



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

**PAUL MAYNARD MP**  
**Minister for Pensions**

**26 March 2024**

Alison McGovern MP

Delivered electronically

Dear Alison,

Thank you for your valuable contributions at the Backbench Business debate on the Child Maintenance Service, in Westminster Hall on 27 February 2024. I was pleased to see such a well-attended debate. I committed to writing to you on any points raised that I did not have time to cover in my closing remarks. This letter is intended to fulfil that commitment.

I will first just reiterate the overall context of the issues we were discussing in the debate. Child maintenance payments can help to keep children out of poverty. Payments through both private and Child Maintenance Service arrangements were estimated to be on average £2.6bn a year in the financial years ending 2020 to 2022, helping keep 160,000 children out of poverty annually.

We've recently taken action to widen access to the Child Maintenance Service, and ensure more children get the best start in life. In February, we removed the £20 application fee so that more families, including the poorest, can access the support available through the Child Maintenance Service. We've also enabled the Child Maintenance Service to write off debt worth less than £7 in inactive cases, so it can focus on parents who owe larger sums.

We plan to bring in new powers to significantly speed up enforcement action so the Child Maintenance Service can recover unpaid maintenance through administrative liability orders, rather than go through a lengthy court process. We published our response to the consultation on 12 February 2024 and will bring forward legislation at the earliest opportunity.

This change will reduce the time taken to obtain a liability order from twenty-two weeks to as few as six weeks and ensure that existing tough action, such as forcing the sale of property or commitment to prison, can be considered much sooner.

You asked me to provide an update on the publication of research Ipsos is currently undertaking with Direct Pay customers.

I can confirm it is expected the research phase will conclude this month and the research will be published, but we do not have a date for this currently.

A copy of this letter has been deposited in the Libraries of the House.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul Maynard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'P' and 'M'.

**Paul Maynard MP**  
**Minister for Pensions**