

Child Maintenance

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Introduction

Child Maintenance is an arrangement between both parents of a child. It covers how their child's living costs will be paid for when one of the parents no longer lives with them. It's made when parents have separated (or if they've never been in a relationship).

Both parents are responsible for the costs of raising their children, even if they do not see them. Making agreements about access to children happens separately.

Child Maintenance can be either:

- a private arrangement between both parents
- made through the Child Maintenance Service - a government scheme

Child Maintenance payments received are not taken into account when considering Universal Credit entitlement. This is so that the child can receive the full benefit of the support paid by the absent parent.

Claimants with a Child Maintenance need should be signposted to Gov.UK [Making a Child Maintenance arrangement](#) (link is external).

The benefits of child maintenance

An effective Child Maintenance arrangement can make a real difference to children as it can help pay for things like clothing, food and other essentials. The extra household income received can help lift workless families out of poverty.

For more information about the benefits of Child Maintenance, see the Children & Families Hub.

Parents arranging Child Maintenance themselves

Separated parents can make arrangements for their children if they both agree. This might cover their living costs and care.

This is a private family-based arrangement where both parents organise everything themselves. No one else has to be involved. It is flexible and can be changed if a parent's circumstances change, for example they could both agree that one parent:

- does school or nursery pick ups
- looks after the children in the holidays
- pays a proportion of their income to the parent with day to day care
- pays for things like housing, school uniform, trips or after school clubs
- pays a regular set amount directly to the parent with care

For more information on the tools available to support parents make an arrangement themselves, including a child maintenance calculator, see the Children & Families Hub.

Parent is a victim of domestic violence or abuse

A private arrangement would involve agreeing an amount with the other parent and being in contact. If one parent does not want to do this because they're a victim of domestic violence or abuse they can use the Child Maintenance Service who will contact the other parent for them. They will not pay the application fee.

See Domestic violence and abuse.

The Child Maintenance Service.

The Child Maintenance Service is for parents who have not been able to make a private arrangement about how their child's living costs will be paid. The payments are a fixed amount on a schedule.

The Child Maintenance Service can:

- work out Child Maintenance payment amounts (parents can do this themselves with the calculator)
- arrange for the other parent to pay Child Maintenance and take action if payments are not made
- help find the other parent (they will need information from the applying parent and will not be able to set up a case if they cannot be found)
- sort out disagreements about parentage
- look at the payments if changes in parents' circumstances are reported

Information about how to apply to the Child Maintenance Service can be found on GOV.UK [Making a Child Maintenance arrangement](#) (link is external).

Making deductions from Universal Credit

Child Maintenance payments for ongoing maintenance or arrears can be deducted from the paying parent's Universal Credit payment if they have no reported earnings.

The deductions are £8.40 per week (which include charges for the collect and pay service). Collect and pay is when the Child Maintenance Service collects and passes on payments to the receiving parent on your behalf – all child maintenance deductions from benefits use the collect and pay service.

The Child Maintenance Service notifies Universal Credit to make Child Maintenance deductions from a claimant's Universal Credit payment.

There is a limit to the amount of deductions that can be taken from an individual's Universal Credit payment and deductions are taken in an order of priority. Therefore, if the parent has other high priority deductions, such as rent or fuel arrears, it is possible that child maintenance deductions cannot be taken.