



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Child maintenance: closing cases in Segments 3 and 4 simultaneously

Public consultation

October 2014

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Introduction

This consultation is to draw to your attention our proposal to select cases for closure from Segments 3 and 4 simultaneously and provide an opportunity for you to comment on this should you choose to do so.

Scope of consultation

This consultation applies to England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Duration of the consultation

The consultation period begins on Monday 27th October 2014 and runs until Monday 17th November 2014.

Proposal

The Ending Liability scheme sets out the general principles in relation to how and in which order cases will be selected for closure and provides information for those who wish to apply to the Child Maintenance Service.

The current version of the Ending Liability scheme, a copy of which is available alongside this consultation document, anticipates that we will issue case closure notifications to all cases in Segment 3 before we begin closing cases in Segment 4.

To allow for a more effective and efficient deployment of resources we would like to select cases for closure from both segments simultaneously.

The types of case in Segments 3 and 4 are the same (fully or partially compliant). The only difference between the segments is that they are administered differently – Segment 3 off system (clerically) and Segment 4 on system.

The change would mean that we would select Segment 4 clients for closure earlier than previously planned. Segment 4 clients would have the same opportunity as clients in Segment 3 to make an application to the Child Maintenance Service should they be unable to make any other type of arrangement.

The level of service provided to clients in these segments would be unaffected by this change. It would not delay the issuing of case closure notices to Segment 3 clients.

This is a change with minimum impact on clients but as it would be a change to our approach, which involves amending the Ending Liability scheme, we are drawing this proposal to your attention and providing an opportunity for you to comment on it should you choose to do so. We are not consulting on any other aspect of case closure or charging as these have already been consulted on extensively.

Please let us know before Monday 17th November 2014 if you have any comments about this proposal.

We have provided some questions and answers below, regarding this proposed change. Please also let us know if you have any additional questions.

The Government response to the consultation: Supporting separated families: securing children's futures is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/supporting-separated-families-securing-children-s-futures>

Questions and answers

The overarching principal of the Ending Liability scheme is to minimise payment disruption and ensure continued compliance, particularly for those cases where compliance was hard won.

Would the change impact on these principals?

No. The cases in both Segments 3 and 4 are partially or fully compliant cases. The only difference is Segment 3 cases are managed off the main computer systems (clerically) and Segment 4 cases are managed on system.

Although Segment 4 clients would be selected for closure earlier than previously stated, their case characteristics are the same as those in Segment 3.

The change will mean that many Segment 4 clients would be able to make an application to the Child Maintenance Service, if they need to do so, earlier than under the existing proposal.

Would the level of client service be affected by this change?

No. The level of service provided to clients in both segments would be unaffected by this change as they would continue to be managed, as they are now, by separate resources. It would not delay the issuing of case closure notices to Segment 3 clients.

If the cases are of the same type why did you originally decide to do Segment 3 ahead of Segment 4?

Cases in Segment 3 are handled off system. We decided to close these cases first as they are more costly for the taxpayer to administer, and parents involved with such cases are likely to have suffered from a reduced level of service.

Why are you requesting this change?

There are business and operational advantages to be gained from having the flexibility in when we close these cases.

The current version of the Ending Liability scheme anticipates that we will issue case closure notifications to all cases in Segment 3 before we begin closing cases in Segment 4.

Segments 3 and 4 are of the same type but managed by separate teams.

It would be a more efficient use of resources if the Segment 4 team were to start closing their cases as soon as they were available, rather than waiting for Segment 3 to finish. The Segment 4 team will be available at the start of Segment 3.

Segment 4 clients would still be afforded the same opportunity as clients in Segment 3, in that they would have the opportunity to make an application to the Child Maintenance Service. The change will mean that many Segment 4 clients will be given this opportunity earlier than under the existing proposal.

It would not delay the issuing of case closure notices to Segment 3 clients and the level of service provided to clients in these segments would be unaffected by this change.

We are aiming to close all cases, in all segments, by 31 December 2017. Closing Segments 3 and 4 simultaneously will help us achieve this.

How will you ensure clients are aware their case will be closing?

In order to ensure clients are given ample time to consider their options for putting a maintenance arrangement in place that best suits their needs, they will be given at least 6 months notice before their existing child maintenance liability will end (unless the case is closed because it is linked to a new application).

Clients will be asked to contact the Child Maintenance Options service, who provide free, impartial information and support on the various ways to set up child maintenance arrangements. Clients will be encouraged to consider family-based arrangements, but where this is not possible they can make an application to the Child Maintenance Service.

Clients will receive a reminder to make sure that if they do want to make an application to the Child Maintenance Service, they can make this application in time to ensure there is no break in the underlying maintenance liability.

Please send your comments to:

Case Closure Policy Team
Child Maintenance Group 2nd Floor
Department for Work and Pensions
PO Box 239
Holbeck
LEEDS
LS11 1EB

Email: CONSULTATIONCASECLOSURE.SEGMENTS3AND4@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK

Please ensure your response reaches us by Monday 17th November 2014.

When responding, please state whether you are doing so as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents, and where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.

Freedom of information

The information you send us may need to be passed to colleagues within the Department for Work and Pensions.

All information contained in your response, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure if requested under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. By providing personal information for the purposes of the public consultation exercise, it is understood that you consent to its disclosure and publication. If this is not the case, you should limit any personal information provided, or remove it completely. If you want the information in your response to the consultation to be kept confidential, you should explain why as part of your response, although we cannot guarantee to do this.

To find out more about the general principles of Freedom of Information and how it is applied within DWP, please contact:

Central Freedom of Information Team
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

Email: Freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

The Central Freedom of Information team cannot advise on specific consultation exercises, only on Freedom of Information issues. More information about the Freedom of Information Act can be found at www.dwp.gov.uk/freedom-of-information

Consultation principles

This consultation is being conducted in line with the new [Cabinet Office Consultation Principles](#). The key principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before;
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and consult with those who are affected;
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy; and
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

Feedback on the consultation process

We value your feedback on how well we consult. If you have any comments on the process of this consultation (as opposed to the issues raised) please contact our Consultation Coordinator:

DWP Consultation Coordinator
2nd Floor
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

Email: caxtonhouse.legislation@dpw.gsi.gov.uk

In particular, please tell us if you feel that the consultation does not satisfy the consultation criteria. Please also make any suggestions as to how the process of consultation could be improved further.

If you have any requirements that we need to meet to enable you to comment, please let us know.

We will aim to publish the Government response to the consultation on <http://www.dpw.gov.uk/consultations>