



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Child Maintenance Reforms Evaluation Strategy

December 2014

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Foreword

As part of the Government's wider Welfare Reforms, we made a commitment to deliver a new system of child maintenance designed to provide encouragement, incentives and support to parents, to help them to work together after a separation for the benefit of their children.

This new system and associated policies will require a significant programme of monitoring, research, evaluation and analysis, both to enable us to report on the extent to which it has achieved its aims, but also to understand how we can improve on the design and delivery.

This evaluation strategy sets out the Department's intentions for the evaluation, highlights the estimated impacts of the reforms along with the key aims and objectives.

This evaluation will consider a variety of different data sources from Management information already being published as [experimental statistics on the 2012 scheme](#), to a programme of surveys and research.

The publication takes into consideration views of external stakeholders following a workshop earlier in the year. Although this is not a formal consultation the Department for Work and Pensions would welcome any additional comments on this evaluation strategy. Please email cm.analysis.research@dwp.gsi.gov.uk with the heading 'Child Maintenance Evaluation Strategy'

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1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is responsible for the child maintenance system in Great Britain. It operates:
- The statutory child maintenance scheme administered by the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) which opened to a limited number of applications in December 2012, with full intake from November 2013.
 - The Child Support Agency (CSA) which closed for new child maintenance applications in November 2013, when the CMS began taking all new applications.
 - It also funds Child Maintenance (CM) Options, a free, impartial national telephone and online service, which provides information and support for separating parents and the Help and Support for Separated Families initiative (HSSF) designed to help parents collaborate on a whole range of issues after separation.
- 1.1.2 The government has reformed the child maintenance system so that it provides support to enable separated parents to work together on child maintenance arrangements and the whole range of other issues faced when couples separate. DWP has introduced incentives to encourage parents to consider setting up a family-based child maintenance arrangement without automatically turning to the statutory child maintenance scheme.
- 1.1.3 This evaluation strategy provides a framework for evaluating the effects of the Child Maintenance Reforms.
- 1.1.4 It also forms part of our publicised commitment, to evaluate and review the implementation of the reform programme and the commitment given in the Welfare Reform Act to complete a review of charging provisions within 30 months of their introduction. As such the plans for the 30 month review presents a partial picture as all 1993 and 2003 scheme cases will not have completed the case closure process until 2018. In order to monitor the full impacts of the reforms on clients, the evaluation will continue after the 30 month review.
- 1.1.5 The Evaluation Strategy is structured around a number of “Evaluation Questions” which seek to understand the context and constraints under which success is delivered. These questions will look at various aspects of the 2012 child maintenance service including the statutory scheme, CM Options (which provides the “gateway” to the statutory scheme) and the Help and Support for Separated Families initiative. Our approach to the evaluation is to use survey and administrative data sources, combining these with quantitative and qualitative research.
- 1.1.6 The strategy will be updated to include further information when available.
- 1.1.7 A glossary of key terms used within the document can be found in Annex B.

1.2 Child Maintenance Reforms

- 1.2.1 The reform of the child maintenance system forms part of the Government's Welfare Reform agenda, where separating or separated parents are encouraged and supported to work together in the best interests of their children. A green paper, "[Strengthening families, promoting parental responsibility](#)" was published outlining proposals for the reshaping of the statutory child maintenance system, this builds upon Sir David Henshaw's recommendations for redesigning the Child Support system, published in "[Recovering child support; routes to responsibility](#)".
- 1.2.2 In 2008, the [Child Maintenance and Other Payments Act](#) was introduced to establish the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (CMEC) and amend various child support provisions. CMEC has since been abolished, with the child maintenance functions returning to DWP. Some of the provisions introduced within this act remain part of the CSA, CMS and CM Options. These provisions include:
- The removal of compulsion for parents with care on income based benefits (Income Support or income based Jobseeker's Allowance) to pursue a claim for child support through the CSA. This was introduced in October 2008 and a decrease in CSA intake can be seen in the [CSA Quarterly Summary of Statistics](#).
 - The introduction of new Enforcement Powers, statistics regarding the use of these powers can also be found in the CSA Quarterly Summary of Statistics.
 - The introduction of new debt management powers.
 - The introduction of the CM Options service which fulfils the information and support function

- 1.2.3 The 2012 Paper – [“Supporting separated families; securing children’s futures”](#), sets out the Government’s vision for the new child maintenance landscape. As outlined below, in December 2012 DWP launched the new child maintenance system. Part of this saw the introduction of a new statutory Child Maintenance Service for parents who are not able to make their own arrangements. This service has replaced the CSA for new applications. From 2014 CSA clients are being told their current CSA case will close. The case closure process (where clients will be invited to have a conversation with Child Maintenance Options and are encouraged to consider a new arrangement suitable to their current circumstance) will take approximately three years.
- 1.2.4 In addition, a series of service charges for the use of the CMS statutory service have been introduced to provide a financial incentive for parents to make their own child maintenance arrangements. These charges will not apply to current cases on the 1993 and 2003 CSA schemes – but rather to new applications to the CMS.
- 1.2.5 In November 2012 Help and Support for Separated Families (HSSF) was established, to co-ordinate and join-up support services for separating and separated families. HSSF incorporates a web app, provided funding to help existing telephony services deliver a service that emphasises the benefits of collaborative parenting, a mark to help users recognise organisations which will support them to collaborate and a series of projects funded under the Innovation Fund to test new interventions to help separated parents collaborate.

1.3 Policy Aims and Objectives

- 1.3.1 The aim of the Child Maintenance Reforms is to encourage and support more families to make their own collaborative arrangements and to deliver a more efficient and effective statutory service to those who really need it. The key objectives are:
- Encourage and support more parents to make family-based arrangements through the provision of better coordinated support services for separating and separated families.
 - Ensure prospective CMS applicants consider family-based arrangements by inviting them to have a conversation with the gateway delivered by the Child Maintenance Options service about their child maintenance options before applying.
 - Introduce application, collection and enforcement fees to encourage parents to consider family-based arrangements as an alternative to the CMS and to provide value for the taxpayer.
 - Enable collection fees to be avoided if statutory maintenance is transferred directly between parents.

- Close all existing CSA cases to reduce cost improve efficiency and increase the number of effective arrangements whether statutory or family-based. An explanation of 'effective' arrangements is given in 1.3.2.

1.3.2 An 'effective' arrangement is defined as:

- A regular financial arrangement where at least some of the agreed amount is always/usually received on time and whether the parent considers the arrangement to be working very/fairly well;
- Or, an ad hoc arrangement which includes a financial element (or transaction in kind e.g. school uniform) and whether the parent considers the arrangement to be working very/fairly well.

Throughout this evaluation we will be interested in effective family based arrangements.

1.4 Timetable of Reforms

1.4.1 The 2012 child maintenance scheme has been introduced in two phases, starting with the 2012 scheme accepting new applications for a limited number of applications, slowly building up to full capacity. This was then followed by the introduction of charging and closure of existing cases on the 1993 and 2003 schemes as outlined below:

- The 2012 child maintenance scheme was introduced on 10th December 2012, using a pathfinder approach to new applicants with at least 4 qualifying children with the same 2 parents named in the application.
- On 29 July 2013 the 2012 scheme expanded to new applicants with at least 2 qualifying children with the same 2 parents named in the application.
- The scheme was then expanded to all new applicants on 25 November 2013, at this point the mandatory gateway conversation with Child Maintenance Options was also introduced.
- On 30 June 2014, in the second phase of 2012 scheme, clients began being charged for making a new application to the CMS and for any new enforcement activity.
- On 11 August 2014, collection charges for new and existing CMS clients were introduced for those using the Collect & Pay service.
- The case closure process began on 30 June 2014. Cases are being closed in a structured way, so that the process can be refined and risk of disrupting maintenance payments is minimised.

Table 1: Estimated timescales for the closure of CSA cases

Segment	Description	Estimated Start Date	Estimated End Date
1	No child maintenance is liable for payment	January 2015	February 2016
2	Paying parent is currently not paying maintenance	August 2015	June 2016
3	Cases that are currently being managed outside of the two main CSA computer systems	November 2015	March 2016
4	Remaining 1993 and 2003 scheme cases with no enforcement action	November 2015	September 2017
5	Enforcement action is under way	July 2017	May 2018

1.4.2 Table 1 shows the current estimated dates for case closure. This strategy will be revised if there are significant changes to the timetable.

1.4.3 The estimated start and end dates are based on when cases will be due to close. The case closure process started on the 30 of June 2014, the process takes six months, and therefore these cases will begin to close at the start of January 2015.

1.5 The 30 Month Review

1.5.1 In the [Welfare Reform Act](#) (section 141), DWP committed to reviewing the impact of charging 30 months after its implementation. Charging was introduced on 30 June 2014. Therefore the 30 month review of charging will take place by December 2016.

1.5.2 The provisions introduced as part of the Child Maintenance and Other Payments Act will also be reviewed, although this does not form part of the statutory requirement.

1.5.3 In view of the timescale imposed by legislation, the 30 month review will be able to evaluate data, survey information and research that are available up to late summer/autumn 2016.

1.5.4 The 30 month review, will therefore not give a full picture of the reforms as this is not a statutory requirement, but rather a review of the effect of charging fees and the impact of the wider reforms to mid-2016. A further evaluation after this point, following the completion of case closure, will give an overall view of the Child Maintenance Reforms.

1.6 Data Sources

1.6.1 The following data sources will be used to inform the evaluation of the child maintenance reforms in the 30 month review. Further detail regarding the data sources is given in chapter 3.3.

1.6.2 **Management Information** - data derived from management information up to the end of June 2016 will be used to inform the 30 month review. Using current timescales this will allow analysis of approximately:

- 3 and a half years of applications on CMS (from December 2012¹ – June 2016)
- 2 years of information since the introduction of charging (June 2014² – June 2016)
- 2 years of information following the start of the CSA case closure process. (June 2014 - June 2016) On current estimated timetables this would mean;
 - CSA cases where no child maintenance was liable for payment (segment 1) will be closed.
 - CSA cases where the paying parent was not paying maintenance (segment 2) will be closed.
 - CSA cases that were being managed outside of the two CSA main computer systems (segment 3) will be closed.
 - Remaining CSA cases with no enforcement action (segment 4), will be part way through closure. Analysis up to the end of June 2016 will mean that these cases would have been closing for 8 months, with 15 months remaining.
 - CSA cases with enforcement action underway will not be available for analysis within the 30 month review as the estimated start date for closure of these cases is July 2017.

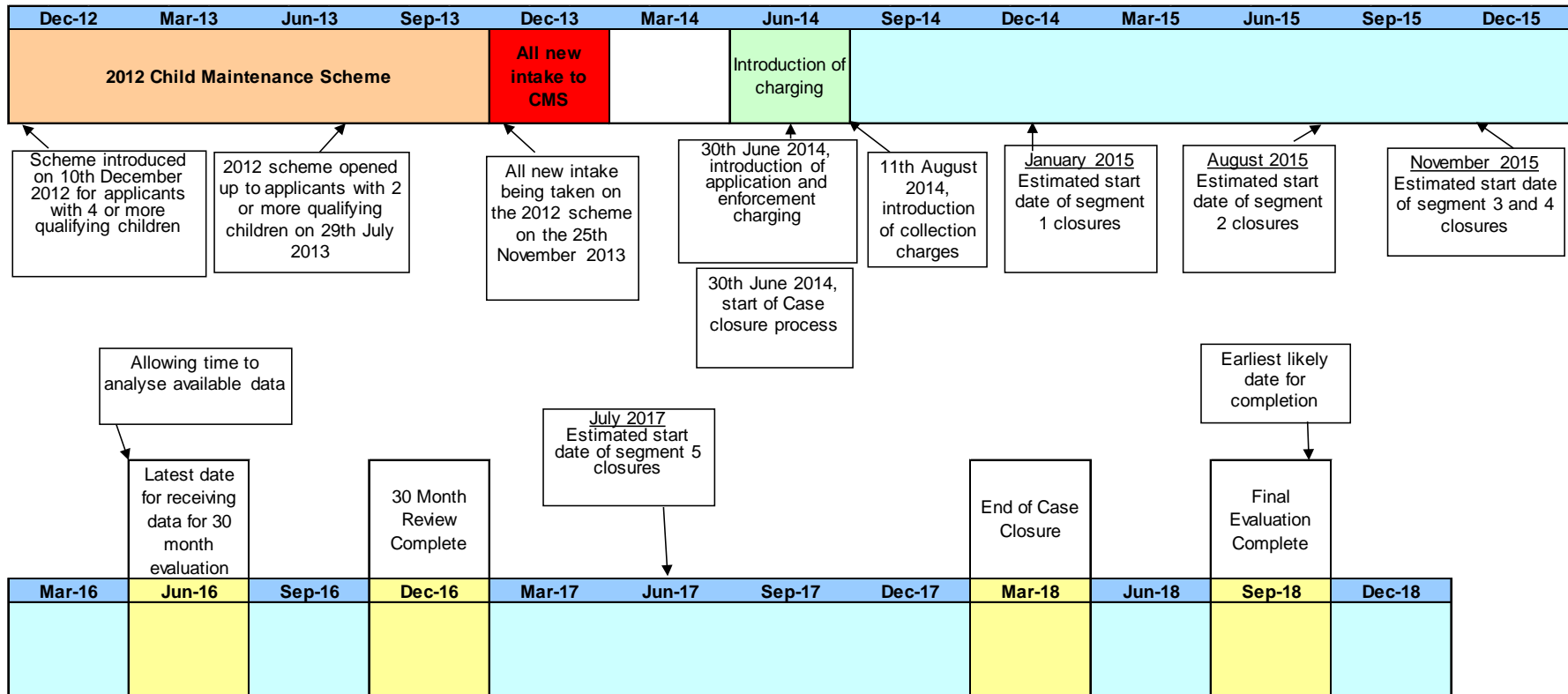
1.6.3 **Research Findings** - data will be available to inform the 30 month review from a number of research projects as outlined in Chapter 3. The various research projects will complete their final surveys in October 2016 to inform the 30 month review.

¹ There will be a limited number of cases from December 2012 until November 2013 due to the phased approach for new applications on the 2012 Child Maintenance Scheme.

² Application and enforcement charging was introduced on 30th June 2014. Collection charges were introduced on 11 August 2014.

1.6.1 Table 2 includes estimated dates for case closure, and subsequent evaluation. If there are significant changes to this timetable this strategy will be revised.

Table 2: Estimated Timetable of Reforms and evaluation



2 Estimating Effectiveness

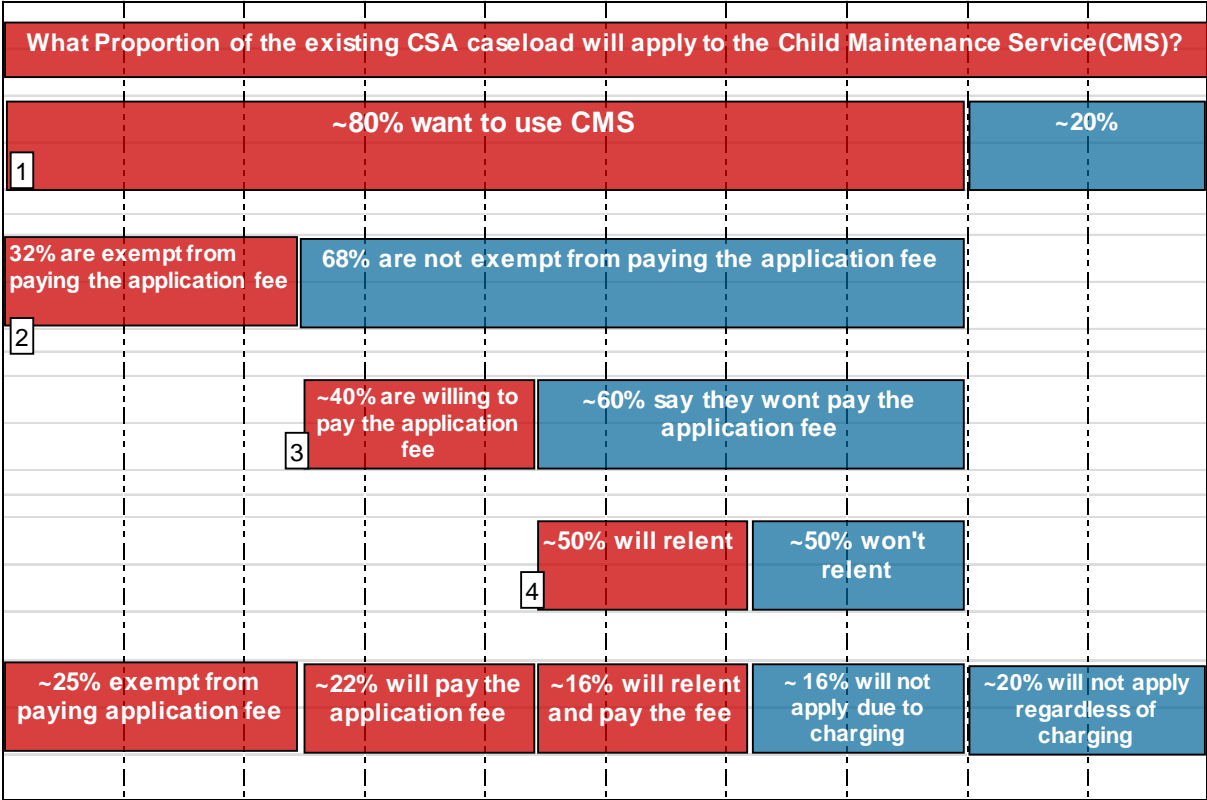
2.1 Estimated Impacts of the Child Maintenance Reforms

- 2.1.1 DWP published [“Estimating the Impacts of CSA Case Closure and Charging”](#) in 2012. It developed some key planning estimates which will be used as a means for measuring the effectiveness of the child maintenance reforms against a set of key evaluation questions (see Chapter 3 for key questions). Key planning assumptions look at:
- The proportion of existing and future clients expected to apply to the statutory scheme following case closure and the introduction of charging.
 - The alternative arrangements made by clients who will no longer use the new statutory scheme.
 - The proportion of clients expected to choose and remain longer-term on a Direct Pay arrangement.
 - The overall child maintenance outcomes for existing and future potential clients.
- 2.1.2 It must be stressed, however, that the planning assumptions provided in “Estimating the Impacts of CSA Case Closure and Charging” should, as the study states (page 2) “be considered indicative of the impacts of the reforms and treated with caution rather than considered definitive” and that they present the best possible view based on the evidence available at the time. This is because the analysis used survey responses (as well as CSA administrative data) to estimate client behaviour in response to charging and case closure. There is likely to be a considerable gap between survey respondents’ initial stated intentions in the surveys (when confronted for the first time with new and complex concepts such as charging and case closure) and their actual behaviour when faced with the real situation.
- 2.1.3 The above impact study provides the following findings in relation to the overall child maintenance population:
- The introduction of charging for use of the new statutory Child Maintenance Service and systematic closure of CSA cases is expected to result in an increase in the proportion of effective child maintenance arrangements overall.

- When combined with the impact of the introduction of the new calculation regulations, in the long term these reforms are anticipated to increase the proportion with effective arrangements from 60% to 70% (of those who will use or would have used the statutory services without the reforms).
- The reforms are likely to have a significant positive impact on collaboration between parents with many former CSA clients making family-based arrangements initially. Over the long term, there will be more family-based arrangements made by clients who would have used the new statutory scheme without these reforms.

2.1.4 The key findings regarding the use of the statutory scheme are shown in the following diagrams.

Table 3: What Proportion of the existing CSA Caseload will apply to the Child Maintenance Service?

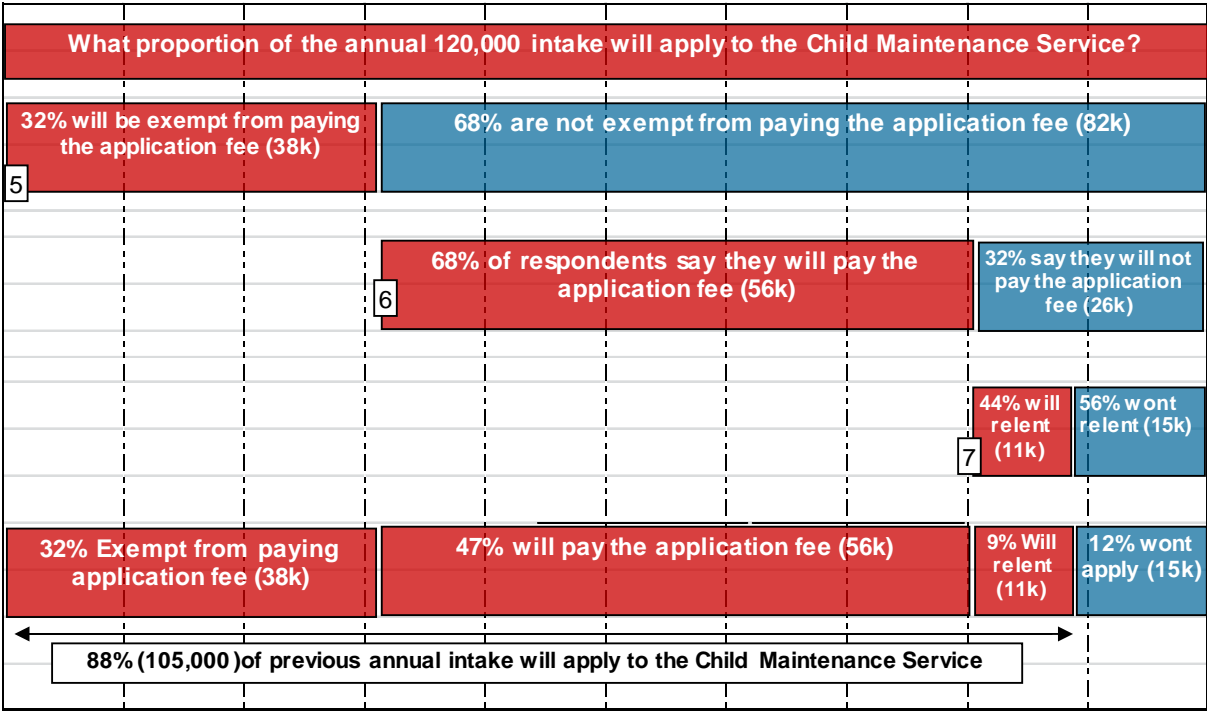


2.1.5 The client insight survey, detailed in ‘Estimating the Impacts of CSA Case Closure and Charging’, asked existing Parents with Care for their preferred arrangement type before suggesting the concept of charging on the Child Maintenance Service. Initially around 80% would want to use the CMS with around 20% preferring to make alternative arrangements [1].

2.1.6 It should be noted that some of these parents would be exempt from paying the application fee due to exemptions, including Domestic Violence [2].

2.1.7 When the concept of charging was introduced, around 60% stated they would not pay the application fee [3]. It is assumed that approximately 50% will relent. This leads to the overall assumption that 63% of existing clients will choose to make an application to the Child Maintenance Service.

Table 4: What proportion of the 120,000 annual intake will apply to the Child Maintenance Service?

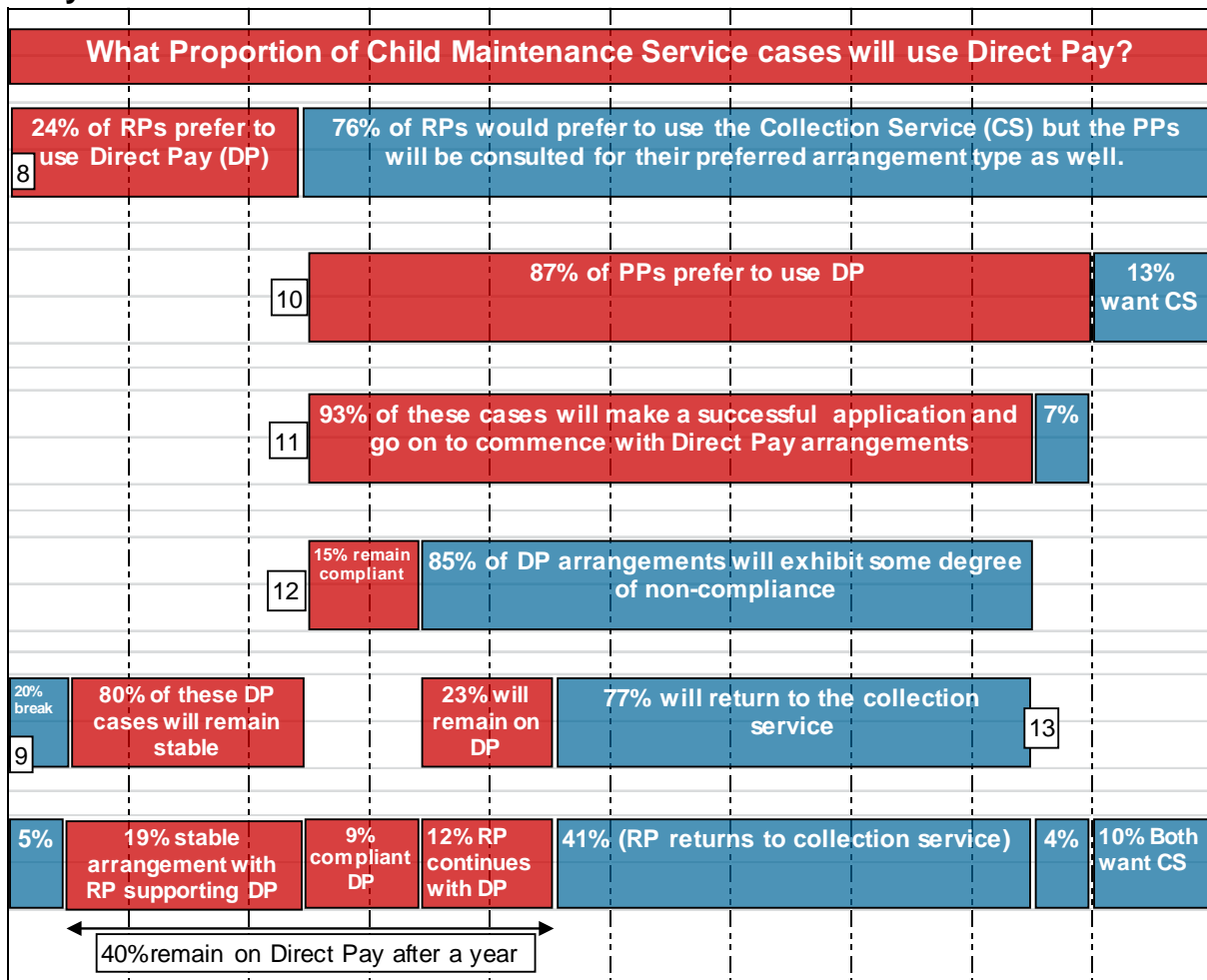


2.1.8 It is expected that 32% of new applicants will be exempt from the application charge due to domestic violence [5], this is based on evidence from the British Crime Survey supported by the insight surveys.

2.1.9 Of those who are not exempt from paying the application fee, 68% of those surveyed stated they would pay the application fee [6]. Of those who claimed they would not pay the fee, it is assumed that 44% will relent [7].

2.1.10 This leads to the overall assumption that 88% (105,000) of the 120,000 annual intake will apply to the Child Maintenance Service.

Table 5: What proportion of Child Maintenance Service cases will use Direct Pay?



2.1.11 Initially, it is expected that 24% of receiving parents (RPs) will prefer to use Direct Pay [8]. The majority of these cases will remain compliant, with 20% breaking down [9].

2.1.12 However, the views of the paying parent are now taken in to consideration. Of those cases where the receiving parent would prefer to use the collection service, it is assumed that 87% of paying parents would prefer to pay directly [10].

2.1.13 93% of these are expected to make a successful Direct Pay application [11]. A large proportion of these will display some degree of non-compliance [12], with the majority of these returning to the collection service [13].

2.1.14 This leads to an overall assumption of 40% of cases remaining on Direct Pay after a year.

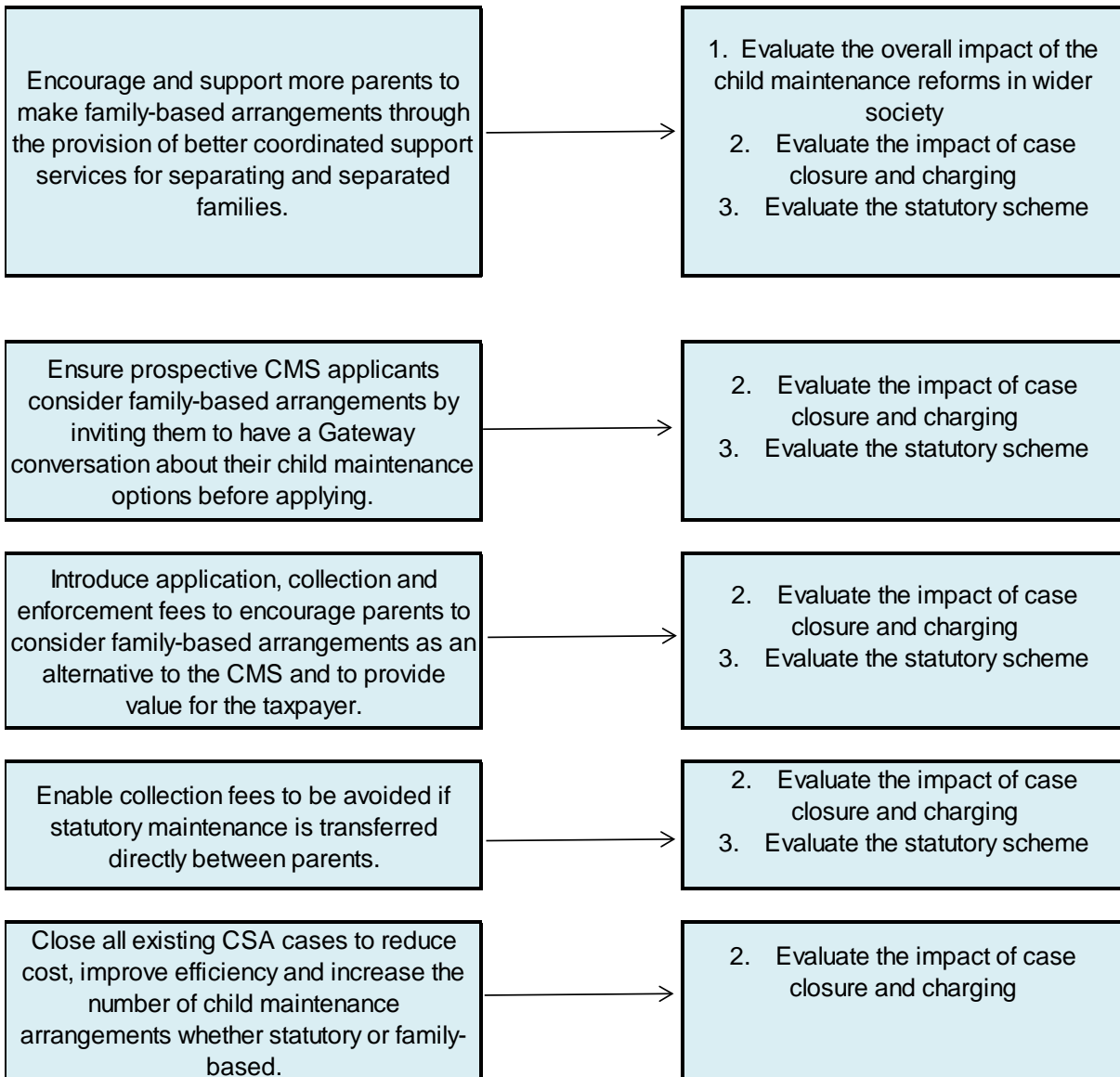
3 Evaluation Approach

3.1 Aims and Key Evaluation Questions

- 3.1.1 The evaluation of the Child Maintenance Reforms reflects part of our publicised commitment to evaluate and review the implementation of the child maintenance reform programme and the commitment given in the Welfare Reform Act to complete a review of charging provisions within 30 months of their introduction. The 30 month review will use all available information at this point. However some information may only be available after the review so will be used in further evaluation.
- 3.1.2 The strategy represents a coordinated approach to monitoring the impacts of the reforms on client outcomes and service up to 2016. As such it presents a partial picture as all 1993 and 2003 scheme cases will not have completed the process until 2018. In order to monitor the full impacts of the reforms on clients, the evaluation will need to be extended.
- 3.1.3 The evaluation is structured around a number of Aims and Key Questions which seek to identify if the reforms have been effective when measured against the aims and objectives of the reform programme.
- 3.1.4 The main aim of the evaluation of the child maintenance reforms is:
‘To provide a robust evaluation of the overall impact of the child maintenance reforms in order to inform publicised commitments, public debate and continuously improve delivery and performance’
- 3.1.5 Under this overarching aim, there are three detailed aims:
1. Evaluate the overall impact of the child maintenance reforms in wider society
 2. Evaluate the impact of case closure and charging
 3. Evaluate the statutory scheme
- 3.1.6
- The following diagram links the policy aims with the evaluation aims.
- These aims will consider all components of the child maintenance system:
- The statutory scheme,
 - CM Options: which is also the “gateway” to the 2012 statutory scheme,
 - The Help and Support for Separated Families initiative.

Policy Aim

Evaluation Aims



3.2 Meeting the Evaluation Aims

- 3.2.1 Under each evaluation aim there follows a set of key questions and areas to analyse. Stakeholder views have been taken in to account when developing these questions and further detail on these views can be found in chapter 4. Our approach to the evaluation is to use survey and administrative data sources, combining these with quantitative and qualitative research.
- 3.2.2 The following sections detail the types of questions being considered, along with what will be used to inform each aim. The first evaluation aim considers the impact of the reforms in wider society – that is parents who are in contact with child maintenance services and those who are not.

Aim 1: Impact of the child maintenance reforms in wider society

Key Questions:

- What changes will there be in the proportion of Family Based Arrangements (FBA) in the overall separated parent population?
- How many children in the separated parent population will have benefited from an FBA?
- To what extent do attitudes change over time towards making child maintenance arrangements in general and FBAs in particular?
- To what extent have the reforms contributed to a reduction in the public cost of child maintenance?
- How effective is the Sorting out Separation portal in improving awareness of, and access to, support services for separating/separated parents, including CM Options?
- How satisfied are users with the Sorting out Separation online service?
- How effective are the Innovation Fund projects in changing parental behaviour and increasing collaboration, resolving conflict and, where appropriate, encouraging parental or financial arrangements?
- Which types of interventions are replicable on a larger scale?

- 3.2.3 This aim will look at the extent to which there have been changes in attitude towards child maintenance, For example, the extent to which there have been changes in the proportion of collaborative (family based) arrangements, indicating that parents are now more likely to view these as a good alternative to the statutory scheme. It evaluates DWP funded services outside of the statutory scheme. For example, Child Maintenance Options and parts of Help and Support for Separated Families (HSSF), namely the Innovation Fund and Sorting out Separation portal. This section also considers the impact the reforms have had on the tax payer.

- 3.2.4 **Changes in attitude towards child maintenance** - will be sourced from the *'British Social Attitudes Survey' (BSAS)*. Child maintenance questions are included in the survey every two years designed to track high level attitudinal changes over the medium to long term. Questions have been included in the 2013 survey and will be included again in the 2015 survey to allow a comparison to be made. These results will be available autumn 2016.
- 3.2.5 **Changes in the level of family based arrangements** - the *Understanding Society Survey (USoc)* provides a means of measuring family based arrangements in the wider UK population. Child Maintenance modules are included within this survey every two years. Data covering the number of family-based arrangements in the UK population will be available in 2015/late 2016. Further waves of the survey will provide information on "effective" family based arrangements.
- 3.2.6 In November 2012, the **'Sorting out Separation'** online service was launched, developed in collaboration with stakeholders, Ministry of Justice and Department for Education. It is designed to help parents identify their needs and signpost them to trusted information, tools and specialist services. It also provides information on the wide range of issues families might face when they separate, including case studies to help support and guide families going through separation. 'Sorting out Separation' includes more than 300 unique signposts to over 50 organisations.

- 3.2.7 [Research](#) was conducted in 2013 to evaluate whether the Sorting out Separation portal (Web app) met the information, support and signposting needs of separating and separated couples, including hard to reach / disengaged groups. [Statistics on the Web app](#), looking at, for example, numbers of visitors and ways of accessing the site were also published.
- 3.2.8 **Innovation Fund** – Up to £10 million of funding has been allocated to the HSSF Innovation Fund via two procurement rounds. The Innovation Fund finances specialist community, voluntary and private sector organisations to deliver 17 projects offering different types of interventions to support separated and separating parents.
- 3.2.9 The primary aim of the Innovation Fund is to test a range of new and innovative interventions to help separated parents to work together in the best interest of their children, including resolving conflict and improving communication, where appropriate, thereby delivering positive outcomes for the child(ren). It also builds a body of evidence for family support services to draw on as to what intervention might work with most families. Each project is unique in the support/service offered and they vary significantly by, for example, the number of participants involved; intensity and duration of involvement and the target group.
- 3.2.10 The main stage evaluation aims to measure the effectiveness of the Innovation Fund projects against the main aims of the fund as outlined above. This will be achieved by utilising a holistic methodology to capture the experiences of all those taking part in projects. It will include qualitative interviews with participants, projects workers and DWP staff. For face to face projects it is intended that:
- The Parenting Alliance Measure (PAM) – will measure parental collaboration. Where possible data will be collected pre and post intervention and at around 6 months after parents leave projects to look at the sustainability of collaboration.
 - Analysis of MI - will provide information about those attending Innovation Fund projects e.g. parental relationships.
 - Web based projects will track participants outcomes through E-mail surveys.
- 3.2.11 **Cost of the reforms** - it is planned to use the departmental accounting systems and management information to assess the impact of these reforms on public finances and to compare outturn to date with the assumptions in the Child Maintenance Case Closure and Charges [Impact Assessment](#).

Aim 2: Impact of case closure and charging

Key Questions:

- How many former Child Support Agency (CSA) clients and former Child Maintenance Service (CMS) clients go on to make Family Based Arrangements (FBA)?
- How many children benefit from a FBA following contact with Options?
- How many former CSA clients and new clients apply to the CMS?
- What proportion of both former CSA and new clients, have made a CMS arrangement,
- Why have they chosen collect and pay on CMS rather than FBA or Direct Pay?
- How many former CSA clients and potential new clients have not made any child maintenance arrangements?
- How many former CSA and new clients have a Direct Pay arrangement?
- How sustainable are these Direct Pay arrangements?
- How do arrangements made following case closure differ from CSA arrangements?
- What has been the client's experience of the case closure process and charging?

3.2.12 The second aim considers the impact of the *closure of 1993 and 2003 scheme cases* and the *introduction of charges* on separated parents, considering change in outcomes (CMS, FBA or no arrangement) before and after charging.

3.2.13 This aim will focus on two main sections of the Child Maintenance population:

- Those who had a CSA case previously and will therefore have their case closed. They have a choice to make regarding opening a new case with CMS.
- Separating parents considering child maintenance for the first time.

3.2.14 For separated parents who have **previously had a CSA case**, the evaluation will consider the change in child maintenance arrangements prior to, and following the reforms. It will aim to validate the assumptions published in 'Estimating the Impacts of CSA Case Closure and Charging'. Analysis will be carried out via:

- **Management Information (MI)** - which is available during the evaluation period. It will consider the different characteristics of clients choosing to apply, or not, to the 2012 Child Maintenance Scheme.
- **Survey of CSA Case Closure Clients** - this survey will track CSA clients (Receiving Parents) following the closure of their cases and measure short term (3 months) and longer-term (1 year) arrangements in place following the closure of their CSA cases. Paying Parents will be interviewed to obtain their views on setting up and sustaining arrangements.

- **Direct Pay Survey** – this survey will contact parents (Receiving Parents) who make a Direct Pay arrangement. This will include parents who have previously had a CSA case which has closed. This survey will also track arrangements made after 3 months and their sustainability at 12 months. Paying Parents will be interviewed to assess their views about the process.

3.2.15 For separated or separating parents who make a child maintenance arrangement with the CMS for the **first time** analysis will include:

- **MI** - to examine the new intake on to the child maintenance service.
- **Direct Pay Survey** – this survey is described above – but will include parents who make a child maintenance arrangement with the statutory scheme for the first time (as well as those whose cases have closed).
- **Child Maintenance Service 2012 Exit Survey** – will contact parents who had a case with the CMS but then closed their case. It will track what, if any, child maintenance arrangements were subsequently made – including family based arrangements.

3.2.16 To provide a complete picture of child maintenance arrangements (including family based), that are made following contact with the CMS or CM Options – the evaluation of the reforms will include data derived from:

- The **Child Maintenance (CM) Options Outcomes Survey** - this aims to measure what CM Options customers actually do following contact with the CM Options service. Quarterly telephone surveys are conducted on average around three months after customers have had contact with CM Options – to allow time for a family based arrangement to be put in to place. A longitudinal study is conducted at the end of the financial year with those taking part in the first three quarterly surveys to take account of any arrangements which may have broken down. This provides an annual “flow” figure. Information regarding the timing of this publication can be found in chapter 5.2.

3.2.17 **Parents’ Experience of Case Closure and Charging Process** - the evaluation of the reforms will examine parents’ experience of case closure and charging, looking both at their contact with the CMS but also their experience outside of contact with the service e.g. contact with attitude influencers, communication channels other than from DWP and their relationship with each other. This data will be provided through a range of research as outlined below:

- **Case closure communications evaluation** - this study aims to understand the effectiveness of the DWP communications in relation to case closure and charging. The evaluation covers a baseline level of

awareness amongst clients, i.e. before they are mailed, compared to client awareness after case closure information is mailed out.

- Two **satisfaction surveys** providing parents' views of their experience of the child maintenance services – CMS and CM Options;
- The main aims of the Case Closure Outcome and Direct Pay surveys (outlined above) are to consider outcomes, however, these surveys will also include questions regarding the client's experience of case closure and charging.

Aim 3: Evaluation of the statutory scheme

Key Questions:

- How well does the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) perform when measuring Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) e.g. compliance, processing times.
- How satisfied are clients with the statutory scheme?
- How effective is the statutory scheme in dealing with arrears in terms of increasing compliance, effectiveness of enforcement powers and write off of CSA arrears.
- What barriers to paying child maintenance do paying parents experience – what support/initiatives can be provided to encourage compliance?

3.2.18 The third aim considers the *statutory scheme* and will focus on the performance of the 2012 child maintenance system. This aim will use **Management Information** to evaluate how well the CMS performs when measuring performance in areas like compliance, arrears and processing times. Due to the different objectives of the 2012 scheme any comparisons made with previous schemes will not be 'like for like'.

3.2.19 **Client satisfaction with the statutory scheme** – as mentioned above (3.2.17) client satisfaction with the CMS will be measured through a satisfaction survey. This is a quarterly survey that provides robust findings at the overall level but also when looking at various lines of business within the department.

3.2.20 In order to understand barriers to paying child maintenance, two pieces of research have been commissioned.

- **Self Employed Research** - The department has conducted research to identify factors that self employed paying parent's experience that are barriers to paying child maintenance. The evaluation of the reforms will consider the findings and support that has been put in place.
- **Long Term Separated Research** – Research has been conducted with paying parents and receiving parents to examine the barriers to

collaborative arrangements and family based arrangements for the long-term separated.

3.3 Data Sources

3.3.1 The evaluation will use a variety of survey and administrative data. The tables below give the main data sources that will be used to evaluate each aim

Aim 1: Impact of the child maintenance reforms in wider society

Source	Outcomes	Timescales	Limitations
British Social Attitudes Survey	Understanding of 'changes in attitude' towards child maintenance in the wider population	Child maintenance questions will be included in the survey every two years. Relevant questions have been asked in 2013 and will be included in the 2015 survey – with results available Autumn 2016	Child Maintenance modules are available every two years. Data will be available to compare the responses received from 2013 and 2015. It is unlikely that over such a short period of time a discernible change in attitude will be detected to inform the 30 month review in December 2016.
Understanding Society Survey	Measurement of Family Based Arrangements in the wider child maintenance population i.e. those have and have not touched child maintenance services	Child Maintenance modules every 2 years.	Child Maintenance modules are available every two years. The definition of family based arrangement has been modified in recent modules to bring it into line with current definitions. Data available in late 2016 will not be aligned with recent definitions of “effective” family based arrangements, but we should be able to use the survey to calculate the number of FBAs in the population within the 30 month

[Evaluation of the Sorting out Separation portal \(Web app\)](#)

The research had two primary aims:

1. to evaluate whether the Web app meets the information, support and signposting needs of separating and separated couples, identifying ways to optimise the offering to reach the target audience; and
2. to explore how hard to reach/disengaged groups could be encouraged to use the Web app and understand whether their support requirements are similar or different to other groups of separating couples using the Web app.

See publication

review of charging.

Questions being asked in the next wave of the survey (in 2015 and 2016) will allow for evaluation of 'effective' FBAs, this data will be available for analysis in 2018.

See publication

Innovation fund Evaluation	The primary aim of the Innovation Fund is to test a range of new and innovative interventions to help separated parents to work together in the best interest of their children.	Main evaluation is due to start in 2015 and will be published in 2016.	There is a risk that there may not be enough quantitative data to provide a robust evaluation
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Aim 2: Impact of case closure and charging

Source	Outcomes	Timescales	Limitations
Case closure communications evaluation	Evaluation of case closure communication. Understanding effectiveness of communications and spend.	On-going	The evaluation can only take place once clients have been contacted and will have to be adapted with each case closure segment.
Child Maintenance Service exit survey	Evidence on separated parents' child maintenance outcomes following closure of a CMS case. This will be for parents who had a case with the Collect and Pay or Direct Pay service and then closed their case. Under this aim, we will be particularly interested in the reasons for closing their CMS case i.e. was charging a factor?	Quarterly and annual surveys	Interviewers from the CM Options service provider will not be professionally trained and hence may not provide robust findings. Will attempt to overcome the above limitations by training and quality assuring interviewers.

CM Options Outcomes Survey	Number and effectiveness of arrangements following contact with the Options service including Family Based Arrangements, CMS, Courts or No Arrangements in the short and long term. Estimate of the number of children benefiting via non statutory arrangements.	This information is due to be published by the end of 2014, with annual publications after.	Interviewers from the CM Options service provider will not be professionally trained and hence may not provide robust findings. Will attempt to overcome the above limitations by training and quality assuring interviewers.
CM Options Satisfaction Survey	Provides the views of parents who contact the CM Options service on the quality of the service they have received	Monthly surveys	Interviewers from the CM Options service provider will not be professionally trained and hence may not provide robust findings. Will attempt to overcome the above limitations by training and quality assuring interviewers.
CMS Client Satisfaction Survey	Provides the views of parents who have a case with the Child Maintenance Service on the quality of the service they have received.	Quarterly surveys	Interviewers will not be professionally trained and hence may not provide robust findings. Will attempt to overcome the above limitations by training and quality assuring interviewers.
CSA Case Closure Survey	Tracking CSA clients following the closure of their cases and measures short term (3 months) and longer-term (1 year) arrangements in place following the closure of their CSA case	Rolling 3 and 12 month surveys up to October 2016	Information will be available up to October 2016, therefore later case closure segments will not be represented as fully as earlier segments.

Direct Pay Survey	Outcomes of Direct Pay in the short-term (i.e. around 3 months after putting an arrangement in place) and in the longer-term (i.e. around 12 months after putting an arrangement in place) following the introduction of charging.	Rolling 3 and 12 month surveys up to October 2016	Information will be available up to October 2016, therefore later case closure segments will not be represented as fully as earlier segments.
Management Information	Management information is available for the 1993 and 2003 child maintenance schemes, it is our aim to link this data as much as possible with 2012 administrative data in order to compare case characteristics of the different schemes.	On-going	Management information for the 2012 Child Maintenance Scheme, to support the detailed analysis for this evaluation, is currently being developed. We plan to make full use of these administrative data sources and will add further detail when the MI has been developed and is robust enough to use.

Aim 3: Evaluate the statutory scheme

Source	Outcomes	Timescales	Limitations
CMS Client Satisfaction Survey	Provides the views of parents who have a case with the Child Maintenance Service on the quality of the service they have received.	Quarterly surveys	Interviewers will not be professionally trained and hence may not provide robust findings. Will attempt to overcome the above limitations by training and quality assuring interviewers.
Direct Pay Survey	This survey will provide parent's views of the service they have received from the Child	Rolling 3 and 12 month surveys up to October 2016	As above

	Maintenance Service when applying for a Direct Pay arrangement and if there has been further contact.		
Management Information	Financial and administrative data will be used to evaluate the statutory scheme	On-going	Management information for the 2012 Child Maintenance Scheme, to support the detailed analysis for this evaluation, is currently being developed. We plan to make full use of these administrative data sources and will add further detail when the MI has been developed and is robust enough to use. The Department's accounting systems provide information on the costs of activities, goods and services.
Self Employed Research	To understand the needs of this client group, and the potential barriers to paying maintenance	To be published in 2015	This is qualitative research, for communication purposes, considering a small number of clients to better understand the needs of this group.
Long Term Separated Research	To understand the needs of this client group, and if they require further support.	To be published in 2015	This is qualitative research, for operational purposes, considering a small number of clients to better understand the needs of this group.

4 Stakeholder Engagement

4.1 External Stakeholder Workshop

- 4.1.1 External stakeholders were invited to a workshop in May 2014 to discuss the evaluation and review of the child maintenance reform programme.
- 4.1.2 The session was lead by DWP Analysts highlighting the high level aims and objectives in section 3, and facilitating discussions on these topics. Notes were taken away from this session along with written feedback being welcomed.
- 4.1.3 The main theme from feedback was that not enough focus was being given to paying parents, or fathers within the research.
- 4.1.4 Two large scale projects which will be integral for measuring the effectiveness of the reforms: **Direct Pay Survey** and **Survey of Case Closure Outcomes**. Both of these surveys have been put out to tender.
- 4.1.5 The **Direct Pay Survey** tender stated that it should include research with paying parents (who are largely fathers), both those who previously had a case with the CSA and those who did not, to gain an understanding of their views on setting up and maintaining a Direct Pay arrangement.
- 4.1.6 The **Survey of Case Closure Outcomes** tender also included an element where paying parents are surveyed to gain information on their views of case closure and how it has affected them.
- 4.1.7 Annex A gives further details of those who attended the session along with the feedback received.

5 Timetable and Reporting

5.1 2012 Statistics

- 5.1.1 [Experimental statistics on the 2012 statutory child maintenance scheme](#) are currently published. These statistics will be updated and reviewed in line with the [publication strategy](#).

5.2 Research Reports

- 5.2.1 [Child Maintenance Options Outcomes](#) - Experimental statistics on Family Based Arrangements following contact with the Options service was published on 12th December 2014. Future publications will be announced on the [Statistics: release calendar](#).
- 5.2.2 **Direct Pay Survey** - Interim results are due to be published externally by the end of 2016, with a final report in spring 2017.
- 5.2.3 **CSA Case Closure Survey** - Interim results are due to be published externally by the end of 2016, with a final report in spring 2017.
- 5.2.4 **Innovation Fund Evaluation** – The results of the main Innovation fund evaluation will be published in 2016

5.3 30 Month Review

- 5.3.1 We have committed to completing a review 30 months after the introduction of charging. This review will be completed by December 2016.

5.4 Overall Evaluation

- 5.4.1 Information available for the 30 month review of charging will not allow for a full evaluation of the Child Maintenance Reforms as the case closure process will not be complete by then.
- 5.4.2 A further evaluation is planned once all of the cases on the 1993 and 2003 schemes have closed.

6 Annex A

6.1.1 Representatives from the following groups attended the stakeholder session in May 2014.

- Durham Legal Services Ltd
- Family Lives
- Gingerbread
- Maypole Women
- Resolution
- University of York
- Working with Men

Although unable to attend the session in person, written feedback was received from Families need Fathers.

6.1.2 The comments raised at the stakeholder session, along with those highlighted after the session have been taken in to consideration within the evaluation Strategy.

6.1.3 The following table gives the key themes that emerged from the session.

	Comment	Response
1	Not enough thought has been given to fathers, and how certain elements of the reform might work for/against them	Two large scale projects which will be integral for measuring the effectiveness of the reforms: Direct Pay Survey and Survey of Case Closure Outcomes. Both of the tenders for these surveys have requested that we look at paying parents
2	Key indicator will be proportion and sustainability of FBAs	Experimental statistics will be published in December 2014 on this topic.
3	Understand reasons for FBAs failing	This will be considered in the Options outcomes research.
4	Compare number of families in receipt of regular maintenance before and after	This is one of the key areas of the strategy. We will be looking at various surveys and management information in order to monitor the change in number of families with effective arrangements.

5	The Direct Pay survey should focus more on Paying Parents	Two large scale projects will be integral for measuring the effectiveness of the reforms: Direct Pay Survey and Survey of Case Closure Outcomes. Both of the tenders for these surveys have requested that we look at paying parents
6	Stability of Direct pay arrangements should be considered	This will be measured within the Direct Pay Survey. Management information will also be analysed to count the number of cases that move off Direct Pay and back on to the collect and pay service
7	Compliance is strongest factor for evaluating efficiency of the statutory scheme	This is one of the key indicators that will be measured when looking at the statutory scheme.
8	Client experience and satisfaction needed for efficiency of statutory schemes - determining how support for parents can be improved	The CMS Client satisfaction survey will be used - See chapter 3.3 on this data source.
9	HSSF - any lessons learned from Innovation Fund projects on 'what works' should be applied more widely where feasible and as quickly as possible	The Innovation Fund Evaluation will be published. See 3.3.25.
10	Evaluation of the web app will be important in evaluating its effectiveness	An evaluation of the usage of the web app is available.
11	More robust and objective measure of 'effective' child maintenance arrangement should be used consistently across all evaluation strands alongside opinion questions concerning parental satisfaction regarding arrangements for children	<p>A consistent view of 'effective' FBAs is being used consistently within internal surveys and research, defined as, either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A regular financial arrangement where at least some of the agreed amount is always/usually received on time and whether the parent considers the arrangement to be working very/fairly well; • Or, an ad hoc arrangement which includes a financial element (or transaction in kind e.g. school uniform) and whether the parent considers the arrangement to be working very/fairly well. <p>The definition used externally within 'Understanding Society' changes over time, with the most up to date definitions of 'effective' FBAs being available for analysis in 2018.</p>

12	Strategy is heavily quantitative focused, little room for enable an analysis of how or why arrangements do not work.	The research strategy includes quantitative and qualitative work.
13	Qualitative work alongside each evaluation strand would assist in understanding behaviours and outcomes	Many of the surveys include both qualitative and quantitative areas.
14	Greater focus is needed on the impact on Non-resident parents within the strategy.	Two large scale projects will be integral for measuring the effectiveness of the reforms: Survey of Direct Pay Clients and Survey of Case Closure Outcomes. Both of the tenders for these surveys have requested that we look at paying parents
15	Doesn't seem to be an evaluation of the gateway itself	The gateway will be evaluated using the CM Options Outcome and Satisfaction surveys.
16	Unduly focused on the 30 month review - this will give an unrepresentative view due to order of case closure	We recognise that the 30 month review will not give the full picture due to the order in which cases are closed. This will be highlighted within the 30 month review. A further evaluation will take place once all cases on the 1993 and 2003 schemes have closed.
17	Confirmation that Direct pay and case closure surveys will continue after the 30 month review	Continuity of these surveys will be dependant on departmental research funding.
18	Needs to consider a broader list of questions beyond the effectiveness of maintenance and how many children are benefiting	Questions have been updated following stakeholder feedback as per chapter 3.

7 Annex B

7.1 Glossary

2012 Child Maintenance Scheme	The 2012 Scheme delivers a new statutory child maintenance system aligned with the Government's goals for supporting and strengthening families.
1993 scheme	Cases managed under 1993 child maintenance rules by the Child Support Agency. These cases will be closed as part of the case closure process.
2003 scheme	Cases managed under 2003 child maintenance rules by the Child Support Agency. These cases will be closed as part of the case closure process
Collect and Pay	A case is classed as 'Collect and Pay' when the maintenance calculation has been derived by the CMS (after assessment of the case) and the paying parent pays child maintenance to the CMS. The CMS then sends this money to the receiving parent. This is also known as 'Calculation and Collection'
Case Closure	Existing CSA cases will be closed over a period of 3 - 5 years. At the end of this period statutory scheme clients will be on one set of assessment rules using one IT system, managed by one organisation.
Charging/Fees	From the 30th June, charges were introduced on the 2012 Child Maintenance Scheme for those making a new application to the CMS and for enforcement activity. On the 11th August 2014, collection fees for using the Collect and Pay service was introduced for new and existing 2012 scheme clients.
Child Maintenance Options	Child Maintenance Options is a free service that provides impartial information and support to help separated parents make decisions about their child maintenance arrangements. This also acts as 'The gateway' for callers wishing to apply to CMS
Child Maintenance Service (CMS)	The government has introduced a new statutory Child Maintenance Service for parents who are unable to make a family-based arrangement. It will bring speedier processing of applications, simpler calculations and faster enforcement action for those that choose not to pay. Also referred to as the 2012 scheme
Child Support	The existing statutory scheme which maintains the 1993 and

Agency (CSA)	2003 scheme caseload
Direct Pay	A case is classed as 'Direct Pay' when the maintenance calculation has been derived by the CMS (after assessment of the case) and the paying parent pays child maintenance directly to the receiving parent. These cases are assumed to be fully meeting their current liability (since clients can come back to the CMS if there is a default on their payment or to request a revised calculation).
Family Based Arrangements (FBA)	Family-based arrangements are child maintenance arrangements which parents have agreed between themselves.
Help and Support for Separated Families (HSSF)	Help and Support for Separated Families (HSSF) is a network of tools and resources to help parents work together to achieve what's best for their children. It has been established to better coordinate and signpost to the existing support services offered through voluntary, community, local and private sector organisation and test new interventions to help parents collaborate.
Maintenance Direct	A CSA service which allows parents to pay child maintenance between themselves with the amount to be paid calculated by the state.
Paying Parent	The parent who pays child maintenance, previously known as 'Non-Resident Parent' or NRP
Receiving Parent	The parent who receives child maintenance, previously known as 'Parent with Care' or PWC