



## Work and Pensions Committee

12 July 2023

### Viscount Younger of Leckie

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State  
Department for Work and Pensions  
(By e-mail only)

Dear Viscount Younger,

#### **Government Response: Children in poverty: Child Maintenance Service**

Thank you for sending the Government Response to the Committee's Report, *Children in poverty: Child Maintenance Service*.

It is important that the Child Maintenance Service functions effectively to support children in separated families and to ensure that an appropriate and effective arrangement is reached between paying and receiving parents. The Committee was therefore concerned, having considered the Government Response, that the detail of a number of our recommendations does not seem to have been adequately dealt with in your Response.

I would therefore be grateful if you could answer the following questions:

1. what is the Government's response to the Committee's proposal at paragraph 24 that CMS should undertake a survey, at least once every 12 months, on the effectiveness of Direct Pay arrangements;
2. what is the Government's response to the Committee's proposal at paragraph 25 that "child maintenance arrears reaching half of the current average arrears" should be a trigger to move to a Collect and Pay arrangement;
3. will the Government publish an estimate of fraud and error and a timeline for when it will include unearned income in the initial calculation (recommendation at paragraph 38 of our Report);
4. how, in the absence of an estimate and target reduction rate for fraud and error, will the Department assess the effectiveness of its "proportionate and cost-effective [fraud and error] controls" (response to recommendation at paragraph 38 of our Report);
5. what is the Government's response to the Committee's proposal at paragraph 40 that a specialist caseworker should be assigned to cases where the paying parent's income is from self-employment;
6. where is the work needed to the Universal Credit (UC) system for partial deductions ranked in terms of priority of requests for changes to the UC system (recommendation at paragraph 44 of our Report);
7. please provide the full deduction priority list (recommendation at paragraph 46 of our Report);

8. could you please provide a more detailed timeline for when the Government aims to have completed the various pieces of work arising from the Callan review (recommendation at paragraph 57 of our Report);
9. when does the Government plan to commence the provisions in the Child Support Collection (Domestic Abuse) Act 2023 (recommendation at paragraph 58 of our Report);
10. when does the Government plan to make changes to calculation levels, as your response indicates it will (recommendations at paragraphs 76–79 and 85 of our Report);
11. when will CMS caseworker guidance on 50/50 day-to-day care be updated (recommendation at paragraph 87 of our Report);
12. your response to our recommendation at paragraph 92 focusses on communications relating to CSA, our recommendation was not focussed on CSA communications but CMS cases in general. Taking into account experiences summarised in the Annex of our Report, please can you provide a further response on communications with receiving and paying parents who use the CMS;
13. what is the Government’s response to the Committee’s proposal at paragraph 110 that the Department should provide the Committee with quarterly data on progress of assigning customers with named caseworkers; and
14. what explains the high Independent Case Examiner (ICE) wait time and what steps is the Government taking to tackle it—in response to [a PQ I tabled](#), the Department said that “The average time taken, as of 23 May 2023, from complaint receipt to allocation to an investigator (based on all current live cases being investigated) is 71 weeks for CMS cases”.

I would be grateful for your reply to these questions by Wednesday 23 August so that we can consider your responses at our first meeting after the summer recess. As is usual practice with the Committee’s correspondence, I will be publishing this letter and your response on the Committee’s website.

Yours sincerely,



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