey whether Australia had evaluated the impact on child poverty of the reforms to its child maintenance system. We would be grateful to know what information the Department holds on any such evaluation and any evaluations of other countries' systems. (Q246)

David Linden also asked for information the Department has on the Child Maintenance Service's effect on child poverty and we would be grateful to receive this information (Q248).

Family Test

David Linden asked you about your assessment of the compatibility of the Family Test and the two-child policy and rape clause and you offered to write back to us on this subject. (Qq235–236)

Additional information

We would be further grateful if you could provide the following additional information

1. The Department has most recently estimated that 40% of separated families do not have an arrangement in place. Is it the Department's understanding that there is no maintenance or other support provided within that 40%?
 - a. The NAO report estimated that the number of families without an arrangement was 25% in 2011–12. What assessment has the Department made of the reasons for this increase?
 - b. What are the implications of that increase on rates of child poverty?

2. Concern has been raised with us about how the CMS implements Regulation 50 of the [Child Support Maintenance Calculation Regulations 2012](#) when determining whether there is a non-resident parent. How does the CMS decide whether day-to-day care is split 50:50 when
 - a. overnight care is not equal or near equal?
 - b. overnight care is equal or very nearly equal?

3. Please provide a summary of the relevant legislation that underpins the calculation of child maintenance payments and what changes to primary legislation might require a review or amendment depending on the outcome of the Department's review of the affordability of child maintenance payments.

Yours sincerely,



Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee