

Withdrawn

This publication is withdrawn.

This publication is no longer current.

How we collect and use your information

We need to collect information so that we can deal with your child maintenance application or case.

This information helps us to:

- process applications
- work on child maintenance cases
- process any reviews, appeals or complaints
- offer you relevant information about our child maintenance services
- gather statistics for research and analysis
- make informed decisions about how we treat our customers.

We may work with credit reference agencies to assess your financial circumstances, and we'll use this information to help us tailor our service to you and the other parent. It won't leave a 'footprint' on your credit file – that is, it won't affect your credit rating. However, if you are a paying parent⁺ and you do not pay the right amount of child maintenance at the right time, we can use a liability order to take enforcement action against you. This action may affect your credit rating.

We may also use your details to send you other useful information about arranging maintenance for your children. You can ask us to stop sending you this at any time.

Who we can share information with

We'll never tell the other parent your address unless you ask us to.

We take the protection of personal information very seriously. Normally we won't tell anyone your address or phone number. But if the law allows, we may give information about you (including your contact details) to some other organisations, including:

- other government organisations such as Jobcentre Plus, the DWP and HM Revenue & Customs
- local councils (to help with Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit enquiries)
- a court or tribunal (about child maintenance)
- debt-collection agencies and other organisations that help us collect child maintenance.
- research organisations. If we do this, we won't link research answers or results to individual cases without your permission.

We can also pass on information about you if:

- we have a legal reason to (including under the Data Protection Act)
- a court orders us to
- you have given your permission
- it could help to prevent crime
- it could protect public funds
- it's useful for checking the accuracy of information.

We may also give information about you to partners or agents who are legally authorised to act on our behalf – for example, training providers and research organisations. We'll only give them the information they need to carry out the work we've authorised them to do, and they cannot use it for any other reason.

We'll never sell your details to other organisations for sales or marketing activities.

Who we get information from

When we need information about you we'll usually ask you for it first. In some circumstances the law says you have to give this information to us.

The law also allows us to ask other people or organisations for information about you. Some government organisations automatically pass on information to us. These include Jobcentre Plus, the Pension Service, HM Revenue & Customs and the DVLA.

We can also get information from:

- prison services
- local councils
- police and law enforcement agencies
- legal representatives
- organisations that have information about your financial history, such as banks, building societies and credit reference agencies
- overseas organisations with responsibilities for enforcing child maintenance in their territory



- the paying parent’s employer or accountant, or companies or partnerships they provide services to.

Other ways we can get information

Sometimes we use our investigators to gather the information we need. This usually happens when people or organisations don’t give us the information we have asked for.

Inspectors can visit a parent’s place of work. They can also visit other places where information is held about the parent.

It is a criminal offence to:

- make it difficult for our inspectors to do their jobs
- deliberately delay the process of gathering information
- not answer our questions
- not show us documents we ask for.

We can prosecute people for any of these offences. If they are found guilty they could be fined up to £1,000.

Will you check the facts I provide?

It’s important that all the information we have is correct, so sometimes we’ll need to check the details you give us.

This might be as simple as asking you for proof of a change you’ve told us about, or us working with other organisations to check the information we’ve been given.

Can I have access to my personal information?

The Data Protection Act 1998 allows you to ask to see what personal information we hold about you on computer and in some paper records. There are two ways you can get information, depending on what you want to know.

1. We can give you the following information **free of charge**:

- how we worked out your child maintenance
- a copy of any letter we have sent you
- an update on your case.

If you want this information, please contact us.

2. For all other personal information, you must ask us in writing by sending in a ‘Subject Access Request’ (SAR) and **pay a £10 fee**.

We’ll then send you copies of the information we hold about you on computer records and some paper records.

If your records contain information that wouldn’t be appropriate to show you, such as certain other people’s information, we’ll blank out or ‘redact’ it. This means you may get documents with blanked-out sections.

Making a SAR

If you want to see other personal information we hold about you, please ask us for a SAR form.

You don’t have to use a form, but it will help us keep track of your request from the moment you make it, and to match it up with your payment.

The form will ask you for:

- your full name
- your date of birth
- your customer reference number with the Child Maintenance Service
- your address and phone number
- your National Insurance number
- details of any specific data you want, such as phone records.

When we have your payment and all the information we need, we’ll deal with your request. This may take up to 40 calendar days.

If you prefer not to use a form, send your written request and payment to:

Child Maintenance Service
PO Box 249
MITCHELDEAN
GL17 1AJ

Please don’t send cash. If you’ve asked us for a form with a tracking number, you can pay by card using the self-service website.

Otherwise you can pay by card over the phone.

Making corrections to your personal information

If you think some of the information we have about you is wrong, it’s important that you let us know.

Where can I get more help and information?

Go to www.gov.uk/child-maintenance for more information, or call us on **0845 266 8792*** if you have any questions.

You can get independent advice and guidance about data protection and freedom of information from the Information Commissioner's Office. Go to www.ico.gov.uk to find out more.

Important information about this factsheet

This factsheet is only a guide and does not cover every circumstance. It only refers to the statutory child maintenance scheme provided by the Child Maintenance Service. It does not refer to any child maintenance schemes provided by the Child Support Agency. 'Statutory' means set up under the law.

We have done our best to make sure the factsheet is correct as of 1 October 2013, but it may not reflect changes to the law or to our procedures after this date. You may want to get independent advice before making financial decisions based on the content of this factsheet.

*Call charges

Calls to 0845 numbers from BT land lines should cost no more than 4p a minute with a 15p call set-up charge. You may have to pay more if you use another phone company or a mobile phone, or if you are calling from abroad.

Calls from mobile phones can cost up to 40p a minute, so check the cost of calls with your service provider.

Charges were correct as of the date of this factsheet.

+ You may have heard different terms used to describe the parents in a child maintenance case.

In child support law:

- the parent who receives child maintenance is known as the 'parent with care' - we call them the 'receiving parent'
- the parent who pays child maintenance is known as the 'non-resident parent' - we call them the 'paying parent'.